

ECONOMIC LITERACY AND BUDGET ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GOVERNANCE

(ELBAG)

IN NORTH BANK REGION

Capacity Building Workshop for Local Government Authority Personnel



SOFRECO



This printing was funded by the European Union through
the Non State Actors Strengthening Programme

Forward

Action Aid The Gambia (AATG) in partnership with the Pro-Poor Advocacy Group (Pro-PAG) seek to empower community stakeholders with the requisite skills to understand and to engage with public budgets and budgeting processes as a means of claiming rights for and by the poor and promoting good governance and democracy in The Gambia. This initiative falls within the ambit of the instrument promoted by Action Aid international and dubbed the “Economic Literacy and Budget Advocacy for Governance” project (ELBAG)¹, to which both organizations (Pro-PAG and AATG) are deeply committed to.

The national budget is a potent instrument for territorial regulation and distributive justice. It is good for leveraging development, promoting economic growth and reducing poverty. It is accepted that “after the constitution, the national budget is the most important document in any modern state”. That led Preg Govender² to deliver this wise pronouncement that: ***“if you want to see which way a country is headed, look at its national budget and how much of its resources are allocated to the women, the children, the poor and the vulnerable”***. This view is premised on the fact that poverty has the ***“face of a woman”*** and by extension, the children, in whose name decisions are taken by adults without consulting them.

Good governance involves not only the application of the rule of law and due process, but also the effective and efficient management of public funds in a way that benefits all members of society, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized. Development should be inclusive, leaving nobody by the wayside. We reckon that citizens’ knowledge of public finance management is the weakest link of the development process. This initiative therefore seeks to promote inclusive citizenship and proactive engagement for development by demystifying economic concepts and budgets and making them accessible to a wide range of stakeholders. It is aimed at fostering budget transparency, participation and independent oversight by citizens. The budget is a very important policy tool for the following reasons:

- The Gambia’s resources are generated and allocated through the budget
- The budget states the amount of public resources needed for development purposes and how government plans to generate them for public expenditure.

¹ An Action Aid International Instrument

² A South African Member of Parliament at the time

- The budget impacts the lives of virtually everybody in society (though differently), depending on how resources are generated and allocated.

Due to lack of knowledge and skills, many stakeholders at all levels of society (macro, meso and micro levels) have largely remained passive and cannot constructively engage in the Local Government and National budget processes. The ELBAG approach intends to invent a whole new attitude by stimulating conversation around budgets and empowering communities to take interest in and to constantly assess service delivered by duty bearers and all other service providers. So everybody should be interested in the budget (both National and Local Government) and must try to influence its outcome. That has not been the situation and most people, especially the poor and marginalized, are not adequately catered for in the national budget. Empowerment of citizens via capacity building initiatives raises their awareness of revenue generation, the uses to which public funds are put and their entitlements as taxpayers.

| We are convinced that when empowered, civil ~~society~~society actors will be able to articulate the interest of the people by:

- Facilitating the execution of their duties and creating the right enabling environment to respond to the advocacy messages from Civil Society Organizations.
- Auditing and tracking public expenditure and assessing public service delivery at community level
- Lobbying, advocating, enacting, implementing and enforcing policies and laws that are favorable to the poor and the vulnerable.

The training empowered AATG Development Area 9 and other stakeholders of NBR with state of the art knowledge to help them deal effectively with accountability and transparency issues in a viable democracy. The Gambia's PRSP documents recognize the participation of citizens as a contributing factor in the enhancement of Public Service delivery for a meaningful poverty reduction and sustainable socio-economic development.

Omar Ousman Jobe
Policy and Budget Analyst
The Pro-Poor Advocacy Group

Nyakassi Jarju
Governance Manager
Action Aid The Gambia

Introduction:

Governance work is fundamentally proactive and is geared towards providing better alternatives to citizens to improve their lives. That makes it a deeply political approach within the framework of development engineering. In our quest to institutionalize a just and democratic dispensation, the issue of participation by citizens and their access to basic social services is of utmost importance.

The Gambia is at a crucial stage in the implementation of PRSP II which serves as the transmission mechanism for achieving the MDGs and the Vision 2020 objectives. The campaign to alleviate poverty has been gaining ground in recent years but paradoxically the incidence of poverty seems to be rising, instead of decreasing. There has been little engagement between the Local Government Authorities in The Gambia and the inhabitants of the different regions around the budget process. Consequently, there is an urgent need for more citizen engagement to hold duty bearers accountable and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. That can only come through citizen empowerment using the ELBAG approach to improve their welfare. In that regard, the ELBAG process is an “eye opener” to local residents to avail themselves of the various entry point offered by the budget cycle to engage with the Area Councils for quality service delivery that is accessible to all. It raises the exercise of voice as a way to expand citizens’ rights and creates the learning opportunities to Area Councils, CSOs and local representatives like counsellors. The approach goes further to refocus public resources on the poorest segments of society by rebuilding the concept of social ties and common interest; forging new relationships between CSOs, the Area Councils and the citizenry and inventing a new democratic culture and a sense of active citizenship.

Constructive activism premised on the rights based approach is a key ingredient in social engineering and downward accountability. People’s oversight over governance processes and public service delivery is critical for achieving development results at community level. It is important therefore to ensure that proper allocations are made to sectors that impact poverty. Budget Advocacy is within that context increasingly being regarded as a powerful tool at the disposal of Civil Society Organizations for engaging with national development processes to enhance allocations to the poor. Pro-PAG and Action Aid want to empower communities to exact accountability by creating the enabling environment for constructive engagement. By bringing enormous pressure on the decision makers, service providers and other types of duty bearers, there is a chance that social sectors will be adequately resourced for poverty reduction.

There is empirical evidence to suggest that not all decentralization empowers communities to engage meaningfully in the affairs of the state or the LGA. To deepen the process of democratic accountability therefore, regional structures need to be strengthened and the space created for participation by the citizenry in the management of development processes that impact on their lives. Citizen participation in decision making processes and decentralization are some of the basic principles of good governance. Democratic principles require the State as the primary duty bearer to provide citizens with basic social services. The same principles of democracy empower the state to tax the populace to acquire the resources for development financing. Rights go “hand in glove” with responsibilities and both parties must be seen to fulfil their commitments at all times.

Workshop Proceedings

Session 1: In welcoming the participants to this first ELBAG regional training workshop Mr. Nyakassi Jarju of Action Aid and Mr. Omar Jobe of Pro-PAG, set the workshop in the context of the ELBAG framework being promoted by Action Aid International. This session featured a preliminary discussion on the concept of ELBAG as an empowering approach in development.

1.1 What is ELBAG?

Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability for Governance (ELBAG) is a process and a framework that combines: organising people, building their capacities, developing monitoring mechanisms, democratising the sharing of information and knowledge (particularly on economics and budgets) and using participatory tools and methodologies for building public accountability and transparency.

The ELBAG approach creates the space for people to discuss the economy, and to use it as an entry point to build inclusive and authentic democracy. The aim is to ensure the participation of the poor and excluded; to facilitate the empowerment of people; to reduce the incidence of corruption and inefficient use of resources; to increase accountability in governance processes and policy making, particularly with regards to budget formulation, execution monitoring and reporting.

1.2 Objectives of ELBAG

1.2.1 Popular Mobilization

The ELBAG process promotes popular mobilization, bringing people together to claim economic justice. Through the use of the processes of dialogue, debates and collective action, such mobilization fosters the development of processes aimed at questioning, influencing, and challenging the status quo to engender equity and equality development outcomes . The goal is to develop the basis for collective action and unity of purpose in the struggle against exploitation.

1.2.2 Analysis of Local Economics and Continued Popular Education

ELBAG groups are organized around specific issues of denial of rights or discrimination. Initial engagements are promoted through the introduction of economic literacy, analysis of local economies and resource flows. Typically groups may discuss their livelihoods, analyzing it from an economic perspective. Groups may study the state of local development – infrastructure, public services such as schools, health, systems, extension services etc, analyzing how public funds are used in their own locality. Such collective analysis and ownership of the problems and issues provides the basis for action to bring about tangible changes at the community level.

People's implication in the ELBAG process is maintained through advocacy and campaigning around the need to strengthen grassroots monitoring mechanisms and the democratization of knowledge sharing using participatory tools and methods for public accountability.

Conscious educational activities are also important and necessary. ELBAG promotes continued education through popular materials generated through democratic processes as well as resourced from progressive knowledge hubs.

1.2.3 Access to information and Local Analysis of Economics and Budgets

Information is power. ELBAG promotes people's access to information by moving from the known to discover the unknown. Examples are drawn from household budgets that participants are familiar with. Thereafter, they are gradually immersed into bigger governmental processes - such as how key budget decisions are made; how policies such as the privatization of water or health are decided; and how the impact of World Trade Organization agreements matters on the life and livelihoods of farmers and workers. Such collective learning creates demand within communities to seek access to information to trigger collective action. In the process it creates transparency and accountability in both public and private entities. Another important aspect in the ELBAG approach is the development of a media strategy to amplify the message for the benefit of the wider public.

1.2.4 Advocacy for public accountability using participatory tools and methods

ELBAG aims to put people at the driver's seat in an effort to deliver policy and social change. Groups are supported by NGOs and other campaigners to have various instruments and tools at their disposal. Whereas some of the approaches that ELBAG draws on are well established, others are still under formulation. The instruments and tools include: Basic Economic Literacy, Budget Analysis, Social audits, Public hearings, People's report cards/opinion polls and poverty dialogues, participatory budgeting and planning, Reflect methods, assemblies, Community newspapers, radio, and wall papers or other public information processes. ELBAG combines different methodologies into an integrated programme of work that addresses issues at local, national and international levels.

1.2.5 Building Platforms. Establishing vertical and horizontal relationships

Under the ELBAG approach, community groups are supported to form vertical and horizontal relationships with the media, think-tanks, platforms and social movements with a view to creating platforms to challenge the neo-liberal discourse and practices that deepen institutional bias in favor of the dominant social groups.

New forms of collective expression and solidarity movements are promoted with a transformational goal. In this regard, the current economic crisis offers a big opportunity to elaborate such a collective and unifying programme for change.

2. The Target Group:

Based on ActionAid policy, the training targeted people of Development Area 9 (DA9) i.e. Upper Nuimi District (in North Bank) where the institution's child links are located. But in order to have an impact on the lives of the people of the region, the training was expanded to cover the policy and decision makers of the entire region. The target group thus included: ADWAC staff, Kerewan Area Council staff (including the Chairman and the Chief Executive officer), Area Councilors, community radio personnel and Multi-Disciplinary Facilitation Teams (MDFTs). Overall, 30 persons from the targeted groups took part in the training.

3. Participants' Expectations:

To ensure that people get maximum benefit from the training, the facilitators first asked the participants to state what they expected to gain from the ELBAG workshop. The answers generated were as follows:

- To be able to read the national budget i.e. budget literacy
- To have skills to be able to read and analyse national budgets
- To gain knowledge on budgets and be able to share it with the people of my ward
- To help councilors to be able to analyse budgets and attract funds from donors
- To be able to analyse, interpret and utilize the knowledge
- To be able to advocate for the rights women considering budget allocations.

These responses proffered served as a guide to the facilitators to align the objectives of the workshop with the expectations of the participating stakeholders and to further fine tune the methodology and techniques they intended to employ.

4. Objectives of the Workshop:

Sequel to that process, the overall objective of the training as encapsulated in the project design process was delivered by the Governance Manager of Action Aid, Mr. Nyakassi Jarju, as follows:

- To demystify the National Budget and by proxy the Local Government Budget processes through the ELBAG approach by fostering understanding of the national budget, and manner in which budgets are coded; how they should be analyzed and used for advocacy purposes to maximize developmental outputs.

Thereafter, the detailed objectives and goals of the capacity building workshop were summarized by the lead facilitator, Mr. Omar Ousman Jobe, as follows:

- To deepen the understanding of Development stakeholders in Public Finance Management
- To familiarize them with the budget cycle and how they could avail themselves of the possible entry points to influence the decision making processes.
- To develop Budget analysis capacity and capability in local stakeholders with a view to enabling them to scrutinize budget documents with ease and to tease out advocacy issues for use at local and national level.
- To foster understanding of the principles of Budget Tracking and the links it has with accountability and transparency in the management of public resources
- To foster understanding of advocacy and communication strategy skills
- To empower Civil Society Organizations to monitor budgets and influence national policies through evidenced based advocacy

5 Training content:

The following capacity building modules were delivered in a coherent sequence aimed at building solid blocks for maximum impact:

1. ELBAG: Everyday Concepts
2. The Structure and Coding of the National Budget with frequent insights into the Gambia's Budget Cycle and Civil Society Entry Points in each stage
3. ELBAG: Challenges and complexities in national budgeting
4. Budget Analysis tools skills
5. Budget Tracking
6. Budget Advocacy for Governance rooted in the Rights Based Approach
7. Advocacy and Communication Skills

5. Presentations & Exercises

5.1 ELBAG Everyday Concepts – relationships & interdependence

The training started with a brainstorming session aimed at sharing individual perceptions of common economic concepts regularly heard on media channels. The key concepts are as follows:

> Economics, > Economy (ies), > Policy (ies), > Politics, and > Development

Responses:

Various views were forwarded of which many were book definitions involving the use of numerous jargons.

The facilitator then demystified the concepts into simple common language thus:

Economics is the processes of producing goods and services within a given community or country to support the survival and sustenance of the community/country e.g. groundnuts for The Gambia;

Economy refers to and concerns the production sector of a community/Country that supports its survival as a state or country.

Policy refers to the principles that guide actions in a public or work place i.e. what and how it is to be done (e.g. what services to pay for in public health care).

Politics here refers to a country's civil administration affairs (this is bigger than party politics which is about giving mandate to a group/party to take charge of the civil administration of a country for a period of time. Therefore issues of the public budgets should be rationalised outside party politics e.g. providing people with quality hospitals/health care concerns all regardless of political party colour).

Development is ways or means of improving the welfare of the people of a community/country e.g. education, communication, health, security etc.

5.2 Basic Definitions and Concepts of Budgets & Budgeting:

The subsequent session took the participants into deeper waters by delving into important concepts like Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Appropriation Act, Fiscal Accountability, Budget Deficit, Balance of payments, Gambia Local Funds (GLF) deriving essentially from taxation and which are mainly used to finance the recurrent budget. A parallel was drawn with the development budget which is donor driven. The notion of budget inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact were also explained to enable the participants to grasp the linkages between them and how they serve the purpose of managing for development results.

The presenter seized the opportunity to explore the budget cycle to enable the stakeholders to envision the entry points for advocacy in the budget process value chain for civil society and the citizenry in general. The presenter told the participants that it was critical for them to identify the following four stages and to avail themselves of the opportunity to influence the processes:

- Phase 1: The preparation or drafting stages (the forming of sector budget committees, the collation of the budget, the budget bilaterals, the approval of the budget by the IMF, the intervention of the cabinet and the powers vested upon it to make amendments as required etc.

Role of Civil Society Organizations: The presenter told the participants that the participatory budget process that Pro-PAG is mandated to conduct within the framework of the first PRSP offers immense opportunities for CSOs to input into the design of the sectoral budgets on an annual basis.

- Phase 2: The legislating stage – the intervention of the National Assembly and the ability of the people's assembly to make internal amendment within the approved budget among sectors.

Role of Civil Society Organizations: The presenter told the participants that during this phase, CSOs need to advocate and lobby for adequate allocations to their sectors of interest through the National Assembly Members so that they use their amendment powers to increase allocations to social services that positively impact women and children.

- Phase 3: The administration of the budget – the execution of the budget from the 1st of January to the 31st of December.

Role of Civil Society Organizations: During this stage, according to the presenter, CSOs should ensure that the budget is being implemented effectively, efficiently and in a timely manner to achieve the set objectives through monitoring and evaluation, insisting that CSOs should have an eye on the implementation rate.

- Phase 4: The reporting and audit stages: The intervention of the Public Accounts and Public Enterprise Committees of the National Assembly is critical here, the presenter posited; Social Accountability tools and mechanisms etc could also be deployed by Civil Society and the wider citizenry.

Role of Civil Society Organizations: Finally, the presenter underscored the important role that NGOs, CBOs, the Media and the citizenry can play in exacting social accountability from the duty bearers and service providers with a view to enhancing developmental value.

The Structure and Coding of the National Budget:

This technical session focused on the Structure and Coding of the National Budget. This module was geared towards demystifying the budget by equipping participants with the notions

of head, sub-head and budget line expenditure item. The Head, the participants were told refers to the expenditure Department or Ministry; the Sub-Head to the programme component within the Department or Ministry and finally, the Item it was stated refers to the budget line expenditure item. That information, the participants later agreed, had made the budget more user-friendly than before the start of the training.

☛ National Budget	Recurrent Budget
	Development Budget
☛ Departmental/Sector Budgets	Head 01 Office of the President
	Head 12 DOS Finance & Economic Affairs
	Head 17 Agriculture
☛ Programme Budgets	Head 17 Agriculture
	17 – 04 Cooperative Development
	17 – 06 Agricultural Services
☛ Budget Line Items	17 – 04 – 1001 Salaries
	17 – 04 – 2912 Training
	17 – 06 – 2332 Dev of Horticulture
	17 – 06 – 2729 Agricultural Inputs

Group Work:

This session was followed by group work on assigned exercises like:

What were the allocations to the health sector 2009 for?:

(a) Basic salaries? (b) Allowances? (c) Utilities? (d) Travels



Group work: participants read budgets using learnt techniques

The table below shows participants first attempts in budget literacy. This group was able to apply (albeit imperfectly) the basic principles of identifying the sector head, sub-heads, items and sub-totals.

GROUP 2: HEALTH

HEAD	SUB-HEAD	ITEMS	ALLOCATIONS
21	21-1001	BASIC SALARIES	26,794,000
	21-1200	ALLOWANCES	7,333,658
	21-2102	UTILITIES	500,000
		TRAVELS	
Grand Total			216,422,000

Sample of participants' first steps to budget literacy work

5.3 ELBAG: Challenges and complexities in national budgeting:

The session explains the dilemma the developing economies face in national budget preparations. This is because such economies are not independent for they have to satisfy the frameworks and the conditionalities of external financial institutions, especially World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The conditions set by these two world economic watchdogs have to be complied with to have a good rating.

Characteristics of IMF Macroeconomic Policies

The Fund deems a country stable if the “current account and fiscal balances are consistent with low and declining debt levels, inflation in the low single digit and rising per capita GDP”. In sum, the following criteria make a stable economy (regardless of negative effects on the social and political contexts):

- ❖ Rising GDP
- ❖ Low single digit targets
- ❖ Little or no domestic borrowing
- ❖ Little or no fiscal deficit spending.

However, it needs to be realized that the IMF and WB are profit making agencies. They hold funds from stakeholders to raise profits.

5.4 Exploration of Simple Budget Analysis Tools:

The following session availed the facilitators the opportunity to take participants through the application of basic calculations to budget information and to interpret the results. The following concepts and their application to national, Local Government budgets and organizational budgets were discussed:

The Percentage share of the total budgetary allocations of key sectors like education, health, agriculture, infrastructure and water resources.

Growth in the Budget (in nominal terms) to give an idea of progress

Adjusting for Inflation: Converting nominal amounts to real amounts taking on board the corrosive impact of inflation

Average Annual Growth

GDP per Capita etc

Budget Literacy Challenges and Emerging issues:

- Few of the participants have ever handled a budget document. Even fewer have taken the trouble of browsing through the document, let alone being able to understand and interpret the information.
- People do not generally know where to procure budget documents and how much it costs to get a copy. As a result, budget information has been the prerogative of a limited few, the elites! Participants were therefore urged to purchase a copy for their institutions.
- All agreed that the use of the budget should be democratized and that can only happen through demystification.
- Participants were urged to be more proactive and to take interest in the national and local government budget processes in general and to focus more especially on the sector budgets that are related to their area of interest. In so doing, they would be able to gauge government's commitment to poverty reduction as will be exemplified by the match or mismatch between policy statements and budgetary allocations.
- There was also discussion revolving around the opening up of the Local Government budget process to citizen participation and the structures to be put in place to make it work for

them. The inherent difficulty in acclimatizing decentralization was also emphasized. It was further argued that technocrats in Banjul were reluctant to relinquish the resources and the authority to the Area Councils and that to justify being in control, they peddle arguments about lack of capacity at the decentralized level. For some of the participants, it simply does not hold water.

- The session concluded with an examination of the role of Pro-PAG in facilitating the process of engagement between the Area Council and the inhabitants of the region.

5.5 Principles and Practice of Budget Tracking:

Managing for development results requires that civil society organizations and the citizenry at large participate in social accountability outreaches. The following session introduced the participants to the principles and practice of Budget tracking, using the education sector as an example. The function of budget tracking the presenter emphasized was among other things:

To make public affairs transparent and public information accessible through civic engagement

To promote efficient and effective public service delivery

To institutionalize the participation of Civil Society (particularly the Parent Teacher Associations for the education sector) in the analysis, tracking and advocacy for better service delivery

Budget tracking interventions he said, would focus on: Budget formulation (how public resources are allocated); Budget review components; (diagnosing the implications of the budget when formed and their likely impact); Tracking public expenditure at the local and national levels (seeing where the money is actually going); Monitoring the performance of programmes at the decentralized level (after money is spent, observing how the output/service is performing); ascertaining how well government or its agencies (in this instance, the education sector) are implementing the budgets.

Zeroing in on service provision at school level, the presenter took the participants through the following Indicators for tracking education inputs and funds:

1. Availability of an enabling learning environment (congestion of classrooms, availability of furniture etc.); Functional Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs); School Resource Centres & Staff Quarters; School feeding programmes, School bus services; Separate toilets for boys and girls in good working condition; Teachers and textbooks.

2. Accessibility – Free access to goods, services and institutions without any legal or cultural barrier - Retention of girls in schools; Presence of adequate mechanisms and structures to safeguard, guarantee and enforce policies and laws against discriminations based on gender, status, religious or other considerations in the provisions of education good and services

Economic access (affordability): Ability of parents to afford user-fees to maintain their children in the education system for the entire lower and upper basic cycles; Capacity to afford other education related services etc.

Quality – Quality Teaching and Learning materials; Upgrading Teaching & Learning Materials; Increasing duration of instruction time; Quality Teachers (Training untrained teachers); Pupil/teacher ratio; Classroom Size.

Teacher Motivation: Rate of Attrition; Delay in salary payments; Regularity in payment of salaries; Hardship Allowances as a motivator; Many teachers in acting positions for years – upward mobility hindered!

Some of the issues highlighted after the presentations were as follows:

- After the budget tracking presentation, the issue of internal auditors being sidelined in the institutions where they serve, emerged.
- The counselors wanted to know what recourse is available to them in case the Area Council refuse to share budget related information with citizens.
- The issue of “ghost teachers” uncovered in Sierra Leone aroused a lot of interest amongst the participants, thus buttressing the need to track budgets and inputs to maximize development delivery.

5.6 Two Advocacy modules were presented:

The **first one** focused on the Rights Based Approach (RBA) and explored concepts like the ethical choices that must underpin advocacy campaign; the power relations involved; social transformation, Participation, Communication and legitimacy. The presenter evoked the four main arenas of advocacy namely: People, Public, Network/Alliances and Decision-Making and how they could all concur to bring about social change. He said people could be affected in different ways: a) those that are directly affected by the issue; b) those with whom an organisation or movement is directly working and c) those that identify with a particular cause or issue.

Continuing, the presenter informed the participants that advocacy work in these arenas involved: educating people on an issue; mobilizing them around that issue and organizing a group or community for a long-term social transformation.

The presenter then underscored the role of Networking and Alliances building in sharing resources, coordinating multiple strategies and involving large numbers of actors in advocacy. This, he emphasized would seek to bridge the gap between micro-level activism and macro-level policy initiative, thereby developing multiple voices and diverse efforts in favour of the advocacy cause.

The second module was intended to teach participants the art of crafting advocacy and communication messages.

The presenter (Pro-PAG's Policy and Budget Analyst) started with the example of a confusing message that is long, full of jargons and is not making any specific request. That he said, leaves the people for whom the message is intended perplex. Conversely, a typical clear message was projected, making one specific request and is couched on a very clear language that is jargon free. Participants were informed that a message is only effective if the target of its advocacy or communication campaign can understand what it is asking them to do. Once the content of the messages have been developed, there are at least two things that the advocates should ask themselves, he insisted:

5.1.1 First

Have you chosen language your audience can understand? For example, have you used jargon, technical terminology that will not be understood by people outside your professional circle? Sometimes, it can be helpful, he said to try out your message on someone who isn't in your line of work (like a family member, or a friend).

5.1.2 Second

Will your audience know what action to take if they agree with you? For example, is your goal for them to make a decision, call someone, vote a certain way, change a corporate practice, or convince others to support your proposal? That is crucial!

Continuing, he said, the other issues to consider in designing advocacy and communication strategies include among other things: delivering the messages strategically. He emphasized the fact that credibility is a prerequisite for successful advocacy. It is also something that one needs to consider when one is deciding how to deliver a message and who delivers it. But first, he said, the advocates should: 1. Know the facts by conducting analysis to establish the evidence; 2. Document the problem. 3. Choose the best messenger. 4. Decide when to advocate and the appropriate media channels to use for maximum impact.

Discussions after the presentation:

- A participant stressed the importance of taking action to improve service delivery and urged the counselors to be more proactive in community matters by constantly trying to know what is happening; asking the right questions; taking keen interest in the local government budget process; constantly lobbying and advocating for pro-poor policies, projects and programmes for their constituents.
- A debate on whether the Local Government Authority would readily share information on revenue collection and expenditure items ensued.
- The LGA officials emphasized the fact that they are always open to suggestions from citizens as a way of improving service delivery. They however lamented the fact that the citizens do not always avail themselves of the opportunities or the space to engage.

- The commitment to information sharing and to action was reiterated many times by the different stakeholders so as to bring about the desired changes in the region. It was suggested that one way of improving the collaboration between the Local Government Authority and the citizenry was to initiate discussion forums like the interactive meetings between duty bearers and rights holders like the ones done in KMC and URR.
- One consistent theme throughout the discussion was the importance of citizen participation in the decision making processes that affect their lives
- Much of the discussions focused on ways of promoting a constructive dialogue between the duty bearers and the rights holders for better service delivery.
- The workshop acknowledged that further step down training was needed to empower more people at community level and recommended action to deal with constraints that impede the rolling out of such a strategy
- The debate about the depth and process orientation of participation was again touched upon.
- Participants itemized constraints that hamper the effectiveness of engagement at LGA level. Three points were made on the need to improve the quality of engagement between civil society and the LGA:



Group work: Making the budget a user-friendly tool

Perceptions

Question: What is this ELBAG Training to you?



CHIEF-EXECUTIVE OFFICER of Kerewan Area Council: Mr. Tamba Kinteh

“First of all, I would like to express my profound thanks and gratitude to Pro-PAG and ActionAid for choosing our LGA for this ELBAG training. It has been attended by all our ward councilors and the major NGOs in our region.

I must confess that the training came at no better time than now. This is because councilors have little or no knowledge about the national economy, the budget processes and the development path that the government has taken and which is being financed using public resources. However, I now believe that councilors will join hands with Council to be vigilant on public resources collection, allocation and execution. As they now know that Central Government finances major projects from external funding, they will be able to take these ideas to apply them at the local level.

The Council administration will from now on practise proper development planning and budgeting in order to secure external funding. I look forward for more such training sessions to strengthen the capacities of our local governance.

I wish to assure all of you that Kerewan Area Council will take the lead as the first LGA to benefit from this ELBAG Training” , say Mr. Tamba Kinteh, Chief Executive Officer for Kerewan Area Council.



CHAIRMAN Kerewan Area Council: Alhaji Lamin Ceesay.

This training is timely, especially when we place it within the context of decentralization. Decentralization and attempts to enhance local democracy often grapple with issues of capacity and resources i.e. managerial and technical capacities. This training has contributed towards improving our technical capabilities like budgeting for development interventions. This training has plugged the information gap, which is an essential step towards improving democratic accountability.

The training has provided us with transparent and user-friendly information essential to meeting the demands of our people. It has given us a sense of clearly defining targets for resource mobilization. Since decentralization is about devolution of power, as representatives of the people, the training has provided our area councilors with the opportunity to advocate for remittance of resources from the central level to the local councils to meet the needs of our people, like in roads maintenance which at the moment is far beyond the local council capabilities.

Trainings of this nature will strengthen the capacity of local government actors. Such an intervention needs to be replicated for the knowledge to filter down to the grassroots structures at Ward Development Committee, and Village Development Committee levels.

On behalf of the Council and collaborating partners, I wish to call for more such training activities for regional stakeholders (especially from Pro PAG) on national budget related issues.

Conclusions

The session ended with thanks from the Action Aid Governance Manager and the Policy and Budget Analyst of the Pro-Poor Advocacy Group (Pro-PAG). Thereafter, the Governor of the region was invited to deliver the closing remarks. But before doing so, Governor Edward Seckan insisted that the Chief Executive Officer and the Chairman of Council be present while he delivers an **“important message”** coming from the Office of the President to the effect that henceforth, it would be the Governor who would be delivering the annual budget speech of the region and not the C.E.O of Council. He told the audience that he had already starting feeling the impact of the training when a participant burst into his office just to inform him that he knew what his budgetary allocation for 2009 was! That he said is the testimony that budget literacy was indeed gaining grounds in the region thanks to the intervention premised on the ELBAG approach. In responding to the points that had been raised during the briefing, the Governor underscored the fact that he wanted the North Bank to become one of the leading LGAs in the country. To that end, he reassured everybody that he will welcome any initiative that is geared towards enhancing developmental outcomes in the region. He then thanked the organizers of the workshop for choosing his region to pioneer the ELBAG approach and called on the participants to utilize the knowledge gained from the workshop to improve development processes in the region. He then declared the workshop officially closed.



“It is important to note that we may be counted lucky to have such a workshop conducted for us. I am saying this because I have just received a correspondence from our Ministry asking

all local government units to prepare their 2010 budgets with immediate effect; and that all must henceforth do budgeting in a transparent manner. We are expected to prepare it in a participatory way and it has to be presented in an open forum i.e. just like the Budget Speech Day is done at national level. The media and many stakeholders must be present.

I am impressed in the outcome of this workshop because just last night, a participant came to me and told that he knows my Office's budgetary allocation. This shows that something is learnt which has benefitted the learners i.e. knowledge; which power.

I therefore will look forward to see the full participation of the councilors in the Region's mobilization of resources, as well as efficient utilization of those resources earmarked for local people. I have confidence in the staff of Kerewan Area Council and I am sure that their work will now be easier as all the locally elected representatives now have ideas of how and where budgets are made for the benefit of the people. Thank you all once again."

Annex 1:**1 List of participants**

	Name	Status & Institution	Gender	T/Contact
	Kebba Sawaneh	Councilor – Saba Ward	Male	7832908
	Ousman Touray	Councilor – Sabbach Ward	Male	6470968
	Muhammed Njai	Councilor – Saliken Ward	Male	7577340
	Kausu B. Marong	Councilor – Essau Ward	Male	7238426
	Ebou Gaye	Councilor – Prince Ward	Male	7527052
	Bubacarr M. J. Kante	Accounts Assistant – KAC	Male	9919286
	Omar W. Bah	Councilor – Kubandarr Ward	Male	6229513
	Tamba Marong	Councilor – Kachang Ward	Male	6577734
	Lamin Mbowe	Councilor – Kerr Jarga Ward	Male	7440341
0	Yorro D. M. Bah	Councilor – Njaba Kunda Ward	Male	6416982
1	Arafang Dibba	Youth Rep KAC	Male	9719169
2	Malilda Daffeh	Women's Rights Coordinator - ADWAC	Female	3406565
3	Wassa Sowe	Councilor – Farafenni Ward	Male	7778395
4	Tamba S. Kinteh	CEO – Kerewan Area Council	Male	9908410
5	Sulayman Njai	Accountant – ADWAC	Male	6359943
6	Momodu A. Jallow	M. & E. Officer – ADWAC	Male	9936912
7	Kebba AK Sise	Programme Officer – ADWAC	Male	6542774
	Yusupha Fatty	Physical Planning - KAC	Male	7247453

ELBAG Capacity Building Programme 2009

8				
9	MamSamba Joof	Executive Director – ADWAC	Male	9915217
0	Faburama Fofana	Programme Officer –ADWAC	Male	9955217
1	Seyfo Fafading Kinteh	Chief – Lower Badibou	Male	9899170
2	Haruna Kuyateh	World View The Gambia	Male	6610640
3	Alhaji Lamin Ceesay	Chairman – Kerewan Area Council	Male	9940075
4	Fatou Sonko	Woman Council – Women's Bureau	Female	7801277
5	Omar A. Bah	Councilor – Pakau Ward	Male	7774910
6	Kemo Jabbi Kassama	Councilor – Dasilami Ward	Male	7018319
7	Marang S. Kinteh	Women Representative – KAC	Female	7107650
8	Abdoulie Khan	Internal Auditor – KA C	Male	9955443
9	Eduwarr Seckan	Governor North Bank Region	Male	9829342
10	Sheriff Misba Hydra	Vice Chairman – KAC/Councilor for Medina Ward	Male	9829342

2. List of Facilitators

No	Name	Institution	Gender	T/Contact
	Omar O. Jobe	Pro-PAG	Male	9972525
2	Nyakassi Jarju	Governance Manager - AATG	Male	9919424
	Saloum Sanyang	Accountant – Pro PAG	Male	6911761
	Isatou Touray	Secretary – Pro PAG	Female	6936880
	Pap Touray	Driver – Pro PAG	Male	6720214



SOFRECO



This printing was funded by the European Union through the Non State Actors Strengthening Programme