

THE CIVIL SOCIETY BUDGET ADVOCACY GROUP

**Record of proceedings at the CSO Budget Advocacy Group
Inception Workshop, September 19th - 21st 2005**

Buziga Country Resort, Kampala

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SECTION 1

About the CSO Budget Advocacy Inception Workshop

Introduction

The Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group was formed in May 2004 as a loose coalition of Civil Society Organizations and individuals¹ to continuously advocate for a national budget which is pro-poor and supports the poverty eradication agenda of the country. Since 2004, however, focus has been on analyzing the national budgets and assessing its pro-poor nature and content. Dialogues have been organized and statements have been put in the media to state Civil Society's position on the budget and often it has been that national budgets have been adequately responsive to the needs of the poor women, men and children of Uganda. It was however realized that the approach of the group was more of a post-mortem nature and for its work to become more effective, there was need to devise ways of effectively engaging in the national budget process.

It was against this background that the Uganda National NGO Forum, with the full mandate of the CSO Budget Advocacy Group organized an inception workshop attended by about 32 CSO representatives from national and district level NGOs was organized at Buziga Country Resort between 19th and 21st of September 2005. The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Charles Lwanga Ntale from Development Research & Training and featured presentations and insights from the Commissioner of Budget Policy in the Directorate of Budgeting in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), the Director of the Parliamentary Budget Office, a presentation from the Chief Finance Officer of Nakasongola District Local Government on the budget process at district level and other budget analysts from Economic Policy Research Center and from the civil society sector. NGOs engaged in budget work also shared their experiences in budget work.

Workshop Objectives

Despite the fact that the CSO Budget Advocacy Group is growing in stature and becoming a key mobilizer of public views on the national budget, its growth has come with a number of challenges, including those related to leadership especially coordination; composition of members; capacity to engage in budget work and sustainability. The Inception workshop was organized to devise strategies to overcome the above mentioned challenges and thus the workshop had the following objectives:

Broadly, the workshop aimed to:

- a) Discuss strategic issues related to key challenges facing the Civil Society Advocacy Group.
- b) Start the process of developing an engagement plan for CS budget work in Uganda.

More specifically, the workshop aimed at:

- c) Assessing the nature of work of existing and emerging CS budget advocacy activities especially their strength and weaknesses

¹ The group comprised of UDN, FOWODE, Oxfam GB, FENU, Uganda National NGO Forum, VEDCO, Environment Alert, Fred Muhumuza, UCSD, Caritas Uganda, CDRN, CEEWA, ACODE, UCRNN, ULA, UNHCO, NUDIPU

- d) Inducting CSOs into the national budget process by presenting a power analysis of the key players in the process.
- e) Seeking consensus on the minimum agenda and strategic intent and vision of the group
- f) Developing and agreeing on the guidelines, principles and framework for the group participation in the budget process.
- g) Working out a coordination mechanism for CSO budget advocacy group

SECTION 2

Civil Society Budget work in Uganda

Civil Society Organizations have been involved in budget advocacy at different levels, though not necessarily through the CS budget advocacy group. Most CSOs do so especially at monitoring levels and tracking of expenditure. However, their work as individual organizations in budget process was meeting a number of challenges, which could necessarily be overcome by acting more collectively, hence the need for a strong link for networking and coordinating CSO budget work in the context of the national and local Government budget processes.

Experiences of Civil Society organizations show that their involvement is more at the planning stage, both at local and national level; however, with little focus on how priorities identified at planning translate into budget priorities. CSO budgeting is also tailored to respond more to organizational specific objectives rather than the broader needs of CSO collective action. A number of CSOs have been invited to participate at various stages of the budget process such as in the district budget meeting, national budget consultative conference and more broadly in the public expenditure reviews. CSO participation at these meetings is more done by individual organisation without a clear mechanism of aggregating a Civil Society voice.

Selected Experiences:

No	Organization	Level and Focus	Achievements
1.	CCF Acen Lworo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro Level with specific focus on the use of UPE funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased vigilance by the community on how UPE funds are used
2.	Uganda Debt Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National level but drawing experience from the grassroots expenditure monitoring. • Focus is more on analytical work to engage in the national budget process, especially with MoFPED and Parliament 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved link between grassroots issues and national level advocacy • Create public awareness on problems in the budget process
3.	The Apac Anti-Corruption Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District level focus • Public expenditure tracking and monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness on public expenditure • Public officials more responsive and careful
4.	FOWODE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and local levels • Focus is on how national and local budgets take on gender issues and dimensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation of gender budgeting by Government • Communities trained in gender budgeting

Challenges of CSO budgeting across the board:

These can be looked at from 2 fronts; the internal ones which relate to issues within the Civil Society and the external which are those beyond effective control of CSOs:

Internal Challenges

- i. At organisational level, CSOs are dogged with the problem of lacking adequate skills in budget analysis and many CSOs do not have programmes that focus on enhanced capacity for budget analysis and engagement
- ii. Even those who may be involved in budget work, they still concentrate on narrow organizational objectives and lose sight of the bigger picture and why things happen the way they do at national and local levels.
- iii. CSOs are faced with the problem of legitimacy and mandate questions especially at the local Government level, which has led to shying away from the noble cause hence hindering their success in budget advocacy.
- iv. Efforts towards improved networking and joint action by CSOs on budget related issues is weak and this makes their work end up as isolated initiatives which in turn undermines impact
- v. Insufficient understanding of the planning and budgeting interface and the national and district level budget processes
- vi. Inadequate resources to engage in analytical work in order to influence the budget process from informed positions rather than challenging the status quo without offering alternatives

External challenges:

- i. The national and district level budget processes are highly political in nature and CSOs do not well organized institutionally to engage in the political discussion, sometimes out of their own self censorship
- ii. Access to information is a problem and key dates and timeframes are not well known. CSOs are not in total knowledge of how key stages inform one another in the budget process
- iii. The National and District local Government budget processes are so tight as to allow adequate participation of citizens and CSOs
- iv. Government is at times not open to involving CSOs in the planning and budgeting process and this is more apparent at district level where Local Government budgets are almost prepared exclusively by technocrats in Local Government

CSOs shared interests in budget advocacy

- a) The need to continue monitoring and engaging in the national and district level budget process in an attempt to influence budget outcomes in favour of the poor
- b) Community empowerment by offering opportunities for them to engage and their voices heard at various levels of the budget process
- c) Building a critical mass for budget advocacy for increased impact on the budget cycle
- d) Commitment to ensure that sectors where the poor eke out a living benefit from increased budget allocations and that the poor are not further hurt or disempowered by budget proposals and outcomes

SECTION 3

Understanding the Budget Process in Uganda

Background:

Uganda has a national budget, which is a detailed annual public expenditure and resource plan of the Government, expressed in quantitative terms. It explains how resources are obtained and how they are planned to be put into use during the year to deliver public goods and services.

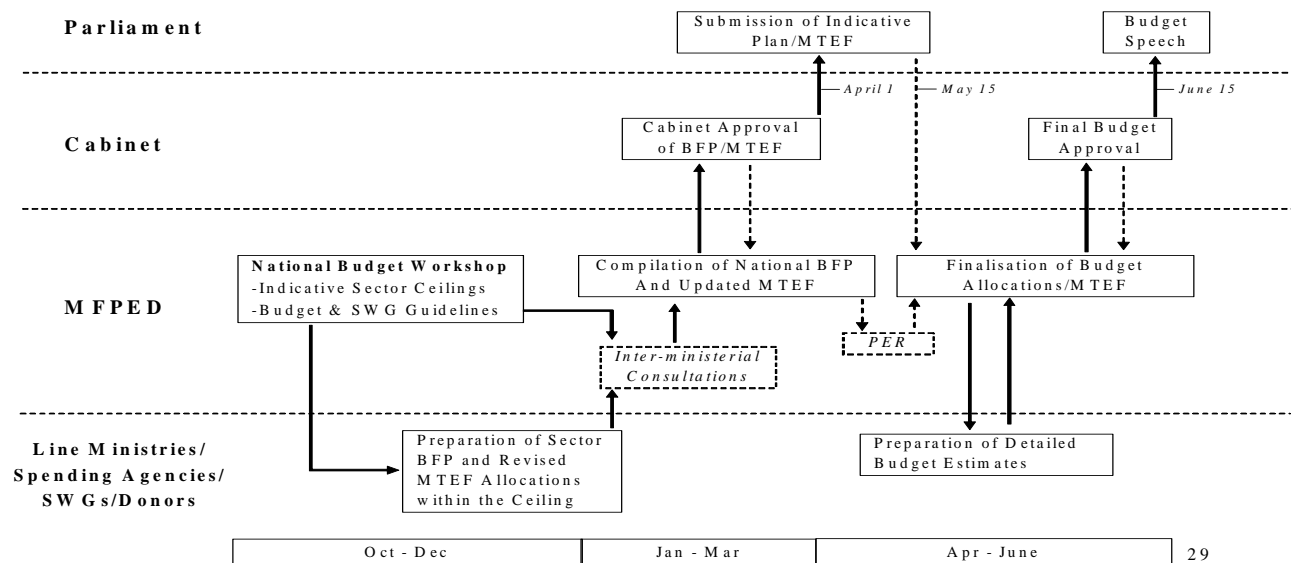
The budget process in Uganda is constitutionally defined and governed by the National Budget Act 2001 and other interlinked legal instruments such as the Finance and Accountability Act 2003, among others. The aforementioned instruments together determine the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders/actors that include Government (legislature, the executive and the civil service), the donor community, the private sector, the CSOs and the community.

The Budget process in Uganda

It is important to focus on the process rather than the numbers/figures that appear in the budget as these are meant to be determined through intensive negotiation and discussion in the budget process. Focusing on the process also means engaging in the budget process in its entirety. The Budget process can be broadly looked at national and district level.

The Uganda National Budget Process at a Glance:

The Uganda National Budget Process



National budget process

At the national level, the budget process covers the budget preparation, execution and evaluation. It starts with a national budget conference in October or November of every year. The national budget conference is preceded by the updating of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) which determines expenditure ceilings for sectors. Over the years, the national budget process has gone under a number of reforms; increased focus on poverty eradication by the process being guided by the interventions under the PEAP, the MTEF being adopted as a planning and budgeting tool both at

the national and local level, sectors developing a sector investment plan (SIP) as a basis for program prioritization and resources allocation, Government adopting budget support as opposed to project support, as a preferred mode of financing Government programs.

The national consultative processes follow these stages;

- I. National budget consultative workshop, which brings together all Government at Central and Local level, Donors, Civil Society, Research and Academic Institutions. The focus here is to review the MTEF, discuss macroeconomic framework and kick start the work of sector working groups (SWG)
- II. Consultation at Local Government levels, which result into Local Government Budget Framework Paper (LGBFP). Issues identified here are reviewed and considered by SWGs.
- III. SWGs identify, review and plan for key priorities within MTEF
- IV. Ministerial level consultations with MoFPED resulting into National Budget Framework Paper that is discussed and agreed upon by cabinet.
- V. National Budget Paper agreed upon by cabinet is then sent to Parliament on or before 1st April for their input
- VI. The reading of the budget then follows on or before 15th June.

Key features of a National budget - the national budget covers the following:

- a) Sector Wide Approach to Planning (SWAP)
- b) Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)
- c) Fiscal Decentralization

SWAPs: SWAPs are translated into budget estimates through sector wide investment plans articulate the allocation of recurrent and development resources for identified priorities within the sector for a period of time. The goals and objectives of the programs must have a direct impact on poverty and identify cost effective strategies for implementation.

Medium Term Expenditure Framework has objectives to ensure that, there is aggregate fiscal discipline; resources are allocated in accordance with the strategic priorities and efficient and effective use of resources in implementation of these strategic priorities. MTEF gives sector-spending ceilings that are consistent with macro-economic stability and economic growth. All other spending patterns and levels of Government agencies thus have to be within the MTEF limits.

Fiscal Decentralization - Local Governments receive transfer in form of conditional, unconditional and equalization grants. With the Poverty action Fund (PAF), there has been expansion of the conditional grants leading to substantial growth in transfers generally to ease the work of Local Government. In the budget process, the nature, timing and mode of transfers to Local Government is therefore very important to understand in the overall budget execution process.

Local Government and the budget process

The local Government budget is the detailed plan of how Local Government plan to spend funds in line with the objectives, needs and priorities identified in District Development Plans. Under the decentralized system councilors at the district and sub-county are mandated to formulate three year integrated development plans, budget framework papers and annual budgets.

Budget process at the local Government kick-starts in September runs through to June 15th when the budget is read. During the process, there is participatory planning and budgeting by the various actors including communities, local councils and CSOs.

Ideally, the budget process at this level is supposed to be as consultative as possible employing the bottom-up approach, capturing ideas from the village, parishes, sub-county up to the district level but the reality is that the community at the village level don't actually participate, either because they don't get to know about the meetings or they just fail to turn up for the meetings forcing the LCs at that level to dominate the action at that level. CSOs can use this gap to engage in influencing the budget at that level.

Challenges

- LG are faced with the problem of resource constrains which lead to fragmentation of the available resources because of their ever-increased roles and responsibilities of decentralization.
- Guidelines for LG planning and budgeting are ever changing which creates a capacity gap among the Local Government staff calling for re-orientation of the technical planning committee at the beginning of every budget cycle in order for them to effectively participate.
- LG approve their budgets much later because of the failure to receive the final indicative planning figures from central Government before the approval of the National budget.
- Politics is a major set back in the budgeting since it influences the process and the eventual outcome

Parliament and the budget process

Parliament has a mandate through the constitution to over see the executive arm of Government throughout the entire process of budgeting to ensure proper expenditures, accountability and transparency.

The involvement of Parliament in the process of budgeting lies in the legal framework as enshrined in the **Constitution** chapter nine (through various Articles), which outlines the role of Parliament in the management of public funds. **The Budget Act 2001** gives Parliament the mandate to effectively get involved in the budget process at an early stage and continuously. **The Public Finance and Accountability Act 2003** (within the sections), gives mandate to Parliament to ensure accountability, while the **Parliamentary rules and procedures** allows them to determine their own method of work-providing it unlimited jurisdiction to conduct its business including the budget.

The activities of Parliament in the budget process

- At the budget conference, the Parliament through the budget committee and individual MPs, participate in the workshop and forward constituents' opinion.
- The Parliamentary budget committees together with sessional committees review the priorities and activities funded under Poverty Action Plan (PAF).
- During the Sector Working Groups (SWG) discussion/ meeting when their input is fed in the inter-ministerial consultations, many stakeholders including CSOs and Parliamentary commission participate.
- Sessional committees participate in the regional Local Government budget framework paper workshop which is a basis for the national budget framework paper (NBFP) and give reports.

- Parliament receives preliminary estimates of revenue and expenditure for discussion. These estimates include economic assumptions and projections upon which the proposed budget will be realized. Individual MPs participate in the Consultative Group (CG) meetings.
- Others include giving comments on the preliminary budget proposals and macro economic plans, reviewing public expenditure and ministerial policy statements and monitoring budget implementation amongst others.

Guiding from the above, it's worth noting that the Parliamentarians play a crucial role in the budget process in this country, that if held responsible by those who voted them in power, they would influence this process and probably have a pro-poor budget. They could therefore be good allies with CSOs.

Possible CSO Role in the Budget Process

Civil society organizations can play a crucial role in the budget process at all levels and stages; ensuring that resources are allocated and efficiently and effectively used for the purpose they are meant. The consultative nature of the budget process provides an opportunity for CSOs to actively participate and influence the budget through:

- a) Participation in the policy formulation, like the PEAP and Sector Investment Plan (SIP)
- b) Influencing budget prioritization through participation in the budget process especially SWGs and LG budget process.
- c) Monitoring of the budget at Local and Central Government levels to ensure increased efficiency and effectiveness;
- d) Furthering the crusade against corruption;
- e) Empowering the communities to demand for services and also engage in local level budgeting;

SECTION 4

Emerging Issues and Way Forward

The need to advocate for a pro-poor national budget

According to the CSO budget advocacy group, a pro-poor budget is one which introduces a deliberate bias in public expenditure so as to serve the needs of the poor. This means, there must be a positive correlation between increases in public expenditure and poverty reduction. Budgets are also viewed as being pro-poor when expenditure and tax incidences are progressive and take the projected impacts on poor, women and marginalized groups into account.

The argument about pro-poor budgeting became more pronounced over the last decades following years of increased interest in poverty eradication and the subsequent introduction of the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSP), which in itself was recognition that promotion of local and national ownership based on broad based participation was fundamental to redress poverty concerns.

What a pro-poor budget in Uganda would look like:

For a country like Uganda to be able to have a pro-poor budget, two fundamental questions should be asked;

- i. Who are poor?
- ii. Why are they poor?

A pro-poor budget would therefore, in the main be guided by attempts to address the above two questions. For the first question, we would have groups such as women; those engaged in agriculture; child headed families; internally displaced people; the unemployed; people in the north and east, etc. Furthermore, poverty in Uganda is more rural than urban; a pro-poor budget would aim at allocating more funding for rural development; in improvement of infrastructure, provision of credit and information. Finally, we know that there has been a continuous rise in consumers' prices and low purchasing power of the citizens, a pro-poor budget should ensure a proportionate increase in purchasing power of her people i.e., there must be a correlation between rising consumer prices and purchasing power

A pro-poor budget would therefore be the one that focuses on fighting the causes of poverty for the groups identified above. A pro-poor budget in Uganda would therefore have increased budgetary allocation for those in agriculture, put investments in sectors that create employment; it would be tailored towards resolving the conflict in Northern Uganda in the most cost effective manner, etc.

Key Challenges with managing National Budgets

Dependency and budget sustainability - Government's domestic revenues are not sufficient to finance all its expenditure. The ability of the Government to meet its expenditure requirements is squarely dependant on the ability to raise additional domestic revenue, while limiting further donor flows to only those critical productive areas. CSOs must attempt to provide clues on sources of domestic revenue.

Curtailing Supplementary Expenditure - Supplementary spending has continued to be a problem for effective budget planning and execution. This subsequently disrupts effective service delivery because supplementary funding is mainly financed by cuts in discretionary expenditures and the usually the easy targets for expenditure cuts are those which affect the poor most.

Under-provision of some critical activities: The Sectoral working Groups are expected to point out the entire sector related critical expenditures, based on the past experience. However, there is a tendency for some sectors to under provide critical activities which cannot be done without and must be catered for in the course of the financial year. As a result, a supplementary is provided

Inefficient and Ineffective use of public expenditure: Poor coordination of roles and responsibility across Government leads to duplication and parallel intervention in turn leading to inefficient and ineffective use of our limited resources. The challenge is therefore how results orientation in planning and budgeting can be effectively operationalized.

Reporting and Accountability - This is still a problem in a number of Government departments and institutions yet it's a key aspect of public expenditure management. It is important that spending agencies report on resource utilization released to them, reports should clearly provide a linkage between expenditure and outputs, which demonstrates that they are contributing to the expected outcomes.

Inadequate Capacity for Budget Planning: There is still *inadequate capacity* for budget planning and implementation in many sectors, unit costs of inputs and outputs are poorly scrutinized. Various sectors still have problems conceptualizing how best to address the needs of the poor within their sectors.

WAY FORWARD

Though there was inadequate time to come up with a fully fledged engagement strategy for the CSO Budget Advocacy Group work, major opportunities were identified. A Steering Committee of 6 NGOs was identified to use the draft work plans developed by participants at the workshop.

Two groups were formed during the course of the workshop as follows:

1. **Group I: National Level:** This comprised national level NGOs and their main focus was identifying opportunities during the budget process including - the national budget conference, preparation of sector budget framework papers, influencing the budget in Parliament, etc
2. **Group II - District Level:** This group came up with a draft plan of action for CSOs to engage at the district and levels below.

The 6 NGOs identified to develop a detailed engagement strategy for the CSO Budget Advocacy Group were:

- i. The Uganda National NGO Forum
- ii. Oxfam GB in Uganda
- iii. Uganda Debt Network (UDN)
- iv. Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)
- v. Mbarara District Civil Society Organisations' Forum (MBADICSOF) and,
- vi. Environmental Alert

The table below is the matrix that needs to be filled with background information from the 2 draft action plans for national and district level budget engagement strategy.

Proposed CSO Action Matrix

Stage in Budget Process	What is discussed	Proposed Civil Society Action	Lead Organisation	What is required by the Lead NGO?
National Consultative Budget Workshop				
Consultation at Local Government Level				
Sector Working Group participation				
Inter Ministerial consultation with MoFPED				
National Budget Framework Paper sent to Parliament				
Reading the National				

Budget by the Minister of Finance				
Continuous analysis of the budget process and content - Some of the areas that need constant analysis include:				

CSO Budget Advocacy Group Engagement Plan at Local Level

Stages	Issue	Target	Roles (BAG)
Budget Formulation	<p>Effective participation of people in the budget process</p> <p>Inappropriate inter-sectoral allocation- (to be in line with the needs of the people)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Village - CBO interest groups - Local councils - TPCs (District Planners) - Local Government Sectoral Committees - Local Government council District Local Government Executive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empower CSOs - Village - To influence local Government structures to deliberately involve the people - Who? -SODANN, KDG/Iganga NGO Forum - Bundibugyo, UGAADEN, Mbarara Forum - Advocacy and engagement initiatives By :- TOCINET, SODANN, Environmental Alert, Mbarara Forum
Budget Implementation	<p>1. Inappropriate service delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tendering processes Shoddy work <p>Regular / Delayed release of funds to service delivery points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tender Board/ Contact Committee - Technocrats (District Engineers) - Councilors - PAC - CAOs/ CFOs - PAC, Councilors - CAOs, CFOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor and expose through media - Review of progress reports and plans - Information repackaging and dissemination - Track and identify blockages in funds flow - By who (as above) - By who (Same as above) Support from national BAG critical
Budget monitoring and reporting	<p>1. Feedback on the effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate feedback from duty bearers through out the Budget Cycle <p>2. Inadequate M&E systems practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate feedback f.... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget planners - TPC - CAO - Councilors Communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demand for regular accountability - Collect and disseminate information on performance results Empower communities to engage in budget tracking

CSO Budget Advocacy Group Engagement Plan at National Level

Stages	Issue	Target	Roles (BAG)
Budget Formulation	<p>1. Review and analysis of intra-sectoral allocations and prioritization during the SWGs meetings. (SWAPS) for consistence with the PEAP.</p> <p>2. Approval of budget by Parliament (appropriation of finance bills, ministerial policy statements)</p> <p>3. Review the MTEF and macro-economic framework during the 1st National Budget consultative meeting for consistence with the PEAP.</p> <p>4. Public Expenditure Review meeting e.g. - Public Administration, Supplementaries, Defense etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SWGs (education, health, agriculture...) - Parliament - Ministries <p>Key</p> <p>Priority</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most important 2. 3. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parliamentary committees - P.B.O - ** Cross-cutting issues <p>-MFPED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donor - MOF - Donor - Parliament - Line Ministries - P.S 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective participation - Prior analysis of key issues (collective) - Feed back mechanism - Lobby for space - Position papers - Engage Parliament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restating CSO concerns - Lobbying comm. - Produce information of new insights on budget implications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation - Position papers - Lobby for Space - Re-stating CSO concerns - Position papers - Engage media*
Budget Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to budget information 9Approved estimates, releases to local Governments, ...) - Re-allocations and Supplementaries (consistence with sectoral priorities, law and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MFPED - L.G.F.C - Ministry of L.G - Line ministries - Local BAG - CSOs - Parliament - Line ministries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collecting - Simplifying - Disseminating - Tracking release performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal reforms - Tracking expenditures

	PEAP)	- L. Governments	
Budget Monitoring and Reporting	- Analysis of budget performance (budget performance reports, NIMES reports, Auditor General reports) etc	- MFPED - A.G - Donors - Line ministries - Local Government - Parliament	- Review BPF reports and highlighting key issues. - Participation in sectoral review meetings (Education, PMA etc)
	- Empowerment of local level budget groups (participation of budget process, monitoring of budget implementation)	- Local BAG - Communities - CBOs/CSOs etc	- Capacity building - Training - Funding/ facilitation - Feedback - Advocacy and lobbying - Information dissemination
	Documentation and review of Civil society budget advocacy work	- BAG - Donors	- Sharing meetings - Annual planning and reviews

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