

WORKSHOP

"Building an Asian community of practice on monitoring and budget analysis"

09-11 July 2007 Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Organized by SILAKA and Social Watch
in collaboration with OXFAM- Novib/KIC

PARTICIPANT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

SYSTEMATIZATION OF EXPERIENCES

To be submitted before 3 July, 2007

Congratulations on being selected to participate in the workshop. Since this workshop is based on the exchange of knowledge contained in specific practices, please fill in this form as fully as possible so that we can make the most of it. If you have any queries about how to complete it, do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you.

I. Personal and Contact Information

(Please check your personal and contact data)

Gender | F | M |

Name(s) | BHUMIKA

Surname (s) | JHAMB

Nationality | INDIAN

Name of the Organization/Movement/Community (and Acronym)

CENTRE FOR BUDGET AND GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY (CBGA)

Describe your current position in the organization

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA ASSOCIATE

Does your organization take part in or does it have bonds with local, national, regional or international networks? If so, which?

YES, WITH GRASSROOT ORGANIZATIONS

II. Description of experiences and selection of a practice:

Please answer the following questions. Use the necessary space.

What is a practice?

We understand a practice to be a process, strategy or activity of an organisation or a group of organisations to achieve social change. A practice may vary from an agricultural technique or an educational method to more complex processes like international coalition building. Its scope may be limited, but it may also correspond to entire projects or programmes.

1. Which are the principal fields of expertise of your organization? (E.g., social development, human rights, budget monitoring, sexual and reproductive rights, etc)

CBGA's core expertise lies in analysing the budget and public policies from the perspective of poor and marginalised, hence its focus on crucial sectors such as education, health, gender, infrastructure, dalits and adivasis etc. CBGA is an attempt to promote transparent, accountable and participatory governance.

2. Which are the main strategies used in your organization? (E.g., education, research, campaigning, advocacy, lobbying, satisfaction of specific demands, etc.)

The main strategies adopted by CBGA to attain its larger objective of making the budget people-centric include:

- research studies on issues of public policy;
- tracking policy documents of the government through a tri-annual newsletter- Budget Track, and
- advocacy exercises through out the budget cycle. One of the vital activities of the Centre is a comprehensive and quick analysis of the Union Budget within 24 hrs of the budget speech given by the Finance Minister, and prepares a report - Response to the Union Budget.
- Lobbying with the parliamentarians

3. Among the activities and experiences of your organization, please chose one you consider relevant to be transmitted to the other participants. The practice selected should be a specific action, plan, intervention or process in one of the four topics that will be explored in the workshop (ESCR, Budget analysis, monitoring, advocacy). And you should be able to divide it into the following elements:

a. Summary of the practice (no more than 5 lines, please).

CBGA attempts to further deepen budget work at the national level. The analysis of the Central Government's budget is done by locating it in the context of overall macroeconomic policies and from the perspective of the disadvantaged sections of society. Budget and policy analysis pursued at CBGA is closely linked with advocacy efforts through a network of countrywide alliances with grassroots civil society groups and social movements. We advocate the use of budget analysis as an instrument to seek accountability from the Government for its commitments.

b. Motivation: Situation or problem that the practice aimed to resolve.

In the recent years, many economies of South and South East Asian countries have been booming and yet South Asia alone accounts for nearly 40% of the world's absolute poor. There are huge gaps in governance accountability and it is only civil society action that can propel any redemption on that count.

Budgets reveal in black and white the government's priorities and intentions. Any policy commitment cannot achieve its desired objective unless translated into adequate budgetary provisions. Budget analysis is a critical tool in the hands of the civil society to leverage state accountability.

c. Objective(s)

To develop into a centre of excellence, focusing on budget and governance accountability from the perspective of the marginalised sections (poor, adivasis, dalits, women, children etc.), and be proactive in the policy making process by dissemination of knowledge, using the medium of research, advocacy and capacity building to help the society at large to seek equity, transparency and accountability in the democratic process.

d. Strategies used to solve the problem or situation.

A multi pronged strategy is followed to achieve the above-mentioned objective:

Research: Tracking Budgets

- Tracking Policy pronouncements
- Budgeting for marginalized sections (women, dalits, adivasis)
- Budgeting for social sectors (health, education, infrastructure etc.)
- Demystification of budgets (i.e. by way of Primers, manuals etc.)

Advocacy: Budgetary Advocacy

- Capacity Building and networking
- Media Advocacy

e. Resources (financial, human, materials, etc.).

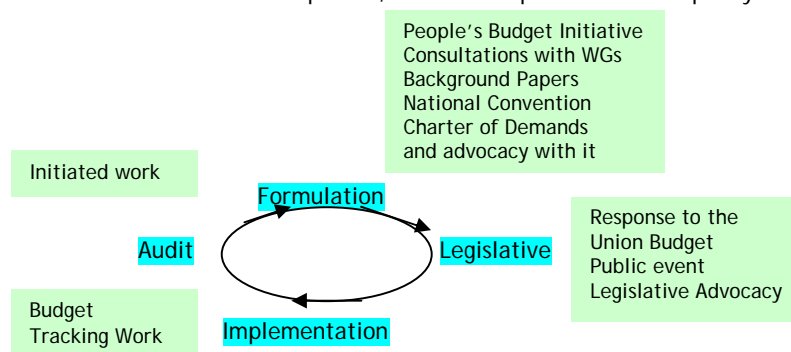
In order to demystify the budget, adequate resources of all kinds; human, financial and material are needed. Expertise is required to understand and analyse the policies.

f. Level of action (local, national, regional and/or international, and if there are any relations among them)

CBGA works at all the levels to a large extent. At the local level, district level budget analysis and trainings are conducted. At the national level, it analyses the Union Budget. Also, at the international level, in collaboration with agencies such as International Budget Project, CBGA has proactively engaged itself in the Open Budget Study. However, it is making effort to work at the regional level.

g. Brief description of the process (main activities, beneficiaries, when and where it was carried out, methodology, collaboration with partners, etc.).

Recognising that Budget process consists of four broad phases, CBGA attempts to influence policy at each phase:



The above diagram shows activities undertaken at each phase of the budget cycle. People's Budget Initiative is a coalition of diverse individuals and organizations which aims to put together a concerted collective voice asking for people's voice to be given its due space in the budget making process. At each phase, an attempt is made to make inroads to the policy makers and influence the policy.

h. Main results and changes made during the implementation (if it is still running, please comment on the potential outcomes, obstacles, etc.)

CBGA has since its inception grown manifold in its areas of research and advocacy. In terms of research, both the breadth of issues and the depth of CBGA's engagement with issues have gone up significantly. For instance, in terms of new areas of work, significant advancements were made in work on budgeting for marginalised sections - on dalit budgeting, child budgeting or gender budgeting. Regarding work on social sectors, and education in particular, the last year saw collecting primary data from more than 4200 respondents and probing deeper into tracking funds for education in the selected districts of three states. This also reflected in the enhanced quality of Response to the Union Budget 2007-08, which not just covered new sections which but also a more in-depth and nuanced analysis of sectors that were commented on.

In terms of advocacy, CBGA could reach larger audience and make inroads to some more political parties.

Implementation of activities was not at all easy taking into account constraints at various levels: human capital, financial as well as material.

3 Evaluation of the Practice.

1. What is the general evaluation of the practice? Was the practice successful in achieving the objectives stated? Was the situation/problem resolved?

Although CBGA has made several efforts during all these years, however in terms of larger objective of making the budget process people-centric, it has a long way to go. However, in terms of specific research outputs or advocacy efforts, specific benchmarks help in evaluating the effort.

2. What were the key factors for success or failure?

There are many successful attempts as there are failures. For instance, CBGA has been invited at various prestigious policy spaces to make presentations, was able to train 400 grassroots activists and NGO professionals on budget analysis, witness participation of over 300 people in the panel discussion etc. However, it still has to make efforts to influence policies and demystify budgets using primers and manuals. Media is amidst many other fields where CBGA has been struggling.

3. What are the major lessons learned?

Both external and internal constraints pose a challenge in achieving the desired objective. With the neo-liberal framework pervading wide and deep, there seems to be a ready acceptance of their ideas and suggestion. Arguing that the poor and marginalised not be left out of the budget making process, totally rational though it seems, is in itself a paradigm shift in the conventional understanding that the closed process of budgets making is the prerogative of bureaucrats and technocrats.

It was felt utmost important to maintain and strengthen partnerships with other mass movements and civil society groups and also widen our reach.