



INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP
Open Budgets. Transform Lives.

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Just Released! Handbook on Budget Implications of Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

The Article 2 Project, a collaboration between a group of civil society organizations, has developed a handbook that details how governments' budgets should help realize people's human rights. The handbook focuses on civil society budget work and explores how government commitments under Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights to "achieving [human rights] progressively," "to the maximum of its available resources," and "without discrimination" should guide how it raises, allocates, and spends public funds.. The handbook is a resource for civil society organizations, human rights commissions, and even legislators to hold governments to account for their human rights obligations. The [handbook is available on the IBP website](#).

Welcome New IBP Staff Member!

IBP continues to grow with the addition of Opare Densua, Accounts Payable & Payroll Specialist! In her new role, Opare is responsible for the accounts payable and payroll functions for IBP's staff and international consultants. Prior to joining IBP, Opare managed the finance and administration for several Washington, D.C.-area commercial construction contractors.

Get Social with IBP



Traveling the Superhighway for Local Services

How Kerala Is Using the Internet to Localize Delivery of Public Services to Citizens, by Tina Karippacheril, World Bank

This is a summary of a post that originally appeared on the World Bank's Governance blog, [available here](#).



One of the core responsibilities of a government is to effectively deliver such services as education and health care to its citizens, as well as provide ease of access to government services. Effective service delivery hinges on the appropriate allocation of public funds and ensuring that the money reaches the intended beneficiaries. In India the government decided to improve both its service delivery and service accessibility for “the common man” in his or her locality.

India's National e-Governance Program (NeGP), a US\$9 billion program, seeks to increase the efficiency, equity, and transparency of service delivery by reducing the burden of physical visits to separate agencies, providing ready access to information, curtailing the discretion of officials, and curbing

leakages and corruption. Within this context is the state of Kerala's Akshaya program, a public-private partnership for establishing citizen service centers. In its first phase, the Akshaya program was designed to improve e-literacy in underserved areas, and in its second phase to provide a platform for government-to-citizen services (e.g., filing commercial taxes, applying for a ration card, health insurance registration, etc.). More than 60 percent of Kerala's 33 million citizens have been served by 2,070+ Akshaya centers run by private entrepreneurs.

Akshaya centers have become game changers for citizens' right to services. Here's how:

- **Transparency:** there have been massive improvements in transparency and accountability as processes are made visible and information is accessible online.
- **Accountability:** an application case number facilitates tracking and monitoring of service requests.
- **Governance and anti-corruption:** the e-payment system provides a framework to streamline cash handling and prevent corruption.
- **Digital inclusion:** some argue that e-governance programs are not for the masses since not everyone has access to or can afford the Internet via a personal computer or mobile device. A visit to an Akshaya center in Kerala presses home how locating service delivery centers closer to citizens can alleviate this problem.

How can we use the Kerala e-governance service delivery model in other contexts?

- **Citizen-centered design:** people seeking services often have to combine online and offline tasks, making the process unduly cumbersome. By mapping how people make their way through these processes, including gauging the complexity of back office decision making and the rejection rate for applications, government processes can be more citizen-centered.
- **Agents and/or self-service:** ordinary citizens may not be familiar or comfortable with applying and accessing the public services they need. For a small fee, citizen service centers can provide a trusted space for licensed agents in the community to help citizens navigate the process.
- **Use the Internet to decentralize:** that the Internet can decentralize information and potentially redistribute power from institutions to citizens is a powerful idea. When designing government services that employ the Internet as a backbone for information and service delivery, it is useful to keep this idea in mind.

While some questions about improving citizen centers and how best to move forward may remain, the Kerala model for delivering services to citizens is one that has the potential to improve the lives of Kerala citizens, and perhaps, beyond.

Initiatives for Change

Stop Secret Contracts: The Missing Link in the Transparency Agenda, by Theodora Middleton, Open Knowledge Foundation

Every year governments around the world spend over US\$9.5 trillion buying goods and services through public contracts. Getting good information about these contracts is notoriously difficult. Even in governments with fairly strong access to information protections, contracts with the private sector are often immune from scrutiny. [Stop Secret Contracts](#) believes we need serious commitments to contracting transparency from governments around the world if the open government agenda is to have real weight. Stop Secret Contracts is coordinated by the [Open Knowledge Foundation](#) and supported by civil society organizations (including the International Budget Partnership) from around the world. The goals of the campaign include:

- raising public awareness of the issues around nontransparent public contracts;
- showing the scope of the problem by collecting, publicizing, and analyzing relevant information from our community members and new partners all over the world ; and
- using our links in the open contracting policy community to make our findings heard, by feeding into existing and emerging projects and exchanges between open data and open contracting experts and governments.

Tales of contract corruption and mismanagement are not hard to come by. In Nigeria [a secret deal](#) between the government and international oil corporations, including Shell and ENI, led to a loss of \$1.1 billion for the Nigerian people — money that could have been used to educate 1.7 million Nigerian schoolgirls for five years in a country where over five million citizens are not in school. [Extortionate infrastructure costs](#) for hosting the World Cup in Brazil point to profound mismanagement of contracts at best, and stand grotesquely alongside scenes of deprivation and anger on the streets of Brazil's big cities. All around the world, secrecy in government contracting is making a mockery of government commitments to openness and leaving citizens disempowered and ripped off.

Contracts form a huge and growing part in the provision of government services and the distribution of public funds, and while their contents remain inaccessible, vast areas of governance remain hidden from public view. [Open Government Action Plans](#), which governments are making to become signatories to the [Open Government Partnership](#), should include a commitment to adhere to the [Open Contracting Partnership principles](#) as a matter of course.

The [Stop Secret Contracts](#) campaign is bringing together civil society organizations, contracting experts, and concerned citizens to put pressure on governments to open up contracting practices. We believe that when governments sign contracts on our behalf, we have the right to read the fine print. [Sign the petition today](#) to add your voice to the chorus of people who believe in transparency and think all government contracts should be open and publicly accessible.



For more information on the Stop Secret Contracts campaign contact contact@stopsecretcontracts.org.

Public Audit: How Can Scrutiny Translate into Lasting Change? by Jessica Taylor, International Budget Partnership



The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) recently published a collection of short articles written by 12 public auditors from around the world. [“Breaking Out: Public Audit’s New Role in a Post Crash World”](#) reflects on the expanding role of supreme audit institutions (SAIs) and explores varying opinions on the proposition that auditors must go beyond a narrow mandate and contribute more directly to enhancing accountability and improving public sector performance.

The report contains at least three significant insights that are worth highlighting.

Private companies delivering public services need to undergo routine audits

The public sector is undergoing radical changes in many countries around the world. Governments have continued to expand the range and scale of public services that are delivered by the private sector and yet the accountability of these private companies remains substandard in many places. In the words of Hodges and Fawcett of the ACCA, “private contractors are now responsible for significant public services yet they do not undergo the same audit rigor as their public sector counterparts” (p.10). This lack of scrutiny presents a number of new risks to service quality and highlights the need for these private companies to be routinely subjected to performance audits. The challenge is that most legislatures already receive an overwhelming number of audit reports each year and have little scope to take on more work. This implies a change to the legislative machinery may be needed to ensure effective oversight and scrutiny.

Collaboration and follow up can improve the implementation of recommendations

A common question asked by auditors the world over is: Why do agencies accept recommendations but then do nothing? The report suggests that, whatever the answer, the contemporary auditor can and should do something by adopting a more collaborative approach.

- First, auditors should get buy in from the audited agency by working with them to develop recommendations.
- Second, auditors should seek explicit agreement from the agency to the recommendations along with a timeline stating when implementation will take place.
- Finally, after a set period of ideally no more than a year, auditors should follow up with the agency to assess their progress.

Thomas, the Auditor General of Wales, suggests that this “collaborative approach to external review for public bodies helps overcome inertia and resistance to change” (p.18).

Public support can give audit a voice

Public opinion can play an important role in audit effectiveness: so much depends on how willing the public is to speak out about the quality of public decision making. Auditors need to improve public engagement to expand public understanding of auditing and encourage the recognition of SAIs as principle players in service delivery. To this end, SAIs should try to address the gaps between the information they report and what the public expects or hopes to find to satisfy their sense of accountability. This is particularly relevant in developing countries where Muwanga, the Auditor General of Uganda, explains that the increasing number of public protests focused on service delivery issues is “testing public audit as a mechanism for promoting accountability and transparency within government” (p.9).

Final thoughts

Whether you call it “making a difference,” “promoting effective government,” or “driving wider improvements in public services,” most contributors to the “Breaking Out” collection agree that auditors need to go beyond their basic mandate of assurance. Indeed, many are already doing so. The insights highlighted in this article explain three specific dimensions of the broadening role of auditors and the expanding scope of audit.

From the Annual Report: What Have We Learned About Using Budgets to Transform Lives?

The following section includes two essays from IBP’s 2013 Annual Report. Three other essays from the report were included in the [March-April](#) issue of the newsletter. Access the complete report [here](#).

How Can Civil Society Organizations Join With Others in Accountability Ecosystems for More Impact?

The [case studies](#) that IBP recently commissioned show clearly that civil society can make a significant contribution to improvements in governance and poverty reduction in a wide range of country environments. In doing so, they often help to bridge the gap between transparency and accountability by compensating for the deficiencies of formal oversight actors by:

- gathering, interpreting, and distributing information to multiple stakeholders in usable and accessible formats;
- demanding accountability of government directly;
- supporting and encouraging formal oversight actors to demand accountability; and
- supporting and encouraging other actors (such as executive insiders, political parties, donors) to demand accountability.

While oversight actors may benefit from the more active engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the budget process, CSOs also gain substantially from these partnerships. IBP’s analysis of its case studies confirmed that the impact of CSOs is more frequent, significant, and sustainable when they work with other actors in the oversight system.



The IBP case studies provide a number of examples demonstrating that when CSOs collaborate with, or have their work amplified by, willing and able media, legislators, SAs, donors, and political parties, the wheels of accountability really start moving. For example, the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in India had very little effect when it campaigned on its own to retrieve funds for the vulnerable Dalit community that the government had diverted to build sports stadiums. But when local and international media covered the issue and opposition legislators forced a parliamentary debate, the Minister of Finance quickly admitted wrongdoing and ensured the money was returned.

In other examples, the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies (INESC) pushed the Brazilian Congress to hold a series of public hearings during which INESC presented evidence that convinced deputies to reject a tax reform that would have eliminated revenue earmarked for essential social services. In Tanzania HakiElimu broadcast television “spots” about insufficient teachers’ housing in rural areas, leading to a media storm that motivated the government to speed up housing delivery. In Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Honduras, CSOs contributed research and advocacy in support of donor efforts to encourage the governments to open their budgets, ultimately leading to dramatic increases in transparency in all three countries.

In each of these examples, the CSOs would not have had the same impact on their own, and it was unlikely that the media or legislators would have taken up the issues without the CSO campaigns. The accountability systems were only able to achieve significant influence when the various accountability actors worked together.

What does this analysis mean for the practice of supporting budget accountability? First the analysis takes us beyond a supply and demand dichotomy, in which the executive “supplies” information about how it will manage public funds efficiently and effectively and then does so, and other actors — working more or less independently from each other — “demand” accountability through official oversight mechanisms and informal monitoring and advocacy. Our case studies demonstrate that effective budget accountability depends on a system of interaction and coordinated action within the oversight system writ large: involving the symbiotic engagement of the legislature, SAI, judiciary, media, civil society, donors, and sympathetic insiders in government institutions.

Figuring out how to promote this integrated engagement does not involve one simple model, particularly since the level of each institution’s influence on the oversight system is not consistent across countries. It is therefore necessary in each country case to analyze the relative strength of institutions in the oversight system to identify the most appropriate combination of institutions capable of catalyzing or sustaining greater oversight and accountability in the short and long term. IBP’s case studies tend to show that civil society often plays a particularly important role in initiating the demand for greater oversight where legislatures or SAIs are weak relative to the executive branch, but for this pressure to intensify or be sustained requires effective partnership with other accountability actors.

This analysis provides the direction for IBP’s next generation of country work, now starting in Kenya, India, and South Africa. Within these countries, we will work with our civil society partners to build their capacity to do budget analysis and advocacy and facilitate relationships and dialogue among other civil society organizations, government, the media, and other public finance actors.

To respond to the varying strength and weakness of different actors in different countries, over the next three years, IBP’s [Learning Program](#) will focus on finding out which types of relationships between CSOs and oversight institutions lead to stronger budget outcomes. This includes learning about which accountability actors CSOs are more likely to work with under which circumstances, and which kinds of impact such collaboration is likely to achieve.

While the success of CSO campaigns frequently depends on other actors in the accountability system, the campaigns often start when CSOs themselves find common cause. For this reason our Learning Program will also examine what types of relationships among CSOs lead to stronger budget outcomes. Our previous research revealed that CSO campaigns, coalitions, and networks often play a role in citizen impact on government budgets — but in some cases, impact occurred without the existence of a campaign or coalition. Thus we will explore the conditions under which coalitions and campaigns contribute to greater impact, and what types of impact they can typically produce.

What Have We Learned About How Civil Society Moves from Transparency to Service-Centered Budget Advocacy?

IBP’s mission is to open budgets and transform lives. While we understand the power of access to budget information and opportunities for participation, in the end we want to transform lives by improving the quality of life of the poor. While we must continue our fight to ensure vital public access to budget information in all countries, we are learning from our partners’ experiences that a direct focus on service delivery is also an important route to transformative change.

Our case studies are replete with examples of CSOs that have successfully addressed many service delivery issues by focusing on the budget problems that cause them. In South Africa the Treatment Action Campaign forced the government to allocate funding for antiretroviral medicines, benefitting over 6 million people with HIV/AIDS. In India NCDHR improved the monitoring of funding to the vulnerable Dalit community by forcing the government to introduce an expenditure code that made it possible to track such funding. NCDHR used this code to identify and ultimately recover for Dalits US\$150 million misspent on the 2010 Commonwealth Games. And, in Ghana the Social Enterprise Development Foundation engaged local residents' committees to monitor the implementation of the school feeding scheme, leading to improvements in village infrastructure. We know it happens, but what is the best route to improving services through budgets?



To date, IBP has invested more resources in opening budgets than on service delivery issues. This reflects our working theory that citizens and oversight institutions need access to budget information and participation opportunities before they can engage with government to improve taxation and public spending, ultimately improving service delivery. When working in “tough” accountability neighborhoods, for example, IBP would typically focus on increasing budget transparency as a first step in building citizens’ capacity to monitor budgets, rather than pursuing such oversight straight away. But our case studies show that CSOs in other countries often follow a different route to accountability and improved service delivery.

In Cape Town, South Africa, the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) started as a campaign to improve sanitation services to one of the largest informal settlements in the city. Its engagement with the city government made it clear that the financing of these services was critical to its advocacy. After a long struggle, the city government finally gave the SJC copies of the financial documents it needed. Using this information, the SJC conducted a social audit that, in turn, put sufficient pressure on the city government to introduce a US\$2.6 million janitorial service and geo-tagging of public toilets to allow for speedier repairs. In Buenos Aires, Argentina, the Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia (ACIJ) wanted to sue the city government because it was not providing sufficient preschool facilities in poor neighborhoods as required by the city’s constitution. Like the SJC, ACIJ struggled to obtain the necessary budget documents; but after it did, ACIJ won the case and the process of providing educational facilities to more than 8,000 children from poor neighborhoods could begin.

These examples include the familiar elements of budget transparency, participation, accountability, and service delivery, but the route that CSOs followed through these steps is instructive. Their stories did not start with a demand for increased transparency or participation but rather with a service delivery demand. The SJC story starts with poor sanitation; for ACIJ it was insufficient school facilities. When these groups did not have access to specific information they needed, that was what they demanded, not improvements in the overall levels of transparency. The SJC obtained service delivery agreements, invoices, receipts, and inspection reports for sanitation service providers. ACIJ obtained actual expenditure data for the school infrastructure budget. Thus these campaigns followed a “short” route to service delivery improvements that went from a demand for service delivery, to engagement with government, then to a very specific transparency demand, and in the end to better services.

Starting advocacy with a focus on services has the potential to animate broad groups of citizens in a way that starting with budget transparency does not. It also allows CSOs to establish stronger connections between ordinary citizens and build the technical skills required to engage in government budgets.

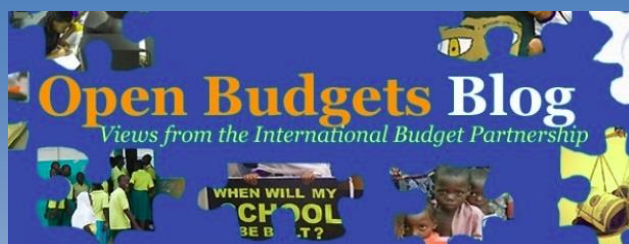
Because of the high level of citizen interest in such broad-based campaigns, even semi-schooled villagers can be empowered to engage with the information and analysis that budget work can demand. Obviously in countries with no budget transparency or space for participation, these issues are still priorities, and higher levels of transparency do make it easier for citizens to hold government to account.

In Brazil, for instance, the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies (INESC) campaigned against a regressive tax reform that threatened funding for a broad range of social services. But INESC only knew about the proposed tax reform in the first place because the Brazilian government publishes substantial budget information. And in Madhya Pradesh, India, Samarthan, a local CSO, could monitor the uptake of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) because of data published on the official MGNREGS website.

These examples notwithstanding, transparent governments often complain that the public does not use the budget information that they publish, and researchers have struggled to connect improvements in levels of budget transparency with improvements in services. Our case studies, however, suggest that while access to information is crucial in enabling the demand for better services, it does not drive it. In the end, it is people and institutions (CSOs, legislatures, the media, donors, and even reform-minded executive insiders) that are the driving force behind service delivery improvements, not increased levels of budget transparency and more participation opportunities.

There is nothing mysterious or automatic about the link between budget transparency and improvements in service delivery — they are hammered out in the trenches by citizens, CSOs, and their oversight allies.

Blog Corner



From the Open Budgets Blog

[The Hidden Corners of Public Finance: Where Can CSOs Look, and for What?:](#) Greater access to budgetary information helps civil society to hold governments to account for how they are spending public money. But what about spending that doesn't happen through the budget? IBP's Paolo de Renzio explores the latest IBP research into these "Hidden Corners" of public finance and their implications for civil society organizations.

[Unlocking Budget Data in Australia: the BudgetAus Collaboration:](#) Budget transparency was recently given a boost in Australia, with the first ever release of federal budget data in machine readable formats. Rosie Williams of InfoAus explains how, prior to this advancement, she created the website BudgetAus to allow for easier and better analysis of budget data.

Publications

IBP Publications

IBP has added new publications to the online [library](#)!

- [The Hidden Corners of Public Finance: A Synthesis of Country Case Studies that Look Beyond the Core Budget](#) synthesizes eight case studies from around the world that examine public spending that occurs outside of the core budget. Related case studies include:
 - [Transparency of Tax Expenditure Reporting in Mexico](#)
 - [Quasi-Fiscal Activities in Croatia](#)
 - [State-Owned Enterprises and Quasi-Fiscal Activities in South Africa](#)
 - [Tax Expenditures in Germany](#)
 - [Transparency of State-Owned Enterprises in South Korea](#)
 - [Extra-Budgetary Funds in France](#)
 - [The “State-of-the-Art” of State-Owned Enterprises in Brazil](#)
 - [Transparency of Extra-Budgetary Funds in Russia](#)
- [Budget Brief No. 25 – Sharing Revenue: How Much of Kenya’s Budget Is Already Committed and Cannot Be Shared?](#)

Further Reading from the Field – Relevant coverage of budget issues and civil society’s engagement in public budgeting from academia and professional journals

In the think piece “[Thinking and Working Politically in the Transparency and Accountability Field](#),” Brendan Halloran from the Transparency and Accountability Initiative argues that “thinking politically is only one component of a broader approach to contributing to change through politically informed interventions.” Halloran suggests that organizations also need to “work politically” by understanding the political context in which they function and the role of pro-accountability actors.

Sheryl Warren Mitchell, PhD candidate at Lawrence Technological University, recently authored the dissertation “[An Exploratory Study of Priority Based Budgeting: Identification of Public Values and Public Priorities through Citizen Engagement in Government Budgeting Decisions](#).” This qualitative study examines Priority Based Budgeting, and how it can be used as a tool for governments to engage citizens in budget decisions.

The Overseas Development Institute recently published a new guide for fostering sustainable policy change. Drawing on a decade of research, ROMA – the [RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach](#) – is designed to help civil society organizations improve their policy influence. It is composed of a set of tools for analyzing how to diagnose an issue, set objectives, and evaluate progress being made.



Job Openings

Three IBP Positions Available

- [Research Assistant](#) – Open Budget Initiative: IBP is seeking a research assistant to work on its Open Budget Survey with a team of international budget experts.
- [Program Officer \(South Africa\) – Catalyst Program](#): IBP is seeking a program officer for South Africa to join the Catalyst Program team. The program officer will represent IBP and manage the Catalyst initiative in South Africa.
- [Program Officer – International Advocacy](#): IBP is recruiting a program officer to support its International Advocacy Program. Through this program, IBP seeks to achieve budget transparency reforms in countries that are among those with the least open budget systems in the world.