

30<sup>th</sup> March, 2025



### **Introduction**

The release of the 2023/2024 report by the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) has once again shaken the confidence of Tanzanian taxpayers. As has been the trend in previous years, the findings have laid bare disturbing levels of financial mismanagement, misappropriation, and outright abuse of public funds by various government institutions. For many hardworking Tanzanians who endure economic hardships to comply with tax obligations, the report has triggered deep frustration and disillusionment.

### **A Betrayal of Trust**

Tanzanians pay taxes with great effort and in good faith, believing that their contributions will support national development, provide essential public services, and improve livelihoods. However, the CAG's revelations tell a different story one of systemic misuse of public funds by individuals entrusted with public offices. The CAG report presented to President Samia Suluhu Hassan on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2025, detailed the misuse of billions of shillings across various sectors and institutions. These findings not only dampen the morale of honest taxpayers and tax administrators (TRA) but also disincentivize compliance, especially among businesses and individuals operating outside the tax net.

Rather than encouraging tax registration and voluntary compliance, the state of public financial management risks promoting the opposite. Taxpayers, already burdened by the rising cost of living, are now increasingly questioning the wisdom of contributing to a system that appears to reward irresponsibility and impunity.

## **Government Promises vs. Public Skepticism**

While President Samia Suluhu has reaffirmed her commitment to holding those responsible accountable, many citizens remain skeptical. The reason for this mistrust is rooted in the past. Each year, the CAG issues similar warnings, and each year, the public sees little or no tangible action against those implicated. Public outcry is often met with silence or political rhetoric. Parliament debates the findings, but decisive actions against named officials are rare or delayed. As a result, there is a growing perception that the CAG process is a ceremonial formality, lacking the teeth to enforce financial accountability.

## **A Call for Accountability-Naming and Shaming**

One of the core frustrations is the CAG's reluctance to name individual wrongdoers in the reports. While institutions are listed and categorized with terms such as “adverse opinion” or “qualified opinion,” the actual individuals behind these decisions remain shielded from public scrutiny. This approach, while legally cautious, does little to restore taxpayer confidence or deter future malfeasance.

The public wants to see names, titles, and the specific actions (or inactions) that led to financial loss. Only then can the relevant enforcement agencies including the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB), the Police, and the Judiciary take decisive steps to ensure that justice is done. Transparency in identifying culprits is essential for rebuilding public trust.

## **A Nation in Need, But Funds Are Wasted**

The human cost of this mismanagement is impossible to ignore. It is particularly heartbreaking for taxpayers to witness news reports of women giving birth without sterile gloves in public hospitals or schoolchildren learning in dilapidated classrooms with no toilets while the same report highlights the extravagant purchase of luxury cars, excessive per diems, and lavish expenditures by government officials.

The disconnect between public needs and government spending has never been more apparent. Funds meant for life-saving drugs, school infrastructure, clean water, and rural electrification are instead fueling the lavish lifestyles of a few. This is more than just mismanagement; it is a betrayal of the national development agenda.

### **Who Pays the Price?**

The report also underscores the growing burden of foreign debt on Tanzanian taxpayers. Loans are often procured under the promise of improving infrastructure and service delivery. However, when these funds are misused, it is the average Tanzanian who bears the burden of repayment either through higher taxes, reduced services, or increased inflation.

Moreover, the mismanagement of donor funds is equally troubling. Development partners who allocate grants and concessional loans expect transparency and efficiency in the use of those resources. The continuous abuse of such funds not only jeopardizes future aid but also tarnishes Tanzania's international reputation. It sends a message that the country is not serious about accountability or development.

### **Learning from Global Examples**

Tanzania is not the only country that has faced financial mismanagement. But many nations such as Singapore, China, Japan, and even Burkina Faso have implemented strict accountability measures, transparent governance systems, and financial discipline that have yielded measurable development results. Tanzania must take similar bold steps.

It is not enough to issue warnings or reshuffle leaders. What the country needs is a culture of accountability where no one is above the law, and public service is truly that service to the people.

## The Way Forward

The time has come for a serious national conversation on the state of public financial management. As President Samia Suluhu rightfully said, the CAG report should serve as a wake-up call. Tanzanians are not asking for much. They want transparency. They want value for their taxes. They want clean hospitals, functioning schools, decent roads, and a government that uses their money responsibly.

Public officials must begin to fear the consequences of financial misconduct not just legal consequences, but the moral and social condemnation that comes with betraying the people's trust. At the very least, if they cannot be held accountable by law, they should fear God.

Taxpayers are ready to support national development, but only if they see their contributions put to good use. Let this year's CAG report be a turning point a call for reforms, for prosecutions, for transparency, and for a new era of fiscal discipline.

***"Let us stand united in demanding accountability. For only then can Tanzania truly move forward."***

**Author,**

Respicius E. Mwijage (Advocate cum Tax Consultant),  
SARC Law Chambers, City Mall,  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, F-27A Bibi Titi /Morogoro Road  
P. O. Box 13452, Dar Es Salaam  
Tel: +255 754 302 054 / +255 767 397 582  
Website: [www.sarclawchambers.co.tz](http://www.sarclawchambers.co.tz)  
E-Mail: [info@sarclawchambers.co.tz](mailto:info@sarclawchambers.co.tz) / [remwijage@yahoo.com](mailto:remwijage@yahoo.com).