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Akasa Afaifai: Improving Accountability in the Budget Implementation Process: A Case Study from Kano

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Background

Kano, located in the north of Nigeria, is the most populous state in the country. Its capital, the city of Kano, is the second largest city in Nigeria after Lagos and is the commercial hub for northern Nigeria. Despite early progress in sectors such as education and infrastructure, by the time Engr. Rabiu Kwankwaso was re-elected governor in 2011 (having lost second-term bids in 2003 and 2007), Kano State had high rates of youth unemployment and drug misuse, and had experienced huge declines in manufacturing output following the closure of many industries. Net enrollment in junior secondary school in 2010 had stagnated at twenty-four percent (UBEC 2010), and in 2013 the pregnancy-related mortality ratio was 576 deaths per 100,000 live births and the child mortality rate was 128 deaths per 1,000 live births (National Population Commission and ICF Macro 2014).

In this context of declining overall wellbeing, demands for reform to deliver good governance increased and citizens elected Kwankwaso. Desiring to be considered among the successful governors of the state, and with an eye for a higher political position, Kwankwaso was willing to create openings for reform in the state, including promoting transparency and accountability. The case study that follows describes one particular opening, in which Governor Kwankwaso published the minutes of the weekly governor's executive council meeting, which included the state's planned budget release. A local civil society organization, the center for Information Technology and Development (CITAD), with support from the Abuja-based center for Democracy and Development (CDD) and funding from the MacArthur Foundation and the National Endowment for Democracy, created a weekly radio program *Akasa Afaifai* (Hausa for "Let's Clarify Things Openly") to help disseminate information about the release in a comprehensible manner. The show played on independent radio, Freedom Radio, through 2014, and featured calls from citizens, as well as guests from government, civil society, and academe.

Methodology

The case study below draws from several information sources. First, we relied on extensive documentation created by officials of the government prior to leaving office. This document review gave us a clearer background of the context of the operation of the government and helped to develop questions we used to interview key actors. Second, we interviewed twelve people, listed in Table 1. These included seven people who served in the government, such as former Governor Kwankwaso himself, his commissioners, the accountant general, and other officials and aides of the government. We also interviewed five civil society activists, specifically those who took part in the radio program. Material from interviews is referenced by a number corresponding to Table 1. Third, we reviewed the topics and guests on all episodes of the *Akasa Afaifai* program, including several audio recordings of shows that were available, as well as associated social media posts. Table 2 lists all episodes of *Akasa Afaifai*, including the topic, the name of the guest, and their position. We identified the issues covered on the show that elicited a response from citizens, and ascertained the response, if any, from government.

Context and Triggers

Governor Kwankwaso was re-elected in 2011 on a platform that promised effective governance for the state following the previous regime, which was largely seen as uncoordinated and ineffective. Conscious of these promises and the opportunity offered by a second term, and also with an eye on higher political office, Kwankwaso sought to develop an impactful agenda.

His term began amidst increased concern about accountability and transparency in governance, particularly given allegations of corruption in the previous regime. The popular perception in the state was that the Shekarau administration (2003–2011) was ineffective in disciplining its commissioners, leaving accountability for those who had mismanaged resources in the hands of God. The public knew that the former governor had reportedly left a state debt of N77 billion (US\$200 million) alongside debts to hotels running into the millions of Naira, which was perceived as particularly scandalous for a religious man (Kwankwaso nd, 48). There were also reports of his administration using government agencies to siphon money. For instance, there were allegations that the administration used the Hisbah (responsible for enforcement of Sharia law) in return for political support from religious leaders. Furthermore, the number of ghost workers grew from about twenty-five thousand in 2003 to around forty-five thousand by 2013.¹

Kwankwaso's election was a welcome change for development partners. The previous regime had viewed development partners negatively, which also influenced popular opinion. This negative perception of development partners came from several sources. The first source was the scandal around Pfizer's testing of a new meningitis drug, *Trovan*, without due procedure and attention to ethical considerations. As a result, five children died and others suffered deformities. The state government fought a spirited battle with the company to compensate the victims, but the overall experience made citizens and government apprehensive about outside organizations. The second source of negative perceptions about development partners was people's suspicion about polio immunization, further amplified by Governor Shekarau's public opposition to immunization campaigns. This climate of suspicion made it difficult for development partners to engage fully with government, especially regarding governance. For example, a medical team from the USA brought to the state by a foundation was unceremoniously expelled. That Kwankwaso was willing and ready to embrace development partners encouraged them to partner with reform-minded state administrators.

Development partners also helped to enhance the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) and popularized the concept of independent tracking of government programs as a key accountability tool. For example, the European Union (EU) funded a project through CDD, while DFID funded the State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) and a complementary civil society-based project, the State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI). These programs contributed to the building of government-civil society working relations. SAVI was set up to work with civil society groups, media and legislators as demand-side partners, while its sister intervention, SPARC, worked with the executive, spread across key ministries such as budget and planning, education, and health as supply-side partners. The interventions by both SAVI and the EU trained local CSOs in the state on budget analysis and tracking/monitoring, which helped increase civil society organizations' capacity to demand accountability.

Coordination between Kwankwaso and donors began before the governor assumed office. A few days after his election, Kwankwaso held a day-long interactive session with development practitioners (including civil society actors). As he explained, “We held a meeting in Abuja with stakeholders and people from all walks of life. [United States Agency for Development], [Millennium Development Goals], organizations and ministries that are willing to support Kano State to solve its problems of water supply, problem of education, health, sanitation” (Mohammad 2011). This meeting allowed development partners to understand the thinking of the governor and to see what areas they could support. They also advised him on areas of reform that the government could initiate.

Taking a cue from this, CDD in partnership with CITAD designed a project entitled “Promoting Democratic Accountability in Kano State.” The specific objectives of the intervention were to:

- Raise citizens’ awareness of the policy pronouncement and commitments of the Kano State governor in the 2012 budget;
- Increase and galvanize citizens’ agency and influence in engaging the state government to promote good governance in Kano State; and
- Synthesize citizens’ opinions and perceptions regarding the delivery of services and periodically share those with the governor.

The intervention’s main goal was to empower citizens to engender participation through the dissemination of information using a multiplicity of channels. The Akasa Afaifai radio program was the key element of the project that CDD in partnership with CITAD implemented in Kano State from 2011 to approximately 2014. The project was supported by the National Endowment for Democracy in the first year and subsequently by SAVI in the second year and is described in greater detail below.

The Opening from Above

The Kwankwaso regime right from its inception initiated a series of actions that lowered the costs for civil society engagement. These included publishing the minutes of the weekly executive council meeting, supporting civil society monitoring of key government programs, and facilitating community monitoring of implementation of government programs. In addition, Kwankwaso took a number of other steps that contributed towards good governance but did not specifically enable collective action.

First and foremost, Kwankwaso enabled citizen oversight by publishing the minutes of executive council meetings that revealed the planned weekly budget release. Specifically, the governor published “the weekly update on the approved funds for various projects in the state. The update came on every Wednesday during State Executive Council Meeting and [was] published on some national dailies and relevant government websites.”² Publication provided more than just release amounts; it also included details about what projects were approved by the council, at what cost, under what terms, and at what location. Such information made it much easier to monitor. A civil society activist described this shift as a major advancement in promoting

transparency and accountability because until then, “Getting finance-related information from state governments require[d] a strong advocacy, sometimes require[d] the use of [freedom of information] act.”³

Kwankwaso also set up an independent mechanism to monitor the implementation of key government programs, the first time the state established such a mechanism. Since at least 2007 a number of civil society organizations, including CITAD, had been involved in monitoring the implementation of government projects. One of the key challenges they faced was access to information in the possession of government officials necessary to monitor the projects implemented. Kwankwaso set up the office of the Special Advisor to the Governor on Civil Society in order to work with civil society organizations to get an independent assessment of the implementation of key government projects, notably the women empowerment project and the vocational training centers. As a result, civil society felt empowered by government to carry out what it had always wanted to do. The fact that government also provided some support in the form of small funds to facilitate travel and training of field monitors not only reduced the cost but also the risks of collective action, given that state-level involvement meant government officials at lower levels would have to respond to civil society requests for information.

In addition to civil society monitoring, Kwankwaso also set up community relation committees to provide oversight of community-level implementation of government programs. These committees were created by the governor, and consisted of community representatives, including leaders of both the ruling and opposition parties, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and elites at the community level.⁴ Committees were established in all forty-four local government areas of the state and the supervisory committee at the state level that carry out renovations of old structure and conduct school programs (Tilde 2012). These committees were close to the heart of the governor: “We put best eleven in each ward of the state, and membership included the chairmen of both the ruling and opposition parties in each community, any serving senator, commissioner, judge from the area. We allowed them to address community problems at that level.”⁵

Most broadly, the governor’s articulation and popularization of an agenda for his second term, alongside government willingness to engage the public around it, created a climate conducive to citizen action. Knowing the governor’s agenda gave clear ideas to civil society on the intentions of government, allowing civil society to develop mechanisms to follow the implementation of the agenda and providing a basis upon which to not only engage the government, but also to hold the government accountable. In developing this agenda, the governor solicited and received input from local civil society organizations and some development partners.

Kwankwaso also took a number of other steps to reduce corruption and improve governance that did not involve enabling collective action. These included transferring oversight of local government salaries from the local to the state level, abolishing the security vote (a large slush fund controlled by the governor) from the state budget, eliminating 8,000 ghost workers from the civil service through the use of biometric data, minimizing opportunities for budget padding within state ministries,⁶ and decreasing leakages in internal revenue collection.⁷ Overall, these actions solidified Kwankwaso’s reputation as a reformer, endeared the administration to the people of Kano, and increased overall trust in government.

Not surprisingly, many of these reforms were met with resistance. Opposition to the reform agenda came from three distinct, but linked centers. First, there were those among the political class within government who felt that some of the elements of the reform could undermine

their capacity to seek and retain power. As one civil society activist put it, “Internally, there are number of politicians not happy with reform agenda because of the stringent adherence to the set reforms by the governor, and some they felt isolated not benefiting financially as business as usual in Nigerian politics.”⁸ As one of the permanent secretaries observed, “So, most of the reforms were his [Kwankwaso’s] idea. Some of the people in government don’t even know how run the government. He was the one planning and pushing for the implementation.”⁹

The second source of opposition came from civil servants who had been benefiting from opaque running of the civil service. As a former Commissioner of Justice and attorney general observed, “there were challenges mostly from the civil servants who were adamant to change, and when the reforms came they were not happy.”¹⁰ A third source of opposition to reform was the business class, who saw some elements of the reform, such as providing information to CSOs and answering their questions, as making businesses answerable to non-governmental actors alongside greater demands for accountability.

Amplifying the Opening from Above, Catalyzing the Response from Below

Akasa Afaifai both extended the opening created by the publishing of the governor’s executive council’s weekly minutes, as well as facilitated the response from citizens. Akasa Afaifai aired weekly on Sundays from 11 am to noon on Freedom Radio, the first independent radio station in Kano. Although the overall project that funded the program deployed other communication tools including social media, radio was key because of its reach and accessibility to ordinary citizens—at the time, the radio station commanded a listenership of about five million people. In addition, radio had a high credibility rating among the citizens and therefore was an effective means of communication.¹¹

Radio advertisements for the program were broadcast 60 times in the two weeks prior to Akasa Afaifai’s launch (CDD 2013b, 45). The jingle, aired in English and Hausa, was as follows:

As a citizen, you have the right to participate in budget process. In order to address the perennial problems of poverty, unemployment, infrastructural decay, and amongst all, growing insecurity, we need to proactively participate in the budget process so that priorities of government are set in tandem with our needs, as well as to ensure adequate implementation of public spending. center for Democracy and Development (CDD), in partnership with center for Information Technology and Development (CITAD), bring to you “A Kasa FaiFai” program on this station, every Sunday by 11am, to voice your concerns on issues around budget in Kano State. Our collective effort through constructive debate and discussion will strengthen participatory budgeting and public accountability. Please, visit www.knbudgetresponse.org, <http://www.facebook.com/KanoStateBudgetResponse>, and follow us on twitter @KanoBudget. For further details and send comments to 08134232180 or knbudgetresponse@gmail.com.

Each program featured a discussion on a specific aspect of the budget with a knowledgeable person or key actor in the sector for about 30 minutes. These guests came from government for approximately one fifth of episodes, civil society for one third of episodes, and elsewhere (e.g., academe) for one quarter of episodes (see Table 2). Other shows featured solely audience participation. The remaining 25 minutes of each show was reserved for questions and comments by the listeners as well as responses from the guests. Questions and comments were handled live via phone to the radio station as well as through the program's social media handles (Facebook or SMS) as well as email. The show was anchored by CITAD with support from a staff member of Freedom Radio.

To extend the opening from above, Akasa Afaifai brought government officials to speak on their specific mandates, as shown in Table 2. For the most part, CITAD invited these individuals to appear on the show, which sometimes took lot of advocacy. In a few instances, however, government officials requested to appear on the show, as with the management of the state-owned North West University and the Commissioner for Budget and Planning. The participation of government officials was both an indication of the willingness of the government to engage with non-state actors as well as an attempt to seize the opportunity of the radio show platform to reach out to large number of citizens to explain government policies.

Akasa Afaifai also brought experts who helped to interrogate government programs, thus allowing citizens to comprehend government policies, understand their weaknesses, strengths and gaps, and be able to frame demands to address negative consequences of such policies and programs.

To help catalyze a response from below to the government's opening, Akasa Afaifai also brought a number of civil society activists to make demands on government. Table 2 shows some of the civil society activists featured on the program. The program also allowed different CSOs an opportunity to share their experiences about tracking the implementation of government programs. As one CSO leader noted, "Akasa Afaifai was a good initiative that provide local citizens and civil society with an opportunity to know the budgeting processes and how they can give their inputs and influence its outcome."¹²

The program also allowed citizen voices to be heard as citizens were given time not only to ask questions of the guests, but also to make comments, sharing their observations and experiences with regards to government programs. There were also open editions devoted to harvesting the views of the listeners. In the open editions, the whole time was devoted to listening to what the audience had to say on the topic of the day. The views gathered from these editions populated the contents of the governor's letter, described below. Through these open editions, Akasa Afaifai consciously sought to build a culture of citizen voice by encouraging citizens to speak out and offer their opinions on governance issues in the state.

To amplify the voice emerging from the radio program, a summary of each edition was posted on Facebook as well as Twitter. The two CSO partners managing the program, CDD and CITAD, provided a simplified version of the budget release, translated into Hausa, and blasted out by SMS. They also set up a website, Kanobudgetresponse.ng, where the recordings of the program were uploaded. The site also hosted the state budgets, the minutes of the executive council meetings, and other relevant documents.¹³ Between June and September 2013, an average of 90 persons per day visited/saw the Kano State Budget Response Facebook page, or saw one of its posts in a news feed or ticker, and at that time, the Twitter handle (@KanoBudget) had over 250 followers (CDD 2013c).

In addition to the radio program, the partners (CDD and CITAD) also deployed what they termed the governor's letter. This quarterly letter contained summaries of key issues discussed on Akasa Afaifai and recommendations arising from the discussion for the governor's attention and action. In addition to sending the letter to the governor, it was also published in the media as well as publicized on social media to elicit independent action by citizens and citizens' groups on the same issues. For example, the partners used the letter to communicate the outcome of their study on the government's youth empowerment initiatives (CDD 2013, 8).

To ensure that CSOs were able to capitalize and leverage the openings provided by the government, the partners (CDD, CITAD and later SAVI) organized a series of training and capacity building programs for CSOs to both understand the budget and its implementation as well as to track its implementation. They also provided training on the use of social media for advocacy.

Outcomes Associated with Akasa Afaifai

A number of the issues discussed on Akasa Afaifai led to responses by government to the voice of civil society. These include increased citizen participation in budgeting, the release of funds to complete a road project, addressing problems with a vocational training program, the increase in fees at the state-owned North West University, and several other smaller examples.

Generally speaking, Akasa Afaifai enabled CSO access to critical information that facilitated evidence-based advocacy. It also allowed activists to directly ask government officials questions. For example, as one CSO activist pointed out, "We engaged in many phone calls during the program to answer some question and [asked government] to share [information about] project under construction."¹⁴ The program also made government listen to the complaints of communities and respond to them. Generally civil society activists found the government to be responsive to demands by citizens. One of the civil society activists engaged with the government at the time averred that, "The government was quite responsive to citizens' demand. For example, there was a clamor by students on scholarship payment, which the government paid at the tail end of its administration."¹⁵

In addition to receiving such inputs as the governor's letter from the Akasa Afaifai partners, the government also acted on feedback collated from social media. As the Director of Press of the Governor said,

We also used the social media intensively. When I was using Facebook, many people created Facebook account and sent friends request to me because they believe first in the morning they read something about the governor and the government from my Facebook. And I was printing the social media feedback and give it to the governor. He used that to make changes in the government and react to many things at times, and intimidates the commissioners with the social media feedbacks.¹⁶

Most directly relating to transparency and accountability as well as citizen participation in budget processes, civil society organizations had been calling on the State Assembly to begin to hold

public hearings during their consideration of the state budget proposal. Such hearings were not held in Kano State and had been vehemently resisted by past state legislatures, despite becoming common at federal levels and in other states. After several advocacy¹⁷ visits to the State Legislature, the Akasa Afaifai partners convinced members of the House of Assembly to feature on the radio program, having assured them they would not be exposed to ridicule. During a show in early November 2013, they responded to questions on the supplementary budget as well as on the need for holding a public hearing on the budget. At the end of December that year, following the presentation of the budget for 2013 by the governor, the chairman of the Assembly Appropriation Committee promised to conduct a public hearing on the budget.

In late January 2014, the State House of Assembly for the first time conducted a public hearing on the proposed state budget. The State Legislature received the experience positively. Indeed, a member of the House Committee on Appropriation not only commended the Akasa Afaifai radio program but also confirmed that it played a major role in getting the Assembly to conduct the public hearing. In his words, "Because of your program and similar demands, for the first time in the history, the Kano State House of Assembly has agreed to conduct a public hearing for CSOs and members of the public to contribute to the making of the budget before passing it into law."¹⁸

Ahead of the hearing, Akasa Afaifai conducted a special episode on the public hearing with an expert from Bayero University, Kano. This episode was both to educate and sensitize the public and CSOs on the need to critically examine the budget and make their input. Also prior to the hearing, CITAD and CDD convened a one-day meeting of CSOs in the state to deliberate on the budget and make specific inputs for the consideration of the Assembly. The meeting was very successful and generated observations and recommendations presented to the State House Assembly at the public hearing on the budget. The House then acted on a number of the recommendations. Other organizations seized the opportunity presented by such openness. For example, a youth-led organization, the Nasarawa Youth Development Forum, "started mobilizing its members across the state to submit their demands to their respective state representatives" (CDD 2014, 13).

Another positive outcome related to Akasa Afaifai was the establishment of the Kano Budget Partners, "founded in 2014, with the central guiding areas of research, awareness creation, community mobilization, advocacy and social audit around budget tracking" (Kano Budget Partners 2014, 3). At its founding, it had 17 members, including media organization such as Pyramid Radio and Express Radio, as well as mass-based trade unions such as the National Union of Teachers. The Kano Budget Partners, with capacity building and mentoring support from SAVI, became a key platform for independent monitoring and tracking of budget implementation in the state. They also continued to consult with and engage both the legislature and executive on budget preparation and to advocate for laws to promote transparency and accountability such as the Public Procurement Law and the domestication of the Freedom of Information Act.

Akasa Afaifai also amplified the work of Kano Budget Partners in monitoring the implementation of a government program to construct five kilometers of paved road in each of the state's forty-three local government areas. Kano Budget Partners focused on monitoring implementation of the project in five local government areas, including photographing road construction which had been abandoned in some instances and poorly executed in others (SAVI nd). They then made their allegations public on two episodes of Akasa Afaifai, where members of Kano Budget Partners and citizens called in to the show to corroborate and expand on the allegations. A civil society activist noted that the show allowed him and others "to directly speak to policy

maker/implementer on what they need to be done¹⁹ in a manner that had not been possible before. For example, Dakata-Bela road community members outcried how the uncompleted roads affected health in that area. Following the airing of the two episodes, the governor gave a directive for the release of the full funding for the road program, N800 million (SAVI nd).

Akasa Afaifai also helped facilitate a government response to public complaints about operations of twenty-six vocational training institutes set up by Governor Kwankwaso, which brought him great pride.²⁰ This program supported those training in poultry, fish farming, and animal rearing with seed capital, equipment, and animals. It also trained a number of secondary school leavers in community health services and provided them with money to rent an office and buy drugs to sell in their communities. Citizens and civil society organizations had made allegations and complained of unclear selection criteria and inappropriate admissions. During a May 2013 edition of Akasa Afaifai, a civil society activist said that “to make women empowerment project more effective...the government [should] set a selection criterion for the potential beneficiaries.”²¹ On the same program, one of the callers opined that, “One of them said the government has good intention but it is those in charge of the projects that are sabotaging them.”

Given these complaints, the following week, the program featured the Special Adviser of the Governor on Empowerment programs, Hajiya Maryam Umar K/Mata. When she responded to these complaints and allegations, she did not deny the allegations but rather encouraged people to use the reporting boxes in their various local government areas to report such irregularities. In her words, “You are there in your local government, the governor will not know what is happening there, so if you have such cases report to him.”²² The Akasa Afaifai partners also undertook an independent assessment and after finding some of the allegations to be true, shared their report with the governor. Responding to these complaints, the governor set up a committee to investigate the allegations. Ultimately, a number of civil servants were dismissed for complicity in the abuse of the process, and one of the institutes, the Corporate Security Institute, published a booklet containing admissions instructions and clear criteria for admission (CSI nd, 21).

Another example where Akasa Afaifai facilitated government response to citizen complaints related to the increase in fees in the state-owned university, North West University. Following the government announcement of the fee increase, the program devoted an episode to the issue featuring an expert from Bayero University, Kano. That edition received a lot of input from the public, urging the government to reduce the fees, and arguing that the fees were contrary to the state government’s publicly declared prioritization of education. In response to the show, the management of the university requested that they be given an opportunity to explain the rationale for the increase on the program. Several weeks later, an episode featured a team from the University consisting of the Chairman of the Implementation Committee, the Vice Chancellor, and the Registrar. Prior to appearing on the show, they consulted with the governor, who agreed to a reduction in the fees. They used the radio program not only to respond to questions from the public and to clarify the rationale for the fee increase, but also to announce on air the reduction in the fees.

Akasa Afaifai elucidated government responses on a number of other occasions. For example, in May 2013 the executive director of CITAD made the point on air that government efforts at achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were largely ad hoc as there was no coordinating point or responsible agency. A few days later, the governor set up an MDG coordinating office with a focal officer, and two weeks later, the State House of Assembly also established a committee on the MDGs. In another example, the chairperson of the Kano branch of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPID) was the Akasa Afaifai

guest and complained about government failure to adequately attend to the health problems of persons living with disabilities in state hospitals. In less than four weeks after the show, the government provided adjusted beds in some state hospitals for persons with special needs (CDD 2013b).

Other Outcomes Resulting from Civil Society Voice

Following from both the openings created by the governor and the increased capacity for voice among civil society, citizen action found expression in several forms, and also received a response from government. Examples not directly tied to Akasa Afaifai include the outcomes associated with the community relation committees, civil society monitoring of the youth and women empowerment scheme, reversal of the decision to expel medicine sellers from the Sabon Gari market, and a compromise over the use of three-wheeled scooters (*achaba*).

The community relations committees provided a veritable structure for popular mobilization and citizen participation in governance. They promoted openness, provided access to information, and were open to advocacy by non-state actors and development partners. The program courted and successfully converted the goodwill of development partners into capital that went into the execution of development programs, especially in the health and youth development sectors. Through the community relation committees, many communities were able to get their issues addressed by the government. Two things made these committees work. First, many of their members were active politicians interested in contesting elections who therefore used the committees as an opportunity to showcase what they could do if elected. Second, the committees were under the spotlight of civil society and public scrutiny for probity. As one civil society activist argued, the community relations committee “program also provides a genuine opportunity for community-based organizations to participate in designing and implementing local interventions in the areas of education, health, women and youth empowerment.”²³ As a result, in limited cases, citizens were able to take this opportunity to decide what they wanted for themselves and their communities. Community groups were more organized, awareness was raised, and government executed some projects as a result of community demands.

Another example of government response to citizen action related to independent civil society monitoring of the women and youth empowerment scheme. The scheme, which provided financial support and training to women and youth, was also a means through which the political class fleeced the people. Politicians acted as gate keepers for beneficiaries and demanded a cut from the money distributed through the program. Once civil society began monitoring the program, it became difficult for the politicians to shortchange the beneficiaries. The politicians complained to the governor that they were being sidelined through the action of the Special Adviser to the Governor on Civil Society and Development Partners, who was not a politician. Ms. Rabi Isma, the special advisor, was an employee of the British Council in Kano before her appointment to the position and had the support of the governor in reducing corruption in the program. He listened to the complaints but did not instruct the special advisor to stop her efforts. However, when complaints against her by party stalwarts and politicians mounted,

including accusations that she was not supporting the party and was colluding with politicians at the local level, the special advisor threw in the towel and resigned her appointment.

Citizen action also forced the government to reverse its decision to eject the medicine sellers from the Sabon Gari market, part of an attempt to regulate drug sales in Kano. The state has one of the highest incidences of substance abuse. The government perceived the drug section in the Sabon Gari Market as the source of the supply of these illicit drugs, and the center for the production and sale of fake drugs. This perception was not without some justification. The drug section was not subject to regulatory inspection by authorities, and also lacked minimum requirements for the safe production and sale of drugs, such as electricity, cold room storage, and a registration system. The state government therefore decided to tackle these problems by ejecting the medicine sellers from the market to a new location where they could easily be supervised and subject to regular inspection. This attempt was resisted from two quarters. First, drugs and medication were cheaper in the market than anywhere in the state, so ordinary people felt that ejecting the medicine sellers from the market could make the drugs more costly, and objected loudly. The second point of resistance was the drug sellers themselves, Igbo traders whose ethnicity differed from that of the Fulani governor, and so they claimed that the governor was targeting them because of their ethnic affiliation. In the end, the state government had to soft-pedal the expulsion.

Citizen opposition also altered government plans to address the chaotic transport situation in the city. Kano streets were choked especially by *achaba* tricycles that the government viewed as inefficient since they did not convey large numbers of passengers but occupied a lot of space and polluted the environment. Additionally, government saw them as reckless, causing many accidents and thus negatively impacting the state health budget. Statistics from the Federal Road Safety Commission showed that by 2013, there were over one million achaba operating in the city, used by seventy-eight percent of passengers (Muhammad 2013). As Muhammad (2013) observed, "Hospitals are congested with the wounded achaba passengers who suffer from various degrees of injuries ranging from broken skulls, bruised faces, strained joints to fractured limbs and dislocated backbones." Politicians, however, frequently bought achaba in the name of youth empowerment.

Given the enormity of the problem, the state government sought to ban the use of achaba on major streets of the city. But the government proposed this ban without consultation with stakeholders, and it was popularly opposed. The Kano CSOs Forum on Banning Achaba quickly formed. The Forum in early 2013 demanded that the government reverse the ban, threatened legal action if it did not, and proposed a registration system for achaba that the Forum would voluntarily help implement. The forum mobilized citizens and used both traditional and social media to enlighten people about the issue, arguing in particular that the government had not made any soft-landing plan for the riders that would lose their jobs. The level of mobilization eventually led the government to abandon the ban.

Resistance and Challenges

Ultimately, resistance and a number of structural challenges weakened the opening from above, as well as the response from below.

The fragility of the opening from above was due to several factors. One was the personalization of the reform agenda, leading to its perception as the ideological program of Kwankwaso. Even promoters of the reform often saw it as personal to the governor. As the Director of Press for the governor said in an interview, “The reform agendas were mostly the governor’s ideas.”²⁴

Relatedly, the Kwankwaso regime could have done more to build up support for the reforms. There was a lack of coherence in the cabinet because not all members of the cabinet or commissioners at the head of state ministries²⁵ were on the same page. For example, when Kwankwaso assumed office, Kano State had no public procurement law. As part of consultations with CSOs and development partners, Kwankwaso indicated willingness to have such a law for the state, so an earlier draft developed with the support of SAVI, some civil society organizations, and some Assembly members, was dusted off and presented to the House. The State House of Assembly passed the bill and transmitted it to the governor for assent. Civil servants in the Ministry of Justice, however, not only sat on the bill for an extensive period of time but ended up advising the governor not to sign it, ultimately stymying it from becoming a law.

Finally, when internal disagreements made the governor leave the ruling party and join the opposition party coalition, the federal government became hostile and tried to financially muzzle the state government. As one observer noted, “When [Kwankwaso] left the [People’s Democratic Party], his relationship with the federal government was bad and that brought some hitches in implementing some of the policies, especially on agriculture.”²⁶

There was simultaneously a lack of citizen support for elements of the reform agenda that resulted in increased costs for them: “From the citizens also there was lack of support in fighting drug abuse, their refusal to pay seven hundred Naira schools fee.”²⁷ This reaction from citizens was not an indication of lack of support for the reform agenda overall, but reflected that people had different readings of different aspects of the agenda. Both the high-level political resistance and citizen reaction indicate a poor level of consultation by the government to carry along different stakeholders.

To overcome these obstacles the government could have institutionalized the publishing of the executive committee minutes by sending a bill to the State House of Assembly to pass legislation requiring it. It could also have created a law on the community relation committees, domesticated the Freedom of Information Act, or enacted the public procurement and fiscal responsibility laws. Kwankwaso may not have taken these steps because he anticipated resistance from others, or because he did not want to share the credit for reforms with the legislature. This weakness was responsible for the quick eroding of the gains of the regime by the succeeding government.

The scope and sustainability of the reforms was constrained not only by the opposition and resistance from both within and outside the government, but also by both the weakness and limited experience of civil society. The weaknesses of civil society can be seen in multiple areas.

First, its distribution across the state was uneven. While there were numerous community-based organizations across all the local governments of the state, they did not focus on governance issues or advocacy and were mainly self-help groups. The available advocacy skill was limited to organizations in the state capital, which did not have the capacity or social network to speak to and mobilize citizens in rural communities.

Civil society also had limited capacity for sustained advocacy on specific issues. This weakness was mainly because the CSOs were donor dependent, in a context in which donor funding was increasingly difficult to come by. Many of the CSOs were new with weak structures and limited access to donor funding. As a civil society representative explained, “We have tried in training local [community-based organizations] on budget cycles and tracking methodology, but due to financial constraints we cannot cover all [local government areas]. We usually refer[ed] them to follow Akasa Afaifai for more info.”²⁸

Relatedly, most CSOs had no experience in sustained mobilization outside of project programming. As someone knowledgeable about the sector pointed out, community-based organizations “were not trained to sustain the monitoring process well.”²⁹ Once funding ended, action stopped. Although donors required a sustainability plan in funding proposals, these plans existed more on paper and without funds were difficult to implement in reality.

Another area of weakness was the limited capacity of civil society to sustain follow ups on issues. For example, an official of the Kano State branch of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria made revelations about the diversion of fertilizer by officials when he featured on the Akasa Afaifai radio program. He offered a series of recommendations on how to address the issue, but no one from civil society followed up to know if the government had acted on the recommendations. Similarly, when both CITAD and CDD undertook an assessment of the operations of the twenty-six vocational training institutes set up by the state government, no one followed up on their findings. And again, no one followed up on the allegations about the pinching of the Dangote Women Empowerment money by party gatekeepers, even though the Adviser to the Governor on Civil Society ultimately resigned her post in protest because no one would agree to a thorough process that ensured only genuine beneficiaries received the money. In yet another example, when the Chairman of the Kano Youth Stakeholders Forum demanded that the government amend the 1976 Youth Edict and the intention of the Forum to hand over a five-year strategic plan for youth development, implementation by the government was not pursued. Because of the lack of civil society follow up, consequently, government hardly acted on their allegations and demands.

The depth and breadth of the reforms were also constrained by a democratic deficit at the lower level of government. The local governments, which are closer to the citizens, do not have financial autonomy. Their resources are controlled by state governors. Moreover, electoral reform has largely focused on state and national elections conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission. In contrast, local government elections are conducted by the respective state independent electoral commissions, which are not independent of state governors. Consequently, elections at the local level are not determined by voter preferences. Instead, the governor’s nominees are “elected.” Additionally, those appointed have no tenure security and governors often simply dissolve their positions and appoint caretaker committees to run the affairs of the local government councils. Because of these realities, local government officials see their appointment or election as owing to the governor, have no incentive to respond to their constituencies, and are accountable only to the governor. Therefore, they ignore any advocacy for accountability or reform. This experience was no different in Kano State when Kwankwaso

was governor. In this sense therefore, the ability to deepen and broaden the impact of civil society voice was structurally limited and little could be achieved at this level.

Conclusion

The opening created by Governor Kwankwaso by publishing the planned weekly budget release, alongside his willingness for civil society to participate in governance and his commitment to reform, amplified by the Akasa Afaifai radio program, led to some citizen action. For the most part, however, this action was not extensive nor did it last far beyond the 2015 end of Kwankwaso's term as governor, due to characteristics of both state and society described above. In particular, the weekly publication of the executive council meeting minutes, had ended by 2019.

Both within government and civil society, the paradigm shift from seeing good governance as mere service delivery to incorporation of accountability and ending corruption is yet to be deeply engrained. This conflation of good governance and service delivery can be seen in the emphasis governors give to listing projects as their achievements without thinking about institutional reforms. For example, accounts of Kwankwaso's administration showcase projects (e.g., Spikin, nd.) rather than reform institutionalization. Similarly, most civil society activists tend to evaluate the performance of the government in terms of project delivery with little concern about value for money or institutional reforms. This focus on project delivery tends to underplay issues of accountability, limiting the potential scope of reforms to support accountability and reduce corruption.

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Tables

Table 1. List of Individuals Interviewed for Case Study

#	Sector	Name	Position	Date
1	Civil Society	Abdulrazak Alkali	Executive Director, OCEEN	Oct. 11, 2019
2	Civil Society	Ibrahim Maryam Garba	Gender and Social Inclusion, GIS	Oct. 11, 2019
3	Civil Society	Kabiru Dakata	Executive Director, CAJA; anchor of Akasa Afaifai, then program Officer with CITAD	Oct. 12, 2019
4	Civil Society	Rabiu Shamma	Chairman, Kano Youth Coalition for Advocacy	Oct. 24, 2019
5	Civil Society	Akibu Hamisu	Kano Budget Working Group	Nov. 30, 2019
6	Government	Mailik Kuliya Umar	Commissioner of Justice and Attorney General, 2011-15	Sept. 24, 2019
7	Government	Habu Fagge	Chairman, Internal Revenue Board	Sept. 26, 2019
8	Government	Ibrahim Braji	Permanent Secretary, Council Affairs, Cabinet Office 2011-15, and later Special Advisor	Sept. 28, 2019
9	Government	Halilu Dantiye	Director Press and Public Relations to the Governor, 2011-15	Sept. 28, 2019
10	Government	Faruk Jibril	Commissioner of Information of Kano, 2011-15	Sept. 29, 2019
11	Government	Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso	Governor of Kano, 2011-15	Oct. 29, 2019
12	Government	Danjuma Mahamoud	Accountant General of Kano, 2011-15	Oct. 29, 2019

Table 2. Chronological List of Akasa Afaifai Episodes, 2012-14

Sector	Topic	Guest	Position
2012			
Civil Society	Women and Youth Empowerment	Kabiru Dakata	program Officer, CITAD
Experts	Healthcare Sector Budget	Dr. Ibrahim Musa Idris	Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Kano
Civil Society	Civil Society Tracking of the Budget Implementation	Malam Abdulrazaq Sani Alkali	Project Coordinator Budget Tracking Group
Experts	On the Fees Increase by the State-Owned North West University	Prof. Lukman Ibrahim Diso	University Librarian, Bayero University, Kano
Experts	Commerce and Employment Generation	Dr. Balarabe Jakada	Former Head of Business Admin Dept, Bayero University, Kano

Civil Society	The Importance of Budget in Democratic Setting	Jibril Ibrahim	Country Director, center for Democracy and Development (CDD)
Experts	The Constitutional Provision on the Budget	Barrister Muhammad Zubair	Legal Consultant to SAVI
Experts	On the Agric Sector Budget	Engr. Khalid Shehu and Malam Ya`u Umar Tela	Practicing Farmers
Audience	Harvesting Citizens' Input to the 2013 Budget	Open	Audience
Audience	Focus on the 2013 Budget Speech	Open	Audience
Audience	Citizens' Views on the Budget Speech	Open	Audience
2013			
Civil Society	An Overview of the 2013 Proposed Budget	Y.Z. Ya`u	Executive Director, CITAD
Audience	Citizens Views on the Proposed Budget	Open	Audience
Civil Society	The Role of CBOs in Ensuring Budget Accountability	Com. Nura Iro Ma`aji	Advocacy Nigeria
Experts	Education Sector Budget	Prof. Lukman Diso	University Librarian, Bayero University, Kano
Government	On the Fees Increase by the State-Owned North West University	Prof. Hafizu Abubakar Prof. Dato Mohd Razali Bin Agus Registrar Yanganau	Chairman, Implementation Committee, Vice Chancellor, and Register of the University
Audience	On How to Track the Implementation of the Budget	Open	Audience
Civil Society	Kano State Youth Empowerment programs	Com. Othman Abdulhamid	Former Students' Leader and Pro-Youth Activist
Civil Society	The Marginalization of People Living with Disability	Alhaji Mohd Sa`idHajiya Rabi	Joint Association of People Living with Disability, Kano State Branch and National Officer
Government	Government Revenue Project	Alhaji Abdul Ajumawa	Director of Revenue collection at the Kano State Board of Internal Revenue
Government	Government Tax Policies	Alhaji Abdul Ajumawa	Director of Revenue Collection at the Kano State Board of Internal Revenue
Civil Society	On Youth Development	Maryam G. Usman Nura Ahmed Muhammed Garzali Ibrahim Ungogo	Kano State Youth Stakeholders Forum (KSYSF)
Experts	On Policies for Commerce and Industry	Prof. Kabiru Isa Dandago	Professor of Accounting, Bayero University, Kano

Government	On the Youth and Women Empowerment programs of the Government	Hajiya Maryam Umar K/Mata	Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Empowerment programs
Civil Society	Development Projects in Kano State Do Not Consider Elderly and Disabled	Alhaji Ibrahim Garba M	Gender and Social Inclusion (GIS)
Civil Society	Collaboration among CSOs on Budget Tracking	Musa Kaila	Collation on Budget Transparency Advocacy in Kano (COBTAK)
Civil Society	On Their Advocacy for Greater Health Budget in the State	Hajia Hafsat Kolo Mal. Salisu Yusuf	Partnership for Promoting Maternal and Child health
Civil Society	Assessing the 2013 Kano State Budget on the Benchmark of MDGs' Goals	Dr. Y.Z. Ya`u	Executive Director, CITAD
Civil Society	Maternal Health	Malam Salisu Yusuf	Partnership for the Promotion of Maternal and Child Health
Experts	Power and Industry in the Budget	Prof. Garba Ibrahim Sheka	Professor of Economics, Bayero University, Kano
Experts	Assessing the Internally Generated Revenue Target	Prof. Garba Ibrahim Sheka	Professor of Economics, Bayero University, Kano
Government	On the Implementation of the Budget	Hon. Yusuf Bello Danbatta	Commissioner of Budget and Economic Planning
Experts	Water Supply in the Budget	Prof. Mustapha Hassan Bichi	Civil Engineering Department, Bayero University, Kano
Experts	On Safeguarding the Environment	Prof. Mustapha Hassan Bichi	Civil Engineering Department, Bayero University, Kano
Civil Society	Commemorate International Youth Week	Alhaji Abdullahi Sulaiman	Chairman of Kano Youth Stakeholders Forum
Government	On the Evaluation of the Performance of the Dangote Fund for Women Empowerment	Hajiya Rabi Isma	Advisor to the Governor on Civil Society
Civil Society	On Community Involvement in the Budget Processes	Hajiya Hadiza Bala Fagge Mohd Yahaya	Chairperson of Budget Tracking Group (BGT) and Member of the Group
Experts	On How to Address the Problem of Diversion of Fertilizers by Government Officials	Alhaji Abdulrashi Magaji Rimingado	Auditor General of All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) Kano State Branch
Experts	Focus on Education	Alhaji Ishaq Gandun Albasa	Retired Educationist
Government	On the Empowerment of People Living with Disabilities	Hon. Usman Yusuf	Special Adviser of the State Governor on the Disabled People Affairs
Government	Explaining the Process of Passing of the 2014 Budget by the Legislature	Hon. Hamza Sule Bichi Hon. Rabi Saleh Gwarzo	Chairman Kano State House Committee on Appropriation and Chairman, Public Account Committee

Government	Assessing the Performance of the 2013 Budget	Hon. Bello Y. Danbatta	Commissioner of Budget and Economic Planning
Civil Society	Tracking of the 2013 Budget	Comrade Muhyi Magaji	Grassroots Anti-corruption Awareness Initiative
Experts	On the Proposed Supplementary Budget for 2013	Prof. Garba Ibrahim Sheka	Professor of Economics, Bayero University, Kano
Government	On the Proposed Supplementary Budget for 2013	Hon. Hamza Bichi Hon. Abdul Ilyas Yaryasa	Chairman, Kano State House of Assembly Committee on Appropriation and Member of the Committee
Audience	Citizens' Assessment of 2013 Budget Performance	Open	Audience
2014			
Government	On the 2014 Budget	Hon. Bello Y. Danbatta	Commissioner of Budget and Economic Planning
Audience	Evaluating the Akasa Afaifai Radio program	Open	Audience
Civil Society	On the Emergence and Activities of the Kano Budget Partners (KBP)	Ibrahim Garba Maryam	Kano Budget Partners (KBP)
Experts	On Financing the Budget	Dr. Mohammed Sagagi	Consultant to DFID
Experts	On Environment Protection	Dr. Ibrahim Lawal Abdullahi	Head, Biological Science, Bayero University, Kano
Audience	Evaluating the Impact of Public Hearing on the 2014 Kano State Budget Conducted by Kano State House of Assembly	Open	Audience
Government	Education Sector Budget	Alhaji Tajudeen Gambo	Commissioner of Education
Civil Society	Women Participation in Budget Tracking	Shema`u Adam Imam Maryam Abubakar	center for Young People's Advancement and Community Development (CYPAC) and United Action for Democracy (UAD)
Audience	Assessing the Construction of the 5 KM Roads in 44 LGAs	Open	Audience

Notes

- 1 Interview #11, government.
- 2 Interview #3, civil society.
- 3 Interview #3, civil society.
- 4 Interview #11, government.
- 5 Interview #11, government.
- 6 Interview #10, government.
- 7 The internal revenue base of the state increased from N400 million when Kwankwaso took office to about N2billion within his first year in office (Agada, nd: 21).
- 8 Interview #1, civil society.
- 9 Interview #8, government.
- 10 Interview #6, government.
- 11 CDD and CITAD also started a television version to complement the radio program, but this did not catch well and it was abandoned, largely because TV did not have the same popularity or reach as radio in Kano (given its need for a constant power supply).
- 12 Interview #1, civil society.
- 13 Unfortunately this web site no longer exists.
- 14 Interview #2, civil society.
- 15 Interview #4, civil society.
- 16 Interview #9, government.
- 17 Interview #3, civil society.
- 18 Transcript of Akasa Afaifai program featuring Hon. Abdul Ilyas Yaryasa (government), aired Dec. 29, 2013.
- 19 Interview #5, civil society.
- 20 Interview #11, government.
- 21 Transcript of Akasa Afaifai program featuring Ibrahim Maryam Garba (civil society), aired May 5, 2013.
- 22 Transcript of Akasa Afaifai program featuring Hajiya Maryam Umar K/Mata (government), aired May 12, 2013.
- 23 Interview #1, civil society.
- 24 Interview #9, government.
- 25 Interview #8, government.
- 26 Interview #8, government.
- 27 Interview #8, government.
- 28 Interview #2, civil society.
- 29 Interview #2, civil society.

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