



**Semkae Kilonzo, Coordinator of the [Policy Forum on Tanzania](#)**

**Q. What is the nature of your project / programme (who does it help, how is it funded?)**

Social Accountability Monitoring (SAM) focuses on enabling civic actors to monitor public resource management within Local Government and conduct advocacy by engaging with government. It is funded predominantly by the Swiss and Canadian governments.

**Q. What type of information do you need to run this programme?**

CSOs would like the Government to disclose all legally bound and accessible government and Council documents and make them readily available to the entire public. This includes everything from local budget summaries to treasury disbursements to speeches.

For CSOs to be able to hold service delivery providers accountable for use of public resources, they need to know what resources are available and how those resources will be prioritized. Conversely, government should be able to explain and justify the prioritisation of available public resources and how they will progressively realise human rights. They should be able to explain whether or not the allocations will address the most pressing social and economic needs. The above listed information enables them to come up with analyses to determine whether or not human rights are being progressively realised and to ask the right questions to government.

**Q. What are the current (or past) obstacles to getting this information?**

We are highly dependent on access to relevant public resource management documentation in a timely manner. Access to information is also the most commonly cited challenge among CSOs in Tanzania.

The problem is that the legal, regulatory and normative provisions for accessing information relevant to SAM are not held in a central document, making it necessary to search for it across a number of laws, regulations, directives, instructions and guidelines to identify a relevant clause. It would not be realistic to expect the average citizen, or even the average CSO, in Tanzania to have the time and/or capacity to do this. It is therefore not surprising that information is often withheld from civic actors requesting it.

**Q. What does aid transparency mean to you? Why is it important?**

For aid to be effective, it requires mutual accountability between the donor and the recipient. Aid transparency is the backbone of this relationship and crucial to building effective accountability frameworks in the aid architecture.

More specifically, the following illustrate the importance of aid transparency:

- **Timeliness of the information:** Projects initiated in a country by a donor without the recipient government's detailed knowledge of the undertaking facilitates the creation of wasteful parallel structures that sometimes compete against each other for further resources in a bid to be sustainable in the long term. Aid should go preferably into country systems but if that cannot happen, then at least recipient governments should know exactly how much is being allocated in a particular area well in advance (TIMELY) so that they can make provisions to allocate elsewhere (other sectors).
- Transparency is one thing. **CLARITY and USEFULNESS** of the information is just as important. Unclear financial reporting requirements result in a massive and wasteful workload for developing country governments, with already weak and fragile institutional capacity. In Tanzania, the health sector alone has more than 100 projects of less than \$1 million each.
- **Participation:** Another point of transparency is so that all domestic stakeholders can partake in the decision-making process. When recipient governments are busy with overloaded project budget monitoring meetings with donors, they have limited time to be accountable to their own citizens. To arrest the phenomenon of "mission overload", Tanzania asked donors to allow a two months mission-free relief (quiet time), especially during the intense budget preparation period so that they can plan the national budget together with the involvement of parliamentarians and civil society.

**Q. Are there any direct ways in which your organisation has been improved thanks to increased transparency?**

During the initial stages of our participation in the Public Expenditure Review/General Budget Support process in Tanzania, we realized that the general lack of budgetary transparency was the primary and overriding impediment to impacting on the budget process in a meaningful manner and hence decided to spend the remaining years of the project using this space to advocate for greater transparency ahead of impacting on budget decisions. Realising that the Citizens Budget, one of the key budget documents for public participation in the budget process was not being produced by government, the Policy Forum Budget Working Group (BWG) decided it use the space not only to encourage government to produce this publication, but to also begin a larger conversation with government on budget transparency.

The BWG hence sought financial and technical support from the International Budget Partnership (IBP) on producing the citizens budget and in FY 2010/11 PF issued a Citizens Budget. Following years involved transferring that skill over to government by jointly publishing the simplified version of the budget. The joint activity also gave us the opportunity to influence government on this good practice and those we worked with have stated they now realize the importance of the document and fully accept that it is the government's responsibility to publish such a guide.

This interaction with the government has given us the opportunity to discuss the budget transparency more closely and over the grant period we have witnessed a change in attitudes from the officials in government.

**Q. Do you think there are ways your project/organisation could work better if there was increased aid transparency?**

Advocates throughout the world have demonstrated that inclusive and transparent budgets can meaningfully transform people's lives through better processes, decisions and outcomes. Making available to the public all information relating to the acquisition, allocation and expenditure of public money in a timely, accessible, relevant and comprehensible manner is crucial for this to happen. In the organization I work for, we rightly consider financial aid from Western governments, to our country as public money because these funds are raised through citizens' taxes and the revenue that comes from assets that belong to the public. Moreover, these public funds are transferred to the recipient governments to manage on behalf of their citizens. So it is logical to expect that they know what funds are available and what is planned to be spent for their benefit and subsequently take part in shaping those decisions.

**Q. What would you like to see happen to increase aid transparency, and why?**

The entire donor community has to become more transparent about the aid flows to a given country. In Tanzania, for example, we would like to see the following:

- For our government to engage in long term planning and be strategic with our own revenues, it would need timely and comprehensive information on the predictable foreign aid expected.
- The information about foreign aid flows should be provided in formats that are harmonious with our government budget systems and processes.
- A donor country has to be clear about what other donors allocate, spend, or are planning to spend in the longer-term.
- To avoid providing support in 'fashionable' areas of focus (where many other donors find appealing perhaps because it's easier to show outcomes and in turn neglect domains that critically need funding and are equally as important), there should be a sharing of information amongst donors.