



policy forum

CSOs PERSPECTIVES ABOUT MAGUFULI'S 100 DAYS IN POWER

Prior to the October 25th 2015 general elections, civil society organizations under the Policy Forum Budget Working Group prepared and presented what was termed "Our KEY ASKS to the Next Government" for the consideration of different political parties that were taking part in the polls. The document contains a number of critical issues that required the attention of the government. Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) won the elections to form the government which is headed by President John Pombe Magufuli and CSOs therefore hope that the issues they raised then will be addressed by the fifth regime which has recently marked its 100 days in power. Based on what we have observed during this short but momentous period, we present our reflections and assessment on how well the new government is addressing the issues that are of concern to us:

1. On Domestic Resource Mobilization

For many years, CSOs have had concerns over how the government can improve its fiscal policies so as to combat losses of tax through systemic tax evasion, tax avoidance and illicit outflows that are draining domestic resources. The new government under President Magufuli has shown interest to review fiscal policies. Since 2015 the government has reduced tax exemptions extended to mining companies from 17.6% to 9% of all tax relief granted to mining investments. The government through the Minister of Finance and Planning gave a statement in the Parliament that the focus of the government now will be to improve business and investment climate to attract investors as opposed to granting tax incentives. Towards the end of last year, the government through the Ministry of Finance and Planning extended invitation to stakeholders including CSOs to provide inputs that may help in the proceedings of the task force on tax reform, in preparation for the 2016/17 budget. The initiative by the new government indicates not only its willingness to improve fiscal policies and thereby increase domestic resource mobilization, but to also open up this process by involving non-state actors.

In order to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability in tax collection, as well as to curb tax evasion and avoidance, practical measures and actions have been taken which include restructuring at the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA) and the Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA) that saw more than 200 clearing and forwarding companies being disqualified for failure to show up their tax clearance receipts and in the past three months, TRA effectively collecting over and above 100% of estimated tax revenue collections.

Other steps have included outright termination of services of senior TRA officers including the Commissioner General, other officers being charged in court over abuse of office and causing losses of government revenues and over 100 TRA officers being relocated from Dar es Salaam to other regional offices.

Furthermore, to ensure that the government spends tax revenues expediently, we have seen measures taken to reduce unnecessary expenditures for example; the government issued a guideline on foreign travels for all government officials. A travel permit has to be sought from the state house and the trip should not only be relevant but it must be proved necessary and cost effective. It is estimated that over 4 billion shillings have been saved monthly since the announcement. It is recommended, however, that the government works to progressively build strong institutions and systems with strict and enforceable rules and regulations for sustained actions on tax revenue collections.

2. On Health

The health sector has seen tremendous improvements in the first 100 days of the current regime. It is indeed one of the sectors that have received most attention with numerous

spot checks by the President and responsible Ministers on key health facilities. The reported intent for the visits was to address the rampant inefficiencies in the system – from equipment to patient management. The visits also appeared to push for accountability among public health providers. This has ensured improved efficiency in service delivery.

There have not been any explicit actions, however, that have indicated direction or priority of the government on health financing, commodities and human resources for health. With the Government's efforts to curb public spending and increase revenue collection, it is uncertain how much of a priority the sector will be in the 2016/17 FY disbursements. Focus currently appears to be on infrastructural items as opposed to systems, curative and treatment programs, the human resource shortage and accessibility among others.

CSOs have as well looked at the proposed Five Year Development Plan (5YDP) on fostering an industrial economy. The focus under this sector is on MNCH (mothers, newborns and children's health), human resource and infrastructure, access to medicine and medicaments and insurance schemes. The one year plan discussed in parliament goes further to specify which facilities will get attention in the coming FY, but also reiterates the commitment on MNCH, medicine, human resource and retention packages. Financing, however, is not adequately analyzed and it is unclear how these plans would be resourced.

During the 11th inauguration of the Parliament 2015, the President ordered a decrease in the budget aimed for celebrations and re-directed Tshs. 201 million to buy hospital beds at Muhimbili National Hospital.

A study on the availability of essential medicines, medical supplies and bed capacity conducted by Sikika in 2013 found that, there are critical bed shortages in public hospitals which led patients to either share beds or sleep on the floor. This situation is unacceptable and we, therefore, commend the President for improving the bed capacity in public hospitals.

CSOs would like to encourage the President to keep promoting the quality of health care services by strengthening the health sector's budgets efficiency, transparency and accountability of the service providers.

3. On Education

The year 2016 started on good note to parents whose children are in public schools in the country following the promise and directive by the new government on free education as stipulated in the 2014 education policy. There were complaints from citizens regarding the rising and high costs that parents incur as contributions towards their children's education in public schools which traditionally have been considered as nominal.

Already the government has clearly made it public that free education has to be provided in public schools starting from this year. In cases where this directive has not been adhered to, we have heard of disciplinary measures by the government. With the increased revenue collection and appropriate allocation of the same, we believe that the commitment by the government to provide free education will be successful.

Our plea to this government is to invest more in the education sector with focus on the development budget starting from the financial year 2016/17. It is by looking at the 2016/17 budget allocation that one can truly see government's real intention to provide free education as well as to improve the performance of the sector. We need to see at least 30% of the education sector budget being directed to development expenditure from the current 15%. The proposed allocations are meant to help eliminate the current infrastructural challenges

and thereby contribute to an improved learning environment. Further to that, we urge the new government to ensure that the Teachers' Service Commission is in place following its approval by the National Assembly in 2015. It is therefore high time that the government fulfills this requirement as its presence will help in addressing some of the challenges facing teachers in the country.

4. On Land Rights and Forest Conservation

The new government under President Magufuli has been able to resolve some of the land conflicts and return back land to communities. Examples include Kapunga and Vilima Vitatu in Mbarali and Babati districts, respectively.

There is still a need, however, for the government to change its approach especially when dealing with conflicts between farmers and pastoralists; a need for looking at the broad systemic issues as opposed to a narrow perspective so as to ensure permanent solutions. Land reforms and structure are well in place but more efforts are needed on law enforcement and accountability in land administration and budget allocation for Land Use planning (LUP).

In this short period under review, we have noted that nothing has been done to show commitment to women's right to land. There are policies on land and land administration but nothing tangible has been addressed that shows this government's commitment to women issues especially related to land. The government in its first 100 days has been able to resolve the Kapunga conflict in Mbarali but we are not sure if there are any directives as to how this land will be distributed and if women will be given preference.

5. On Agriculture

The government has strategically called upon all leaders at all levels to sensitize and mobilize community engagement in agriculture –but clear lines strategically aiming at facilitating rural community and women to engage profitably have not been seen in agriculture neither have we observed government perseverance that is centered on delivery of loans with affordable interest rates to the poor and marginalized.

Moreover, we have not observed effective initiatives and commitments that are focused on the inclusiveness of the poor women and other marginalized groups and neither have we seen insistence on promoting equity agribusiness on land-based investments including awareness creation to empower smallholder farmers and pastoralists on demand shared value.

We acknowledge, however, the President's tone on agriculture that has mostly been pro-poor but urge the government to ensure that the budget in this sector achieves the target in the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security of 2003 of allocating at least 10% of the entire national budget towards agriculture.

Conclusion

It is evident that the new government under President Magufuli has shown political will on both the need to increase revenue collection and ensure discipline in the use of public resources, as it is well-known that public service delivery can hardly be improved when emphasis is merely on increased resources without mechanisms in place to guarantee accountability. The first 100 days in power by the new regime has largely shown that it is possible to collect significant domestic resources that can be used to improve lives of the citizens. Good farming practices are only possible when there are appropriate supplies; and the people are healthy with the required skills to undertake modern agriculture on dispute free pieces of land.