

In the News: Issue 18

Welcome to our first edition of *In the News* for 2011. This edition contains news items on service delivery, especially in the education sector, posted to our website during the period 10 December 2010 to 13 January 2011. This digest will be followed by a second one containing articles on governance and anti-corruption, as we clear our holiday season backlog.

Service delivery and the budget

Free learning - quality is now the issue

Daily Nation

Nairobi: For most of the past decade, the discourse on education at the national and global levels was on increasing the number of children going to school. This was a response to the gloom scenarios of the late 1980s and the 1990s, when school enrolments declined across Africa by up to 25%. Then national economies declined and things were made worse by the structural adjustment programmes that compelled governments to cut spending on social sectors such as education and health.

When pupils are in school but learning nothing at all

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: When the majority of parents send their children to school, sometimes forcing them to brave the tortuous heat, morning chill and hours without eating a decent meal, their aim is to have the young ones learn reading and writing, and ultimately a career that would liberate their families from the shackles of poverty. But what if school does not have what it takes to feed that desire?

How long do East African pupils remain in school?

The East African

Nairobi: Millions of dollars have been spent towards education efforts in East Africa, most of them directed toward the attainment of universal primary education, as championed by the Millennium Development Goals. Tanzania and Burundi, for instance, have recorded a 99% enrolment rate into the first grade of primary school. The pertinent question is: How effective are these funds in retaining children in school? Once enrolled, how long can the pupils be expected to last in the education system, and how many years of schooling, on average, are actually attained by East African pupils?

Private schools lose lustre in new Form One selection rules

Business Daily Africa

Nairobi: Investors in the education sector were left reeling by a populist move that will see qualified pupils from private primary schools denied entry into the 18 national schools, defining a class struggle that has been simmering in Kenya's competitive education sector for two decades. Education minister Sam Ongeru announced new guidelines that will limit the available places in public secondary schools to the ratio of candidates in a stream - either private or public - to the overall number of candidates who sat the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education in the previous year. "The government's policy is aimed at enhancing access, equity and quality at all levels of education," said Prof. Ongeru.

Ongeru, national school quotas is the wrong fix

Daily Nation

Nairobi: The government decision to introduce a quota system on admissions to national schools finally proves what most of us have been pointing out as wrong with KCPE (Not 8-4-4, but KCPE). The Ministry has over the decades allowed the private education sector, business people and God knows who else to hijack primary schooling in Kenya. This has created a lopsided system that fleeces parents, stresses kids, and alienates the majority poor leading to the most horrible class system from the grassroots. Further, this scenario has tilted the balance in the secondary school level, perpetuating the primary school chaos even further.

Fewer matrics taking, passing maths

Mail and Guardian

Pretoria: While the overall pass rate for matriculants had increased, the number of students who sat the mathematics paper and then passed, dropped in 2010, the Department of Basic Education has said. Basic Education Director General Bobby Soobrayan told media in Pretoria that the drop in the number of pupils writing mathematics was a concern.

Nan Yeld: Education

Business Day

Johannesburg: Much has been written about the National Senior Certificate and its predecessor, the Senior Certificate, over the years. In relation to the last year's NSC, it might be helpful to group the issues into three overlapping but distinct categories of concern: have the results been manipulated to achieve the dramatic increase in the pass rate?; are standards slipping?; what can we infer from the results about what candidates actually know and can do?

Public service delivery and education in Ghana, Benin and Mozambique

AfriMAP

AfriMAP has finalised reports on public service delivery in the education sector in Ghana and Benin. A third report on Mozambique is nearing completion. The [Ghana report](#) was published in early December 2010 with research conducted over several years by teams of researchers, teachers, members of teachers' unions and experts on education issues in Ghana. The report contained wide-ranging recommendations, including the need for expenditure tracking processes.

Donors refuse to supplement teachers' salaries

The Zimbabwe Independent

Harare: The international donor community has refused to supplement salaries of teachers because this does not fall under their humanitarian ambit, a cabinet minister says. Education, Sport, Arts and Culture minister David Coltart said this at the Zimbabwe Independent-run Independent Dialogue in Bulawayo whose theme was "The State of Education in Zimbabwe".

Boost for Zimbabwe's education sector results in texts

VOA

Harare: When Zimbabwe schools re-open this week, younger scholars will find they have text books for the first time in many years. A record 13 million text books are being delivered to Zimbabwe's primary schools. Education minister David Coltart said the massive text-book order, a record for Zimbabwe, was made possible by donations, mainly from Scandinavian countries and Germany.

Minister pulls no punches with education managers

New Era

Swakopmund: "Namibian education is at the cross roads. It can either go down the precipice or on a reverse course." So said the Minister of Education Dr Araham Iyambo, on the first day of his ministry's coastal retreat with the top brass present.

Private schools: Demand outstrips supply

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: Rachel Mgwasa, a parent who lives in the Msasani suburb of Dar es Salaam, was willing to do whatever it took to ensure that her 12-year-old daughter received quality education as she started Form One last year. For Rachel and her husband, that meant not only enrolling their child at any private school, but also finding one that is highly reputable and affordable, preferably a boarding school. However, the search for the kind of private school they desired did not go down easily. At most of the schools they visited, they discovered that the fees were not only very high, but also that the teachers were handling an average of between 25 and 30 pupils.

NGOs fight for child rights in MGDS II

The Nation

Lilongwe: A network of Malawian non-governmental organisations called NGO Coalition on Child Rights has asked government to show political will to incorporate its submissions on child rights into the second phase of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy. The network says government should prioritise the welfare of the children in the second phase of the MGDS because respect for children's rights is a litmus test for the country's long-term vision.

Don't chase pupils over fees

Lusaka Times

Lusaka: Education Minister Dora Siliya has directed school management countrywide to allow pupils who fail to pay school fees and for those who buy uniforms from outside schools to attend classes. At a press briefing, Ms Siliya said the ministry had received numerous complaints of pupils being sent away due to non-payment of user fees which in some schools are high. She urged school managers and parents to use Parent Teachers Association meetings as a platform for them to discuss such issues and agree on how much should be paid as user fees.

Standard of science education dropping, educationists warn

TODAY

Kanifing: The paucity of qualified science teachers in local schools is seriously hampering the Gambian education ministry's drive to produce on a regular basis a bunch of students well grounded in the sciences, said a senior official of the ministry who also claimed that the standard of science education was going complacently downhill as a result. Principal programme officer for science at the ministry Mr Yahya Al-Mattarr Jobe cheerlessly observed that "standards in science classrooms are falling badly because of the shortage of properly trained science teachers."

National budget gender lens blurred

NewsDay

Harare: Since her husband's death five years ago Sindiso Moyo of Budiriro has earned a living through her informal trade business, capitalising on her entrepreneurial flair. The mother of four was able to see her last child through her final school year courtesy of the profits realised from her vending market. She gets a \$100 monthly pension for her husband, who had worked in government for nearly 20 years at the time of his death, but this is too little to cover all her financial obligations. "I sell a variety of goods," she says, "from vegetables and fruits to second-hand clothing items that I get from Mozambique."

Parliament should seriously monitor budget implementation

NewsDay

Harare: A good precedent was made in parliament this [last] year when the 2011 National Budget was passed with amendments to the Finance Bill recommended by the Senate. A Money Bill can only be amended by the House of Assembly, according to provisions of our Constitution. The Senate can only recommend and it is up to the House of Assembly to accept or reject those recommendations.

Development fund brings positive change

NewsDay

Harare: Innovative MPs have started development projects in their constituencies following disbursement of the Constituency Development Fund allocated to them by Finance minister Tendai Biti through the Ministry of Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs. Although the Minister of Constitutional and Parliamentary Affairs, Eric Matinenga, told Parliament that several MPs had not applied for the funds, he said a significant number of MPs had taken up this opportunity.

Kogi lawmakers ask for 25% of 2011 budget

THISDAY

Lokoja: In a reminder of the ongoing debate on National Assembly's share of the national budget, the Kogi State House of Assembly has demanded that not less than 25% of the N85.5 billion budget for 2011 - which is N21.375 billion - should be allocated to it. Speaker of the House, Chief Clarence Olafemi, made the appeal yesterday at the presentation of the 2011 budget to the House.

Communiqué on Kogi State budget processes

CISLAC

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre organized a one-day Civil Society Organisation-Legislature Review Session on the annual budget of Kogi State for the year 2010. The objectives of the public hearing included the review and analysis of the Kogi State budget for 2010 and setting the agenda for the 2011 budget.

Jigawa State budget monitoring communiqué

CISLAC

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre with support from the Heinrich Boll Foundation organized a one-day Civil Society Organisation-Legislature Review Session on the annual budget of Jigawa State for the year 2010. The meeting had 32 participants in attendance, comprising the representatives from the House of Assembly, CSOs and media representatives.

Ensure LG budgetary independence, stakeholders urged

THISDAY

Lagos: Stakeholders have been enjoined to step up efforts towards ensuring the budgetary independence of local governments. Also, there was a call for citizens, through umbrella organisations such as civil society organisations, community-based organisations, and faith-based organisations, to be involved in the formulation and monitoring of the budget at local government level. The calls were contained in a communiqué issued at the end of a recent two-day stakeholder consultative forum on the development of a strategy for engaging the budget at the local level, which took place in Kaduna and had participants from Sokoto and Bauchi States.

SERAP drags FG to UN Human Rights Committee over jumbo pay

SERAP

Lagos: The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project has dragged the Federal Government to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights over "unreasonable pay increase for the National Assembly" alleging that this "constitutes a serious breach of the country's obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to use its maximum available resources to fulfil economic, social and cultural rights of Nigerians, and to ensure the minimum contents of these rights."

Government not transparent on supplementary budgeting

Daily Monitor

Kampala: In February 2010, the government requested a supplementary budget of Shs456 billion to cater for expenses for 18 ministries and government agencies, including State House, President's Office and Public Service. To date, barely six months after reading the 2010/11 National Budget, a request for supplementary budget has been made for Shs605 billion. Several issues arise from this trend of supplementary budgeting.

Uganda in record budget absorption for 09/10

The East African

Kampala: Uganda's budget absorption rate, a measure of spent funds against those released by the government, was 99% at the close of the past financial year, with Ush5.11 trillion (\$2.21 billion) used out of a total allocation of Ush5.17 trillion (\$2.24 billion). According to the Government Annual Performance Report FY 2009/10 - December 2010, compared with the mid-year point in December 2009 when the absorption rate was as low as 82%, dropping still further to 79% by March 2010, budget performance in Uganda seems to have picked up momentum.

Commentaries on the 2011 Ghana budget statement

GhanaWeb

Accra: A budget is a fiscal instrument which is used by the government as a policy instrument to achieve broad macroeconomic objectives such as: achieving accelerated economic growth, stabilizing inflation or money growth, achieving domestic equilibrium in expenditure and income, achieving external equilibrium in the balance of payments and providing a backdrop/backcloth to woo foreign direct investment.

NGO advises transparency on mining tax system

The Post

Lusaka: Public discontent with the mining tax system will only be alleviated if the culture of secrecy around mining is removed to allow for greater transparency, says the [Centre for Trade Policy and Development](#). And the CTPD has advised the government to suspend or revoke mining licences of non-tax compliant mining companies. The civil society organisation also challenged the government to urgently resolve legacy issues related to the development agreements and adherence to the current tax regime.

Government report slams maternal deaths and poverty

Times Live

Johannesburg: South Africa is winning the war on want in some areas but failing badly in terms of child and maternal health and in the abolition of poverty, a [new government report](#) shows. It uses data from a variety of sources to assess whether the country has moved backwards or forwards on a host of indicators ranging from the economy, health and education to social cohesion and democratic involvement.

Far too many questions about the structure of devolved governments

The Nation

Nairobi: I gather that a former Treasury mandarin, Dr Kamau Thugge, has been recalled from Washington where he has been working with the International Monetary Fund to assist the government craft a fiscal decentralisation strategy. Working with a team of economists from both the Treasury and the Ministry of Planning, Dr Thugge has also been tasked to craft systems for funding the 47 counties created under the new constitution. I think that Mr Charles Nyachae's committee on the implementation of the constitution should also be involved in the crafting of a new fiscal decentralisation strategy. This exercise has major implications for the success of the proposed devolved government.

Revenue team ready to begin work

Daily Nation

Nairobi: The Commission on Revenue Allocation has been exhorted to work "without fear of any person or organ of government." Justice minister Mutula Kilonzo assured members of the Micah Cheserem-led Commission that they would have a free hand to work. Mr Kilonzo told the nine members, sworn in by Chief Justice Evan Gicheru that Kenyans expected equity in revenue distribution.

Kenyan MPs warned over graft in CDF

Daily Nation

Nairobi: MPs suspected of misusing the Constituency Development Fund could soon be arrested. Planning and Vision 2030 minister Wycliffe Oparanya accused MPs of shouting the loudest about corrupt cabinet ministers yet some could not account for millions of shillings allocated to their constituencies. Mr Oparanya said a number of complaints on the misuse of CDF money had been forwarded to the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission "and soon some legislators will be arrested."

Social Accountability training courses: Details of three training courses, with a strong focus on improving skills for practioners involved in budget monitoring and expenditure tracking processes, have been posted in our events section. The courses deal with Budget Accountability, Mainstreaming Gender in Development Planning and Expenditure Tracking for Donor Funded Projects in the Health Sector. Details of each course can be obtained [here](#).

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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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