

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF CUTS INTERNATIONAL, LUSAKA

Economic Governance Desk



Mr Phiri a consultant, speaking at the workshop

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Role of Parliamentary oversight in debt

In a bid to shed light on the intricacies of public finance management and Parliamentary debt oversight in Zambia, CUTS Lusaka held a full day sensitisation workshop in Lusaka drawing attention to the critical role of parliamentarians in shaping the nation's financial landscape.

The workshop held on 26th September 2023, aimed at comprehensively unpacking the findings of CUTS Lusaka's research on the 2018

Public Finance Management Act, brought together a diverse array of stakeholders.

Opening the meeting, CUTS Board member Sajeev Nair emphasized the pivotal role that Parliamentarians play in legislating, oversight, representing national budget and public debt concerns.

Over the past decade, Zambia has faced sovereign debt crisis aggravated by policy and legislative deficiencies in public finance management.

And Mr Garth Phiri a consultant said

“Parliamentary oversight plays a crucial role in debt management. Granting the National Assembly authority over debt contraction, enhancing transparency and promoting accountability.”

Key outcomes of this enlightening workshop was the creation of an advocacy canvas, and a joint media statement that resonates with the need for transparency and accountability in public finance and debt management.

CBGS Tour National Assembly

On 27th July 2023, CUTS International, Lusaka participated in the 'Tour of the National Assembly by Community Budget Groups (CBGs) hosted by the Zambia Council for Social Development (ZCSD), a network of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) around the country working in the area of governance, environment, human rights and social development and has an active member base of more than 100 CSOs situated countrywide. The tour sought to bring members of CBGs from project areas in five districts (Monze, Rufunsa, Lusaka, Mpika and Mufulira) to visit Parliament and interact with their

Members of Parliament (MPs) in relation to the budget formulation process.

The objective of this activity was to facilitate an engagement and interface between ZCSD, CSPOG and NGOCC Community Budget Group members and MPs and National Assembly Officials involved in the national budget formulation process.

During the tour, the CBGs met the Committee Chairpersons of Health, Education and Agriculture as well as the Expanded Committee for Estimates. The interaction accorded the CBG members an opportunity to appreciate the role that MPs play in the process of making the budget and its implementation.



Students Trained on Tax Justice, Equitable Taxation



On 14th September 2023, a tax justice public lecture organised by CUTS Lusaka and Oxfam was held at Lusaka's Taj Pamodzi hotel, bringing together students from various institutions, professionals, and experts in the field of taxation.

The event shed light on the importance of tax justice, equitable taxation, impact on economic growth and development of Zambia.

Oxfam programs manager Mrs Annie Sikanwe emphasized the importance of students developing a strong evidence-based advocacy on matters related to tax justice at institutional, national and regional levels.

Underscoring the importance of sufficient tax revenue in the country's economy, Economic Association of Zambia representative Mr Gary Tembo, explained how equitable distribution of tax revenue

can lead to growth and development, contrasting it with the current situation where multinationals often renegotiate their tax payments, resulting in tax avoidance and evasion.

Further, highlighting the pivotal played by Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) in collecting and managing tax revenues, Ms Helen Sichamba, a senior tax consultant from ZRA elaborated on the diverse types of taxes in Zambia and the specific requirements for each taxpayer.

The seminar that emphasized on the need for informed advocacy and equitable taxation practices to foster economic growth and development in Zambia served as an invaluable platform for students and professionals to gain insights into the intricacies of taxation and tax justice.

SADC Affirms Role of NSAs

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) representative, Mr. Wazha Ompile has underscored the vital contribution of Non-State Actors (NSAs) in advancing Regional Integration. Speaking at the national CSOs led advocacy forum organised by CUTS and SDGCA with the support of SADC under 11th EDF envelope, Mr. Ompile said NSAs play a crucial role in providing valuable insights into prevailing issues, strategic planning, and monitoring and evaluating significant projects at the national and regional level.

He said the SADC treaty empowers CSOs to actively participate through the SADC National Committees (SNC), and the functions of these committees have been explicitly defined.

During the 2022 SADC Council of Ministers meeting, the framework for NSA engagement was approval, signifying a significant step towards fostering inclusive and transparent decision-making processes. Furthermore,

the SADC Secretariat is diligently working on developing accreditation criteria for NSAs that seek to be engaged in the region's affairs, enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of their participation.

And SDGCA regional director Dr. Benjamin Warr emphasized that regional integration is a vital aspect of fostering economic growth, reducing poverty, and ensuring peace among member states.

Dr. Warr said, "The success of regional integration efforts depends on the active involvement of CSOs. Their engagement in promoting sustainable development, economic cooperation, and social cohesion is paramount to achieving our goals."

In collaboration with CUTS International and stakeholders in Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, the SDGCA has been actively working to empower CSOs to effectively engage with their networks and contribute to regional integration. tion in the top tax rate from 37.5% to 37.0%.



Mr.Ompile

Women, girls urged to submit budget proposals



To assist Government develop gender responsive national budget that works for everyone, Kafue Councilor Ms Buumba Malambo has advised women and girls to participate in public affairs such as budget submissions.

“Complaining without participating in national affairs will not help women and girls. Their voices should be heard at family level, community level and at national level.” Ms Malambo said this during the tax hall meeting organised by CUTS and Oxfam on July 13, 2023 in Kafue District.

In order for more women and girls can reach their full potential, CUTS country director Ms Angela Mulenga called for adoption of sound policies and enforceable legislation that promote gender equality at all levels.

Ms Mulenga said women and girls in rural and urban communities face challenges regarding opportunities in education, business and career advancement which negatively affect them in realising their full potential.

Fiscal justice is about people having the space, voice and agency to exercise their rights and through this to influence and monitor fiscal systems to mobilise greater revenue and increase spending for quality public services.

In the past three years, CUTS been implementing Fiscal Justice for Women and Girls project supported by EU, FEMNCT and Oxfam and a number of activities have been implemented such community awareness, research, production of the monitoring tool and the fair tax monitor to regional integration in the top tax rate from 37.5% to 37.0%.

NSAs Key in Achieving Regional Integration Agenda



CUTS Regional Director and Board Member, Sajeer Nair has emphasized the pivotal role of Non State Actors (NSAs) in ensuring regional integration initiatives not only yield economic benefits but also maintain social and political sustainability.

In an effort to promote transparency, inclusively, and the active participation of citizens in SADC regional integration process, CUTS Lusaka and SDGCA held a virtual regional public debate on July 28, 2023.

The debate brought together CSOs, academia, journalists and citizens from member countries to discuss and deliberate on the critical aspects of the SADC integration agenda.

CUTS and SDGCA have been implementing a 17 months project titled “Engagement for Results:

Capacitating Regional CSO and their networks to effectively participate in the SADC regional integration process.” The project, supported by the SADC secretariat and founded by the European Union (EU), aims to strengthen the capacity of regional CSOs to engage with key stakeholders and effectively contribute to the SADC regional integration agenda.

The project that ended in July was financed under the 11th European Development Fund, and was being implemented in four SADC countries namely Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Mr. Nair said the project's primary focus was to ensure that SADC integration benefits the citizenry, improves their welfare and development, and positively impacts various sectors. The significance and advantages of African free trade markets.

CUTS launches "Safe and Healthy Food, Safe and Healthy Zambia" campaign



Ms. Mulenga

To ensure food safety and public health, CUTS International Lusaka, in collaboration with FoodForAfrika.com and with the support of Solidaridad Zambia, have launched the "Safe and Healthy Food, Safe and Healthy Zambia" campaign.

The campaign launched on 10th August 2023 aims to promote sustainable consumption, enhance food and nutrition security, and a healthy life for both present and future generations. It also seeks to advocate for the reduction of food contamination through improved production and handling processes, strengthen the capacity of stakeholders in the fruit and vegetable value chain to adhere to food safety measures, and advocate for the development of fruit and vegetable standards.

CUTS Lusaka has already taken

significant steps to achieve these objectives, including the production of a status report on food safety in Zambia, engagement with farmers, stakeholder meetings, and a market campaign at Lusaka's Mtendere market.

Launching the campaign, CUTS Country Director Angela Mulenga stressed the importance of strengthening surveillance systems, implementing rigorous testing protocols, and providing training and resources to agricultural stakeholders.

"Improving food safety standards in Zambia is not just a regulatory obligation but a moral commitment we owe to our people and the international community. To fully harness the potential of lucrative markets and the Africa Continental Free Trade Area, it is imperative that we rise to meet these standards." Ms Mulenga said.

Youths to unlock the potential of AfCFTA



CUTS staff attending the youth symposium at Mulungushi Conference Centre

From August 21st to 23rd, 2023, the Mulungushi Conference Centre in Lusaka was transformed into a vibrant hub of enthusiasm as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Youth Symposium took center stage.

This gathering united young minds from across Africa, all driven by a shared desire to unlock the potential of AfCFTA in shaping the continent's future. Throughout the event's three-day duration, the youth action group from CUTS actively engaged in a wide array of breakout sessions.

On the inaugural day, they made a substantial impact by participating in a panel discussion organised by the International Trade Center in collaboration with CUTS International. The discussion, titled "Youth Innovation in Africa," explored the creation of an enabling ecosystem for entrepreneurs and innovators throughout Africa, with a special emphasis on how this would empower women and young individuals within the African free trade

market.

During the symposium's course, the advocates had the privilege of posing questions to the AfCFTA Secretary General, H.E. Wameke Mene, in a town hall meeting facilitated by the Ministry of Commerce, Trade, and Industry.

While the symposium embraced a multifaceted agenda, its core theme revolved around "AfCFTA as a Catalyst for Peace and Security in Africa" exploring the intricate relationship between peace-building, economic development, and the pivotal roles women and youth can play in advancing the harmonization of migration, regional integration, and stability through trade and economic growth. Minister of Youth, Sports, and Arts, Mr. Elvis Chishala Nkandu, also provided insightful perspectives, underlining the primary objective of the symposium: to furnish young individuals with a platform to comprehend the significance and advantages of African free trade markets.