

PRESS Release

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Oversight bodies urged to be more effective in the budget process in Tanzania

Policy Forum and HakiElimu have urged institutions of accountability such as the legislature and the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) to become more effective in engaging in the budget process so that they can better scrutinize the budget proposals and their execution. This was said in the wake of the release of the Tanzania report of the Open Budget Index (OBI) for 2010, which will be launched tomorrow.

The report reveals that both the parliament engage little in the budget process because it does not have full powers to change the Executive's Budget Proposal, it does not hold open budget discussions at which the public can testify and it does not have sufficient time to discuss and approve a budget. The CAG was found not to have proper channels of communication with the public and found not to issue reports on the follow-up steps taken by the executive to address audit recommendation.

"Weak oversight bodies facilitate waste, increase the chances for priorities that are misguided, and occasionally, straightforward graft. We need, hence, robust oversight bodies with adequate resources and most importantly independence and authority for them to carry out their job", said Moses Kulaba, Chairman of Policy Forum.

The OBI is an independent, comparative, regular measure of budget transparency and accountability. The report shows that although Tanzania provides some of its budget documents to the public, it has failed to make 5 out of the 8 key budget documents publicly available.

"The lack of budget transparency paves way for abuse and improper and wasteful use of public money and hence we advise that the government to put in place mechanisms to make its budget process more transparent", said Moses Kulaba. "In fact, the government can enhance budget transparency with very little cost by simply posting online all of the budget information it already produces and by establishing means by which the public can send feedback and get involved in the budget process."

"Increased government openness of budget allocations and on how the taxpayer's money is spent helps improve public scrutiny and oversight. As the situation is now, it is still very difficult for citizens in Tanzania to hold their government accountable for the way they use public money or for the public to make meaningful input into the

decisions taken by government", said Elizabeth Missokia, Executive Director of HakiElimu, the NGO that worked on the report for Tanzania.

Based on documented evidence, the Open Budget Survey 2010 finds that although Tanzania's score (45) is slightly higher than the average score (42) of the 94 countries, there are inadequacies within the published documents such as the Executive Budget Proposal no having adequate disaggregated data on expenditure estimates that cover a multi-year period and the In Year Reports not containing program-level detail. The report reveals, however, that Tanzania is not alone as a laggard. "Just seven of 94 countries assessed release extensive budget information, and 40 countries release no meaningful budget information", said Moses Kulaba.

The Open Budget Index follows a rigorous methodology of measuring budget practices. The survey comprises two sets of questions, totalling 123 altogether. The first set (92 questions) assesses the transparency of a country's budget to citizens and collects information about the availability, timeliness and comprehensiveness of budget reports. The remaining set of questions assesses the strength and effectiveness of institutions that oversee the budget process, the Legislatures (Parliaments) and the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) like the National Audit Office.

The complete Open Budget Index 2010, including detailed analysis, methodology, and recommendations, is posted at www.openbudgetindex.org

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

The 8 key budget documents that should be made available are:

1. Pre budget statement(PBS)
2. Executive Budget Proposal (EBP)
3. Citizen Budget (CB)
4. Enacted Budget (EB)
5. In year Report (IYR)
6. Mid Year Report (MYR)
7. Year End Report (YER)
8. Audit Report (AR)