



# **WOMEN UNITE!**

## **STRENGTHENING WOMEN-LED SOCIAL COHESION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN POST-ELECTION SIERRA LEONE**

Gender budgeting increased in five (5) district councils,  
but more needs to be done to increase the coverage

**Search for Common Ground  
Budget Advocacy Network  
The 50/50Group**



The Women Unite Project supported by the Irish Aid implemented by Search For Common Ground, Budget Advocacy Network, and 50/50 Group, has succeeded in improving gender budget allocations in five district councils in Sierra Leone.

## Why we did it?

In the context of inequalities that exist in the aspect of equitable distribution of national and local resources, one approach to deal with this norm is to rollout a gender-sensitive budgeting system. This system brought out evidence on how national resources distributed at the local level impacted a number of male and female including the vulnerable and marginalised in Sierra Leone. Prior to now, Sierra Leone's national and local budgets were gender blind and not sensitive to the diverse needs of men and women including the vulnerable and the marginalised. This makes it very difficult to quantify or more so qualify the impact of the budget on the citizens.

Gender sensitive budgeting is an approach designed to mainstream the gender dimension into all stages of the budget cycle. It refers to the process of conceiving, planning, approving, executing, monitoring, analyzing and auditing budgets in a gender-sensitive way. Gender budgeting allows governments to promote equality through fiscal policies by taking analyses of a budget's differing impacts on the sexes as well as setting goals or targets for equality and allocating funds to support those goals.

## How we did it?

We focused on five Districts Councils which include Kambia, Port Loko, Tonkolili, Kono and Kenema targeting the Health, Education, Social Welfare and Agriculture sectors with in-depth analyses of the sector budget allocations using 2018 as a baseline and follow through to the 2021 fiscal years. Four approaches were used;

1. we gave an overview of the budget process and gender;
2. we analyze the gender-specific allocations;
3. we looked at equal employment opportunity/facilities allocated
4. we looked at General Allocation

Result of these analyses were published and disseminated in the district through multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms, which spur the authorities at the targeted District Councils to develop interest and take actions towards engendering their budgets to make them gender-sensitive. Equally, we do follow up with the respective councils on the preparation of the budgets before they are presented for hearings. All of these contributed to the change story which has been recorded.



## What we found?

- **Overall Gender Budget Allocation** – Overall, gender budget allocations increased significantly from 1.21% in 2018 to 29.33% in 2021. Four out of the five councils under review increased on their gender budget allocations significantly. The most improved council is the Kenema District Council followed by Port Loko and Kono District councils in 2021. See summary by districts.

	GENDER SPECIFIC BUDGET			
	2018	2019	2020	2021
KAMBIA DISTRICT COUNCIL	0.65%	0.00%	1.35%	21.65%
PORT LOKO DISTRICT COUNCIL	1.43%	0.22%	2.71%	43.42%
TONKOLILI DISTRICT COUNCIL	0.00%	0.66%	11.73%	7.42%
KONO DISTRICT COUNCIL	0.50%	1.32%	0.63%	25.08%
KENEMA DISTRICT COUNCIL	3.45%	1.72%	0.38%	49.09%
AVERAGE	1.21%	0.78%	3.36%	29.33%

- **Need Assessment & Structured Planning Data**
  - The budget process is informed by some appreciation of the differential needs of users for all the 5 Councils under review. This is because the Local Government Act (2014) makes it mandatory for councils to do needs assessment upon which the council development plan should be drawn from and subsequently the budget. There is no evidence of the existence of regularly updated planning data.
- **Policy Guidelines Need for Gender Mainstreaming** – In the budget, the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) is the guiding document for all government budgets (central and local) in the country and the revised framework makes mention of gender mainstreaming to be included in the budgets. Furthermore, the Budget Call Circular for local councils also provides concrete guidelines including gender budgeting.
- **Redirecting resources to previously neglected needs or areas to promote equality.** – The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework does not have a principle to redirect resources to previous neglected needs or areas to promote equality in the budget.
- **Departmental plans, programmes and activities gender audit** – Departmental plans are not, as a general practice, subjected to a gender audit or analysis before, during and after implementation.



## Key Policy Asks

- Development of Gender Policy for the Local Councils which should be in line with Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)
- Development of a framework for the collection of data that is gender disaggregated
- Revision of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework to include the principle of redirecting resources to previous neglected needs or areas to promote equality in the budget.

# Recommendations

- ✓ **Collection of gender-disaggregated data** is fundamental for GRB and planning. Without meaningful data on the situation of men and women, including the vulnerable, analysis of targeted group(s) is not possible.
- ✓ **Sensitization of decision makers** (politicians and council officials) to raise awareness about gender issues and to provide them with skills to analyze and address issues and to act as change agents. Gender mainstreaming and GRB is not only about planning and budgeting but also about the local government approach to women empowerment and gender equality.
- ✓ **Increase the number of women in the decision-making processes of local government** where they can ensure that gender commitments are translated into fiscal commitments. Within patriarchal structures, women are more likely to champion the cause of gender equality and speak directly to the needs and priorities of women.
- ✓ **Sensitisation of planning and budget officials** so that local council officials who plan and draw up budgets see that their work may affect women and men differently. Gender sensitisation must not only focus on a change in attitudes towards patriarchy and gender equality, but also provide officials with skills to plan for gender responsiveness and to track budgets accordingly.
- ✓ **Training and capacity building** to ensure that officials can develop actions at every stage of the project cycle that supports a gender-mainstreaming approach. Awareness raising and sensitisation are not enough to empower local council officials across all departments, but must include planning, project implementation, budgeting, community participation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- ✓ **Advocacy** so that decision makers (politician and officials) are influenced to ensure that women empowerment and gender equality is part of the local council's strategic agenda. Raising awareness of gender mainstreaming and GRB is central to the issue of sustainability (and the move away from events-driven equality).
- ✓ **Gender analysis of existing revenues and expenditures should be done**, so that local government finance officers can promote post-budget, gender-aware impact analysis to determine GRB and the impact of public finance. The way in which government raises revenues and its pattern of public expenditures could support gender-blind macroeconomic planning, which will unfairly disadvantage women.

## Conclusion

If gender budgeting is done properly at the local level, it will be one of the motivations for women's involvement with local governments. For building capacity and strengthening monitoring mechanisms to support accountability to women benefit from gender responsive budgeting, it is obvious that gender responsive budgeting is a perfect tool to enhancing women's power at local governments.