



Assessment of the Effectiveness of Oversight Bodies

The report considered the assessment of the responsiveness of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) to oversight bodies such as the Controller and Auditor General (CAG), and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Services. It considered the oversight role of National Assembly itself more broadly, through looking at official opposition input to the budget debate in parliament. It also considered the annual Public Expenditure Review (PER) for the Health Sector. It was expected to enable Youth Action Volunteers (YAV) and like minded organizations to engage effectively with the budget process for the health sector, be a resource for use with the media and the public, and contribute to public debate on health sector Performance and effective use of resources. Two MPs, members of the Social Services Committee, the Clerk to the Committee and one official of the Office of the Controller and Auditor General, were interviewed.

Public Expenditure Review (PER)

- The PER for the Health Sector were typically carried out by a Task Team drawn from the Ministries of Health and Finance as well as PMORALG with the external support of a consultant;
- They are overseen by the Health Sector PER Working Group, composed of donors, Ministry officials and Civil Society Representatives.
- Health Sector PERs for the Financial Years 03-07 were reviewed for the purpose of assessing its role in oversight directly or as a contribution to the work of other statutory oversight bodies.
- The input of MoHSW and other government officials to the health sector, PER process appears to have reduced steadily over the past few years, and currently relies heavily on just one or two already over-burdened individuals. Although the same

recommendations are made each year about early data collection, this never happens, and even basic information, eg on expected future resources, has not been forthcoming. No effective Steering Group exists to a) keep the process on schedule and b) respond to queries arising as the analysis proceeds, and inability to progress results in consultants pursuing other activities, thereby further delaying the process.” (MoHSW, 2007).

Controller and Auditor General

- CAG staff are based in Ministries themselves, so presumably they are reliant to a certain extent on the ongoing cooperation of Ministry staff.
- The CAG report that is tabled in the National Assembly is the consolidated report only. The individual reports for each Ministry, Department and Agency as well as Local Authorities and public enterprises are not tabled as such. A report for each body is submitted to that same body and copies of all are presented to the relevant public finance Standing Committees of Parliament. The complete audit report on the Ministry of Health is not considered by the Parliamentary Social Services Committee
- The publicly available CAG report which is tabled in Parliament, which aggregates individual reports is a useful document. Nevertheless, the quality of potential oversight from parliament through the Social Services Committee, and individual MPs as well as from other interest groups and the general public would be greatly enhanced by the Ministry’s individual report being made available.

Parliamentary Social Services Committee

- The principal budgetary oversight committees are the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the Local Authorities Accounts Committee (LAAC) and the Public Investments Committee (PIC). These are charged with directly addressing concerns raised in the Controller and Auditor
- the remit of the Social Services Committee seemed to be vast, covering the Ministries of: Health and Social Welfare; Education; and Communications, Science and Technology (URT, 2007), with considerable elements of the health and education budget passing through local government structures.
- A long standing complaint regarding the National Assembly and its committees has been funding. This has improved somewhat with the establishment of a National Assembly Fund. This gives some extra autonomy to committees which, for example, are no longer reliant on Ministries over which they exercise oversight.

Conclusions

- Oversight is likely to be more effective if triangulated by more than one institution. In this regard we deal with the Controller and Auditor General. As noted above, the detailed audit reports on individual Ministries, agencies, departments and local authorities are the preserve of the PAC and LAAC – the public finance committees. The Terms of Reference of the other Standing Committees do not specifically rule out examination of such reports. Indeed, one would presume that oversight of implementation would include examination of use of funds. Yet

this does not happen, at least with the Social Services Committee.

- The Opposition Parliamentarians raised a total of 25 issues in response to the 08/09 Budget Speech. In comparison to the Social Services Committee, issues raised by the Opposition Parliamentarians are more numerous, more likely to be quantified and more challenging. They also seem to draw on a wide range of sources.
- The Social Services Committee is dominated by CCM. Of 18 members, 13 are from the ruling party. The lack of detail given to the issues raised by the CCM committee members may well have reflected a wish not to embarrass their party more than they considered necessary. This may also explain the greater rigor and detail of the opposition's contributions to the budget debate.
- The concentration of power in the President is reflected in his reaction to the CAG's report for the year 2005/06. All Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Permanent Secretaries were called to Ngurdoto Lodge in April 2007 to be lectured on the importance of taking action in the light of that year's CAG report. Given that the CAG himself continues to note "non-implementation of my previous years' recommendations", one must question the effectiveness of those meetings.
- Parallel to that, those bodies that are ultimately charged with oversight, the National Assembly and its committees, appear to have their hands tied. Despite some reforms and advances, they are still unable to adequately scrutinize government and demand that its officers be held to account



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