

State budget: Every citizen can be a reporter

While every citizen contributes to the State budget, it is quite often that even responsible tax payers are ignorant of their right to be ensured that the tax money is used for right purposes. A photo contest named "Taxpayers' view" was therefore held to raise citizens' awareness of their right to supervise the State budget management, bringing about an opportunity for interested people to express their views through photography.

Lasting from 10/2014 to 03/2015, the contest received 351 photos taken with all kinds of equipment. Using their personal digital devices, all the citizen competitors could report how public expenditure was executed in their places, illustrating the level of effectiveness and transparency of State budget management. To name some remarkable works: an image of a vocational school turning into a place to feed cows, another one featuring a collapsed electric pole was taken on the day when electricity price was increased.

"I love the idea that every citizen can be a reporter with a mobile phone. They can access to places that professional reporters cannot, they may know the stories that professional reporters may not. That's why they would have a picture that professional would never have" – Reporter Tran Viet Van, Labour Newspaper.

In the awarding ceremony on 15 April, 2015, the first prize was announced. In the photo, a woman was leaping in a flooded street passing by a "speaking" red banner which struck a question on how the State budget was used.



The red banner says “Start hearing people’s opinion from 27/10/2014 to 02/11/2015. Tax bureaus are always willing to hear people’s opinions and desires of tax payers”.

During 5 months, the contest’s Facebook Group has also become a platform to share and discuss useful budget-related information for its 2000 members. A number of interesting side-events were also held discussing on State Budget management such as talk-show in University of Social Sciences and Humanities – Vietnam National University in Hanoi and Hoa Sen University in Ho Chi Minh City and the talk-show “*Dancing money*” held by one of the organisation committee member – Center for Media in Educating Community (MEC).

The contest and its side events were co-organised by CDI, Towards Transparency (TT), Oxfam, MEC, Action to the Community Development Center (ACDC), Centre for Education Promotion and Empowerment for Women (CEPEW), and Governance and Public Administration Reform (GPAR).