

PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) – Kenya

A civil society organization (CSO) based in the coastal city of Mombasa, Kenya, MUHURI has been involved in promoting good governance and respect for human rights since 1997. MUHURI seeks to enhance the capacity of coastal communities to hold state and nonstate actors accountable for human rights violations; increase public participation in the political, social, and economic development of coastal communities; and progressively mainstream a gender perspective into the policies, institutions, and practices of these communities. Through its Social Accountability program, MUHURI empowers communities to monitor public funds so that they can participate in the proper administration and implementation of development projects and demand accountability of public officials.

MUHURI Uses Social Audits to Monitor Kenya’s Constituency Development Fund

Since 2005 the core activity of MUHURI’s Social Accountability program has been monitoring expenditures made under Kenya’s Constituency Development Fund (CDF). This fund provides every member of parliament (MP) with just under US\$ 1 million a year to support development projects in his or her constituency. Since its inception in 2003, the CDF has been plagued by allegations of corruption, nepotism, poor planning, and a lack of oversight. In order to bridge the CDF’s accountability gap, MUHURI has been conducting “social audits” – a participatory process in which communities monitor publicly financed projects and identify how best to improve project outcomes.

Over the last three years, MUHURI has carried out CDF social audits in ten constituencies of Kenya’s Coast Province. Their social audit process involves six steps: 1) gathering records from the government on CDF projects; 2) training community activists to monitor CDF projects; 3) educating and mobilizing the public; 4) inspecting the project sites; 5) organizing a public hearing; and 6) following up with public officials.

To conduct a social audit, MUHURI first obtains records on CDF projects from the office of the local Constituency Development Fund Committee (CDFC),

which is responsible for managing CDF funds in the constituency. These records can include contractors’ bid documents, bills of quantities that specify the works executed by contractors, tender awards, and minutes of CDFC meetings, among others.

During the training stage, community activists are divided into teams and given copies of the CDF project records. They then collate the information contained in the project files into simplified formats that enable them to identify problems

KENYA
Open Budget Index 2010
Overall Score: 49
Government provides some 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	No
Enacted Budget	Yes
In-Year Reports	Yes
Mid-Year Review	No
Year-End Report	No
Audit Report	Yes
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in the management and execution of the project –such as over-inflated costs, irregularities in billed costs, or the preferential selection of contractors. This process also allows the participants to identify incomplete project records. In



addition, participants are encouraged to identify positive practices that can be emulated by other constituencies.

While the activists are being trained, MUHURI's communication and theater team generates interest in the social audit among local communities in the constituency. By playing music (trumpets and drums) and staging puppet shows and street plays, the theater team goes through each community to inform and energize local residents for the upcoming public hearing.

Using their project analysis forms and a simple questionnaire, the activists visit the project sites to assess whether each project was completed according to the specifications in the project documents. They also meet with residents living near the CDF projects and invite them to review the project records, which gives residents the chance to comment on the accuracy of project records and the quality of CDF-funded projects. The activists then prepare summary sheets of their findings which later form part of a report that MUHURI submits to CDF officials.

The pinnacle of the social audit is the public hearing, held outdoors in a large public space, at which the audit findings are presented and discussed. The hearing is chaired by a panel of moderators. MUHURI invites local CDF officials, including the MP, members of the CDFC, and district officials. The public hearing is attended by local residents –sometimes over 1,000 people– as well as the trained activists who conducted the project monitoring. During the event, the activists take turns reading out the findings they recorded during their investigation of CDF-funded projects and also invite local residents to ask questions of the CDF officials. At the end of the hearing, MUHURI obtains commitments from the officials to rectify mistakes made and to improve the operations of the CDF. The officials are then asked to sign an accountability charter of their commitments. At a later stage, MUHURI follows up on the hearing by presenting a report of their findings and recommendations to the current and previous members of the local CDFC.

Over the last three years, MUHURI's social audits have revealed numerous problems

with CDF projects. For example, in 2007, when auditing a market construction project in *Changamwe* constituency, community monitors found that materials from an old market had been used in the construction of the new market, even though the records showed that all new materials were to be purchased. In *Bahari* constituency in 2008, physical verification of a road project revealed that there was no gravel on the road, and the audit team learned that laborers who worked on the road had not been paid but had been given food instead. During a social audit in *Likoni* constituency in 2009, community monitors found that there were irregularities and nepotism involved in the allocation of scholarships.

Overall, MUHURI's social audits demonstrate how CSOs can use an innovative and citizen-centered methodology to hold public officials accountable for the use of public resources.

MUHURI's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

As part of its Partnership Initiative project, MUHURI seeks to strengthen its ongoing work in community empowerment and public expenditure monitoring and build its own technical expertise in the following areas: 1) *Training* – By transferring their knowledge and skills to other individuals and CSOs, MUHURI will work to strengthen communities' capacity to follow up on the use of public funds; 2) *Documentation* – MUHURI will track and evaluate the performance of public projects to determine whether they are successful; and 3) *Advocacy* – MUHURI will advocate for amendments to the CDF Act that will ensure maximum participation of communities in CDF activities.

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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.