

Social Accountability Practitioners Conference

Paper Delivered By Rongai Chizema
on behalf of

Hon. H. Hamududu (MP)

Chairman of the Estimates Committee

National Assembly of Zambia

Role of Parliament

Oversight

Representation

Legislative

Oversight Roles

- to ensure that the estimates of revenue and expenditure are in line with the underlying policies, plans and commitments that the government has outlined;
- conduct Budget Hearings through receiving oral and written submissions from CSOs, Business Associations, professional bodies and general citizenry to get their views on the estimates of revenue and expenditure;
- Conduct hearings and get views from stakeholders and the general citizenry on tax proposals to support revenue raising by the government.

Oversight Roles

- present consolidated views of the aforementioned witness, in form of a report for the plenary for the government to take into account stakeholders views on the budget estimates;;
- to conduct budget implementation reviews by summoning controlling officers to present expenditures reports to ascertain adherence to approved budgets;;
- conduct on the spot tours on funded projects to assess implementation as provided in the approved budget.;;

Institutional Capabilities of the Estimates Committee

- Zambian Parliament does not enjoy the right to independence from the executive arm of government because of the poor legal framework, this puts oversight committees in a weak position to play their role;;
- Involvement of citizens in budgeting at grassroots is weak and, therefore, the true aspirations of the people are not adequately captured in the budget;; ,
- sector ministerial plans are not provided ahead of budgets to guide allocation of funds;
- sector ministries by and large do not prepare budget implementation plans to improve transparency and accountability;

Way Forward

- Because of the identified weaknesses, we have advocated, together with CSOs for a comprehensive Planning and Budgeting legislation to be put in place.
- The draft Planning and Budgeting Policy is out for comments from various stakeholders. This is a precursor to the envisaged Planning and Budgeting Bill to be presented to Parliament soon for enactment;
- A Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) is being set up at Parliament to provide parliamentarians backup for evidence - based oversight capacity;
- Zambia is undertaking a Constitution Review exercise in which good governance is to be enhanced e.g., the separation of powers through creating an independent Parliament to enhance parliamentary oversight on public resource management;

SADC Level

- An Association of Parliamentary Budget Committees (SADCAPBC) has been set up since 2010 which the Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST) coordinates as the Secretariat;
- The Chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee of the Parliament of Zimbabwe is currently Chairing;
- Zambia is an active member of the Association;

SADC Level

- One of the key mandates of the SADCAPBC is provide fora where member Parliaments share best practises on public finance management;
- Platform to share experiences and best practices in budget oversight in the region.
- Currently in collaboration with PSAM members of the Association are now being enrolled at Rhodes University for the Fundamentals of Social Accountability Course – 7 MPs have to date benefitted from this training – **Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Swaziland and DRC Congo**;
- The SADCAPBC in collaboration with PSAM is working on rolling out in – country capacity building missions in target Parliaments to unlock a critical mass of legislators to drive a Rights Based approach to budgetary oversight capacity.
- This trip is also part of Mission to invite the Budget Committee of Tanzania to be part of the SADCAPBC.

Conclusion

African proverb:

“If you want to move quickly, go alone, if you want to go far, go together. In SADC and Africa in general, lets go far, lets go together in improving social accountability”.