

1. Various Advocacy tools and strategies that OBAC has adopted to influence various phases of Budget Cycle

Strategies

Advocacy, being one of the prime components of OBAC, was planned to be executed in three different manners namely **Community Advocacy** where advocacy in form of *Community reflection programmes* on budget issues was initiated at both district and Gram Panchayat levels.

Legislative Advocacy which comprised of lobbying and persuading the legislators to utilize the research based information on budget issues during the legislative discourse. Suggestions and feedbacks on the present governance system from experts like Ex-legislators and Ex-Finance Minister were taken into account. The standing committee members were provided with relevant information to reflect the civil society inputs for the state budget discussions.

Citizenry Advocacy involved *Strengthening of State Level Budget Watch Group* (through regular meetings and interface programmes with the Government), *Development of District Level Budget Watch Groups* (to interact and facilitate dissemination of findings with the district level functionaries and strengthen their voices for better allocations at the district level) and *Peoples' Charter of Demand* (to consolidate and synthesize the discussions and recommendations emerging from the district in the form of peoples' charter to be provided to the state during the pre and post -budget periods).

Media Advocacy to be routed through *Print media, Civil Society Response through press brief and discussions in the electronic media.*

OBAC emphasized on innovative communication strategies in budget advocacy. Dissemination of authentic and simplified information on budgetary processes and trends was conceived as a key strategy.

Activities:

Community Advocacy Initiative:

The community level advocacy process targets to generate the community demands and communicate to the local as well as the state administration for implementation. Community reflection process will be undertaken in every proposed micro level research theme. The field findings from the different tracking studies will be shared among the community members (many of them are respondents) so that they can have a thorough reflection on the status of implementation of the programmes.

- Members of the KBK round table (an advocacy group working on the issues of KBK) submitted a memorandum to Prof. Abhijit Sengupta, Member, Planning Commission of India, highlighting the needs of KBK region and necessary budgetary provisions to be made. The budget centre took a lead role in preparing the memorandum on the eve of his visit to the Koraput district.
- Conducting training programmes in districts of Orissa on budgetary issues and creating awareness on participatory and pro-poor budgeting process.
- Educating and empowering marginalized communities to demand for their rights on different pro-poor schemes & programmes of the government.
- Decoding and communicating budget concepts and terminologies to the rural communities by *Community Radio Programs* broadcasted at community centers.

Legislative Advocacy:

- To our earlier intervention, the organization has already established relation with the 50 out of 147 legislators in the state. This process of advocacy will be strengthened through supplying more research based information on budget issues during budget sessions.
- Looking into the crucial role of standing committee members in the budget process of the state, budget information will be provided to them in order to reflect the civil society inputs in the budget of the state.
- Formulating questions based on findings and analysis related to all administrative units and different government schemes & programmes. Such questions would be raised in the assembly which would enhance the quality of budget discussions in the state.
- Empowering disadvantage sections in KBK region and other constituencies by enhancing budget knowledge of community leaders or representatives in those areas.
- Response to the State Budget 2010-11'- Publication and dissemination to the key stake holders including standing committee members and MLAs in the state. This is a regular published material of the center which feeds many civil society organizations, media and legislative members for quality budget discourse in the state.

- The budget centre formulated and supplied relevant information to the legislative members on social sector issues to be raised during the Assembly question hour.
- Dissemination and circulation of key research outputs before the Finance Department and similar functionaries.
- OBAC conducts pre and post budget workshops before the Finance Minister of the state to analyze the promises and priorities of the government as well as provide them with essential information on the actual needs and demands from the community level. In such an attempt to do so, OBAC is facilitated by State Pressure Groups (SPG) and District Budget Groups (DBG), both formulated by us. While the former assists in defining issues and providing directional inputs, the later provides crucial information from the community level.
- OBAC organized a state level pre-budget consultation in the month of June where efforts were made to facilitate participant's interaction with the finance minister on the needful priorities of the state.

Citizenry Advocacy:

State Level Budget Watch Group:

This state level budget watch group is comprised with nine members who are from politics, media, academics and civil society organizations. Prof. Bhagabat Patro, Professor in economics; Mr. Dillip Satpathy, State head, Business Standard; Mr. Dillip Bisoi, State Correspondent, Financial Express; Mr. Panchanan Kanungo, Former Finance Minister are the leading members of the watch group who constantly support the Budget research and advocacy team to effectively influence the government decisions on budget and policy priorities.

Linkage with Other Citizenry Groups/ Campaigns

OBAC involved in the campaigns like Wada Na Todo (Keep Your Promise), Jana Swasthya Abhiyan (Health Budget Campaign), KBK round table, etc to use the social sector related findings for building cogent arguments before the state. The research findings also feed the Education Watch and Social Watch reports being brought out by CYSD.

Development of District Level Budget Groups

OBAC initiated District level citizenry pressure groups comprising representatives from district level political leadership, students' community, academicians, grass root media persons and development organizations. The district level groups are providing information on district level allocations to state group for expert analysis.

Peoples' Charter of Demand

The discussions and recommendations emerging from the district/state processes are submitted in the form of peoples' charter to the state. Apart from focusing on optimal utilization and judicious resource allocation in favour of the poor, the memorandums had touched upon the issue of revenue generation and other pertinent issues of the state.

Communication and dissemination

Activities:

- OBAC ensured flow of information via print media in the form of English (The Hindu, The Business Standard and The Pioneer) and Oriya newspapers (The Sambad, The Dharitri, The Samaj, The Pragatibadi, and The Khabar reached at the door-steps of the people. The Electronic Media (Door-Darshan, Kanak TV and OTV) also played a vital role in covering discussions on the basic issues of health (medicine, bedding and diet), education (scholarship, textbook, and inspection) and agriculture (crop insurance, seed banks etc). The team has also contributed in terms of participating in panel discussions organised by print and electronic media.
- Post-budget citizen's consultation on RTE Act and Odisha Budget 2010-11 was jointly organized by CYSD, Action Aid and Sikshya Sandhan. It ensured larger civil society engagement in the context of RTE act. Issues like deficiencies in the state budget provisions for text books, teachers appointment etc were highlighted and communicated to the Education Secretary, Department of School and Mass Education.
- Representative of OBAC participated in pre and post-budget discussions telecasted on a leading Oriya news channel i.e. OTV.
- A newsletter titled, 'The Place of Odisha in Thirteenth Finance Commission' was published and disseminated. This issue speaks on the rational comparison of support from the 13th finance commission of India.
- The district level organizations hold budget discussions through using the budgetary information supplied by the center from time to time.
- OBAC provided information support to the key stakeholders of the state on budget relevant issues. Newspapers like The Business Standard, The Hindu and

The Samaya published articles on poverty and elementary education. On the other hand, organizations like Water Aid and Retired Primary Teachers Association were given inputs on water and sanitation budget and budget for education in the context of RTE respectively.

- OBAC team has also contributed significant editorial columns in state's leading newspapers in order reach to the wider audience on policy priorities of the state budget.

- **Campaign through E-Communication**

The current fast-paced scenario demands transparent and timely information on every aspect of life. To serve this purpose, a state wide platform for campaigning on budgetary issues on rights and concerns of the people for good governance has been set up. A website namely <http://www.obac.in>, enclosing OBAC's other publications related to Public Distribution System (PDS), Revenue from Forests & Mines, issues on social sector development like Education, Health, under-privileged etc has also been designed.

Challenges:

- Low understanding on the Budget Making Process among the MLAs restrains them to participate in the Budget Sessions.
- Non responsive attitude towards this budget related discussion due to their Technical inefficiency.
- Find it difficult in getting them in the pre-Budget Meetings.

Highlights of best practices

- Every year finance minister of the state is attending the pre-budget discussion organized by CYSD.
- This year the state government has taken a new and noble initiative to organize a two day state level pre-budget consultation with the CSO, Media, Economist, Educationist, Political leaders and Industrialist.

Future Action / Strategy

The future strategy will be focus on formation of a well-equipped budget analysis group comprising people from areas such as media, academia, politics and civil society. This group would function as a resource unit and provide inputs to the Finance Ministry in budget planning and execution. It would also be involved in preparation of alternative budgets for specific areas of social sector based on normative approach. At

the macro level, efforts will be made to link the impact of the union budget on the state economy.