

In the News: Issue 21

In the News 21 highlights a selection of social accountability news articles posted to the ANSA-Africa website during the period 28 January - 18 February 2011. This issue covers articles on the themes of service delivery and the budget; and governance, anti-corruption and extractive industries.

1. Service delivery and the budget

SEND Ghana: A budget reform action plan for Ghana

SEND Ghana

Accra: Ghana has made incredible progress in recent years, both in terms of democratic consolidation and development outcomes. In addition to the achievement of an increasingly competitive political sphere and greater macroeconomic stability, successive governments have made important commitments to spending on key social priorities such as health, education, agriculture and social protection. By the end of 2010, a major influx of oil revenues should start to flow onto Ghana's budget. These revenues have the potential to help Ghana consolidate its middle-income status, with an evolving welfare state. But, [as this paper argues](#), they also have the potential to become a missed opportunity.

SEND-Ghana launches District Assemblies' Common Fund monitoring report

Ghana News Agency

Accra: Mr Dominic Azumah, Chairman of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Local Government and Rural Development, has called for an immediate resolution of all conflicts between Members of Parliament and their District Chief Executives. This is because such conflicts stifle development and suppress an effective decentralisation system. Mr Azumah, who made the call at the launch of a 52-page monitoring report on the District Assemblies' Common Fund in Accra, said good governance thrived on transparency and accountability and required the involvement of all stakeholders in attaining the required objective.

HakiElimu set to monitor use of capitation grants

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: A new system has been established to monitor the disbursement and use of capitation grants in implementing the second phase of the Secondary Education Development Programme. This is the brainchild of HakiElimu, a non-governmental organisation engaged in the education sector. The move aims to ensure that the funds reach the schools in time and in approved amounts.

President not happy with service delivery

New Era

Windhoek: Modalities for the implementation of public policies and service delivery are a concern for the Namibian Head of State, Hifikepunye Pohamba. During the first Cabinet meeting for the year, Pohamba said he is particularly concerned about the slow expenditure of the development budget, a practice that he finds unacceptable. "In order to arrest this undesirable situation, measures will be put in place to compel greater accountability in the implementation of the development budget," the President told cabinet ministers.

Government must change attitude - social activists

Afrique en ligne

Windhoek: Church and civil organisation leaders said government should "change its attitude" and work with other social partners to tackle poverty, inequality and unemployment head on. "Government should not underestimate the power of NGOs," said Women's Action for Development executive director Veronica de Klerk. "We move on the ground and we move fast."

"IPCs, police, Lands, RTD most corrupt"

The Nation

Lilongwe: Internal procurement committees, police, Lands and Road Traffic departments top the list of public institutions that seek gratification for their services, according to a survey commissioned by the ACB. The survey also rates political parties, members of parliament and traffic police as the least honest institutions and people in the country. These are findings of a 2010 Governance and Corruption Survey conducted by University of Malawi's Centre for Social Research with Dr Blessings Chinsinga as a lead consultant.

EC case should be ACB's priority - Chinsinga

The Nation

Lilongwe: The anti-corruption fight is one of the issues that government has placed high on its agenda. Ironically, the practice seems to be rampant in public institutions. Dr Blessings Chinsinga, a Chancellor College associate professor in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies, talks to Mwereti Kanjo on this and other issues. Q: Why do you think there is a lot of corruption in government institutions?

CDF to get the boot in new county system

Daily Nation

Nairobi: The Constituency Development Fund might be discontinued as the treasury seeks a new system of funding the grassroots. A technical committee on what is referred to as a fiscal decentralisation strategy has concluded that with the new constitution stipulating that 15% of total revenue must go to 47 county governments and another 0.5% to the Equalisation Fund for marginal communities, the kitty has now been rendered duplicative and expensive.

CCM "policy of revenge"

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: The CCM government withholds development funds from areas where the ruling party gets fewer votes in elections, a new study says. Titled "The Politics of Government Expenditures in Tanzania", the study by Ms Laura Weinstein of the Department of Political Science at the University of California, says the CCM government favours areas where the party gets the most votes. But Finance and Economic Affairs minister Mustafa Mkulo, CCM Secretary-General Yusuf Makamba and the chairman of the opposition Civic United Front, Prof. Ibrahim Lipumba, all dismissed the findings as "flawed".

Bid to improve service delivery

The Sowetan

Cape Town: The Black Sash has posted hundreds of monitors at social grant payout points across the country in a bid to help the government improve their service delivery. The project, in partnership with another non-governmental organisation, the Social Change Assistance Trust, was launched in Cape Town. "We believe that quality service delivery is something we can tackle even at a time of economic recession," SCAT director Anthea Davids-Thomas said. Black Sash project coordinator Gouwah Samuels said the project will give the poor a chance to hold government accountable.

NUMSA: What's wrong with our municipalities?

Politicsweb

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa has made some decisive insights pertaining to the struggle of making local government work and deal with apartheid fault-lines. The working class and the poor are directly in contact with government at the municipal level of the state.

Municipalities: Is bigger better?

Mail and Guardian

Johannesburg: Fewer and bigger local government municipalities might be the best way to address service delivery if Gauteng minister of local government and housing Humphrey Mmemezi's words are anything to go by. Mmemezi's argument is that not only are bigger municipalities in a better place to plan because of their bigger budgets, but they are also capable of attracting senior and well-equipped municipal officials and stand at a less risk of needing bailout from provincial government.

Zambian government launches gender responsive budget programme

UKZambians

Lusaka: Government has launched the Gender Responsive Budget Programme which seeks to ensure equality in the budgetary process. The project, in conjunction with the United Nations Development Fund for Women, will incorporate four main areas of activities. The activities are gender citizen report cards, budget tracking from the gender perspective, budget statements and gender-aware policy appraisals.

Governors and the revenue allocation formula

THISDAY

Lagos: As the Revenue Mobilisation, Allocation and Fiscal Commission reviews the country's revenue allocation formula, one begins to wonder if there is, indeed, any justification for increased revenue to the states. And on account of very poor performance, justification for the existence of most local governments is a lot more difficult than finding out how much the federal government actually does for the people. Under the current revenue formula, the federal government takes 52.68%; the states 26.72%, the 774 local government councils, 20.60% with 13% derivation revenue going to the oil-producing states.

Government seeks emergency support from donors

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: The government has appealed for additional funding from donors to meet an urgent shortfall in its 2010/11 Budget. However, a letter sent to a number of donors and signed by Finance and Economic Affairs Permanent Secretary Ramadhan Khijjah does not specify the amount of money needed to plug the budget gap.

Keep an eye on larger taxpayers, Waweru tells African authorities

Daily Nation

Nairobi: Kenya Revenue Authority has asked Africa's revenue agencies to be cautious when dealing with large business taxpayers, as they are prone to complex tax avoidance and evasion schemes. Commissioner general Michael Waweru said this category of taxpayers is a significant contributor of government revenue and therefore needs to be handled well and closely monitored.

IMF declines to sign off on Uganda economic policy

Africa Times News

Kampala: The International Monetary Fund said it had not completed a recent evaluation of Uganda's economy because the country's economic policies are "inconsistent" with those previously agreed with the fund. The IMF did not say which policies it was unhappy with, but said a mission would again visit the Central African country in March.

Farm budget - gimmick or boon?

The Times of India

Bangalore: Karnataka was the first state to table a separate fiscal document in the state legislature along with the state budget in the late 1990s. The document pertained to a special component plan and tribal sub-plan for the integrated development of scheduled castes and tribes. Over a decade later, the state will table a separate agriculture budget, which chief minister B S Yeddyurappa will present along with the state budget 2011-2012 on February 24. The proposal has evoked a mixed response, with Union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar vetoing it because it's inter-connected with various departments.

2. Governance, anti-corruption and extractive industries

Grappling with Governance: Perspectives on the African Peer Review Mechanism

SAIIA

Johannesburg: Born out of the optimism at the new millennium that Africa's time had come, the African Peer Review Mechanism is built on the belief that the continent does not lack ideas to advance its development, but that states have struggled to live up to their principles and implement their policies. Looking in the rear-view mirror almost a decade after the APRM was first conceived, [Grappling with Governance: Perspectives on the African Peer Review Mechanism](#) explores how this complex process has evolved from theory to practice in a variety of contexts.

Act fast on governance weaknesses, government urged

The Citizen

Dodoma: Tanzania is likely to lose its credibility among international donors unless it takes bold steps to address governance challenges. This is also seen as important in galvanising the people's participation in improving their daily lives, and promoting poverty alleviation and development. The observations were made by people commenting on Tanzania's self-assessment report on governance, in accordance with the guidelines of the African Peer Review Mechanism voluntarily acceded to by member states of the African Union, and expected to be released soon.

Kigali Declaration to reinvigorate African capacity development

AllVoices

The African Capacity Building Foundation 20th Anniversary celebrations in Rwanda produced an ambitious blue-print expected to drive the continent towards greater socio-political and economic prosperity. The Kigali Declaration appreciated massive ACBF contributions towards Africa's development since its formation 20 years ago. It rooted for greater African capacity development through empowering individuals, groups, organizations, and societies to fully participate in their country's decision-making and economy. The [Africa Capacity Indicators Report 2011: capacity development in fragile states](#) was also released.

Africa leadership institute names best MPs

New Vision

Kampala: The African Leadership Institute released its scorecard of the 4th year of the current Parliament, naming the best performers as committee chairperson Abraham Byandala and Mathias Kasamba with 100% score. Byandala, the chairman of the infrastructure committee and Kasamba, the head of the defence and internal affairs committee, both NRM, outshone their colleagues, including Cabinet and shadow ministers, in the plenary and committees respectively. The scorecard by the Kampala-based think tank, is an annual tool which the public can use to measure the performance of their leaders.

Unprincipled MPs meet their nemesis, but...

The East African

Kampala: The political future of 70 legislators in Uganda hangs in the balance after a landmark Constitutional Court ruling nullified their incumbency in the current 8th parliament, and at the same time, their candidacy in the February 18 general election. The MPs are paying the price for failure to live with the constitution's Article 83, which requires an MP to resign his or her seat upon switching parties or contesting an election on a different ticket from that they ran on in the previous poll. To say that this ruling has been a long time coming is an understatement.

You cannot interpret law, MPs told

Daily Nation

Nairobi: The Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution has warned MPs they have no jurisdiction when it comes to interpreting the Constitution. Speaking at a monthly breakfast meeting with parliamentary journalists the commission chairman, Charles Nyachae said that mandate lay with the Supreme Court. In the transition period, he noted, the Court of Appeal had the jurisdiction to interpret the law. "That's the law. The final arbiter in terms of interpreting this document is the court; it's not Parliament," he told journalists.

Love-hate relationship between Kenyan media, MPs plays out

Daily Nation

Nairobi: MPs have blamed the deadlock over the legality of the Kibaki nominees on succession politics, saying, most lawmakers were only interested in pleasing their godfathers. Mr Danson Mungatana (Garsen, Narc-K), Ms Rachel Shebesh (nominated, ODM) and assistant minister Lewis Nguyai, said focus on 2012 had led their colleagues to show loyalty to their political godfathers instead of being patriotic towards a law that two-thirds of Kenyans ratified.

Pro poor growth would increase voting in Mozambique

UNDP

Maputo: Voters in Mozambique are aware of the procedures, their rights as citizens as well as the importance of free and fair elections but still only 45% exercise this right. A main reason for abstaining from voting is that while people are seeing substantial economic development in the country they do not perceive the fruits of this growth reaching them. This is the main conclusion from a UNDP and STAE commissioned survey on voter preferences in Mozambique.

JK decries trend of poll-result disputes in African countries

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: The most prominent emerging trend in the process of building a democratic culture in African countries, including Tanzania, is the refusal to accept election results by politicians, President Jakaya Kikwete has said. "Until we learn to embrace the culture of accepting defeat gracefully, democratic culture will take time to fully mature in Africa. It is an important shared value which we must work hard to build," he added.

Baregu: "People's power" action hits Africa

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: The recent dramatic developments in Tunisia and Egypt have inevitably caused some anxiety for those in power and raised hopes for those struggling for freedom and democracy. In Tanzania they have also triggered a discussion on whether the same could happen here. More broadly, however, questions have been raised on whether these events could, indeed, be the proverbial spark that started a savannah fire that will soon engulf the African continent.

Trevor Ncube: We are our own liberators

Mail and Guardian

Johannesburg: Zimbabwe is neither Tunisia nor Egypt. Far from it! In fact, Zimbabwe's political predicament is far worse than that of these two North African countries before their recent revolutions. But events in the two countries have certainly planted ideas in Zimbabweans' minds that may influence the country's future in a significant way. Comparisons can be odious but this is an exercise worth doing in this instance.

Is our democracy mature enough to resist dissension?

The New Age

Cape Town: As the Tunisian and Egyptian revolts have shown, dissent grows until it explodes unceremoniously and unexpectedly on a national scale. When ordinary people are fed up, they will walk the streets and who knows what gets unleashed thereafter. Tunisia and Egypt were protests against dictators but who is to say it can't happen in a mature democracy? South Africa is not necessarily immune to the recent north African phenomena.

It's time to use the rights we have

Business Day

Johannesburg: Much has been made of the irony inherent in the African National Congress's angry rejection of political commentator Moeletsi Mbeki's prediction that the government faces its own "Tunisia moment" within a decade - on the same day police fired live ammunition to disperse protestors in Mpumalanga. It is indeed ironic, but that is about where the relevance of the comparison ends.

SA no Tunisia: Zuma

Times Live

Johannesburg: President Jacob Zuma is confident that South Africa "will never become a Tunisia", referring to ongoing service delivery protests. "I can tell you there will never be a Tunisia in South Africa. We have a constitutional democracy here; every person has the right to say what he wants and to vote," he said in an interview with Beeld newspaper. "It is impossible. I repeat: It is impossible," he was quoted as saying in the Afrikaans daily.

Are fiery street protests replacing the vote?

Business Day

Johannesburg: It is interesting to consider the latest service delivery protest in the news - police retaliated with live rounds after an Ermelo community staged what became a particularly violent service delivery protest. The death of one man and an attack on an eNews team are features of the intensity of the incident, but otherwise it conforms to the increasing phenomenon of (often violent) service delivery protests. What sticks out is the timing of the protest.

Right2Know pumps up the volume

Mail and Guardian

Cape Town: The Right2Know campaign added a new voice to organised civil society when it formally constituted itself at a summit in Cape Town last week. Non-governmental and community-based organisations and individuals launched R2K in August last year to fight the Protection of Information Bill before Parliament.

Campaign against secrecy is ready for action

Business Day

Johannesburg: So what is the state of secrecy in SA? Is it winning? You might think so, given news over the past few weeks. The Presidency is appealing against the Supreme Court of Appeal order that the Khampepe-Moseneke report be released, the SABC won't say what it paid its CEO to go away, and a group of nongovernmental organisations has been refused access to a report determining ways to draw private sector mining companies in Gauteng into the process of extracting mine water and cleaning it.

Do informed citizens hold governments accountable? It depends...

Governance for Development

We are increasingly-and more openly than ever-grappling with what to do about the problems of politics and government accountability. Much emphasis and faith seem to be placed on the role of information and transparency. Using information interventions to enable civil society to hold their governments accountable seems so eminently sensible that it's become an end in and of itself, an "already known" and ticked box. Is it?

Revolutions are not widgets

Inter Press Service

New York: Behind the headlines of mass social forums and violent protests, fighting oppression and changing the world requires sustained grassroots action, according to Kenyan social justice activist Onyango Oloo. IPS spoke to Oloo, a writer, former political prisoner and national coordinator of the 2007 WSF, about climate change, the ongoing protests in North Africa and social movements in his home country of Kenya.

Bono says improving technology could lift Africa

Washington Post

Johannesburg: Rock star Bono says that technology is key to solving Africa's problems and urged other stars to come forward and promote good causes. Following his sold-out concert in Johannesburg that drew bigger crowds than the World Cup final, the U2 frontman said social networking, coupled with improved access to information, could transform governance on the continent, that is beset by corruption and autocratic leaders.

Civil society, media women seek enforcement of texts on women's rights

Afrique en ligne

Dakar: African female media practitioners and those in civil society called on governments in the continent to enforce the texts, conventions and protocols they signed on the protection of women's rights. Such rights protection treaty included the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women.

Deny officials indicted by Auditor-General salaries - Mills

My Joy Online

Accra: President JEA Mills has directed that the salaries and emoluments of persons who fail to adequately and satisfactorily answer queries of the Auditor-General regarding financial impropriety be withheld. The president said he was concerned about reports from the Auditor-General of lack of co-operation by some government departments.

Tony Aidoo elected member of AU advisory board on corruption

Accra Daily Mail

Accra: Dr Tony Aidoo, head of the Evaluation and Oversight Unit of the Office of the President, has been elected member of the 11-member African Union advisory board on Corruption. He scored 73% at the first voting, after a marathon meeting of the AU Executive Council on the sidelines of the AU summit underway at the AU in Addis Ababa.

Presidential cop-out on GIPF scandal

The Namibian

Windhoek: President Hifikepunye Pohamba, although admitting that about N\$560 million of workers' pension money went missing through "irregular investments" authorised by the Government Institutions' Pension Fund refused to hold the fund's board of trustees accountable. Instead, he opted for the "likely" prosecution of "some individuals", but appeared to have exonerated GIPF board of trustees of any wrongdoing.

It's time to put G20 anti-corruption commitments into practice, say campaigners

Transparency International

Transparency International and Global Witness, together with 76 other organisations from around the world, have signed a letter to the Group of 20 leading economies calling for swift implementation of the G20's Anti-Corruption Action Plan, published last November.

Sarkozy backs Africa transparency laws: think tank

AFP

Paris: French President Nicolas Sarkozy reiterated plans to spearhead efforts to force major companies extracting oil or diamonds in Africa to say how much they pay local regimes, a think tank said. Members of the Africa Progress Panel chaired by former United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan, met with the French leader in Paris to find out what he was planning to do for Africa during his stint as G20 leader.

Windfall tax re-introduction meaningless without transparency - MUZ

The Post

Lusaka: Zambians should demand transparency from government in the use of revenue from the mining industry before pushing for the re-introduction of the windfall tax. And the Council of Churches in Zambia says government must develop a policy framework to compel investors to deposit 50% of their profits in local banks to strengthen the foreign exchange reserve bases.

NEITI report demands drastic restructuring of NNPC, others

Vanguard

Abuja: The Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, has recommended a drastic restructuring of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation to ensure greater transparency and credibility of certain oil sector payments and receipts in the national oil and gas behemoth.

Nigerian CSOs respond to AG's comments on Halliburton issue

CISLAC

Lagos: In February 2010, the Nigerian Bar Association through its President, Mr Rotimi Akeredolu San, raised an alarm over attempts by the Federal Government to sweep the Halliburton scam under the carpet. A year after the clarion call, it is distressful to see Bello Adoke San, the Attorney General of the Federation and Justice Minister following the line of his predecessor-in-office Chief Michael Aondoakaa who was unwilling to prosecute public officials involved and was shown the way out in circumstances that are dishonorable and disgraceful.

A tale of two indabas

Times Live

Cape Town: The Investing in Africa Mining Indaba has been going from strength to strength, with more than 4 000 delegates from more than 800 international companies. Conspicuously absent from the main event were NGOs and community groups. The R10 000 registration fee ensured that only the largest international NGOs could attend the first two days of the conference to follow discussions and presentations by mining companies and investment-hungry governments.

Hessequa Mayor uses public office to raise funds for the ANC

IDASA

Cape Town: Idasa notes with grave concern the statement issued on 1 February 2011 by Hessequa Mayor Christopher Taute, in which he admits using his official title as mayor and the council's letterhead to raise funds for the ANC. We welcome the subsequent statement by the party's Secretary-General, Mr Gwede Mantashe, in which he indicates his view that using municipal resources such as its letterhead to raise funds for the party is wrong, and that a clear distinction must be drawn between party and state. Nevertheless, the confusion among senior ruling party representatives on these important issues is unsettling.

Police lifestyle audit way to go

NewsDay

Harare: News that the Zimbabwe Republic Police has introduced anti-corruption measures which we hope will result in junior police members, from the rank of constable to assistant inspector, undergoing a lifestyle audit is sweet music to the ears. The audit will compel them to declare their assets and earnings to their superiors quarterly, in a move meant to flush out those with ill-gotten wealth.

Assets: Conduct Bureau summons 24 ministers THISDAY

Abuja: Code of Conduct Bureau has summoned 24 ministers who are yet to declare their assets to come and do so before the end of March. In a statement signed by the Bureau's Head of Press and Public Relations Unit, Mrs. Idowu Jokpeyibo, CCB said it had already verified the assets declared by 18 ministers. Verification of assets declared by public officers is to ensure that what is declared is confirmed through the scrutiny of relevant documents, assets profiling and tracking.

Transparency group laud Jonathan over halt in renewal oil exploration leases

Vanguard

Yenagoa: A transparency advocacy group, Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice has lauded President Goodluck Jonathan for his decision to halt the renewal of leases for international oil companies operating in Nigeria. It called on the Presidency to put pressure on the National Assembly for the speedy passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill. The group said though such push by the Presidency should be done within the ambit of the law, the oil and gas industry needs reforms that would help deal with modern day challenges and development without which revenue transparency would remain a tall order in the country.

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Organisations involved in social accountability work are encouraged to **[submit their reports to ANSA-Africa](#)** for posting on our website - thereby reaching a much wider audience in Africa and internationally.

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