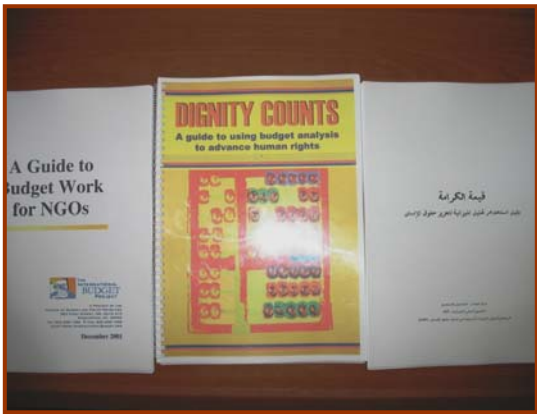




SUCCESS STORY

Follow the Money: Concerned Citizens Track National Budget



"Dignity Counts: A guide to using budget analysis to advance human rights" was distributed with other handouts and resource materials in recent efforts to increase transparency in the budgetary process.

USAID/OTI-funded training is enabling civil society to critically analyze the national budget and advocate for greater government accountability.

March 2008 – Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in 2005, emphasizes respect for citizens’ fundamental rights and calls for development “within a framework of transparent and accountable government.” Unfortunately, more than three years after the signing of the CPA, the allocation of resources and revenues from the national budget continues to reflect government priorities while largely failing to address the political, economic, and social needs of the Sudanese people.

USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) recently responded to civil society’s calls for increased government transparency by supporting a series of small grants to equip human rights activists and select government officials with the skills needed to analyze the national budget. Although public debate over the budget has become more common, few members of civil society – or even parliamentarians in the newly established Government of National Unity – possess the technical know-how required to scrutinize the budget and lobby for change. During a series of USAID/OTI-funded workshops and forums, academics, economists, journalists, lawyers, trade unionists, and human rights activists learned to dissect the national budget and discussed methods to advocate for greater government accountability.

In another recent initiative, a local nongovernmental organization received USAID/OTI support to conduct a pilot study on budgetary allocations in the primary health care sector. The study, which took place in a settlement on the outskirts of Khartoum known as Haj Yousif, resulted in Sudan’s first thorough assessment of the budget’s impact on human rights. Despite ministry efforts to stall the study, a group of researchers eventually obtained access to detailed budgeting documents, which were then compared to results of a detailed survey of services and conditions on the ground. Unfortunately, the study found current services on the verge of collapse, with results reflecting gross inequities in the health care system.

A national budget is more than a collection of numbers; it is a declaration of a nation’s priorities. Accordingly, USAID/OTI aims to enable civil society organizations to effectively make their voices heard by Sudan’s decision makers – so the budget may one day serve as an illustration of the Sudanese government’s commitment to its citizens.