

**Budget 2015 fails women, says Empower**  
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The 2015 Budget has failed to recognise, let alone address, the existing structural barriers faced by women, said NGO Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (Empower).

Empower president Janarthani Arumugam also accused the government of regressing on its approach of public participation as there were no consultations with the civil society as done during the tenure of his predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"Social, political, cultural, economic and legal inequalities continue to hold back women from reaching their full potential," she added in a statement today.

Janatharni suggested that the government also provide gender-sensitisation training and education at all levels of society, including the private and public sectors.

"Training women is only half of the work: without changing societal perceptions and stereotypes, women will remain and be perceived as secondary regardless of any number of entrepreneurial workshops," she added.

The Empower president said she was also shocked to know that the public were not allowed to witness the tabling of the Budget from the Parliament's gallery, even with invitations from MPs.

"The consultative and inclusive approach must be continued.

"Raw data and information must be made available for analysis by civil society organisations and the public," she said, adding that it would enable them to propose policies that could better the economy.

Although Empower commended the government for allocating RM2.26 billion to the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, the NGO wanted a more detailed breakdown on the spending.

"We wish to see a more detailed breakdown of the spending, given long-standing concerns over the scarcity of resources for the ministry's stakeholders," she said.

She was referring to the inadequate number of shelters and one-stop services to deal with survivors of violence and the lack of officers and counsellors to handle welfare cases.

She added that as citizens, everyone has a stake in the budget whether they are taxpayers or not.

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