



INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP
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Want to Tell Your Story?

Has your organization had an impact on government budgets? Would you like the story to be documented and reported? Then email [Albert van Zyl](mailto:Albert.van.Zyl@ibp.org).

Have a look at some examples of previous case studies on the impact of civil society budget analysis and advocacy [here](#).

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Open Budget Survey 2010 Released! By Delaine McCullough, International Budget Partnership

On 19 October 2010 the International Budget Project (IBP) and its civil society partners released the [Open Budget Survey 2010](#), the only independent, comparative, and regular measure of budget transparency and accountability around the world. Implemented and vigorously reviewed by budget experts who are independent of any national government, the 2010 Survey evaluates whether central governments in 94 countries give the public access to budget information and opportunities to participate in the budget process. It also examines the ability of legislatures and auditors to hold the government accountable.

The 2010 Survey finds that 74 of the 94 countries assessed fail to meet basic standards of transparency and accountability when it comes to their national budgets, leaving the door open to the abuse and inappropriate and inefficient use of public money. Of greatest concern are the 40 countries that provide minimal or no information on their budgets, making it extremely difficult for civil society and the public, the media, and oversight institutions to hold the government accountable for its management of public funds.

In order to easily measure how much budget information a government makes publicly available and whether it provides opportunities for the public to participate throughout the budget process, the IBP developed the Open Budget Index (OBI). The OBI assigns a score between 0 and 100 for each country based on the responses to a subset of questions on the Survey and allows for comparisons across countries and over time.

With an OBI 2010 score of 92, South Africa topped the rankings, followed by New Zealand (90), the United Kingdom (87), France (87), Norway (83), Sweden (83), and the United States (82). The least transparent countries include China (13), Saudi Arabia (1), Equatorial Guinea (0), Senegal (3), and newly democratic Iraq (0).

In general, the 2010 Survey presents a dismal picture of the state of budget transparency worldwide. However, it also identifies a positive trend — in the 40 countries that have been measured over three consecutive rounds of the Survey; there has been a nearly 20 percent improvement in the average performance on the OBI. Some of the most dramatic improvements came from previously low-scoring countries, such as Mongolia and Liberia, which still do not meet best practices but have improved significantly over time.

The 2010 Survey data reveal a strong correlation between a country's lack of budget transparency and whether it relies heavily on oil and gas revenue, receives significant amounts of foreign aid, or has an authoritarian government. However, there are countries that perform well in each of these categories, demonstrating that even in challenging contexts governments can establish open, participatory, and accountable budget systems, if they have sufficient political will.

The 2010 Survey shows that countries that have been assessed over time have been able to improve their performance quickly and at little cost by publishing the considerable budget information that they already produce for internal government purposes or for their donors. This is a critical step for countries to take as research has shown that greater transparency enables better oversight, better access to credit, better policy choices, better service delivery, and greater legitimacy.

To see the complete results of the Open Budget Survey 2010, including detailed analysis, methodology, and recommendations, go to: www.openbudgetindex.org.

The IBP and its Civil Society Partners Release the Open Budget Survey 2010 at Events Around the World by Delaine McCullough, International Budget Partnership

At a series of events in Washington, D.C., and across Europe beginning on 19 October 2010, the International Budget Partnership (IBP) released the findings from the [Open Budget Survey 2010](#) and began dialogues with civil society, the donor community, and governments over the critical need for more transparent, inclusive, and accountable budget systems, and what can be done about it. The first of these international releases was co-hosted by Oxfam America and was attended by a number of D.C.-based nongovernmental organizations. This was followed on 20 October by a presentation and panel discussion hosted by the World Bank Institute, which drew almost 100 staff members of the Bank and included a lively discussion about open budgeting, including how appropriate guidelines for public participation in budget processes might be determined.

Over the next 10 days, IBP staff members made 2010 Survey presentations to the U.K. Department for International Development (UKaid), the Dutch Foreign Ministry, the Swedish Foreign Ministry and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the European Commission, the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), and for U.K. policy groups organized by the Overseas Development Institute. In addition to these events, IBP staff members met with key officials from the British, French, Dutch, and Swedish governments to discuss the role that donors play in supporting more transparent and accountable budget systems in the countries to which they give aid.

What came out clearly at these various meetings and events was that the Open Budget Index is widely recognized by bilateral and multilateral donors and institutions as a key tool for assessing budget transparency practices globally, and that budget transparency has important implications for policy choices, efficient and effective use of public funds, and

responsive and accountable governance. What also came out of these discussions was a strong interest in the idea of an international norm that could codify broadly accepted principles and guidelines for transparency and public participation in public budget processes.

Accompanying these international discussions are events at the national and regional level. Nearly all of the [Open Budget Initiative's](#) civil society partners in the 94 countries included in the 2010 Survey are undertaking a variety of release activities, ranging from social media launches to press conferences to policy forums and meetings with public officials. In order to bring some pressure from regional competition to bear on these national advocacy efforts, the IBP is collaborating with its partners in a series of regional launches. To date a Southern Africa event was held in Mozambique (21-22 October), one for East Africa in Rwanda (1 November), and the South American event in Bogota, Colombia (5 November). Each combined presentations of the 2010 Survey results (read the brief prepared by partners in East Africa, [Can People Follow Their Money?](#)) with discussions on their relevance for the region and were attended by civil society actors, government officials, donor representatives, and the media. Over the next month similar regional events will be held in Southeast Asia (Cambodia), South Asia (Sri Lanka), Francophone Africa (Burkina Faso), Anglophone West Africa (Nigeria), Central Asia (Kazakhstan), Central America (Guatemala), and the Middle East-North Africa (Jordan).

In the first two weeks following the release of the 2010 Survey, it has already garnered substantial media coverage, including pieces in the [Financial Times](#), the [Guardian](#), the [Economist](#), and the [Wall Street Journal](#), as well as nearly 100 articles and blog postings in national media outlets.

To read the global coverage of the 2010 Open Budget Survey so far, and to track what is to come, visit [OBI in the News](#).

Two Newly Released Indexes Illuminate Government Revenue Practices by Kathryn Joyce, Revenue Watch Institute

In October the Revenue Watch Institute (RWI) and Transparency International launched a pioneering measurement of government disclosure in the management of oil, gas, and minerals. The Revenue Watch Index, which ranks transparency in 41 of the world's top producers of petroleum, gold, copper, and diamonds, is the first attempt to measure and compare the information governments disclose related to revenues received from extractive industries.

In nearly all the countries reviewed, natural resources are public assets, managed in trust by the government. Transparent access to information is a prerequisite for effectively managing this complex sector, and for citizens to hold their governments accountable, combat corruption, and ensure successful national development.

The Revenue Watch Index evaluates the availability of information in seven key areas of natural resource management, including contracts and payments to governments.

The Index found that the majority of countries examined – 29 out of 41 – provide only limited public information about the oil, gas, and mining industries, undermining citizen efforts to hold these governments accountable. It found substantial room for improvement in nearly all the countries surveyed.

"In too many countries, governments give citizens little information about this crucial part of the economy," said RWI Director Karin Lissakers, who released the Index on 6 October at a briefing in Washington, D.C. "Without access to information, the public has very limited influence on how governments manage the resources and how governments use the revenues."

Together with the International Budget Partnership's (IBP) [Open Budget Survey](#) 2010, the Revenue Watch Index offers a complementary overview of transparency levels across countries. The Index reviews government transparency on revenues related to extractive industries, and the IBP Survey takes a comprehensive measure of how open and accountable government budgets are by evaluating the information made available on all public revenues and how those revenues are spent, as well as the strength of oversight institutions.

The majority of countries fare similarly in the Open Budget Index and Revenue Watch Index, but there are several striking differences between the two studies' findings for particular countries. For example, Kazakhstan ranks seventh in the Revenue Watch Index but 57th in the Open Budget Survey. Its high ranking in the Index reflects its relatively comprehensive release of information related to revenues from extractive industries through 2009, while its poor performance in the Open Budget Survey is because the government makes minimal information on the complete budget publicly available. In contrast, Ghana comes in near the bottom on the Revenue Watch Index (35th out of 41 countries), while it does a better job on the Open Budget Survey, ranking 35th out of 94 countries.

These examples demonstrate clearly is that a government can be relatively transparent about a specific revenue source without providing its citizens comprehensive information on the budget in its entirety, and vice versa. There is no automatic positive "spillover" for budget transparency of greater revenue transparency and visa versa, or at least without additional pressure to make sure that greater openness in one part of the budget process translates into greater openness of the budget process as a whole.

To read the Revenue Watch Index, go to:
<http://www.revenuwatch.org/rwindex2010/index.html?q=rwindex>

For more information, contact Kathryn Joyce at kjoyce@revenuwatch.org or Robert Ruby at rruby@revenuwatch.org.

Aid Transparency Assessment by Claudia Elliot, Publish What You Fund

In October [Publish What You Fund](#) released the first-ever global Aid Transparency Assessment, which looks at the transparency of 30 major donors across seven indicators from eight data sources. The indicators include commitment to aid transparency, transparency to recipient governments, and transparency to civil society. You can find the assessment on the [Publish What You Fund's website](#), where [visualizations and interactive data](#) show how the donors have been ranked. These tools allow users not only to browse the study's results but also to assign different weights to the three main indicators and see how the overall ranking changes as a result.

The first major findings highlight how essential it is that donors develop an international standard for collecting and reporting information on aid flows. In putting the assessment together, Publish What You Fund faced a notable lack of comparable data, meaning that it

was not able to conduct the bottom-up kind of work initially planned. However, the indicators developed from the limited data that was available provide an interesting comparison of current levels of donor transparency. Publish What You Fund plans to repeat this study every year with the hope that there will be more comprehensive, comparable, and timely data to draw on in the future.

Publish What You Fund emphasizes aid transparency because it is an important and relatively uncontroversial means of improving aid delivery and accountability. Ideally, all players should benefit from increased transparency. Opponents of current aid practices can still support a movement toward greater transparency, while supporters of aid can use the new information to drive improvements in aid usage. Increased transparency could reduce the uncertainty of future funding for recipient governments and help them track aid projects already underway in their countries. Donors also would benefit from a better understanding of the impact and the use of their funds.

Meanwhile, citizens and civil society in aid-recipient countries can more easily hold their governments accountable when they can access information about aid coming to their country, while citizens in donor countries also should be informed about how their money is spent. The need for this is clear: currently, citizens often overestimate the amount their government spends on aid, as in the U.K., where people estimated that 18.55 percent of government spending went to aid (the real figure was 1.3 percent).

As with the findings of the International Budget Partnership's [Open Budget Index 2010](#), the state of aid and budget transparency is currently poor, which means that the public cannot know if their government is spending their tax money to best effect. Wide variations in levels of donor aid transparency were found, with some major donors showing significant weakness across the seven indicators. The highest performing donor — the World Bank — achieved 85.4 percent, more than double the transparency score of the lowest ranking — Japan, with 41.9 percent.

The work of Publish What You Fund goes beyond tracking, however, with its advocacy campaigns to pressure the world's largest donors — in particular, the European Union, the United States, and the World Bank — to increase the amount of information they make available about the aid they give. Additionally, it has worked with donors to make aid information more accessible to the public. For example, in a project with the U.K. Department for International Development (UKaid), Publish What You Fund assisted in the creation of a [visualization](#) of where money was spent from 2004 to 2009.

The Aid Transparency Assessment will be presented at the [International Anti-Corruption Conference](#) in Bangkok in November and in Washington, D.C., in early December.

For more information, contact Claudia Elliot at claudia.elliott@publishwhatyoufund.org.

Ask Your Government: Listen to What Happens When Governments in Five African Countries Are Asked for Budget Information by Rocío Campos, International Budget Partnership

In September the International Budget Partnership (IBP), along with nine other international organizations [1] launched the [Ask Your Government \(AYG\) Initiative](#): the most extensive cross-country exercise to access public budget information to date.

In 86 countries around the world, IBP partners asked their governments for specific budget information related to the countries' development commitments, including maternal health, aid effectiveness, and environmental protection. As part of the initiative, five African partners — the Social Development Network in Kenya, the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN), Idasa in South Africa, the Uganda Debt Network (UDN), and the Economic Association of Zambia (EAZ) — recorded audio diaries of their efforts to request and obtain budget information from their governments on these issues. Based on the audio diaries, the IBP produced a five-part radio series to inform the public about their right to ask for and receive public budget information, why this information is relevant to their lives, and how responsive their governments are to information requests.

The radio series is currently being broadcast by Bush Radio, Radio Khwezi, and Vukani Community Radio in South Africa; Zodiak FM in Malawi; 93.3 KFM in Uganda; Joy FM in Zambia; and Kenya Broadcasting Corporation in Kenya. Listen to the five programs here: [Part 1: Why Access to Budget Information Matters](#), [Part 2: Dear Government I Have Some Questions](#), [Part 3: Where is the Money for Maternal Health?](#), [Part 4: Will the Government Respond to My Questions?](#), and [Part 5: Access to Budget Information: Where Do We Go From Here?](#)

Radio in Africa is a very powerful and effective means of mass communication because it is widely accessible — owning a radio is inexpensive, radio broadcasts are capable of reaching urban and rural populations, and most people can understand program content regardless of their literacy levels. In Uganda, for instance, radio reaches almost 97 percent of adults over 18 years old weekly and, therefore, is the most effective form of media for disseminating information to young adults. The leading commercial radio station in Uganda, 93.3 KFM, offers time for current news stories and transmitted the IBP radio series in English. With a signal radius of over 200 km, the broadcast covered the city of Kampala, as well as Busia, Karuma, Kumi, Lyantonde, Mbale, and Mubende.

Imelda Nammaga from the UDN reports that during the broadcasts at 93.3 KFM, callers wanted to find out how people in their areas could access public information, and why access to information is important to citizens in rural areas. Imelda reported receiving “a lot of feedback from the people who listened to the talk shows who felt that they were very timely since we are now approaching the elections and this would force leaders to put the issue of access to information on their agendas. Others felt that the issues discussed were very pertinent as they hint on issues that affect people's daily lives and would put pressure on the government to become more transparent in availing information to the public since citizens are now beginning to realize that they have a right to access public information.”

In South Africa three radio stations ran the five-part radio series: Bush Radio, which is based in Cape Town and is one of Africa's oldest community radio stations; Radio Khwezi, one of South Africa's leading regional community radio stations covering most of the KwaZulu/Natal Midlands; and Vukani Community Radio, based in the rural town of Cala in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. Together the audience of these radio stations represents 406,000 listeners in Afrikaans, English, German, and Xhosa.

At a time when the South African government is considering legislation on the Protection of Information and establishing a Tribunal for the Media, the AYG Initiative and the radio series are timely civil society interventions, according Thembinkosi Dlamini from Idasa. Dlamini, who recorded the audio diaries and participated in the radio programs transmitted by Bush Radio, explained that both bills are a step back from the progressive Promotion of Access to Information Act 2000.

Similarly, in Malawi, Dalitso Kingsley Kubalasa from the MEJN commented on the timeliness of the broadcasts, referring to the recent national launch of the [Open Budget Survey 2010](#) and the public's attention to the work of the Common Approach to Budget Support, a group of donors that provide aid to the government of Malawi through general budget support. It is currently assessing the government's progress to strengthen its governance practices, particularly those related to anti-corruption efforts.

Kubalasa recorded the audio diaries for Malawi and attended the broadcasts at the Zodiak Broadcasting Station (ZBS). ZBS is a privately owned radio station with headquarters in Lilongwe. It focuses on the needs and interests of the underprivileged, especially the rural poor. ZBS was so excited with the radio programs that it offered additional air time to the series in order to promote the right to access budget information for rural Malawians. Four of the programs included live studio discussions in which listeners sent in text messages with their questions in English and Chichewa, and two were pre-recorded village debates in central Malawi district of Mchinji. Local villagers, including two senior chiefs and three representatives from the District Council, attended the debates.

Kubalasa reports that two government officials attended the broadcasts: a member of the Budget and Finance Committee of Parliament, Hon. Sosten Gwengwe, and a public relations officer for the National Audit Office, Mr. Timothy Sandram. Their participation offered an opportunity for listeners to reach for their cell phones and send at least a couple of dozen instant messages with questions about the issues raised during the programs. Many callers wanted to know if budget transparency is possible in Malawi. Hon. Gwengwe responded that it is, and Kubalasa supported this assertion by referring to the [Open Budget Index 2010](#), a measure of how transparent governments in 94 countries are about their budgets. The OBI 2010 shows that Malawi improved its score from 28 in 2008 to 47 in 2010. Hon. Gwengwe reiterated that perhaps Malawi could do even better by enacting a budget law that would enable parliament to have a budget office to interact and collaborate with independent institutions like MEJN and other members of civil society.

In central Lusaka, Zambia, one of the newest private radio stations in the country, Joy FM, broadcasted the five-part radio programs. Joy FM is also a member of the African platform on access to information. Kaalu Mubita from the EAZ recorded the audio diaries in Zambia and participated in the Joy FM programs. He reported that the callers' views and questions reflected the public's interest in public participation in the budget process, the absence of budget information that is both available and accessible, and thus the need for additional mechanisms to make budget information broadly available. Some of the questions, comments, and suggestions include:

- Where can one get a budget document?
- Can a citizen make suggestions or comments to the national budget after it has been presented in the national assembly?
- Even if the document was available at our government offices, would it be affordable to most citizens?
- Access to information is central to any development process and raises issues about our national budget document: it uses very technical language, which makes it hard to understand for nontechnical people; it needs to be circulated all over the country to provide opportunities for all citizens to understand the budget and provide input; and to increase accessibility and understanding, there should be a print-out version in local languages, as not everyone can read English.

In countries that have an access to information law, like South Africa, the broadcasts served as an opportunity for callers to share their experiences requesting public information from

the government, including one who was told to focus on what was happening at the municipal level when asking for information about national budgets. Other callers were not aware that they could actually ask questions to which the government would be obliged to respond.

In all five countries the public was intrigued by how they could use access to budget information to improve their livelihoods. The public intuitively linked the issue of access to budget information with other events in their countries like the electoral process in Uganda, the external donor assessment in Malawi, and the impact of having or not having access to information laws in their respective countries. In addition to the IBP's civil society partner organizations and government officials, other panelists present in the broadcasts included Dorothy Ngoma, a leading Maternal Health Advocate in Malawi, and Mukelani Dimba, Deputy Director of the Open Democracy Advice Center in South Africa.

To listen to the five-part radio programs, go to:

<http://www.internationalbudget.org/library/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3754>

To learn more about the Ask Your Government Initiative, go to:

<http://www.internationalbudget.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3653>

[1] [White Ribbon Alliance](#), [Family Care International](#), and the [Averting Maternal Death and Disability Program](#) at Columbia University prepared the maternal health questions; the aid effectiveness questions were prepared by [Publish What You Fund](#), [Oxfam America](#), and Development Initiatives; and the environmental questions were prepared by the [World Resources Institute](#) and the [International Institute for Sustainable Development](#). In addition to these core partners, the Ask Your Government Initiative has been joined by dozens of [national and international organizations](#).

Radio Broadcasts Monitor Service Delivery in East Africa by Catherine Kell, Twaweza

Twaweza's work in East Africa is based on a bottom-up approach to promoting new and creative technologies for development. Although citizen budget monitoring is not one of Twaweza's program areas, citizens' ability to monitor government expenditure is central to its mission. This is why Twaweza promotes activities in which ordinary people can use their mobile phones and other means of disseminating and receiving information to monitor public service delivery. Twaweza believes that frequent and targeted information on government expenditure and service delivery issues can improve the effectiveness and coordination of stakeholders and, consequently, improve the quality of and access to basic services. The goal is to provide citizens with information on how the government spends public money so that they can more effectively participate in public debates and hold government to account.

In Tanzania the popular radio program *Kero* ("annoyance" in English) allows citizens to call in and discuss their concerns. Many Tanzanians feel that the government listens to this program and that problems raised by callers have been fixed. Twaweza hopes to build on this momentum for citizen reporting and support government accountability movements across East Africa. It supports a television program called Daladala, in which ordinary people ride a small bus (a "Daladala") fitted with a small television studio. During the ride passengers participate in vibrant discussions on such topics as government spending.



Daladala bus in Tanzania

Twaweza also works with partners that use media and mobile phones to help citizens become agents of change. [Daraja](#), for example, a partner organization working in rural Tanzania, works to make the government more accountable for providing access to and maintaining water points. As part of the "Raising the Water Pressure" project, citizens send instant messages using their mobile phones to report broken water points or water access problems in their community. The instant messages are filtered to partner radio stations that then interview the messenger or report on the problem. The resultant increase in public awareness about broken and neglected water points around the country can pressure the Ministry of Water to spend funds where they are needed the most and demand accountability from the appropriate public water-repair services.

Twaweza focuses on access to basic services like clean water, primary health care, and basic education, involving ordinary citizens to generate their own information and become part of the solution. As in the Daraja example, mobile phones can provide a powerful tool because they allow people to receive information, express their opinions, report on community problems, and organize around a practical issue.

For more information, contact Catherine Kell at ckell@twaweza.org.

In Azerbaijan Radio Programs Promote Public Participation in Budget Transparency Issues by Rena Rzayeva, National Budget Group

Since 2006 the National Budget Group (NBG) in Azerbaijan has conducted budget analysis at the state level. In 2007 Transparency International with support from NBG experts,

started working with the media more actively, including television and radio broadcasters, to increase the public's knowledge of and participation in budget issues.

The radio station [Azadliq Radiosu](#), or Radio Liberty, airs discussions on access to budget information. One of its programs told the story of how commercial trucks had been stopped at the Azeri border for several days after refusing to pay a bribe, even though they had appropriate documentation and had made all official payments. This issue was settled soon after the businessman who owned the trucks exposed the corrupt customs officials on the radio program. Participants discussed the impact of bribery on the budget and the economy.

Another radio program talked about how journalists who investigate budget expenditures have fewer problems obtaining official data on the amounts allocated to the social sector than they do trying to find out how money was actually spent. Using information from other sources, the journalists revealed the misuse of state funds, which led to public demands for accountability.

The radio programs provide citizens with current, valuable budget information from qualified independent experts, which increases their awareness and promotes discussion and participation in budget issues. The structure of the programs allows members of government and the public to express and debate their positions and provides the public with a forum to call for effective and transparent use of public resources.

The effectiveness of the programs can be judged in part by the number of comments and requests made on these topics. Before these broadcasts, budget issues were covered in isolated discussions and generated minimal public input. This changed once the station introduced regular evening programs on budget issues to accommodate workers' schedules in urban and rural areas, which increased interest among education institutions, businesses, civil society organizations, and small entrepreneurs. Examples of engagement include:

- a case in which local media in Ganja, Azerbaijan, conducted a project on corruption based on the Transparency International program that featured the local university president, students, and teachers discussing corruption issues; and
- small entrepreneurs sending in requests that stations feature programs devoted to particular budget topics.

The simple language and format of the radio programs draw diverse groups with different levels of understanding of budget issues. The programs also offer a space for dialogue between the public and the government, which has built trust among citizens and served as an effective tool to increase government accountability and budget transparency.

Given the wide interest in the program Transparency International launched another project called [Korrupsiometr](#) on successful tools for individuals to take action on budget transparency issues. The NBG hopes to start various budget advocacy projects using radio, as well as television and online, debates.

To listen to the radio programs and current live broadcasts, go to: <http://www.azadliq.org/>.

For more information, contact Rena Rzayeva at office@nbg.az.

The 10 Missing Priorities of the Mexican Budget: A Civil Society Campaign by Elisa Walton, International Budget Partnership

The International Budget Partnership's partner Fundar, a civil society organization based in Mexico City, recently launched the campaign, "Las diez faltantes" ("The 10 Missing Ones"), seeking to bring attention to the Mexican government's spending priorities during the economic crisis. In 2009 the federal government spent 4.9 million pesos on official advertising, a significant overrun from budget projections. The amount spent on official advertising has increased by 501 percent from 2006 and, in 2009, was more than the entire expenditure of the Ministry of Labor.

This is exacerbated by dysfunctional government accounting and a lack of transparency. Despite a lower advertising allotment in 2010, it is too early to tell if the government has followed its pattern of spending more than projected on publicity and subsequently shifting funds to this area. Fundar argues that this situation is unacceptable, and that the only legitimate use of official communications is to inform citizens about laws, services, and programs and to promote the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

To highlight the impact of government spending decisions, Fundar has outlined what it considers 10 missing priorities in the Mexican budget. Many of its recommendations for greater public spending revolve around healthcare: e.g., improving the use of public funds for healthcare and medication, increasing spending on AIDS treatment, reducing out-of-pocket costs, and increasing the number of clinics and hospitals, without which increases in health spending have a limited impact. Additionally, Fundar suggests strengthening accountability measures for health funds spent at the local level so that the funds are administered in a results-oriented manner. Fundar also emphasizes the importance of transparency in other areas of government in order to improve accountability, strengthen democracy, and increase citizen participation and trust in government.

To reach its target audience, i.e., the national executive and legislative branches, political parties, media, and the general public, Fundar has used a variety of strategies, including an online campaign. In order to reach a wider audience and to emphasize the relevance of budget issues, Fundar created a new website dedicated to the 10 areas of concern and a Youtube video disseminated through Twitter and Facebook.

The online campaign has been supplemented by postcards and a space on Fundar's website dedicated to the cause, as well as through meetings of civil society and legislators. In only a few weeks, the video has attracted over 530 viewers. However, Fundar hopes that the campaign will reach many more. Along with raising awareness and attempting to increase social spending, Fundar is also urging the enactment of a law to define the correct uses for government spending on communications.

To learn more about the campaign and watch the video, go to:
<http://www.las10faltantes.com/lasdiez/>.

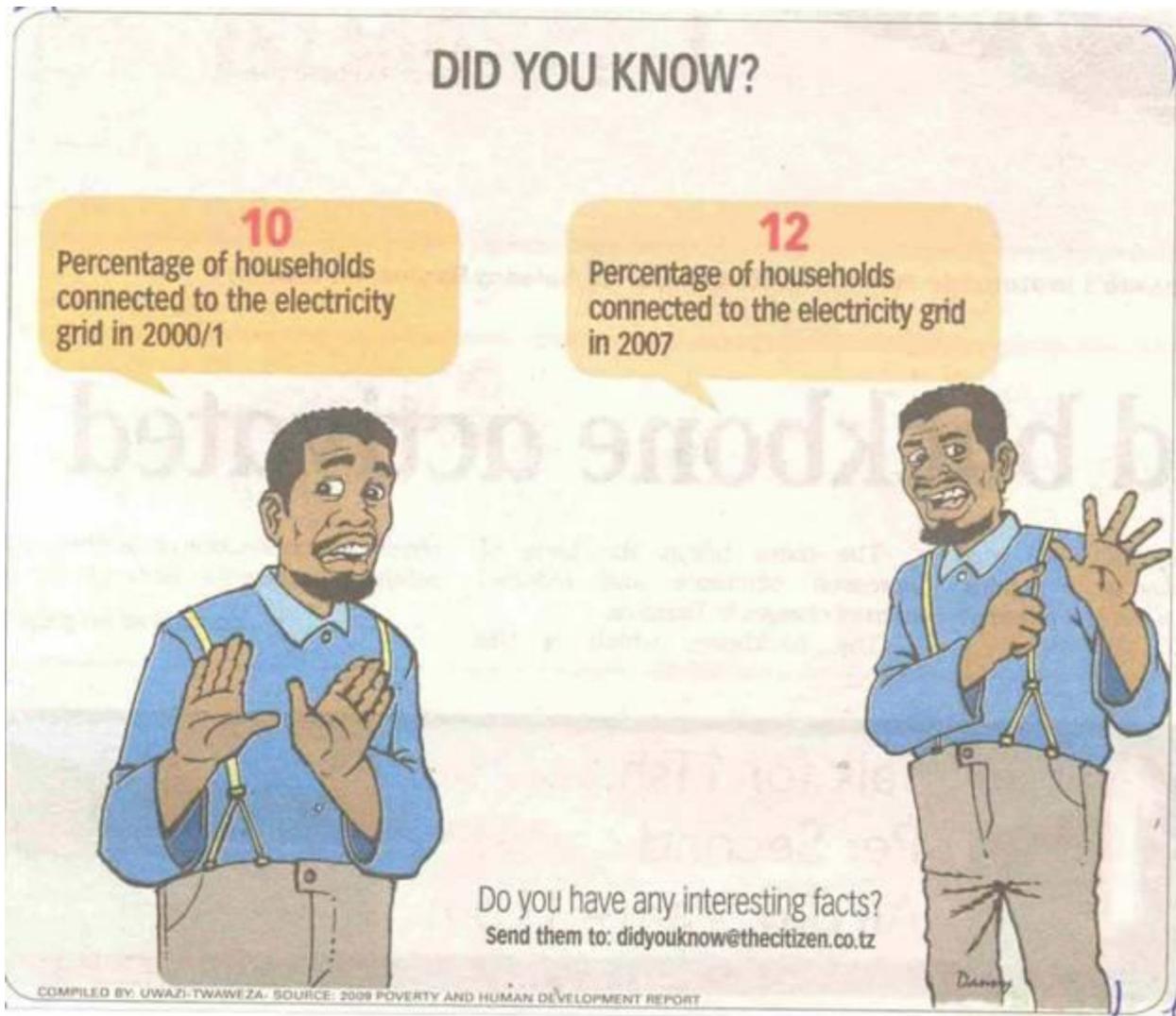
For more information, contact Rocío Moreno at rocio@fundar.org.mx

Using Cartoons to Improve Public Budget Decisions in East Africa by Catherine Kell, Twaweza

Twaweza's info-shop, also known as Uwazi, is pioneering ways to make data more readily available to citizens in order to improve public budget decisions in East Africa. Uwazi operates under the premise that while data is available, it is not accessible to key stakeholders. To address this, Uwazi utilizes cartoons in national newspapers to get information out to citizens about government spending.

Chaguo Letu, which means "It Is Our Choice," is a weekly cartoon series that appears in the *Raia Mwema* newspaper. The cartoon compares different ways in which budget expenditures can be used. In the example below a man is scratching his head as he thinks about two public spending options for Tsh 35 million: 50 palm trees to decorate Dar es Salaam before the arrival of the 2010 World Economic Forum delegation or 1,150 desks for Tanzanian schools that often lack basic supplies.

Another innovative use of cartoons by Uwazi is the "Did You Know?" series, known in Swahili as "Je, Wajua?" The cartoon features a man who presents two simple budget facts from which to draw comparisons. For example: "11.7 percent of the budget was allocated to health in 2007/8" and "8.2 percent of budget was allocated to health in 2009/10." Twaweza argues that this series is a powerful way for citizens to understand their current situation in relation to previous years and other nations, and hopes that this information will compel people to take action.



Uwazi's website also has a counter that tracks the number of allowances paid to government officials since 1 July 2009, which has already surpassed more than Tsh 553 million (approximately US\$370 million). Twaweza is currently setting up monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the impact of its efforts to improve governance, accountability, and transparency in East Africa.

Both cartoon series are run in the daily newspapers *The Citizen* and *Mwananchi* and are available here: <http://uwazi.org/>

For more information, contact Catherine Kell at ckell@twaweza.org.

Using Role-play to Influence Budget Priorities by Pooja Parvati, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability

The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) in India has adopted a strategy to facilitate budget awareness and advocacy from the perspective of the poor and marginalized. In the CBGA's capacity-building workshops trainers rely on games and group exercises to explain the technicalities of the budget process. One of these games explores

how to influence budget priorities and examines how these are not merely determined by government officials but by other actors who can influence government.

The game starts by explaining who influences budget priorities in the country. Flashcards are prepared with the names of select actors, according to the number of participants (e.g., 20 flashcards for 20 participants). The names of the select institutional/individual actors are identified based on the country's budget process. In the case of India the cards include:

1. Minister of Finance, Government of India
2. Planning Commission of India
3. Finance Commission of India
4. Reserve Bank of India
5. Government-funded Research Institution
6. Member of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education
7. Secretary, Ministry of Finance
8. Influential Businessperson
9. International Financial Institution (e.g., World Bank)
10. Trade Union (e.g., Centre of Indian Trade Unions)
11. Rich Farmers' Lobby (e.g., Federation of Sugarcane Growers Associations)
12. Business Chambers (e.g., Confederation of Indian Industries)
13. Civil Society Organization
14. Migrant laborer
15. *Dalit* (or Scheduled Caste) woman
16. Disabled child
17. 60-year old man without pension and other benefits
18. Tea-kiosk operator
19. Journalist of leading newspaper
20. Landless farmer

Each participant role-plays one of the actors and answers the questions:

- Do you influence the priorities of the country's budgets?
- If you do, why are you able to influence budget decisions? Is the extent of your influence justified?
- If you do not, why are you not being able to influence budget decisions? Are the limits on your influence justified?

What follows is a vibrant exchange in which the participants examine their respective roles and debate the need to change the *status quo*. The game generates budget awareness among members who have a basic knowledge of budget issues and provides a thorough understanding of the level of participation of various stakeholders in determining budget priorities. The participants are able to empathize with the responsibilities of each actor, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and realize that a majority of important stakeholders are left out of the budget process. Finally participants also discuss how to strengthen the role of civil society organizations and the media in the budget process to increase government accountability.

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Panos London's Tactics to Bring Greater Media Coverage to Poverty and Development Issues by Elisa Walton, International Budget Partnership

The international economic crisis has worsened the economic situation in many African countries, slowing the progress toward the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, high levels of inequality and social exclusion in Kenya and rising food and fuel prices in Tanzania promote social instability and higher unemployment. According to Panos London, a civil society organization that seeks to increase the involvement of the poor and marginalized in debates on development, greater participation and information sharing between researchers and the media on poverty issues is necessary to overcome these problems.

In order to promote greater accountability, generate public debates on social inequality, and increase citizen participation in decision-making processes — currently dominated by technical experts and influential groups — Panos London designed a set of media trainings and outreach activities in East Africa, particularly in Kenya and Tanzania. It followed up on these with a regional meeting in Uganda. In these countries the shared lack of confidence and trust between the media and researchers has led to a lack of collaboration between them. Hence the media trainings look to create the necessary skills among journalists and the interest among editors to increase coverage on poverty-related issues over the long term. At the same time, Panos London hopes to increase contacts between researchers and journalists to foster better communication, combining the information and analysis of researchers with the media's wider access to the public.

Panos London has already brought together 40 journalists (20 each from Tanzania and Kenya) to participate in the workshops. Further trainings in January 2011 will bring together 10 journalists and 10 researchers from each country. Each journalist will write a story that will be published next spring through an international fellowship program run by Panos London. The Panos website will highlight the best stories and will also send them to approximately 2,500 international contacts. A regional workshop in Uganda planned for next summer will gather lessons-learned from the process. Panos Eastern Africa will organize the events and work with in-country trainers and specialists.

Other tactics, beyond the workshops, include disseminating media briefs to give journalists an understanding of debates on economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries, supplemented by tips on how to explore possible stories. These briefings and other materials, such as information about the recent financial crisis, a glossary of important economic terms, and a bibliography with further sources of information, will also be disseminated throughout Africa and South Asia through links on external websites.

For more information on the project and for related resources, go to:
<http://www.panos.org.uk/?lid=32850>.

Best Practices Award in Public Administration in Peru: Transparency and Access to Information by Caroline Gibu, Ciudadanos al Día

The Award for Best Practices in Public Administration (Premio BPG in Spanish), organized in Peru each year by Ciudadanos al Día (CAD) with the support of Defensoría del Pueblo, seeks to highlight best practices in the public sector that have benefitted the public and that can be replicated by other government entities. It recognizes excellence in public administration, as well as those public servants who do their job well.

Throughout its six editions, the Award focuses on issues related to transparency and access to information, with an emphasis on the innovative ideas that have contributed to greater collaboration between government institutions and the citizenry through increasing access to and dissemination of public information.

Public entities should keep in mind that the information that they produce belongs to the public. It is, therefore, necessary to create channels through which to share information within and among government entities and, especially, with citizens. In the case of Peru, the main challenge for government actors is to understand that the manner in which information in the public domain is handled has changed. The Law of Transparency and Access to Information established two alternatives to transmit public information to the public: the electronic portal, and the request for access to information.

Best practices in public administration in transparency and access to information are those that use the two aforementioned tools, as well as other mechanisms, to ensure that useful, complete, pertinent, comprehensible, and current information reaches the citizenry.

With successive editions of the Award, public entities have notably optimized the channels for giving out information and improved their efficiency, making better use of technology in each round. Similarly, best practices for transparency and access to information have shown a continual evolution. As a result, formerly basic websites with the requisite information have evolved into mediums for more efficient public information services that support accountability and decision-making processes.

This year the Award's technical team, headed by Mirtha Correa and comprising more than 50 outstanding professionals, has honored 10 best practices on transparency and access to information.

To learn more about this year's winners and Award, go to:
http://www.ciudadanosaldia.org/premiobpg2010/BPG_2010/PremioBPG2010.htm.

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Using the Basic Needs Basket as an Advocacy Tool by Miniva Chibuye, Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection

The Basic Needs Basket (BNB) Manual prepared by the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) in Zambia, seeks to promote critical assessments of poverty and its causes in Zambia (see <http://www.internationalbudget.org/resources/newsletter49.htm#JCTR>). The BNB has served as an effective instrument for advocacy on various social, economic, and political decisions.

Every month the BNB is accompanied by a press release, published by electronic and print media, highlighting some of the policy and strategy issues that need to be addressed to improve the quality of life for the poor. This has greatly contributed to the BNB's usage and popularity among international scholars, embassies, and international organizations, as seen in citations by the 2003 United Nations Human Development Report and the 2005 World Bank Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment Report on Zambia. The BNB is referred to as an influential tool that indicates the degree of the consumer's vulnerability when commodity costs rise without a commensurate increase in income levels.

The BNB's wide usage and popularity can also be attributed to the fact that it is simple to understand, accurate, and consistent, and that it can be used to highlight the gap between the actual needs of families and the wages offered in the formal sector. This has allowed the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions and other government and private unions to use the BNB as a negotiating tool for wage adjustments.

At the policy level the BNB was used to advocate for an increase in the annual income tax threshold, the level at which employees start paying income tax. This was done through submissions to the Ministry of Finance and National Planning and subsequent appearances before the Parliamentary Estimates Committee. The rationale was to increase the purchasing power of low-income earners. While the government has responded by ensuring that the threshold meets at least the basic food requirements for an average family, the increments are usually eroded during the year due to inflation in the price of food.

The success of the BNB in Zambia has stirred considerable interest regionally. For instance, under the auspices of the Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar, the JCTR has trained justice and peace groups from 10 African countries. Currently, three countries are actively implementing BNB activities, while five are in the pilot process.

One of the major challenges faced by the BNB is that while it has gained legitimacy in discussions on the country's development, it has not yet been endorsed by the government as an official statistical tool. This recognition would facilitate incorporating the BNB in government strategies and documents and act as a proxy measure of poverty. According to the 2005 World Bank Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment Report on Zambia "taking the JCTR cost of living as a poverty line would imply higher poverty rates than those presented by the World Bank."

The most recent Basic Needs Basket can be found [here](#).
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A Review of Joachim Wehner's *Legislatures and the Budget Process: The Myth of Fiscal Control* by Rick Stapenhurst, Parliamentary Adviser, World Bank Institute

One of the most important issues facing legislatures today is how they can effectively oversee the formulation (*ex-ante*) and audit (*ex-post*) stages of the budget process. Therefore, it is surprising that until now, with the exception of some work on the U.S. Congress and other individual countries, little has been written on the role of the legislature in terms of budget formulation or audits. Wehner's book fills this void with a rigorous, large-scale statistical study of the role of the legislature in budget formulation and two in-depth country case studies. In so doing he extends his former contributions to the field of legislative studies, namely his articles "Assessing the Power of the Purse: An Index of Legislative Budget Institutions," [1] and "Budget Reform and Legislative Control in Sweden." [2] This is not to imply, however, that this book is merely a rehash of previous articles. It is drawn from Wehner's doctoral research at the London School of Economics, itself seminal, and presents a framework for analyzing cross-national data on legislative institutional design for *ex-ante* budget oversight. Questions considered include:

- How can we measure and compare legislative budgeting across countries?
- What factors explain cross-national variation?
- Do countries differ in the way that legislatures engage in the budget?

- How does this affect fiscal policy?
- What are the implications for institutional reforms?

The book covers four main areas:

- A succinct overview of the topic and a short but comprehensive review of the literature (chapters 1 and 2)
- Empirical analysis from which the author proposes an index of legislative budget institutions (chapter 3)
- Analysis that considers factors that account for the cross-national variation in the legislatures' role in budget formulation (chapter 4) and the fiscal outcomes of legislatures' budget activity (chapter 5)
- Two case studies on budget reform and legislative control — one on Sweden, where such reforms have been quite successful, and another on South Africa, where reforms have been only partial (chapter 6)

To the legislative studies scholar and practitioner interested in the institutional development of legislatures, the most interesting chapters are 3 and 6. Wehner's "index of legislative budget institutions" enables cross-national comparison and ranking of legislatures in terms of their influence and control over the budget. The index differentiates between formal powers (such as budget amendment powers and consequences if the legislature does not approve the budget) and organizational and operational factors (such as the amount of time that the legislature has to review the budget and its research capacity to independently analyze the budget). Wehner finds that in Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.S., the legislature has considerable influence over the budget. At the other end of the spectrum are the Westminster legislatures (Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand) where, to quote Schick (2002, p.27) in the case of Britain, "Nowhere is the case of budgetary decline of parliament more noticeable." The case studies of Sweden and South Africa present examples of legislatures attempting to regain control of the budget, with varying levels of success.

Those interested in fiscal discipline will be more interested in chapters 4 and 5, which suggest that greater legislative involvement in budget formulation generally leads to larger deficits. This group of readers will also find the Swedish case study of interest, as it offers a model of top-down budgeting suggesting that fiscal control can coexist with greater legislative involvement in the budget. This model centers on a two-step process whereby the legislature first sets a hard overall fiscal ceiling, and then it can increase expenditures in one area only by reducing expenditures elsewhere.

The shortcoming of the book, if there is one, is that it leaves the reader wanting more. Wehner could have been more free-thinking, especially in the conclusions presented in chapter 7. For example, while he notes that the fiscal cost of legislative activism may be an acceptable side effect of democracy, he does not explore this interesting trade-off any further. Similarly, while there is passing reference to audits and the role of legislative public accounts committees, this important area of oversight is not developed further. These criticisms aside, Wehner has written a book that is both rigorous in its analytical approach and practical to those involved in legislative strengthening and fiscal design. It is a useful addition to the bookshelves of scholars and practitioners alike.

[1] Published in *Political Studies*, Vol. 54 No. 4 (2006).

[2] Published in *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 14 No. 2 (2007)

To obtain the book, go to: <http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?PID=310478>.
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