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TANZANIA

SUCCESS STORY

Enhancing Parliamentary Expertise

Helping new MPs learn about critical issues before budget meetings



Photo: SUNY/Beatrice Massawe

The Honorable Lucy Mayenga, standing, discusses the importance of tracking public expenditures during a presentation by Tanzania's Ministry of Finance.

“The briefings gave us knowledge which is pertinent to our day to day responsibilities as national and local leaders,” said one Member of Parliament who participated in a USAID-sponsored three-day briefing program.

Telling Our Story
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After Tanzania's Parliamentary elections in 2005, 60 percent of the MPs elected were serving their first term. In June 2006, the Parliament took on the task of scrutinizing the national budget. The task would take about six weeks. Throughout that period, known as the Budget Session, legislators are required to analyze Tanzania's National Budget estimates — they must be equipped with appropriate budgetary analysis skills and a thorough understanding of public sector finance as well as cross-cutting issues that affect how funds are allocated.

Since so many MPs were new, USAID helped facilitate training sessions to ensure that the new lawmakers were up to speed in budgetary and policy analysis skills. Over three full days of briefings prior to the Budget Session, USAID helped Parliamentary Committees learn about relevant budget and policy issues. Four Parliamentary Committees — Public Accounts, Social Services, Finance & Economic Affairs, and Natural Resource Management & Environment — attended briefing sessions held in Dar es Salaam. Some 70 MPs and eight Parliamentary staff participated, learning about key issues from local organizations and institutions.

The briefing sessions were developed with Parliamentary Committee staff in consultation with the committee leadership. They were designed to meet specific informational needs that the committees had identified. Briefing topics included: education reforms, auditing skills, challenges to implementing the environmental policy and legislation, and integration of gender budgeting principles. In addition to topics designed specifically for certain committees, all participating MPs learned about Tanzania's public financial management, the budget cycle, and public expenditure management. Presenters were drawn from Tanzanian civil society, research organizations, academia, and government institutions.

As the Budget Session drew near, MPs agreed that the briefing sessions had offered a much-needed opportunity to participate in an informed dialogue with fellow committee members and outside experts on critical issues. The majority of Tanzania's MPs may be new, but they are rapidly gaining the experience and expertise they need to run a strong Parliament.