

MPs dared to track K10.9tn budget amid debt surge

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The African Institute for Development Policy (Afidep) has lamented lack of tracking of the national budget after approval and dared members of Parliament (MPs) to step up to improve outcomes.

Afidep executive director Eliya Zulu, speaking during a 2026/27 National Budget Implementation, Tracking and Oversight Forum at Bingu International Convention Centre in Lilongwe yesterday, observed that post-approval budget tracking remains largely neglected in the country, thereby allowing inefficiencies to persist. "When resources are constrained, the development budget is often the first to be cut because salaries and debt obligations are fixed," he said.

Zulu, whose organisation hosted the forum attended by MPs and other stakeholders, said Afidep plans to institutionalise the forum as a biannual event to strengthen Parliament's capacity to monitor budget implementation and deepen understanding of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA).

Budget and Finance Committee



Zulu: The development budget is the first to be cut. | Nation



Gwengwe: We should avoid surprises. | Nation

chairperson Sosten Gwengwe said Parliament's failure to consistently enforce the PFMA has left the country exposed to fiscal shocks, including a sharp rise in public debt from K4 trillion to about K26 trillion in recent years.

"We should avoid surprises. Malawians have a right to be concerned when debt jumps like this. It reflects gaps in how we are complying with the PFMA, which requires regular reporting," he said.

First enacted in 2003 and overhauled in March 2022, the PFMA obliges the Minister of Finance to submit quarterly reports to Parliament to facilitate continuous monitoring of public spending.

But Gwengwe, who served as Minister of Finance in former president Lazarus Chakwera's Cabinet, said the requirement has not been consistently met.

"People think Parliament's role ends when the budget is passed. But the real work begins after that. Even during recess, MPs should be actively scrutinising implementation," he said.

Gwengwe said his committee has since engaged Speaker of Parliament Sameer Suleman to ensure that key oversight bodies, including the Budget and Public Accounts committees, are adequately resourced to monitor spending throughout the year.

The Speaker echoed the

concerns and warned that failure to act on audit findings undermines accountability.

"A budget is not successful because it is passed, it is successful because it is implemented. Our most important work begins after approval," said Suleman.

He highlighted persistent bottlenecks affecting budget execution, including procurement delays, weak financial management systems and poor coordination among public institutions.

Besides legislators, the forum was also attended by civil society leaders, development partners, Media Institute of Southern Africa (Misa) Malawi Chapter representatives and Afidep officials.

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