

Press Release

Inclusive and Merit-Based Budgeting Called



Quetta, November 28, 2023: Speakers at a recent seminar called on the government to enhance budget transparency and accountability in the country. The seminar, focusing on the importance of transparent and participatory budgeting, was held in Quetta with the primary objective of discussing challenges related to inclusivity and gender sensitivity within the budgetary framework. Organized by the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) and supported by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the event took place on Tuesday.

Moonus Kayinat, Project Manager, CPDI shared the essential steps to ensure participatory budgeting which is the essential component of democratic governance. As Pakistan navigates its fiscal challenges, the importance of transparency in its budgetary processes becomes even more crucial. Article 19-A guaranteed citizens access to information that ultimately leads to transparency, and budget documents should be pro-actively disclosed by the government departments, she further added.

Fazeela Khan, Section Officer of the Provincial Finance Department, highlighted that provincial departments are not adhering to the budget process, with not a single department making efforts towards an inclusive budget-making process.

Muhammad Asif, Finance Director at Balochistan Food Authority, stressed the need for the budget to be in a simple form for the public to understand. He encouraged citizens to demand a participatory budget and accountability from the government. Asif proposed including budget comprehension in the syllabus and emphasized the interconnectedness of participation and transparency, stating that active citizen involvement enhances overall transparency.

Sana Durrani, PPP representative and chairperson of ending violence against women (EVAWG-alliance) , urged inclusive and gender-sensitive budgeting. She highlighted that the Balochistan Domestic Violence Act 2014 remains unimplemented due to resource shortages. Durrani noted the absence of the Balochistan Information Commission and pending initiatives due to resource allocation issues.

Former MPA Qadir Nael underscored the importance of departments seeking necessary budgets through strategic planning and in alignment with requirements, as opposed to relying on individual schemes. Additionally, he encourages empowered local governments to proactively address issues at the local level.

Shahid Abbas Jatoi, Information Commissioner of Sindh Information Commission, underscored the role of citizen participation in enhancing budget transparency. He emphasizes the empowering effect of Right to Information (RTI) laws for citizens to hold public officials accountable.

Mir Kabeer Shahi, former senator, stressed that resource distribution lacks merit-based allocation. He urged parliamentarians to engage in thorough discussions well before budget approval, emphasizing adherence to the constitutional guidelines for the National Finance Commission (NFC) award. Shahi underscored the imperative need to address corruption for meaningful progress.

Mr. Ghafar Kakar, PTI representative, emphasized the imperative of transparent budget utilization. Yasmeen Lehri, former MPA, urged for resource allocation based on needs and proposed projects aligned with public requirements. Lehri also emphasized the need to empower the local government in Balochistan. Educationist Faiza Mir highlighted the pressing issue of 23 million out-of-school children, advocating for budget allocation for schools and teacher hiring. The seminar drew significant attendance from women, former elected representatives, educationists, budget experts, government officials, civil society organizations, and media representatives. The seminar concluded by Mr. Sami Sharique by thanking note.

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