



Directorate of Budget
Ministry of Finance &
Economic Affairs

2023 Citizens'

Budget dialogue:

17th April, 2023 - SDKJ

Conference Centre

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Introduction

As part of the efforts by Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MOFEA) to improve stakeholder engagement, enhance participatory budgeting and promote fiscal transparency for the effective and efficient utilization of public funds – the Budget Directorate organized a High-Level Public Dialogue on the 2023 Citizens’ Budget which was supported by UNDP, US Embassy and Gambia Participates.

Invited were representatives from the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), selected Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and media outlets to discuss the overall budget process

The face-to-face Dialogue was held on the 17th of April, 2023 and was targeted towards gathering feedback: ensuring citizens are well informed about central government finances, development policies and programs. The main objective was to explore mechanisms and practices to increase citizenry participation and incorporate relevant feedback into the national budgeting process.

The Dialogue was very interactive as important public finance information and associated development objectives were discussed with those in attendance. The dialogue commenced following two presentations by the Budget Directorate and two Panel Discussions involving the MDAs (i.e., Gender, Trade, Higher Education and Public Service), audience and the National Assembly.

Summary of the Workshop

The forum was opened by the Permanent Secretary of MOFEA Mod A.K. Secka who highlighted the importance of the workshop stating it is a way to communicate the annual government budget in a simple and easily understood language to all citizens. He also noted the session offers an opportunity to hold a constructive dialogue with relevant stakeholders to promote transparency, increase citizen engagement, improve decision-making and support advocacy and public debate. He also stated that, the workshop was intended to stimulate discussions on how stakeholder engagements can be strengthened to ensure the budget process is more participatory while enhancing transparency.

The Permanent Secretary urged participants to take this opportunity to highlight their concerns for the 2024 budget cycle.

The World Bank representative, Ephrem Niyongabo also gave remarks, giving assurances of continuous support to the Gambia in terms of promoting participatory budgeting and increasing fiscal transparency.

Marr Nyang, the Executive Director of Gambia Participates also expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Finance and emphasized more CSOs and government collaborations to promote transparency and accountability for a better Gambia. He also mentioned the importance of the Fiscal Transparency scorecard which is a guide tool in improving fiscal transparency.

He also mentioned the significant growth The Gambia made from 2019 to date on the fiscal transparency scorecard from 4% to 35%, becoming the country with the highest score in the recent years which was backed up by the Executive Director of Gambia Participates, Marr Nyang.

In addition, Mr. Nyang mentioned that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and Gambia Participates will embark on a joint community engagement on budgeting to promote participatory budget and for the wider citizens to understand how budget process works, how it is made and what is allocated to sectors and communities for every fiscal year and this slated for early June.

Following the opening, the two presentations were delivered. The first presentation was from the Principal Economist of the Budget Planning Unit, Mr. Abdou Salam Jatta, and provided a recap of the 2022 Citizens' Budget Dialogue; providing answers to questions asked during the 2022 Citizens' Budget Dialogue.

The second presentation was done by Fiscal Officers of the budget Directorate; Fatoumatta Daffeh and Omar Fofana. The presentation focused on the 2023 Citizens' Budget and gave a brief summary of what a Citizens' Budget should contain including expenditure and revenues, budget cycle and the objectives of the citizens' budget. More importantly, the presentation also indicated the amount of funds allocated to critical sectors and what strategic objectives and plans these sectors have for 2023.

Panel Discussions

The second part of the workshop was on panel discussions of critical spending areas of the government. The panels were divided into two, each of which was followed by a question and answers session.

- The first panel consisted of Ministry Health represented by Gibril Jarju (Director of Planning), Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare represented by Neneh Touray (Director, Gender Equality and Women Empowerment) and National Assembly represented by Daniel Cardos (Deputy Clerk).
- The second Panel consisted of Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment represented by Omar Kanteh (Principal Planner), Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology represented by Lamin Ceesay (Director of Planning), Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reforms, Policy Coordination and Delivery represented by Lala Jaiteh (Deputy Permanent Secretary) and Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs represented by Mr. Lamin D. Manneh (Principal Fiscal Officer and Head of Budget Execution).

The sessions were interactive and questions were asked and answers were provided. The questions were directed to the panel on the planned activities of the various sectors to know the progress and status of projects and clarifications on issues surrounding the sectors and the expenditures and allocations.

Discussions are summarized below:

1. **Ministry of Health:** One of the main issues discussed was the National Health Insurance, the initiative started 2 years ago where 42% of Gambian population were registered. After

a survey done by Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), the result showed that, 50% of the Gambia populace have access to the new birth certificate and health insurance.

The Ministry of Health are currently working on developing a **health** benefit package which is forecasted to be launched in July but **due to series of delay of events**, the new target is slated for September of this year.

Furthermore, the discussion touched on the establishment of a new Health Plant at Farato costing \$22M which will include various centers such as Surgery Centre, Trauma Centre and Renal Transplant Centre. The construction of the new Health Plant has commenced **and the first phase is all but done**.

The lab for food and drug testing is to be established at Brusubi and operations are due to start before the end of the year. Disease surveillance machines to detect disease outbreak earlier is already in the ministry's possessions.

2. **National Assembly:** series of questions were raised by the participants regarding the D300 million Constituency Development Funds and the expenditure levels at the National assembly as well as the magnitude of rights and powers of the nominated and elected members. The deputy clerk while responding to the questions stated that; nominated members in the parliament do not have a geographical constituency but they have a geo-political constituency that cuts across the length and breadth of the country and they shared equal rights when it comes to funds allocation.

Recommendations given by the deputy clerk were:

- i. Adding a table that would give flashback to the previous year's budget should be include in the CB.
 - ii. Budget mapping should have been done to track various sensitive aspects of the MDAs e.g., Child protection, social protection etc.
3. **Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare: One of the issues raised from last year's Citizens' Budget dialogue was answered by Mrs Touray where she mentioned that**, seven gender units were created in government ministries and parastatals such as Justice, MOHERST, Tourism, MoBSE, Petroleum, Defense, Interior, NAWEC and all security bodies. The original target is to have units in all 25 ministries. The Disability Act is been popularized before implementation process is executed. Women Enterprise Fund was allocated with D10 million but only 5 million is received. 214 women groups benefitted from the Women Enterprise Fund.

On the question about how the ministry make sure gender-based-violence and easily reported, she said help lines have been established for easy reporting of all incidences to referral pathways.

4. **Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment:** The discussion was centered on Unemployment and idea of technology transfer. With technology transfer, there is a technology related policy called the Expatriate quota, it is a law of the labour act

that was set up towards businesses in The Gambia. This act only allows you to bring in skills that are not within the country, it allows you to bring 10 to 20% of employment to the country. It is monitored through Gambia Immigration Department (GID).

The Ministry is also working closely on the reducing Unemployment through Agropolls, skills development, infrastructural development. The plan to establish the Economic zone is also on going.

5. **Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology:** The deliberation focused more on the curriculum of schools in Gambia to promote high delivery of quality education. The representative from Higher Education stated that, it is of importance to them to see quality education delivered so there is an institution called National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA) that monitors and reviews the structures and school curriculums of the Tertiary Institutions to make sure they are within the domain of quality service for the citizenry.

On the progress of the UTG Faraba campus, MOHERST rep, Lamin Ceesay clarified that, there are five (5) financing steps for the project, despite too much of bureaucracy, the procurement delivery is slated for end of May, 2023 and the first phase of the project is complete, operations will begin by June 30th, 2023.

6. **Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reforms, Policy Coordination and Delivery:** The discussion was centered on performance appraisal of civil servants and this, Lala Jaiteh the deputy permanent Secretary explained the ministry has an electronic clock in and out machine at the entrance of every department which is reviewed at the end of every month to know the staff who are punctual and regular.

There is a reduction penalty from their salary and there is also an inspectorate team that goes to departments to see if staff are in office or not and whether they are working or idling as part of monitoring and ensuring top performance from the civil servants.

Expectations for 2024 Citizens' Budget

The ministry conducted an evaluation after the workshop to know what sectors and civil society organizations want to see in the 2024 budget, and the following comments were captured:

- Disaggregation of data and indicating the previous year allocation and actual expenditure
- More spending on productive sectors and more funding on the sustainability of projects.
- More infographics and further analysis on the expenditure
- A more robust budget for Gender Ministry
- A more serious health budget including more specialized services in maternal health
- Prioritize the social sector, Education, Health and Agriculture.
- More allocation to the Ministry of Youths and Sports
- The Ministry of Interior should be allocated sufficient budget looking at the crime rate in the country.
- The contributions of CSOs in the National Budget
- Bottom-up approach.

Appendix

Below are some key points and questions asked during the panel deliberation;

Ministry of Gender, children and Social Welfare

1. How are you going to make sure the disability act is implemented?
2. What has been allocated for child protection?
3. How are public places easily and safely accessible to people with disabilities?

Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

1. How much control does MOFEA have in contracting loans, grants, and service contracts for government?

The Budget Directorate also made an evaluation to get the feedbacks of the participants to know what recommendations they have to improve our future workshops. The recommendations are as follows;

- To develop a clear action point following the workshop
- Communicate the concept and agenda earlier
- Involve more other stakeholders on the planning and implementation
- The Citizens' Budget should be day's retreat for the participants who should be assigned by the MOFEA to conduct sensitization on budget
- Include security sector in the subsequent Citizen Budgets.
- All critical sectors should send participants to attend the workshop and take part in the panel discussions
- The ministry should make a follow up on how different ministries use their budget funding
- Conduct community engagements before budgeting
- CSO consultative forum to hear more suggestions in addressing the needs and aspirations of young people, women and persons with disabilities.
- The event started late; the budget directorate should work on the timeline.
- More days required for such a workshop
- The ministry of finance should develop measures to use in monitoring the utilization of funds, to be able to strengthen inclusive budget and conduct research to understand the lapses needed to be fixed.
- More time should be allocated for the panel discussions for it is an important session.
- MOFEA should distribute soft copy of the document prior to the workshop.
- All ministries should be invited to the workshop to give answers to questions asked.

Permanent Secretary's Speech

STATEMENT BY PERMANENT SECRETARY AT THE 2023 CITIZEN'S DIALOGUE HELD AT SIR DAWDA JAWARA KAIRABA CONFERENCE CENTRE 17TH APRIL 2023

Fellow Permanent Secretaries, representatives of our Development Partners, Civil Society Organizations, distinguished ladies and gentlemen and all other protocols respectfully observed.

Good morning to you all.

Each year, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs prepares and submits the National Budget in accordance with the relevant Public Financial Management laws to the national assembly for debate and approval. The approved budget is long, complex and can be difficult to comprehend. As a result, the Citizens' Budget is prepared to present the annual Government Budget in a simple and easily understood language to all citizens.

In doing so, MOFEA intends to:

1. Promote transparency: Citizens' Budgets provide a clear and easily understandable breakdown of government spending, which helps to promote transparency and accountability.
2. Increase citizen engagement: By presenting budget information in a format that is accessible to the general public, Citizens' Budgets can help increase citizens' engagement in the budget process.
3. Improve decision-making: Citizens' Budgets can help to inform and educate citizens about the trade-offs involved in budget decisions.
4. Support advocacy and public debate: Citizens Budgets can be used as a tool for advocacy and public debate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Civil Society Organisations have a great responsibility given the important role they can play in advocacy, keeping the public informed and stimulating public debate about relevant matters. As such, your presence here is a first step in raising awareness on budgeting, advocating for social inclusion in the budget and promoting a participatory budget. It is a part of Government's initiatives to inform The Gambian citizens of government priorities. The aim is to give them the opportunity to be more involved in Government's plans and budget process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A summarized version of the budget for public understanding of government priorities and projects is important. International good practice recommends that governments publish eight budget

documents at various points in the budget cycle as guide to transparency in government and key among them is the Citizens Budget, Enacted Budget and In-Year Expenditure Reports.

The Directorate of Budget at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs publishes these key documents on the Ministry website for public consumption to enhance public finance governance and transparency.

Recently, the U.S. Government's fiscal transparency report 2022 indicates that Government of The Gambia has satisfactorily met the minimum requirement for being receptive to ideas and publishing key budget information.

To consolidate these gains, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs has acquired an improved budgeting module referred to as the **Centralized Budgeting Management System (CBMS)**. The aim is to facilitate better integration of development Planning and the budget. This will also enhance the timely and quality production of Financial and non- financial information reports as required by International good practice.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our development partners for their continuous support in particular the UNDP for sponsoring this event. Government is committed to implement its Public Financial Management reform agenda to promote transparency and accountability in Government. My sincere gratitude and appreciation also go to **Gambia Participates**, a civil society organization for their valuable collaboration with Directorate of Budget, for the production of the citizens' budget. This has enhanced the content and graphic design of the document.

I would also implore participants to take this opportunity to highlight some of their concerns for the 2024 budget cycle. On this note, I finally declare this workshop open for the successful launching and discussion of the 2023 Citizens Budget edition. Thank you!

□ AGENDA

Programme: 2023 Citizens' Budget Dialogue

Organized by the Directorate of Budget, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

SDKJICC

Monday, 17th April 2023

Time	Session	Responsibility
8:30 – 9:00	Arrival & Registration of Guests	Support Staff
9:00 – 09:30	Welcome & Opening Remarks	Permanent Secretary, MOFEA UNDP Rep., Gambia Participates
09:30-09:45	Presentation 1- Recap of 2022 dialogue	Budget Directorate
09:50 – 10:20	Presentation 2- Snapshot of the Citizens' Budget and a look at the Critical Spending	Budget Directorate
10:20 – 10:30	Morning Coffee/Break	
10:30–11: 00	Panel Discussion 1: Education, Health & National Assembly Theme: Interventions and Plans in the Education & Health Sectors	Ministry of Health, Ministries of Education (Basic & Higher Education)
11:00 -11:30	Panel Discussion 2: Agriculture, Trade, Works, National Assembly & MoPSAR Theme: Interventions and Plans in the Agriculture & Fisheries, Trade and Transport Sectors	MoA, MoTIE & MoTWI
11:30-12:00	Panel Discussion 3: Youth & Sports, Gender & Social Welfare, National Assembly & MoPSAR Theme: Interventions and Plans in the Youth & Sports, Gender & Social Welfare Sectors	MoYS, MoGCSW
12:00 – 13:00	Question and Answer session	All
13:00- 13:30	General Remarks & Closing Remarks	Directorate of Budget

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