



Open Budgeting Brings Better Development Results

Introduction

The budget sets out how a government plans to use public resources to meet its citizens' needs. It is the most important policy document that governments produce, setting out a country's priorities and enabling citizens to see where and how public money is spent.

Open budgets are essential to holding governments accountable for the effective use of public resources. Transparent disclosure of timely, accurate and understandable fiscal information to citizens empowers them to oversee how resources are managed and increases the likelihood that resources will be used efficiently. If budgets are open to the public and to legislative scrutiny, there is less room for deviation from policy decisions and reversal of budget allocations. Open budgets are also a powerful disincentive for officials to misappropriate funds, reducing the likelihood of corruption.

Across the developing world, citizens are demanding access to their budgets and opportunities to influence them. A number of governments have increased the effectiveness of public spending by adopting participatory budgeting processes that allocate resources to public services identified through citizen involvement. In a growing number of countries, citizens are influencing the use of public money through information and communication technology (ICT)-based budgeting systems, budget analyses, public expenditure tracking surveys and other auditing tools. The following stories document the positive development outcomes of open budgeting practices.

1. Participatory budgeting expands Brazil's municipal revenue

In Brazil, participatory budgeting has expanded municipal revenues across the country.¹ It was pioneered in Porto Alegre in 1989, when the city was highly indebted and had limited revenue for service delivery. The new budgeting model involved citizens meeting with government officials in popular assemblies to determine budget priorities and spending allocations. Between 1989 and 1996, the number of households with access to water services rose from 80% to 98%; the percentage of the population served by the municipal sewage system rose from 46% to 85%; the number of children enrolled in public schools doubled; and, in the poorer neighborhoods, 30km of roads were paved annually during that period. Porto Alegre's health and education budget increased from 13% in 1985 to almost 40% in 1996. Transparency improved motivation to pay taxes, and tax revenue increased by nearly 50%.²

This success was credited to the participatory budgeting process and to the commitment of government leaders to making it work. Over 80 Brazilian cities are now following the Porto Alegre model.³ Some states have introduced digital budgeting. In 2012, Rio Grande do Sul's "Digital Cabinet" engaged over one million residents in its online and offline participatory budgeting process. The state has also established a web-based policy crowdsourcing initiative, "Governador Pergunta" (The Governor Asks), which invites citizens to co-design solutions to service delivery challenges. The process has generated over 1,300 proposals, with more than 120,000 votes cast on the prioritization of different proposals.⁴

¹ Participatory budgeting is broadly defined as a process whereby citizens participate directly in the different phases of budget formulation, decision-making, and monitoring of budget execution.

² <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/1143372-1116506093229/20511036/sdn71.pdf>

³ A challenge for participatory budgeting has been its tendency to work most effectively at local government level. To date, the Brazilian government's attempts to replicate it at national level have not been successful.

⁴ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/publicsphere/technology-drives-citizen-participation-and-feedback-rio-grande-do-sul-brazil>

2. Budget analysis secures life-saving HIV/AIDS drugs for South Africans

In South Africa, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) used budget analysis to prove that state resources were available to treat people with HIV/AIDS in the face of government claims that this was unaffordable. In 1999, when the HIV/AIDS pandemic had reached already crisis proportions, the government refused to introduce a drug program that would prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV, claiming that the country did not have sufficient financial resources. TAC reviewed the health budget and noted that provincial health departments had underspent their budgets by around \$63 million in 2000. TAC took the government to court, arguing that resources were, in fact, available. The courts ruled that the administration of drugs was well within the country's resources.

South Africa's civil society has since been vigilant in monitoring government policies and budgets, and demanding that sufficient resources be allocated to the fight against HIV/AIDS. The government now allocates over \$530 million to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, up from a budget of \$28 million in 1998. South Africa has the world's most comprehensive HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention program, providing free anti-retroviral drugs to over 2 million people. The country's program to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV covers around 95% of all HIV-positive pregnant women receiving care within the public health sector.⁵

3. Mobile-budgeting improves public services in the Democratic Republic of Congo

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, war-torn conditions, internal corruption and limited local-level institutional capacity have long prevented communities from accessing even the most basic services. However, while many citizens do not have water and electricity in their homes, they do have mobile phones.⁶ Local government authorities and the World Bank Institute have piloted an innovative mobile phone-based program to enable citizens in South Kivu province to participate in budget formulation. Geo-targeted SMS messages announce the date, time and location of budget assemblies, where citizens jointly determine their development priorities with local officials.⁷ Local government allocates a percentage of the local investment budget to the service delivery projects selected by citizens. Those unable to participate in person are able to send a SMS message to identify which priority they would like to see addressed. Citizens then offer SMS feedback while monitoring projects.

Citizens are currently monitoring the building of 54 classrooms and a bridge in Luhindja district, the establishment of a health center and repair of the sewage system in Bagira district, and construction of water supply infrastructure and public toilets in local markets in Ibanda district.⁸ Citizens are seeing tangible improvements in service delivery and are more willing to pay taxes. In some cases, local tax collection has increased up to 20 times since the program began. For the first time, communities in Ibanda region have gone from having no investment budget to having 40% of their budget allocated to public services.⁹ This is leading to broader participation in budgeting from all segments of the community, particularly poor women.

4. Budget advocacy in Argentina helps fulfill the right to education

In Argentina, the government is constitutionally obliged to provide free education to every child.

⁵ International Budget Partnership, Case Study: South Africa, August 2011

<http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-case-study-TAC.pdf>

⁶ Mobile penetration in the DRC is increasing rapidly, from 16% to an estimated 47% in 2013. In addition, 55% of the country's population resides in areas currently covered by mobile networks, including most rural areas from the eastern province of South Kivu.

⁷ <http://test.ictdev.org/pulse/20120213/africa/mobile-enhanced-participatory-budgeting-drc>

⁸ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/ic4d/mobile-enhanced-participatory-budgeting-in-the-drc>

⁹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/2012/09/10/participatory-budgeting-an-experience-in-good-governance>

However, between 2002 and 2006, civil society organizations in Buenos Aires noted that the number of children excluded from early education had increased by 37%. By 2006, 6,047 children were being denied access to early education facilities. By 2008, the number had increased to 8,000. More than half of the excluded children lived in the city's six poorest districts and less than 15% lived in the six most affluent districts.¹⁰

The Civil Association for Equality and Justice (ACIJ) issued a class action suit against the government of Buenos Aires on the grounds that it was violating its constitutional obligation to provide free education to every child. It used the city's Freedom of Information Act to get detailed information about all budget resources allocated to early education facilities between 2001 and 2005, and actual spending data on construction, maintenance and school provisions for those fiscal years. ACIJ was able to prove conclusively that the government had underspent 32.3% of the allocated resources. This led to a court ruling that compelled the government to commit to efficient spending of public resources for early education as approved by the legislature. The ACIJ secured a legally binding agreement from the government that it would address the shortage of early education facilities. The ACIJ's action set a precedent for future social rights campaigns to use open budget tools and litigation to hold government to account for failing to carry out legislative decisions.

5. Kenyan community action strengthens local government budgeting

In Kenya, civil society and local authorities in Turkana County are working to ensure that resources from the Local Authorities Transfer Fund, the Constituencies Development Fund and their own local revenues are effectively channeled into public services. To spearhead these efforts, in 2008 the Turkana Women Advocacy and Development Organization began training community members to analyze and link Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plans to local government budgets and development funds.¹¹ Citizens became active participants in budget formulation, fiscal oversight and social auditing. New community feedback mechanisms produced positive results for pro-poor management of service delivery. Through these communication channels, community members made clear that rising service fees were becoming unaffordable for them. Officials subsequently revised service charges to make them less prohibitive for the poor.

Council budgets are now shared with communities at scheduled periods, when members are invited to give comments to the local council. The council publishes and posts its annual budget and expenditure details on community noticeboards for public validation. Women have been empowered to access development funds and loans to improve their income generation activities. In Lokabuur village, the women's committee decided to request loans from the national Ministry of Social Services to set up small businesses. These women are now engaged in small trade activities and are able to earn incomes to feed their families.¹²

6. A budget transparency movement challenges local budget misappropriation in Indonesia

Following Indonesia's transition to democracy in 1998, the legislature passed laws that transferred central government functions to regions. The new decentralization policy was outlined in the Local Government Law, the Fiscal Relations Law and the Clean and Good Governance Practice Law, which granted local governments greater political and financial powers, and sought to eradicate the corruption, collusion and nepotism that had characterized the previous authoritarian regime. Under the new policy, both national-level departments and local governments were granted the authority to plan and design their own budgets.

¹⁰ International Budget Partnership, Case Study: Argentina, July 2011

<http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-case-study-ACIJ.pdf>

¹¹ Oxfam GB, Case Study: "Where Does the Money Go? Citizen Participation in Turkana County", May 2012

<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/where-does-the-money-go-citizen-participation-in-turkana-county-kenya-226751>

¹² <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/blog/2012/05/we-have-a-right-to-know-citizen-participation-in-turkana>

Although citizens welcomed these policy changes, they soon recognized the flaws in its implementation and feared that the large levels of funds at the disposal of local authorities were leading to even more rampant corruption and the creation of “little kingdoms” ruled by “little dictators” with unchecked power. A group of academics, activists, journalists and government officials joined forces to put in place participatory budgeting processes. Group members traveled around the country for eight months, demystifying budgets, helping citizens understand the process of budget planning and management in government agencies, and providing tools to monitor budget spending and allocations. They founded the Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency (FITRA) as a civil society alliance with seven local networks in seven provinces. FITRA began building public capacity for conducting expenditure analyses and encouraging practices to support more transparent, accountable and gender-sensitive budgeting and public service delivery.

As well as positively affecting policy, changing bureaucratic attitudes and generating broad-based public participation in budget processes, FITRA’s interventions have deterred corruption in significant ways. Amongst other actions, it has initiated litigation based on a detailed case accusing more than 20 local councilors in Southeast Sulawesi Province of misuse of the local budget; submitted reports to the national state auditor of the reported misuse of the National Election Commission’s budget (2002-04), and ensured investigation of this case by the National Corruption Commission and the Attorney-General; and submitted a report to the Attorney-General detailing the involvement of the Governor of the Southeast Sulawesi Province’s in a fraudulent electricity project. It works closely with the media to expose cases of budget misappropriation and fraud, a number of which have been brought to trial as a result of public campaigns. FITRA’s movement for budget transparency has been scaled up to other regions, where results of budget analyses have become a reference for local legislative institutions.¹³

7. Budget tracking improves management of Mexico’s farmer subsidies

In Mexico, the allocation system of the Procampo national farm subsidy program, which provides farmers with a stable flow of cash that they can use to improve their production, has been fraught with challenges since its establishment in the 1990s.¹⁴ From 1994 to 1998, 57% of benefits were distributed to the wealthiest 10% of recipients. Despite consistent increases in rural public expenditure in the decade that followed - from \$9 billion in 2004 to \$13 billion in 2007 - the enormous gap between rich and poor in the agricultural sector remained.

A coalition of farmers, activists and academics began demanding access to budgets to try to determine the reasons for subsidy failures. As early pioneers of the “open data” movement, they used Mexico’s Freedom of Information Act to obtain the lists of agricultural subsidy recipients. From 1994 to 1998, five states received 40% of total funds for subsidies, but had only 27% of recipients. In the same period, the state of Tamaulipas received 15 billion pesos for 159,500 beneficiaries, whereas Chiapas, one of Mexico’s poorest states, received only 11 billion pesos for 459,803 recipients.¹⁵

Citizens pressured the Auditor-General (AG) to review the program’s budgets and spending patterns. Amongst other remedial actions, the AG ordered 557 ministry officials who were illegally on the recipient list to return over \$380,000 that they had received in 2009. The Agriculture Ministry announced program reforms. It mandated a minimum subsidy for small producers of \$99 and a ceiling of \$7,630 for large producers. New operating rules for the program were established. The government passed a congressional order for greater transparency in the distribution of farm subsidies. The 2011 budget included an order for transparency in the agricultural subsidies program, a single repository for all subsidy-related data, and routine publication of figures on farm subsidies.

¹³ World Bank Institute, Case Study: Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency, 2007

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTSOCACCEMSIDEGOV/Resources/EmpoweringTheMarginalizedFinalVersion.pdf>

¹⁴ http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Subsidizing_Inequality_Ch_1_Fox_and_Haight.pdf

¹⁵ International Budget Partnership, Case Study: Mexico, July 2011

<http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/LP-case-study-Fundar.pdf>

8. Public budget action increases Ghana's rural education grants

In Ghana, citizens have helped plugged leakages in the management of state capitation grants, a yearly allocation per student per school geared towards funding of all classroom activities, teacher salaries and administrative costs. In 2010, Action for Rural Education (ARE) began to monitor funding processes and capitation grants to ten schools in Ghana's coastal region to try to curb embezzlement of grants and textbook allocations.¹⁶ Together with a group of students, teachers and local education officials, the organization identified recurring mismanagement of funding channeled through the Ghana Education System Municipal Offices to the respective schools. It became clear that closed budgets and the lack of clarity about process and timing around the grants were facilitating corruption.

ARE campaigned for the formalization of ad-hoc committees of government and community representatives to participate in education budgeting and planning processes. It helped build public understanding of all dimensions of education budgeting and the capitation grant system, and established textbook tracking processes with School Management Committees. By 2011, all schools had achieved enhanced enrolment and retention rates. The delivery rate of textbooks reaching intended schools was recorded at 99%. The project is being replicated in other communities and schools in the region.

9. Communities monitor development funds to curb corruption in Cameroon

In Cameroon, local development project identification and selection in municipal councils has been laced with corruption and non-transparent processes. Administrative officers wield disproportionate discretion over budgets and are not held to account. To help combat this problem, in 2010, the Assembly of Youth for a Sustainable Environment and Development (ASYOUSED) began working with municipal council members and community organizations to establish participatory budgeting processes in Buea and Tiko municipalities, and to track local development funds.¹⁷ Within one year, the two districts' mayors recognized the value of participatory budgeting and expenditure tracking, and requested its codification into Council rules.

In North-West Cameroon, the Budget Transparency Initiative was developed to encourage dissemination of budget information.¹⁸ In the initiative's first phase, a total of 60 primary and secondary schools, 20 health centers, and 12 local councils in the region opened their budgets to their communities and disseminated simplified budget information in public meetings. Radio programs and theatre performances in local languages were used to raise awareness of the importance of transparency of government revenues and public expenditure. A Budget Transparency Index for local councils was created to compare municipalities' performance in budget transparency and encourage dialogue among mayors on how to improve access for community members to municipal financial data. These innovative practices have helped curb institutionalized corruption at local level, and built stronger political will to set up effective checks and balances in their districts.

10. Budget monitoring strengthens sanitation delivery to Nepal's villages

In Nepal, public budget monitoring has improved access to water and sanitation for students and marginalized villagers in remote rural areas. In 2007, the Federation of Water and Sanitation Users established its grassroots "Citizens Action" program.¹⁹ Federation members in Nepal's Dhading district provided user networks with basic information about budgets and expenditure decisions so that they could track the way money was being spent and how this translated into improvements in water and

¹⁶ <http://www.areghana.org/reports/1352891358Case%20Study%20ARE%20PAGE.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://ptfund.org/2012/12/community-budgeting-monitoring-cameroon/>

¹⁸ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/publicsphere/when-budget-disclosure-not-enough>

¹⁹ Water Aid, Case Study: Nepal, August 2010

http://www.wateraid.org/documents/plugin_documents/budget_primer_for_cso_aug2010_1.pdf

sanitation programs. Shortly after they started monitoring government expenditure, user groups discovered that three villages in the district had received no budget allocation for water and sanitation from the government. More than a quarter of schools in Dhading had no allocation for sanitation facilities for their students. One settlement above the water source point had no water or pumping infrastructure.

A combination of public hearings, in which community members were able to articulate their budget analysis and expenditure tracking findings, and direct lobbying by the coalition helped eliminate these problems. In their subsequent budget, local government authorities allocated adequate resources to the three Village Development Committees; the district education office committed to providing toilets and sanitation facilities for all schools; and the district service provider agreed to contribute its budget for water-pumping to the community above the source point.

11. Public expenditure tracking plugs leaks in Uganda's education grants

In Uganda, public expenditure tracking surveys and access to information have helped improve the management of education grants.²⁰ Surveys were first used in the 1990s when civil society organizations observed that despite significant increases in budgetary allocation for primary schools, enrolment was stagnant.²¹ The findings of the first survey confirmed that only 13% of capitation grants were reaching the primary schools. 87% of the funds were being misappropriated or used by district officials for purposes unrelated to education. Most schools received no share whatsoever of their capitation entitlement. Parents and teachers were largely unaware that the capitation grant existed.

Citizens took action. Transfers from central government to districts were publicized in the media. Posting of fund transfer information at schools and district offices became mandatory, and school committees were trained on how to use the information to hold authorities accountable for the receipt and use of funds. When the surveys were repeated four years later, findings indicated that schools were receiving more than 90% of grant funds. Improved access to information was helping to hold leakages in check. Success was attributed to the opportunity that citizens had to voice their claims for the funds, improved policies and institutional reforms, regular legislative reviews of education-related budgets, and public expenditure audits to track the use of allocated funds.²²

12. Pro-poor budget analysis generates benefits for tribal people in India

In India, the government of Gujarat state has established specific funds for poor tribal people under the Tribal Area Sub-Plan. In 2004, the weak results of state investment in tribal development projects motivated the Development Initiative for Social and Human Action (DISHA) to take action to obtain and analyze state budgets to find out where allocated funds were going.²³ DISHA reviewed government departmental allocations for different beneficiaries, analyzed the discrepancy between proposed and actual spending, and prepared briefs on findings for the press, parliamentarians and Cabinet Ministers, to encourage production of pro-poor state budgets.

The briefs enhanced budget debates within the state's legislative assembly, and focused parliamentary attention on land titles for tribal people and improvement of resettlement policies. They also improved the state's budgetary planning by closing the gap between budgeting and sectoral planning, enabling

²⁰ World Bank, Social Development Notes, Case Study 5: Participatory Approaches in Budgeting and Public Expenditure Management, Uganda, March 2003

<http://www.sasanet.org/documents/Case%20Studies/Uganda%20case%20study.pdf>

²¹ Centre for Global Development, Working Paper: "Putting the Power of Transparency in Context: Information's Role in Reducing Corruption in Uganda's Education Sector", December 2007

http://www.cgdev.org/files/15050_file_Uganda.pdf

²² <http://www.people.su.se/~jsven/TestingJune2007.pdf>

²³ World Bank, Social Development Notes, Case Study 3: Participatory Approaches in Budgeting and Public Expenditure Management, Gujarat, March 2003

<http://www.sasanet.org/documents/Case%20Studies/Gujrat%20case%20study.pdf>

better allocation and release of funds to priority sectors. This successful experiment in pro-poor budgeting has now been replicated in 12 other states of India. Open budget debates and increased citizen involvement have ensured that budget preparation and monitoring is not an elite prerogative of a few technocrats or monopolized by state politicians.

13. Opening budgets improves maternal health in Mexico

Mexico has an unusually high rate of maternal mortality. Those who suffer most are poor, indigenous, rural women. The Ministry of Health states that the national maternal mortality rate has steadily decreased in the past fifteen years, from 89 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990, to 83.2 in 1995, 72.6 in 2000 and 63.3 in 2005.²⁴ However, these statistics do not reflect the vast inequalities between states. In the impoverished state of Guerrero, the rate stands at 128 deaths per 100,000. These rates are principally a failure of political will, poor policy design, inadequate budget allocation and corrupt management of resources.

When the Health Ministry decentralized healthcare provision in the early 1990s it devolved increasing power and responsibility to the state level. The government viewed this as more democratic. However, devolution of power was not matched by greater accountability and transparency, and resources were placed out of range of public scrutiny. In the late 1990s, a series of reports revealing the existence of secret presidential slush funds galvanized civil society groups in Mexico to push for increased access to information, including the national budget, so that they could monitor the government's fiscal management at national and state level. By 2002, a law guaranteeing citizens' rights to information was passed.

In 2003, civil society organizations noted that resources in the national budget to tackle maternal mortality were not being allocated effectively. They used budget information that had been previously unavailable to the public to identify a lack of funding throughout the country for emergency obstetric care. A coalition of civil society organizations met with policymakers to argue for specific funding allocations, emphasizing that increased funds for emergency health care would directly benefit pregnant women, particularly those from poor indigenous communities. They secured an increase of \$50 million for a national program designed to decrease maternal mortality rates. Emergency obstetric care was later included in the government's health insurance scheme, resourced by additional funds.²⁵

14. Budget monitoring ensures access to HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis treatment in South Africa

In 2009, the Centre for Economic Governance and AIDS in Africa and the Treatment Action Campaign launched a budget monitoring and expenditure tracking project to ensure proper use of state resources for HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB) treatment in two of the country's poorest provinces.²⁶ They developed the skills of community-based fieldworkers to analyze and track health budgets and spending, and to document experiences of patients' access to HIV/AIDS and TB services at public hospitals in two provincial districts. In 2010, and again in 2012, the results of this work were shared in public hearings in each district. Community members gave their testimonies and action teams of government and community members were tasked with addressing identified resource and budgeting challenges.

²⁴ Institute for Development Studies Research Brief: Reducing Maternal Mortality in Mexico

http://www.drc-citizenship.org/system/assets/1052734562/original/1052734562-layton_etal.2008reducing.pdf?1289992369

The fifth Millennium Development Goal targets reducing the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters by 2015. Although this should be an attainable target, the problem persists in the developing world, where 98% of deaths occur. The 2010 maternal mortality rate for the United Kingdom is 12 deaths per 100 000.

²⁵ International Budget Partnership, Case Study: Mexico, July 2011

<http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/MexicoStoryEnglish.pdf>

²⁶ <http://www.ngopulse.org/article/spending-well-wellness-hiv-aids-and-tb-budget-monitoring-local-level-south-africa>

The project has reduced HIV/AIDS and TB drug stock-outs in public hospitals and improved budget management in the pilot districts. The project's evidence base for health resource allocation has been used as motivation for increased budget allocation and expenditure to address the serious shortage of health workers and specialist medical staff salaries. The Department of Health has subsequently prioritized resources to increase specialist staff and improve health infrastructure to absorb patient numbers.

South Africa's National Treasury has allocated a large grant to project facilitators to cover the testing of budget innovations needed to implement the country's new National Health Insurance (NHI) and to support the NHI pilot districts in implementing identified service delivery interventions. The NHI pilot phase has been allocated a total of R150 million for the 2012/13 financial year. The total NHI allocation for all pilot sites will increase to R350 million in 2013/14, and to R500 million in 2015/16. In the Medium-term Budget Policy statement issued by the Finance Minister in October 2012, funding for HIV/AIDS and TB programs will be increased in the 2013 budget, despite the constrained fiscal environment.

Promoting Open Budgeting: ONE's Agenda for 2013 and Beyond

Open budgeting is at the heart of open development. It is indispensable for sustained genuine human development, giving citizens the information that they need to hold their governments accountable and giving them the opportunity to participate in the decision-making that affects their lives.

As these case studies illustrate, for open budgeting to bring better development results, three elements need to be in place: 1) strong government leadership with commitment to open budgeting processes and to making them successful; 2) active citizens and independent parliaments, empowered to hold their leaders to account for the public money that they manage on citizens' behalf; and, 3) transparent and accountable investment of public resources in sectors that are key to the fight against poverty - health, education, agriculture and infrastructure.

ONE's work on open budgeting is part of an integrated campaigning agenda on fiscal transparency, with the working title "Follow the Money, Track Results". This agenda combines advocacy in the global North and in Africa, and collaboration with international and local partners. Through this work we aim to promote greater transparency, participation and accountability – in relation to budgets, extractives, illicit financial flows and development assistance – to enable citizens to hold governments and companies to account for the use of public resources, driving improvements in service delivery and accelerating progress towards the eradication of extreme poverty.

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For further information, please contact:

Alan Hudson, Policy Director: Transparency and Accountability
alan.hudson@one.org

Katherine Lay, Policy Manager: Transparency and Accountability
katherine.lay@one.org