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Reporting tax research

Connecting researchers and
journalists for improved media
coverage and debate in Kenya

Promoting dialogue, debate and change



Above: The move towards providing free primary school education in Kenya can be directly linked to improved revenue collection by the government. The Relay workshop aimed to improve media coverage of the links between tax and governance.

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Introduction and context for the case study

In late 2009, three newspaper articles appeared in the Kenyan press, contributing to a newly emerging debate in the Kenyan media over government transparency and accountability.¹ Media reporting in Kenya on governance issues, particularly in relation to corrupt practices in public spending, is not new. What was unusual about these articles was the attention they brought to the specific issue of taxation. Who is paying tax? Who is not paying tax? And what is happening to the revenue? Using evidence from a range of sources, these articles showed the potential for more in-depth questioning and scrutiny of tax issues by the Kenyan media, strengthening the role the media is playing in the development of Kenyan democracy.

The three journalists who published the articles had all recently participated in a workshop for researchers, civil society organisations (CSOs) and Kenyan media representatives held in Kenya in November 2009. This workshop was part of a series of interventions delivered by Relay, a media and research communication programme. The Relay programme is managed by Panos London, which runs workshops and other activities with the other institutes within the Panos network, including Panos Eastern Africa. Relay provides training and facilitates relationship-building among key stakeholders to support more in-depth, research-informed media coverage of complex, under-reported or misreported development issues. The long-term goal is to generate public debate that can have an impact on policy and bring about much-needed change.

This case study describes some of the methods and activities developed by Relay and how they were applied in Kenya to the issue of tax and governance. It offers a detailed and descriptive account of Relay's series of workshop sessions, in particular. In doing so, it attempts to shed some light on practical ways to:

- build the skills of journalists to use research to create stories for their audiences
- build the skills of researchers to communicate their findings to the media
- build relationships between research, media and civil society actors.²

The case study also looks at the results of these activities, and what might be achieved with further investment in and support for journalists and researchers in Kenya. The outcomes of this case study give some indication of what could be achieved in other country contexts, where media and political environments may differ.

Ultimately, the case study aims to inform the work of a broad group of actors, including researchers, communication specialists, media development practitioners, infomediaries, editors and media managers, as well as organisations interested in funding initiatives to improve research-informed development.

1

See articles in Section 5, p16

2

See also 'Research makes the news: strengthening media engagement with research to influence policy' Panos London, 2010

Tax, governance and the media in Kenya

The debate over tax and its relationship to better governance has come to the fore in recent years, as developing countries and aid agencies have increasingly questioned the effectiveness of aid.³ One of the effects of long-term aid dependency is that it undermines the accountability of governments to their citizens, a precondition for better governance.⁴ While there may be no easy prescriptions for better governance, there are factors that can strengthen the responsiveness of states to the needs of their citizens. Tax is now widely considered to be one such factor.⁵ There is considerable evidence that tax has the potential to mobilise a relatively large group of citizens 'who have shared interests as taxpayers in how governments spend their money and manage the economy, and some power to make their views count'.⁶

Kenya has gradually been decreasing its dependency on aid and debt while increasing its dependency on tax to finance development. The country has seen a noticeable shift away from charging for some of the cost of education, health and other services towards providing free education to primary school children and subsidising secondary education and health services. This policy shift can be linked directly to improved revenue collection by the government.⁷

The Kenyan government has made enormous progress in fiscal transparency over the last two years, but there is still much further to go. According to the IMF, many longstanding fiscal deficiencies remain.⁸ Kenya's score on the 2008 Open Budget Index (OBI) of the International Budget Partnership was 57 per cent.⁹ The OBI concluded:

*'Access to the highly detailed budget information needed to understand the government's progress in undertaking a specific project or activity remains somewhat limited... despite the fact that Kenya has codified the right to access government information into law...'*¹⁰

Greater transparency is essential to improving governance in Kenya and the media has an important role to play in this. The media can be an independent actor¹¹ in the development arena, reporting on government activities, demanding greater public engagement and consultation between state and citizens, scrutinising public policies and generating debate amongst all stakeholders.¹² Although a relatively young industry, the Kenyan media has shown that it has growing capacity in these roles.

3

The debate over the contribution of tax to poverty reduction and growth has also heated up as a result of NGOs' and civil society organisations' efforts to expose the size of capital flight to tax havens around the world. According to the Tax Justice Network, developing countries lose revenues far greater than annual aid flows. See <http://tinyurl.com/9jlsk>

4

OECD-DAC (2008) *Governance, taxation and accountability: issues and practices* Paris: OECD

5

'How does taxation affect the quality of governance?' IDS policy briefing, issue 34, March 2007. Sue Unsworth (2006) 'Getting better governance: insights from new research' in *Trocaire Development Review*, p20

6

As note 5, p21

7

See Attiya Waris et al (August 2009) 'Taxation and state building in Kenya: enhancing revenue capacity to advance human welfare' in Tax Justice Country Report Series: Tax Justice Network

8

IMF (2008) *Fiscal Transparency Module of the Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC)*, cited by eStandards Forum (2009) 'Code of Good Practices on Transparency in Fiscal Policy', Kenya. <http://tinyurl.com/37q24c3>

9

Open Budget Index (OBI), International Budget Partnership, 2008

10

As note 9

11

The media is also susceptible to a range of influences including commercial incentives and political pressures

12

'At the heart of change: the role of communication in sustainable development' Panos London, 2007



Pauline Wanjiku and her bored two-year-old daughter watch the nightly news. 62 per cent of urban households in Kenya own a TV according to an Intermedia survey.

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The Kenyan media

In the last 15 years, the Kenyan economy and commercial media sector have thrived. According to the BBC World Service Trust, the Kenyan media has become increasingly assertive and confident, playing a major role in mediating relationships between citizens and state.¹³ A 2008 policy briefing from the trust noted that the Kenyan media is currently one of the 'most respected, thriving, sophisticated and innovative in Africa'.¹⁴

*'[T]he media has been seen nationally and internationally as a principal indicator of the democratic vitality of Kenya. [It] has been at the forefront of moves to transform Kenya from a one-party state to multiparty democracy; it has gained a reputation for exposing corruption and acting as a vigorous forum for public debate; it is seen as a guardian of the public interest against overweening state power.'*¹⁵

The Kenyan media takes many forms and reaches into rural and urban, rich and poor households alike, according to a recently published Intermedia survey.¹⁶ The survey found that radio is the most widely available medium, reaching directly into more than 90 per cent of urban Kenyan homes and 84 per cent of rural homes. Meanwhile, 62 per cent of urban and 29 per cent of rural Kenyans own a TV, and many Kenyans prefer to use television or radio as their main news and information source. By contrast, only 56 per cent of respondents read a newspaper for their weekly news. In rural areas, this figure is 29 per cent.

When asked why they did not read a newspaper, many respondents cited cost or the inability to read or understand newspapers.¹⁷ In rural areas, lack of availability was also cited as a key factor. Newspapers are more widely read in the capital, Nairobi, than anywhere else, and are more likely to be read by men with formal, mostly secondary, education. The survey found that 70 per cent of capital city dwellers had read a newspaper in the preceding week.¹⁸

Kenyan citizens are not only increasingly reliant on the media for information, but also invest it with greater credibility than almost any other source of information from any other institution. According to the Intermedia survey, 91 per cent of respondents trust the media as an institution. In sharp contrast, 44 per cent trust national government.¹⁹

13

'The Kenyan 2007 elections and their aftermath: the role of media and communication' Policy Briefing No 1, BBC World Service Trust, April 2008

14

As note 13, p3. The report also notes that certain elements of the media lack the skills to moderate debate. Some talk shows on vernacular radio stations, for example, were accused of inciting race hatred especially during the violence that swept the country following the 2007 elections

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As note 13, p3

16

'Information at the grassroots: analyzing the media use and communication habits of Kenyans to support effective development', AudienceScapes Africa Development Research Series: Kenya. Intermedia, March 2010

17

This is despite the fact that Kenya has a relatively high literacy rate, standing at around 87 per cent in 2008, up from 74 per cent in 2004. See <http://data.worldbank.org/country/kenya>

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As note 16

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As note 16. This result may have been affected by the fact that the survey was undertaken shortly after the 2007 elections and the ensuing violence that erupted around the country

Coverage of tax and governance issues in the media

The relationship between public spending and taxation, and other tax-related governance issues, has achieved limited coverage in the Kenyan media. However, corruption has achieved considerable and wide coverage, undoubtedly due to its perceived seriousness among the Kenyan population: 91 per cent of respondents to the Intermedia survey consider corruption to be a serious problem in the country.²⁰

The case of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is a good example of how the media has exposed corrupt practices among MPs and public officials. The CDF was established by the Kenyan government in 2003 through the CDF Act. The goal was decentralised government funding.²¹ Specifically, decentralised funds were established to increase community participation in local decision-making and enhance government service delivery, accountability and transparency.²²

The fund targets all constituency-level development projects, particularly those aiming to combat poverty at the grass roots, and seeks to control imbalances in regional development.²³ Three-quarters of the fund is allocated equally amongst 210 constituencies. This amount grew from US\$19 million in 2003/04 to US\$149 million in 2007/08.²⁴ Initially, the fund was celebrated as one of the most remarkable developments in post-independence Kenya in its capacity to distribute public money more successfully. But it soon became clear that things were not what they seemed. NGOs began trying to investigate the fund's activities as early as 2005, but struggled to get hold of important project documents.²⁵ Not until 2007 were social audits of some of the constituencies' CDF activities successfully completed, uncovering a range of inconsistencies and irregularities that were widely reported in the press²⁶ and which led to many MPs losing their seats in the 2007 elections.²⁷ Reports of mismanagement, unfinished or ghost projects and the disappearance of cash have been reported in the national press and continue to make the news.²⁸

The Kenyan press has therefore played an important role as watchdog over the CDF, not only reporting on corruption but also providing a vital platform for debate about its role and function, and the importance of citizen engagement in defining development priorities. In some constituencies, citizens did not participate in the fund because they did not know it existed. Where constituents were aware of the CDF, some thought that MPs' money, rather than tax revenue, funded the projects.²⁹

Clearly the Kenyan media is already playing an important role in generating debate around government activities and the acquisition and spending of public money, but it has yet to scrutinise and debate the relationship between public spending (including corrupt spending) and taxation. Generating debate over this issue is important for Kenya's development and for the democratic process.

Many journalists are themselves unaware of the relationship between public spending and taxation. They have a limited understanding of how taxation works, and what the key issues are for Kenyans regarding tax and governance. It is for these reasons that a workshop was organised to bring researchers and experts in tax and governance together with journalists, to improve coverage and debate of these issues in the media.

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As note 16

21

'Decentralized funds' Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), 2006

22

As note 21, p1

23

As note 21, p3

24

Roxana Gutiérrez-Romero (2010) 'Decentralization, Accountability and the 2007 MPs Elections in Kenya', CSAE WPS/2010-09, Department of International Development, University of Oxford, p6

25

'Social audits in Kenya: Budget transparency and accountability' International Budget Partnership, 2008

26

See Robert Ochoki Nyamori (2009) 'Making development accountable: a critical analysis of systems of accounting and accountability for the Constituency Development Fund in Kenya' in *Journal of Accounting and Organisational Change*, vol 5, no 2, pp197–227

27

International Budget Partnership, as note 25

28

See Robert Ochoki Nyamori, as note 26, and newspaper articles below

29

See Robert Ochoki Nyamori, p212, as note 26

The Relay programme approach

Relay is a programme of activities operating across the worldwide Panos network of independent institutes. Its broad aim is to improve the communication of research through the media. Relay has been operating for more than five years, and over this time has developed an in-depth understanding of the opportunities for and obstacles to communicating research through the media in the countries where it operates.³⁰ The underlying constraint is communication – how journalists and researchers communicate with each other, so that they can collaborate to improve the media coverage of research.

One of the main challenges that journalists face in reporting on research is their lack of confidence to report on new and potentially complex subjects, as well as their limited knowledge of development issues and how they affect people's lives. In-depth understanding of many development issues requires a level of technical training that most journalists do not have. However, they do not necessarily need this to produce a story which can both inform and engage their audiences. What journalists do need is enough understanding of the subject area, combined with the confidence to ask the right questions of the right people, so they can communicate key messages to the population at large. Relay trains journalists in these areas.³¹

On the research side, there are also a number of challenges. The first is researchers' lack of understanding about how to communicate their findings clearly to non-specialist audiences such as journalists. There is a widespread belief among researchers that journalists are at fault when they fail to understand detailed research on a new subject area, when this is often simply a problem of communication. Researchers also frequently do not trust journalists to report accurately on their research. Whatever the source of the problem, these beliefs and practices create mistrust between the two groups.

Alvin Mosioma of the Tax Justice Network (right) talks to editor and facilitator Kwamchetsi Makokha at the Relay workshop. The Relay programme aims to improve communication between researchers and journalists.

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The Relay programme has gained insights from a range of country contexts and research themes including TB in Zambia, conflict in Northeast India and land rights in Uganda

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Relay's media briefing 'Reporting research' gives guidance to journalists on using research in news stories and features. 'Reporting research: Using evidence for effective journalism', 2008. This and other resources are available on the Panos London website at www.panos.org.uk/relay



Panos London produced a media briefing on tax and governance for use during the workshop in Kenya, as well as more widely for other journalists writing about taxation and development.

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Researchers also have limited understanding of how the media works: that it is primarily concerned with what audiences want to read and hear, and that it operates to short deadlines. This is almost directly at odds with the way many research organisations operate, and these differences can lead to a mutual lack of professional trust. Researchers often think they have a better idea of what journalists should report on than the journalists themselves, but this is not always the case. It is a journalist's job to understand their audience and make research newsworthy.

Relay works to break down these misunderstandings and to address this lack of trust, and supports journalists and researchers to communicate better with each other. This is a prerequisite for getting research into the media.

Relay adopts a number of different tools and approaches to overcome these challenges, including:

- publications for journalists and researchers to support them to communicate research
- media scans and stakeholder mappings of research issues in target countries
- workshops to train journalists and researchers, and build relationships between them
- fellowships for journalists, including editorial mentoring to report research
- multi-stakeholder forums to bring together researchers, media, civil society and other actors to promote improved reporting on research.

In Kenya, a media briefing and six feature stories on tax and governance were produced ahead of the workshop.³² The workshop brought together researchers, journalists and CSOs who conduct research and delivered a number of sessions to build relationships, skills and commitment to better reporting about research on tax and governance. This was followed up with a fellowship programme for selected journalists. The remainder of this paper describes how these activities were implemented and their results.

³²

'Tax matters: a media guide to research on taxation and good governance' Panos London media briefing, 2009. Relay also commissioned journalists from Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and Ghana to produce six Panos global features on tax issues. These and other resources are available on the Panos London website, at www.panos.org.uk/relay

Organising the workshop

Panos Eastern Africa and Panos London worked with two main partners to convene a workshop for researchers, CSOs and Kenyan media representatives at Lake Naivasha in Kenya on 15–17 November 2009. The first of these partners was CommGAP, a global programme at the World Bank which promotes the use of communication in governance reform programmes. The second partner was the Centre for the Future State (CFS), based at the Institute of Development Studies, UK. The CFS conducts research on governance, with a focus on the central role the interaction between state and society plays in constructing effective, accountable public institutions. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) and CommGAP provided funding for the workshop.

The purpose of the workshop was to build the capacity of all three groups – researchers, media and CSOs – to interact productively to increase coverage of tax and governance issues in the Kenyan media. Another workshop aim was to help establish a forum or network of collaborators in the East Africa region to assure continued debate and coverage of these issues.

Selection of participants

Relay's aim was to invite journalists from different media types and platforms who would approach the issues of tax and governance in different ways and could reach a wide range of audiences. A balance of print, radio and TV journalists was selected. Participants included men and women, Nairobi-based and provincial media, and selected community and urban radio stations. The journalists were approached through their editors. One of the main attractions for journalists attending this workshop was the offer to work and train with one of the top newspaper editors in the country.

Relay invited 20 journalists to attend the workshop. These journalists had demonstrated an interest in research, and some had already produced research-based media content. Roughly a third had already participated in Relay activities. A scan of Kenyan media coverage identified additional journalists with a nascent interest in governance issues.

The make-up of the final participants showed a dominance of the large newspapers and TV networks alongside a select number of smaller community and urban radio stations. Journalists came from each of the following:

Four daily national newspapers:

- *Daily Nation*, the most widely read daily in the country with a 75 per cent market share
- *The Standard*, the second most popular daily, and the oldest newspaper in Kenya
- *Business Daily*, the sister publication of the *Daily Nation*, focusing on finance and business
- *The Star*, a full-colour tabloid, mainly providing coverage of, and gossip about, Kenya's public figures.

Four national TV stations:

- Citizen TV, a national station with broad geographical coverage
- KTN, a national TV station owned by the Standard Group, popular in urban areas
- NTV, a national TV station owned by the Nation Group, popular in urban areas
- K24 TV, a news channel for Nairobi and the surrounding areas.

Four regional and community radio stations:

- Kass FM, which broadcasts in the Kalenjin language and is currently the leading radio station in the Rift Valley, reaching about 4.5 million listeners daily
- Ghetto Radio, which targets youth aged up to 24 and gives voice to those who have grown up in the slums
- Milele FM, which broadcasts in KiSwahili, and is popular for its African music
- Frontier Radio, an Islamic radio station in the Northeast Province of Kenya based in Garissa. It is a partner of the Voice of America and broadcasts in Somali, English and KiSwahili.

Two members of the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network (PAJAN)³³ also attended. PAJAN is a media organisation which offers a range of services, including training for radio journalists.

In addition, the CFS identified a number of key researchers and civil society activists in Kenya who were interested and active in the field of tax and governance and invited them to participate in the workshop. These included the Tax Justice Network, the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), the National Taxpayers' Association (NTA), the Centre for Governance and Development (CGD), the Kenya Alliance of Resident Associations (KARA), the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and Kenya College of Accountancy University (KCAU).

A man on his lunchbreak reading the newspaper with the Nairobi business district in the background. Newspapers are more widely read in urban areas.

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The Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network operates in Northeast Kenya. It holds workshops for multiple actors, including the media, to discuss issues of pastoralism and peace. It also runs training workshops for journalists (particularly radio journalists) to report on these issues

The workshop sessions



A woman sells vegetables in Kibera slum, in Kenya's capital, Nairobi. The effect of corruption on people's livelihoods, especially those of poorer people, was one of the topics discussed at the workshop.

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The workshop opened with a keynote address from Professor Mick Moore from the CFS who explained the significance of taxation and its effects on governance. He summarised the main issues associated with development, and tax and governance, and spoke about how the international agenda is starting to shift – as well as the media's increasing role in reporting on this topic. Once the context had been set, the objectives of the workshop were discussed and reviewed with the participants. This was followed by a short discussion about under-reported tax and governance issues. Issues raised in this discussion included:

- the need for more in-depth reporting on the budget and more comparative analysis and questions about how budgetary changes affect people's livelihoods
- how corruption affects people's livelihoods, including whether it is the poor who pay when someone steals from the public purse, and how reporters can help to present the human dimension of corruption
- building awareness of who pays tax, and who knows they are paying tax.

Four separate workshop sessions followed this general discussion:

- the ice-breaker – building understanding between researchers and journalists
- finding the story – editorial mentoring
- 'Research Cafés' – communicating research to non-specialist audiences
- practice interviews and reflection – building skills and confidence in interviewing techniques.

The following sections describe the rationale behind each workshop methodology and the results of the sessions.

The ice-breaker

Journalists and researchers are invited to participate in one of Relay's workshops based on some evidence of their own interest in improving communication of research through the media. Experience shows that a basic commitment to research communication is necessary for the workshop sessions to achieve positive results.

In the ice-breaker, journalists are given open, but managed, space to state their frustrations and concerns about researchers, and vice versa. Each group discusses separately what annoys them most about the other. The discussion is then opened up and each professional group is given the opportunity to respond to the other's views. Both professional groups are able to see that each has a unique role to play, and that they can work together in putting research on key development issues into the public domain. This process begins to break down much of the mistrust that exists between these groups, providing an opening for them to work more closely together in the future.

These sessions need to be skilfully facilitated to ensure that views are aired in a non-confrontational way. The aim is to foster understanding and openness, rather than forcing agreement on particular issues.

‘Lack of knowledge among journalists of the research issues means they often pick the “wrong” story from research.’

Researchers reporting back at the ice-breaker session

‘Researchers want you to go with what they say; they don’t leave space for other opinions and views, but the nature of journalism is to get different views.’

Journalists reporting back at the ice-breaker session

The workshop session

In the Kenyan ice-breaker session, journalists’ main concern was that they did not know how to assess the credibility of research and found the wide variety of research methods confusing. Research into one subject area can produce many research results, each pointing to very different conclusions, and journalists were not sure how to make sense of these conflicting results. They also expressed doubts that researchers had gone into the field to authenticate their findings. The researchers, in return, were aware that credibility was an issue and acknowledged the lack of quality control in their sector. The credibility of research is an ongoing issue and one on which Relay provides guidance to journalists, including practical guidelines in sourcing research from accredited journals, institutions and organisations.

The researchers had one main issue with the journalists, which was not surprising: they did not trust journalists to report accurately on research. The journalists were already aware of this lack of trust.

The researchers highlighted a number of reasons for this suspicion. First, they thought that journalists often selected the ‘wrong’ story from their research and left out important details. Researchers also said that having sought information and research results, journalists often went to other sources, such as politicians, who might refute researchers’ claims simply to pursue their own agenda. Researchers also claimed that journalists would, at times, go to people who did not know what they were talking about and report on that rather than focus on research evidence. They suggested that journalists should be more strategic about who they consulted and how they assessed information.

Journalists claimed that they looked for human interest angles, and that what researchers thought was the story was often not of interest to audiences. They stated that their job was to include as many different views as possible, including those of policymakers, but they also agreed that they would trust someone who had been researching an issue for many years as an expert.

Another complaint from researchers was that journalists were generally not well informed and wanted researchers to ‘babysit’ them through a story. Journalists responded that they could not compete with experts who had been working on the same issue for many years. As one trainer pointed out, ‘journalists will be working on tax and governance one day and on healthcare the next, and corruption and transportation the next week’. A journalist just needs to know enough to ask the right questions of the right people.

The session allowed for very frank and open sharing of perspectives between the two groups. Both groups were able to air their frustrations, and some misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations about the professional function of the other group were revealed.

‘As a journalist, you can’t be a tax expert. Don’t try to be. Ask questions.’

Jaindi Kisero,
Editor-Mentor

Finding the story and ‘Research Cafés’

A major challenge for journalists is finding something newsworthy in research – a story their audiences can relate to. To do this, journalists need both a basic grasp of an issue and skills in drawing on research sources. Relay provides training in both.

In Panos’s experience, editorial mentoring is key to developing journalists’ skills and confidence. Relay establishes an editorial team ahead of each workshop, comprising a lead facilitator and two experienced editors.³⁴ This team works together to design workshop sessions. Each editor-mentor is responsible for specific journalists, providing suggestions and feedback to help each journalist develop a strong story idea over the course of the workshop. Participating journalists are also supported by Relay materials including media briefings.³⁵ Editor-mentors also sometimes play relevant radio features for group discussion and analysis.

Following the general introduction, ‘Research Cafés’ give researchers the opportunity to communicate their key messages to journalists and help journalists to develop their story ideas. These sessions provide valuable practical experience for all participants.

In the research cafés, researchers give presentations that are short and to the point, avoiding jargon and explaining technical terms. Researchers are given guidance and advice on preparing their presentations ahead of the workshop. The aim is to make researchers reflect on their ability to communicate key messages.

The workshop session

Tax is a complex area with legal, political, economic and social dimensions, many of which were new to participants. For the purposes of this workshop journalists were introduced to the issue of taxation, expressed in three simple but key questions:

- 1** How are taxes collected?
- 2** Are people fairly paying their share?
- 3** Are people getting value for their money?

Basic terms were reviewed and discussed, and journalists were invited to come up with story ideas. The session then moved into research cafés with four stations, each with a researcher presenting for 10 minutes on a particular tax theme. After visiting and asking questions at each station, journalists were asked to return with story ideas to share with the group.

Overall, researchers thought that about half of the research-based messages presented to the journalists were picked up and acted on. The main message they thought had been overlooked by journalists related to government accountability.

Journalists did not understand everything that had been presented to them, but were also looking for human interest angles that weren’t always apparent. It was evident that researchers needed to be clearer in their messages and journalists also needed more experience to identify the main messages. Subsequent practice interviews helped to address this training need (see below).

With mentoring support from editors, journalists were encouraged to crystallise issues into good story ideas and identify sources they could consult for further information and clarification.

³⁴

The editorial mentoring team for the Kenya workshop consisted of Kwamchetsi Makokha, independent media consultant, Jaindi Kisero, Managing Editor, Investigations and Economic Affairs at the *Daily Nation*, and Juliana Atemi, freelance editor, formerly of the African Woman and Child Feature Service

³⁵

See ‘Tax matters: a media guide to research on taxation and good governance’, as note 32

‘Media want to be babysat through things; researchers don’t have the time to do that.’

Researchers reporting back at the ice-breaker session

‘Researchers don’t understand our needs.’

Journalists reporting back at the ice-breaker session

Practice interviews and reflection

Journalists report that they easily become discouraged when a researcher becomes impatient because the journalist does not understand, or appear to understand, the researcher’s topic. Researchers can also get stage fright once the microphone or camera is directed at them.

Relay provides training for journalists to interview researchers, which helps them develop their understanding of complex issues, and builds their confidence in approaching researchers. In practice interview sessions, journalists and researchers get training in preparing for, and actually conducting, an interview.

Journalists and researchers are paired up to practise interview skills. Both the journalist and the researcher get an opportunity to see themselves on video to review their own performance.

Once each pair has been filmed, the entire group watches the interviews and provides feedback. In particular, comments are directed to:

- how successfully the journalists formulated their questions to elicit information
- how clearly researchers communicated key messages
- whether journalists asked questions that hit on what the researchers considered to be the critical issues
- whether both parties appeared confident and at ease.

The workshop session

In the session in Kenya, the journalists identified the researchers they wished to interview for their stories, and many had the chance to do a dry-run interview. This enabled them to revise their questions and answers before each pair had their interview filmed. Following the playback, a discussion ensued about journalists’ fear of asking stupid questions and researchers’ beliefs that journalists lacked both knowledge and interest. This debate was lively and both sides were frank about their motives and reasons for mistrust.

One researcher pointed out that journalists could be adversarial and manipulative, and ask leading questions. An editor responded that journalists needed to ask difficult questions, but also admitted that journalists sometimes misled deliberately to ensure they got the information they needed. She said that a journalist might set up an interview to talk about one issue with the intention of asking questions about an entirely different and more sensitive topic. Researchers pointed out that this led to mistrust and to many researchers refusing to talk to journalists.

One researcher concluded, ‘The thing that makes the biggest difference is when journalists seem to be interested. When they approach me saying that they want to find out more about my research and understand it, I am happy to be patient. It’s easier to be patient when someone is listening.’



Issa Hussein from the Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network practises interviewing Kenyan tax expert, Jack Ranguma.

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Overall results of the workshop

The findings of the workshop evaluation indicate that a great deal more understanding and awareness came about as a result of the tax and governance workshop in Kenya.³⁶ In a post-workshop survey, every journalist participant stated that their expectations of improving their skills in engaging with researchers, and having the opportunity to engage, interact and network with researchers, had been met. Most of the researchers agreed that their media engagement skills had also improved as a result of the workshop.

However, there are limitations to what can be achieved in two days, and not all of the issues that were identified during the workshop sessions were resolved by the end. In the evaluation questionnaire, journalists expressed appreciation for the interaction with, and expertise of, researchers but they still had questions about how to assess the credibility of research. Although researchers said that they had a better understanding of media intentions after the workshop, they were still unsure about the media's capacity to cover research accurately.

These responses indicate that each professional group had developed more respect for the other group as a result of the workshop, although clearly there is still work to be done to strengthen these new relationships. This underscores the importance of building on formal workshop sessions to strengthen new relationships and skills.

³⁶ Panos London workshop evaluation report. Unpublished report submitted to the World Bank CommGAP, 2 March 2010

‘The workshop helped me with the skills to report stories on taxation and governance from an informed point. However, I believe more training bringing on board more journalists and researchers will help. Fellowships for journalists are important to move the agenda forward.’

Jevans Nyabiage,
Daily Nation

What happened next?

The workshop's stated outcomes included improving coverage and debate on governance and taxation issues; establishing relationships between individual journalists and researchers; and building better links or creating a network among key stakeholders. There was immediate and longer-term follow up on each of these goals.

Improved media coverage of tax and governance issues

As described at the beginning of this case study, three articles were published in the Kenyan press in late 2009, immediately following the workshop.

- On 21 November, Kenfrey Kiberenge published a piece called ‘MPs and judges’ wealth a well guarded secret’ in *The Standard*.³⁷ This was based on interviews with academics that alleged that an initiative to publish wealth and tax commitments among MPs and judges was a waste of public money. It claimed that tax-related corruption was rife among the wealthiest 600,000 Kenyans, and that the initiative, which had been underway for seven years, was merely a publicity stunt.
- On 23 November, Jevans Nyabiage published a piece called ‘EPZs fail to drive growth of industries’ in the *Daily Nation*.³⁸ He used a study by ActionAid and an interview with Professor Mick Moore from the CFS to allege that some firms in Kenya were significantly reducing their tax bills by taking advantage of the lower taxes offered in ‘special economic zones’ or ‘export processing zones’.
- On 2 December, Allan Odhiambo’s article – ‘Voters put MPs on a short leash through CDF’ – appeared in the *Business Daily*.³⁹ This piece brought in interviews with two researchers present at the workshop and a research report recently published by an international research programme consortium, Improving Institutions for Pro-Poor Growth (IIG), to scrutinise the use of funds by the CDF (see page 6). The piece reported on the research, which showed that perceived corruption by MPs in relationship to the CDF strongly influenced the outcomes of the 2007 general election.

Each of the three journalists was subsequently awarded a Panos London media fellowship consisting of a commission to write a feature on tax and governance with mentoring support.⁴⁰ A fourth fellowship was awarded to radio journalist Pauline Oduor of Ghetto Radio. The radio feature focused on the impact of devolved funds (CDF), with a comparison between two poor urban neighbourhoods – Korogocho in Nairobi and Manyatta in Kisumu East.⁴¹

The three print journalists have since produced further articles (see facing page). They each drew on contacts made during the workshop in order to develop these pieces, and two reported sharing their contacts and what they had learned during the workshop with their colleagues.

Many – but not all – of these pieces refer explicitly to published research, and public reports and documents were regularly cited. Most of them have brought more awareness and focus to the relationship between tax revenue and public spending. Corruption in the activities of CDF continues to be of great interest to media audiences. Three of the four journalists awarded fellowships reported specifically on this issue.

³⁷ This can be viewed at:
<http://tinyurl.com/34s9fjb>

³⁸ This article can be viewed at
<http://tinyurl.com/384r32a>

³⁹ This article can be viewed at
<http://tinyurl.com/2vlwv7t>

⁴⁰ Relay also commissioned journalists from Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and Ghana to produce six features on tax issues prior to the workshop, see note 32

⁴¹ A CD of this feature was not available at the time of writing this case study. See www.ghettoradio.co.ke for more information on the station

Print news coverage produced since the end of the workshop

Jevans Nyabiage

'Sh500m lost in funds misuse',
Daily Nation, 5 April 2010.

<http://tinyurl.com/32w587w>

This piece refers to an audit carried out by the National Taxpayers' Association, published on 6 April, reporting on misuse of taxpayers' money.

Jevans Nyabiage

'Sh445m lost in CDF scandal',
Daily Nation, 6 April 2010.

<http://tinyurl.com/39q3bs9>

Using the now published National Taxpayers' Association Audit, Nyabiage reports on large losses to taxpayers because of unaccounted funds in the CDF.



Top: A screenshot from the *Daily Nation* of Jevans Nyabiage's article, 'Sh500m lost in funds misuse'.

Above: A screenshot from the *Business Daily* of Allan Odhiambo's article 'Poor management and corruption threaten future of devolved funds'.



Jevans Nyabiage

'Kenya to spend Sh156 billion on physical projects',
Daily Nation, 10 April 2010.

<http://tinyurl.com/2w76rhu>

This piece uses a Kenyan budget outlook paper to look at increases in government expenditure on infrastructure projects and the implications for taxpayers.

Jevans Nyabiage

'Kenya sued over Sh22bn as vultures move in for the kill',
Daily Nation, 17 May 2010.

<http://tinyurl.com/2w76rhu>

Citing various reports and statistics, Nyabiage focuses on the taxpayers' bill as a result of high-level corruption.

Jevans Nyabiage

'Local councils starved of cash as millions stolen',
Daily Nation, 29 May 2010.

<http://tinyurl.com/33lp6m9>

Using a Ministry of Planning report, this piece looks at the loss of millions of taxpayers' shillings through theft and mismanagement of devolved funds.

Allan Odhiambo

'Poor management and corruption threaten future of devolved funds',
Business Daily, 6 April 2010.

<http://tinyurl.com/37h6gnh>

This piece uses a University of Oxford report to highlight wastage and corruption in the CDF involving taxpayers' money.

Allan Odhiambo

'New administrative structures present hope of improved grassroots growth',
Business Daily, 27 August 2010.

This piece reports on changes in the allocations of nationally raised revenues among Kenya's constituencies.

Kenfrey Kiberenge

'Uhuru to walk tightrope on budget',
The Standard, 6 June 2010.

<http://tinyurl.com/34rnszz>

This piece reports on loopholes in tax law and tax evasion in Kenya.

Two of the articles dig deeper into issues of tax evasion, an issue which to date appears to have had limited coverage in Kenya. Jevans Nyabiage's pieces continue to focus on public spending, but they draw attention to its relationship to tax-based revenue, drawing on a relationship formed at the workshop with National Coordinator of the National Taxpayers' Association.

One of the editors who supported the journalist fellows said of their achievements that 'training and especially the intense fellowship programme had a big impact on [the journalists] in terms of understanding the issues, expanding their knowledge and their network of sources. It created good foundations for them, especially for linking them up with ongoing research work and researchers.'

There is clearly further to go in terms of developing journalistic capacity to scrutinise Kenyan tax issues more deeply, and this requires further training and investment in fellowships. Mentoring, as Relay has found, is a resource-intensive activity, but also very effective in terms of developing individual skills.

Building relationships between journalists and researchers

Relay's approach emphasises building relationships between journalists and researchers, so that they continue to use one another as resources. Through face-to-face interaction, including less formally over lunches and dinners, a connection can be established. Each can explore what value the other might hold for them as a professional contact. They can also bond socially.

Feedback from the journalists who produced the most media coverage following the workshop reveals the value this had for them.

For example, Allan Odhiambo said, 'All my tax-related articles have received input especially from Jack Ranguma and Michael Otieno whom I met at the workshop and who have remained very helpful whenever I reached them for views and perspectives'.

Jevans Nyabiage said, 'Most of the contacts I made during the workshop have been essential in the tax and governance-related stories I have written, especially those from NTA, the Institute of Economic Affairs, KARA, Kenya Federation of Consumers and ActionAid Kenya.'

Developing an East African network for tax and governance

An important outcome of the workshop is that participants agreed to establish a network to promote public debate on tax and governance. This network, the East Africa Tax and Governance Network (EATGN), was initiated and discussed at the end of the workshop. Monthly steering committee meetings have taken place since then to develop the idea and make it concrete. Relay is providing input through Panos Eastern Africa, but network members are taking the lead on this and are learning as they go.

This is the first time that Relay has experimented with supporting the development of a network. Network members are working out how to organise themselves to achieve their goals and all the current indicators are that issues are being resolved pragmatically and that members are making progress towards achieving their aims. Network member the Centre for Governance and Democracy has pledged its own funding for another set of fellowships for promising journalists – providing one-on-one editorial mentoring and funds for travel to conduct interviews and investigate issues in more depth.

The network is now finalising a memorandum of association to formalise its constitution and is seeking further funding for its work. Relay also plans to undertake an evaluation of the forum and its activities in the near future.



The Kenyan media has the capacity to inform people, like Tom Ogwang at his stall, about who is paying taxes, and also to generate debate about what should be happening to those taxes.

SVEN TORFINN | PANOS PICTURES

'The workshop opened my eyes to the beauty of networking.'

Allan Odhiambo,
Business Daily

Conclusion

The Kenyan media has a strong and assertive presence and therefore has the capacity not only to inform people about who is paying taxes, but also to generate debate about what should be happening to these taxes, making the government more responsive and accountable to its citizens.

Relay's work begins from the premise that research on development issues can add depth and weight to what is being communicated to the wider public through the media. Research also allows for greater scrutiny of complex and technical issues such as taxation. In addition, researchers can help journalists make issues more relevant and meaningful to wider publics. As Relay's Regional Coordinator said in his opening remarks at the workshop:

'Through the media and collaboration with researchers, informed debate can be generated. Debate based on facts, debate and information [that] policymakers and leaders cannot easily refute or ignore. This helps to hold them to account. Research information and findings can help alter the course of the debate.'

But researchers, or communication staff acting on their behalf, need to be willing to work with journalists and allow them to find ways to communicate research findings to wider publics. Building trust in journalists' intentions to report accurately on research also requires the willingness of journalists to achieve this and to access appropriate training. This case study shows that a workshop, such as the one described in this paper, can begin to build the type of relationships that are needed for this to happen. But it is clear from the results observed in Kenya that this is only a beginning. More input is required to develop in-depth coverage and scrutiny of taxation, which can start to generate real debate.

Relay's interests are in seeing positive change result from improved media coverage and debate. It is also interested in seeing its workshop methods taken up and developed wherever there is a need.

The methodologies described in this case study work well in contexts such as Kenya, where the media has sufficient strength and capacity to develop more in-depth reporting skills. They can also work in less developed media contexts, where accurate and sensitive reporting on issues that journalists know little about is needed to effect change. For example, Relay has worked in Zambia to support accurate reporting on the spread and treatment of tuberculosis (TB) and stigma around the disease.⁴² The methodologies can also be adapted and applied in different country contexts, and for different issues. Relay is already successfully working in a very different context in South Asia, and finding ways to adapt the methods to meet the different needs and demands.

Relay's support for the development of a network for improving reporting on tax and governance is an experiment in the region. However, it holds enormous promise for embedding and sustaining these new relationships. The media coverage and debate on tax that has been generated as a result of the Relay workshop in Kenya is also a promising sign. The goal is that the enhanced knowledge and networks developed through the Relay workshop will lead to more constructive engagement between the Kenyan government and its citizens. This is a necessary precursor to better governance and improved outcomes for the people of Kenya.

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'Raising debate around TB and stigma in Zambia', Reporting research workshop 24–25 June 2009, TARGETS, Panos London, Panos Southern Africa.

Right: The methodologies in this case study can be adapted to other contexts, such as Zambia, where Relay worked on providing accurate reporting around tuberculosis (TB).

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Cover: Mombasa, Kenya. Locals read *The Standard* to find out news about a bomb attack that happened the day before in the city.

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The Relay programme works in developing countries to connect journalists and editors with researchers. It is implemented by the Panos Network around the world.

To find out more about the Relay programme go to www.panos.org.uk/relay



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