

PARTNERING TO MAKE BUDGETS WORK FOR THE PEOPLE

Omar Asghar Khan Development Foundation – Pakistan

Activists inspired by the work and memory of Mr. Omar Asghar Khan established the Omar Asghar Khan Development Foundation in 2002. The Foundation's vision for Pakistan is a democratic and peaceful society based on the values of equity, tolerance, and justice, in which all people are assured a life of quality. Its specific mission is to create opportunities for people, particularly the vulnerable, to strive collectively to secure human and livelihood rights by strengthening their asset base and making institutions and policies pro-poor. The Foundation's program is designed around three themes: local leadership and institutions among the poor; citizen activism and public accountability; and community physical infrastructure, social services, and livelihood support.

The Foundation Facilitates Grassroots Budget Advocacy to Improve Earthquake Reconstruction

In October 2005 Pakistan's Hazara region and the Azad Kashmir province were struck by a devastating earthquake. An estimated US\$ 6.2 billion was pledged by the international community to support rehabilitation, which was funneled into the government's Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA). In March 2006 the ERRA announced a US\$ 3.5 billion plan to complete 80 percent of the reconstruction within three years. The reconstruction plan targeted the health and education sectors and earmarked the largest allocation, US\$ 1.5 billion, for building 600,000 houses. The entire plan was to be completed in five years.

Within two years of the quake, top ERRA officials declared success, using a powerful media campaign to inform the public that housing grants had been given to 600,000 people and that 80 percent of the reconstruction was near completion. These claims contradicted the reality on the ground: the slow pace of work, numerous implementation problems, and the difficulty in accessing housing subsidies. In 2007 the Foundation launched a campaign to pressure the

ERRA to address these critical issues. Two primary goals of the campaign were: 1) to realign rehabilitation assistance with people's priorities, and 2) to adjust federal and provincial budgets so that resources are distributed equitably. The power of the campaign came from its massive grassroots base—a coalition of over 300 citizens' organizations, lawyers and workers groups, and journalists called the People's Coalition of Hazara.

To build an evidence base, the Foundation analyzed the ERRA's data to check for internal inconsistencies. They also carried out participatory research to compare the

PAKISTAN
Open Budget Index 2010
Overall Score: 38
Government provides minimal 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	Yes
In-Year Reports	No
Mid-Year Review	No
Year-End Report	No
Audit Report	No
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ERRA's claims with realities on the ground. Over 100 activists from earthquake-affected communities conducted research in 57 villages of the Hazara region to assess residents' living conditions, identify their needs and priorities, and check the ERRA's claims. The research took over 16 months, but it provided the Foundation with solid evidence for its campaign. Through an effective media strategy, the Foundation



was able to feed credible information to opinion makers through op-ed articles and strategically placed stories in Islamabad's major newspapers.

The high point of the campaign occurred on 6 October 2008, when approximately 200 activists staged a sit-in in Islamabad across from the Parliament and the President's Office to draw attention to the problems plaguing the reconstruction effort. The protesters —chanting slogans and waving placards demanding schools, health facilities, and housing reconstruction —were determined to stay until October 8, the third anniversary of the earthquake. The pressure peaked when major TV networks broadcasted live coverage of the protest. This forced ERRA officials to visit the camp, where citizens demanded a meeting with the lieutenant general in charge of the ERRA, a demand that was ultimately met. Three members

of the Foundation represented the protestors at the meeting. They presented a charter of demands, of which the general agreed to accept three selected by the representatives. The following demands were chosen: 1) the ERRA must pay the balance of all housing subsidies immediately; 2) the reconstruction of roads, health, education, and water supply facilities must be expedited; and 3) facilities must be provided to areas dubbed as "red zones" (areas considered unsafe due to their proximity to the earthquake fault line).

After almost two years had passed, the Foundation assessed the impact of the campaign by comparing data for the reconstruction work completed up to June 2008 with that between June 2008 and August 2009. Up to June 2008, only 9 percent of the total projects had been completed, 12 percent were under

construction, and 52 percent were at the tendering or planning stage. The corresponding percentages in August 2009 were 28.5, 31.6, and 39.9. The data also indicated a rapid increase in activity in the housing, health, water supply, and sanitation sectors—those sectors covered by the three demands made to the ERRA. Furthermore, the ERRA deputy chairperson reached out to the Foundation in September 2009 to share updated data on the disbursement of housing subsidies as well as the reconstruction of schools, health clinics, and roads. He also accepted the Foundation's invitation to attend a People's Assembly around the fourth anniversary of the earthquake. The increased pace of reconstruction and the overtures made by the ERRA deputy chairperson indicate the tangible impact the Foundation and its coalition partners have had on the earthquake rehabilitation process in Pakistan.

The Foundation's Participation in the Partnership Initiative

The Omar Asghar Khan Development Foundation's budget work aims to change the relationship between the public and the state. Working since 2006 with over 300 people's organizations in villages across the Hazara region, the Foundation's budget-related work has enabled citizens to: 1) identify their needs and express them in village-based, union council, and district action plans; 2) engage with decision makers and examine the extent to which their identified needs are addressed in government budgets; 3) monitor the implementation of budgets and associated activities; and 4) negotiate for greater inclusion of identified needs in future budgets.

As part of the Partnership Initiative, and in accordance with its current goals and objectives, the Foundation seeks to continue supporting members of the public in using budget analysis to influence policy decisions and allocation and utilization of public finances. The Foundation will continue to focus on rehabilitation budgets in the Hazara region, however, as capacities are further strengthened, it will move to include regular public financing, such as district and provincial budgets.

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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.