

Launch Activities in Philippines

The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) and the Access to Information Network released the Open Budget Initiative 2006 alongside PCIJ's report highlighting the survey's findings at a public forum on November 8, 2006. After the initiative was presented, a panel of speakers including government officials, parliamentarians, a journalist, and individuals from non-governmental organizations led a conversation on various budget issues that are particularly relevant to the Philippines. The panel discussed ways that the executive can make budgeting transparent, and congress' role in checking the executive. Speakers also talked about ways to fight corruption and increase budget transparency, acknowledging the extreme challenge of making budgets open in the Philippines. The event was well-attended and covered extensively in the media.

The panel of speakers included Atty. Nepomuceno Malaluan, Trustee of Action for Economic Reforms, Ms. Vinia Datinguino, Journalist at the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, Ms. Nora Oliveros, Director of the Budget and Management Bureau at the Department of Budget and Management, Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon, a member of the House Committee on Appropriations, Mr. Vincent Lazatin, Executive Director of the Transparency and Accountability Network, and Prof. Leonor Briones, Co-Convenor of Social Watch Philippines.

Attendance at the forum was high. Over 60 people were present including members of the press, individuals from non-governmental organizations working on budget and other issues, as well as public administration academics, students, members of the legislature, and executive officials and personnel. The speakers provided engaging presentations on their subjects, leading an interactive and vibrant exchange with the audience. Reports have been written about the forum in publications including the *Business Mirror*, *GMA News*, and *ABS-CBN News*.