

Use of Community Radio in Budget Advocacy by CYSD

Voice as a medium to voice demands for Budget Priority

Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD), a twenty-nine year old non-profit social development organization, has been relentlessly championing issues concerning the life and livelihood of the tribals, rural and urban poor in Orissa. Key areas under its purview comprise of Primary Education, Sustainable Livelihood and Participatory Governance. CYSD's efforts and strategic partnerships have not only facilitated in its attainment of a new identity but have also carved a niche for itself on national and international arena. Since a last several years, one of the core areas of CYSD has been '*Budget Analysis and Advocacy*'. CYSD intended to find out the state's priority on vulnerable target groups comprising women and children, tribals and dalits and sectors comprising agriculture, education and health. In order to do so, it set up an exclusive centre namely *Orissa Budget and Accountability Centre (OBAC)*, in the year 2010. The motive was to venture deep and demystify the budget making process to the masses.

Key components on which OBAC thrives upon are *research, advocacy, and training*. OBAC conducts continuous analysis of budget priorities to different sectors. Apart from this different tracking exercises are also conducted in various poor and backward districts/areas of Orissa. As part of the advocacy agenda, every year, the centre organizes pre and post budget consultation workshops with various stakeholders, also attended by the Finance Minister of the state. He discusses with number of civil society representatives on the social sector priorities of the state. Apart from training workshops that are organized to educate community members in budget terminologies and processes, communication and dissemination plays a pivotal role in OBAC's activity agenda. Dissemination of authentic and simplified information on budgetary processes and trends is conceived as a key strategy to make people aware and alert on government's priorities.

In order to strengthen and expand the communication and dissemination process, OBAC used '**Community Radio**', an innovative communication strategy to make the community aware as well as generate demands for the state budget. The key intention of this programme is to reach out to a large rural and tribal mass inhabiting in the physically inaccessible areas. This voice media is facilitated through *broadcasting and narrowcasting*; while the former was intended for the entire state, the latter aimed at specific community groups hailing from 90 villages of western Orissa.



Western Orissa, comprising Kalahandi, Koraput and Balangir, is regarded as the poorest and the most backward area in the world. Hence, it is imperative for its denizens to know, understand and critically question the entire budget making process of the state. They need to be educated on the aspects of fund allocation, expenditure and critical gaps in the budget. In addition, it's even more crucial to place their demands and get them involved in the budget making process. Such an act would facilitate in an inclusive, participatory and transparent budget, which earlier was an exclusively closed-door and bureaucratic exercise.

OBAC prepared various audio programmes in local languages. These programmes, in form of interview with the grassroot officials, interactive plays and poems, spoke volumes on budget, its formulation and relevance to the common man. These were relayed in nearly 90 villages of Kalahandi. Moreover, to make a profound impact on the target audience, the audio was prepared in local language spoken in western part of Orissa. Radio, being an affordable and accessible gadget for the



poor, was considered as the best medium to propagate and communicate with the mass. Narrowcasting was conducted through a specific process. Few members of the local tribal community were organized in small groups to whom the audio programmes were transmitted, in definite time slots. Such an innovative scheme via local-cultural media, reaped benefits and proved to be a beneficial mechanism. The '*unaware*' or the '*less aware*' sections of the society began garnering interest in the budget making process.

OBAC even premised that once the community is aware and educated on the budget making process, they can communicate their concerns and demands to the closest possible stakeholder who in turn would convey the same to the relevant appointed authority by the government. To OBAC's content, while the budget preparations are underway, there are evidences of backward and underprivileged communities placing their needs and demands before the apt stakeholder. It is learnt that the Community Radio initiative is effective and impactful in the concerned poverty stricken and backward areas. This process of communication and dissemination proved to be a useful tactic in curbing ignorance related to budget making process and building capacity of the deprived. As a result of which, these people will be empowered to hold regular dialogues with the government on budget and policy priorities. .
