

PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) – India

Founded in 2002, the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) is a New Delhi-based civil society organization that promotes transparent, accountable, and participatory governance, and a people-centered perspective in the preparation and implementation of budgets. CBGA attempts to deepen budget work at the national level by analyzing the central government's budget in the context of overall macroeconomic policies and from the perspective of marginalized sectors of society. CBGA's budget and policy analysis is closely linked with advocacy efforts through a network of grassroots civil society groups and social movements throughout India. CBGA's main activities include analysis and advocacy throughout the budget cycle, research on critical policy and governance issues, training and capacity-building efforts that target legislators and civil society groups, and publishing manuals, training materials, policy documents, and its newsletter *Budget Track*.

The People's Budget Initiative Sheds Light on Inadequate Allocations and Suggests Alternatives

Concerned that civil society organizations (CSOs) were not being adequately heard during the budget process, CBGA along with several CSOs and members of people's movements, grassroots groups, national and international development organizations, academics, and the media formed the People's Budget Initiative (PBI) to increase civil society participation in the budget process. As the secretariat of the PBI, CBGA annually publishes the "People's Charter of Demands" – a listing of civil society's budget priorities which also includes an analysis of the government's commitments.

In 2009 the PBI used data from India's Union Budget to calculate costs related to the health, education, agriculture, food security, and rural housing sectors. The cost calculations were based on the policy priorities set out in the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012) and in the 2009 Congress Party Manifesto. For instance, the government promised to establish one

model school in every block throughout the country, and then an additional model school in every block over the next five years. CBGA calculated that the total cost of this commitment is about US\$ 8.6 billion, far above the US\$ 2.7 billion allocated in the 11th Five Year Plan. However, CBGA's

INDIA
Open Budget Index 2010
Overall Score: 67
Government provides significant information to the public on how it manages public resources.

Availability of budget documents critical for effective public input:	
Pre-Budget Statement	No
Executive's Budget Proposal	Yes
Citizens Budget	Yes
Enacted Budget	Yes
In-Year Reports	Yes
Mid-Year Review	Yes
Year-End Report	Yes
Audit Report	Yes
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research also showed that the cost of setting up the 6,000 model schools required to meet the government's goal could be met by reducing the revenue lost



in one year from tax exemptions by only 10 percent (approximately US\$ 8.9 billion for 2008-2009).

Another example of the PBI's budget analysis involves monitoring the government's commitment to make the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme available to all. This scheme seeks to ensure nutritional security through *Anganwadi* centers (government-sponsored child and mother care centers) and to provide food and preschool education to all children under six years old by 2012. The scheme has been operational since 1975 with limited impact on the well-being of India's children. Research shows that around 46 percent of children under three are underweight, nearly 80 percent of children between six months and 35 months are anemic, and 57 of every 1,000

children die before their first birthday (National Family Health Survey 2005-2006). According to CBGA, making the ICDS universally available would require an investment of around US\$ 9.2 billion to US\$ 16 billion – significantly higher than the actual 2010-2011 budget allocation of about US\$ 1.8 billion.

To bolster the impact of its research findings, CBGA intensified its legislative advocacy during the last two budget sessions. In 2009-2010 the Center experimented with "door-to-door" advocacy, discussing with more than 100 members of parliament (MPs) different budget and public policy issues. These MPs then endorsed the PBI's appeal to the Union Finance Minister to hold civil society consultations before the Union Budget is tabled.

In early 2010 CBGA took a big leap forward in terms of information dissemination, both in print and electronic media, in the run up to the presentation of the Union Budget 2010-2011. *The Times of India* published a seven-part series titled *Promises to Keep* based on CBGA's analysis for the People's Charter of Demands. National newspapers like *The Hindu*, *Economic Times*, and *Deccan Herald*, and several leading news, feature, and business magazines like *Frontline* and *Outlook Business* also covered stories using the organization's budget analysis. In addition, some TV news channels gave CBGA's budget analysis unprecedented coverage, which helped the organization's efforts to make the link between the Union Budget's development goals and the quality of life of the poor and marginalized.

CBGA's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

Despite the government's vocal commitment to poverty reduction, public spending on the social sector in India is not only inadequate but also poorly prioritized and utilized. This contrast between rhetoric and reality demands the active and sustained participation of civil society groups and social movements in public budgets and public policy in order to advocate for more resources for the poor and greater accountability for expenditures. As part of the Partnership Initiative, CBGA works on: 1) developing a more concrete and sustainable strategy to influence policymakers; 2) building a stronger network of civil society groups engaged in budget analysis at the local level; 3) identifying organizations or research centers in at least two provinces and building up their capacity for budget analysis and advocacy; and 4) deepening research efforts on health, education, and gender issues.

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The IBP's Partnership Initiative is a collaborative effort that seeks to enhance the impact of civil society budget work in selected countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The initiative strives to contribute to the development of sustainable institutions; to increase public access to timely, reliable, and useful information; to enhance the effective participation of civil society in policy and budget processes; and to establish a platform of good practices on which future generations of civil society can build.