



INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP  
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## e-Newsletter

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### IBP Presentation on Budget Transparency at the Global Maternal Health Conference

The Global Maternal Health Conference recently took place in New Delhi, India, from 30 August to 1 September. The conference was the first of its kind to give a prominent space to accountability as a key factor in fulfilling Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5. One of the plenary sessions was dedicated to this topic, and the International Budget Partnership (IBP) presented the findings of the [Ask Your Government Initiative](#) carried out in over 80 countries by almost 100 partnering organizations to request specific budget information directly related to maternal health interventions. While governments' responses varied widely, the overwhelming majority did not provide substantive information to their citizens. Furthermore, 11 countries with the highest maternal mortality rates in the world kept silent and ignored the requests posed by their citizens. In Nigeria, information related to life saving drugs was classified as "sensitive" and "controversial" i.e., in Yemen it was declared "private," and in Tajikistan the researcher was told "not to bother the Minister with such request."

[Listen to the IBP's presentation by Helena Hofbauer. Look for plenary 3 video on Wednesday 1 September \(minutes 25:24-40:01\)](#)

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## **94 Countries Prepare to Launch the Open Budget Survey 2010! by Elena Mondo, International Budget Partnership**

In October 2010 the International Budget Partnership (IBP) will release the results from the third round of the International Budget Partnership's Open Budget Survey — the world's most comprehensive, independent assessment of whether central governments countries provide the public with access to budget information and opportunities to participate in the budget process. This round of the Survey will provide comparative data on budget transparency, participation, and oversight in 94 countries, including nine countries that were included for the first time (Chile, Slovakia, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Mozambique, Mali, Timor Leste, and Iraq). The first round in 2006 evaluated 59 countries, followed by the 2008 Survey that included 85.

In preparation for the release, the IBP recently met with partner researchers from 55 of the countries covered in the 2010 Survey. They discussed the Survey's findings, key messages, and plans for disseminating the research and using the findings to increase transparency, participation, and accountability in their countries.

In addition to the international release of the Survey there will be nine regional launches in Central and South America; West, East and Southern Anglophone Africa; Francophone Africa; Central, South and Southeast Asia; and the Middle East and North Africa. Further, partners participating in the Survey will organize activities in their countries, which will include workshops, press conferences, and radio programs.

## **What Makes the Open Budget Survey Different from Other Transparency and Governance Assessments?**

The Open Budget Survey differs from other assessments of government transparency and accountability, such as Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Assessments, Fiscal Reports on the Observance and Standards and Codes, and the Global Integrity Index, because of the following.

- It is based on research conducted by independent civil society experts, rather than government officials or donor agency staff. This avoids issues related to self-reporting and conflict of interests in the assessment and reduces bias.
- It focuses on public access to government budget information. In contrast, other initiatives usually focus on the government's capacity to produce budget information. They do not examine whether, how, and to whom this information is disseminated. One of the strengths of the Survey is the emphasis it places on whether and when information is released to the public. Both the production and release of information are necessary to facilitate participation throughout the budget process. Stakeholders are not only those who manage the resources (i.e., government ministries) but the *people* who own the resources (i.e., the citizens), who must be able to access the relevant information needed to hold the government accountable.
- It includes questions on opportunities for public participation in the budget process, legislative oversight, and the SAI. This is relevant because effective accountability not only centers on transparency but also on the strength of these institutions. Even when information is available, the oversight bodies must have the effective power to hold the executive to account. This means that they should have sufficient resources, independence, and freedom to inquire about the executive's management of public money. In 2008 the OBI results showed that budget oversight was frustrated by the limited access to information and weak formal oversight institutions. What will the OBI 2010 results show?

For more information, contact Elena Mondo at [mondo@cbpp.org](mailto:mondo@cbpp.org).

## **Measuring Deprivation: The New Multidimensional Poverty Index of the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative by Patrick Nolan Guyer, Social Science Research Council**

Consensus is growing that income alone is a poor measure of either progress or poverty. While for years the proportion of people living below a set income-poverty threshold of \$1.25 or \$2 per day has been among the most frequently cited measures of poverty in developing countries, a new index by the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative seeks to challenge this one-dimensional framing of poverty.

The [Multidimensional Poverty Index](#) (MPI), based on a methodology developed by Sabine Alkire and James Foster, utilizes internationally comparable household survey data to measure deprivations in health and education in addition to living standards. It not only measures the number of people who are poor but also the depth and composition of human poverty. For advocates seeking to use budgets as an instrument to make investments in human development and realize the economic and social human rights of poor people, the MPI offers a new tool to identify those most in need, understand the multifaceted nature of some of the deprivations they face, and track the impacts of pro-poor investments.

The MPI considers indicators that gauge deprivation in health, education, and living standards, using basic questions with simple thresholds. The MPI considers, for example, whether or not any member of the household is malnourished or has not completed at least five years of school, or if the household lives in a dwelling without a finished floor, electricity, or basic sanitation. If a household falls below the threshold on 30 percent or more of the indicators, the household is considered to be "multidimensionally" poor. The MPI score for any given country, region, or population group reflects this poverty headcount

multiplied by the average intensity of poverty as measured by the average proportion of indicators on which households fall below the threshold.

For advocates seeking to use budgets as a tool to fight poverty, the MPI presents a new means to identify those most impacted by serious deprivations and tease out which types of deprivation affect them most acutely. For example, disaggregated MPI calculations by [Alkire and Santos](#) show how the MPI differs among the ethnic groups in Bolivia or Kenya. Disaggregating the MPI into its constituent indicators helps showcase what deprivations are most pervasive for which groups and regions.

The MPI can also be used to monitor the impacts of pro-poor budget interventions over time and the connections between budget accountability and poverty reduction. The IBP's [Open Budget Index](#) (OBI), which measures the extent to which governments make information about the budget and budget processes open to the public, has been calculated for 59 countries in 2006 and 85 in 2008. As robust time series for both the MPI and OBI are developed, researchers interested in the potential impacts of budget transparency on multidimensional poverty now have a new metric reference to see if and how budget action can help reduce the prevalence and severity of multidimensional poverty.

Going beyond income and consumption to measure well being and development has been an area of significant interest for the international development community for two decades. The United Nations Development Program, which will feature the MPI in its upcoming [2010 Human Development Report](#) has calculated the Human Development Index for countries worldwide for 20 years. This index, which — like the MPI — is rooted in the work of Nobel-Laureate Amartya Sen, considers the same dimensions of health, education, and income in its measure of human development and is widely used around the world. For example, the [American Human Development Project](#) uses the HDI to understand disparities in human development within the United States.

Unlike the HDI, which generally uses national averages to measure development progress, the MPI draws its data from surveys that collect data about deprivations at the household level and also considers a broader selection of indicators. This allows the MPI to measure not only the incidence of poverty but also the extent to which different kinds of poverty covary among the same individuals. Like all composite indices, the MPI has some limitations: it is not well suited to measure the relative deprivations faced by the poor in middle and upper middle-income developing countries, for example, and the household surveys that the MPI is based on span a range of years and sometimes employ slightly differing definitions of the indicators used, threatening the comparability of cross-national results. Imperfections aside, the MPI marks a novel and important new approach to measure and understand deprivation in the developing world.

For more information, contact Patrick Nolan Guyer, [patrick.guyer@gmail.com](mailto:patrick.guyer@gmail.com).

## **International Endorsement of Global Standards for Publishing Information on Aid by Claudia Elliott, Publish What You Fund**

The steering committee, signatories, observers, and endorsers of the [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#) (IATI) met in Paris on 7 July 2010 to agree on the cornerstone of a global standard for publishing information on aid. The IATI is a donor-led response to increasing calls for greater access to information about aid, and it aims to “deliver a step shift in global public availability and accessibility of information on aid flows for increased effectiveness and accountability of aid.” The IATI was launched during the High Level

Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra on 4 September 2008, and steering committee members from civil society include the [International Budget Partnership \(IBP\)](#), [Publish What You Fund](#), [Transparency International](#), [BetterAid](#), [Reality of Aid](#), and [Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness](#).

Publish What You Fund (PWYF) is a nongovernmental organization that campaigns globally for aid transparency. As a member of the IATI steering committee, the PWYF works to ensure that the standards, formats, and definitions developed by the IATI fully guarantee that aid information is published proactively in a timely, accessible, and comparable format.

As such, we are pleased to report that the IATI phase 1 recommendations were retained. This means that data published by governments should be timely — at least quarterly — detailed, and disclosed in a universal and open format so that it is accessible and comparable. This format is still being finalized but an initial recommendation is that the IATI adopts a decentralized, web-based architecture where donors will publish aid data in machine-readable files in a standard XML format that is freely available on public websites. The IATI will establish a website and provide a registry of links to these aid-data files. It will establish globally unique identifiers for easily tracking donors and projects and will develop a mechanism for notifying users when new data on aid has been added or existing files have been modified. The registry could take on additional functions such as authenticating data sources, providing amalgamated notification feeds, services, and tools to help donors create and host aid data files.

In addition to the aid data that will be made available in Phase 1, the steering committee has proposed requiring the following information in phases 2 and 3: donor aid budgets that include data for planned future funding for each recipient country, contact data for aid activities, monitoring and evaluation reports, detailed geographic locations of projects, and information about aid expenditure on goods and services. There is still work ahead to ensure that the IATI delivers on the real needs of recipient countries, i.e., that aid information is budget-compatible and donors' plans for future aid flows and the conditions attached to them are publically available.

The civil society organizations on the steering committee recently sent out a [letter](#) to each of the IATI signatories urging them to continue their participation in the IATI in advance of the fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which will be held in November 2011. The next Technical Advisory Group meeting will be in early October in the UK, and it is expected that an IBP representative will attend. The IBP is also a member of a subgroup on systems alignment, which is due to meet on 18 August at the IATI Secretariat in London.

For more information, contact Claudia Elliot [Claudia.Elliot@PublishWhatYouFund.org](mailto:Claudia.Elliot@PublishWhatYouFund.org).

## **New Standard for Transparency in the Energy and Mining Industry by the Revenue Watch Institute**

With final approval of sweeping financial reforms secured, the United States has taken a leading role in bringing greater transparency to the energy and mining industry and giving investors and citizens new tools to hold companies and governments accountable for their actions. "The provisions in the new law for oil, gas, and mining companies to report their payments to governments are the culmination of a long campaign by the Revenue Watch and the Publish What You Pay (PWYP) coalition to make extractive industry activities truly transparent, in the U.S. and abroad," said Karin Lissakers, director of the Revenue Watch Institute (RWI).

By passing the financial reform measure, the U.S. Congress voted to require companies registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to publicly report how much they pay governments for access to their oil, gas, and minerals. The requirement has been lauded by RWI and other members of the PWYP coalition of development, anti-poverty, faith-based, and human rights organizations as a powerful tool to help investors lower their risk and empower citizens with information critical to curbing corruption and poverty in many of the richest nations in natural resources.

"This law sets a new, higher global standard for financial transparency," said George Soros, founder of the Open Society Institute, a Revenue Watch funder. "Making public the revenues that governments receive from oil, gas, and mining companies will make those governments more open and more accountable to their citizens — and will also make these industries more transparent to investors. This is a victory for everyone who recognizes that financial transparency is essential for government and corporate accountability."

Lissakers said other industrialized nations should follow the lead of the U.S. "The U.S. is fulfilling commitments it has made with other leading industrialized nations, in the G-8 and the G-20," she said. "Other important capital centers like the U.K., Germany, Canada, and Australia should live up to their commitment to promote transparency in extractive industries by adopting similar listing rules." The Hong Kong Stock Exchange enacted a similar country-by-country reporting standard earlier this year.

"The logical next step is for the International Accounting Standards Board (ISAB) to universalize the standard adopted by the U.S.," Lissakers said. The IASB standards are used by 110 countries, not including the U.S. The G-20 Summit held in June 2010 called for "a single set of high quality improved global accounting standards."

The bill's most important potential impact is its effect on other major capital markets, which could use the new U.S. transparency standards as a model for openness for the extractive industry worldwide. At the end of July the White House noted the administration's commitment to "working with other countries to ensure the implementation of similar disclosure requirements in other financial markets." The PWYP coalitions and journalists predict that the U.S. reforms will indeed lead to greater transparency worldwide. The U.S. PWYP coalition is now preparing analysis and comments for the SEC as it drafts the detailed regulations.

For more information, contact Robert Ruby at [rruby@revenuewatch.org](mailto:rruby@revenuewatch.org).

## **New Tool for Tracking Development Finance by Brooke A. Russell, AidData**

On 24 March 2010 [AidData](#) — a new online resource that seeks to organize the universe of donor aid — launched a beta version of the world's most comprehensive repository of development finance records. AidData builds upon the [OECD Creditor Reporting System](#) data and then augments them with improved information for some donors. In addition AidData includes project records from many other donors that have never been tracked systematically. With the release of this beta version, development practitioners, researchers, students, reporters, and citizens can now use these data to inform and enhance their work.

Currently AidData catalogues nearly one million development projects that were financed between 1945 and 2009, providing access to information on \$4.2 trillion dollars in development finance flows from over 80 bilateral and multilateral donors through a single interface. Data from more than half of these donor agencies are not found in existing databases, and the value of this additional information is striking (as illustrated in posts on [aid to Haiti](#), [oil spills](#), and [climate change aid](#)).

Even though the website has been public for only a short time, it is already making a splash in the academic and policy worlds. And since the public launch, AidData has been working on using the data in new ways--including new applications such as geocoding and [crowdsourcing](#). In fact, AidData has recently [geo-coded over 1200 active development projects](#) in conjunction with the World Bank, which will allow users to analyze projects at the subnational level to see where the aid money is really flowing (like in [this blog post on Kenya and Mozambique](#)).

To explore AidData, go to: <http://www.aiddata.org>. If you need help getting started, check out this how-to [video](#). For more information, comments, or questions, please contact [info@aiddata.org](mailto:info@aiddata.org).

## **Proposed South African Secrecy Law: Undermining the Right to Know by Hopolang Selebalu, Institute for Security Studies**

Lawmakers in the South African Parliament are embarking on a course that goes against the nation's hard won Constitution and could undermine transparency, promote corruption, and hinder the work of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media. The Protection of Information Bill — also known as the Secrecy Bill — intends to protect legitimate state secrets and replace an offensive piece of apartheid era legislation. However, many believe that the draft law will not only create a cloak of secrecy on information the public has the right to know but will contradict existing access to information laws.

These laws both reflect and contribute to a commitment to open and accountable governance that has been recognized worldwide. In the 2008 round of the IBP's Open Budget Survey, an independent, comparative study that measures budget transparency, participation, and oversight globally, South Africa ranked number two out of 84 countries, providing a model for governments in developed and developing countries. According to the Survey, "South Africa's score [...] shows that the government provides the public with extensive information on the central government's budget and financial activities during the course of the budget year." Access to public budget information allows citizens and CSOs to participate meaningfully in budget decision making, hold governments accountable, curb corruption, and improve service delivery.

The broad sweep and lack of oversight of the proposed law could erect a considerable barrier to this kind of participation. Under the Secrecy Bill every organ of government has the ability to classify public information as secret, including information pertaining to service delivery, in the name of national interest or national security. These broadly defined terms could lead to over-classification and substantially restrict access to information on how the government is managing public resources for CSOs, the media, and the public. The law would not only affect access to budget information it also would curtail access to commercial information held by the government, which could lead to tender irregularities and make it difficult to hold businesses and the government accountable for inefficiency and corruption. Public officials would have broad discretion in terms of classification and would not need to provide a reason for classifying information that may be in the public interest. Finally, the

proposed law does not include provision for an independent oversight mechanism or ombudsman to prevent information that is in the public interest from being made secret.

With regard to how the government manages the public's money, access to information held by the state allows CSOs to participate in budget debates, propose alternative policies, monitor the use of funds that are allocated for the delivery of basic services, and keep the public informed on government spending. The Secrecy Bill poses a threat to CSOs and their ability to effectively engage with the government on budget and policy decisions and in oversight, with potential for long term imprisonment merely for possessing classified information.

In order to encourage transparency and responsive and effective governance in South Africa, access to information is imperative. Although it is reasonable for the state to control information that impacts national security, it must be careful not to undermine democracy in doing so. South African and international CSOs have jointly formed the 150-strong Right to Know Coalition to put pressure on lawmakers and defend and advance the country's constitutional values.

For more information, go to [www.right2know.org.za](http://www.right2know.org.za) or contact Hopolang Selebalo [selebalo@issafrica.org](mailto:selebalo@issafrica.org).

Join the International Budget Partnership in signing the Ask Your Government petition to protect access to public information [here!](#)

### **Budget Analysis Used to Win Judicial Case on Children's Right to Education in Buenos Aires, Argentina by Martin Sigal and Dalile Antúnez, Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia**

The city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, was a federal district until 1996 when it acquired autonomy and became a province (state). At this time the city also enacted its constitution, which recognizes education as a fundamental right and establishes an education system committed to the principle of equal opportunities for all. These provisions obligate the city to ensure and finance public, free, and nonreligious education at all levels, starting with infants as young as 45 days old.

The Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia (ACIJ), a civil society organization based in Buenos Aires, developed a program to challenge the city for inequality in the provision of education, particularly as it relates to socioeconomic discrimination. The ACIJ observed that thousands of infants and children between 45 days and five years old were excluded every year from pre-elementary school. The city argued that there were not enough spaces in the public schools to accommodate these children. However, the ACIJ's budget analysis revealed that the city had significantly under spent resources that had been allocated by the local legislature specifically for infrastructure, including the construction of new schools and repairs for existing ones.

In 2006 the ACIJ filed a collective case on behalf of the 6,047 children who had been excluded from public schools. The ACIJ's argument was based on:

- the violation of children's right to education;
- the claim that the right to lead an autonomous life, according to Article 19 of the Constitution, was affected by the denial of basic education, since the ability for individuals to succeed in society depends on access to proper education; and

- unequal employment opportunities that children who are excluded from schools face, compared to those who attend school.

Excluding children from public schools had a greater impact on those who were economically disadvantaged because their parents could not afford to send them to private schools. Their dependence on the state's school system supported a discrimination argument based on the unfair treatment of underprivileged children.

The ACIJ used budget analysis to show consistent government under spending over the past five years. From 2002–2005 the city of Buenos Aires had not spent an average of 32.3 percent of the resources allocated to it for infrastructure, despite the city's infrastructure deficit. Reports by the city's general audit office showed that in 2003, 63 percent of the budget allocated to infrastructure, repairs, and equipment was under executed. The lack of investment in infrastructure had a direct impact on thousands of children who were prevented from attending school.

The judge in the Court of First Instance established that the state should provide free education to infants and children between the ages of 45 days and five years old and ordered the city government to inform the court within 30 days about the works that it claimed during the case were in progress. The city government was required to file within 90 days its work plans for building enough capacity to satisfy the demands of the excluded children. It was required to present disaggregated information by school district, including schools' names and addresses, number of classrooms and children per classroom, information on the status of the works, and dates of completion that were not to extend beyond 2010.

The final decision was based on the argument that the city had established through its constitution a right to education, which placed on it the obligation to progressively realize this right using the maximum available resources. This obligation to ensure access to proper education for all children was reinforced by the right to lead an autonomous life. Though the government argued that it had been adopting measures to guarantee the right to education, the evidence of under spending presented by the ACIJ demonstrated that the problem of unequal access to educational opportunities within the city was not a question of resources but of inefficient administration.

Governments often argue in social rights litigation that they are taking progressive action to realize rights but they are limited by a lack of resources. Interestingly, in this case the budget for education was not diminishing from year-to-year; in fact the resources devoted to educational policies had been increasing steadily. Rather, it was found that high levels of under execution were at the core of the problem.

This case underlines the importance of analyzing not only the allocations made in government budgets but also whether these allocated resources are spent effectively. Often unavoidable political and public opinion pressures during budget debates result in allocations that may not correspond to the government's real priorities and which the government subsequently fails to support. Allocations also may reflect the priorities of previous governments, and though the current government does not share these priorities it may fear the consequences of reducing certain expenditures. A lack of commitment to specific allocations combined with unexpected financial needs that may arise throughout the budget year can result in under or over spending resources.

The case in Buenos Aires shows how important it is to look at budgets when assessing governments' commitment to the realization of rights. The ACIJ's analysis of funds

allocated in the budget to school infrastructure provided key evidence for challenging the government, improved the quality of the judicial review of the case, and informed the court's decision with relevant, concrete data.

For more information, contact Martin Sigal at [msigal@acij.org.ar](mailto:msigal@acij.org.ar).

## **Monitoring Government Spending in Turkey Reveals Inadequate Investments in Children, Youths, Women, and the Disabled by Jay Colburn, International Budget Partnership**

The Public Expenditure Monitoring Platform (PEMP), formed by 30 civil society organizations (CSOs), recently organized a public expenditure monitoring exercise in Turkey that focused on social protection and the rights of women, children, youth, and the disabled. The exercise included a training session on budget monitoring and a public expenditure monitoring camp where smaller working groups monitored and analyzed sector-specific expenditures. The participants consolidated their analyses and sent the results to the members of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

The findings of the PEMP expenditure monitoring exercise showed overall inadequate public spending on social protection (11 percent of GDP, compared to the European average of 26 percent), such as social services, unemployment insurance, and health care. Social service expenditures were predominantly directed toward those with formal employment, which only worsens the existing inequality with those who are unemployed, informally unemployed, and socially excluded. The exercise provided evidence supporting the argument that Turkey's unemployment insurance fund needs to expand its coverage, and make its eligibility criteria more transparent, and ensure that funds are being allocated appropriately and efficiently. The expenditure monitoring effort also found that Health care services, like support for the unemployed, remain underfunded and largely inaccessible to certain segments of society like the unemployed and many women.

The participants also monitored how much was being spent on specific social groups, e.g., children, youth, and the disabled. In a country where 38 percent of the population is under the age of 18, only three percent of the GDP –goes to programs and services, including education, that target children. While the budget for the Social Services and Child Protection Agency is supposed to increase over the next few years, the annual spending per child is expected to decrease by 1,000 Turkish lira (approximately US\$650) by 2014. Expenditures directed to supporting youths are also significantly low and need to be targeted more toward areas like juvenile judiciary services, rather than to sports and education.

The PEMP's expenditure monitoring findings also note the lack of policies and expenditures for the disabled. The current level of regular income support from the Social Security Institution to poor people with disabilities remains highly inadequate. The PEMP argues that all disabled people should be covered by a formal social security system without any contribution requirement, and that this would alleviate some of the existing inequalities.

The budget monitoring exercise concluded that overall public spending on social protection for children, youth, and the disabled needs to increase in order to adequately support and begin to balance some of the inequalities of Turkish society.

To learn more about the public expenditure monitoring exercise, click [here](#).

For more information on the groups that form part of PEMP, go to their website [here](#) or contact Nurhan Yenturk at [yenturk@bilgi.edu.tr](mailto:yenturk@bilgi.edu.tr).

## **Rights-based Budget Framework to Improve Social Housing in Northern Ireland by QUB Budget Analysis Project**

A two-year project — the Budget Analysis and the Advancement of Economic and Social Rights in Northern Ireland — aims to develop a methodology for assessing the government's compliance with the resource-related obligations set out in the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The project team, located in the School of Law at Queens University Belfast, recently published its first case study in which it applies this economic and social rights-based methodology to social housing in Northern Ireland.

The study clarifies government's international law obligations regarding the use of resources in the context of the right to adequate housing. It draws upon comments and statements by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; comparative jurisprudence, and academia to explain the budget implications of key human rights concepts, such as *progressive realization*, *maximum available resources*, *equality and non-discrimination*, and *minimum core obligations*. The framework applied to the specific issue of the right to adequate housing is based on a more general rights-based budget framework document that the project will publish later this year.

In addition to demonstrating how a rights-based budget framework can be applied in practice, the research seeks to inform and influence the debate on housing policy and budgeting in Northern Ireland. The report focuses on the social (i.e., publicly funded) housing sector, which plays a particularly important role in ensuring that low-income households in Northern Ireland enjoy the right to adequate housing. The analysis draws attention to the neoliberal shift in social and economic policy, which led the state to sell large numbers of social housing units to residents at discounted prices (subsidizing owner-occupation) and prompted a long-term disinvestment in social housing in Northern Ireland. Increases in waiting lists for social housing and homelessness over the past 10 years provides evidence of the inability of the social housing sector to accommodate households in need. From a human rights perspective, this represents a failure to progressively realize the right to adequate housing.

The report shows that the level of funding for new construction has failed to progressively increase in line with increasing housing needs. In addition, the study raises a number of concerns in relation to specific aspects of the budget for social housing in Northern Ireland. These include the use of a public-private funding model whereby nonprofit private housing associations borrow money from private lenders to help finance the building of social housing. With regard to the maximum available resources, the research questions the capacity of disparate housing associations to:

- realize economies of scale;
- borrow at favorable rates in the difficult lending environment; and
- acquire the complex skills needed to deliver social housing on a large scale.

The report was launched at an event that was attended by members of civil society and various experts on housing rights in Northern Ireland, including the minister responsible for social housing, who welcomed the report. The Budget Analysis and the Advancement of Economic and Social Rights in Northern Ireland project is funded by Atlantic Philanthropies.

To read the case study, go to the project website at:

<http://www.law.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofLaw/Research/HumanRightsCentre/ResearchProjects/BudgetAnalysis/>

For more information, contact Jennie Finlay at [jennie.finlay@qub.ac.uk](mailto:jennie.finlay@qub.ac.uk).

## **The Impact of the Global Economic Crisis on the Budgets of Low-Income Countries by Katerina Kyrili and Matthew Martin, Oxfam**

Oxfam's recent report titled *The Impact of the Global Economic Crisis on the Budgets of Low-Income Countries* examines Low Income Countries' (LIC) spending to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The global economic crisis created a huge budget revenue hole of \$65bn of which aid has filled only one-third. As a result many LICs are cutting MDG-related spending (especially on education and social protection), applying for expensive domestic loans, and increasing anti-poor sales taxes. The report explores what 56 LICs did in 2009 and plan to do in 2010 to fight-the crisis, protect the poorest, and revive progress toward the MDGs. The report also urges: 1) the international community to make new aid commitments at the Millennium Summit in September 2010, 2) the IMF to encourage LICs to spend more on achieving the MDGs, on combating climate change, and to report regularly on such spending, and 3) LIC governments to increase spending on social protection and education; increase in taxes on income, property, and foreign investors; and fight tax avoidance.

To read the report, go to: <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/impact-global-economic-crisis-lic-budgets-0710.pdf>

## **Where Does Our Money Go? Priority and Progress in the South African Health Budget by Saranne Durham and Len Verwey, Idasa**

The large-scale challenges facing the South African public health sector raise questions of whether the sector is a government priority and if it is making progress. Currently South Africa has the second highest infant mortality rate, the highest maternal mortality rate, and the lowest life expectancy of countries with similar per capita GDPs (e.g., Brazil, Botswana, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Namibia). In democratic South Africa the public health system increasingly serves the poor while an expensive private system assists a minority of citizens.

South Africa continues to fall short of the Abuja Declaration's commitment to allocate 15 percent of the public budget to health, despite the country's poor health outcomes and the detrimental impact of an inefficient health system on South African society and economy. Unlike what is found in the consolidated budget at the national level, health as a percentage share of total provincial budget allocations is substantial, and increasing amounts are allocated to the health sector on a year-to-year basis.

An analysis of the progress in South African health budgets shows that increases in public health allocations generally keep up with, and in some years surpass, the economic growth rate. Nevertheless, a healthy budget needs appropriate health prioritization and increased funding. This is especially true in a country that is facing the significant health challenges South Africa must address.

To read the full article, go to:

[http://www.idasa.org.za/index.asp?page=output\\_details.asp%3FRID%3D2150%26oplang%3Den%26OTID%3D15%26PID%3D44](http://www.idasa.org.za/index.asp?page=output_details.asp%3FRID%3D2150%26oplang%3Den%26OTID%3D15%26PID%3D44)

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## **Newsletter by the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative**

*LGI Announce* is an electronic newsletter with more than 2,500 subscribers published by the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI) of the Open Society Institute. The newsletter includes sections on conferences, calls for papers, professional opportunities, publications, resources, and information about new and innovative projects on governance-related issues, including those that LGI supports. The LGI also accepts posting requests. To subscribe and download the latest issues, please go to: <http://lgi.osi.hu/newsletters.php>.

## **New Website on Human Rights Budget Work Around the World**

The International Human Rights Internship Program (IHRIP) — an ESCR-Net member and part of the budget and ESCR initiative — recently launched a website devoted to human rights budget work: [Human Rights Budget Work Around the World](#). While the website focuses on economic and social rights, it intends to feature budget work to advance civil and political rights more broadly. The website is available in English but will be available in Spanish and French soon. To share information or strategies with other ESCR advocates, subscribe to the [Budget Analysis and ESCR Discussion Group](#).

## **Strengthening the Budget Network: The Partnership Initiative's Third Partners Meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia by Manuela Garza, International Budget Partnership**

“Public budgets and human rights is a strong theme capable of generating significant change in our societies. Thanks to this meeting the birth of a synergy to build an international network around public budgets and human rights begins to become evident.”

**Iara Petricovsky, INESC, Brazil**

Almost four years ago the International Budget Partnership (IBP) began a strategic reflection on its approach to supporting civil society applied budget work around the world. At the heart of this reflection was the goal of taking this work to the next level by focusing on the potential impact of budget analysis and advocacy on the lives of the poor and marginalized.

The IBP and its partners knew that in order to achieve real and sustained impact, the number of civil society organizations (CSOs) using budget analysis and advocacy to advance their social agendas needed to grow, and they

would need to push their efforts to another level. The goal was nothing short of an advocacy explosion, and one of the first key steps taken by the IBP to foster this explosion was to establish the Partnership Initiative (PI).

Today the PI is a core component of the IBP's work and supports CSOs in 20 countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia with resources, learning and networking opportunities, and technical assistance. In June the PI's Third Partners Meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia, was testimony to the growth of a solid, vibrant, and engaged global network of CSOs and social

movements committed to changing the lives of people through impact-oriented budget activities.

The meeting represents a significant leap forward in building the partners' network. The previous meetings in Washington, D.C. (2008) and Rio de Janeiro (2009) represented the initial steps in building the initiative and the network, which at that point was half its current size and strength. In Cambodia over 80 representatives from the PI's 40 partner organizations came together to exchange stories of success, challenges, and frustration in their work to change policies and budgets. The partners shared experiences, insights, and ideas across four different languages, three different continents, and five days of active plenary sessions and passionate interregional working groups. Through this partners became allies and colleagues — realizing that they do not fight their fights in isolation, and that a greater social impact can be achieved by pushing their individual strategies and developing joint advocacy efforts at the international level.

Partners found spaces beyond the formal agenda to establish bilateral and multilateral agendas. Colleagues from Cambodia, Indonesia, and the Philippines agreed to develop a regional working group to learn from each other's work and advance knowledge on the state of budget work in the region. The 17 African organizations in attendance broke language barriers to initiate what is to be an ongoing regional discussion; they will set up a listserv as the first step to continuing the dialogue. The nine Indian organizations continued their discussions on developing a common national-level advocacy agenda and found the opportunity throughout the meeting to move beyond their region and exchange with partners from other countries. The meeting also offered colleagues from Latin America a space to deepen their relations and identify common issues for regional advocacy.

“Apart from the rich exposure to budget analysis experiences from around the world, there were several discussions during the meeting that kindled an innovative way forward. These vigorous discussions inspired us to identify concrete actions to address the minimum standards of decentralization, transparency, and accountability at the subnational level and plan steps toward an international advocacy campaign.”

**N. Paul Divakar, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, India**

Thus the Cambodia meeting was about ownership of the network and true horizontal learning, both of which lay at the core of the PI's mission. For the IBP and PI staff this meeting was the materialization of a goal that began as an idea of what might be possible. The PI team hopes to contribute to the spark needed for a true advocacy explosion and looks forward to the challenges ahead!

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