

OPEN DATA

From PDFs to Corrective Action: Kenya's Journey Opening Budget Data

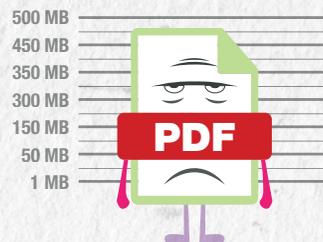
When in 2010 a new Constitution reorganized Kenya in 47 county governments, the change sparked a rising demand for more information. Despite obstacles ranging from limited resources for processing large volumes of data to turf wars between institutions, open data initiatives started to emerge.

One obstacle stood out: a lot of the information was “open” only to the extent that it was publicly available and could be freely used. PDFs continued to reign and limited the ability to modify, conduct analysis and transform the data.

So how did Kenyans go from PDFs to open budget data capable of changing public perceptions and getting Members of Parliament (MPs) to quickly take corrective action on irregular and stalled projects? How did data contribute to keep MPs engaged in irregular practices from being reelected?

This is the story of Kenya's journey with open data, the intermediaries who turned data into messages citizens can understand, and the long way ahead for Kenyans looking for transparent fiscal practices.

CHECK THE FULL STUDY <http://bit.ly/1V0qGmE>



How Can Open Budget Data Help One of the Most “Corrupt Cities” in the U.S.?

After 22 years of having the same mayor and going through several high-profile scandals, Chicago built a decades-old reputation as one of the most corrupt cities in the United States. Cook County, of which Chicago is the largest city, even had senior officials indicted for corruption.

Trying to demonstrate a clean break from this corrupt history, in 2011 the new mayor, Rahm Emmanuel, promised that within his first 100 days “a searchable version of the City budget will be posted online.”

When the County's open data portal was launched, it was presented as a measure combatting “the historic lack of transparency and accountability that has eroded the legitimacy” of the government. The portal has been recognized as a best practice among cities publishing financial data. This report explores why and how local governments publish open budget – including kind, format, frequency, distribution channels and other key elements of the budget datasets – and how journalists, civil society organizations and other expert users are engaging with the data. The case of New York City is also covered here.

CHECK THE FULL STUDY <http://bit.ly/2bTey2W>

Using Open Budget Data to Bring Oversight to NYC Citizens

New York City has a powerful, independently elected office that provides comprehensive oversight of the City's budget and fiscal condition. That is the Comptroller's Office, which in 2010 launched Checkbook NYC.

Initially including only financial transactions, budget data was added in 2013 with the launch of Checkbook NYC 2.0.

Since the Comptroller, John Liu, does not make budget decisions – as these correspond to the Mayor and City Council – there was little risk in any analysis citizens and expert users could do that would reflect negatively on him. Additionally, at the time Liu was preparing to run for Mayor and Checkbook NYC raised his profile.

Politics aside, the portal has been recognized as a best practice among cities publishing financial data.

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