



NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CIVIC EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY (NaCCED)



REPORT ON THE REGIONAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS ON THE FY2025 CITIZENS BUDGET

FISCAL YEAR 2025



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
National Council for Civic Education and Democracy (NaCCED)
No. 21 Steward Street Freetown



Acknowledgement

Our thanks and gratitude to the leadership and staff of the Ministry of Finance for the support and approval of this Citizens' Guide to the FY2025 National Budget of the Government of Sierra Leone. Special thanks go to the Minister of Finance for his strong commitment in supporting and formally launching the FY2025 Citizen's Budget.

The regional civic engagements would not have succeeded without the support and active participation of our key stakeholders. Our thanks and appreciation to Non-State Actors (NSAs), District Budget Oversight Committees (DBOCs), traditional leaders, local council authorities, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and other district and regional authorities for their cooperation and active participation.

Many thanks to all persons with disability who despite their physical challenges, actively participated in this year's civic engagements,

The media was highly visible and very active throughout the regional civic engagements. Many thanks and appreciation to the media teams in all the regions.

To the NaCCED team, you are highly appreciated for a collaborative and cooperative teamwork.

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Chairman
National Council for Civic Education and Democracy (NaCCED)

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List of Acronyms/Abbreviation

1. CSO - Civic Society Organization
2. DBOC - District Budget Oversight Committee
3. FY - Fiscal Year
4. GDB - Government Duty Bearers
5. GoSL - Government of Sierra Leone
6. LCR - Local Council Representatives
7. MP - Media Practitioners
8. MDAs - Ministries, Department and Agencies
9. MoF - Ministry of Finance
10. NCB - National Citizens Budget
11. NaCCED - National Council for Civic Education and Democracy
12. NRA - National Revenue Authority
13. NSAs - Non- State Actors
14. PWDs - People With Disability
15. TLA - Traditional and Local Authority

1. Background

Every financial year after the reading of the national budget by the Minister of Finance in the well of Parliament, the National Council for Civic Education and Democracy (NaCCED) partners with the Ministry of Finance to promote Economic and Financial Management Education (EFME) among citizens in Sierra Leone. This year, the National Council for Civic Education and Democracy (NaCCED), with support from the Ministry of Finance has successfully conducted regional-level civic engagements on the FY2025 national budget. . The Citizen's Guide to the National Budget otherwise known the Citizens Budget, an abridged version of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 National Budget was launched in Freetown by the Minister of Finance, Hon. Sheku Ahmed Fantamadi Bangura followed by a regional popularization and nationwide civic education and public engagement in the West, East, South and Northern regions of the country. The FY2025 Citizen's Guide to the National Budget with the theme: "Improving the Well-Being and Quality of Life of Sierra Leoneans" was designed to bridge the information gap between government fiscal planning and the citizens, especially given the complexity and technical nature of the national budget document, which is typically voluminous and difficult for the average citizen to access, read, or understand.

For this year's Economic and Financial Management Education (EFME) (Citizens Budget) NaCCED produced

- the booklets which is the abridged version of the national budget for FY2025
- Animation of the annual district budget oversight committee meeting
- Air audio and video jingles and
- Held Civic Engagements, which involves regional town hall meetings with, district budget oversight committees (DBOC), Non-State Actors (NSAs), traditional leaders, local government authorities and the media.

2. Rationale for the Engagement

The regional civic engagements on Sierra Leone's 2025 national budget (Citizen's Budget) marks a significant step toward transparent, accountable and participatory governance which aims to demystify the national budget by presenting a simplified version of the National Budget for public understanding, solicit grassroots input on economic priorities, ensuring the 2025 budget reflects citizens' needs and strengthen accountability by fostering

open discussions between the government, civil society, non-state actors and local communities. The national budget serves as a financial blueprint for development priorities, resource allocations, and government service delivery. Inclusive civic education ensures that every citizen has a clearer understanding of the budget's content and purpose, empowers local actors with the knowledge and tools needed to monitor budget implementation and demand accountability.

3. Objectives

The primary objectives of the Citizens' Budget 2025 civic engagement were to:

a) Promote Transparency and Accountability

Simplify and communicate the content of the national budget to citizens in clear and understandable terms and enhance public trust in government financial planning and implementation.

b) Improve Public Understanding of the National Budget

Educate citizens and grassroots stakeholders on government revenue, expenditure priorities, and development allocations.

c) Increase Public Participation in Governance

Foster active citizenship by encouraging dialogue, feedback, and civic engagement in national and local budget matters.

d) Build Local Capacity for Budget Oversight

Strengthen the knowledge and role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-State Actors (NSAs), District Budget Oversight Committees (DBOCs), and local authorities in monitoring budget execution.

e) Create Multipliers of Information

Equip community representatives to cascade the information within their networks for broader grassroots understanding.

4. Targeted Audience and Beneficiaries

Town hall civic engagement meetings were held in all regional headquarters, including Northern-Eastern Region (Makeni), North-West Region (Port Loko), Eastern Region (Kenema) and Southern Region (Bo).

Given the impossibility of assembling the nation's entire population under one roof, a representational model was adopted. A regional and district-level

engagement brought together selected community actors and influencers who could serve as multipliers of information within their respective constituencies.

Key categories of participants included:

- Non-State Actors (NSA)
- District Budget Oversight Committees (DBOC)
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Traditional and Local Authorities
- Youth and Women's Groups
- Government Duty Bearers and Local Council Representatives
- Media Practitioners

These participants were strategically selected to ensure broad-based dissemination of the simplified budget message to grassroots communities.

5. Methodology

The civic engagements were interactive and participatory; using simplified visual and audio materials, and translated content to facilitate understanding. Facilitators from the Ministry of Finance NaCCED worked hand-in-hand to present:

- A breakdown of sectoral allocations (e.g., Health, Education, Agriculture, Infrastructure, others) with Budget priorities and funding sources; regional development projects included in the 2025 budget.
- Citizens' roles in monitoring and engaging with budget implementation.
- A presentation by the NaCCED Chairman giving vivid explanation of the work of NaCCED, the importance of the national budget and the role of citizens in governance and national development.
- Animated video presentation of the national budget was made at each regional civic engagement, followed by open floor discussions to address questions, concerns and note recommendations/suggestions for future action.
- Media engagement and involvement was critical before, during and

after the regional meetings. NaCCED collaborated with local radio stations and community media to amplify the key messages from the sessions to the wider audiences. During these processes, NaCCED collected feedback and observations on the budget process and delivery of services in their respective communities

6. Citizens' Concerns About the National Budget 2025

During the discussions of the national budget, the following concerns were raised by the participants;

- Inflation rate was said to have been reduced but prices of commodities are still very high except for fuel and rice
- Government subsidizes the electricity generation by Karpowership but the tariffs for consumers are still very high and inconsistent power supply.
- Revenue from the mining sector is very low which do not meet the expectation of citizens
- The budget allocation for agriculture is low which cannot meet the aim of the Feed Salone programme
- In the recurrent expenditure, a high percentage of the expenditure is on loan repayment or servicing for which Government could not undertake major development programmes
- Though the wage bill is high, many Government employees receive low salaries whilst a small percentage receive very high salaries
- Only the Budget Oversight Committee members participated in the animation of the national budget leaving out the NSAs and the animation is done in Creole only.
- Inadequate information flow from the Government to the people
- Leakages observed in revenue collection at the border crossing points and many business people do not comply with the tax laws.
- Some local councils do not generate enough revenue to support development in their localities.
- No revenue is projected for timber logging even though many companies are in timber logging and business.
- Early sensitization of the citizens is critical for successful national budget implementation
- The impact of the Feed Salone programme is a major concern to the people.
- Budget allocation to education is very high but yet school fee subsidies are not regularly paid to the schools

- Involvement of NaCCED in tax education and public engagement in revenue mobilization is highly necessary

7. Successes/Achievements

Despite few challenges, the exercise achieved notable successes:

- High participation and stakeholder engagement
- Strong turnout across districts demonstrated public interest in civic education and fiscal accountability.
- Recognition and wiliness of stakeholders in patronizing with NaCCED work in national development countrywide.
- Improved public awareness: Participants reported greater understanding of budget allocations, especially in sectors like health, education, agriculture, (feed Salone) and infrastructure.
- Strengthened Government-Citizen relations. This event created a space for citizens to interact with government representatives, improving trust and responsiveness.
- Local ownership of budget monitoring. Community actors pledged to cascade the information within their networks, communities and support local budget tracking.
- Constructive feedback channels. Participants provided valuable feedback on budget expectations and implementation gaps in their communities.

8. Challenges

Whilst the exercise was largely successful, few challenges were however encountered as listed below:

- Late disbursement of funds to NaCCED to embark on the education and sensitization drive.
- The sensitization exercise was done in May which could have been done at the beginning of the year.
- The budget allocated for the exercise is limited to undertake district level engagements.
- Non participation of heads of MDAs in the public engagement exercises to address the concerns of citizens.
- The animation video of the citizen's budget was done in Creole only which limited participation and understanding by citizens who do not understand Creole.

9. Recommendations/Suggestions

The following are suggestions/recommendations that were made by participants at the regional meetings; that:

- The importance of civic education cannot be overemphasized, and that NaCCED should take civic education to chiefdoms where communication and information on government activities is low but highly needed by the citizens. The Citizens Budget animation video be translated into some other local languages (,Mende, Theme, Limba etc.) for airing nationwide. Thus promoting and deepening understanding of revenue, income and expenditure of the government, and the animation video distributed to the chiefdoms that have benefited from the National Solar TV project from GoSL through NaCCED
- Government should intensify revenue collection to enhance effective budget implementation. NaCCED to collaborate with MOF and the National Revenue Authority (NRA) to embark on effective and sustained tax education nationwide.
- Revenue from the mining sector is very low; Government should increase revenue collection in the mining sector.
- Members of Parliament should play major role in educating their constituents on the national budget.
- Budget Oversight Committee members be trained and capacitated to enhance effective monitoring of the budget implementation.
- Government to increase its budgetary allocation to agriculture and the local councils
- Institutionalize feedback mechanisms. Introduce structured feedback tools (e.g. comment cards) to capture participants input for future improvement.

IMAGES IN FREETOWN:



IMAGES BY REGIONS:

MAKENI



PORTLOKO



KENEMA



BO



Prepared and Submitted by:

The Council for Civic Education and Democracy (NaCCED)