

REPORT ON NATION WIDE ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION ON THE 2023 CITIZENS BUDGET

INTRODUCTION

The National Council for Civic Education and Democracy (NaCCED) with support from the Ministry of Finance, launched an abridged version of the FY 2023 National Budget' called the "Citizens Budget 2023", in the West, East, South and Northern parts of the country. The 2023 document was titled "A Citizen's Guide to the National Budget-2023" with the theme "Addressing the needs of the vulnerable in the context of the multiple crisis." Several activities were outlined and carried out for the launch and nation wide civic education and engagement .They include:

- Production and printing of an abridged version of the FY 2023 National Budget
- Production of a 10-minute video animation of the Citizen's Budget
- Airing of the animation video on SLBC, AYV and Star TT
- Regional launch of the Citizen's Budget which included distribution of the booklet, screening of the animation, and discussions on the content to facilitate understanding of participants and the public. Participants included MDAs, NSAs and the media
- Media engagements (Radio and TV)

OBJECTIVE OF THE ENGAGEMENTS

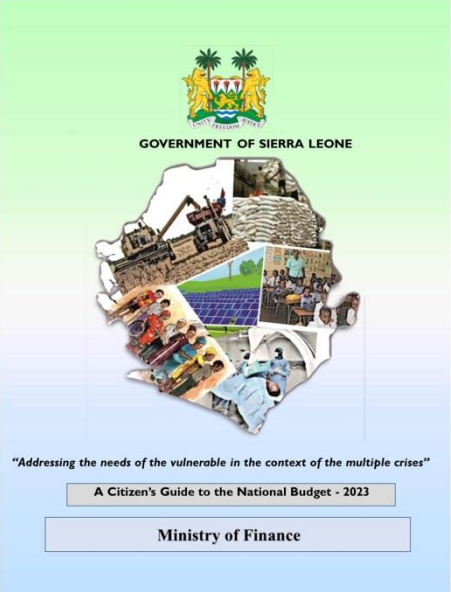
The objective of the 2023 Citizens Budget citizens engagement was to promote greater public understanding of the national budget to enhance accountability and transparency in the management of public resources. It was also meant to increase public awareness and understanding of the work of the Ministry of Finance and vital interventions undertaken by the Ministry.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

1. PRODUCTION AND PRINTING OF THE ABRIDGED COPY OF THE FY 2023 NATIONAL BUDGET

One thousand (1000) copies of the Citizen's Budget (abridged version of the FY 2023) were produced, printed and distributed to Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Non State

Actors (NSAs) and the media/journalists. This document contained shorter descriptions or explanations, diagrams, graphs and shorter.



I. INTRODUCTION

The Citizen's Budget 2023 provides a summary guide to the national budget delivered to Parliament by the Minister of Finance for the Fiscal Year 2023. The theme of this year's budget is: "Addressing the needs of the vulnerable in the context of the multiple crises".

It gives simple information on what services the Government plans to deliver, how it will be done, who will do it, how much it will cost, and it helps citizens to monitor and make sure that these services are provided as promised.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE 2023 BUDGET

Therefore, the 2023 Budget seeks to provide support to:

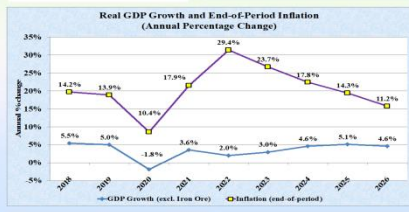
- Intensify local food production and facilitate food importation to address food insecurity, especially for the most vulnerable groups;
- Sustain critical investments in education and health to improve human capital;
- Expand social safety nets to enable vulnerable people to cope with the challenging economic situation;
- Pursue adaptation and mitigation measures in response to climate change risks;
- Promote private sector development for job creation;
- Contain inflation and stabilise the exchange rate to lower the cost of living;
- Strengthen public finances and maintain sustainable debt levels; and
- Improve governance and accountability.

3. THE ECONOMY AT A GLANCE

GDP Growth (excl. Iron Ore)

Inflation Rate (End of Period)

Real GDP Growth and End-of-Period Inflation (Annual Percentage Change)



The medium-term outlook for the economy is expected to be very challenging in the wake of the overlapping crises (COVID-19 and war in Ukraine), with current projections indicating that real GDP growth will not return to the pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels until 2025.

The current account deficit, including official grants, is projected to narrow from 10.3 percent of GDP in 2022 to 8.0 percent of GDP in 2023.

Gross foreign reserves are planned to average 3.3 months of imports in the medium term (2023-2025).

2. PRODUCTION OF A 10-MINUTE VIDEO ANIMATION OF THE CITIZEN'S BUDGET

A ten-minute video animation was produced for the purpose of having an audio-visual explanation of the content of the Budget. The concept or format of the animation featured a radio magazine program with a host presenter and Mr. Citizen's Budget 2023 as a guest. The radio presenter asked Mr. Citizen's Budget several questions about the document, and later responded adequately to each question.

AIRING OF THE ANIMATION VIDEO ON SLBC, AYV AND STAR TV

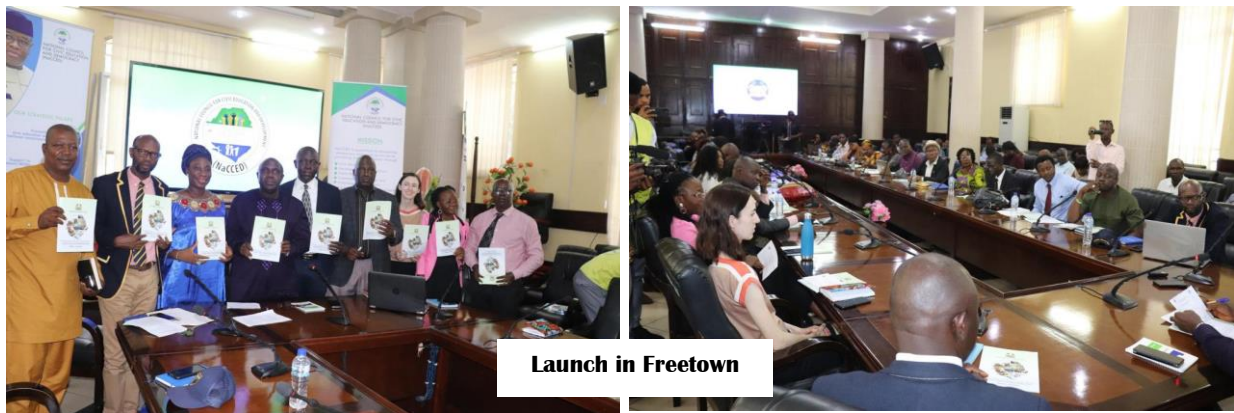
The animated video was aired on SLBC, AYV and Star TV for a period of two weeks simultaneously. This was aimed at having a wider reach and understanding of the national budget.

REGIONAL LAUNCH OF THE CITIZEN'S BUDGET

SESSIONS

The launch of the 2023 Citizens Budget was done in a form of press conference in all four (4) regional headquarter towns.

Freetown (Western Region)- it was hosted at the Conference Room of the Ministry of Finance at George Street, on April 5, 2023. Participants of this event included the media, NSAs (CSOs, Trade Unions, women’s groups, student unions etc), and representatives from Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The session was chaired by The Senior Deputy Financial Secretary, Mr. Samuel E.B Momoh, and co-chaired by NaCCED Chairman, Mr. Kalilu Ibrahim Totangi. An overview of the 2023 Citizens Budget document was done by the Deputy Director of Budgets Dr. Ilara Mahdi. She informed the participants that the document highlights three (3) key elements namely; Key Revenue Measures, Expenditure Measures, and Expenditure Priorities for 2023 Fiscal Year. An Krio video animation which highlights key areas of the Budget was screened, followed by a Question and Answer session. Every participant (49 in total) was handed a copy of the booklet.



Launch in Freetown

Bo (Southern Region)- this event took place on April 14, 2023, at the J&E Hall situated at the Bo-Koribondo Highway. The session was chaired by the Non-State Actor Southern Regional Coordinator, Honorable Bami Keindoh, and co-chaired by NaCCED’s Chairman. There were thirty-five (35) NSAs and MDA representatives, six (6) journalists, plus six (6) NaCCED staff.



Launch in Bo

Kenema (Eastern Region)- the engagement was held on April 15, 2023, at the Albertson Conference Hall at Nyandeyama Road- Kenema. The session was chaired by Ahmed G. Kallon

Manager for Eastern Radio in Kenema, and co-chaired by NaCCED Chairman. There were forty-one (41) NSA, media and MDA participants and six (6) from NaCCED.



Launch in Kenema

Makeni (North-East and North-West)- the engagement was held at the Makeni Council Hall. The session was chaired by NaCCED North- East Regional Coordinator Mr. Ibrahim Jalloh and Co- Chaired by NaCCED Chairman and the Deputy NSA Northern Regional Coordinator. There were forty-two (42) representatives from NSA, the media, 7 from MDAs.



Launch in Makeni and Port Loko

MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS (RADIO AND TV)

Four radio engagements or discussion programs were carried out in all the regions. Studio guests and program participants included NaCCED Chairman, the Director of Communications and Outreach, and the Regional Coordinators.



The engagement intended to reach out to more people and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Budget. These radio discussions were done prior to the day of the launch in all of the regions

Flyer Showing Advert for Radio Discussion

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS FROM ALL THE ENGAGEMENTS

- Limited time in the Budget hearing process to deliberate on issues
- Lack of monitoring. Participants appreciate the setting up of National Monitoring and Evaluation Department (NaMED). It is important to monitor the agriculture sector
- Commended government for establishing NaCCED and the role it is performing - information, communications and outreach programs. They also lauded the National Solar-powered TV project.
- Concern in the area of Agricultural support to the farmers. Limited support to farmers with larger acres of land, especially women.
- Inadequate drugs for beneficiaries of the free healthcare facility - especially women.
- More support to women especially for International Women's Day celebration
- Recommended that NaCCED should have coordinators at district and chiefdom levels
- Negative influence of social media on the work of NACCED and other institutions - to disseminate key messages.
- Observed that the Citizens Budget did not capture the financial support government gave to youth in Agriculture in various districts.
- Delay in the disbursement of school fees subsidies. This hinders the fight against corruption, extortion etc. Advised that disbursement should be done within the first three weeks.
- Revenue generation from timber export business in the country is missing in the 2023 Citizens Budget.
- Citizens Budget animation should be video animation should be translated into the major local languages
- What has been government intervention in controlling the price of imported rice?
- Citizens Budget did not include government's disbursement for Agriculture Ministry.
- Women feel the impact of the challenging economy more than any other group of people.

- NaCCED should organize similar engagement for smaller groups like schools, youth organizations, Ataya bases, and ghettos.
- What will be the status of the Citizens Budget if there's a change of government?
- What is the relationship between the District Budget Advocacy Network and NaCCED/MoF? The network was the main partner for all the engagements.
- Citizens education on the need to request NRA receipt from businesses they transact with should be looked into.

CHALLENGES

- The team experienced late starts of the program due to lateness of participants in some regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Citizens Budget animation should be aired on every radio station nationwide to promote and deepen understanding of revenue, income and expenditure of the government.
- Citizens Budget animation should be done in different local languages
- The video should be distributed to the chiefdoms that have benefited from the National Solar TV project