

PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

SEND – Ghana

Based in Accra, SEND is the Ghanaian arm of the regional organization SEND West Africa, with offices in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Founded as a service organization in northern Ghana in 1998, SEND started engaging in budget work in 2002 and has evolved into a civil society organization (CSO) with a broad national presence. Despite the new mission SEND adopted in 2008 – to promote good governance and the equality of women and men in Ghana – the organization still provides micro-finance services and continues to work with farmers to improve their access to markets. SEND's recent policy-related activities include: successfully monitoring the uses and misuses of HIPC funding (resources from a multilateral donor initiative to transform debt relief into expenditure to alleviate poverty); conducting monitoring and evaluation of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS); organizing and sensitizing women producers at the district level around trade policy issues; and carrying out agricultural budget tracking. In addition to monitoring and evaluation of social policies, SEND conducts focused advocacy on education, health, agriculture, and trade.

SEND Monitors the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Relief Initiative

In February 2002 the government of Ghana released the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) and subsequently qualified for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Ghana's participation in the HIPC initiative meant that about US\$ 3.7 billion in debt relief payments would be released to the country over a 20-year period, the conditions of which were that 20 percent would be used for domestic debt reduction and the remaining funds would go to projects and programs aimed at poverty reduction and economic growth. The GPRS was critically important to the HIPC initiative since the document was to guide all policy and budgetary decisions at the district and national levels.

Recognizing the potential for civil society to play an important role in the HIPC process, SEND developed a concept paper on a project to monitor and evaluate the impact of the debt relief initiative on the poor in Ghana. The organization invited over 30 CSOs based in northern Ghana to a consultative workshop to discuss the paper, at which the CSOs confirmed their interest in partnering to develop and implement the Ghana HIPC Watch. At the same

time, however, the CSOs indicated their lack of familiarity with government policies and limited skills and experience in policy dialogue with government officials. Guided by these insights, SEND developed a GPRS Education and Awareness-Building Framework and organized a series of workshops to facilitate civil society's understanding and engagement with the GPRS.

The GPRS educational process set the stage for the participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) of HIPC-funded programs. For this

GHANA
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 Overall Score: 54
 Government provides some 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 | No |
| Enacted Budget | Yes |
| In-Year Reports | No |
| Mid-Year Review | Yes |
| Year-End Report | Yes |
| Audit Report | Yes |
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purpose SEND, in consultation with its CSO partners, district assemblies, and donor agencies, developed a PM&E guide. SEND then organized training workshops on how to use the manual for 25 district-based CSOs identified to lead the Ghana HIPC Watch in their districts. Subsequently, these 25 CSOs conducted similar induction workshops in their districts, which led to the formation of 25 District HIPC Monitoring Committees (DHMCs).



Currently, SEND is working with 50 CSOs in 50 districts across four political administrative regions in Ghana.

SEND's PM&E framework involves five stages: 1) policy education and sensitization; 2) data collection and analysis; 3) sharing of findings and recommendations with district assemblies; 4) a quarterly review meeting in which the 25 DHMCs share, analyze, and synthesize their findings and recommendations, and agree on advocacy issues; and 5) national advocacy with key policymakers.

SEND and its partners agreed that the PM&E would be guided by three broad indicators: good governance, accountability, and equity. During the two-year pilot phase of the project, the DHMCs discovered a number of problems in all three areas. Participation in the planning and implementation of HIPC projects was low, and thus the beneficiaries had no ownership over the projects, which resulted in a lack of interest in project maintenance over the long term. Furthermore, multiple or parallel sources of fund transfers to the district made accountability very difficult. For instance, a district could receive funds from both the Ministry of Women and Children and the Senior

Minister's office as micro-credit for women's groups. The monitoring committees also found that while there was geographic equity in the allocation of HIPC funds, the funds went primarily to infrastructure projects. Even when these new public service facilities were closer to the poor, most of the poor continued to lack the means to access them. In addition, the new facilities had inadequate personnel to provide services. Another major finding was that the agricultural sector was ignored, even though the majority of the poor depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.

The pilot phase of the Ghana HIPC Watch generated a positive impact, especially at the district and organizational levels. As a result of the many educational workshops that were conducted, CSOs' knowledge and awareness of the GPRS increased dramatically. The majority of the CSOs that participated in these workshops reported having little or no information about the GPRS prior to the workshops. Furthermore, the capacity of CSOs was strengthened through such activities as PM&E training. Another noticeable impact was that civil society gained confidence in its ability to effectively engage in dialogue with the government. This confidence was manifested

through proposals coming from DHMCs and CSOs to initiate monitoring of other poverty reduction strategies.

One of the most significant impacts was the establishment of a functioning and practical structure for civil society and district assemblies to collaboratively monitor HIPC funds. SEND's partnership approach – bringing together civil society and government – also helped to foster positive relationships between the two, especially at the district level. In fact, the final evaluation of the project revealed that district assemblies had begun turning to DHMCs for valuable monitoring information which they otherwise would have been unable to obtain because of resource and time constraints. An important indirect outcome of the project was that it bolstered support for fiscal decentralization. Since civil society-local government partnerships demonstrated that they could guarantee the successful disbursement and implementation of HIPC funds at the district level, this built the central government's confidence in the ability of districts to effectively manage their own finances.

SEND's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

With support from the Partnership Initiative, SEND will monitor the District Assemblies Common Fund (DACF), which sets aside 7.5 percent of total national revenue for all district assemblies to support development financing, primarily for basic health, education, water, and sanitation infrastructure. SEND will conduct the main activities of this monitoring project using its evidence-based PM&E framework. At the core of this approach is the training of District Citizens Monitoring Committees (DCMCs) in each of the 50 districts where SEND already has a presence. DCMCs will be trained to understand the DACF structure, monitor its expenditure on a semi-annual basis, and work with local civil society networks to use their findings to conduct advocacy at the local and regional levels. SEND will then collaborate with regional civil society representatives to develop and implement a national advocacy strategy based on the findings of the local monitoring committees.

SEND-Ghana

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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.