

Promoting citizenship engagement in government budgeting processes in Sri Lanka

3-4 August 2019, Colombo, Sri Lanka

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CED Sri Lanka, with ASPBAE's support, organised a budget advocacy training workshop to build capacities of education coalitions, other members, and the youth constituency to undertake effective budget advocacy to call for concrete budget recommendations.

reforms in the education sector to meet current labor market demands lead to a mismatch of education, qualifications, and skills for employability. At the same time, the government prioritizes actions to increase its own popularity and gain political advantage rather than addressing the actual needs of the education sector.

In this context, to be able to lobby the government to implement the necessary reform and implement actions to promote quality education, people need to have access to knowledge on financing and the budgetary allocation processes. To promote citizen engagement in government budgeting processes, the Coalition for Educational Development, Sri Lanka (CED Sri Lanka), with ASPBAE's support, conducted a budget advocacy training workshop for its member organisations. The workshop aimed to build capacities of education coalitions, other members, and the youth constituency to undertake effective budget advocacy to call for concrete budget recommendations. In particular, the workshop aimed raise the awareness on analysis of the national education budget, and identify gaps using an equity and gender lens and frameworks and tools on Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and equity-based budgeting.



The different standards in education quality and uneven provision of facilities in schools in Sri Lanka can be attributed to political to geographical factors.

With the acquired knowledge and skills on budget advocacy, CED Sri Lanka proposed to work closely with the participants to effectively engage in national and provincial budget processes, ensuring that the government commits to budgets provide inclusive and equitable quality education.

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ASPBAE's Cecilia (Thea) Soriano and Rene Raya facilitated the two-day workshop. In addition to familiarising participants with the local budget process and steps that have already been taken for gender responsive budgeting in Sri Lanka, Samanthi N. Meethalawa, Director in the Ministry of Finance, Sri Lanka, also shared her experiences on the budget process.

Twenty-eight participants from 15 districts participated the workshop. They identified marginalised groups in education and developed budget proposals focusing on achieving SDG 4 with a gender lens.



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The discourse at the workshop highlighted the fact that the social, economic, and education status of Sri Lankan women is higher than that of the women in other countries in the region. At the same time, various health and socio-economic indicators are at par with developed countries. This progress was achieved through free education and health policies implemented after the independence of the country. At the same time, a misunderstanding and lack of knowledge on gender dimensions of budgeting are some of the main challenges in working towards gender responsive budgeting in Sri Lanka. These include – (a) a belief that gender equality has already

been achieved, often based on misguided notions of what gender equality is; (b) a belief that budget measures that do not specifically target men or women are therefore 'neutral'; (c) a belief that gender-responsive budgeting has been achieved if the government reports that funding is allocated to women-specific programmes; (d) lack of understanding of how to obtain relevant data and construct relevant gender indicators; (e) lack of familiarity with how to apply a gendered analysis of the quantitative taxes and expenditures.

The participants shared that the workshop helped them to review the national budget in a different perspective and that they were better equipped to analyse the budget with and equity and gender lens.

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