



INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP
Open Budgets. Transform Lives.

e-Newsletter

November-December 2012 No. 69

The Open Budget Survey 2012

[Governments serving half the world's population shut citizens out of budget decisions that affect their lives](#)

[Lessons from Brazil, Afghanistan, and Liberia on How to Accelerate Budget Transparency](#)

National and International Budget Advocacy

[Looking Ahead in the World of Budget Advocacy: An Interview with Vivek Ramkumar](#)

[Government and Civil Society Discuss Budget Transparency and Accountability During a National Consultation](#)

Leveraging Technology to Strengthen Budget Work

[Making Decentralization in Cameroon More Efficient with Public Participation](#)

[Community Radio Programming Promotes Budget Literacy, Fosters Budget Advocacy among Vulnerable Groups](#)

Jobs and Opportunities

[Program Officer \(Francophone Africa\), International Budget Partnership](#)

[International Taxation Program \(ITP\), Duke University](#)

[Public Policy and Finance Programs at the Duke Center for International Development \(DCID\)](#)

What's New About the Open Budget Survey 2012

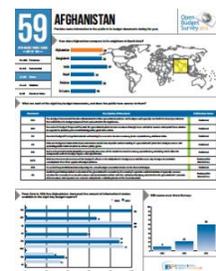
Released on 23 January 2013 the results of the [Open Budget Survey 2012](#) raise serious questions about the prospects for individual countries to overcome poverty and promote economic development and for international efforts like the Millennium Development Goals. Click on the icons below to learn more.



[Full Report](#)



[Infographic](#)



[Country Summaries](#)



To easily measure the commitment to transparency, IBP created the **Open Budget Index** from the Survey. The **Open Budget Index** allows for comparisons among countries and across years. Use the **2014 calculator** to predict the outcome of the next survey and see where transparency can improve.

[Data Explorer](#)

Publications and Tools

[Results of Country Pilot Studies on IATI Aid Reporting Standard](#)

[New Civil Society Procurement Monitoring \(CSPM\) Tool](#)

[Samarthan's Online Certificate Course on Social Audits for MGNREGS in India](#)

The Open Budget Survey 2012 Release

Governments Serving Half the World's Population Shut Citizens out of Budget Decisions that Affect Their Lives, by the International Budget Partnership

Released on 23 January 2013 the results of the [Open Budget Survey 2012](#) raise serious questions about the prospects for individual countries to overcome poverty and promote economic development and for international efforts like the Millennium Development Goals.

The [Open Budget Survey](#) is the only independent, comparative, and regular measure of budget transparency and accountability around the world. Produced every two years, the 2012 Survey reveals that the national budgets of 77 of the 100 countries assessed – these 77 countries are home to half the world's population – fail to meet basic standards of budget transparency. The Open Budget Index 2012 scores are very low, with the average score among the 100 countries studied being just 43 out of 100. The governments of 21 countries do not even publish the Executive's Budget Proposal, the most critical document for understanding government plans to manage the country's finances.

Compounding this unacceptable lack of budget transparency are the Survey's findings on the widespread failure of governments to provide sufficient opportunities for citizens and civil society to engage in budget processes. The average score on participation opportunities was just 19 out of 100.

"Absent information and a lack of participation opportunities mean citizens can neither understand the budget nor hold their governments accountable," commented Warren Krafchik, director of the International Budget Partnership. "It also opens the door to abuse and the inappropriate and inefficient use of public money, undermining equitable economic development at a time when public resources and services are already dwindling due to the financial crisis. This has major implications for the quality of life for millions of people around the world."

With regard to oversight, one unsurprising but nevertheless troubling finding is that countries with weak oversight institutions (i.e., legislatures and supreme audit institutions, or SAIs) have a greater tendency to also be countries with little budget transparency and few opportunities for public participation. In these countries all governance aspects of their budget systems are deficient.

The 2012 Survey [report](#) also summarizes new research showing that transparent budget systems can lead to cheaper international credit and, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are critical to a country's fiscal credibility and performance. For instance, using findings from a recent analysis by the IMF, the IBP estimates that Portugal's lack of fiscal transparency has enabled the government to hide a substantive part of its government debt, to the tune of approximately US\$26 billion, or 11 percent of GDP.

Rapid improvement is possible – and necessary

While the Open Budget Survey 2012 paints a bleak picture of budget transparency, participation, and accountability overall, there has been steady, albeit incremental, progress over the four rounds of the Survey since 2006. However, the IBP estimates that at the current pace it will take at least one generation for the vast majority of countries in the world to attain significant levels of budget transparency. This could mean a generation of wasted resources and missed opportunities.

In this context, the IBP's overarching recommendation is that the governments of individual countries commit to achieving practical benchmarks on budget transparency based on the scores they receive on

the Open Budget Index. For **low-scoring countries** this could mean publishing documents that they already produce but currently are not making public. For **other countries** it could mean increasing the details they provide in published budget documents. And the governments of **all countries** should take steps to fully engage citizens in budget decisions and oversight, which could include hotlines for reporting problems with service delivery, public hearings to gather input on proposed budget policies, and efforts to bring communities into audits of public programs. The [IBP website](#) has summary reports for [individual countries](#), which contain practical recommendations on how each government can improve budget transparency.

The IBP also recommends that efforts be made by all stakeholders to support budget reforms in individual countries. **Legislatures and SAIs** should demand the independence and resources necessary to make them effective, and should improve their collaboration with each other and civil society. **Donor agencies** should follow and expand recent instances of tying foreign aid to budget reforms and support the development of strong domestic accountability systems. **Civil society** should continue its role in pushing for more transparency and accountability, and further demonstrate the constructive roles it can play with adequate information and access.

Most of the tools necessary to advance budget reforms — consensus on standards, mobilized actors, and understanding of current deficiencies — are at hand. What is missing is political will in many governments to institute budget reforms. If a concerted global effort is made to create such political will in individual countries, then these available tools can be deployed, and historic and widespread advances in budget transparency and accountability can be achieved quickly.

For more information about the Open Budget Survey 2012, visit the [IBP website](#) and check out the 2012 [Data Explorer](#), [Full Report](#), [Infographic](#), [Video](#), and [Storify page](#).

Lessons from Brazil, Afghanistan, and Liberia on How to Accelerate Budget Transparency, by Erin Upton-Cosulich, International Budget Partnership

On 5 February 2013 the IBP and the World Bank co-hosted the Washington, D.C., release of the [Open Budget Survey 2012](#). The event brought together government representatives from three very different country contexts – Afghanistan, Liberia, and Brazil – with practitioners in the field of fiscal management to discuss how to accelerate improvements in budget transparency and public participation around the world. Vivek Ramkumar, the IBP's director of International Advocacy and the Open Budget Initiative, presented on the results of the Survey, highlighting the [key findings](#).

[Amara Konneh](#), Liberia's Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs, discussed how and why that country's [ranking in the Survey](#) jumped from 2 in 2008 to 43 in 2012. In the past Liberia's budgets have remained secret, but recent efforts such as its [Citizen's Guide to the National Budget](#) and legislation like its 2009 [Public Financial Management Law](#) have helped create a more solid and transparent public financial management framework. Minister Konneh reported that this shift toward efficiency and openness is changing the way public officials are elected; rather than voting based on tribal loyalty now citizens want to know what officials can deliver.

Liberia also placed an [electronic billboard](#) in front of their Ministry of Finance (MOF). The billboard displays budget expenditure information that pulls directly from MOF data systems. Such information enhances open debates in the legislature, and coupled with information gathered through public consultations across the country, helps the government link the budget to national development priorities.

Minister Konneh stated that a key incentive for Liberia to make such improvements in budget transparency is to show donors that the country manages aid properly. The government is also committed to findings ways for Liberia to perform even better in future rounds of the Survey.

[Brazil's](#) Deputy Secretary of the Budget Planning Ministry, Eliomar Wesley Rios, also emphasized the importance of public participation in explaining his country's [high score](#) of 73. Brazil (Facebook Inc.'s second largest market after the United States) uses [digital technology](#) to bring civil society closer to government and help citizens understand the budget process. The government also holds state-level

public hearings to identify needs and guide the allocation of resources. In the future the Ministry of Planning will use the [Open Budget Questionnaire](#) as a guide to enhance transparency mechanisms.

While reaching the public is a relatively seamless process in Brazil, it proved to be more of a challenge in conflict-ridden [Afghanistan](#). But as [Mustafa Mastoor](#), Afghanistan's Deputy Minister of Finance, noted, the country still managed to increase its Open Budget Index score from 21 in 2010 to 59 in 2012. Citing political will as a major driver of the change, the government and its partners built a public finance roadmap that has helped improve transparency in the budget process and build public confidence in their public financial management systems.

A score of 59 is a big improvement for the country, but Mastoor said they "still have a long way to go," citing Brazil's performance as Afghanistan's goal. He sees a need to improve the quality of data and for transparency reforms to become institutionalized so as to avoid a Survey score regression in the future.

These examples serve as lessons for other countries on how to improve their scores on the Open Budget Survey (for more recommendations for governments and other actors, read the Open Budget Survey 2012 [Report](#)). Vice president of the World Bank Institute and co-host of the event, [Sanjay Pradhan](#), highlighted the importance of donors supporting such innovations as participatory mobile technology and described the WBI's [BOOST](#) initiative, which geocodes treasury data and overlays it with development data, making it all available online. These improvements accelerate budget transparency, which Pradhan described as an "instrument to get basic services to the poor." He said the fact that the average score in the Survey is less than half is a "damning indictment for many of our countries."

When asked why so many countries are doing badly, Warren Krafchik, director of the International Budget Partnership, said that just 15 years ago secrecy was the norm, but now every international institution, multiple governments, and civil society agree that open and transparent budgets are important for an equitable distribution of resources. This drive for change comes from both the top and the bottom because there is now wide acceptance that "budgets are the gateway to development."

You can read a transcript of the event [here](#) and our tweets at [@OpenBudgets](#). Check out our [Facebook page](#) to see photos and a video. Read more about the Open Budget Survey and see how your country compares by visiting our [website](#).

National and International Budget Advocacy

Looking Ahead in the World of Budget Advocacy: An Interview with Vivek Ramkumar, by the International Budget Partnership

The core of the International Budget Partnership's (IBP) work since its inception has been to collaborate with and support its civil society partners' advocacy efforts to improve government budget practices, systems, and policies within their country. The focal point of this work has been, and continues to be, at the country level; however, over the past few years the IBP has begun working at the international level to try to leverage external sources of incentives and pressure on governments to open their budget systems to public engagement and scrutiny. Our most recent efforts at this level have been with initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership ([OGP](#)), the Global Movement for Budget Transparency, Accountability and Transparency ([BTAP](#)), and the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency ([GIFT](#)).

In light of the importance of these efforts, we sat down with Vivek Ramkumar, the IBP's director of International Advocacy and the Open Budget Initiative, to discuss where the IBP's international work is headed in the future.

Erin Upton-Cosulich: To start, can you tell us about the IBP's motivation for engaging in international advocacy around budgets?

Vivek Ramkumar: The IBP has expanded its advocacy role "organically" in recent years. Especially in the context of the Open Budget Survey, we have conducted implicit advocacy for several years. More recently, the growing global consensus on the need to promote transparency and public engagement in

budgeting through such initiatives as the OGP, GIFT, and BTAP has led the IBP to develop a more formal in-house structure to manage its role in these initiatives. We look forward to using our budget expertise to influence discussions on such issues as the United Nation's post-2015 development framework, climate change financing structures, and the modalities for effectively channelling foreign aid. We also look forward to expanding our outreach to legislators and supreme audit institutions to assist them in strengthening oversight during all phases of the budget process. Our work with our civil society budget partners in more than 100 countries gives us a unique perspective on how transparent, responsive, and accountable budgeting practices can yield multiple benefits to society — and especially to the poor and marginalized. We think it is important to use this experience to advocate for open budgets around the world.

Upton-Cosulich: How do you define advocacy around budgets? How do organizations carry out advocacy versus simply disseminate information on the implications of budget data?

Ramkumar: The IBP and its civil society partners share a passionate belief that budget decisions affect the lives of all people, especially low-income people. Our work reveals that when budget decisions are poorly planned and callously implemented, they can have terrible consequences for society. The IBP's director, Warren Krafcik, often says that it is easier to convert an advocacy specialist into a budget expert than to convert a budget specialist into an effective advocate. Our work has never been solely about the budget numbers, but rather about the implications of these numbers to the lives and wellbeing of people. That is why the IBP's tagline is *Open Budgets. Transform Lives.* Our new advocacy agenda will enable us to augment our research and training efforts with expanded outreach to all stakeholders in the budget arena to support the improved budget decision making that is our passion!

Upton-Cosulich: Can you think of a particularly successful budget advocacy campaign?

Ramkumar: The IBP has documented through case studies a number of successful advocacy efforts undertaken by our partners. Two particularly notable ones are the work of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa and the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in India. TAC used a combination of litigation, mass mobilization, and strategic alliances to convince a previously reluctant national government to increase spending on HIV/AIDS treatment programs by nearly \$6 billion, thereby providing lifesaving anti-retroviral medicines to nearly 1.6 million South Africans who had not been receiving these medicines. NCDHR published investigative reports based on budget analysis and tracking and worked with a coalition of concerned groups and individuals to successfully pressure the government to return nearly US\$100 million that had been diverted from programs meant for Indian Dalits. Those funds are now providing programs and services for nearly 2.4 million people.

Upton-Cosulich: When the IBP started out in 1997, not many groups were advocating for budget transparency and accountability. There are now budget-focused organizations in over 100 countries. What spurred that growth, and how do you envision future growth?

Ramkumar: A number of factors have spurred growth in budget-focused organizations. It is only in recent years that most governments have begun to allow external voices into budget discussions, albeit still too often in a limited way. Consequently, civil society groups have only recently begun to obtain access to budget information and a seat at the table with government on budget issues. Further, many civil society groups that previously had focused on specific sectors or areas of governance now have begun to see the benefits of using budget analysis to augment their advocacy demands. Many groups have developed a new focus on budgets to complement their work on such issues as human rights, maternal healthcare, and anti-corruption. Additionally, the IBP has played an important role in expanding work on budgets through its training, technical assistance, and grantmaking programs, as well as through its Open Budget Survey. Now, after every round of the Open Budget Survey, we receive requests from many civil society groups to include countries in the subsequent round of the Survey that have not previously been included.

Going forward, the number of groups working on budgets will only increase — and this growth will be supported by the development of nascent initiatives like the OGP, GIFT, and BTAP. Budget-focused organizations are also going to grow as a result of work being undertaken through other international

transparency efforts, such as those around the extractives industries and foreign aid, as well as other global governance efforts, such as climate change mitigation and the United Nations' post-2015 development framework. As new funds from promised increases in foreign assistance and new domestic revenues flow into government coffers, there is going to be greater civil society interest in ensuring that these funds are properly managed.

Upton-Cosulich: What kinds of challenges have the IBP and its partners faced in engaging in budget advocacy around the world? How have they overcome those challenges?

Ramkumar: The first and most enduring challenge faced by civil society organizations is getting access to timely, comprehensive, and accessible budget information. Successive rounds of the Open Budget Survey have highlighted this ongoing problem. Further, even when civil society groups gain access to information, their advocacy can be thwarted when governments deny these groups a seat at the table when budget decisions are made. In some unfortunate instances, civil society groups have even been targeted by governments for drawing attention to questionable budget decisions. Despite these challenges, the IBP's civil society partners have succeeded in influencing governments' budgets in many countries. They have done this by carefully analyzing available information and publicizing their findings and by working in coalitions of civil society within their countries to advocate on the issues they have identified. In some cases, civil society groups have also used litigation, mass mobilization, and strategic alliances with sympathetic legislators and bureaucrats to influence budget decisions.

Upton-Cosulich: Other civil society networks — such as those working on public health, education, extractive industries, aid, and the environment — increasingly recognize the importance of budget information to their own advocacy. How do those groups use budget work as a tool to achieve their goals?

Ramkumar: Most civil society groups that are working on specific sectors such as the ones you mention develop policy recommendations that concern the use of public resources. For example, public health or education advocates want more money to be spent on the health or education sectors, or they want existing funds to be spent more efficiently and equitably in these sectors. Similarly, extractive industries-focused advocates or groups advocating for the effective use of foreign aid want to ensure that funds from these sources are utilized effectively to promote national development. Groups working on a number of sector-specific issues can strengthen their advocacy efforts by scrutinizing national budgets to understand the impact of budget decisions on the issues of concern to them.

Upton-Cosulich: Let's discuss the international advocacy initiatives that the IBP supports. The [Global Movement for Budget Transparency, Accountability, and Participation](#) joins together activists and organizations to increase budget transparency, as well as to encourage citizens to participate in budgetary processes and hold governments to account for how they spend public money. What aspects of this movement are unique and exciting to you?

Ramkumar: I am very excited about the BTAP movement. I have worked at the IBP for more than eight years and know many of the individuals and organizations that are part of the BTAP movement. They are some of the most committed and passionate advocates in our field. The BTAP Movement consists of a diverse group of people from more than 50 countries who bring their collective wisdom and experiences of working on many different advocacy campaigns to address the critical global governance issues of transparency, public participation, and accountability in government budgets. After four years of leading the IBP's work on budget transparency, I have had front-row view of the challenges civil society faces in convincing governments to open up their budget systems, and I am deeply heartened by the formation of a civil society collective to confront these challenges.

Upton-Cosulich: The IBP also holds the civil society co-chair of the Open Government Partnership ([OGP](#)), which aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to make their government systems and practices more open and accountable. Why do we need civil society to help secure those commitments?

Ramkumar: The OGP is a collective of like-minded governments and civil society organizations that have come together to promote greater transparency and accountability in governance. The voluntary nature of the initiative is its strength. Governments join the OGP by choice once they have met certain qualifying criteria. However, the voluntary nature of the OGP also requires some checks to be put in place to ensure that governments are held to account for the promises they make to practice more open and accountable governance. Further, even before they implement their commitments, governments need to make appropriate commitments. Civil society can play the twin roles of: 1) assisting governments in identifying the most appropriate improvements to commit to making, and 2) holding governments to account for achieving these commitments.

Upton-Cosulich: The [Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency](#) aims to build global norms for fiscal transparency, engagement, and accountability. Why are global standards like those important?

Ramkumar: Global standards on budget transparency are important because they increase the legitimacy of civil society in their discussions with governments on budget issues. The experience of civil society is that when their public finance demands are anchored around international standards that have been accepted by governments in the global north and south, it is harder for individual governments to dismiss their demands as being culturally alien or inappropriate. Since governments often seek international legitimacy and credibility, they can often be persuaded that adhering to global standards on budget transparency is in their national interests.

Upton-Cosulich: You have recently become the director of International Advocacy, a new position at the IBP. What does the creation of your position mean for the IBP's role in future civil society engagements in advocacy around budgets?

Ramkumar: One of the IBP's key objectives is to help civil society groups undertake budget analysis and advocacy. We work to build capacity by providing training and technical assistance services through grantmaking programs and through joint research projects. To these efforts, we will now add another resource for civil society: an advocacy partner who can help represent civil society perspectives on budgets at relevant *fora* and who can help civil society partners strengthen their own advocacy initiatives. As I mentioned earlier, there are a number of current global discussions surrounding budgeting. The IBP will be an active participant in such discussions and will help present civil society's views to all stakeholders.

To learn more about the IBP's advocacy efforts, please visit our [website](#) or write to ramkumar@cbpp.org.

Government and Civil Society Discuss Budget Transparency and Accountability During a National Consultation, by Sona Mitra and Jawed A. Khan, the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, India

Although Kerala state is recognized as the best performer in India when it comes to fiscal decentralization from state to local governments, the state's performance on budget transparency has received little attention due to limited civil society intervention on this issue. In light of this concern, the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), a civil society organization (CSO) based in New Delhi, along with the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT), and Sustainable Development and Governance (ISDG), jointly hosted a



National Consultation on Budget Transparency and Accountability in Kerala in September 2012. GIFT and ISDG, both Kerala-based organizations, used their knowledge of the local context and relevant actors to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders including policymakers, academics, legislators, media representatives, and more than 100 representatives from CSOs and local governments across the state to discuss fiscal transparency and accountability in Kerala's three-tier government system. GIFT, ISDG, and CBGA worked together with government officials to establish the consultation agenda and choose participants and speakers. Stakeholders discussed the quality of fiscal decentralization, local revenue and expenditure flows, strategies to make government budgets and planning more responsive to disadvantaged segments of the population, and the need for stronger civil society efforts to increase budget transparency.

The Minister of Finance of Kerala, K. M. Mani, opened the consultation and called for participatory and inclusive pre-budget discussions to ensure that the budgetary process is more transparent and accountable to the public. He also focused on other possible interventions to increase public awareness on budgets and taxation issues. These interventions ranged from including budget literacy in the curriculum of schools and colleges to releasing the *Economic Review*, an analysis of the Kerala state economy published annually by the State Planning Board, at least one month prior to the presentation of the state budget. The vice-chairman of the State Planning Board of Kerala, K. M. Chandrasekhar, shared his insights on the poor service delivery mechanism in government programs and schemes. Kerala State Planning Board members, prominent economists and social scientists, senior media representatives, and leaders of civil society budget work in India also provided input into the discussion.



Though the focus of the consultation was on budget transparency and accountability, speakers and participants also expressed concerns related to decentralization. In the context of India's federal fiscal architecture, the issues of devolution of funds are more critical at the provincial level because those officials are also responsible for channeling funds to lower levels, setting up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at the local level, and ensuring increased information sharing by the provincial government to lower levels. Three specific

issues were raised at the consultation regarding decentralization and the devolution of funds from the Union and provincial governments: 1) bottlenecks in service delivery mechanisms; 2) the need to change fiscal policies on taxation; and 3) the need to increase the amount of discretionary funds devolved to local governments. The consultation ended with a call to build synergies between policymakers, academics, CSOs, and local government representatives in order to increase budget literacy, transparency, and accountability at various levels of government.

A number of developments have taken place since the consultation in September 2012. ISDG has taken the lead in setting up a Social Accountability and Budget Analysis Network (SABAN), a voluntary network of civil society actors, researchers, activists, and media from across Kerala to ensure transparency and accountability in governance.

ISDG and SABAN organized the first ever pre-budget consultation on 30 January 2013 in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, as a continuation of the September consultation as promised by Kerala's Finance Minister K.M. Mani. This consultation was jointly organized by SABAN and the Government of

Kerala and hosted by Minister Mani. Policymakers, members of the State Planning Board, economists, top officials from Ministry of Finance, and civil society actors from the state all participated in this consultation.

To learn more about this consultation, please contact sona@cbgindia.org or jawed@cbgindia.org. To learn more about CBGA's work, please visit www.cbgindia.org; and to learn about the global initiative that is fostering dialogue on budget transparency between governments and civil society, visit the [Open Government Partnership website](#).

Leveraging Technology to Strengthen Budget Advocacy

Making Decentralization in Cameroon More Efficient with Public Participation, by Mallah Tabot, VSO Cameroon

Many previously centralized governments in Africa, including Cameroon, have initiated reform agendas to transfer certain powers, tasks, and resources to regional governments and local authorities. While Cameroon has been relatively quick to decentralize, it has been slower to transfer the competencies and resources needed to ensure that local governments can function efficiently. Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Cameroon, a civil society organization (CSO), aims to change that by working with the government and local councils to involve the public through innovative technology. The goal of these efforts is to improve transparency, efficiency, and accountability in budget tracking, citizen participation, and participatory budgeting.

In a country plagued by nepotism, mismanagement, and the siphoning of public funds at all levels, VSO Cameroon introduced the 2011-12 Inclusion Enhanced project, in which 34 VSO Cameroon staff members, along with international and national volunteers, used the “photovoice” method — a photography-based action research element — to deliver on 13 research projects. “Photovoice” uses



photography to promote discussion on change within communities. Project organizers provide community members with digital cameras so that they can take pictures of and discuss their perspectives on issues, challenges, opportunities, and the impacts of community development projects. In addition to improving and monitoring budgets, this information is used to influence the programs of VSO Cameroon and its partners.

Council partners and participants unanimously reported that these projects surpassed expectations and were used to set council priorities for

the upcoming year — in particular for community plans. For example, one council learned of the dire situation of its constituency's many persons with disabilities and allocated CFA 4 million to serve them. Both councils and participants said they would like to continue to engage with and to act upon the findings in a more long-term way.

VSO and Cuso International's Volunteering Innovation Fund have recently created a new two-year initiative, the Participatory Budgeting and Tracking (PB&T) project, which incorporates the use of “photovoice” and of short message service (SMS) technology. Through the PB&T project, six councils in three regions of Cameroon are learning to engage members of their communities, particularly local women, in setting budget priorities and monitoring how budgets are implemented on the ground.

Through exercises that allow citizens to decide how councils should spend public funds, council authorities are introduced to more inclusive decision-making practices for community development projects. Simultaneously, volunteers will use SMS to provide monthly updates on budget allocation and spending, and community members will report on changes they see as a result of council spending on the priorities they identified. This dialogue will continue until the end of the budgetary year, culminating in a “photovoice” workshop that will capture the changes brought about by the PB&T project.

VSO Cameroon has refined “photovoice” and captured how to use it in a [facilitator’s guide](#) and short films. The organization currently seeks partners to collaborate with at the regional level that would give greater visibility to VSO’s work and help identify means by which citizen participation in budgetary processes may be sustained beyond the project’s lifespan.

Help track that budget! VSO Cameroon’s PB&T project is now on Facebook. Check out their [Facebook page](#) and don’t forget to “Like” and share this creative initiative. For more information, contact Mallah Tabot at mallah.tabot@vsoint.org.

Community Radio Programming Promotes Budget Literacy, Fosters Budget Advocacy among Vulnerable Groups, by Pravas Mishra, Centre for Youth and Social Development, Odisha, India

For almost 30 years the Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD), a nonprofit social development organization in the state of Odisha, India, has advocated relentlessly to improve the livelihoods and quality of life of Odisha’s tribal communities and rural and urban poor. In 2010 the CYSD established the Odisha Budget and Accountability Centre (OBAC), which has used highly successful community radio programs to educate and empower the public to engage in budgetary processes.



The OBAC focuses on three areas: research, training, and advocacy. As part of the research agenda, the OBAC compares actual state expenditures to state budget allocations and commitments, monitors the inflow of state revenues, and tracks budget allocations and expenditures for government programs earmarked for tribal communities and the Kalahandi, Balangir, and Koraput (KBK) districts. The KBK districts, located in the western region of Odisha, are largely rural, underdeveloped, and impoverished; in fact, the planning commission has designated the KBK districts as the most “backward” region in Odisha.

Since 2005, as part of its budget advocacy program, the OBAC has organized annual pre- and post-budget consultative workshops to educate community members and state and district-level civil society representatives about budget terms and processes. The Odisha State Minister of Finance regularly attends these workshops and outlines for civil society representatives the state’s social sector priorities. Additionally, the finance minister and the Department of Finance have been responsive to the suggestions offered by other stakeholders in these meetings, such as increased budget allocations for free medicine, nutrition for patients, and scholarships for students. In response to increasing demands for an even more participatory budgeting approach, the government has created more opportunities for public participation in the budget process: since 2010, the Odisha state government has held its own pre-budget consultation and invited civil society organizations to attend and provide input prior to the formal presentation of the state budget. Prior to 2010 the state government did not have its own pre-consultative process with vested stakeholders.

In addition to the consultations, the OBAC created ***The Community Radio***, a radio program that uses interviews with grassroots leaders, interactive plays, straightforward descriptions, and poems to present widely accessible information about the state's budgetary process and its social sector priorities. This program seeks to educate community members in order to empower them to engage in regular and informed dialogue with their government representatives. Regular dialogue will likely foster a participatory and transparent budgetary process that will result in state budgets, policies, and spending that reflect the needs and interests of the poor and rural communities in western Odisha. *The Community Radio* program harnesses the region's most widely used media outlet to reach listeners and incite action — and they employ an innovative two-pronged approach to reach both broad and targeted audiences.



Their shows are “broadcasted” through signals transmitted by a national radio station to a wide geographic audience, and also “narrowcasted” when the OBAC provides targeted groups with specific budget information that is most relevant to them. Broadcasting is done by All India Radio (AIR), India's national broadcasting station, when it airs the program to residents of the Kalahandi district and to neighboring districts in western Odisha in the local Oriya language. The OBAC “narrowcasts” information by gathering community members at local community centers in 90 villages in the western Odisha region to listen to a recording of *The Community Radio*. Depending on the issues covered, certain members of the

community are encouraged to attend. For instance, if a particular airing discusses textbooks for school children, then parents are invited to listen; if the episode focuses on women's health issues, then women are encouraged to attend.

The OBAC's narrowcasting initiatives have been effective in both raising public awareness of the budget process and fostering citizen participation in budget formulation by creating a more informed demand for services. During the state's budget preparations in August, some communities that listened to *The Community Radio* demanded from their district-level Drawing and Disbursement Officers (the government representatives responsible for budget preparation and spending at the local level) allocations for textbooks, scholarships, and doctors for primary health centers to. Check the [OBAC's website](#) in the future for information on whether these officers took action on the demands.

The OBAC's two-pronged approach to presenting *The Community Radio* illustrates how important it is for civil social organizations that are engaged in budget work to identify and harness the most appropriate modes of communication to effectively reach target audiences. To learn more about these programs, please visit the [OBAC's website](#), or for more information please write to Pravas Mishra at pravas@cysd.org.

Jobs and Opportunities

Program Officer (Francophone Africa), International Budget Partnership

The IBP is seeking a program officer (Francophone Africa) to provide support to the [Open Budget Initiative \(OBI\)](#). The OBI is a research and advocacy program that seeks to increase public access to budget information and promote inclusive and accountable public finance management. The program officer will report to the IBP's director of International Advocacy and Open Budget Initiative, and to the supervisor of the IBP's Open Budget Survey. For more information and to apply, [click here](#).

International Taxation Program (ITP), Duke University

The International Taxation Program (ITP) at Duke University is a graduate-level program for those interested in leadership and management positions in tax systems throughout the world. Offered as a specialization within Duke University's Master of International Development Policy (MIDP), the program recognizes the diversity of economic and social development situations affecting the design and administration of taxes in different countries and focuses on comparative analysis of tax systems between countries. Prospective applicants include professionals involved in fiscal and tax policy, tax law, and regional and local governments; and others working in the design, analysis, forecasting, and administration of taxes. For more information, [click here](#).

Public Policy and Finance Programs at the Duke Center for International Development (DCID)

The Duke Center for International Development (DCID) at the Sanford School of Public Policy offers short-term executive education programs to meet the needs of mid-career public policy professionals in government agencies, international institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. The program attracts development professionals from around the world and provides a supportive environment for learning and interaction.

They offer four [open-enrollment](#) public policy and finance programs each summer:

- Project Appraisal and Risk Management ([PARM](#)): 12 May – 7 June 2013
- Program on Fiscal Decentralization and Local Government Financial Management ([PFD](#)): 7 – 26 July 2013
- Tax Analysis and Revenue Forecasting ([TARF](#)): 23 June – 19 July 2013
- Budgeting and Financial Management in the Public Sector ([BUDGET](#)): 21 July– 9 August 2013

Visit the [DCID website](#) to learn more about the programs offered this summer.

Publications and Tools

Results of Country Pilot Studies on IATI Aid Reporting Standard, International Aid Transparency Initiative

In an effort to make information on development resources and aid more accessible and transparent, the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and other stakeholders involved in the High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness have been working to develop a common, open standard for donors to record and report aid information. As part of this process, IATI has tested proposals for their IATI standard in four country pilot studies in Malawi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Colombia. The results of these pilot studies are available on IATI's website at <http://www.aidtransparency.net/resources> under the "Evidence" section. For more information on IATI, visit <http://www.aidtransparency.net/>.

New Civil Society Procurement Monitoring (CSPM) Tool, Transparency International

The CSPM is an online tool to support civil society organizations (CSOs) that want to monitor public procurement for red flags signaling corruption. While several CSOs have successfully monitored public procurement in their respective countries for many years, some of them lack a simple, user-friendly, web-based tool to support and streamline their monitoring activities. The CSPM tool was created to fill this void. To test the tool and read more information, [click here](#).

Samarthan's Online Certificate Course on Social Audits for MGNREGS in India

IBP partner Samarthan is now offering a 45-day online certificate course on social audits of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme . Participants will learn about the nuances of the implementation of the MGNREGS and about Samarthan's experiences in facilitating social audits in the villages of the Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh state in India. The course is meant for development practitioners, academics, students, and any individuals interested in accountability and transparency. To learn more, check out the [brochure](#).