District Level Budget Consultations

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PUNJAB
CPDI launches report on ‘Study of Budget-making Process at District Level in Punjab’

Saeed Ahmad
Punjabi

Centre for Policy & Development Initiatives (CPDI) delved into transparency and citizen participation in the budget-making process at district level in Punjab. Punjab Assembly should pass a budget in the month of April every year to ensure proper checks in the estimates submitted in the budget estimates. The disgruntlement emerges from the fact that the districts are not able to understand the budgeting process and also to help the CSSOs in understanding the gaps in the budgeting process.

Saeed Ahmad, chief executive officer of CPDI, launched a report on the study of budget-making process at district level in Punjab. The report, titled ‘Study of Budget-making Process at District Level in Punjab’, provides an in-depth analysis of the budget-making process at the district level and highlights the need for transparency and citizen participation in the budgeting process. The report highlights the importance of transparency and citizen participation in the budget-making process, which is crucial for effective governance and development in Punjab.
Call for citizens’ participation in dists’ budgeting

By Our Correspondent

SAHAWAL District governments should ensure citizen participation in the budget making process that should be transparent and open to public input and feedback while the people must also play a proactive role in this regard.

This was the consensus at an interactive dialogue organized by Citizen Sindh for Budget Accountability (CSBA) attended by local political and civil society activists as a brainstorming session on Thursday.

The participants lamented that though new district governments would be in place by end of January 2016, the provincial government has not finalized the modalities of the functioning of district budgets under the amended LG Act 2013.

They said public participation in district budget making processes must be the corner stone of any genuine planning envisaged in the new law. Mr. Asrar Abbas of Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) conducted the dialogue as resource person.

It was said that according to Budget Reforms, Government of Punjab 2006, it was mandatory for each district to share budget calendar with multiple stakeholders. The process starts in September of each year with issuance of Budget Call Letter. This process ends in June with final approval of the budget.

The citizens were informed how they could follow budget calendar and put their proposal in Budget Call Letter. It is stressed that each district government must make special arrangements to solicit public opinion in the processes of budget making under new LGA 2013. They should act about the budget making process from district governments through engaging with the public in this regard.

The citizens should invite district government officials to their official websites so that they could get first-hand information about budget making. Every district has a senior network administrator (SNA) office for developing websites and making budget process open to public.

The participants developed a consensus that budget making was not an “inverse” process and should be carried out through citizens’ participation so that they could give their input by proposing development schemes which they consider necessary for their areas. These schemes if approved would be included in the province’s Annual Development Plan (ADP).

In the end, a unanimously resolved that gratitude was expressed upon provincial government to get developed websites of 26 district governments of Punjab. It is learnt generally only 30 district governments have started making the website of their development plan. Mr. Muhammad Mansha, Pakparan, Sargodha, Qasim Rizvi, Chaudhry Bashir Ali and Mali Raza Suleman – have their operational official websites.
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Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
BUDGET-MAKING PROCESS: Transparency and people’s participation should be ensured in the budget-making process at the district level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

This call was given by participants of a meeting organised by the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) here in Alpuri on Wednesday.

In attendance were district officer (finance and planning), officials of district administration, district naib nazim, district councillors, tehsil nazims, village council chairman, representatives of civil society organisations, elders, political workers, journalists and education department officials, said a statement issued here.
Transparency, participation of citizens in district budget making underlined

The district office of Mansehra and Togtgar in Hazara Division are facing problems understanding, handling and preparing budget documents, said Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) provincial coordinator.

Shamsul Hadi, the coordinator, said the problem of limited capacity was a result of lack of education and training of staff.

Sharing the analysis of a study carried out in the two districts by CPDI, Hadi said, “The budget is one of the key instruments in the disposal of incumant governments to implement their political commitments and development agenda.” He added, “Unfortunately, the district administration is often focused on allocations and expenditures, and rarely critical issues of transparency and accountability of the budget-making process.”

He said, “Only a transparent and accountable budget making regime can ensure that government achieve its results.”

According to the handout, Hadi said, “The budgetary process is one of the key elements that help a government provide quality public service to its citizens, utilising funds for development goals, poverty reduction objectives and growth-oriented plans, committing the CPDI official.

He said budget-making required a comprehensive set of steps, including timely circulation of budget cal-lers, submission of budgetary proposals and reports on consultation with the stakeholders concerned. “Although it is an important policy and procedural requirement, the practice of maintaining secrecy of budget documents and public consultations on proposed budgets and expenditures are not held.” Hadi criticised the provincial finance department, which is responsible for budget preparation, coordination, monitoring, and release of funds. He said it has been working under a rule of not consulting the budget of each department every year by a certain percentage without reflecting on its needs."
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Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, (CPDI) is an independent, non-partisan and a not-for-profit civil society organization working on issues of peace and development in Pakistan. It is registered Under Section 42 of the Companies Ordinance, 1984 (XLVII of 1984). It was established in September 2003 by a group of concerned citizens who realized that there was a need to approach the issue of peace and development in an integrated manner. CPDI is a first initiative of its kind in Pakistan. It seeks to inform and influence public policies and civil society initiatives through research-based advocacy and capacity building in order to promote citizenship, build peace and achieve inclusive and sustainable development. Areas of special sectoral focus include promotion of peace and tolerance, rule of law, transparency and access to information, budget watch, legislative watch and development.