

REFLECTING ON THE OBS PROCESS: KEY RELEVANT GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS TRAINED ON BUDGET RESPONSIVENESS

1. INTRODUCTION

UDN in partnership with UNICEF Uganda organized an open budget survey training for Government officials from key Government institutions (including the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and Parliament of Uganda) that are accessed in the Open Budget Survey. The training commenced on 3rd April 2023 to 6th April 2023 at the Imperial Hotel in Entebbe. The training also attracted participants from the Zimbabwean Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), National Association of non- Governmental Organizations (NANGO) Zimbabwe and other civil society Organizations in Uganda. UDN in partnership with UNICEF Uganda organized an open budget survey training for Government officials from key Government institutions (including the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and Parliament of Uganda) that are accessed in the Open Budget Survey. The training commenced on 3rd April 2023 to 6th April 2023 at the Imperial Hotel in Entebbe. The training also attracted participants from the Zimbabwean Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), National Association of non- Governmental Organizations (NANGO) Zimbabwe and other civil society Organizations in Uganda.

Objectives of the training were:

1. Revise the OBS 2021 question and ascertain the basis of a given score on each indicator,
2. To draw strategies on how Uganda's OBS survey score can be improved in subsequent surveys especially on areas where the country scored poorly like citizen's participation in the budgeting process.
3. Share experiences on strategies employed by other countries like Zimbabwe that attained a significant improvement in their Transparency score from 49/100 in the OBS 2019 survey to 59/100 in the OBS 2021 survey.

2. KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE OBS TRAINING

Uganda has taken tremendous strides towards achieving greater budget openness over time through creation of a medium through which the budget information has been disseminated to the public which has also ensured a participatory budgeting process. For instance, creation of an interactive budget website (budget.finance.go.ug) where Government Data is uploaded and can be accessed by any citizen, undertaking Budget consultative meetings (where citizens are invited to make input into the National Budget), Creation of the Citizen's Feed Back Platform by the OAG through which citizens can contribute to the audits among others.

However, since 2015, Uganda's Transparency score has oscillated between 60/100 and 58/100 implying that there is Limited availability of budget Information which undermines meaning public participation in the Budget process. Moreover, Uganda's score in Public Participation as a 19/100 in the OBS 2023.

Factors that contributed to stagnation in Transparency Scores and low performance in Public Participation Score include;

1. Failure to publish the Enacted Budget online in a timely manner;
2. Lack of formal opportunities offered to the public to engage in meaningful discourse at different stages of the budget process. therefore, Members of the public not given opportunity to testify during Parliamentary hearings on the budget proposal prior to its approval (*this transpired in the COVID 19 period*);
3. Members of the public not given opportunity to testify during Parliamentary hearings on the Audit report;

Experiences on how Zimbabwe managed to improve their Transparency Score

UDN appreciates support by: UDN Membership; [DCA](#); [Save the Children in Uganda](#); [OSIEA](#), [Inspectorate of Government](#); [IBP](#), [Trocaire](#) and [NDI](#).

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According to Ernest Nyimai- this included, enhancing collaboration and Partnership between Government Key Line Ministries and Departments, Parliament, CSOs and Development Partners, putting out timely publications of the 8 key budget documents as well as improving on the comprehensiveness of information published and having a deeper understanding of OBS Process.

3. LESSONS FOR UGANDA:

1. Publish all the eight key budget documents (e Pre-Budget Statement, the Executive's Budget Proposal, the Enacted Budget, the Citizens Budget, the In-Year Reports, the Mid-Year Review, the Year End Report, and the Audit Report) online in a timely manner. Open Budget Survey Guidelines on the Public Availability of Budget Documents can be access on; <https://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/open-budget-survey-2017-guidelines-on-public-availability-of-budget-documents.pdf> .
2. Improve on the comprehensiveness of the Mid-Year Reports Guide on what should be included in the eight key documents can be accessed on, <https://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Transparency-in-Government-Budget-Reports-Why-are-Budget-Reports-Important-and-What-Should-They-Include-English.pdf>.
3. Publicize existing public participation mechanisms and ensure that they are inclusive to expedite active and meaningful engagement of all citizens (including the marginalized groups like Persons with Disabilities, the poor among others) in the Budgeting Process.

In conclusion, milestones so far achieved by UDN and other CSOs including, (*Transparency International Uganda (TIU), National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), Social Protection Platform Uganda (SPPU), Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection (UPFSP), Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Children (UPFC), AfriChild, Uganda National Health Consumer's Organization (UNHCO)*) was by reacting to the Ministerial Policy Statements for MGLSG for FY 2023/23 and went ahead to present a joint CSO position paper to the Parliamentary committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development. Full details of the paper can be accessed on <https://www.udn.or.ug/download/cso-position-paper/> This is one of ways we believe through which Parliament can engage the public on the budget before it is approved by the legislature.

UDN IN PICTURES



Above; Stakeholders taking part in a discussion on how to enhance the OBS score.



Above; Members at the OBS training sharing a light moment.

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