



INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP  
Open Budgets. Transform Lives.

## e-Newsletter

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One of the most powerful civil society advocacy strategies is to use budget analysis, monitoring, and advocacy to try to change what the government spends the public's money on, and how effectively it spends those funds to address critical issues. So how do you get started?

Play the International Budget Partnership's [new e-learning game](#)! Grab your passport and travel to Polarus to learn how civil society and individuals can use budget analysis and advocacy tools to change lives.

Note: The game was developed by the IBP and Wireframe/Formula-D.

### The IBP and Partners Prepare for the First Global Assembly of New Civil Society Budget Movement

The IBP and its civil society partners have initiated a global effort to catalyze a broad-based, cross-sector civil society budget movement that will be an effective collaborative force for realizing substantive improvement in:

1. the amount of information governments make public on how they raise and spend public resources, and
2. the opportunities they provide for citizens and civil society to engage in budget and oversight processes.

On 18-19 November 2011 civil society organizations from around the world will gather at the first Civil Society Budget Movement Global Assembly in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The Assembly participants will finalize and adopt the Declaration of Principles for the movement and define joint actions for 2012. See the next issue of the IBP newsletter for a full report!

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Governments in Liberia and Kenya Use Technology to Improve Public Financial Management and Increase Government Transparency by Daniel Wessler, International Budget Partnership

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## New Publications and Internet Resources

Four New IBP Case Studies on the Impact of Civil Society Budget Analysis and Advocacy in Argentina, India, and South Africa

2011 Budget Briefs for Mozambique Now Available by Natalia Adler, UNICEF; Francisco Albino, Foundation for the Development of Communities; and Jacob Bathanti, International Budget Partnership

New Resources for Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Asia-Pacific Region by Rhonda Sharp, Hawke Research Institute of the University of South Australia

## IBP Job Announcements

Consultant for Subnational Budget Transparency Assessment Project

Administrative Assistant with the Middle East/North Africa Program

## International Events and Initiatives Focus on Budget Transparency, Participation, and Accountability

### **Governments, Civil Society, and the Private Sector Launch the Open Government Partnership** by Delaine McCullough, International Budget Partnership

On Tuesday, September 20, President Barack Obama of the United States and President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil hosted the launch of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in New York City — a new international initiative that brings together governments, civil society, and industry to promote transparency, increase civic participation, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.

At the OGP launch, the founding governments — Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States — endorsed an Open Government Declaration and announce national action plans of concrete steps they will take to make their government systems and practices more open and accountable. The founding governments also welcomed the commitment of a large number of governments to join OGP and to deliver their action plans in March 2012 in Brazil.

The eight founding governments were joined by the Transparency and Accountability Initiative and eight civil society organizations, including the International Budget Partnership (IBP) on a steering committee to design and launch the OGP. The IBP sees in the formation of the OGP a unique convergence of global interests, most important a convergence in the interests of both governments and civil society in catalyzing greater openness and public engagement as a means to activate citizenship and improve the quality of life. The OGP is a major opportunity for the IBP's civil society partners in up to 70 countries around the world to be involved in establishing and implementing open budgeting-related commitments.

“We know that there are sufficient public resources available globally to eradicate extreme poverty and inequality. The problem is the distribution and management of these resources,” says IBP Director Warren Krafchik. “Open government practices offer great promise for improving our management of public resources and, therefore, our potential impact on poverty and inequality. Thus the Open Government Partnership has great potential to improve the quality of life of people around the world.”

In addition to the main launch event, 200 representatives from government, civil society, the private sector, and the media attended a high-level discussion to explore mechanisms to improve responsiveness, foster accountability, create efficiency, promote growth, fight corruption, improve performance and capture dispersed knowledge – all in support of smarter policies and better government in the 21st century. Philippines President H.E. Benigno S. Aquino III delivered keynote remarks. Other speakers included Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero (U.S), Minister of State Jorge Hage (Brazil), Dr. Mo Ibrahim, Sir Tim Berners Lee, and Esther Dyson.

As of September 2011, 46 countries have joined the OGP, and more will follow in the next few months. Each participating country will spend September 2011-March 2012 developing its own OGP country action plans in consultation with civil society. These action plans will be finalized and presented at a multi-stakeholder meeting in Brazil in early March 2012, when these countries will also sign the Declaration of Principles.

To learn more about the Open Government Partnership and the launch events, visit [www.opengovpartnership.org/launch/](http://www.opengovpartnership.org/launch/).

### **The Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) and the Open Government Partnership (OGP): Marshalling Commitments to Advance Fiscal Transparency, Engagement, and Accountability** by Rocio Campos and Paul Zeitz, International Budget Partnership

An historic meeting was held in Washington, D.C., on 13-14 July 2011 where participants committed to join forces to design and plan for the launch a “Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT)” in early 2012. Governments, international organizations, professional associations, foundations, civil society organizations, and experts came together to address one of the most critical issues the global community faces – how to ensure that decisions on raising and spending public funds are undertaken transparently and in consultations with the public.

This will make it more likely that public funds are used efficiently, effectively, and equitably to address such challenges as persistent financial stability, poverty alleviation, environmental degradation, and sustainable economic development.

This is a pivotal moment for such an initiative, as the global financial crisis has destabilized fiscal systems around the world. Additionally, over the next few years substantial new resources are expected to flow into countries’ public finance systems from increased domestic revenue mobilization, extractive industries, foreign aid, and the flow of climate mitigation and adaptation funds. These resources offer the potential for major gains in poverty alleviation and other priorities, if they are managed transparently.

The meeting was co-hosted by Mr. Jorge Hage, Ministro de Estado do Controle e da Transparência, Office of the Presidency, Brazil, and Warren Krafchik, Director, International Budget Partnership (IBP). Thirty-nine people representing a variety of constituency groups across sectors and from all over the world participated, and others lent their support, including:

- **Governments:** Office of the Comptroller General (OCG), Brazil; Department of Budget & Management, Philippines; Department for International Development (DfID) U.K.; Department of the Treasury, U.S.
- **International Organizations:** The World Bank Group; International Monetary Fund (IMF); International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI); Interparliamentary Union (IPU); and United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

- **Philanthropic Networks/Foundations:** Transparency & Accountability Initiative (TAI), Metanoia Fund
- **Civil Society Organizations:** International Budget Partnership, Centre for Public Integrity (Mozambique), Fundar (Mexico), Greenpeace International, the ONE Campaign
- **Expert Facilitators:** Innovations for Scaling Impact (iScale)

Parallel to this effort, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) was launched by the U.S. and Brazilian governments, together with six other countries (Brazil, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, and UK) and eight international civil society organizations, including the IBP. The OGP will encourage governments around the world to make commitments with regard to open government (especially transparency, participation, and accountability). Commitments can be on any issue of open government — very broadly defined — including budgeting. The OGP is voluntary but to participate countries have to pass a set of threshold indicators.

GIFT and OGP are complementary but distinct:

- GIFT is a multi-stakeholder initiative focusing exclusively on public finance openness and specifically on defining global norms and getting governments to work toward these norms. The OGP is also a multi-stakeholder initiative but it focuses on open governments more broadly and public finances are only one component of the initiative.
- The OGP membership is only open to governments that pass certain thresholds, including on budget transparency. GIFT's focus is on all countries irrespective of their current budget transparency practices. In fact, the GIFT process may help countries improve performance and qualify in future years for membership in the OGP.

To learn more about GIFT, go to: <http://internationalbudget.org/2011/06/stakeholders-commit/>.

To learn more about the OGP, go to: [www.opengovpartnership.org](http://www.opengovpartnership.org).

### **Supreme Audit Institutions and the Public: Partners in Open Budgeting** by Delaine McCullough, International Budget Partnership

*The citizens are natural partners of SAIs [supreme audit institutions] in promoting transparency in the process of public accountability.*

– Dr. Josef Moser, Secretary General of INTOSAI

On 13-15 July 2011 the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) and the United Nations hosted the 21st UN/INTOSAI Symposium in Vienna, Austria. The theme was “Effective practices of cooperation between SAIs and citizens to enhance public accountability.” Representatives from supreme audit institutions (SAIs) from nearly 70 countries discussed the importance of informing and involving the public in audit processes, presented innovative examples of SAI initiatives to engage citizens and civil society, and committed to furthering these efforts as a way to strengthen transparency and accountability in public finance management.

#### *Informing the Public*

SAIs from several countries are stepping up their efforts to provide the public with timely and accessible information on their audit findings. The SAIs are doing this both to ensure that citizens are informed about how the government is managing public resources and to empower them to demand that the government act to address problems identified through audit processes. Examples of initiatives and actions to inform the public on audit findings undertaken by SAIs include:

- **Russia:** the Accounts Chamber of Russia uses a variety of forms and channels to make its audit findings available to the public, including print and broadcast media, posting audit reports on its website, face-to-face meetings with citizens and community leaders, partnerships with civil society, and responses to information requests.

- **Brazil:** the Tribunal de Contas da União reaches out to policy makers, civil society, academia, the press, and citizens by convening roundtables, leveraging media coverage, posting information on its website, and producing broadly accessible fact sheets. The TCU seeks to “expand the debates with different segments of society and Parliament” in part to increase its ability to influence public policy by selecting relevant audit subjects and topics.

### *Engaging Citizens and Civil Society*

SAIs from several countries reported taking steps to establish two-way communication with the public and to engage civil society and community members in audit processes. SAIs cite the critical information on community needs and problems with service delivery that civil society and the public can bring to audits and the on-the-ground knowledge and connections they can bring to budget monitoring exercises as reasons for undertaking these initiatives. Promising examples include:

- **Colombia:** the Comptroller-General of the Republic of Colombia initiated a strategy to audit the management of resources allocated to address the devastating impacts of catastrophic winter storms that struck the country in May 2010. A critical component of the initial audit strategy was to gather over 500 reports from citizens in over 300 communities around the country. The CGR stated the intent to further engage the public and civil society in audits to address Colombia’s persistent corruption issues but recognized the need to build capacity to assist in audit processes.
- **Honduras:** with World Bank support, the Superior Court of Auditors conducted a pilot project that engaged members of the public in eight audits related to health, education, local government, the environment, and infrastructure. A key component of the pilot was the use of seminar workshops to build the capacity of civil society and citizens to participate in the audits.
- **India:** the government of the State of Andhra Pradesh invited the participation of Office of Auditor and Comptroller General in its work with a consortium of civil society organizations, led by social audit pioneer the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, to engage local residents in social audits of a rural employment guarantee program. This experience resulted in the India SAI establishing a task force to examine how to use social audit hearings to strengthen its own audits and participated in the development of the social audit guidelines for the Ministry of Rural Development.

### *Next Steps*

The INTOSAI/UN symposium concluded with the unanimous approval of set of recommendations for INTOSAI to further its commitment to increasing the collaboration between supreme audit institutions and the public. Of particular importance was that the SAI members argued for greater transparency throughout the budget process, not just the audit phase, specifically calling for INTOSAI to “(s)upport budget transparency systems and actions that will inform citizens of the entire budget process including amendments to and the execution of the budget.” As part of this recommendation, the members passed a recommendation for INTOSAI to join the Steward’s Committee of the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT).

To contact INTOSAI, visit <http://www.intosai.org/>.

To learn more about GIFT, visit <http://internationalbudget.org/2011/06/stakeholders-commit/>.

## Budget Transparency: Opportunities, Obligations, and Obstacles

### **On Citizens Budgets** by Atzimba Baltazar Macías, International Budget Partnership

Governments around the world have taken significant steps toward greater budget transparency in the past few years. Transparency is increasingly being seen not just as an end in itself but as a means to win the respect and trust of citizens and to improve budget policies and execution. One important tool for increasing budget transparency are Citizens Budgets, widely accessible, nontechnical presentations of government budget information. Citizens Budgets are a key component of a transparent and accountable

public finance system because they help ensure that citizens understand the government's plans for raising and spending public funds, can see how public priorities are translated into government policies, and have the information they need to participate in budget processes — from decision making to monitoring execution to audit.

Unlike many other official budget documents, Citizens Budgets are designed to be easy to understand by all by using plain language and including graphs and charts and by being presented in a variety of formats, such as radio broadcasts, newspaper inserts, pamphlets, or SMS texts. Well-designed and broadly disseminated Citizen Budgets can be an incredibly effective way to spread awareness of government policies and the state of a country's economy.

The International Budget Partnership and its civil society partners have long been advocates for Citizens Budgets, and in recent years that advocacy is beginning to bear fruit as the number of countries publishing Citizens Budgets has increased substantially. The first of the IBP's Open Budget Survey in 2006 found that only seven countries produced Citizens Budgets. Today, that number is 24 and is increasing.

#### **Countries that have produced a Citizens Budgets**

<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Chile</b>
<b>Croatia</b>	<b>Democratic Republic of Congo</b>
<b>El Salvador</b>	<b>France</b>
<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>Honduras</b>
<b>India</b>	<b>Indonesia</b>
<b>Kenya</b>	<b>Mali</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>Malawi</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>Norway</b>
<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Rwanda</b>
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>South Korea</b>
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	<b>Sweden</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>Uganda</b>

Since 2009 the International Budget Partnership's Mentoring Governments Program has assisted several governments in conceptualizing and constructing a Citizens Budget. The IBP has included several civil society organizations (CSOs) in these exercises, and all of those involved have learned that, as always, the devil is in the details. Citizens Budgets are important for civil society and citizens alike because they represent a powerful channel of communication between them and their governments. For example, governments can use a Citizens Budget to raise awareness of the importance of paying taxes or to explain where, why, and how public resources are going to be spent, and why there may be little room for innovation in some critical sectors. In turn, CSOs and the general public can use the information presented in a Citizens Budget to demand more progressive resource allocation and hold their governments to account.

There is a general agreement on what a Citizens Budget is and what producing and disseminating one seeks to accomplish. However, there is still confusion as to how governments can best translate public policies and budget data into words and other forms that can be easily understood by a diverse audience. When producing a Citizens Budget, governments must ask: who is intended audience? Should a Citizens Budget target the poor? The educated middle-class? The media? Or, academia? These are critical questions because different audiences sometimes require different content, format, and means of dissemination. Therefore, governments should consider producing different Citizens Budgets for different audiences for the greatest transparency.

The 14-page Citizens Budget that the government of Mali produced earlier this year highlights how a government can struggle to make information accessible to a diverse public. When the document was first released, the government solicited feedback from independent budget experts and CSOs, who concluded that Mali's Citizens Budget was still too technical to be understood by the majority of the population. To improve and simplify its Citizens Budget, the government reached out to the IBP for help in crafting a one-page brochure that includes only the most basic 2011 budget information. Unfortunately, these efforts still fall short of what is necessary for deeper transparency due to high illiteracy rates in the country. In a similar effort to make budget information more broadly accessible, the government of Guatemala, a country where many indigenous communities do not speak Spanish, plans to translate its Citizens Budget into Maya. These examples illustrate the challenges to meaningful budget transparency but the governments of Mali and Guatemala are taking important steps to overcome some of these.

While the increasing number of governments that are publishing Citizens Budgets is good news, there are issues around the demand for these documents that must be addressed in order to encourage government efforts at greater transparency and improve the usefulness of Citizens Budgets. For example, how many people actually access and use Citizens Budgets? Do Citizens Budgets help members of the public hold government to account, including voting poor performers out of office? Do Citizens Budgets motivate the public to become more involved in government processes? And, do they help CSOs inform their strategies and improve their advocacy initiatives? While we cannot answer all of these questions yet, the demand for Citizens Budgets will remain so long as civil society and citizens seek information from their governments to be able to hold their elected representatives accountable for using public resources efficiently and effectively to meet the public's needs and priorities.

### **Assessing Budget Transparency and Maternal Health: How Five Countries Measure Up** by Laura Malajovich, International Planned Parenthood Federation, and Jacob Bathanti, International Budget Partnership

In 2010, the International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region (IPPF/WHR) and the International Budget Partnership (IBP) implemented a pilot project to determine the extent to which governments publically report on the steps they have taken to fulfill international commitments to reducing

maternal mortality. This research was carried out in Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, and Peru.

#### *Why We Did It*

In 2000 governments around the world committed to reducing deaths from pregnancy and childbirth by 75 percent by 2015 as part of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Nonetheless, with more than 350,000 women and girls dying each year during pregnancy and childbirth, progress toward ending maternal deaths is “well short of the 5.5 percent annual decline needed to meet the MDG target.”[1]

Civil society organizations (CSOs) can — and should — play a key role in holding governments accountable to their commitments to reducing maternal deaths. In order to play this oversight role, CSOs and the public must have access to information about public health plans and their implementation.

#### *How We Did It*

The IPPF and the IBP worked with CSOs in the five countries that had worked on either budget issues (IBP partners) or maternal health issues (IPPF Member Associations), leveraging their multiple perspectives and areas of expertise. [2] These partners searched for documentation on their governments’ policies and programs aimed at reducing maternal mortality, evaluating these documents against the four pillars to save women’s lives developed by Family Care International and Women Deliver:

- 1) Comprehensive reproductive health care
- 2) Skilled personnel during and immediately after delivery
- 3) Emergency obstetric and neonatal care
- 4) Immediate postnatal care for mothers and newborns

The organizations identified budget lines associated with reducing maternal mortality to determine the availability of information on these policies and the resources committed to implement them.

#### *What We Found*

While partners in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Peru managed to obtain substantial budget information, much crucial data for El Salvador and Panama remained inaccessible.

In Peru, while some budget information was available online, it was presented as an aggregate total, hampering inquiry into specific areas of investment. In this case, as in the remaining country cases where information was not made available online or in public records, requests were made through the countries’ access to information laws, with varying results. In addition to the case of Peru:

- In Costa Rica, all information is centralized in the Social Security Administration, which provided significant data in response to the information requests.
- In Guatemala, several meetings were held with Ministry of Health officials, who referred the request to the implementing units. These units provided detailed information.
- In El Salvador, various meetings and inquiries with different agencies resulted in only partial data, in part, because the Ministry of Health was not prepared to respond to requests.
- In Panama, partners received only general figures, without the specific information requested.

In summary, the search process took a complex course. While sometimes governments responded adequately to requests, other responses provided insufficient data to facilitate civil society monitoring.

#### *What We Learned*

This pilot initiative not only found plenty of room to improve budget transparency on maternal health but



also built our partners' capacity to analyze budgets and enabled them to offer the following recommendations for improvement.

- Governments should have specific, coherent, and publically available plans to address maternal mortality, ensuring more efficient government, and a more effective civil society "watchdog."
- Governments must make public substantive, disaggregated, and well-organized budget information.
- Budget information should be broken down by region or locality and must be provided in comparable formats, allowing for its integration into regional and national frameworks.
- Since maternal health funds are implemented in a decentralized way, it is critical to have a system for tracking and reporting the use of these funds.

This pilot has demonstrated the importance of building the capacity of local organizations to analyze budgets and advocate for increased access to information. Our partners obtained new information, albeit limited, that they can use to hold their governments accountable to their commitments on global development goals and maternal health. The IPPF is assessing prospects for developing the capacity of its regional partners in budget analysis and advocacy, and both the IBP and IPPF look forward to building on this foundation to expand a vital area of work to strengthen maternal health in Latin America.

To read the full report, visit <http://www.ippfwhr.org/en/pilot>.

[1] [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG\\_FS\\_5\\_EN\\_new.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_FS_5_EN_new.pdf).

[2] The organizations were: APLAFA in Panama, ADC in Costa Rica, ADS and FUNDE in El Salvador, CIIDH and APROFAM in Guatemala, and INPPARES and CAD in Peru.

### **How Much Budget Information Do Public Agencies in Indonesia Provide to the Public by Muhammad Maulana and Lukman Hakim, Seknas FITRA**

In February 2011 Seknas FITRA began a project to assess whether public agencies were complying with Indonesia's recently enacted public information disclosure law (Law No. 14/2008), which gave citizens the right to access official public information, except in cases where the documents are specifically protected. FITRA enlisted volunteers to request from central government agencies and related institutions or entities three documents deemed suitable for public disclosure by the government's Commission of Information: 1) a 2011 Budget Workplan, 2) a 2011 Budget Execution Checklist, and 3) a 2010 Budget Realization (Year-End) Report.

The volunteers made formal written requests on behalf of FITRA, as well as informal personal requests as private citizens, for information from 118 public agencies, institutions, or entities, including government ministries, agencies, quasi-governmental agencies, judicial/law enforcement agencies, legislative bodies, and political parties currently represented in parliament. Those targeted have had several months to comply with FITRA's requests, but the level of information these entities have disclosed is unsatisfactory. The majority of agencies and entities have yet to respond at all to the requests of FITRA or its volunteers. Overall, out of 118 public agencies or entities, only 54 have complied with the law, and even fewer have done so in a timely fashion. 26 agencies provided the information within the first stage of the assessment (17 working days), another 15 responded after receiving a letter of objection during the second stage, and the 13 more provided the information only after a mediation process hosted by the Central Commission of Information.

It is interesting that political parties and quasi-government agencies were the most reluctant to respond to the information requests. While political parties currently represented in parliament are subsidized by the government and so are explicitly required to publicize their budget documents, only two responded to FITRA's requests, and these only partially. These parties promised in writing to make their budget documents transparent, but neither has followed up. The documents of another party were produced only after FITRA initiated a mediation process. Participation rates also varied according to how the request for information was made. No agency has disclosed information to a volunteer making the request as a member of the general public. Agencies have only cooperated with volunteers acting on behalf of an official institution, such as FITRA.

#### **Less than Half of All Agencies or Entities Provided Information Requested**

<b>Public Agency or Entity Type</b>	<b>Information Obtained</b>			<b>Total Responders</b>	<b>Total Agencies</b>	<b>Percent Responded</b>
	<b>Within 17 Working Days</b>	<b>After Objection Letter</b>	<b>After Mediation</b>			
Ministry	12	3	6	21	34	61.8
Non-Ministry Government Agency	4	4	3	11	21	52.4
Quasi-government Agency	8	6	2	16	47	34.0
Judiciary/Law Enforcement Agencies	1	1	1	3	4	75.0
Legislative Bodies	1	1	0	2	3	66.7
Political Parties	0	0	1	1	9	11.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>45.8</b>

The public agencies and entities that were included in the exercise gave a variety of reasons for failing to disclose public information. A common excuse was that the head of the agency or entity was unavailable, forcing a delay in the release of the requested budget documents. Other agency staffers expressed confusion about who should deal with the requests, which resulted in some requests being shuffled back and forth among departments. These agencies have relatively poor mechanisms to track internal correspondence, which made tracking these requests difficult. Written requests for information had to be resent to 37 of the 118 agencies that claimed to have lost the original requests due to "organizational restructuring" or a "move in office location." Several agencies refused to make copies of the requested documents but have allowed FITRA staff members to use their own funds to photocopy the reports under official supervision.

While this project is still ongoing, the results so far are less than satisfactory. Government agencies have made great progress — in a similar project undertaken in 2010, only 27 percent of the 69 public agencies approached provided the information requested — but there are still many ways to improve transparency in accordance with Indonesia's new public information disclosure law. Seknas FITRA recommends that public agencies and entities begin by publishing the three key budget-related documents online or distributing them to the media. They should also be required to respond to requests for information regardless of the way those requests are made. Heads of public agencies should appoint an Information and Documentation Official as mandated by the public information disclosure act, and quasi-government agencies and publicly-funded political parties should be clear about their obligations to comply with citizen requests for public information. These steps

would go a long way toward ensuring comprehensive public sector compliance with Indonesia's public information disclosure law.

## Voices from the Ground: Opinions on Budget Work Around the World

### **Lebanon: A No Budget State – Is There Hope Still?** by Dima Wehbi, Middle East Advocacy and Research Center (MARC)

It's been six years now that Lebanon has gone without an enacted budget. How does this happen? First, the institutional nature of the Lebanese state makes it almost impossible to insulate economic and social management from political conflicts and disparate agendas, requiring political consensus on every detail of governance. What has happened with the National Budget in Lebanon is driven by the political instability present in the country. Ongoing disputes between opposing political forces hinder the budgeting process, and accusations of corruption and mismanagement of public funds, in the absence of effective oversight, make any solution to the problem unattainable.

The lack of a budget has been blamed on everything from insufficient administrative capacity to intentional sabotage of the budget process. Moreover, the budget in Lebanon, as in many countries in the Middle East region, is considered an "elite" or "academic" concern. Ordinary citizens generally are not aware of the budget's importance or its role in their lives. Given the instability and poor living conditions many face, citizens are more concerned with the immediate benefits provided by their political affiliation, and less interested in working to improve their longer term social and economic well being through engaging in government budget processes. In a country with a poverty rate of over 20 percent, the poor usually bear the brunt of the lack of adequate budget planning and poor service delivery and so are most likely to accept payments from political parties instead of demanding change. [1] They feel that their political affiliation provides them with a sense of structure and a social safety net — things the state has failed to provide.

Lebanon does not have an access to information law, and this along with the absence of protection mechanisms for whistle-blowers make it very difficult and even dangerous for citizens to engage in budget work. Lebanon's political system allows relatively open discussions in the media and on the streets on corruption and the mismanagement of public funds, but this rarely leads to the prosecution of those responsible, and certainly does not promote greater accountability.

Lebanon's newly formed government has made a commitment to implement reforms concerning the budget, and the new prime minister has issued several policy memos on public financial management. It is hoped that this is the beginning of an attempt to implement a reform agenda that will correct some irregularities left over from previous governments, such as off-budget allocations to certain agencies, and will ultimately lead to a more stable budgeting process and political climate.

Working in an environment like Lebanon has taught the Middle East Research and Advocacy Center (MARC) to be cautiously optimistic with regard to the pace of change in public management. It remains to be seen whether recent developments will realize their potential, or if they will end up being just another political ploy. While waiting for the government to pick up the slow pace of reform, MARC hopes to see the average Lebanese citizen become more aware of the importance of the National Budget to their everyday lives, and how the absence of a budget only adds to the instability that characterizes the current state of affairs in Lebanon.

[1] International Poverty Center: [www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCCountryStudy13.pdf](http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCCountryStudy13.pdf) (p.6).

Governments, Civil Society, Donors and Technology: Increasing Transparency and Participation

## **Grupo Faro's Mobile Government Initiative Advances Municipal Level Transparency and Citizen Participation in Ecuador** by Manuela Garza, International Budget Partnership

Grupo Faro launched the Open Municipalities and Mobile Government Initiative (Municipalidades Transparentes y Gobierno Móvil) in 2010 to expand access to public information and accommodate increasing demand from citizens for new ways to participate in municipal government. This initiative was a response to a survey conducted by Grupo Faro showing that citizens in rural communities faced many obstacles in obtaining public information. Municipal governments had previously experimented with publishing information on the Internet, but Grupo Faro's survey showed that only 13 percent of Ecuador's total population had reliable Internet access. This figure was even lower in rural areas. However, the survey also found that a high proportion of citizens in both urban and rural areas were active mobile phone users, nearly 15 million total subscribers. This discovery led Grupo Faro to the idea that municipal governments could use text messages (via SMS) to disseminate information.

The Open Municipalities and Mobile Government Initiative was piloted over the past year in the municipalities of Azogues, Ibarra, Isabela, Orellana, and Sigsig — all chosen for their geographic, demographic, and ethnic diversity. Citizens in these municipalities are able to sign up for the initiative free of charge and submit their mobile phone numbers to a central database. The municipal authorities manage an electronic platform that can send SMS texts to thousands of subscribers at a time. The texts provide information about a variety of public issues, including upcoming cultural events, public meetings, government planning proposals, public works projects, bureaucratic procedures, emergencies, and, most important, information about the municipal budget.

Grupo Faro has supported the implementation of these platforms by working with municipal governments to install technology and train local authorities to use the system. In addition to providing targeted technical assistance during the implementation stage, Grupo Faro has worked with relevant officials to prepare SMS content and establish a communications strategy.

The Mobile Government Initiative has shown great promise and drawn the attention of national authorities. What began as a pilot is taking root, for example, in Orellana the government has institutionalized the SMS platform as an official channel of communication with citizens. Grupo Faro was recently contacted by the Presidency and the Ministry of Telecommunications, which are keen to learn more about the initiative and are looking at possibly implementing a similar system at the national level. While Grupo Faro initially envisioned a unidirectional transfer of information from government to citizens, the project has expanded to consider how to foster communication from citizens to government. Users have expressed the need to give feedback to the municipal authorities, demonstrating the capacity and desire of rural communities to participate proactively in local-level decision making.

Over the past year approximately 13,000 citizens have registered to receive messages from the Mobile Government platform. As the SMS platform becomes more reliable, and the system more established and better publicized, Grupo Faro hopes that the Mobile Government Initiative will expand to other municipalities and will eventually serve as the basis for a broader system that reaches all of Ecuador. Grupo Faro will advance these goals by implementing the second phase of the Mobile Government Initiative, which will reinforce the bidirectional nature of communications between citizen and government and encourage participating municipalities to commit to improving the quantity and quality of information they share with the public. By using mobile technology to disseminate public information, Grupo Faro has changed the relationship between citizens and their government and has created new opportunities to participate.

To learn more about Grupo Faro, go to [www.grupofaro.org](http://www.grupofaro.org).

## **Governments in Liberia and Kenya Use Technology to Improve Public Financial Management and Increase Government Transparency** by Daniel Wessler, International Budget Partnership

Governments are increasingly turning toward new technologies to improve public administration and expand access to public data and budget information. An integrated financial management system in Liberia will increase efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the management of Liberia's public

resources, while an online data portal in Kenya will make available a wide variety of public information. Both solutions have the potential to create opportunities for greater civil society involvement in public decision making.

The government of Liberia chose to install the FreeBalance Accountability Suite ([www.freebalance.com/products/](http://www.freebalance.com/products/)) to foster efficient fiscal management as a way to accelerate the modernization of its governance systems. The Accountability Suite, also known as an Integrated Financial Information Management System (IFMIS), is a software and technology package that automates many government processes and financial transactions and integrates all government budget revenue and expenditure information. FreeBalance, a for-profit social enterprise software company, has implemented similar systems in other African countries, including Uganda, Sierra Leone, Southern Sudan, and Namibia. The adoption of the IFMIS is a significant component of the Liberian government's strategy to improve performance and accountability in accordance with the country's Public Financial Management Law of 2009.

The government of Kenya created the Kenyan Open Government Data Portal ([www.opendata.go.ke](http://www.opendata.go.ke)) as a way for policymakers, researchers, and citizens to access a centralized database of public development, demographic, statistical, and expenditure information. Both county and countrywide datasets are available for download in several different formats. Regular users can view easily-accessible charts, maps, statistical tables, and fact sheets. More advanced users can query datasets to find specific information, and developers can download raw data with an Application Programming Interface to produce mobile and web applications. The portal already contains hundreds of datasets and is expanding rapidly. The Kenyan government hopes that the Open Government Data Portal will serve as the foundation for improving transparency and accountability in the country and create a platform for further social and economic innovation.

The potential of the IFMIS and the Data Portal to improve government transparency and accountability has been acknowledged at the highest levels of government by President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson of Liberia and President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya. Liberia's IFMIS will integrate and track all financial data, allowing for more convenient oversight of government revenue collection and expenditures. Kenya's Open Government Data Portal grants direct and immediate access to public information. While these solutions are primarily used to modernize and simplify government, they present opportunities for governments and civil society alike to monitor and improve public policies and processes.

### **Pooling Resources for Aid Transparency at [open.aiddata.org](http://open.aiddata.org) by Rebecca Hammer, International Budget Partnership**

AidData and the World Bank recently launched [www.open.aiddata.org](http://www.open.aiddata.org), a website dedicated to providing resources to better track, understand, and share the destination and impact of foreign assistance for development.

[Open.aiddata.org](http://Open.aiddata.org) provides an online public portal to view close to one million data points related to development finance activities from a variety of donors. The website also includes information and links to three aid transparency initiatives: the Geo-coding Aid Information Project, the International Aid Transparency Initiative, and World Bank's Mapping for Results. These resources are directed at donors that are interested in making details of their aid activities public and to those who want to know more about aid, where it goes, and how it affects those who receive it.

The Geo-coding Aid Information project is the product of a partnership between AidData and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program at Uppsala University in Sweden. The project seeks to record the precise

destination, down to the subnational level, of development funds in order to better understand the ultimate impact of those funds.

The information collected through the project is compatible with the International Aid Transparency Initiative standards. The geo-coding information has the potential to be superimposed with other geographically organized data, such as health statistics, income averages, or information on infrastructure. This can shed light on such questions as whether aid money is achieving its goal, or what areas could benefit from certain types of aid. The project primarily seeks to give stakeholders in both donor and recipient partner countries the ability to ask more relevant and informed questions about where aid is going and how it is being used.

The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) is a global effort led by a group of bilateral, multilateral, and private donors to create standards for organizing and documenting aid activities. Last February the IATI finalized its data standards to allow users to analyze and compare aid information.

Part of the World Bank's Open Data Initiative, Mapping for Results allows users to access, download, analyze, and manipulate data on World Bank projects. The platform provides an interactive map that displays the location and number of World Bank projects in an area and has a scale that displays global, regional, national, and local data.

Open.aiddata.org cohesively brings together several projects with the goal of identifying where aid goes, and whether or how it makes an impact. Increased transparency and accountability of aid funds has the potential to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of development assistance. Providing access to these resources on one website facilitates sharing, using, and interpreting aid information from multiple sources. It also allows donors and stakeholders to more easily access and interpret aid information.

To visit Open.AidData, go to: <http://open.aiddata.org/content>  
For more information, contact [open@aiddata.org](mailto:open@aiddata.org).

## New Publications and Internet Resources

### **Four New IBP Case Studies on the Impact of Civil Society Budget Analysis and Advocacy in Argentina, India, and South Africa**

Evidence is mounting in support of the active engagement of civil society organizations in public budgeting because in case after case we are seeing that it contributes to improvements in budget policies, accountability, and outcomes. The IBP's Partnership Initiative is releasing four new studies that examine how civil society organizations:

- [used budget analysis, strategic litigation, and advocacy to put pressure on the government of Buenos Aires, Argentina](#), to provide early education to all children;
- [combined budget monitoring, advocacy, and public information campaigns in an effort to ensure that people in rural areas in India](#) receive the public employment and income benefits they are entitled to demand;
- [analyzed the flow of funds meant to benefit one of the most excluded and disadvantaged groups in India](#) and publicized evidence of misuse, which contributed to the government admitting to diverting the funds and committing to restore them;
- [integrated analysis, advocacy, and international pressure into a campaign that contributed to a dramatic increase in public spending on treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS in South Africa](#).

Read all of the IBP's [Partnership Initiative Case Studies](#) on how open budgets really do transform lives.

## **2011 Budget Briefs for Mozambique Now Available** by Natalia Adler, UNICEF; Francisco Albino, Foundation for the Development of Communities; and Jacob Bathanti, International Budget Partnership

If Mozambique's state budget, or that of any country, was a cake, each slice would represent a public policy or program that will be implemented during the budget year. But how the cake will be cut is not a neutral decision. Eventually, some slices are more generous than others. And these decisions have direct implications on the lives of children, particularly those living in vulnerable conditions.

UNICEF Mozambique and one of the IBP's civil society partners in Mozambique, the Foundation for the Development of Communities (FDC), have just made available their most recent set of "budget briefs" at [www.unicef.org/mz/budgetbriefs2011/](http://www.unicef.org/mz/budgetbriefs2011/). The briefs, which have been issued by UNICEF and the FDC for the past four years, aim to illuminate Mozambique's planning and budgeting process for a broad audience and encourage public participation in budget decision making. In presenting highly technical issues in an accessible format, the authors hope to stimulate and amplify debate on the challenges of equitable resource allocation and service delivery.

The briefs offer succinct presentations, rich in charts and graphics, of Mozambique's State Budget, Economic and Social Plan, and Medium Term Fiscal Scenario, as well as six sector-focused briefings on health, decentralization, social welfare, education, infrastructure, and governance. In addition, the website offers an archive of previous years' budget briefs. These documents show that while some gains have been made in administrative decentralization and in adjusting a skewed distribution of public resources, the allocation of funds is still profoundly centralized, and regional disparities in both programmatic expenditures and policy outcomes remain entrenched.

The latest briefs are based on Mozambique's 2011 State Budget (prior to revision in May 2011 by parliament) and shine a light on disparities in the budget with regard to social protection programs. They also describe and seek to explain regional disparities in allocations.

The Budget Briefs are based on the belief that government budgets should be seen as a strategic tool to mitigate disparities, with higher investments targeting the least privileged areas. For governments like that of Mozambique that seek to achieve national goals for poverty reduction and inclusive growth, it is critical to adopt a more equitable approach for resource distribution and to reinforce existing social protection systems.

Read the Budget Briefs at: [www.unicef.org/mz/budgetbriefs2011/](http://www.unicef.org/mz/budgetbriefs2011/).

## **New Resources for Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Asia-Pacific Region** by Rhonda Sharp, Hawke Research Institute of the University of South Australia

The University of South Australia has launched a new resource on gender responsive budgeting (GRB) with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. The central feature of the website is a set of 31 country profiles that document gender budgeting work in the region. The associated research is focused at the national level but also includes several subnational GRB initiatives. The website's publications section features papers on the GRB experiences of Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

The profiles for half the countries are longer versions that frame the experience of gender responsive budgeting by including information on development backgrounds, gender equality, and the budgetary contexts of the countries — placing the GRB experience of the Pacific Island states in their regional context. The remaining shorter profiles outline the GRB experience of certain countries.

What emerges are patterns of differing levels of institutionalization of GRB work across the region, which can be seen as indicators of GRB's sustainability. The profiles describe a range of country experiences, including that of "first stagers" that have just begun to raise awareness of GRB, those that have engaged in and attempted unsuccessfully to institutionalize GRB, and those where GRB work is ongoing and showing promise of integrating a gender perspective into budget decision making. Finally there are those

engaged at the highest levels of institutionalization, some of which show that over time GRB approached may undergo significant changes.

The website results from a two year research project led by Rhonda Sharp (University of South Australia) in collaboration with Diane Elson (University of Essex, UK) and Siobhan Austen (Curtin University, Australia) and funded by AusAID. Other contributors included Monica Costa, Sanjugta Vas Dev, Ray Broomhill, Jan Edwards, Reina Ichii and Anuradha Mundkur. Additional resources include examples of training materials and other GRB publications by team members.

To access the website, go to: <http://resource.unisa.edu.au/course/view.php?id=1351>.

## IBP Job Announcements

### **Consultant for Subnational Budget Transparency Assessment Project**

The IBP's Open Budget Initiative is seeking a part-time consultant to help implement its subnational budget transparency plans. The consultant will be required to spend approximately 100 days between September 2011 and August 2013 on this project.

To read the consultancy announcement, visit <http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/OBI-Subnational-Consultant-Job-Advert-300811.pdf>.

### **Administrative Assistant with the Middle East/North Africa Program**

The IBP is seeking an Administrative Assistant to be part of the IBP administrative team, to provide administrative support to the Training and Technical Assistance Program, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Project, in particular.

To read the position announcement, visit <http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/MENA-Admin-Assistant-JD-220911.pdf>.