

CLOSING SPEECH BY YDP PUAN MAIMUNAH BINTI MOHD SHARIF
ASIAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE “ GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING (GRB)
NARRATIVES :TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS, EMPOWERING
COMMUNITIES”
24 & 25 FEBRUARY 2014 AT BAYVIEW HOTEL GEORGE TOWN.

YB Tuan Chow Kon Yeow, Chairperson of the Conference Coordinating Committee
And State EXCO for Local Government, Traffic Management And Flood Mitigation.

YB Puan Chong Eng, State EXCO for Youth and Sports, Women, family and
Community Development and Chairperson of the Penang Women’s Development
Corporation (PWCD).

Yang Berusaha, YDP MPP, Dato’ Patahiyah Binti Ismail,

Distinguish Speaker, Friends, Ladies, and Gentleman.

Salam Sejahtera and good evening to all of you.

The last days seem to have gone by so quickly, and in what seems like a flash, i am
now standing before you to deliver a closing address.

I feel honoured to be given this opportunity to say a few words to all of you before the
conference is officially declared closed.

As Yang Dipertua (President) of MPSP (Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai), I have
pleasant but nevertheless onerous task of overseeing the upkeep and maintenance
of much of the public facilities and amenities of Seberang Perai.

One might say I have the duty to ensure the upkeep, cleanliness, and maintenance
of half of Penang that is located on what we commonly refer to as the mainland.

The other half, the island of Penang, is under the good office of my esteemed colleague and good friend Dato' Patahiyah, and I'll leave it to her to tell you about Penang Island, when she officially declares the conclusion of the conference.

As I have mentioned elsewhere, at MPSP, we can see the RGB project as an extension of our ecological community unit through which we engage with the communities and involve them in decision making.

I have from the very initiation of the Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) project in Penang embraced the many positive traits that can be found within GRB. What I found especially attractive about the GRB programme was the feature that involves engaging and consulting the people.

Today, after listening to and engaging in conversations with so many of you renowned experts and specialists in gender and participatory budgeting, I am even more convinced that we had taken correct and necessary step by embarking on the Gender Responsive Budgeting Journey.

For the GRB community pilot at PPR Ampangan, I had the opportunity to journey with the residents and the GRB team as they collectively decided their prioritisation of needs through the voting process. As always there are limited financial resources and it is important that the people have a say in how this limited financial allocation is to be utilised,

We need a model for RGB at the budgeting stage as in MPSP we have limited resources with unlimited demand. We need to ascertain that a certain percentage (%) of the budget is allocated to project and programmes with clear gender goals. The detail model for the implementation of the agreed budget must include community engagement and consultation as an integral part of the modus operandi.

To me the GRB process was indeed a "One Up" for democracy and good governance that gives power back to the people. With this precedent set what we need do next is to find tune the process that allows for people's participation in decision making and have it to replicated throughout Penang, such would be our challenge.

At another level in trying to mainstream gender and to work towards the institutionalisation of gender responsive budgeting at the local council, I would as the president of MPSP, like to renew my commitment to head and support the initiative by ensuring that all staff at MPSP will have an opportunity to be exposed to capacity building exercise that will enhance their level of gender awareness and mastery of GRB methodology and tools of analysis.

I am also looking forward eagerly to a time in the near future when GRB is fully integrated into MPSP budget cycle. When that time comes Gender Responsive Budgeting will no longer be a distant dream but instead be part of our reality.

We must always remain cognizant of the fact that at MPSP our main source of revenue is the assessment which we collect from ratepayers and it is crucial that we expend our limited financial resources in judicious and responsible manner.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to all the organisers who have worked hard to make sure this event a success. As part of the host team, I do apologise for any inconvenience and shortcomings that you experience at this conference.

Whilst this conference is indeed coming to an end, to most of us, the work is only beginning and we need to take heed that this journey to work towards gender equality and social justice will be filled with various challenges,

Nevertheless I am confident that with the networking and sharing that has gone on at the conference we will be there to continue to support and encourage one another in striving towards this common goal of gender equality.

Thank you and for those who are staying back do enjoy Penang's famous hawker food and other attractions, and for those who will be going home, have a safe and pleasant journey.

Terima kasih.

Thank You.