

# No need for further Budget debate: NGO

By The Citizen Reporter

A non-governmental organisation has advised Members of Parliament not to go back to their respective constituencies after they approve the main 2010/11 government Budget estimates today, arguing that sector Budget discussions scheduled to start next week will cause unnecessary expenditure of taxpayers' money.

Sikika, an NGO that seeks to ensure government accountability in the expenditure of public resources for healthcare, said in a statement sent to *The Citizen* yesterday, adding that sector Budget discussions are not supposed to change any figures in the main government Budget after the estimates are approved today.

MPs were given only two days to discuss the 2010/2011 Budget estimates tabled in Parliament in Dodoma on Thursday by the minister for Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr Mustafa Mkulo.

In his proposed Budget estimates, Mr Mkulo put the government expenditure at Sh11,112.419 billion (Sh11.1 trillion) for both recurrent and development votes, adding that the expenditure will be financed through internal sources including domestic loans, and external grants and loans.

The statement signed by Sikika executive director Irenei Kiria said if the MPs have no constitutional mandate to change any figures in the presented main Budget, then the process thereafter will be simply to rubber stamp what would be approved today.

According to article 90.2 (b) of the Constitution of Tanzania, MPs cannot apply pressure on the government to make any changes in the main Budget estimates unless they want the

President to dissolve Parliament prematurely, said the statement. "This means that on June 14, 2010 (today), Parliament must approve the budget which was tabled on June 10, or else Parliament will be dissolved," said the statement.

It quoted Article 96 of the Parliamentary Standing Orders (2007 Edition), saying MPs need to have received copies of government's main Budget estimates 21 days before the Budget session starts.

"We know that until June 8, when the session started, MPs had not received budget books. How did MPs prepare themselves to discuss the Budget speech?" Sikika queried.

The statement further pointed out that Budget books present highly aggregated figures, adding that details for the figures are normally found in the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF) documents.

"The government does not usually share MTEF with MPs. This means that in some instances, MPs approve expenditures without enough details," charged the statement.

It added that the NGO was of the opinion that the on-going Budget discussions serve only to rubber stamp the government's Budget proposals and the cost to keep the MPs in Dodoma is therefore unnecessary expenditure.



## CHECK-UP

Medical intern Hamza Mzige checks little Hajira Mohamed during a free clinic in Dar es

Salaam yesterday.

PHOTO/FIDELIS FELIX