



INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP
Open Budgets. Transform Lives.

July - August 2014 No. 79

Adapting to Local Context

[Chinese Grassroots CSO Pushes Government to Publish Waste Management Costs](#)

[Delivering Budget Training to Subnational Government in Vietnam](#)

Opening Budgets and Increasing Participation

[How Open is the Brazilian Government Really?](#)

[The Power of Social Audits: Lessons from South Africa](#)

Training

[From our Partners](#)

[Latest IBP Webinars](#)

Blog Corner

[From the Web](#)

[The Latest from the Open Budgets Blog](#)

Publications

[IBP Publications](#)

[Further Reading from the Field](#)

Keeping the Spotlight on Open Budgets: The Open Budget Survey Tracker

IBP has launched the [Open Budget Survey \(OBS\) Tracker](#) to provide more timely updates on progress toward more open budgets.

Designed to complement the [Open Budget Survey](#), which takes two years to produce, the OBS Tracker provides monthly updates on whether governments are releasing the eight key budget documents to the public. While less comprehensive than the survey – it does not assess the detail of the information provided – the OBS Tracker is far more responsive to changes.

Initially covering 30 countries, the OBS Tracker is an innovative new tool to help keep the spotlight on open budgets. [Explore the data](#) and [read the press release](#).

IBP South Africa on Facebook

IBP South Africa has launched a [Facebook page](#) to keep everyone up to date on their work.

The page will feature news and debates relevant to budget work in South Africa; as well as updates on IBP South Africa's work. [Check it out and hit like!](#)

Get Social with IBP



Adapting to Local Context

Chinese Grassroots CSO Pushes Government to Publish Waste Management Costs, by Zhang Lanying and Ma Jifang

A Chinese environmental civil society organization (CSO) [Eco Canton](#) has been putting IBP's [budget analysis training](#) to good use. In early 2013 Eco Canton launched a project to investigate waste management in Guangzhou and advocate for improvements. Drawing on the training, the project has adopted — and adapted to the local context — some innovative approaches to budget analysis and advocacy.

One of the bi-products of China's remarkable economic growth has been an increase in household waste. Ten years ago, to stem the tide by encouraging recycling and reuse and reduce the fiscal impact, the government adopted the policy of charging for waste collection. But the charges did not cover the treatment of waste after collection and, as the composition of waste has become more complex, more and more treatment has been required. In response, Guangzhou officials have explored reforming the system by introducing a "Pay as You Throw Scheme."

Eco Canton was eager to contribute to the reforms and help to ensure public awareness and support. They began by investigating the costs of waste management in Guangzhou, discovering gaps in the financial information that is publically available.

Building a Picture of Waste Management Finance

Eco Canton wanted to understand the budget allocations and expenditures for waste management, as well as how much revenue is collected through the fees charged. They used a number of approaches to construct a picture of waste management finance, including applying to the government for access to budget documents that were not publically available and conducting desk studies and stakeholder interviews.

By June 2014 Eco Canton had completely mapped how waste is managed in Guangzhou — from household disposal to collection, transportation, and treatment — and the financial flows for each step. They found the actual operating costs to be higher than the fees charged to residents: the government was drawing on other revenues to subsidize waste management. Not only does this realignment of spending reduce funds for other programs and services, often without input from oversight institutions or the public, it fails to encourage citizens and businesses to reduce the amount of waste they generate by hiding the true costs.

Making Voices Heard

Eco Canton adopted innovative approaches to reach out to the public. Social media platforms such as Weibo, a popular Chinese micro-blogging platform similar to Twitter, and Wechat, a mobile phone chat application, helped them to engage a wide audience directly. They also published articles in traditional media and participated in public consultations organized by the government.

Based on their survey of people's opinions about a Pay as you Throw Scheme, Eco Canton requested the government to make public the cost of Guangzhou waste management. The government has agreed to do careful calculations and cost analysis of waste treatment and disclose their findings at a suitable time. While this commitment from the government is seen as an important success, Eco Canton is monitoring whether it translates into concrete reform.

"We grew up as the project progressed"

Budget analysis and budget tracking are new skills for Eco Canton, and the new approach broadened the perspective and focus of their work. They initially struggled with the limited availability of information, but through experiential learning and analysis they were able to drive the project forward.

The design of the project, the techniques provided by IBP training and technical assistance, and information exchange between the IBP-supported groups were also good opportunities to learn and reflect on opportunities for improvement.

For more information on Eco Canton's work, contact Ma Jifang at majifang@gmail.com.

Delivering Budget Training to Subnational Government in Vietnam, by Charles R. Hankla, Georgia State University

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Committee for Financial and Budgetary Affairs of the National Assembly of Vietnam have been working together to improve the budgetary oversight capabilities of the country's provincial governments. As part of this effort, I was recently involved in developing a training needs assessment, a training plan, and a course curriculum for provincial deputies. The resultant new training program was recently rolled out to a selection of both urban and rural provinces, and, if successful, it will be expanded to others.

The experiences gained from this effort may be of interest to other countries seeking to strengthen the budgetary capacity of subnational legislatures.

Governance in Vietnam

The Vietnamese state has three tiers of government below the central authority in Hanoi. The provincial level is the highest of these subnational tiers and is governed by a representative body (the People's Council) and an executive body (the People's Committee). At the provincial level, deputies serving on the Provincial People's Councils (PPCs) are vetted by the Communist Party-affiliated Fatherland Front and then chosen in competitive elections. As a result, the PPCs are among the most representative institutions in Vietnam and can more or less claim a direct mandate from the people.

PPCs play an important and growing role in Vietnam's budget process. Vietnam began the process of fiscal decentralization to its three subnational tiers in the mid-1990s. In 2002 new budget laws entrusted the provinces with supervising revenue and expenditure of the lower levels. More of the country's business is being conducted at the provincial level than ever before. It is therefore increasingly important to equip provincial deputies with the necessary technical budgetary knowledge and skills to steward public resources.

Designing the Training

After traveling to each of the five different provinces to interview provincial deputies, we began designing a program aimed at leveraging their experiences as part of the educational process. We wanted the training to be both useful and fun; our approach combined lectures to impart technical information with interactive activities designed to teach practical skills.

Our training includes a range of hands-on activities, including exercises in drafting memos to legislators and budget oversight reports; lessons in analyzing budgets, budget documents, and case studies; mock plenary sessions, public hearings, and committee meetings; and sessions on visualizing financial data and delivering presentations.

The Syllabus

Based on our interviews, we decided to develop a number of individual courses that comprise two or three six hour sessions covering several related modules. Two courses per year will be provided for the length of a deputy's term in office (five years). Courses will be offered simultaneously, or in quick succession, in the north, center, and south of Vietnam.

In designing the curriculum we have aimed to satisfy the training requirements of those deputies and staff members who need specialized instruction, as well as those at a more introductory level.

Should any readers have questions about budgetary training in Vietnam, they can contact Charles Hankla at chankla@gsu.edu.

Opening Budgets and Increasing Participation

How Open is the Brazilian Government Really? By Nathalie Beghin and Carmela Zigoni, Instituto de Estudos Socio-Economicos

A new [study on budget transparency](#) by Brazil's Institute for Socioeconomic Studies (INESC) has revealed that, despite improvements, the Brazilian government has a long way to go in terms of the timeliness, availability, and usability of the budget information it publishes. Progress in opening budgets has, however, had a positive impact on realizing human rights in the country.

A Brief History of Transparency in Brazil

Since the launch of the National Transparency Portal in 2004, the Brazilian government has made moves toward publishing more government data. In 2011 Brazil passed the Access to Information Act, which further strengthened this effort. The act dictates procedures for federated entities to follow in order to ensure public access to information, and additional regulations apply to the disclosure of financial data.

Research Methodology

Conducted in 2013 and 2014 and supported by World Wide Web Foundation, the INESC study aimed to answer two questions:

- Is the government at both the national and subnational level actually opening data in accordance with the law and with open data principles?
- How can open budget data contribute to promoting the human rights of Brazilian citizens?

To answer these questions, the INESC researchers carried out a quantitative evaluation of official budget websites at national and subnational level. They evaluated how well the websites adhered to the eight principles of open government data (complete, primary, timely, accessible, machine readable, non-discriminatory, non-proprietary and license-free); and how well the governments complied with laws and regulations governing budget disclosure.

The study also investigated the role of open data intermediaries. The researchers interviewed CSOs, researchers, journalists, and hackers to help identify the impact open data has had on securing human rights.

Evidence and findings

The quantitative survey revealed that there is still much work to be done to improve budget transparency in Brazil. The research found that the government is publishing most of the required documents, but often fails to do so in a timely manner. The accessibility of the information remains an issue and, although progress has been made, only a minority of websites offer machine-readable data (i.e., data is presented in Excel or .CSV files from which it can be easily manipulated without first manually transcribing it from PDF files) in nonproprietary formats.

The results of the interviews supported the findings from the quantitative investigation and a call to improve the process of opening up data in Brazil. Despite limitations, however, interviewees believed that there has been progress in the field of human rights as a result of opening up data in the country.

Both the quantitative and qualitative components of the research highlighted data licensing as an area that lacked clarity: none of the sites surveyed had explicit information on open licensing, and, although intermediaries were aware of the concept, few saw this as a relevant factor in their use of data.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The debate around open data is changing in Brazil. This shift impacts a number of different fields — from transparency advocates, to human rights campaigners, to those involved in new media. Paradigms are being broken and elements of governance are being reconfigured and built. New tensions and new negotiations are emerging, particularly between civil society and government, which are key actors in these new processes.

In terms of policy, the public sector at all levels needs to improve the open data process and provide information that is accessible to nonspecialists. In the domain of practice, more investment is needed to support the reuse of tools and promote interdisciplinary networks that can analyze open budget data. Future research needs to monitor the evolution of open data in Brazil, track access by citizens, and, ultimately, its impact on human rights.

For more information about the research contact Nathalie Beghinat nathalieb@inesc.org.br.

The Power of Social Audits: Lessons from South Africa, by Jessica Taylor and Mario Claasen, International Budget Partnership

One of the fastest growing townships in South Africa, Khayelitsha, is an informal settlement on the southeast edge of Cape Town. South Africa's [Social Justice Coalition \(SJC\)](#) recently led their third social audit in the settlement, bringing together individuals from the Khayelitsha community, local leadership, and various civil society organizations. The [social audit](#) investigated the delivery of the janitorial service for public toilets in Khayelitsha.

Most of the main problems that have plagued the janitorial service in Khayelitsha since it was established by the City of Cape Town in 2012 remain unaddressed due to the city's failure to produce an implementation plan. These problems include: failure to provide the necessary protective gear, cleaning equipment and supplies to janitors; failure to inoculate janitors against disease, leaving them unable to clean inside the toilets; failure to pay janitors the amount due to them, or at all; and failure to provide sufficient training to new janitors and challenges of access where toilets have been locked.

These, among other issues, were identified and investigated during the social audit process.

The social audit took place from 14-19 July 2014 and was conducted as part of SJC's broader campaign for dignified sanitation in Khayelitsha. Axolile Notywala, who is part of the Khayelitsha community and a leading member of the SJC, led the social audit and facilitated the presentation of the preliminary findings at a public hearing attended by City of Cape Town officials. Axolile explained that prior to the public hearing one of the key challenges that the SJC had faced was getting the government to acknowledge that there was a problem. He suggests that this changed with the public hearing because "[the government] knows about the sanitation issues now."

Describing the social audit as an "educational process," Axolile highlighted that "when doing a social audit you get to see for yourself and you get to have that knowledge." He went on to explain that this knowledge, when aligned with relevant information produced by government, empowers citizens to meaningfully engage with local government on issues of service delivery and enables them to hold government to account. In the words of Axolile, it is a way to "make sure that the person you voted for is accountable and is responding to the needs of the community."

A social audit provides not only a mechanism to collect and record the realities and experiences of some of those living in the relevant community but also a space to communicate these findings to a wider audience during the public hearing. A detailed report on the social audit process and its findings will be released on 1 October and it is hoped that this will create an even broader community of informed citizens who will be empowered to participate in constructive conversations about the janitorial service in Khayelitsha, and in turn contribute to the pressure on government to improve the service.

While talking about the future of the social audit methodology in South Africa, Axolile explained that it is crucial to encourage communities to take ownership of the social audit process. He emphasized that there does not “have to be an SJC...[Social audits] should be led by communities.” Ultimately, they should “empower communities to monitor services themselves, to gather evidence themselves, and to hold government to account.”

Training

From Our Partners

[Fostering Strategic Social Accountability](#)

The Global Partnership for Social Accountability is launching a new online training course on social accountability. Taking place between October 6 and November 28, the free online course will be delivered by IBP partner Fundar (Center for Analysis and Research). It's free to join, [sign-up online](#).

From IBP

[Budgeting for Human Rights](#)

IBP recently explored what Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights means for government budgets in a series of webinars. [Catch up on the series online](#).

Blog Corner

From the Web

[Winners and losers: how budgeting for human rights can help the poor](#) (Open Democracy)

In this recent piece for Open Democracy, Helena Hofbauer shows how human rights law – coupled with budget analysis – can be a powerful tool to hold governments to account for [how their policies affect the poor](#).

From the Open Budgets Blog

[What Is PFM?](#)

Public Financial Management (PFM) is a term often thrown about when talking budgets and budgeting. Just as often its definition remains somewhat mysterious. A heterogeneous group of experts from academia, multilateral institutions, think tanks, together with IBP's own Paolo de Renzio, collaborated on a recently published paper that tries to “demystify the concept.” Paolo [explores the paper in his latest blog](#).

[Budgeting for Human Rights: Using the Maximum of Available Resources](#)

While budgets today have a global profile like never before, the lingo connecting public budgets to people's lives has a clear precedent in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). In a series of blogs, IBP's Helena Hofbauer explores what the covenant means for government budgets. This first post examines the concept of [using the maximum of available resources to realize human rights](#).

Publications

IBP Publications

[Tracking Climate Change Funding: Learning from Gender-Responsive Budgeting](#)

This paper looks at what budgeting for climate change initiatives can learn from gender-responsive budgeting. It draws on the author's experience of working on GRB and child-friendly budgeting in more than 30 countries and advising even more countries long distance on these topics.

[Open Budget Survey Tracker Report](#)

This report describes the Open Budget Survey Tracker, discussing how data is collected for the tool and how it can be used.

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

IBP's Paolo de Renzio, along with Matt Andrews, Marco Cangiano, Neil Cole, Philipp Krause, and Renaud Seligmann, have authored a working paper titled "[This Is PFM.](#)" The paper seeks to demystify the concept of public financial management and casts new light on approaches to reforming it.



Center for International Development
at Harvard University

In the research paper "[Improving Governance Through Biometric Authentication and Secure Payments: Evaluating the AP Smartcard Program](#)," KarthikMuralidharan, Paul Niehaus, and SandipSukhtankar test how advances in payments technology have the potential to improve the efficiency of inefficient and corrupt public welfare programs. The authors found that the use of Smartcards resulted in a faster and less corrupt payments process for two government welfare schemes in India.

Authors Veronica Cretu and NicolaeCretu delve into some existent practices for local open governments in their report, "[How to Build Local Open Government?](#)" The paper also examines the history of open government and how Open Government Partnership member countries are going local with their open government commitments, and analyzes the ways that local governments could embrace the core values and principles of open government in practice.