

In the News: Issue 19

In the News 19 highlights a selection of social accountability news articles posted to the ANSA-Africa website during the period 10 December 2010 - 14 January 2011 which deal with ICT, governance and anti-corruption.

ICT, governance and anti-corruption

Kenyans must have access to public information

Business Daily Africa

Nairobi: The government must wake up to the new reality brought by the constitution, which gives a great sense of being to transparency and accountability. Being a constitutional right, access to information takes precedence over legislation such as the Official Secrets Act, which has been used repeatedly to hold back vital public information thus fuelling a facilitative environment for corruption and impunity to thrive. A freedom of information law has been elusive to Kenyans, despite a decade-long clamour by the civil society.

Tunisian protests fueled by social media networks

CNN

Tunis: The protests that have gripped Tunisia in recent weeks are, to say the least, unusual. Organized dissent in the streets is rarely tolerated in Arab states, and human rights groups say the Tunisian government has had a short fuse when dealing with opponents. But what's going on in Tunisia is all the more unusual because the protests are being organized and supported through online networks centered on Twitter and Facebook. So prolific are the educated members of the northern African nation's younger generation online that it has become a top priority of the Tunisian government to block and disrupt bloggers and others perceived as opponents.

Social media that matters

The Witness

Pietermaritzburg: Social media have become the proverbial soap-box for causes, issues and many things that need a voice. Social-media campaigns spearheaded by individuals often lose momentum because they fail to mobilise people. The power of platforms like Facebook, Twitter and blogs lies in the fact that they empower individuals to publish, influence and make a cause known. But that's the ideal world. The reality is that the impact most individuals can make on a regular basis is limited, fragmented and not co-ordinated.

Kenyan lands key Google post

The Nation

Nairobi: Kenyan information and technology activist Ory Okolloh has joined Google as its policy manager for Africa. The 33-year-old is a Harvard-trained lawyer and blogger who created Ushahidi - a non-profit organisation that produces free software to help democratise information and increase transparency. Ms Okolloh said in her blog that she has stepped down as the executive director of Ushahidi, proud of her achievements while at the organisation.

Mapping Kibera

IRIN

Nairobi: It is one of the most densely populated districts of Kenya's capital and one of the most researched urban areas in Africa. Hundreds, if not thousands, of NGOs work there, serving a community estimated to number anywhere between 100,000 and a million. Yet, until recently, the sprawling slum of Kibera barely featured on any detailed maps. As a result, basic information, such as the location and number of schools, churches, health centres, water points and other amenities was simply not available except to people living or working in their immediate vicinity. The [Map Kibera project](#), launched just over a year ago, has filled in many of these gaps.

Next on Google maps: Hospitals, roads and kiosks of Korogocho slum

The East African

Nairobi: After mapping various key locations and landmarks in the country, Google is now mapping Korogocho, one of Nairobi's informal settlements. The mapping of Korogocho, an area with about 200,000 people, is meant to make it easier to identify streets, key structures and landmarks that were previously not mapped onto Google Maps.

Improving public service delivery using ICT

IPPMedia

Dar es Salaam: As new technologies are driving and reshaping Governments throughout the world by improving public services delivery and engaging citizens Tanzania is yet to fully utilise information communication technology because of poor infrastructure, inadequate human capacity and legal framework. The Economic and Social Research Foundation through its Tanzania Knowledge Network has introduced a topic for discussion to explore how the country can take advantage of emerging technologies to improve government service delivery and citizen's engagement through e-government, mobile-government and the use of web 2 technologies like Twitter, Wikis, blogs and other social networks.

African constitutional court mooted to deal with election crises

Afrique en ligne

Algiers: Experts meeting at a conference convened to reflect on the input of the African Panel of the Wise to conflict prevention efforts, have proposed the formation of an African Union-run constitutional court to deal with election-related crises. The experts also called for the eliminating of constitutional ambiguities in the succession of a sitting president, to counter the political crisis that appears to affect several African states and has become a potential cause of violent conflicts.

Elections on trial

Africa Confidential

London: At the start of one of Africa's busiest political seasons - more than 17 elections are due this year - the deepening crisis in Côte d'Ivoire sends a brutal reminder of the limits of electoral politics. The idea that free-ish multiparty elections supervised by the United Nations were going to resolve the fissures between the north and south of the country owed more to hope than to reality on the ground.

African rights court a white elephant?

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: When the African Court of Human and People's Rights became fully operational in 2008, many thought it would soon be overwhelmed by cases due to widespread human rights violations in the continent. To the contrary, the court headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania, has received only one case so far, part of the reason being that many people, including Non Governmental Organizations dealing with promotion and protection of human rights are unaware of its operations.

Kikwete forms Constitutional Review Commission

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: President Jakaya Kikwete has announced the formation of a Constitutional Review Commission that will finally kick start the process of re-writing the country's supreme law. The president made the surprise announcement in his televised New Year speech broadcast by TBC1. It came as the voices drumming up support for constitutional reforms swelled.

Government's response to Bishops' Pastoral Letter

The Nation

The Government of the Republic of Malawi, led by Ngwazi Professor Bingu wa Mutharika, is a caring government and, guided by its constitutional obligation to develop our country, hereby responds to the [*Pastoral Statement*](#) issued by the Catholic Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi entitled *Reading the Signs of the Times: Socio-Political and Economic Issues in Malawi* dated 31st October 2010.

Churches fault government on bishops

The Nation

Lilongwe: The Malawi Council of Churches supported the Catholic bishops' recent pastoral letter and expressed dissatisfaction over the manner government has responded to issues raised by the clerics. But government maintained its stand on the letter.

Malawi Parliament courts civil society

The Nation

Lilongwe: Malawi Parliament has said respect and cordial relationship between civil society organisations and the National Assembly is vital in strengthening the country's parliamentary democracy. Second Deputy Speaker Jones Chingola said although parliament and the CSOs are two different institutions with different mandates, it is important that they recognise each other's roles. "The community does not benefit from adversarial relationship between parliament and the civil society," he said.

Sanusi's surging profile

Leadership

Lagos: All over the world, Central Bank governors are not popular technocrats. Unlike top politicians and civil servants, no one in the grassroots bothers to know the name of the governor of the central bank. Although they make critical macroeconomic decisions that affect the lives of millions of people in their respective countries, very few people outside a nation's financial circles bother to know who they are.

Corruption, poor funding undermine LGs' performance

THISDAY

Lagos: High cases of corruption, lack of transparency, absence of accountability and poor funding have been identified as major constraints undermining the performance of the 774 local governments in the country. This finding was contained in a report of local government survey conducted by the Orderly Society Trust in 40 local governments in 13 states of the federation, thereby showing that 68.4% of the respondents acknowledged that local government personnel were highly corrupt and equally fraudulent as well.

Government shouldn't downplay donors' concerns on accountability - EFZ

The Post

Lusaka: The government should not downplay donors' concerns about accountability for donor aid, according to the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia. EFZ executive director Reverend Pukuta Mwanza said the government should take the donors' concerns on the use of financial aid seriously. Rev. Mwanza said it was also unfortunate that donors were withholding funds due to abuse of funds but that this affected the majority poor. He said where there was corruption, there was no guarantee of transparent use of resources.

Incessant corruption is aggravating poverty

The Post

Lusaka: The concerns that donors to our country have continued to raise about accountability over the use of public funds need to be taken very seriously by those in government. As Reverend Pukuta Mwanza, the executive director of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, has correctly observed, the political leadership of this country needs to take the donors' concerns about accountability seriously and not try to belittle them or play them down in any way.

Corruption fight dealt a blow

The Nation

Lilongwe: It is unfortunate that Minister of Information and Civic Education Symon Vuwa Kaunda did not report corruption circumstances to relevant authorities within 48 hours as the law stipulates. The irony is that part of Kaunda's brief as Minister of Information and Civic Education is to articulate and promote government policy as well as civic-educate people on various public matters. Kaunda also happens to be a lawmaker. But instead of leading by example and reporting to the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) within the legally-stipulated time, Kaunda kept the information to himself for months.

Graft fight deflated, NGOs say

Capital FM

Nairobi: Anti-Corruption activist John Githongo says not enough is being done in the fight against corruption despite commitments made by politicians under the new constitution. Mr Githongo said that impunity was still prevalent in government and no solid action was being taken against individuals implicated in graft. He called on both private and public organisations to unite in putting pressure on the government to weed out corruption.

Why the Ocampo Six must vacate office

Daily Nation

Nairobi: No one who is accused by a competent tribunal of crimes against humanity - which have similar elements as genocide - must be allowed to squat in public office. Noisy supporters of the Ocampo Six argue that they should not be sacked. Their logic is painful.

One more minister under KACC graft probe

Daily Nation

Nairobi: Kenya Anticorruption Commission is currently investigating another minister over graft, in addition to the four ministers earlier mentioned, including suspended Industrialisation minister Henry Kosgey, who has since been charged in court. According to KACC director Dr PLO Lumumba, the latest case relate to allegations of misuse of Constituency Development Fund money and that it was "very weighty".

Graft is real, says KACC boss

Daily Nation

Nairobi: The information in the cables is a true reflection of the situation in the country and leaders should "style up" and save the country's dwindling economy, Kenya Anti-corruption Commission director Patrick Lumumba says. He also defended US ambassador Michael Ranneberger, who is under attack by the political class led by President Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga saying, "sometimes it is good to have a visitor in your house that you are so much used to. He may find a cobweb and remove it."

Fighting corruption the wrong way

The Independent

Kampala: When the Acting Inspector General of Government Raphael Baku released a new report on November 18, he ironically was the first to throw mud at it. He derogatively described his statutory biannual *Report to Parliament January - June 2010* as "a ritual" that even parliamentarians "never take seriously". He said the MPs receive it and store copies without ever debating or even sparing one committee meeting to look at the recommendations in it. Baku said, however, he has higher hopes in another report he had issued just three days earlier, *The IGG Report on Corruption; Data Tracking Mechanisms*. The DTM is a novel idea that the IGG hopes to turn into an annual report.

Half of public officials face risk of losing jobs

The Citizen

Dar es Salaam: Over half of public office holders face demotion or dismissal after failing to beat last month's deadline for completing and handing in wealth declaration forms. 56% of those required by law to declare their wealth had not done so by December 31, Public Ethics Secretariat Commissioner Salome Kaganda said in Dar es Salaam. Lady Justice (rtd) Kaganda said a total of 8,410 politicians and civil servants were supposed to fill in and return the forms, but only 4,788, or the equivalent of 57%, beat the deadline.

Makone declares assets

NewsDay

Harare: Home Affairs co-minister Theresa Makone has become the first Cabinet minister to declare her assets to the Speaker of Parliament and has challenged other ministers to prove their honesty and "cleanliness" by following suit. Makone said she decided to declare her assets a few days after listening to a speech by the African Parliamentarians Against Corruption chairman, Willas Madzimore, on World Day Against Corruption, which was held on December 5 2010, where 25 MPs publicly declared their assets.

Another minister to declare assets

NewsDay

Harare: Another senior government official, a Zanu PF deputy minister, has joined the asset-declaration crusade and is keen to present a register of his assets to the Speaker of Parliament, NewsDay has learnt. African Parliamentarians Against Corruption chairman Willias Madzimore said the deputy minister, whom he was not at liberty to name as yet, was still seeking approval from his party to make the declaration.

WB launches Corruption Hunters

World Bank

Washington: The World Bank concluded the first meeting of the International Corruption Hunters Alliance. "Implementing the resolutions we made will take effort, money, results and perseverance. We are not intimidated by that," said Leonard McCarthy, World Bank Integrity Vice President in his concluding address to 247 anticorruption officials from 134 countries.

Audit Office "happy" with public fund accounting

Tanzania Daily News

Dar es Salaam: The National Audit Office has said much improvement has been attained on accountability and transparency in handling of public funds in both central and local government entities. In an interview with the 'Daily News' in Dar es Salaam, the Controller and Audit General Mr Ludovick Utough said most public servants have been transformed and are now committed in making proper channels of the taxpayers' money.

Provinces to get dedicated courts to deal with graft

Business Day

Cape Town: The Department of Justice plans to introduce dedicated courts in each of the provinces to deal with fraud and corruption cases, spokesman Tlali Tlali has revealed. The congestion in courts and long delays in finalising cases has been identified as one of the weak links in the government's multipronged and interdepartmental strategy to fight the fraud and corruption which has become widespread at all levels of the state apparatus.

The other side of the NMG's leaders' scorecard

The New Times

Kigali Nation Media Group (NMG) through its fast growing publication "The East African" run a captivating story in its magazine section, two weeks ago, rating the performance of Africa's leaders and providing a score for each. For those who missed the story, NMG index dubbed "The African Presidents' index" ranked all African Heads-of-State and gave a mark where the best President/Head of Government scored an A+ and the worst scored an F-. NMG had developed its own index but also relied on other indexes like the Mo Ibrahim index on African Governance, the democracy index, Transparency International Corruption Index, the Freedom House's Press Freedom index and the UN Human Development index to come up with a final ranking.

Delivering good aid?

Development Policy Blog

Is Australian development aid effective? The answer is yes in a narrow sense of delivering programs, but in terms of impact on poverty we do not know in any systematic way. As AusAID's own watchdog, the Office of Development Effectiveness, notes in its just released Annual Review for 2009: AusAID does not have an overarching strategy on implementing the aid effectiveness agenda and has not clarified how to report against aid effectiveness principles. It needs a strategy for reporting that sets out benchmarks and targets for country and regional programs in terms of aid effectiveness principles.

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](#).

Keep up to date with:

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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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