



Press release, Thursday, 19 May 2011

Government failed!

The Government has failed to avail 2011/2012 budget books to Members of Parliament 21 days before the Parliament budget session as requested by Parliamentary Standing Orders.

According to Article 96 of the Parliamentary Standing Orders (2007 Edition), Members of Parliament (MPs) need to have received copies of government's budget estimates twenty one (21) days before the Parliament budget session starts. Considering that today is the 19 of May 2011 and the budget session will start on 7 June 2011, MPs have actually not received these documents.

Sikika has noted with great concern that it has become a norm for Members of Parliament (MPs) to receive budget books late, sometimes when the budget session has already started. Timely dissemination of national budget information to legislators and the general public is vital in increasing budget transparency, efficiency and effectiveness.

Last year, MPs received the budget books late such that Sikika was left wondering if the MPs knew the budget they approved during the session. Usually, the budget books present highly aggregated figures hence MPs may either unknowingly approve highly inflated budgets for some activities or approve funding for less priority activities.

A good example is unknowingly approval by the Parliament of 2.5 billion shillings worth construction and renovation of two residential houses for the two Bank of Tanzania's governors. Surprisingly, this expenditure drew public attention last year which led to an inquiry by the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee hence extra expenditure.

While the 2.5 billion shillings for the two residential houses led to Parliamentary Inquiry another 3.7 billion shillings (vote 42, sub-vote 2001 in the budget books for 2008/09 and 2009/10 respectively) for construction of a Speaker's residential house in Dodoma did not. This is an embarrassing illustration of how untimely budget information and inadequate analysis by MPs lead to inefficient and ineffective budgeting.

Again, a speech presented by Mrs. Monica I. Mwamunyange, Commissioner for Budget, on the 7th of December 2010, highlights that "detailed information about budget allocation, execution, and medium term focus is obtained in various documents including the Budget Background and Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF); Budget Digest; MKUKUTA Annual Implementation Reports; Budget Books Volume I-IV; Quarterly Budget Execution Reports," are available on the MoFEA's website (www.mof.go.tz).

But, a visit by Sikika on the website today (19 May 2011) reveals that all Budget Books Volumes I-IV and Medium Term Expenditure Framework for individual MDAs are not available on the said website, something that is counterproductive as it deprives the general public the chance to monitor and participate in the budgeting process. In fact, while the Budget Books Volumes I-IV used to be posted late on the Parliament's website in the past years, the MTEF for individual MDAs has not been publicly posted.

Sikika, therefore, urges the government to urgently avail to MPs the 2011/12 Budget Books Volumes I-IV and MTEFs for individual MDAs to allow them time to carry out analysis and consultations for informed discussions and approval of budget in the House. The same books should be urgently posted publicly on websites for Ministry of Finance and Parliament to allow citizens time to carry out analysis and consult with their MPs if they are supposed to approve the budget on behalf of citizens. This is possible, other countries are doing it and there is no acceptable justification for the Government of Tanzania doing it.

Mr. Irenei Kiria

Executive Director of Sikika, P.O. Box 12183 Dar es Salaam,

Tel: +255 222 666355/57, Fax: 2668015, Email: info@sikika.or.tz, Website: www.sikika.or.tz