SERA

2008: An exciting year for Policy Forum

Policy Forum is looking forward to an eventful year in 2008 which promises activities that are both exciting and challenging as part of the network’s move towards its vision of improved and participatory policy processes; and an active citizenry with a better say over how public money is allocated and spent.

As with previous years, PF will continue to look at how policies and their implementation impact the lives of ordinary Tanzanians and ensure that the analysis is disseminated widely to ordinary Tanzanians and ensure that implementation impact the lives of policies and their function.

PF will in 2008 also work with a partner network to identify in the realm of SAM as part of enhancing the capability of civil society to monitor and participate in policy processes; and work with the Office of Parliament in its quest to engage the network as a whole in the country’s national policy spheres.

Policy Forum’s participation in formulation of new LGRP

The PF network, through its Local Government Working Group (LGWG), participated in the Local Government Reform Programme’s (LGRP) formulation of the new Local Government Reform and Decentralisation by Devolution (D-byd-D) which begins in July, 2008. In a working session held in February this year, the LGWG emphasised on a number of issues to be considered by the LGRP:

- Human Resource Management (HRM) should be decentralised, especially with regards to the hiring and firing of staff. It was in the LGWG’s view that if we decentralise accountability, this must be accompanied by the decentralisation of authority.
- There should be an enabling environment for civil society.

Quarter 1

Highlights:

- PF Institutional Assessment
- Collaboration with Office of Parliament
- SAM—PF’s New Approach to accountability

Contributors wanted!

PF Members are requested to send in stories of their activities for the next SERA issue. The others in the network would like to hear and learn from your experiences.

In this issue:

- 2008: An exciting year for PF
- PF participation in LGRP Formula-
- Policy Forum’s New Approach: Making Government More Accountable
- PF’s collaboration with MPs
- Parliament Watch
- PF undergoes Institutional Assessment

Contd. Page 2
Policy Forum’s participation in formulation of new LGRP

From page 1

- There should be a set of documents that, as a minimum, local governments are required to make publicly available in their areas own localities. These would include: all laws and bylaws enforceable at their respective levels of government, a summary of their costed and current strategic plan, their final approved budget, a breakdown of all quarterly disbursements, a summary of all quarterly expenditure reports, quarterly activity progress reports, latest annual report, latest NAO audit report, minutes of full council meetings, minutes of council committee meetings, and minutes of village assembly, ward-DC, and district development committee meetings.
- The LGWG felt this is the basic minimum documentation required in order to even begin to monitor local governments effectively.
- The LGWG felt that political decrees, regardless of how senior the politician making them, should not take precedence over local priorities. These diktats undermine the D-by-D process and hence there should be measures taken to curb the problem including having laws and policies harmonised to eliminate contradictions; and ensuring that equal priority is given to bottom-up information flow within government as to top-down. This will help bring to light what is workable or not.
- During the working session, the LGRP showed interest in incorporating these views within its framework and promised further collaboration with civil society on D-by-D issues.


"Every single human being in Tanzania has the potential to make a positive contribution to public life. The challenge for all of us as citizens is to ensure that we create just, meaningful and relevant ways in which this contribution can be harnessed for the public good. Unless we put people, and particularly those that have been historically excluded, at the centre of public life, our development goals will continue to evade us."


The historical year of 2008 witnessed a number of sharp turns in Tanzania public life; the opposition exposing the government evils, the dissolution of cabinet, the exposures of the ‘Rich Monders’, BoT twin-towers, EPA and other scandals. Everyone is calling for transparency and (more) accountability; from the Senior Central Government and their counterpart Local Village Executives, from the mega Multi-national mining and ‘Radar vending’ Companies to Machingas and CSOs.

It is therefore timely that this year we have refocused our work towards Social Accountability Monitoring (SAM) of our public institutions. We plan to work closely with 2 regional networks each year over a 2-year period to strengthen capacity to better understand and monitor the social accountability cycle of government. This should strengthen the watchdog role of civil society at local level leading to greater accountability in the use of public resources.

The program intends to achieve the following:
- The basic understanding by the Tanzanian public that social accountability is a right that is guaranteed in national and international legislation committed to by our government. The purpose of SAM is to enhance our collective capability to realize this right.
- The LGWG felt this is the basic minimum documentation required in order to even begin to monitor local governments effectively.

The program intends to achieve the following:
- More efficient, effective and accountable systems for planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring public sector commitments by monitoring the systems within which public decision-making happens.
- Better informed and more consistent monitoring of these systems by civil society.
- Increased and informed media and public debate on substantive accountability issues.
- Governance that is more responsive to public needs as a result of better monitoring and informed advocacy.

For more information on Policy Forum’s social accountability work, visit the PF website’s Strategic Documents page http://www.policyforum-tz.org/node/5445)
Policy Forum’s Collaboration with Office of Parliament

Under the stewardship of the Budget Working Group and with the support of IDASA, last year Policy Forum (PF) organized a seminar on budget processes well-attended by parliamentarians, journalists, and CSOs, such as Youth Action Volunteers, and Tushiriki.

The seminar gave a broader understanding of how the budget process works taking into account the historical background and current legal framework. One of the discussion highlights include that the link between budget and the strategic priorities was questioned. For example, HIV/AIDS received Tshs. 61 billion last year whereas malaria, which is the number one killing disease for both adults and children in Tanzania, was not as highly prioritised. One of the outcomes of the seminar was that the links between CSOs and MPs ought to be strengthened through similar brainstorming exercises as a way of finding solutions to Tanzania’s issues.

Building on last year’s successful collaboration with Parliament, and in line with PF’s objectives to analyse and monitor policies and the resulting information to be used by civil society and advocacy groups, one of PF’s activities this year, with the continued support from IDASA, is to deepen its work on budget processes with the Office of Parliament.

A new dimension of the collaboration, and in partnership with Revenue Watch, will be a focus on revenue obtained from the extractive industries, which is a priority sector for the Government. This is an exciting development which is responsive to current issues in the country, (e.g. Richmond Report and the Bomani Commission on mining contracts to be released at the end of this month), and is intended to better equip parliamentarians and CSOs to conduct collective monitoring and advocacy of the extractive industries.

Parliament Watch

- The 11th session of the National Assembly is expected to commence in Dodoma on 8th April 2008.
- The Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Samuel Sitta (MP) has formed new Standing Committees. They are:

1. Finance and Economic Affairs
2. Public Accounts
3. Local Government Accounts
4. Industries and Trade
5. Social Services
6. Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security
7. Agriculture, Livestock and Water
8. Land, Natural Resources and Environment
9. Miscellaneous Amendments
10. Social Welfare & Community Development
11. Public Corporation Accounts
12. Infrastructure
13. Constitutional, Legal and Public Administration
14. Standing Orders
15. Parliamentary Privileges, Ethics and Powers
16. HIV/AIDS Affairs These two changes are not minor
17. Energy and Minerals
18. Energy and Minerals achievements and are a result of hard work by all those involved in constructively analyzing the draft Bill.

Quick Bunge Facts:

320 - Current total number of Members of Parliament
7 - Presidential appointees so far, 3 remaining
75 - Special Seats Women
PF Institutional Assessment

Policy Forum’s underwent an Institutional Assessment between December 2007 and January 2008 to determine its capacity in terms of financial, human and physical resources; the level of involvement of key stakeholders; and its ability to deliver on its main objectives.

The institutional assessments conclusions were that PF is a relatively young network still in its learning phase. However, according to the report, despite being this young phase it is in, PF has performed better than other older networks by:

- Bringing together several CSOs, NGOs, DPs and individuals for a common cause including discussing and giving suggestions on various policies and laws in the country.
- Enabling citizens and other organizations to use PF as a forum to raise their concerns and challenge government decisions and actions.
- Creating opportunities for people and policy-oriented CSOs to analyze government policies, stimulated debates and dialogues on public service delivery.
- Effectively participating in policy dialogue issues, active policy engagement with the government especially in the areas of MKUKUTA, PMS and Research.
- Facilitating networking and information sharing among the members and the public at large mainly through debates, meetings and publications.
- Results of PF Working Groups have influenced the work performance of some members and the size or status of the concerned organization does not matter.
- PF has filled up the gap left by ‘old’ networks; for example PF has drafted and circulated the Code of Conduct for CSOs in the country.

Furthermore, Policy Forum has been recognized as a credible organization in policy issues as evidenced by institutions (including government agencies) and individuals seeking advice from it.

AGM 2008: Buzwagi drama group performing a play on Good Governance at the PF Offices as part of the Pre-AGM activities for PF Members. This year’s Annual General Meeting was held on 10th-11th of April at the White Sands Hotel. April.

Upcoming Events

May:
- Training Series for Parliamentary staff and Civil Society members on Extractive Resources, 12th-17th of May.
- Seminar Series for Parliamentarians on Extractive Resources, 19th-20th of May

June:
- Social Accountability Training at the Centre for Social Accountability in Grahamstown, South Africa.

For more events check the calendar on www.policyforum.or.tz