

PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

Policy Forum – Tanzania

Founded in 2003, Policy Forum is a national coalition of over 90 civil society organizations in Tanzania that seeks to influence policy processes in order to reduce poverty, promote equity, and bring about greater transparency and accountability. Policy Forum strives to increase informed civil society participation in decisions and actions that affect the lives of ordinary Tanzanians, particularly the most disadvantaged.

Policy Forum focuses on three specific areas: 1) *Local Governance*: monitoring the decentralization of power to the regional, council, and subcouncil levels of government; 2) *Public Money*: monitoring the acquisition and use of public money for government activities on behalf of citizens; and 3) *Active Citizen Voice*: fostering a culture of more informed public debate on issues of development, governance, and accountability, particularly with regard to local governance and the use of public money.

Policy Forum Facilitates Social Accountability Monitoring in Tanzania

In 2007 Policy Forum participated in a pilot course on social accountability at the Centre for Social Accountability in South Africa. After completing the course, it decided to use the tools learned to assist its member organizations in monitoring budget problems at the local level. In July 2008 Policy Forum entered into an agreement with the Mwanza Policy Initiative (MPI), a civil society network operating in Mwanza Region (northwest Tanzania), to work with them to develop their social accountability monitoring program. A monitoring team was formed in Mwanza city that comprised staff members and volunteers of local civil society and community-based organizations that were members of MPI.

The Mwaloni Fish Market Association, a member of MPI whose members are fishermen and fish sellers, identified the first issue for monitoring. In September 2008 Mwanza City Council announced that the fish market levy would be increased by 100 percent, effective that month. The Association felt this was unfair because they were already heavily taxed, while at the same time the plumbing in the fish market had been dysfunctional for several years. The local government had yet to

rehabilitate the plumbing despite the fact that poor sanitation at the fish market contributed to the cholera and typhoid outbreaks that were a regular occurrence in the city.

The monitoring team started by collecting the city council's budget and planning documents – a challenging task since the information was either not produced or not accessible to civil society. However, after three months, the team was able to obtain the strategic plan, medium term expenditure framework, annual plans and

TANZANIA
Open Budget Index 2010
 Overall Score: 45
 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	No
Executive's Budget Proposal	Yes
Citizens Budget	No
Enacted Budget	No
In-Year Reports	Yes
Mid-Year Review	No
Year-End Report	No
Audit Report	Yes
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budgets for two years, and the annual auditor's report. At this stage, Policy Forum assisted the monitoring team in analyzing the documents and drawing conclusions, which were shared with the wider MPI network as well as relevant government officials and local councilors at a public hearing.



By participating in the analysis, the Mwaloni Fish Market Association discovered several findings which helped them to address the tax hike problem. They discovered that the fish market contributed 3 percent of total revenue to the city council's budget. Despite this, they were excluded from the council's participatory planning and budgeting process, which was accessible to civic actors by invitation only. When asked about this, council officials explained that people who worked at the fish market were unlikely to contribute substantially to the process due to low levels of education.

The Association also discovered that there was no allocation in the 2007-08 capital budget to rehabilitate the fish market's water and sanitation infrastructure, in spite of the significant health implications that poor sanitation could have on the council's potential income if a cholera outbreak occurred. Instead, the items prioritized for capital spending included renovation of the council treasurer's office and the mayor's office, accounting for 25 percent and 7 percent of the capital budget, respectively. Lastly, the Association found

a discrepancy of approximately 10 million Tanzanian shillings (US\$ 8,000) between the amount they recorded as having paid the tax collector and the amount the council reported to have received.

As a result of the findings, the Association decided that it had enough evidence to compel the council to negotiate. However, the council refused to hold discussions, forcing the Association to resort to civil disobedience (they refused to pay any tax until the council agreed to meet with them). The MPI and Policy Forum publicly supported the Association's case. In December 2008 the council finally agreed to meet with the Association. As a result, the fish market levy was not increased, and the Association was invited to participate in the planning and budget process. Furthermore, an allocation was included in the 2009-10 city budget for rehabilitating the infrastructure at the fish market, as per instructions from the national Ministry of Livestock Development and Fisheries.

Policy Forum has entered into similar collaborations with other regional networks,

using the evidence from these local monitoring initiatives to inform its national level advocacy. For example, in all districts where social accountability monitoring was conducted, there were unspent funds identified in a particular year that were neither reallocated nor returned to the Ministry of Finance. Since these funds did not appear in the official accounts, they were not being monitored by any oversight bodies nor were they picked up by district council audits. At the same time, services were not being delivered to the required standard in these districts (e.g., local dispensaries ran out of essential drugs). In 2008 and 2009 Policy Forum reported on this issue in a number of presentations. In September 2009 the Ministry of Finance issued new Council Financial Instructions to all district councils which emphasized that all councils must either reallocate or return to the Treasury all unspent funds at the end of the year, and that disciplinary action would be taken if this was not done. It is not clear how much Policy Forum influenced this change in policy, but it would be fair to assume that civil society advocacy played some part in the decision.

Policy Forum's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

The work supported by the Partnership Initiative will focus on three relevant aspects of the budget process in Tanzania. First, Policy Forum will seek to influence the Public Expenditure Review process and push for more opportunities for civil society organizations to participate in this process. This includes using a dialogue process to advocate with the government to produce and make available more and better information, including the timely release of budget documents. Second, Policy Forum will focus on revenue collection issues with an emphasis on those from extractive industries, which represent 4 percent of Tanzania's GDP. Policy Forum also will build the capacity of members of parliament to engage in this debate from a transparency and accountability angle. Finally, Policy Forum will monitor public service delivery at the local level by introducing social accountability monitoring tools to local networks, so they will be able to hold local government accountable and encourage grassroots assessment of local needs and problems.

Policy Forum

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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.