

How much are you spending on life-saving drugs? How many midwives are you training? How much are you investing in environmental protection? How much aid are you providing to developing countries? How much are you receiving? How much are you spending on life-saving drugs?

# ASK HOW MUCH IT'S SPENDING ON DEVELOPMENT YOUR GOVERNMENT



How much aid are you receiving? How many midwives are you training? How much are you investing in environmental protection? How much aid are you providing to developing countries? How much are you receiving? How much are you spending on life-saving drugs?

# Government budgets and development are inextricably linked. The budget:

- is the government's single most important policy instrument;
- shows the true priorities and values of government;
- affects the lives of all citizens, especially the poor and marginalized.

**A legal framework, government commitment, policy, or program *without a corresponding budget allocation* cannot be implemented and thus is meaningless.**



# *Ask Your Government!*

From January to April 2010 civil society organizations (CSOs) in 86 countries posed **six questions** to their governments, asking for specific information on the budget allocated to fulfill development commitments, including the MDGs.

The questions and the information request protocol were defined by networks & organizations actively involved in **budget work, access to information, maternal health, environmental protection, and aid effectiveness.**

Because all of the requests made in each of the countries followed the same carefully designed procedure for submitting and following up on the questions, we were able to compare results across countries.



# The Six Questions

## Maternal Health

- Q1. What was the total amount actually spent nationwide during the last two fiscal years on purchasing/procuring each of the following medications: magnesium sulphate used for eclampsia, and uterotonics used for post partum hemorrhaging?
- Q2. What was the total amount spent during the last two fiscal years for pre-service training of midwives (or midwife equivalents) and how many midwives graduated from pre-service training?



# The Six Questions (cont.)

## Development Aid (for Aid-Recipient Countries)

- Q3. What was the total amount of aid received during the last fiscal year from the European Development Fund, the World Bank, and the following three US government agencies: i) PEPFAR), ii) the MCC, and iii) USAID. Were you notified and if so, what were the dates (month and year) on which each of these agencies notified you (recipient government) about the assistance?
- Q4. What is the total amount of aid committed for the next three fiscal years by the European Development Fund, the World Bank, and the following three US government agencies: i) PEPFAR, ii) the MCC, and iii) USAID. Were you notified and if so, what are the dates (month and year) on which each of these agencies notified you (recipient government) about the assistance?



# The Six Questions (cont.)

## Development Aid (for Donor Countries)

- Q3. What was the total amount of aid **actually provided** during the last fiscal year (not your fiscal year, but the fiscal years of each of the relevant recipient government) to each of the following governments: Rwanda, Liberia, Ethiopia, Colombia, and Vietnam, and what were the dates (month and year) on which you notified the governments about the assistance?
- Q4. What is the total amount of aid **committed** during the next three fiscal years (not your fiscal year, but the fiscal years of each of the relevant recipient government) to each of the following governments: Rwanda, Liberia, Ethiopia, Colombia, and Vietnam, and what were the dates (month and year) on which you notified the governments about the assistance?



# The Six Questions (cont.)

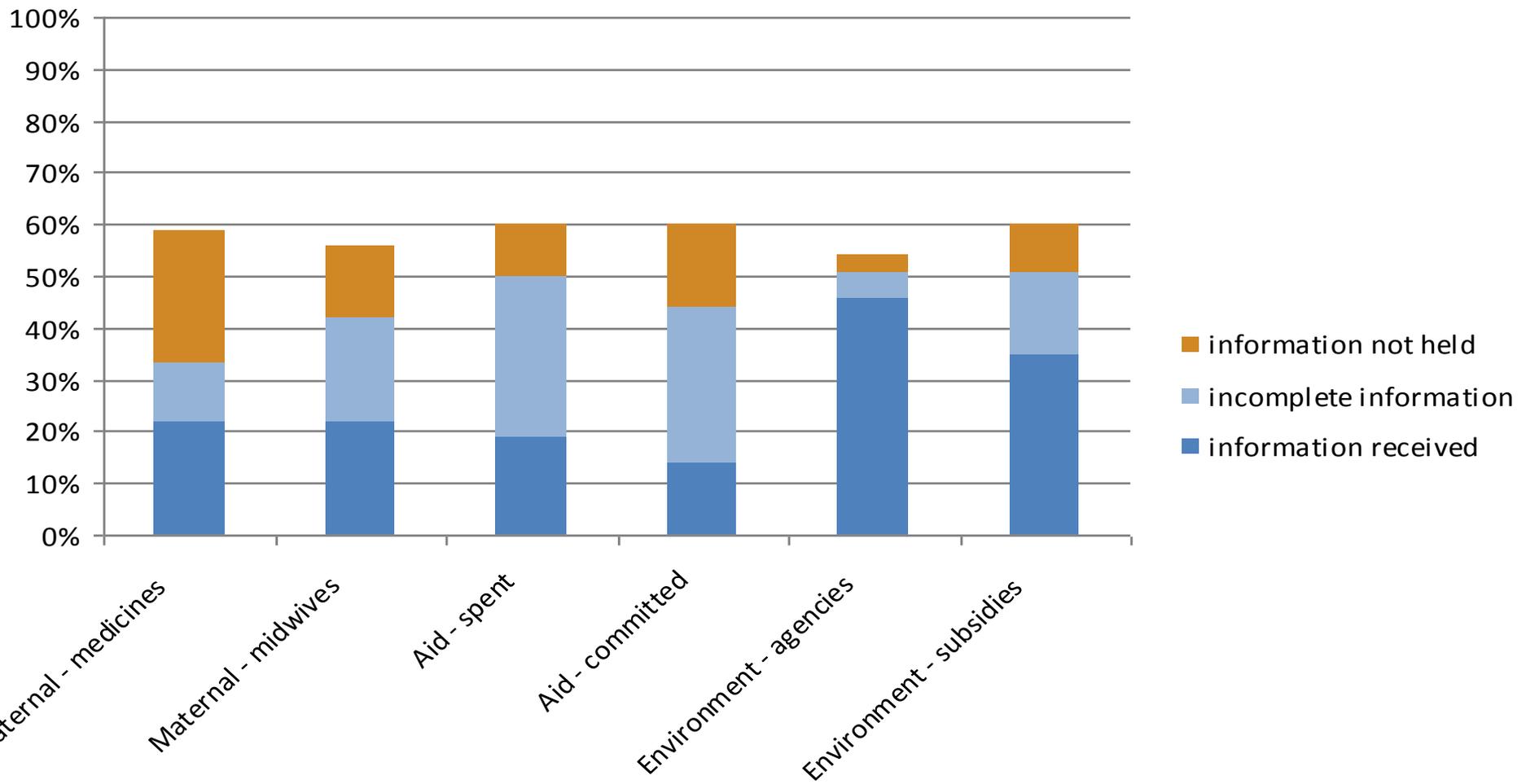
## The Environment

- Q5. As a share of the national budget, what was the total amount actually spent on all national agencies in charge of environmental protection and conservation during the last two fiscal years?
- Q6. What was the total amount actually incurred during the past three fiscal years on subsidies for oil, gas and coal production and consumption?



# Results by Question

## Information Received / Incomplete / Not Held



**Depending on the question asked, up to 40% of governments simply ignored the requests for information posed by citizens (mute refusals, oral refusals, and evasive promises):**

- Information is “sensitive” and “controversial” (Nigeria);
- “Come back, if you want,” after six attempts (Chad);
- Information is “private” (Yemen); and
- don’t bother the Minister with such requests (Tajikistan).



**In up to 25% of the cases, governments replied by saying the information was not held.**

They:

- argued a “lack of reliable statistics” (Azerbaijan);
- pushed responsibility for answering the question from one agency to the next, without providing anything (Mexico);
- claimed it was “difficult to find a person who could provide such information” (Zimbabwe); and
- stated that the request was “beyond the competence of the executive government” (Russia).



## Up to 30% of governments provided a partial or incomplete answer.

They either:

- clearly indicated that not all information is available;
- conveniently ignored parts of the question, switching into “mute refusal mode,” despite researchers’ follow-up attempts (Argentina);
- argued that questions were “complex” and “time-consuming” (Zambia); or
- showed unmistakable annoyance.



# Maternal Health: An Illustrative Example

- Representing a wide range across the development spectrum, 15 countries (Namibia, Guatemala, Malawi, India, etc.) replied with comprehensive answers to the questions on maternal health – those related to MDG 5.
- **These cases show that good practice is possible even in contexts of low capacity and scarcity** – and that meaningful information on public spending related to critical actions for achieving the MDGs can be produced.

# Maternal Health: An Illustrative Example

However, as many as 23 countries offered no response at all to these questions, including 11 African countries with some of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

- It is impossible to know whether or not these countries actually have the information.
- One thing is certain: the UN's MDG reporting system does not require these or any countries to provide detailed information on public expenditures toward achieving this goal, nor does that of other international actors.

**This is, in practice, an accountability-free zone.**



# Looking at the aggregate of the six questions:

- Only one country, New Zealand, responded with substantive budget information to all of the questions posed;
- One-third of governments gave less than half the information asked for;
- Only half of the governments answered all of the information requests, but not with all of the required budget data; and
- One in every seven governments gave us no information at all.



# What does this mean for:

- Budget transparency?
- The right to access information and accountability?
- The MDGs?



# Budget Transparency Worldwide: What Do We Know?

- The OBS tells us that the state of budget transparency, in terms of the amount of budget information governments proactively publish (supply), is deplorable.
- The *Ask Your Government* initiative tells us that governments' response to requests for budget information (demand) is equally poor.
- And, while there might be attention paid to the flow of funds into countries (through donors, EITI, etc.), we continue to know little about what happens with the funds once they reach the recipient government's treasury.

***Without budget information, real accountability on development goals is impossible.***



# The Right to Information and Accountability

The right to information does not end with legal recognition or administrative regulations that govern the exercise of requesting information.

The *Ask Your Government* campaign found that:

- even when governments were willing to provide information, they were limited by the manner in which their systems organize data; and
- over-bureaucratization of the process has often rendered the right into a procedural issue, rather than an exercise in transparency and accountability (Ghana, Honduras, Uganda, Mexico).

***Informing the citizenry means gathering, organizing, and providing information that relates to practical issues that people care about.***



# The Millennium Development Goals

Governments have committed to the MDGs, but progress towards them is not satisfactory. This is likely because of two crucial problems:

1. Not enough money is being spent on achieving the MDGs
2. Resources that are allocated are being spent in an ineffective or inefficient way

***Knowing what governments are spending on key interventions that link directly to achieving the MDGs can give us early warning signs about insufficient, or complete lack of, action.***



**The *Ask Your Government* campaign was coordinated jointly by the:**

International Budget Partnership

Access Info Europe

Centre for Law and Democracy

**Campaign partners at the international level include:**

White Ribbon Alliance

Family Care International

Averting Maternal Death and Disability Program (Columbia University)

Publish What You Fund

Oxfam America

Development Initiatives

World Resources Institute

International Institute for Sustainable Development



INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP  
Open Budgets. Transform Lives.

## Implementing countries:

Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Dominican Republic, DR Congo, East Timor, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Macedonia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United States, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe



For more information go to:

**ASK YOUR GOVERNMENT**

at

[www.internationalbudget.org](http://www.internationalbudget.org)

(enter “AYG Campaign” into Search box)

A full campaign report, country-specific results, and thematic reports are available.



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Dear government- I have  
some questions  
you need to answer...

Have you bought enough medicines  
to keep me alive while I am giving birth?

Have you made sure that a skilled birth attendant  
will be there to take care of me?

HOW MUCH ARE YOU INVESTING IN MATERNAL HEALTH?

Ask your government  
to go from commitments to investments.  
Go to [www.internationalbudget.org](http://www.internationalbudget.org)  
and participate!