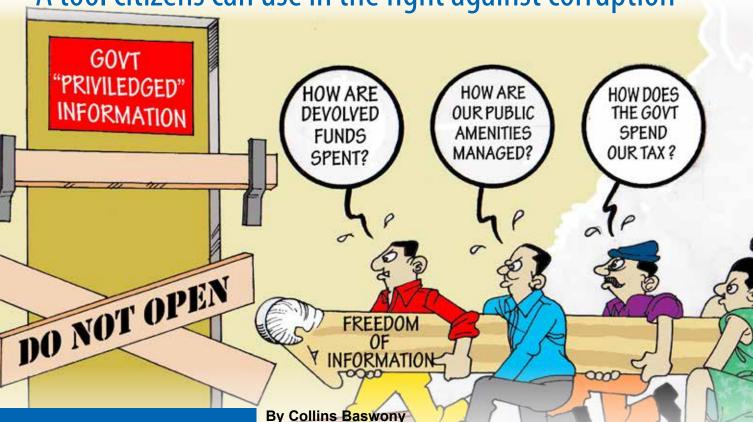


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Access to information
A tool citizens can use in the fight against corruption



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In January 2014, four residents of Kapsaret Constituency, Uasin Gishu County walked into Transparency International Kenva's Advocacy and Legal Advisory Centre in Eldoret and presented a complaint about how a public bridge building project was being carried out. The four constituents complained that procurement procedures were skewed and that funds were embezzled.

Following their complaint, the Constituency Fund Development Committee agreed to meet with them and provide information to clarify the issues the residents raised. Eventually, this issue was resolved mostly by the action of the Constituency Fund Development

Committee providing information relating to this project.

The dissemination of information about public affairs and the management of public issues is one of the most frequently cited anti-corruption measures .

Richard Maina, Transparency International Kenya's Citizen Demand Programme Coordinator, says citizens can seek and use information to engage in the fight against corruption. Information such audit reports on public expenditure, public budgets and human resource audits among others.

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Access to information

A tool citizens can use in the fight against corruption





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"Access to information is a tool in the fight against corruption. Corruption thrives most in an environment of secrecy. Access to information therefore creates an environment of transparency and accountability and openness to scrutiny," said Mr. Maina.

However, considering the culture of official secrecy in Kenya's public service, some public officers may not be so willing to honor access to information requests from citizens. Mr. Maina says that it is the responsibility of every officer and institution to provide any public information as and when it is requested. Citizens have a right to access the information whether it is favourable to the officer/institution or not.

Although accessing public information is not easy in most instances, some public institutions have attempted to provide information about their operations to the public.

A citizen can access information by walking to the institutions' offices, on their websites, calling customer care desks, through opinion leaders, through radio, television and newspaper announcements.

"Enacting an access to information laws, Providing for central information desk; customer care desk to serve members of the public and developing public communication framework are some of the measures that can be taken (both at the national and county level) to improve access to public information." added Mr. Maina

Transparency International Kenya postulates that the Kenyan citizen is the ultimate guarantor of integrity in the management of public resources and affairs and is supporting Kenyans through Advocacy and Legal Advisory Centres (ALACs) to demand for accountability and transparency from their public officials.

One of the areas that TI-Kenva is building capacity of citizens in the fight against corruption is access to information.

The writer is the Deputy Communication Officer. **Transparency International** Kenya



Access to information: The problem

Information is fundamental in enabling informed decisions. Information is also power. Where it is not freely accessible, corruption can thrive and basic rights might not be realised. People can hide corrupt acts behind a veil of secrecy.

Those with privileged access to information can demand bribes from others also seeking it. People entitled to health or education may be denied these basic services due to lack of access to information about their rights. Governments can hide their actions by controlling or censoring

the media. This prevents the facts being reported. The truth is gagged.

When our right to know is denied, we can't hold decision makers or institutions to account for their actions. Nor can we make informed choices when we vote.

If information isn't public, we can't enjoy many of our rights, such as participating fully in political life. We might not even understand our rights in certain circumstances. When access to information is blocked, we can never know what's really going on.

Access to information: The solution

Ensuring disclosure of, and access to, information can empower people and institutions to prevent and fight corruption. But it's a two-way process. Governments must proactively release information about what they do. And we must utilise this information to

make full use of our rights. We all have a valuable role to play.

We need to make sure that national laws guarantee public access to information – and that such laws are implemented on a day-to-day basis. These laws are a key safeguard against corruption. They enable us to monitor what's happening. This is vital in areas with specific corruption risks, including water, health and education. Over 90 countries have passed access to legislation in the last 15 years but implementation is patchy. Millions of people still don't know about these laws or know how to use it to their advantage.

Global anti-corruption treaties stress the value of access to information. So governments know what reforms they should have in place. And we can monitor their progress in enforcing those reforms. Then we can make sure our right to know is fulfilled. – Transparency International, The global movement against corruption.

Access to informationWhat the law provides for in Kenya

By Collins Baswony

In April 2014, activist Okiya Omtata was arrested at Milimani law courts in Nairobi "for possessing Government confidential documents" relating to the controversial multi-billion shilling standard gauge railway project. Mr. Omtata presented the said documents as evidence in a court petition.

Article 35 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 guarantees the right to access public information. However, despite the gains made in the area of access to information through the adoption of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, cases such as Omtata's arrest are can still happen. According to Elijah Ambasa, the Programme Officer, Governance and Policy at Transparency International Kenya, the problem is that the Official Secrets act, 1992 has not yet been repealed and can therefore be applied by law enforcement.

"This law (The Official Secrets Act, 1992) should be repealed because it does not communicate to the current constitution. We still don't have a clear policy and law on access to information. We also don't have a whistleblower protection policy and law which can protect Kenyans even as they blow the whistle on corruption" said Mr. Ambasa.



Access to information

- 35. (1) Every citizen has the right of access to—
- (a) information held by the State; and
- (b) information held by another person and required for
- the exercise or protection of any right or fundamental freedom.
- (2) Every person has the right to the correction or deletion of untrue or misleading information that affects the person.
- (3) The State shall publish and publicise any important information affecting the nation.

Constitution of Kenya 2010



From page 3

Even if Mr. Omtata, or any other Kenyan citizen requested for information on any public project or interest, chances are, they would not be allowed access to that information. This is because there is no law to actualise Article 35 of the Constitution.

"Article 35 of the Constitution of Kenya is just a guideline but it should be comprehensively addressed through an Act of Parliament. An Act would consider a wide spectrum of issues based on the guidelines provided for in Ar-

ticle 35. For example matters to do with the procedure for access to information can only be found in an Act of Parliament in detail. An act of parliament will now look at various thematic issues like procurement, recruitment, administration et cetera," added Mr. Ambasa.

So, why isn't there an access to information law in place four years after the Constitution of Kenya was promulgated in 2010? The Commission for the implementation of the Constitution (CIC) forwarded the Access to Information Bill, 2013 to the Attorney General (AG) for publication and presentation to the National Assembly in 2013. However, by the time of publication, the bill is yet to be debated by the National Assembly.

"Stakeholders have developed a new strategy of including access to information provisions in other bills, for instance the draft Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Bill currently at the AG's office," said Mr. Ambasa.

The writer is the Deputy **Communication Officer**, Transparency International Kenya



Have you ever accessed or tried to access any information from a government office? If you have tried to access information from a public office, tell us about your experience -Were you successful? Were you unsuccessful? How did the public officials in that office Your feedback treat your request? If you haven't to access information from a public office, tell us why you have

Benard Koech

It was yesterday (August 14th, 2014) at 2 pm. Konoin Constituency, Bomet County. I met the CDF (Constituency Development Fund) manager.

- 1. I inquired on current projects funded. To my shock, I received cold reception. No hi. No welcome.
- 2. I inquired on how they appraise projects then fund projects, The answer given to me was "comprehensive". Up to now, the answer remains unanswered to me.
- 3. Do youth projects get funding? The answer given was CDF is not meant for the youth. Only bursary is for youth.
- 4. Do you involve the community in social audits on projects? The manager said that they have an internal auditor, why disturb the people?
- 5. Do you read to the public on CDF expenditure? To which the fund manager answered no, not necessary.
- 6. Does the community play a role in identification of the priority projects? The answer was no, committee is the body that decides.
- 7. Can I be able to access files to see projects in my area? The answer was no, that information is official and secret and cannot be disclosed, consult your village elder.

Julius Okoth

I tried to access information on a certain procurement process in Nairobi City County but all in vain.

📑 Lereko Moronge

Mine is not so much a request for information, as a service related matter; it took me over six months to obtain a title deed from Kajiado Lands Office. While on the whole I did not find the staff rude, I observed shocking standards of casual and careless manner of attending to queries, handling documents and a culture of inordinate delays of attending to business. No sense of officialdom could be felt, with no official designations for persons one is dealing with, it was like being in a chaotic marketplace! I last read that one of the land registrars was facing prosecution for graft related cases, perhaps someone took note and acted, because it is in such circumstances that corruption, rent seeking etc. thrive.

The right to information Perspectives from India By Sheila Masinde

I had the opportunity to participate in a Right to Information (RTI) Learning Programme for East Africa in India in March this year. The programme was organised by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) in New Delhi. Colleagues Anne Nderi, ICJ-Kenya and Suyianka Lempaa, Katiba Institute from Kenya also took part in the learning programme. In total we were 10 participants; other participants were drawn from Uganda and Tanzania civil society, academia and media. The broader purpose of the learning programme was to showcase the Indian model of campaigning for a strong RTI law and how civil society and media organisations are using it to demand greater transparency and accountability in the working of government and other public authorities.

We had occasion to interact and visit RTI campaigners and practitioners in India to better understand campaign strategies for enacting and implementing the RTI Act in India. To get an experience of the supply side of RTI, we visited a number of government institutions and spoke to high ranking officials such the Secretary to the Government of India and senior representatives of the Department of Personnel and Training; the Director, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and the MD of the Power Grid Corporation (responsible for electricity transmission). We also visited the Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM) a premier officer training institute under the Central Government that has specialised in conducting RTI-focused training programmes for public authorities across the country since the passage of the RTI Act in India. We also had a session with Shailesh Gandhi, former Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission - which oversees RTI implementation. travelled over 1,000 kilometres (by road) to Rajasmand District, in the

State of Rajasthan, to witness proactive disclosure of information by government authorities and civic mobilisation in regard to RTI.

Legislating the right to information

The Right to Information Act was passed in 2005 in India, replacing the weak Freedom of Information Act, 2002. It is very well understood and utilised by the common mwananchi in India especially as a basis to demand other rights such as the right to hearing (provided by a state legislation of Rajasthan) and guaranteed employment (provided by a national law).

RTI is demand-driven, as members of the public regularly file right to information requests especially as a course to achieve other rights e.g access to food subsidies, food for work, guaranteed employment, education bursaries, pension and others. In Rajasthan, we visited very remote villages where there is extreme poverty. Even amidst the dearth of resources, the people have clung to the right to know as their ticket to basic goods and services.

In countries with RTI laws, it is common for the number of applications to peak over the initial years of implementation and then experience a plateau or reduce in subsequent vears. However in India the number of requests for information is still on the rise in its 9th year of implementation at an estimated 4 million requests across the country. Prof Shekhar Singh, a former convener of the Indian RTI coalition noted that improving the quality, content and accessibility of information proactively disclosed by public authorities is necessary to reduce the number of formal requests for information. This is a strategy that the RTI coalition and other organisations have focused on in recent years.

Highlights of India's RTI Act

The law places individual liability on

officers of public authorities to provide information. This has instilled a sense of fear among public officials as they can be punished personally for failure to disclose information. The law has made bureaucrats wary of giving illegitimate advice and opinions for fear of being exposed, and empowered honest and upright officers to work according to the rules and norms and withstand political pressure to act otherwise. However, there are still cases where information is undisclosed.

There is an independent oversight mechanism - Central Information Commission, which handles all appeals related to undisclosed/denied information. CHRI's experience of litigating in the Supreme Court to recognise the Information Commissions as administrative tribunals was narrated as a model to follow. This ensures that appeals and complaints procedures do not become cumbersome and expensive for people. While information is disclosed in some cases it is withheld in more sensitive cases leading to appeals beyond the Commission through litigation

The Indian RTI law provides for its enjoyment among citizens only, which is similar to Kenya's constitutional provision on access to information. While developing the legislation, the Government and Parliament linked the RTI Act to Article 19(1)(a) of the constitution which guarantees freedom of speech and expression only to citizens. As the right to information has been deemed an implied right under this provision, the RTI Act recognised rights of access to Indian citizens only. Citizens living abroad can however file information requests and pay required fees through internet gateways. However information proactively disclosed on the websites of public institutions are accessible to anyone.



Assessing corruption risks in the e

Transparency International has published the 'Corruption Risk Assessment of the Education Sector in Turkana County'. The objective of this assessment was to identify areas of potential resource leakages and formulate appropriate strategies to remedy this situation.

This assessment was part of an education project by TI-Kenya, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade and Development (DFATD) and Act Change Transform (ACT!). it was focusing on the allocation and flow of education resources in Turkana County.

The number of schools sampled across all the three sampled sub-counties -Turkana Central, Loima and Turkana West.

How the assessment was done

A total of 16 schools were randomly sampled and visited. The schools were spread across all the three sampled sub-counties -Turkana Central, Loima and Turkana West. Qualitative methods were adopted in the assessment to get rapid insight, perceptions and practices as narrated by the respondents drawn from selected primary schools and their stakeholders. These included formal and informal interviews with head teachers, their deputies and relevant county government officials; focus group discussions parents, the school management and teachers; and use of proxies. Data collection was conducted in April 2014.

Summary Findings

Procurement and asset management:

Schools did not have procurement committees in place and there was a conflict of roles by the School Management Committees (SMCs) since they spearhead procurement instead of playing an oversight role. There were attempts at securing school assets. However the most crucial asset namely land was not secured.

Schools had tagged text books but not much had been done with other assets such as furniture. The financial management practices were not water tight therefore increasing the risk of the leakage of education resources.

School management committees:

The study also found gaps in the election and capacity of school management committees to execute their mandate. It was noted that education officers who are meant to supervise such elections had to be facilitated by the school head teachers to travel to the schools yet there was no budget for this activity. This is a corruption risk as such facilitation is provided unofficially. It is a concern that one and half years after theBasic Education Act 2013 came into force, there are no guidelines yet on how schools will have Boards of Management (BoM) in place to take over from the SMCs. Consequently, no elections had been held since the beginning of the year there



CORRUPTION RIS REPORT OF THE ED IN TURKANA





fore some schools were being run by the executive committee only.

Financial management: The majority of schools did not make annual budgets and instead survived on short term activity based budgets. Parents have been making both financial and in-kind contribution which in most instances is not properly documented and accounted for.

The school audit does not cover

ducation sector in Turkana County

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all schools due to limited capacity. This may lead to continued financial malpractices as not all culprits may be discovered.

Teacher recruitment, transfer and promotion: Although the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) has elaborate and clear procedures other factors outside of the guidelines influence transfer and promotion of teachers. The study noted that nepotism influenced promotions to a large extent.

Summary Recommendations

Procurement: There is need to support schools to establish procurement committees and capacity build such committees to enable them fulfil their mandate.

Asset management: There is need to secure school assets for continued service provision. The management of the schools should fast track registration of their parcels of land, tagging of assets and regularly update the assets register.

Complaints handling mechanisms: Schools should be supported to come up with all-inclusive and documented mechanisms.

Capacity of school management bodies; Schools need to set aside resources in their annual budgets for enhancing the capacity of school management committees/ BoMs.

Financial management: Head teachers, especially those newly promoted, should be trained on prudent financial management. Awareness creation among parents on securing acknowledgement for any money paid and strengthening the audit process so that there are more on site audits is also key. The Public Finance Management Act should be produced in a simplified version for ease of use by all parties at the school level.

Human Resource Management:

The respective departments need to address gaps identified under the following themes:

International Kenya carried out the Corruption Risk Assessment of the Education Sector in Turkana County to identify areas of potential resource leakages and formulate appropriate strategies to remedy this situation.

teacher absenteeism, promotions and transfers. Strict enforcement of the teachers' code of conduct and code of regulations is a starting point in handling teacher absenteeism. Where absenteeism is due to social issues, support for rehabilitation and or guidance and counselling need to be offered. Similarly promotions and transfers should be conducted above board providing adequate information on what informed such decisions and communicating these to concerned parties.

Please visit www.tikenya.org to download the full report.

Social auditors in Wajir stop loss of revenue from community water projects



Social auditors trained by Transparency International Kenya and the Wajir Paralegal Network (WAPNET) have plugged the loss of revenue from two community water pans in Wajir County.

The two water pans were constructed in Lagbogol South Location, Habaswein District in Wajir South Constituency in 2000 and 2010 by Jubaland (now defunct), an NGO, and the Ministry of Water respectively. The water points are managed by a Water Resource Users Association committee which is constituted by the area local administrator (area chief).

Even though the committee had been collecting revenue from the water points, the committee never accounted for the funds collected. However, this changed in July 2013.

TI-Kenya through the Humanitarian Aid Integrity Programme and

WAPNET have trained 50 social auditors in Wajir County to date (a social auditor in this context is a community representative selected by his/ her community to engage in monitoring of not-for-profit service provision/ project implementation by state and non-state actors in his/ her locality).

After three months of civic education conducted by WAPNET, the trained social auditors and community members identified the water points for audit. The findings were to be reported back to the community.

TI-Kenya and WAPNET conducted a visit attended by community members and a public forum in October 2013. In the forum, social auditors reported as follows:

1) In the month of July/August 2013, after the total expenditure was deducted from the total collection, Ksh196, 060 was kept

by the treasurer as the custodian. The social auditors obtained the details from the Water Resource Users Association secretary.

2) The Water Resource Users Association treasurer declined to appear before the social auditors and community members despite several efforts to subject him to social accountability.

In the forum, community members after understanding their rights and constitutional mandate, initiated a process for change and thus elected a new Water Resource Users Association management committee, including women, who are now managing the water points. Public accountability in the management of funds has been enhanced. The community receives reports of amounts collected and their approval is sought for planned expenditure.

The County Government and non-governmental organisations launched an Integrated Complaints Referral Mechanism dubbed 'Uwajibikaji Pamoja' in West Pokot County in July 2014.

'Uwajibikaji Pamoja' will enable members of the public to submit complaints or feedback concerning aid and service delivery through: a toll-free SMS line, a web-based portal, or by filling out paper forms. People with no access to a mobile phone or internet can visit the nearest office of a participating partner or speak to any field staff of a participating organisation to lodge their complaints. The walk-in option will thus allow people who cannot read or write to report their cases.

In the Humanitarian Aid sector, when organisations have accountability systems in place, their complaints' response mechanisms are entirely established for their own use. Therefore if someone has a complaint on services or aid delivered by one organisation, he/ she can only complain to the same organisation, but gatekeepers within the entity may impede action. In addition, complaints are often cast to the wrong organisation and not referred to the organisation concerned due to lack of referral

Complaints referral system launched in West Pokot County

systems between them.

'Uwajibikaji Pamoja' was launched in Turkana County in April 2014, where it has recorded considerable.

"Majority of Kenyans acknowledge corruption as one of the main impediments to sustainable development but reporting corruption cases is still generally low, mainly because most people don't know where to report corruption or feel that no action will be taken to resolve their complaints even if they are reported," said International Transparency Kenya Humanitarian Aid Integrity Programme Coordinator, Nicolas Seris during the launch.

"Giving people an avenue to air their grievances is an important step towards improving service delivery by both public and non-public actors," he added. 'Uwajibikaji Pamoja' follows TI-Kenya's Food Assistance Integrity Study (FAIS) conducted in 2011, which identified the lack

of accountability mechanisms to people affected by calamities such as the 2011 drought as a key challenge in humanitarian operations.

"Our accountability, transparency and effectiveness can be measured by the complaints received," said World Vision's Programme Manager, Orwa Integrated Programme Area, Josiah Rotino at the launch.

"For devolution to bear fruit, accountability through checks and balances is paramount by the West Pokot County Government, NGOs and all humanitarian aid organisations," said John Lodinyo, the Political Advisor to the West Pokot County Governor.

Advocacy and Legal Advisory Centre Eldoret, governance working group stirs civic participation in budget making



By Isaiah Mwongela Mbiti

The Advocacy and Legal Advisory Centre (ALAC), Eldoret and members of the Governance Working Group in Eldoret mobilised 200 residents of Uasin Gishu County to participate in the county budget making process.

This followed months of dialogue between the County Assembly of Uasin Gishu and civil society organisations on budget making in the county. The civil society organisations worked under under the umbrella of The Governance Working Group. The Governance Working Group consists of the National Tax payers Association (NTA), Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC), North

Rift Women Voices (NRWV), Nelson and Francis Associates, Kerio Centre for Community Development and Human Rights (KCCD-HR) and Transparency International Kenya's ALAC Eldoret. Article 201 of the Constitution of Kenya provides for the principles of public finance and stipulates that there shall be openness and accountability, including public participation in financial matters.

The public, therefore, have a role to play in budget making. The agencies charged with budget making such as the county executive committees have an obligation to ensure the public participates in the budget making process.

The Governance Working Group was formed following the imple-

mentation of a project funded by Amkeni waKenya in the North Rift region.

ALAC is a walk-in, call-in or mail-in center where a citizen can obtain free and confidential advice on corruption cases. TI-Kenya in collaboration with government commissions, civil society organisations and coalition partners against corruption in Coast, North Rift, Western and Nairobi regions are working to empower citizens to actively participate in the fight against corruption in Kenya.

The writer is the Deputy Programme Officer, Advocacy and Legal Advisory Centre, Eldoret



With regard to the practice of classifying state information as 'secret' or 'top secret', the RTI Act overrode all other laws, rules and regulations to the extent of inconsistency, so mere classification of a document as secret would not be adequate ground for withholding access if a request were made under the RTI Act.

Capacity building on RTI

We met with Dr. S K Sarkar, Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training, which is the department facilitating the implementation of the RTI Act. Dr. Sarkar highlighted the difficulties faced by the department in the initial years of implementation. A majority of the bureaucrats felt that information was their domain and the RTI Act was forcing them to share it with the public. The mindset of secrecy was slowest to change and it still continues in the ninth year of implementation of the Act although it is much lesser now. In order to encourage the State Governments to implement the RTI Act, a scheme has been initiated to provide financial and technical support to the State Information Commissions and the officer training institutes across the country.

Online training modules have also been developed, not only for public officers but ordinary citizens too. Youth are being encouraged to know more about RTI and the procedures for accessing information by including a chapter in their school and college curriculum. Support has been provided to some universities to set up RTI-related courses.

The government and civil society developed guidelines in 2013, requiring state authorities to place more information in the public domain proactively. The department has established an implementation monitoring unit to oversee RTI compliance in the Central Government. Success stories of departments applying RTI proactively are published to encourage others to emulate their examples.

Building a coalition and mobilising voices for RTI

The Indian RTI coalition - The National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) - draws membership from key personalities from various sectors such as environment, human rights, media, labour movement among others. The coalition does not use institutional funding, and thus relies on individual contributions. and through such support has driven various campaigns from the early clamour for RTI.

The clamour for RTI started at the grass roots with a demand from people seeking rightful wages and entitlements under the food-for-work programme in drought-affected districts of Rajasthan, and the groups that were struggling for accountability for human rights violations committed by security forces in the northeastern States of India and Jammu and Kashmir that eventually led to the formation of the NCPRI.

Civil society groups demanding transparency and justice in relation to the environment formed another prominent stream that joined the nation-wide demand for an RTI law. However getting all of these groups to recognise the value of advocating for a transparency law was a major challenge. So the core group of the NCPRI held meetings with each of these sectoral players and discussed the problems and difficulties that they were facing. After identifying the topmost challenges faced by the groups the NCPRI members asked them to identify the information gaps which if filled up would fortify their demands. This demonstrated the value of having a strong RTI law to support these advocacy efforts. It is these interactions which made the diverse civil society actors recognise the importance of demanding an RTI law as the first step towards resolving the main problem areas that they were tackling in their own spheres of work. This helped widen the membership of the NCPRI and amplify the voices demanding a strong transparency law.

Following the enactment of the RTI law, the campaign has been engaged in awareness raising activities to encourage use of the law amongst the public, advocacy and mobilisation against government's efforts to roll back the regime of transparency to protect vested interests. The coalition has also been monitoring the levels of compliance with the RTI Act by public authorities.

Media's use of RTI

We had two sessions on the media's use of RTI, largely for investigative journalism. One journalist recounted how he used RTI to follow up a story on the amount of foreign travel by government officials, resulting in the Central Government launching austerity measures to reduce expenditure on foreign travel for Ministers and senior bureaucrats. This intervention resulted in systemic reform with the Central Government making it compulsory for reports of such foreign tours to be placed on the websites of the respective departments. He also published a story that exposed senior officers using frequent flyer miles for personal use. Consequently, the Government decided to pool in the miles for official use and issued a circular prohibiting their use for personal purposes. In another story, on asset declaration, the journalist showed how ministers under the Central Government were not making mandatory disclosure of their assets and liabilities. After he published this story, the practice improved and in the previous year all Ministers declared their financial assets and liabilities publicly.

There are several lessons on the demand and supply angles of the right to information for Kenya. Lessons for public institutions, ordinary citizens, private sector, media and civil society.

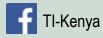
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