The IBP Releases New Landmark Book!

The IBP’s newly released book *Open Budgets: The Political Economy of Transparency, Participation, and Accountability* (published by Brookings Institution Press) presents evidence from a number of new cases to answer key questions around budget transparency, accountability, and participation:

- How and why do governments improve fiscal transparency and engage the public in budget decisions and oversight?
- How are reforms sustained over time?
- When and how do increased fiscal transparency and participation improve government responsiveness and accountability?

You can read a summary of the book at the [Open Budgets Blog](#) and find out more about how to order your copy on our new [Featured Publications](#) page.

After the MDGs: Open Budgets Must Be Part of the Post-2015 Development Agenda

In July 2012 the United Nations set up a High-level Panel (HLP) to advise on the global development framework beyond 2015, the target date for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Following a March meeting in Bali, the panel identified in a [communiqué](#) four areas where progress is necessary to ensure the success of the post-2015 goals, including transparency and accountability. As part of its efforts to ensure that the next generation of global development goals includes targets on budget transparency and participation, the [IBP issued a response](#) to the Bali communiqué.

The IBP’s 2012 Annual Report

Check out the [2012 Annual Report](#) to see the IBP by Numbers, Highlights from the year’s work, a special feature on the Partnership Initiative, and a series of short essays on the Lessons Learned about how best to support civil society budget advocacy and promote open budgets.
What Do We Know About Civil Society Budget Work?

The following section is an excerpt of two of four Lessons Learned essays from the IBP’s 2012 Annual Report. The remaining essays will appear in the May-June issue. Access the complete report here.

For the past 15 years the central focus of the IBP has been to open up budget systems and advance civil society’s engagement in them, with the goal of improving governance and achieving concrete benefits for poor and marginalized people in countries all over the world. Our experience is showing that civil society organizations can greatly influence budget practices, policies, and outcomes. What follows are four essays that each explore a different aspect of civil society budget work and the environments in which that work happens, and how external actors and intermediaries like the IBP can support this work so that it has the most effect. In combination, these essays do not attempt to describe the full scope of what we have learned, but each provides critical lessons for the future.

What Can Civil Society Organizations Accomplish, and What Approaches Are Most Effective?

Over the past five years, the IBP has worked to better document the impact of civil society campaigns to influence government budgets and service delivery. Rigorous documentation identified lessons that practitioners can adapt and use, and that can help the IBP and others to fine tune training materials and support for civil society partners. The IBP will ultimately publish 22 case studies of campaigns around the world, and the lessons below are drawn from an ongoing draft synthesis of this work.

What kinds of budget impacts can CSOs achieve?

**CSO budget work strengthens the quality and diversity of public debate on critical public finance issues, expanding policy options and sharpening public pressure for reform.** For example, in Brazil the BNDES Platform, a broad coalition of CSOs, kept the issue of the transparency of the national development bank on the public agenda at a time when no governing elites were prepared to discuss it. The Platform facilitated the participation in these debates of a vast network of trade unions, indigenous communities, and environmental organizations. After a series of financial, environmental, and human rights scandals, the development bank faced broad pressure from the coalition and others to operate more transparently, to which it has responded with greater openness.

**CSOs contribute to improvements in the budget policies and allocations that have a direct bearing on peoples’ lives.** In South Africa, for example, the Treatment Action Campaign used budget analysis in a landmark court case to prove that the government could afford an HIV/AIDS treatment program. The litigation resulted in additional health expenditures that provided antiretroviral treatment to more than 1.6 million people. In Brazil INESC blocked a regressive tax reform that would have endangered over US$7 billion of important spending in the health sector alone. In Argentina ACIJ’s groundbreaking litigation compelled the government of the City of Buenos Aires to provide infrastructure, learning materials, and teachers that increased access to preschool education for 7,000 children from poor families.

**CSO budget work can improve the implementation of government spending, reducing leakages and delivering better government services.** In India the National Coalition for Dalit Human Rights, identified US$150 million in funds intended for public services to Dalits that was diverted to the Commonwealth Games. Subsequent advocacy by NCDHR forced the government to return most of these funds to provide the promised services. In Tanzania Sikika successfully pressured the government into
establishing new regulations to curb wasteful expenditure in the health sector. In Mexico Fundar’s research forced the government to introduce minimum and maximum benefit levels for the US$2 billion per year NAFTA-related agricultural subsidy program, both limiting the capture of the scheme by large agribusiness and increasing benefits to small farmers.

**Today’s CSO budget campaigns contribute to citizens’ and civil society’s capability to hold governments to account in the future.** Budget activists who learn analysis and advocacy skills in one sector or country often reemerge to contribute to impact in related sectors, or even other countries with similar contexts. In addition to this spillover effect with individuals, advocacy tactics developed in campaigns or organizational development strategies adopted in one context seem to infiltrate the “advocacy zeitgeist” and are replicated by others in different contexts. This lesson should be explored further as it helps to understand how civil society campaigning is sustained and strengthened over time.

**What kinds of CSO budget work are more likely to have an impact?**

**CSOs that focus on long-term strategic outcomes, rather than short-term project outputs, are more likely to be impactful.** CSOs are more likely to be effective if they have the latitude to shift the focus of their budget work to respond to emerging opportunities that are consistent with their long-range strategy. But CSOs struggle to engage in strategic planning and agile responses when their funding is based on completing predetermined project activities. Funders can help by providing more long-term, core funding that is tied to long-range goals, permitting organizations flexibility to make short-term strategic allocation decisions.

**Successful CSOs adjust their advocacy strategies in response to changes in the environment.** In particular, organizations’ ability and willingness to switch between confrontation and collaboration is key to successful budget campaigns. The government ultimately retains sovereignty over public finances, so often campaigns will eventually have to engage with the state. The group ACIJ demonstrated such effective flexibility. First, they successfully litigated for the Buenos Aires government to provide adequate infrastructure for preschool education, and then they shifted from a confrontational approach to cooperating with government in implementing the court ruling.

**Medium- to long-term CSO campaigns have greater impact because sustainable service delivery and policy reforms often require comprehensive, sequential changes.** For example, NCDHR in India first used a right to information request to obtain data on funds earmarked for poor and vulnerable scheduled castes. Next, they successfully campaigned to have “code 789” established, which enabled civil society to track funds earmarked for Dalits. Finally, it was by using this code to track funds that they were able to identify funds diverted to the Commonwealth Games and, ultimately, pressure the government into returning these funds to special caste programs.

**Successful CSO campaigns target the de facto and not just the de jure decision makers in government.** Formal participatory mechanisms, such as legislative budget hearings, can provide important avenues of influence to de jure decision makers. In reality, however, CSOs and citizens often exert more influence by navigating the informal (de facto) avenues of power. In Brazil, for example, INESC managed to mobilize the legislature against a proposed regressive tax reform by informing the relevant ministries and parliamentary committees about the potentially disastrous impact of this reform on health and other social services. After INESC won over these key constituencies, the head of the legislature called the debate that sank the proposed reform.

**Successful CSO campaigns partner with other accountability actors and institutions — such as audit institutions, the media, legislatures, donors, and sympathetic government insiders.** The case studies show clearly that CSOs contribute significantly to budget outcomes, but seldom alone. In most successful campaigns civil society established formal or informal partnerships with other accountability institutions. It is these relationships between institutions in the accountability ecosystem that offers a sustainable path to budget accountability.

All the campaigns referred to in this section have been documented in case studies that are available here: [http://internationalbudget.org/ibp_publication_categories/case-studies/](http://internationalbudget.org/ibp_publication_categories/case-studies/).
Learning by Doing: The Active Partnership Approach

In recent years, the International Budget Partnership has explored new ways of working through more direct collaboration with partner organizations. These experiments have provided us with insights about the ways in which civil society organizations (CSOs) work and learn that form the basis for a deeper type of engagement that going forward we will aim to implement in a larger set of countries. This brief essay describes some of our forays into active partnership in a single country (Kenya) and what we have learned from this approach so far.

At the end of 2012 the Economic and Social Rights Centre (Haki Jamii) in Kenya hired a young economist to lead their budget analysis work on lands and housing. There would have been nothing particularly remarkable about this, except that Haki Jamii had never had an in-house budget analyst, and did not even think of its work in budget terms until a few months before.

The shift in Haki Jamii’s understanding of its own work came about, in part, because of a unique collaboration with the IBP. The collaboration was born out of different comparative advantages — the IBP’s budget analysis capacity and Haki Jamii’s deep knowledge of land reform issues — but shared concerns. Land is one of the most vexing political and social problems in Kenya today. It is of such importance that the 2010 Constitution set into motion a series of steps, including the creation of a new National Land Commission, to facilitate land reform. Both Haki Jamii and the IBP were concerned that the reforms, while well-intentioned, would not be implemented. In particular, the reforms will be short-circuited if they are not properly financed.

We decided to tackle this issue together, jointly working on strategy, analysis, and outreach. The result was that the media and wider citizen networks in Kenya were made aware of the challenges in implementing land reform. Haki Jamii found a new and powerful tool — budget analysis — to support its advocacy, and recognized that it needed to build further capacity in this area. While Haki Jamii had a general appreciation for the potential of budget work at the outset of the project, it was only during the process of collaborating that the organization came to understand exactly why this work was valuable.

This experience contained a powerful lesson for the IBP, as well: hands-on collaboration between the IBP and its allies in civil society can accelerate the process by which organizations learn about budget work and come to see its value. Working together on specific projects and toward specific objectives provides opportunities that arise organically from the work to build organizational capacity and to develop and instill analytic and advocacy tools. These opportunities allow for deeper, more applied learning than that which typically occurs in a formal training or workshop. The lessons that the IBP acquires from these interactions can also inform our future training and research.

The IBP’s Kenya work also found that, where we can facilitate joint work across organizations, rapid learning and deeper work can occur. While CSOs may meet with other groups to discuss issues of common concern, moving beyond meetings to true collaboration is often challenging.

In Kenya many organizations are concerned about devolution and ensuring that the new system of government works for ordinary Kenyans, but they often react to government individually rather than staking out a common position for advocacy. Last year, we helped to bring together a group of CSOs to forge a common stance on the regulations surrounding public participation under the new county budget system. The organizations were able to discuss, debate, and own a set of recommendations in this area that nine of the groups published with the IBP in a joint statement. The generation of this document strengthened civil society coordination and helped organizations to increase their understanding of budget and policy issues. The IBP assisted in this process by lowering the costs of collective action: through organizing, drafting, and cajoling.

These different collaborative efforts help address another challenge for the IBP and our partners: to go beyond promoting open and transparent budget systems to actually increasing the demand and use of publicly available information and opportunities for public participation in budget processes. Otherwise there is unlikely to be true accountability. In Kenya, for instance, more and more data is being made available through the Open Data Initiative. Yet much of this open data sits unused because civil society
lacks the confidence and purpose to use it. The types of learning by doing partnerships described here can help, slowly, to ensure that the information that is becoming available through improved budget transparency is indeed used by citizens to affect policies and their implementation.

Ultimately, data is used when people understand that it can help them to achieve their goals. Through hands-on partnerships, it has been possible to demonstrate to civic activists how budget data can help them to ensure accountability in diverse policy areas. Ideally, capacity built through these partnerships allows organizations to sustain budget advocacy beyond the partnership.

The active partnerships described here open a number of avenues for future IBP work that is more fine tuned to country context and more adaptive to changes in the opportunities for impact. This approach requires intensive engagement from onsite staff and some research, communications, and administrative support to fully capitalize on opportunities. At the same time, by maintaining a lean IBP operation, the risk of competing with partners is diminished, because most of the work requires partnerships to succeed. The active partnership approach can be of benefit to all partners and in a variety of ways: facilitating faster learning and adaptation, developing new methods of budget work, and bringing complementary strengths toward achieving mutual goals.

Technology for Improved Governance and Empowering People

Sauti za Wananchi: Using Mobile Technology to Get Timely Citizen Feedback on Public Service Delivery in Tanzania, by Youdi Schipper, Twaweza, and Cynthia Ugwuibe, International Budget Partnership

In Tanzania policymakers regularly make decisions that impact the whole country, but often do so with limited information about the preferences and opinions of the public. They also struggle to obtain reliable information to evaluate policy implementation and performance.

Sauti za Wananchi (SzW), “Voices of Citizens,” is a new initiative from Twaweza — a CSO focused on improving public access to reliable information and citizen engagement in the delivery of education, health care, and clean water in East Africa. SzW uses mobile phones to collect information on a regular basis on pertinent policy and public service delivery issues from a representative sample of citizens. The initiative applies the rigorous methodology of traditional face-to-face surveys but uses mobile phones to gather the interview data as a way to lower costs and speed up the process of data collection.

Alvin Etang, who leads mobile phone survey development at the World Bank, welcomes the SzW initiative as “it would allow decision makers to receive almost real-time, representative information on the well being of their people and the success of their programs.”

SzW was carried out in two phases.

Phase 1: Ipsos Synovate, a research firm hired by Twaweza, carried out a baseline survey of households from October to December 2012. The survey was designed according to traditional survey methodology
based on stratified random sampling. A sample of 2,000 respondents from all regions of mainland Tanzania was randomly selected to participate. During this phase, enumerator teams made household visits to distribute mobile phones and solar chargers to all participants. By providing the mobile phones and chargers to all respondents, Twaweza addressed the fact that household income would likely affect survey participation and participant response rates: poor households are less likely to have access to a mobile phone than their rich counterparts. The only limiting factor for the selection of households to be included in SzW was mobile phone network reception.

Phase 2: Starting in February 2013, participants are phoned from a call center on a monthly basis. Calling was preferred to text messages based on a pilot study carried out in Dar es Salaam called “Listening to Dar,” which found that respondents were more responsive to voice calls than text messages.

After Ipsos Synovate conducted the SzW baseline survey interviews, the firm scanned the results into a digital format; identified, documented, and removed any errors in the data; and then exported the data into statistical software format. Currently, Uwazi, the research arm of Twaweza, is systematically cross-checking the data it received from Ipsos Synovate.

After completing its internal verification, Uwazi will post baseline data, questionnaires, and outputs, such as briefs, graphs, and findings, on the SzW website. Respondent data from phase two will also become available for policymakers and the public to use. Uwazi plans to utilize the data to write policy briefs on topics covered in the mobile surveys.

Since the initiative will collect citizen feedback on the outcome, effectiveness, and public satisfaction with government-funded projects, SzW can be a useful tool to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the national budget for the National Audit Office of Tanzania, civil society organizations and other stakeholders, and the public.

Are you interested in finding out more about the Sauti mobile survey? Get the details on the SzW initiative, Africa’s first representative mobile survey, from the Sauti za Wananchi website. And, similar to SzW, the World Bank’s Listening to Africa mobile survey initiative will gather timely, high-quality data on access and quality of service delivery, welfare, and many other topics are not readily available in Africa.

**Open Data Initiatives that Empower Citizens and Strengthen Civil Society Organizations**, by Cynthia Ugwuibe, International Budget Partnership

In an effort to be more transparent, governments, donors, and international institutions are “opening their data” — i.e., providing widespread, equal access to records, data, and policy information that they had previously withheld from public scrutiny — in formats that are easy to understand and use. Open Data projects represent a diverse group of initiatives and typically rely on information and communication technology (ICT). Citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs), and journalists can use this newly available information to conduct budget analysis and to present data in ways that enable the public to better assess how government programs, such as public spending on infrastructure, are being managed and impact their lives.

**From infographics to Open Data portals**

Governments and organizations, like BudgIT in Nigeria, use publically available data to create infographics — presentations of complex information in text and graphics — to better communicate national budget and sector-specific spending information. Taking Open Data a step further, the African Development Bank and countries like Chile have launched national-level Open Data portals, which are one-stop, online repositories of government information. The Kenyan government makes available a large amount of statistical, demographic, and public expenditure data in exportable datasets and interactive charts through the Kenya Open Data Initiative, the first open government data portal created by a developing country. Utilizing information available through the Kenya Open Data Initiative, local journalists like Irene Choge conduct budget analysis, and local CSOs create innovative mobile phone applications like the Kenya County Scorecard, which enables users to analyze county-level facts and evaluate the track record of parliamentarians and county governors.
Open Data at the subnational and regional levels

Open Data initiatives are also becoming more prevalent at the regional and subnational levels. At the subnational government level, CSOs and local governments are using interactive visualization tools to track money flows and monitor the quality of spending. The “Caring for My Neighborhood” project, in São Paulo, Brazil, maps out how much the municipal government allocates and spends on public infrastructure projects, helping citizens see how government spending directly impacts their communities. On the regional level, the African Spending Project, a new initiative by the Open Institute, the Africa Media Initiative, and the Open Knowledge Foundation, will provide information on public funds from a variety of sources, including foreign aid and extractive industries. The project will allow users to create customizable visual displays with the information and insert the graphics in blogs, articles, and websites.

Building CSO capacity to create Open Data initiatives

Code4Kenya, a joint pilot program funded by the World Bank and the Africa Media Initiative, seeks to develop the capacity for CSOs to create their own open data projects. In its pilot run the program competitively recruited four skilled ICT professionals from Kenya’s strong technology sector to collaborate with select media and civil society organizations for a five-month fellowship. During this period, the fellows helped their host organizations create open data-driven applications and build the internal capacity to utilize data in the organization’s core work. The initiative was successful and the resulting projects were placed under creative commons license.

As CSOs and citizens harness publicly available information to educate and empower themselves, they will be more equipped to meaningfully participate in government decision-making processes. In future newsletter issues, we will explore some of these initiatives in greater detail.

Civil Society Pushes for Open Budgets at the National and Local Level

Egyptian Coalition Sues Government, Demanding Public Budget, by Jay Colburn, International Budget Partnership

It’s budget time in Egypt. In early April Egypt’s then-Minister of Finance, Al Morsi Hegazi, submitted the Executive’s Budget Proposal to the economic committee of the Shura Council, the upper house of the Egyptian parliament for its consideration. However, the government did not release the budget proposal to the public for discussion and feedback on the specific policies for raising and spending public funds contained in this critical document. The Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) and others argued that it is the constitutional duty of the government to provide the budget to the public according to Article 47, which deals with access to information, and Article 55, which says that citizens should participate in public life. One of those calling on the government to release the proposal is Egyptian Social Democratic party member Maha Abdel Nasser, who insists that the public has the right to know how their money is spent on things like health, education, the police, and the military.

Access to the budget proposal is particularly relevant for a couple of reasons: first, the impact of its proposals and, second, the absence of strong formal oversight in formulating what will become the Enacted Budget for the coming fiscal year. There are serious concerns about how the new budget will affect Egypt’s poor. It is said that the new budget would cut fuel subsidies by over US$300 million. The cutting of subsidies, which has been linked to International Monetary Fund conditions for a US$4.8 billion loan that is under consideration, is controversial since many of Egypt’s poor would not be able to afford basic goods and commodities without the subsidies.

On the oversight question, a thorough consideration of a government’s proposed budget by the full legislature is considered an important part of an accountability system based on checks and balances. Therefore, the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Egyptian parliament, is responsible for approving the national budget. However, the House was dissolved by the military in 2012 and has yet to be reconstituted. Thus it would be unconstitutional for the Shura Council to make any decisions regarding the budget, according to Ali Soliman of the Socialist Popular Alliance party.
The situation in Egypt, where you have a hobbled formal oversight system, is made worse by a lack of budget transparency and public participation. The combination of weak oversight and lack of transparency undermines a strong accountability system that contributes to good decisions about how best to manage public money to meet public needs, and effective implementation of those decisions. So what can civil society do?

There are many tactics civil society organizations can use to press governments to make budget information accessible to the public. Through case studies in various countries, the IBP has documented a number of these strategies, including: forming broad coalitions to raise support and demonstrate relevance across multiple sectors of society; conducting broad communications campaigns through print, broadcast, and social media; submitting freedom of information requests (in countries which have such laws); lobbying key decision makers in the executive and legislative branches; and using litigation.

In Egypt a coalition of 17 human rights groups, activist movements, and opposition political parties have already engaged in several of these strategies, but this past month they decided to take the government to court based on the constitutional issues outlined above. In April a subset of this group (ECESR; four political parties: the Popular Socialist Coalition, Egyptian Social Democratic, Misr el Qaweya, and Tayar el Masry; and three labor unions: Egyptian Independent Federation for Trade Unions, Independent General Tax Collectors Union and Independent Union for Airport Workers) filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Finance demanding that the Executive’s Budget Proposal be released to the public. The decision to take the government to court came after repeated requests to both the executive and legislative branches of government for the document’s release were ignored. The lawsuit was announced at a press conference held by the ECESR and attended by the other 16 coalition members. The ECESR is a member of the Global Movement for Budget Transparency, Accountability, and Participation (BTAP) — a broad movement of activists and organizations working on public finance and budget accountability issues around the world — and has taken this step as part of BTAP’s global campaign to increase budget transparency in the most opaque countries in the world.

Since the lawsuit was filed, the Ministry of Finance has posted the budget proposal on their website, though at this point it is not possible to attribute this decision to the efforts of the coalition. Still, the timing of the ministry’s decision indicates that the coalition may have had some impact.


**Pulling Together to Pull Apart: Devolution in Kenya**, by Jason Lakin, International Budget Partnership

In 2010 Kenya passed a new constitution. This set in motion a series of reforms to be implemented over five years, including the creation of a new level of government (the county) and the decentralization of administrative, political, and fiscal powers. In March of this year, county governors and assemblies were elected, and devolution of money and responsibility was set to follow.

In order to smooth the process of transition, Kenya set up a Transition Authority and mandated it to facilitate a process of “functional assignment.” Functional assignment essentially means looking at the constitutional requirements for dividing up roles between the national and county government (contained in a special schedule of Kenya’s constitution), and comparing this to what government actually does. The detailed set of services that government currently provides are then divided appropriately between the two levels, and the budget to implement these services should follow.

Unfortunately, the functional assignment process has significantly delayed, leading to a situation where Kenya has two levels of government, but no clarity about who is supposed to do what, nor the proper distribution of finances. The process has also been opaque, meaning that most citizens do not know what has been done so far, or when they can provide input into the discussion.

Between February and April, a number of civil society organizations in Kenya came together to analyze this problem across the health, education, housing, water, and agriculture sectors. The organizations
included the Institute for Social Accountability, the Institute of Economic Affairs, Article 19, Water and Livelihoods Reform Network, International Institute of Legislative Affairs, Haki Jamii, and the International Budget Partnership. The team divided itself into sectors and pored over budget and policy documents to understand what the constitution said, what the government had in mind, and where the remaining gaps were.

In April this working group released a synthesis paper, “Who’s in Charge? Devolution May Fail Without Clarity of Roles.” The paper summarizes key concerns across sectors. Among these are the:

- the lack of clarity about who will run Kenya’s provincial hospitals and immunization programs;
- the fact that the national government is trying to retain its role and budget in the housing sector, even though housing has been devolved to counties;
- the lack of clarity about the role of counties vis-à-vis Water Service Boards, and the potential for confusion in delivery of water services;
- the continued role of state corporations and the high share of the budget for agriculture that remains at the national level while most agriculture functions have been devolved; and
- the fact that, while pre-primary education is a county responsibility, the capital budget for investing in pre-primary remains at the national level.

The group pointed out that the lack of clarity about roles could undermine devolution, and argued that the Transition Authority and line ministries should release more information to the public about their plans for aligning service delivery with the new devolved framework. Moreover, dividing up responsibilities is not merely a technical exercise, it must also include public consultation. The working group, therefore, called for a functional assignment timetable with specific opportunities for public input.

On 18 April 2013 a meeting was called with broader civil society in Kenya to discuss the process of functional assignment, and to build support for a common front to engage with national government around devolution. It is too early to say what the impact of this work will be, but the analysis has helped prepare civil society organizations to participate more actively in the technical process of functional assignment. This means that it will be more difficult for the national government to claw back powers and financing that should be devolved.

Publications

IBP Publications

Over the past three years, the IBP has spearheaded an ambitious research program aimed at deepening our understanding of the causes and consequences of budget transparency. Teaming up with some of the best researchers in the field, we promoted both quantitative analysis using OBI data (available here) and a set of qualitative case studies looking at how budget transparency had evolved over time in varied country contexts. The results of these case studies are now available in the IBP’s newly released book *Open Budgets: The Political Economy of Transparency, Participation, and Accountability* (published by Brookings Institution Press). You can read a summary of the book at the [Open Budgets Blog](http://www.openbudgets.org) and find out more about how to order your copy on our [new Featured Publications page](http://www.openbudgets.org/featured-publications).

The IBP has added two new case studies to its ongoing effort to document when and under what circumstances civil society budget advocacy has impact on government budget practices, policies, and outcomes. The new studies examine how IBP partners, the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) and the Legal Resources Centre (LRC), effectively integrated budget analysis into their advocacy strategies to pressure local governments in South Africa to improve public services. The LRC’s budget research and analysis strengthened its successful legal case to force the Eastern Cape provincial government to provide adequate education facilities. The SJC’s multifaceted approach — which relied on extensive budget research, media publicity targeting both poor and wealthy communities, public protest, and a legal strategy — effectively pressured the Cape Town City Council to introduce and maintain clean and safe
sanitation facilities in the informal settlement of Khayelitsha. To read these and other Learning Program cases studies, click here.

The IBP has just released its 2012 Annual Report. Read about the accomplishments of the IBP and its partners over the last year and share our reflections on what we have learned after 15 years of supporting and engaging in civil society budget work. Read it here.

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

HELVETAS, the major Swiss development agency, teamed up with the Institute of Development Studies to examine accountability in fragile states. The report of the study comprises four parts: case studies on Bangladesh, Mozambique, and Nepal; and a synthesis essay. The Nepal case study examines the role of Public Audits of development projects, finding that citizen audits and prior consultations decreased corruption and increased the effectiveness of certain development interventions. The Bangladesh case study surveys local government groups that hold consultations with citizens to share budget information on development projects and finds that, while the implementation of a Right to Information Act has increased budget transparency, more work needs to be done to ensure the participation of marginalized populations. The Mozambique study looks at a decentralization effort to establish “public administration for development” at the local level in which citizens influence decision making through elected conselhos consultativos, finding that the program can lay the groundwork for civil society and citizens to play a meaningful accountability role but more needs to be done to build capacity within the country’s fragmented and weak civil society. Finally, the synthesis essay brings together lessons learned, including the importance of budget education and promoting the sharing of information, and recommends that donor organizations work to strengthen connections between actors in the “accountability ecosystem” (a term coined by IBP’s own Albert van Zyl).

An article in the most recent issue of the Journal of Public Deliberation studies the impact of citizen participation in local health councils in Brazil, where citizen consultations are required for certain decisions. “What did we learn about citizen involvement in the health policy process: lessons from Brazil” finds that mobilizing citizens to participate in the consultative forums helped to decrease inequality in public health spending across municipalities.

Budget expert James Savage has written a special report for the U.S. Institute of Peace, “Iraq’s Budget as a Source of Political Stability.” He argues that because the Iraqi budget process offers a framework for political actors to cooperate, it can contribute to long-term efforts to build peace. Further reforms are needed, however, including increased transparency of the process; Iraq received a score of 4 on the 2012 Open Budget Index.

Jobs and Opportunities

Program Officer(s) for Global Development and Population, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation is seeking to hire up to two new Program Officers for its Global Development and Population Program. The job description can be found below and on the Foundation’s website at www.hewlett.org/careers. The Program Officer(s) will be based in Menlo Park, California, and will have responsibility for grantmaking along the “evidence-to-policy” continuum, ranging from support for data collection and analytic capacity to policy research on social and economic issues and impact evaluation, particularly in East Africa and West Africa. The foundation seeks candidates who have expertise related to social science, policy research, and the field of transparency and accountability, an understanding of African political and social contexts, a demonstrated capacity for strategic thinking, and a track record of excellence in collaborative work. Interested candidates should send a cover letter and resume to Daniel Sherman at Explore Company resumes@explorecompany.com.
Workshop and Project Coordinator, School of Data
School of Data is hiring a Workshop and Project Coordinator. Details about the role and how to apply are available here. They are looking for someone who is self-driven, organized, and a good communicator. This person should be comfortable running a number of projects at the same time, speaking at events and travelling. They need a gregarious, tech-translator, who can empathize with the needs of NGOs, journalists, and engaged citizens and translate the technology to humans in order to allow them to start learning. School of Data works to empower civil society organizations, journalists, and citizens with the skills they need to use data effectively in their efforts to create fairer and more sustainable societies.