

PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

The Public Service Accountability Monitor – South Africa

The Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) is a key program of the Centre for Social Accountability (CSA), an independent institution affiliated with Rhodes University in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. The PSAM has undertaken applied monitoring of public resource management in the Eastern Cape Province since 1999. Its goal is to promote the efficient and accountable management of public resources in order to improve service delivery.

The PSAM's work is based on the principle that people have the right to social accountability. This right obliges government to justify and explain its performance in progressively meeting the needs and realizing the human rights of its people via the provision of effective public services. The PSAM's social accountability model is based on answering five fundamental questions: 1) Planning and resource allocation – What public funds are available to public officials, and how do they plan to use them?; 2) Expenditure management – How effectively are public funds spent?; 3) Performance management – How well do public officials implement their policies and budgets?; 4) Public integrity – What mechanisms exist to prevent, or what corrective action is taken in response to, the misuse of public resources?; and 5) Oversight – Do oversight bodies hold public officials to account for their performance?

SOUTH AFRICA
Open Budget Index 2010
Overall Score: 92
Government provides extensive information to the public on how it manages public resources.

Availability of budget documents critical for effective public input:

Pre-Budget Statement	Yes
Executive's Budget Proposal	Yes
Citizens Budget	Yes
Enacted Budget	Yes
In-Year Reports	Yes
Mid-Year Review	Yes
Year-End Report	Yes
Audit Report	Yes

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PSAM Successfully Litigates for Public Release of Provincial Service Delivery Assessment

In 2005 the Eastern Cape Office of the Premier (ECOP) commissioned a service delivery assessment that was completed in July 2006 and resulted in the Rapid Assessment Service Delivery and Socio-economic Report (RAS). Subsequent to its completion, the ECOP refused to make the RAS available to the public. To pressure the ECOP to publish the report, the PSAM undertook an advocacy campaign that ended – 15 months later – in the courts. As a result of the PSAM's campaign, in May 2008 a South African High Court judge ordered the ECOP to release the RAS report.

needs of Eastern Cape residents and their perceptions of service delivery, an audit of the performance of the provincial and local government departments involved

in service delivery, and identification of needs and recommendations for addressing these needs.

The ECOP commissioned the RAS in order to provide accurate, up-to-date information for provincial and local governments to use as a basis for developing appropriate plans. The research included a survey of the



In February 2007 the PSAM requested a copy of the RAS report, since the information it contained would help them determine whether the plans of provincial departments were addressing the most critical needs of the province's residents. It also would allow the PSAM to assess whether budget allocations were being properly targeted by provincial departments. The ECOP denied the request, stating that it was an internal planning document and that the findings were incomplete without the responses of the departments. Subsequently, the PSAM filed a formal request for the report using South Africa's Promotion of Access to Information Act. The ECOP once again rejected the request, claiming that the report was still being studied. The PSAM then appealed the decision in May 2007 and two months later received another refusal from the ECOP to release the report on the grounds that it was still being considered by the provincial government.

Left with no alternatives, the PSAM initiated a legal case against the ECOP in November 2007, using the access to information law. In defending its decision

not to release the report, the ECOP argued that it was still being used by provincial departments to develop their plans. The PSAM questioned this argument, stating that their own analysis of the provincial plans for 2007 had found little evidence to suggest that data from the report had informed them.

In May 2008 the judge ruled in favor of the PSAM and ordered the ECOP to release the report within 10 days. The PSAM's victory received significant media coverage and led to a number of newspaper articles on the major findings of the report. Furthermore, the provincial legislature ordered the ECOP to provide 100 copies for its members and researchers.

The PSAM has made extensive use of the research findings from the RAS report, particularly in its evaluation of the quality of the strategic plans produced by the provincial departments of health, education, housing, and social development since 2007. The PSAM found no evidence that any of the four departments had made use of the data from the report for their strategic planning.

The Department of Health confirmed this, explaining to the PSAM that it did not have access to the report.

By not releasing the report in a timely manner the ECOP missed an opportunity to support the provincial departments to develop effective plans and advocate for increases in the province's budget allocations, especially in the context of ongoing claims of inadequate funding by Eastern Cape departments. However, without the PSAM's successful litigation, it is likely that the report would never have been released to the public. Access to the report allowed the PSAM to evaluate the provincial government's strategic planning outputs against the most current and comprehensive service delivery data. This also allowed the PSAM to advocate more strongly for change by demonstrating how provincial strategic plans and allocated budgets were not properly aligned to service delivery needs. The PSAM also established an important legal precedent for civil society organizations in accessing information held by the government.

PSAM's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

By engaging in the systematic and ongoing monitoring of public resource management processes in key service delivery departments in the Eastern Cape, the PSAM aims to strengthen public participation within these processes and make each process more responsive. By doing so, the PSAM aims to ensure that the rights of the poor and low-income communities in the Eastern Cape are progressively realized within the province's available resources. In addition, the PSAM hopes to strengthen the case for policy change by providing policy-focused civil society organizations, such as the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), with evidence on the implementation of specific policies.

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The IBP's Partnership Initiative is a collaborative effort that seeks to enhance the impact of civil society budget work in selected countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The initiative strives to contribute to the development of sustainable institutions; to increase public access to timely, reliable, and useful information; to enhance the effective participation of civil society in policy and budget processes; and to establish a platform of good practices on which future generations of civil society can build.