

PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

Uganda Debt Network (UDN) - Uganda

The Uganda Debt Network (UDN) is a coalition of civil society organizations and individuals formed in 1996 to campaign for debt relief from multilateral lending institutions. UDN has since refocused its mission to advocate for the poor and promote prudent management of externally borrowed funds, the productive and equitable use of national resources, and transparency and accountability in the budget process.

UDN's work revolves around five distinct program areas: the Budget Advocacy Initiative, Community Participation and Empowerment, Policy Analysis and Socioeconomic Research, Governance and Rights, and Civil Society Capacity Building. The organization hopes that by channeling scarce resources into critical areas, the needs of both households and communities will be better addressed. UDN's work with communities is based on the belief that improvements in economic literacy will empower poor people to demand that government allocate funds to address their needs and concerns. The Budget Advocacy Initiative, launched in 1999, advocates for both responsive budget policies and the promotion of civil society participation in budget processes at all levels. The Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES) is the grassroots component of this program.

UDN Strengthens Social Infrastructure with the Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES)

The UDN established the CBMES in 2002 to engage local communities in continuous monitoring and evaluation of government programs. The CBMES approach was first piloted in the four districts of Bushenyi, Tororo, Kanungu, and Kamuli, but has since expanded to 13 districts. The initiative uses volunteer representatives to receive input on public programs and services from members of various communities. These Community Based Monitors (CBMs) then work with local bureaucrats and legislators to make sure resources are being used for their intended purposes and in the most efficient way possible. The CBMES has led to increased accountability in many sectors of Ugandan society, including education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Community Based Monitors have helped improve conditions for many Ugandan schoolchildren by alerting the local government to unsanitary or inadequate facilities and working to raise teaching standards and student attendance. In the Kumi District, for example, the CBM testified that "we found four classes studying under a mango tree and another in the chapel. Whenever it rained, lessons were disrupted. There were no desks in the classes with most of the pupils sitting on the floor. The teachers' accommodation was just three grass-thatched houses..."



UGANDA
Open Budget Index 2010
Overall Score: 55
Government provides some information to the public on how it manages public resources.

Availability of budget documents critical for effective public input:	
Pre-Budget Statement	Yes
Executive's Budget Proposal	Yes
Citizens Budget	Yes
Enacted Budget	Yes
In-Year Reports	Yes
Mid-Year Review	Yes
Year-End Report	Yes
Audit Report	Yes
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In response to the observations of the monitor, UDN organized a public dialogue with district officials, who later agreed to allocate resources for the construction of two new classroom blocks, teachers' houses, and latrines.

Public health services have also improved under the watch of the CBMES. Monitors in Bugiri District found that hospitals and clinics were severely understaffed and lacked the resources to provide meaningful services to residents. CBMs began monitoring the Buyingja Health Center in 2005 and found that it needed significant investment. After a sustained lobbying and advocacy effort, Bugiri officials increased the supply of drug kits and allocated funding to hire another midwife. A new double-cabin ambulance was donated to the center by the central government, following reports from the community monitors that expectant mothers were dying on their way to delivery. More mattresses were acquired, increasing the number of beds available, and hospital staff began to report for duty on time. A clinical officer recently

reported that "there have been a lot of improvements since the monitoring began."

In the Kamuli District, the CBMs focused on accelerating the pace of several infrastructure projects designed to improve living conditions and spur economic development. The Bulunda-Butansi-Kakindu Road project caught the attention of CBMs in the district. While more than US\$20,000 had been earmarked to upgrade and maintain the road, it was in nearly impassable condition. With the help of UDN, the Kamuli monitors mounted a campaign to pressure district officials to improve the road network and even aired their concerns on the Empanga FM radio station. The local government finally fixed the road, making access to schools, hospitals, and markets much more reliable. In the Bugaya subcounty of Kamuli, a borehole had been dug for public use as a well. Locals were unaware of this resource and left it unattended. District CBMs realized there had been a lack of communication between Bugaya officials and the community and

subsequently informed residents of their rights and responsibilities regarding the well. Many districts now have improved water, sanitation, and transportation infrastructure thanks to the efforts of local monitors.

The CBMES not only evaluates finished projects but also scrutinizes the entire procurement process. Monitors have often pushed contractors to honor their agreements and have had untrustworthy ones blacklisted from the public bidding process. CBMs occasionally receive complaints from residents about corruption in the Ugandan government. In Kumi District, for example, monitors witnessed students seated on the floor of their classroom even after thousands of dollars were set aside to purchase desks. Their report was directly responsible for the Chief Administrative Officer's prosecution for fraud. According to UDN, CBMs are "not witch hunting but system building." The efforts of the CBMs to root out waste, fraud, and abuse at the district level have helped strengthen the capacity of the Uganda Debt Network to affect change in government on a national level.

UDN's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

The Uganda Debt Network already has a strong relationship with the International Budget Partnership from their participation in the IBP's biennial Open Budget Survey. By becoming a Partnership Initiative member, UDN hopes to expand on their successes with the CBMES by increasing the capacity and autonomy of district-level CBM groups. This will allow the UDN to shift its focus to facilitating monitoring, aggregating local concerns, and using locally collected evidence for national level policy advocacy.

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International Budget Partnership

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The IBP's Partnership Initiative is a collaborative effort that seeks to enhance the impact of civil society budget work in selected countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The initiative strives to contribute to the development of sustainable institutions; to increase public access to timely, reliable, and useful information; to enhance the effective participation of civil society in policy and budget processes; and to establish a platform of good practices on which future generations of civil society can build.