



Improving Governance through Transparency, Participatory Budgeting and Community Monitoring in two Municipalities in Cameroon

CSO:	Assembly of Youths for a Sustainable Environment and Development (ASYOUSED)
Years:	2010 – 2011 (phase 1) 2011 – 2012 (phase 2)
Country:	Buea Municipality and Tiko Municipality, Cameroon
Amount:	\$14,981 USD (phase 1) \$35,000 USD (phase 2)
Sector:	Governance: Improving Governance at Local, Municipal, State and National Levels: Budgeting

Corruption Problem:	Lack of Participatory Mechanisms, Transparency and Weak Council Oversight Facilitate and Reproduce Corruption at the Local Level.
Tools employed:	Capacity Building, Awareness Raising, Community Mobilization, Participatory Budgeting, M&E, Constructive Engagement, Champion, Participatory Planning, RTI, Citizen Monitoring

Decentralization works best when there is a robust legal framework, political will, clearly delineated responsibilities, accountability mechanisms and – most importantly – a shared vision of all actors involved as to how decentralization will contribute to achieving better governance results, improving the lives of ordinary citizens. Corruption impedes or completely prevents decentralization processes to bear any of the envisioned results.

“Our experience with the PTF projects highlighted two key lessons in the fight against corruption: focus on collaboration, not antagonism; and target systems, not individuals.”
Mr. Asah Azefor, Director of ASYOUSED

Assembly of Youth for a Sustainable Environment and Development (ASYOUSED) has successfully completed two transparency projects, aimed at empowering the Buea and Tiko municipalities in south-western Cameroon to reduce corruption and improve its governance outcomes at the local level. ASYOUSED empowered key stakeholders within the communities, council members and staff, citizens

and community organizations, to implement participatory budgeting mechanisms, monitor project cycles and work constructively with all stakeholders to curb corruption and make decentralization work.

Corruption Problem Addressed

One of the objectives in Cameroon’s 2006 decentralization strategy was to prevent continued embezzlement of development funds at the national level. Empowering local communities and their leaders, mayors and municipal council members, to better define, monitor and execute governmental service delivery at the community level was sought as a remedy. The devolution of fiduciary responsibilities however does not necessarily preclude corruption at the local level.

The history of local project identification and selection, a responsibility assigned to council members in all 33 municipal councils throughout south-western Cameroon, is laced with corruption and nontransparent processes. Factors that

contribute to the diversion and mismanagement of funds include the weak institutional position of often uninformed council members, the lack of participatory mechanisms and a lack of public oversight. Council administrative officers wield disproportionate discretion and are not held to account.

Actions Taken by ASYOUSED

ASYOUSED designed its project activities to empower council members and their constituents to make subsequent use of participatory decision-making tools in order to define, track and evaluate projects and the corresponding budgets. Raising awareness and building capacity of council members, administrative staff, citizens, the mayor and other stakeholders pivoted the local development process to be primarily community-driven. ASYOUSED was careful to frame the intervention in a non-threatening, genuinely constructive approach – concentrating on the empowerment of all stakeholders involved.

The first phase (2010) concentrated on the Buea council. The second phase (2011) built on the achievements in Buea and expanded the methodology to the neighboring Tiko municipality. During the second phase, ASYOUSED also supported the implementation of a formal tracking process (M&E) to monitor project implementation in Buea.

Among other activities, ASYOUSED

- organized workshops for at least 200 participants, including 77 councilors and 23 council administrative staff, individuals as well as numerous representatives of community-based organizations (CBOs) on topics such as project identification, mobilization, M&E, budgeting and contract management.

- facilitated, documented and evaluated the community mobilization efforts of councilors to their constituencies.
- organized peer-to-peer knowledge exchange between council members of the two municipalities.
- facilitated and supported the tracking of adopted council projects at the community level throughout.



Participants at the workshop on participation of the population in the project identification process with Tiko Council in July 2011

Impact and Results Achieved

The project successfully achieved its objectives, improving the community-driven selection and monitoring of projects at the local level.

First results point toward achievements in curbing administrative overreach, including reducing opportunities for embezzlement and intentional mismanagement. The project has furthermore succeeded in empowering key stakeholders to sustainably contribute to the definition and creation of better development outcomes.

Council members have embraced the process and other municipalities have expressed interest in the project, requesting ASYOUSED to support similar efforts. The mayor of Buea has expressed his



explicit support of the initiative and has started championing the replication of the Buea/Tiko project across other municipalities.

- ✓ 9 out of 21 Buea council projects in 2011 were selected based on citizen input.
- ✓ 8 out of 23 Tiko council projects in 2012 were community driven projects.
- ✓ Stakeholders produced a set of materials and guides to monitor and evaluate the project cycle in their municipalities based on their needs. This accomplishment allows for easy peer-to-peer replication of the approach to other communities.
- ✓ In both municipalities, the mayor has formally requested the continuation of the participatory project selection process. In Buea, he requested to codify the M&E system into Council rules.
- ✓ In Buea, the tracking of project funds led to the halt of one community project within five weeks from the starting date, proving the value of enhanced management oversight.

ASYOUSED, in cooperation with the councils, has interrupted, if not broken, a cycle of corruptive, closed practices and has opened the way for communities to have a voice in the projects they should benefit from.

Sustainability and Replication

Sustainability is ultimately the responsibility of council members and citizens. Programming a second phase in Buea and deepening the project tracking cycle has proven valuable to advance sustained empowerment. A third and last intervention in Buea and second intervention in Tiko would prove helpful to solidify the results and enable enlightened community leaders support

ASYOUSED in replicating the successful approach in other communities across south-west Cameroon.

Documentation

Project completion reports (PCRs) and Project completion assessments (PCAs) can be accessed at www.ptfund.org under the “Where-we-work” tab

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