The International Budget Project

Open Budget Initiative

2006

More Public Information Needed to Hold Governments To Account

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Within the International Budget Project, this study represents the culmination of two years of work by an excellent team. **Pamela Gomez** provided overall leadership of this study — tirelessly coordinating respondents in multiple languages to meet impossible deadlines. Pamela is also the lead author of this report. **José M. Marín** managed the questionnaire responses and offered insightful contributions throughout the process. His good spirits and dedication made a lengthy process an enjoyable one for everyone. **Magda Cojanu**, **Alta Folscher**, **Jacqueline Geis**, **Diane Kim**, **Vivek Ramkumar**, **Jorge Romero Leon** and **Albert Van Zyl** spent numerous hours analyzing and preparing materials for publication. **Elizabeth Petheo** and **Caroline Poirrier** played a key role in organizing and successfully coordinating the multi-country launch of the research. Thanks also to **Rocío Campos**, **Ann Brown**, and **John Springer** for their invaluable help in developing the presentation materials and website.

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Warren Krafchik
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SUMMARY

The past two decades have seen growing interest in promoting public access to government budget information. This interest reflects the understanding that access to information on government budgets and financial activities is essential to ensuring that governments are accountable to their citizens. Timely access to such information enables citizens to participate in, and understand, policy decisions that have profound impacts on their daily lives.

This interest also reflects broad global developments. The wave of democratic openings in many countries during the 1990s focused attention on issues such as combating corruption, ensuring effective public service delivery, and community-led development. In addition, a series of wrenching financial crises during the 1990s drew the attention of the international community to the implications of the lack of government transparency and financial accountability in the affected countries.

Against this background, the International Budget Project (IBP) began to develop in 2002 the survey instrument that forms the basis of the current study. For the past two years, the IBP has worked with civil society and academic partners in 59 countries to collect comparative information to implement the survey and analyze its results. The survey method is outlined in the box below. The full reports for all 59 countries are available at www.openbudgetindex.org.

The survey, consisting of 122 multiple-choice questions, is the first to offer an independent, non-governmental view of central government budget transparency. It examines the quantity of publicly available budget information in the seven key budget documents governments should issue during the course of the budget year.

The survey's questions are based on generally accepted good practices related to public financial management. Some criteria are similar to — and in some cases are drawn from — guidelines developed by multilateral organizations. The survey, however, goes further than these guidelines to include questions on the performance and design of the legislature and the external auditing body.

This research is intended to assist a wide-ranging audience — civil society organizations, journalists, researchers, policymakers, and economic development specialists — interested in identifying and

advocating for stronger public sector financial accountability and better deployment of society's resources. It is also intended to provide government officials in the countries surveyed with practical measures to improve their budget's performance.

Key Findings on the Availability of Budget Information

Accurate, timely, and comprehensive information during each stage of the budget cycle is required to ensure the accountability of government to citizens. The *Open Budget Index*'s results suggest that 90 percent of the countries covered do not meet this standard.

Just a handful of governments scored particularly well on the survey. Only six of the 59 countries surveyed — France, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States — provide "extensive" budget information in their budget documents.

In 30 of the countries, the government provides "significant" or "some" budget information to citizens. Botswana is one example of a country that falls into the "significant" information category. Its performance could be enhanced simply by publishing a pre-budget statement well prior to the tabling of the executive's budget proposal. Similarly, Sweden's performance could be improved by publishing a single, comprehensive mid-year review.

The performance of countries providing only "some" information is typically undermined by more systematic shortcomings in the information provided to the legislature and public. Jordan, Kazakhstan, and Kenya fall into this category.

The most serious cause for concern is that 23 countries (39 percent of all countries surveyed) provide either "minimal" or "scant or no" information to citizens on their country's budget. Countries in these two categories fall far short of the most basic requirements of budgetary openness.

Ten countries fall into the bottom category — Angola, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Mongolia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria and Vietnam. Six of these countries do not make their executive's budget proposal available to the public at all prior to legislative approval, indicating the closed nature of their budget processes and a fundamental lack of accountability to the public. Four of the countries, Bolivia, Morocco, Nicaragua and Nigeria, do make their proposal available to the public prior to its adoption but provide only very scant information.

The index shows that strong transparency practices are possible in both developed and developing countries. Both Slovenia and South Africa, for example, are characterized by very dramatic improvements in budget transparency that took place over a relatively short period of time.

Nevertheless, the survey's key finding that the majority of countries perform very poorly in terms of budget transparency is deeply troubling. More than a third of the countries provide minimal or no budget information to citizens. This list of poor performers includes a diverse group of low-income and middle-income countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle-East.

What is clear is that the level of budget transparency in a country is strongly influenced by the willingness of the government to be accountable to its citizenry, and that lack of capacity to produce information is not an overriding constraint. In other words, the countries that have performed the most poorly on the *Open Budget Index* cannot take refuge in capacity constraints — sharp improvements in transparency are possible in short periods with modest resources.

Budget Systems Often Lack Appropriate Checks and Balances

Also of concern are the survey findings related to the governmental accountability mechanisms built into the budget process. The responses to the survey suggest that in many countries, neither the executive nor the legislature appears committed to making full use of opportunities to engage and inform the public of the proposed budget. A large number of countries fail to hold hearings on the budget. For example, 24 of the 59 countries surveyed did not hold public hearings on the budget's macroeconomic parameters, while a similar number (25) did not hold public hearings on the individual budgets of ministries or agencies.

The survey also finds substantial and widespread weaknesses in the independent external auditing institutions of the countries surveyed. There is no external check on the executive's financial management without a strong and independent supreme audit institution, known in some countries as the auditor general or the court of accounts. An alarmingly high number of countries (17) do not issue auditing reports at all to the public. A further 25 countries make available only partial information to the public. And in 16 countries, the executive can fire the head of the country's external auditing body without the consent of the legislature or judiciary. This failure to provide basic security of tenure to the chief of the national auditing agency indicates the lack of a fundamental institutional safeguard to guarantee the office's independence from the executive.

Enhancing Citizens' Access to Information

In more than half (32) of the countries surveyed, the government does not make available to the public information it is already producing for its own internal use or for donors. Thus, many countries could sharply improve their transparency and accountability simply by providing information to the public they already produce. This further confirms that when governments do not provide information to the public, it is generally because they choose to withhold it, rather than because they cannot afford to or are incapable of producing it.

Many countries in the survey have adopted the desirable practice of using the Internet to make budget documents available to the public. The Internet offers advantages in providing a cost-effective method for a government to provide simultaneous disclosure of budget documents to all interested parties. But governments could be doing much more to disseminate budget information, especially to those who lack access to the Internet.

Civil society organizations in many low-income countries stress that a large percentage of the population in their country does not have access to the Internet. They urge governments to take other measures to inform the public about the budget, such as making available a citizens' budget

that explains the budget in terms a non-expert can readily grasp. The study found that a surprisingly small number of countries provide such a document — only ten of the 59 countries studied.

The *Open Budget Questionnaire*

The *Open Budget Index* is calculated using the average of the responses to 91 of the questions on the *Open Budget Questionnaire*. These 91 questions cover the public availability of budget information in seven key budget documents. The questionnaire contains a further 31 questions intended to evaluate a range of practices governments might adopt to strengthen public accountability in their budgeting and financial management.

The research effort is intended to offer an independent, non-governmental view of the state of budget transparency in the countries studied. All of the researchers who completed the *Open Budget Questionnaire* are from academic or other non-governmental organizations. The questions evaluate publicly available information issued by the central government, and do not cover the availability of information at the subnational level.

All of the questions were constructed with the intention that they should capture easily observable phenomena. The majority of questions require answer based on a country's actual budget transparency practices; a small number of questions focus on legal provisions. The questions focusing on the contents and timeliness of the seven key budget documents use criteria based on generally accepted good practices related to public financial management. Many of these reflect or are drawn from criteria developed by multilateral organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund's *Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency* and the *Lima Declaration of Guidelines on Auditing Precepts* issued by the United Nations International Organization of Supreme Auditing Institutions (INTOSAI).

The strength of guidelines such as the IMF *Fiscal Transparency Code* and the *Lima Declaration* lies in their universal applicability, making them appropriate to countries with differing types of budget systems and differing income levels. They do not, however, go far enough to ensure that budgeting is responsive and accountable to citizens. For this reason the *Open Budget Questionnaire* covers additional topics of importance to civil society. For example, the questionnaire examines whether or not the legislature holds public hearings as well as the performance and design of the government's auditing body.

Also of growing interest to civil society organizations around the world are "right to information" laws. Increased attention to improved delivery of services is spurring an interest in providing citizens with access to highly detailed information, such as on expenditures in their local school district or health clinic. This detailed information, however, is generally not included in a country's budget documents. The adoption of right to information laws is therefore an essential first step in many countries to strengthening the ability of citizens to obtain such information in practice.

The IBP plans to publish the index every two years to cover an expanding number of countries and to capture changes in government transparency performance over time.

I. INTRODUCTION

Civil society interest in promoting budget transparency through a comparative research initiative grew out of a number of important global trends. Among these trends was the wave of democratic openings in many countries during the 1990s, which focused attention on issues such as combating corruption, ensuring accountability for the delivery of public services, decentralizing government, and community-led development. In addition, a series of financial crises during the 1990s drew the attention of international financial institutions to the importance of ensuring government transparency and financial accountability.

The International Budget Project, in recognition of these important developments, started work to develop a survey instrument to provide an independent check on budget transparency across countries. This instrument forms the basis for the *Open Budget Index*. For the past two years, the IBP has worked along with partners in 59 countries to use this questionnaire to collect information to produce the 2006 results of the *Open Budget Index*.

This research is intended to assist civil society organizations, journalists, researchers, and economic development specialists to advocate for the improved public sector financial accountability that will lead to concrete improvements in people's lives. It is also intended to allow government officials and policymakers in the countries involved in the survey to identify specific measures necessary to improve budget transparency and accountability.

Methodology

The *Open Budget Questionnaire,* which IBP developed over a three year period, is intended to collect comparative data on the public availability of budget information and other accountable budgeting practices. It guides researchers through each of the four stages of the budget process, assisting them in evaluating the information that should be made available to the public at each stage. It also identifies and evaluates accountable budgeting practices during each stage of the budget year.

The *Open Budget Questionnaire* contains a total of 122 questions. The responses to 91 of the questions on the questionnaire that evaluate public access to budget information were averaged to form the *Open Budget Index*. The remaining 31 questions cover topics related to the ability of key institutions

of government to hold the executive accountable. The questionnaire therefore covers opportunities for public engagement in budget debates and promoting strengthened legislative oversight. Accountable budgeting also requires a strong external auditing body independent of the executive. As such, the questionnaire covers important institutional features of the country's external auditing body, the supreme audit institution.

Development and Testing of the Questionnaire

In 1999, researchers at the IBP and Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) piloted a methodology for conducting budget transparency research. By 2002 there were two ongoing multi-country civil society budget transparency research initiatives, one in Africa and a second in Latin America. These were led by IDASA in Africa, and Mexico's Fundar Center for Research and Analysis in Latin America. These two initiatives greatly contributed to the development of the questionnaire. Researchers in the countries involved in these two initiatives tested the questionnaire, providing valuable feedback to refine the questions.

The IBP also tested its initial version of the survey instrument in ten countries outside of these two regions during 2003 (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, India, Kazakhstan, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Thailand, and Turkey). The IBP used this feedback to modify the questions to ensure that they were applicable in countries with distinct budgeting systems. The feedback of researchers was also invaluable to IBP in drafting the *Guide to the Open Budget Questionnaire,* which provides researchers completing the questionnaire with a detailed description of the purpose of each question and the assumptions that should be used when selecting answers.

The questionnaire was further refined during the latter half of 2003, reflecting reviews and consultations with public expenditure management experts around the world. This included presentations at international financial institutions and to practitioners through publication in specialty journals. A second major round of testing was held, in the form of a pilot study involving researchers in 36 countries. Researchers completed their work in May and June of 2004. The results of the pilot phase were made available in October 2004 to collect feedback to further refine the questionnaire and its accompanying guide.

Open Budget Initiative Advisory Committee

The project includes an advisory committee of leading civil society organizations involved in promoting budget transparency, as well as renowned public expenditure management experts. They include:

Helena Hofbauer, executive director, Mexico's Fundar Center for Research and Analysis
Katarina Ott, executive director, Croatia's Institute of Public Finance
Marritt Claassens, manager, Africa Budget Project, Institute for Democracy in South Africa
David de Ferranti, director, Transparency and Accountability Program, Brookings Institution
Murray Petrie, director, Transparency International New Zealand
Malcolm Holmes, international public expenditure management expert
Iris Lav, deputy director, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Isaac Shapiro, associate director, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Joel Friedman, senior fellow, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Content of the *Open Budget Questionnaire*

The *Open Budget Questionnaire* consists of multiple-choice questions, and four tables covering the manner in which budget documents are disseminated. The questionnaire groups questions into three sections. The first section is composed of tables to elicit information on the dissemination of budget information. The second section covers the executive's annual budget proposal to the legislature (Questions 1-55) and the availability of other information that would contribute to analysis of budget policies and practices (Questions 56-66). The third section covers each of the four phases of the budget process (Questions 67-122).

The questions evaluate publicly available information issued by the central government, and do not cover the availability of information at the subnational level. The majority of the questions ask about what occurs in practice, rather than about the requirements that may be in law. All of the questions were constructed with the intention that they should capture easily observable phenomena. Researchers and peer reviewers completing the questionnaires were asked to provide evidence for their responses. The evidence took the form of a reference to a budget document, a law, or other public document; a public statement by a government official; or a face-to-face interview with a government official or other knowledgeable party.

The questions were not intended to evaluate the quality or credibility of information that might be provided by a government. For example, the questions do not evaluate whether information about government expenditures, revenues, or debt may have been illicitly omitted, withheld, or diverted from government accounts. The questions also do not evaluate the credibility of macroeconomic forecasting or economic assumptions used in estimates in a country's budget.

Many of the questions focus on the contents and timeliness of the seven key budget documents that all countries should issue. The criteria used to assess what information should be publicly available and the timing of its release are based on generally accepted good practices related to public financial management. Many of these criteria are similar to those developed by multilateral organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund's *Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency* and the *Lima Declaration of Guidelines on Auditing Precepts* issued by the United Nations International Organization of Supreme Auditing Institutions (INTOSAI). INTOSAI is a professional organization of national supreme audit institutions established by the UN to share information and experiences related to public sector auditing.

The strength of guidelines such as the IMF *Fiscal Transparency Code* and the *Lima Declaration* lies in their universal applicability, making them appropriate to differing types of budget systems around the world, and to countries with differing income levels. However, IBP believes that they do not go far enough to ensure that budgeting is responsive and accountable to citizens. For this reason the *Open Budget Questionnaire* covers additional topics of importance to civil society. These include whether or not the legislature holds public hearings on the budget and other factors related to legislative oversight and the Supreme Audit Institution.

The Researchers and Peer Review Process

The *Open Budget Questionnaire* is intended to offer an independent, non-governmental view of the state of budget transparency in the countries studied. All of the researchers who completed the *Open*

Budget Questionnaire are from academic institutions or non-governmental organizations. Government officials in the 59 countries studied did not complete the questionnaire, although in some cases researchers interviewed government officials to obtain answers for a few of the questions.

The mandates and areas of interest of the research groups vary widely, but all have a common interest in promoting access to information during each of the four phases of the budget process, in strengthening the role and powers of the legislature, and in the performance of the supreme audit institution. Most are groups with significant focus on budget issues, including researchers who are experts involved in budget matters on a daily basis.

One researcher, or one group of researchers within an organization, from each of the countries was responsible for submitting one questionnaire with the results presented for that country. Thus, the results presented for each country are based on a single completed questionnaire. The researchers began their research in May 2005 and completed the questionnaire in October 2005. No events or developments that occurred after October 2005 are taken into account. As noted above, researchers and peer reviewers completing the questionnaires were asked to provide evidence for their responses.

Once the questionnaires were completed, IBP staff undertook an analysis of each questionnaire, and in most cases spent three to six months in discussions with researchers to review the questionnaires. The IBP analysis focused on ensuring that the questions were answered in a manner that was internally consistent, as well as consistent across countries. The answers were also cross-checked against publicly available information. This included those budget documents that countries made available on the Internet, data collected by the Bank Information Center (a Washington, DC-based non-profit monitoring the activities of international financial institutions), the IMF *Reports on the Observance of Standards and Codes* (ROSCs) covering fiscal transparency, IMF Article IV reports, World Bank documents and publications (including *Public Expenditure Reviews)*, and the OECD-World Bank budgeting practices database.

The IBP provided researchers with an accompanying *Guide to the Open Budget Questionnaire*. The guide outlined the research method to be used in completing the questionnaire, introduced researchers to best practices and concepts related to budget transparency and public expenditure management. The guide also provided detailed explanations on how to choose between responses and the assumptions to use in answering each question.

Following the IBP review of each questionnaire, it was submitted to two anonymous peer reviewers. The peer reviewers were required to be independent of both the government and the research organization. The peer reviewers were all individuals with a working knowledge of the country and its budget system. They were identified through searches of bibliographies, personal contacts, Internet searches, and past IBP conference records. IBP considers the peer review system to be anonymous and will not reveal the identity of a reviewer to the public or to a research organization.

IBP staff reviewed peer reviewer comments to ensure that the comments were consistent with the study's methodology as outlined in the *Guide to the Open Budget Questionnaire*. Any peer reviewer comments that were inconsistent with the guide were removed, and the comments were shared with the researchers. Researchers responded to peer reviewer comments, and IBP editors refereed any conflicting answers to ensure the consistency of assumptions across countries in selecting answers.

Definition of "Publicly Available" Information

The *Open Budget Questionnaire*'s focus is on evaluation of information available to the public. As such, the study defined "publicly available" information as *information that any and all citizens might be able to obtain through a request to the public authority issuing the document*. This definition therefore includes information that is available through well-defined procedures that ensure simultaneous release of public documents to all interested parties, as well as information or documents that are available only on request.

Some countries in the study had clearly defined procedures for ensuring the simultaneous release of public documents to all interested parties. The adoption of clear procedures in law for dissemination of budget documents, along with respect for those procedures in practice, are viewed by some countries as important to maintaining an international reputation for sound financial management. Many developing countries interested in gaining access to or maintaining favorable treatment in international capital markets adopt such procedures on their own, or as participants in initiatives such as the IMF's General Data Dissemination System initiative.

Many of the countries in the study, however, did not have legal provisions in place relating to release of budget information, or did not abide by them in practice. In these countries, information was only available on request. The researchers in these countries answered questions based only on publicly available information. In some cases, groups asked citizens to request budget documents to test their availability to the general public. This was necessary because in some countries, substantial budget information is produced but is not shared with the public at all, or government officials make arbitrary decisions regarding which individuals they are willing to share information with. In those cases in which information was available only on request, if there were instances in which an individual requested the document but it was denied to him or her, the document was considered as not available to the public for the purposes of the study.

The definition of "publicly available" information used in the study implies that the method a government chooses to disseminate documents does not affect its performance on the *Open Budget Index*. Specifically, whether or not a government chooses to use the Internet to disseminate documents does not affect its score on the *Open Budget Index*. Countries that disseminate documents exclusively by making printed copies available are not disadvantaged. However, the questionnaire does collect data in the tables that appear in Section One of the study (which are not used to calculate the *Open Budget Index*) to explore the growing trend of Internet availability.

Calculating the Open Budget Index

The Open Budget Index consists of the average of the responses to 91 questions related to public availability of information in the Open Budget Questionnaire. This score reflects the quantity of publicly available budget information in the seven key budget documents governments should issue during the course of the budget year.

Most of the questions in the Open Budget Questionnaire require the researcher to choose among five responses. The response that corresponds to the letter "a" or "b" is considered as describing a situation or condition that represents good practice regarding the subject matter of the question. The responses "c" or "d" correspond to practices that are considered poor. An "a" response indicates that a standard is fully met, while a "d" response indicates a standard is not met at all. The fifth response is "e" or not applicable. Researchers were also asked to provide a citation as well as to enrich their questionnaire responses with comments, as appropriate.

For the purposes of aggregating the responses, the numeric score of 100 percent was awarded for an "a" response, 67 percent for a "b" response, 33 percent for a "c" response, and 0 for a "d" response. The response of "e" caused the question not to be counted as part of the Open Budget Index.

Some questions have three possible responses: "a," "b," or "c" (not applicable). For these questions, a score of 100 percent was awarded for the "a" response and 0 for the "b" response. The "c" response caused the question not to be included in the calculation of the Open Budget Index for a particular country.

For purposes of describing the performance of a country on the index, a country with a score of 81 to 100 percent indicates that the government "provides extensive information to citizens," country scores of 61 to 80 percent indicate that the government "provides significant information to citizens," country scores of 41 to 60 percent indicate that the government "provides some information to citizens," and country scores of 21 to 40 percent indicate that the government "provides minimal information to citizens." Finally, country scores below 20 percent indicate that the government "provides scant, or no information to citizens."

QUESTIONS INCLUDED IN THE *OPEN BUDGET INDEX*

Pre-Budget Statement	Questions 72, 73, 74
Executive's Budget Proposal	Questions 1-55, 67, 68, 69
Citizens Budget	Question 61
In-Year Reports	Question 84-91
Mid-Year Review	Questions 93-96
Year-End Report	Questions 102-111
Auditor's Report	Questions 112-114, 116, 120-122

II. THE *OPEN BUDGET INDEX*

The *Open Budget Index*'s focus on budget information in a country's budget documents reflects the importance of the importance of these documents. A country's budget documents should serve as the definitive source for disclosure to the public of a government's budget and financial activities. A country's budget documents are the place where a wide range of economic and financial information must be consolidated to present to the public a comprehensive picture of the government's fiscal position at the start of the budget year, as well as throughout it. More is needed to achieve accountable budgeting than access to information, but comprehensive and timely information is a necessary, if not sufficient condition for accountable and responsive budgeting.

The index examines the information in the seven key budget documents that should be available to the public during the course of the budget year. It evaluates the appropriateness of the information provided in the documents for those interested in analyzing and understanding the government's policies, the comprehensiveness of the topics covered in the documents, and the timeliness of the documents. The budget documentation is the place where the government reveals it priorities and where citizens can review these against their own. Given this, the overall results of the *Open Budget Index* are disturbing.

The *Open Budget Index*'s results suggest that very few countries provide the extensive budget information during the course of the budget year necessary for government accountability. Only six of the 59 countries surveyed — France, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States — provide extensive budget information in their budget documents.

The remaining 53 countries surveyed either fail to issue one or more of the seven key budget documents reviewed, or the information provided in those documents is incomplete. The vast majority — nine out of ten countries — surveyed in the *Open Budget Index* do not provide sufficient information to enable citizens to hold government accountable for the management and use of the public's resources.

Table 1

Open Budget Index 2006

Which countries open their budget books to citizens?

Provides Extensive Information to Citizens	France	Slovenia	United Kingdom	
	New Zealand	South Africa	United States	
Provides Significant Information to Citizens	Botswana	Norway	Romania	
	Brazil	Peru	South Korea	
	Czech Republic	Poland	Sweden	
Provides Some Information to Citizens	Bulgaria	India	Mexico	Sri Lanka
	Colombia	Indonesia	Namibia	Tanzania
	Costa Rica	Jordan	Pakistan	Turkey
	Croatia	Kazakhstan	Papua New Guinea	
	Ghana	Kenya	Philippines	
	Guatemala	Malawi	Russia	
Provides Minimal Information to Citizens	Albania	Bangladesh	Georgia	Zambia
	Algeria	Cameroon	Honduras	
	Argentina	Ecuador	Nepal	
	Azerbaijan	El Salvador	Uganda	
Provides Scant or No Information to Citizens	Angola	Chad	Morrocco	Vietnam
	Bolivia	Egypt	Nicaragua	
	Burkina Faso	Mongolia	Nigeria	

A country's placement in a performance category was determined by averaging the responses to the 91 questions on the *Open Budget Questionnaire* related to information contained in the seven key budget documents that all countries should make available to the public. The countries that scored between 81-100 percent were placed in the performance category *Provides Extensive Information*, those with scores 61-80 percent in *Provides Significant Information*, those with scores 41-60 percent in Provides Some Information, those with scores 21-40 percent in *Provides Minimal Information*, and those with scores 0-20 percent in *Provides Scant or No Information*.

A total of 9 countries fall into the category of providing significant information, but their performance is weakened by the failure to produce one or more vital documents. Botswana is one example of a country that falls into the category "provides significant information." Its performance was marred by its failure to issue a pre-budget statement. Similarly, Sweden's otherwise good performance was weakened by its failure to issue a single, comprehensive mid-year review covering all expenditures.

Other governments perform poorly on the index due to the lack of information they make available in the annual budget proposal tabled in the legislature. This was the case with many of the countries contained in the category, "provides some information." These countries included Jordan,

Kazakhstan, and Kenya. Others were included in this category because they did not issue in-year or year-end reports.

Most seriously, a total of 23 countries fall into the last two categories, providing minimal or no information to citizens on their country's budget. Failure to provide minimal information on the country's budget falls far short of the most basic requirements of budgetary openness.

Of these countries, ten countries fall into the last category — Angola, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Mongolia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria and Vietnam. These countries provide scant or no information in budget documents, raising very serious concerns about the closed nature of their budget processes and accountability to the public. These countries either do not make their executive's budget proposal available to the public at all prior to legislative approval, or provide very scant information in the document.

The index shows that strong transparency practices exist in both developed and developing countries. Both Slovenia and South Africa are characterized by very dramatic improvements in budget transparency that took place over a relatively short period of time. In these countries, only a decade was required to transform the closed books of central planning and apartheid into adherence to good practices on openness in budget documentation.

Nevertheless, the survey's key finding that the vast majority of countries perform very poorly in terms of budget transparency should be cause for concern. In the 59 countries reviewed, 23 do not even provide minimal budget information to citizens. This includes several countries that have received substantial donor assistance for several years, and which enjoy positive reputations among international donors and investors. The list of poor performers includes low-income and middle-income countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

The *Open Budget Index* provides a snapshot of the public availability of budget information in each country. It does not indicate whether the information environment in each of the countries is improving or worsening. IBP hopes that such trends will be captured in future surveys. However, what is clear is that the level of budget transparency in a country is strongly influenced by the willingness of the government to be accountable to its citizenry, and that the capacity or lack of capacity to produce information is not an overriding constraint. The countries that have performed the most poorly on the *Open Budget Index* cannot take refuge in capacity constraints — sharp improvements in transparency are possible in short periods even given modest resources.

III. A CLOSER LOOK AT KEY BUDGET DOCUMENTS

A more detailed examination of the seven key budget documents governments should issue reveals that during the course of the budget year, governments tend to make the most information available to the public in their annual budget proposal. But as the budget is executed, information in many countries is much scarcer. This lack of information during the budget's execution raises concern about the executive's accountability for its spending decisions, revenue collection, and adherence to authorized debt levels. The survey results also suggest that there is substantial room for improved accountability through strengthened auditing and legislative engagement.

Failure to Disclose Information Produced

A surprising finding of the survey was the large number of budget documents that governments do not make available to the public, but in fact produce for their own internal use or for reporting to donors. The researchers in the 59 countries surveyed interviewed government officials to determine which of the seven key budget documents that were not available to the public were in fact produced.

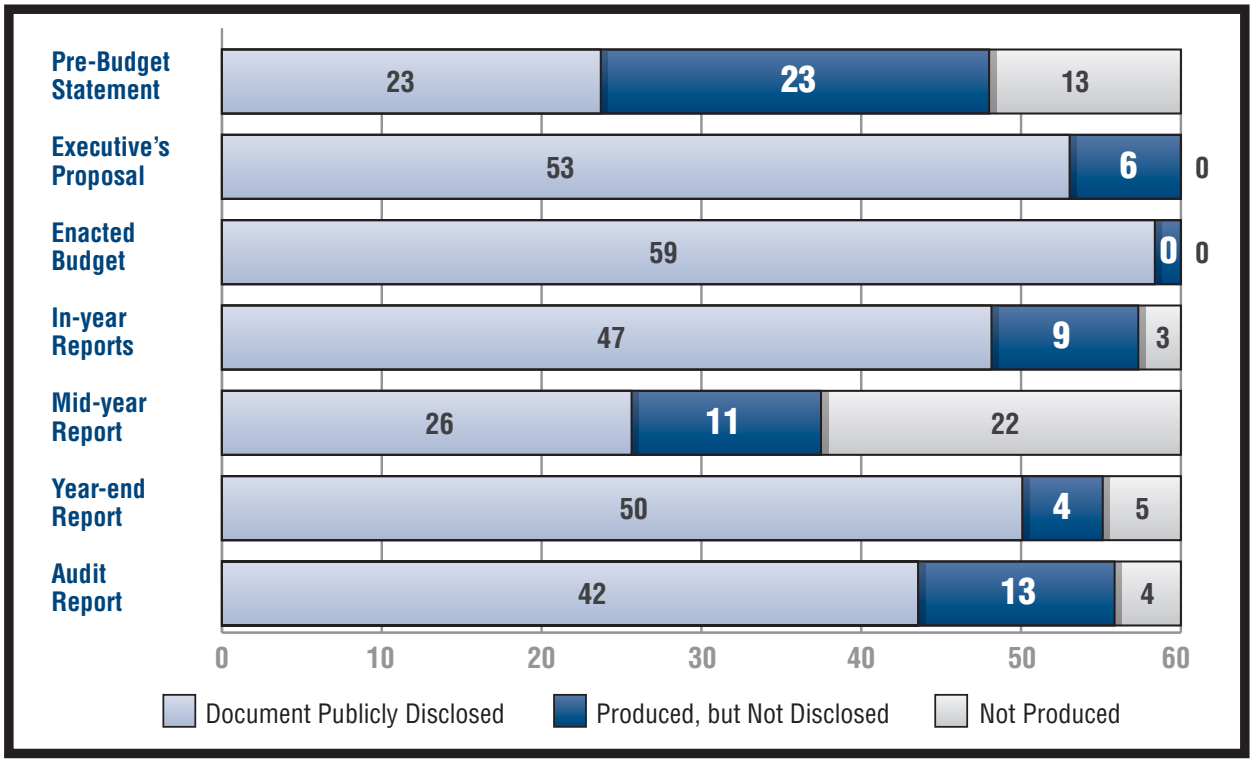
For example, the adjoining table shows that in 23 countries, governments produce the information that should be disclosed in a pre-budget statement, but choose not to make it available to the public. A cause for concern is the high number of countries — 13 — in which the supreme audit institution produces audit reports, but in which the reports are then withheld from the public.

More than half the countries (32) produce budget information that they could be making available to the public in one or more of the seven key budget documents. This suggests that they could sharply improve their transparency by simply providing the public with information that the government already has produced. It also suggests that governments do not provide information because they choose to withhold it from the public, rather than because they cannot afford to or are incapable of producing it.

Table 2

Availability of Key Budget Documents

Out of 59 Countries Completing the Questionnaire



The Executive's Budget Proposal

One of the most important budget documents issued during the course of the budget year is the executive's annual budget proposal. This document is a government's declaration of the policies that it will choose to pursue during the upcoming budget year. The legislature's approval of the executive's proposal suggests its concurrence with the government's chosen priorities. A serious cause for concern was the study's finding that only five of the 59 countries surveyed provide the extensive information to citizens in the budget proposal necessary to ensure accountability. These are France, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Countries that performed poorly did so because the proposal (or the series of documents that formed the proposal) did not provide a comprehensive picture of the government's fiscal position during the upcoming year, as well as in future years. For example, in some countries, the documents do not lay out the government's policy goals and explain how planned spending will assist in achieving them. Other governments do not disclose detailed information on revenues expected, the value of tax breaks, the amount and destinations of transfers and grants to other levels of government, subsidies to entities such as public corporations, plans to borrow, any delays in making payments due, or loan guarantees. Finally, some governments commonly do not disclose their financial and non-financial assets or information on the current performance of, and future liabilities and risks to, pension and other social security schemes.

Table 3

Executive's Budget Proposal

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Provides Extensive Information to Citizens	France	South Africa	United States		
	New Zealand	United Kingdom			
Provides Significant Information to Citizens	Botswana	Czech Republic	Namibia	Peru	Slovenia
	Brazil	Ghana	Norway	Poland	South Korea
	Colombia	Malawi	Papua New Guinea	Romania	Sweden
Provides Some Information to Citizens	Algeria	Cameroon	Indonesia	Nepal	Turkey
	Argentina	Costa Rica	Jordan	Pakistan	Uganda
	Azerbaijan	Guatemala	Kazakhstan	Philippines	
	Bangladesh	Honduras	Kenya	Sri Lanka	
	Bulgaria	India	Mexico	Tanzania	
Provides Minimal Information to Citizens	Bolivia	Ecuador	Georgia	Russia	
	Croatia	El Salvador	Nigeria	Zambia	
Provides Scant or No Information to Citizens	Albania	Burkina Faso	Egypt	Morocco	Vietnam
	Angola	Chad	Mongolia	Nicaragua	

The country's percentage score for the Executive's Budget Proposal is the average of the responses to Questions 1-55 on the Open Budget Questionnaire. These questions cover the executive's budget proposal and any supporting documents that may accompany it at the time that it is presented for consideration to the country's legislature. The countries that scored between 100-81% were placed in the performance category *Provides Extensive Information*, those with scores 80-61% in *Provides Significant Information*, those with scores 60-41% in *Provides Some Information*, those with scores 40-21% in *Provides Minimal Information*, and those with scores 20%-0% in *Provides Scant or No Information*.

A significant finding of the survey is that several countries do not make their budget available to the public prior to its adoption by the legislature. Six countries keep their budget secret until after it is adopted by the legislature — effectively barring any public participation in the budget's consideration. These are Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Egypt, Mongolia, and Vietnam. This practice severely restricts the ability of the public and civil society to participate in important budget debates, raising serious concerns about democratic accountability in those countries.

Pre-Budget Statement

A total of 23 countries in the study have adopted the positive practice of issuing a pre-budget statement to disclose the overall spending and revenue levels during the budget's formulation, prior to its submission to the legislature. This allows for the overall parameters of the budget to be discussed before the executive makes more detailed decisions on sectoral or programmatic breakdowns. And in some countries, the pre-budget statement is presented and approved by the parliament, strengthening legislative oversight.

Table 4

Pre-Budget Statement

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Top Performer: Provides Much Information to Citizens	Brazil	Nigeria	Slovenia	Zambia
	France	Papua New Guinea	South Africa	
	Kenya	Peru	South Korea	
	New Zealand	Poland	Sweden	
Provides Partial Information to Citizens	Cameroon	Kazakhstan	Tanzania	United Kingdom
	Croatia	Mongolia	Turkey	
	Georgia	Russia	Uganda	
No Pre-Budget Statement Made Available to the Public	Albania	Burkina Faso	Guatemala	Nepal
	Algeria	Chad	Honduras	Nicaragua
	Angola	Colombia	India	Norway
	Argentina	Costa Rica	Indonesia	Pakistan
	Azerbaijan	Czech Republic	Jordan	Philippines
	Bangladesh	Ecuador	Malawi	Romania
	Bolivia	Egypt	Mexico	Sri Lanka
	Botswana	El Salvador	Morocco	US
	Bulgaria	Ghana	Namibia	Vietnam

The country's percentage score for Pre-Budget Statement was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 72, 73, and 74 on the *Open Budget Questionnaire*. The countries that scored 100 percent were placed in the performance category *Top Performer*, those with scores below 100 percent, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Partial Information*, those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No Pre-Budget Statement Made Available to the Public*.

The survey found that more than half (36) of the countries surveyed fail to issue a pre-budget statement during the first stage of the budget process, when the executive formulates its budget proposal. This suggests that this is the phase of the process in which it is frequently the most difficult to obtain information, and that budget drafting in many countries takes place behind closed doors with little public involvement or access to information.

In-Year Reports

The majority of the countries surveyed provide no information or partial information in their monthly or quarterly progress reports on the budget's implementation. Timely availability of these reports allows civil society and the legislature to raise important questions about the executive's performance when it departs from approved policies in the budget.

The executive should issue periodic reports showing the expenditures it has made, the revenues collected, and debt incurred. Such reports are essential to ensure accountability, allowing the public to know if the government is adhering to the approved expenditures in the budget, revenue targets, and maintaining debt levels under authorized ceilings.

Table 5

In-Year Reports on Execution

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Top Performer: Provides Much Information to Citizens	Bulgaria	Turkey	New Zealand	Sri Lanka
	Peru	US	Poland	Brazil
	Romania	France	Slovenia	Sweden
	South Africa	Mexico	Mongolia	
Provides Partial Information to Citizens	Albania	Ecuador	Kazakhstan	Pakistan
	Argentina	Egypt	Kenya	Papua New Guinea
	Bangladesh	El Salvador	Malawi	Philippines
	Botswana	Georgia	Morocco	Russia
	Burkina Faso	Guatemala	Namibia	South Korea
	Colombia	Honduras	Nepal	Tanzania
	Croatia	India	Nicaragua	United Kingdom
	Czech Republic	Jordan	Norway	Zambia
No In-Year Reports Made Available to the Public	Algeria	Bolivia	Costa Rica	Nigeria
	Angola	Cameroon	Ghana	Uganda
	Azerbaijan	Chad	Indonesia	Vietnam

The country's percentage score for In-Year Reports on Execution was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 84-92 on the *Open Budget Questionnaire*. The countries that scored 90-100 percent were placed in the performance category *Top Performer*, those with scores 89 percent or below, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Partial Information*, those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No In-Year Reports Made Available to the Public*.

Yet the adjoining table shows that only 15 countries provide substantial information in the in-year reports they produce. A significant cause for concern is that more than half (32) of the countries in the survey provide only partial information, while an additional 12 countries surveyed provide no information to the public at all.

Mid-Year Review

The adjoining table shows that only seven of the countries surveyed issued a comprehensive mid-year review. The executive should make this document available six months into the budget year to discuss any challenges or changes in economic assumptions and how these changes might impact the government's expenditures, revenues and debt for the remainder of the budget year.

For example, changes in the prices of volatile commodities such as oil and gas can lead to huge revenue windfalls in resource-rich countries, while in other countries it can lead to unexpected expenses. The impact of such factors should be disclosed to the public at the six-month mark. Yet more than half (33) of the countries in the survey fail to issue such a report.

Table 6

Mid-Year Review

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Top Performer: Provides Much Information to Citizens	France	Norway	South Africa	United States
	New Zealand	Slovenia	United Kingdom	
Provides Partial Information to Citizens	Burkina Faso	Ghana	Nepal	Russia
	Cameroon	India	Pakistan	South Korea
	Czech Republic	Indonesia	Peru	Sri Lanka
	Egypt	Mexico	Philippines	Zambia
	Georgia	Namibia	Poland	
No Mid-Year Reports MadeAvailable to the Public	Albania	Bulgaria	Jordan	Romania
	Algeria	Chad	Kazakhstan	Sweden
	Angola	Colombia	Kenya	Tanzania
	Argentina	Costa Rica	Malawi	Turkey
	Azerbaijan	Croatia	Mongolia	Uganda
	Bangladesh	Ecuador	Morocco	Vietnam
	Bolivia	El Salvador	Nicaragua	
	Botswana	Guatemala	Nigeria	
	Brazil	Honduras	Papua New Guinea	

The country's percentage score for Mid-Year Review was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 93-96 on the *Open Budget Questionnaire*. The countries that scored 90-100 percent were placed in the performance category *Top Performer*, those with scores 89 percent or below, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Partial Information*, those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No Mid-Year Review Made Available to the Public*.

Year-End Report

At the end of the financial year, the executive should issue a comprehensive year-end report. This document should be more than a simple financial report. Rather, it should serve as the government's principal accountability report to its citizens — providing an update on progress in achieving the policy goals and improvements in outcomes it laid out for itself at the beginning of the year. The document should make clear the link between policy achievements and how the government spent its funds.

Despite the importance of the year-end report, only nine countries surveyed provided extensive information in the document. Forty-one countries provided only partial information in their year-end reports, while nine countries did not issue a report at all or did not issue a report separate from the annual budget proposal for the following year.

Table 7 & 8

Year-End Report

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Top Performer: Provides Much Information to Citizens	Brazil	Poland	South Korea
	France	Slovenia	Sweden
	New Zealand	South Africa	United Kingdom
Provides Partial Information to Citizens	Albania	Croatia	Kazakhstan
	Algeria	Czech Republic	Kenya
	Angola	Ecuador	Mexico
	Argentina	Egypt	Mongolia
	Bolivia	El Salvador	Morocco
	Botswana	Georgia	Namibia
	Bulgaria	Guatemala	Nepal
	Burkina Faso	Honduras	Nicaragua
	Chad	India	Norway
	Colombia	Indonesia	Pakistan
	Costa Rica	Jordan	Papua New Guinea
	Peru		
	Philippines		
	Romania		
	Russia		
	Sri Lanka		
	United States		
	Vietnam		
	Zambia		
No Year-End Report Made Available to the Public	Azerbaijan	Ghana	Tanzania
	Bangladesh	Malawi	Turkey
	Cameroon	Nigeria	Uganda

The country's percentage score for Year-End Report was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 102-111 on the *Open Budget Questionnaire*. The countries that scored 80-100 percent were placed in the performance category *Top Performer*, those with scores 79 percent or below, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Partial Information*, those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No Year-End Report Made Available to the Public*.

Auditor's Report

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Top Performer: Provides Much Information to Citizens	Colombia	Mongolia	Poland	South Korea
	Croatia	New Zealand	Russia	Sweden
	France	Norway	Slovenia	United Kingdom
	India	Philippines	South Africa	United States
Provides Partial Information to Citizens	Albania	Georgia	Mexico	Tanzania
	Bolivia	Guatemala	Namibia	Turkey
	Botswana	Honduras	Nepal	Uganda
	Brazil	Indonesia	Pakistan	Zambia
	Bulgaria	Jordan	Peru	
	Costa Rica	Kazakhstan	Romania	
	Czech Republic	Kenya	Sri Lanka	
No Auditor's Report Made Available to the Public	Algeria	Burkina Faso	El Salvador	Nigeria
	Angola	Cameroon	Ghana	Papua New Guinea
	Argentina	Chad	Malawi	Vietnam
	Azerbaijan	Ecuador	Morocco	
	Bangladesh	Egypt	Nicaragua	

The country's percentage score for Auditor's Reports was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 112-114, and 116 on the *Open Budget Questionnaire*. The countries that scored 80-100 percent were placed in the performance category *Top Performer*, those with scores 79 percent or below, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Partial Information*, those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No Auditor's Report Made Available to the Public*.

Auditor's Report

All countries should have an office independent of the executive that performs audits of the government's annual accounts. The annual auditor's attestation report should be issued by a body that is independent from the executive (not by the government's internal auditor or other entity attached to the executive). In most countries, the external auditor is part of the legislature or, in civil law countries, part of the judiciary. Auditors review expenditures to ensure that spending conforms to the requirements and procedures approved by the legislature in the annual budget and in the country's budget laws.

The adjoining table shows that an alarmingly high number of countries (17) included in the survey do not issue auditing reports at all to the public, while 25 countries made available only partial information to the public.

IV. HOW DOES THE PUBLIC OBTAIN ACCESS TO INFORMATION?

Recent trends in information technology and the increasing popularity of "right to information" laws have had an important impact on how the public may obtain access to budget information. The Internet is now used by a large number of countries in the survey to make documents available to the public. But some civil society organizations warn that it is necessary to be mindful of the limits of the Internet for dissemination of budget information in some countries.

Obtaining Access to Budget Documents Through the Internet

Many countries in the survey have adopted the desirable practice of making use of the Internet to make budget documents available to the public. But governments could be doing much more to disseminate budget information, especially to those who lack access to the Internet.

The Internet offers advantages in providing a cost-effective method for a government to provide simultaneous disclosure of budget documents to all interested parties. This has the potential to guard against insider dealing, arbitrary denial of access to documents, or favoritism in providing information. It also promises to make budget information more widely available to citizens outside of major cities. The adjoining table shows that the overwhelming number of countries, 47 of the 59 surveyed, make their enacted budgets available on the Internet.

At the same time, civil society organizations in many low-income countries stress that a large percentage of the population in their country does not have access to the Internet. They urge governments to take other measures to inform the public about the budget, such as making available a citizens' budget that the population can understand. The table shows that a surprisingly small number of countries surveyed provide such a document — only ten of the 59 countries studied. These include Angola, El Salvador, India, France, New Zealand, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Uganda, and the United Kingdom.

Table 9

Internet Availability of Documents

Out of 59 Countries Completing the Questionnaire

	Not Produced	Not Disclosed to the Public, Produced for Internal Use	Public Document, Print Copy Only, Not Available On the Internet	Public Document, Available On the Internet
Pre-Budget Statement	13	23	6	17
Budget Summary	8	6	7	38
Executive's Budget Proposal	0	6	10	43
Supporting Budget Documents	1	10	9	39
Citizen's Budget	49	0	1	9
Enacted Budget	0	0	12	47
In-Year Reports	3	9	5	42
Mid-Year Report	22	11	7	19
Year-End Report	5	4	10	40
Auditor's Report	4	13	10	32

"Right to Information" Laws and Access to Highly Detailed Information

The increased interest around the world in promoting improved delivery of services is spurring an interest in ensuring that citizens have access to highly detailed information, especially on spending programs. However, such highly detailed information is generally not included in a country's budget documents. The adoption of right to information laws is therefore an essential first step in many countries to strengthen the ability of citizens to obtain such information in practice.

The availability of highly detailed information is important to ensuring that citizens know what is spent in their local school district or health clinic. But as the adjoining table shows, in about half of the countries surveyed, it is not possible in practice to obtain this detailed budget information. Meanwhile, in more than half of the surveyed countries, it is not possible in practice to obtain key non-financial information. Such non-financial information can include the number of a program's beneficiaries or the number of staff involved in administering it.

A country's laws governing the budget process, or laws establishing a country's institutions such as the supreme audit institution, will frequently contain provisions requiring that some budget information be made public. Including such provisions in law, especially if these requirements are

consistent with best practice standards, such as the OECD *Best Practices on Budget Transparency*, represents a positive step to institutionalizing access to information.

However, frequently highly detailed information is not included in budget documents. Laws granting the right to request and receive information may be necessary to gain access to spending information broken down in sufficient detail to allow citizens to know the expenditures associated with specific programs or specific geographic areas. Such laws also can facilitate access to non-financial information. It is important that such laws cover or be adopted by both national and subnational governments because many public services are delivered at the provincial and municipal levels.

V. THE ROLE OF THE LEGISLATURE

In the vast majority of countries, the legislature is constitutionally designated with the responsibility for oversight of budget matters. The responses to the survey suggest that in many countries the executive and legislature do not appear committed to adopting practices that would strengthen public engagement in budget debates, and ultimately accountability to citizens.

A significant factor that can play a role in the legislature's ability to conduct oversight of budget issues is the amount of time that the executive allows the legislature to review the annual budget proposal. The executive can sharply limit the ability of the legislature and public to analyze and debate the budget by making it public only weeks or days before the new budget year starts. The OECD *Best Practices for Budget Transparency* recommends that the budget be tabled at least three months prior to the start of the budget year. This is the time considered necessary to conduct careful analysis and to undertake other activities, such as public hearings.

The survey shows that in fact, in many countries a sufficient period for legislative consideration is not allowed. In 14 of the countries reviewed, the executive tabled the budget in the legislature less than six weeks before the start of the budget year. And in some extreme cases, such as Ghana and Zambia, the government does not even present the budget until after the budget year starts. (In the case of Nepal, cited in the adjoining table, the legislature had been disbanded at the time of the study due to the declared state of emergency in the country.)

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Table 10 & 11

How Long Does the Executive Allow for Legislative Consideration?

The legislature receives the budget at least three months before the budget year starts.	Algeria	Czech Republic	Indonesia	Romania
	Argentina	Ecuador	Kazakhstan	Russia
	Bolivia	Egypt	Mexico	South Korea
	Brazil	El Salvador	Nigeria	Sweden
	Burkina Faso	France	Peru	Uganda
	Colombia	Guatemala	Philippines	United States
	Costa Rica	Honduras	Poland	
The legislature receives the budget at least six weeks, but less than three months, before the budget year starts.	Angola	Chad	New Zealand	Sri Lanka
	Azerbaijan	Croatia	Nicaragua	Turkey
	Botswana	Mongolia	Norway	Vietnam
	Bulgaria	Morocco	Slovenia	
The legislature receives the budget less than six weeks before the budget year starts.	Albania	India	Namibia	Tanzania
	Bangladesh	Jordan	Pakistan	United Kingdom
	Cameroon	Kenya	Papua New Guinea	
	Georgia	Malawi	South Africa	
The legislature does not receive the budget before the start of the budget year.	Ghana	Nepal	Zambia	

Response by country to Question 75 on the Open Budget Questionnaire.

Can Citizens Obtain Non-Financial Information on Spending Programs, such as the Number of Beneficiaries?

Highly disaggregated non-financial information is available to the public for all programs.	Columbia	Peru	Poland	Sweden
	New Zealand	Phillipines	Slovenia	
Highly disaggregated non-financial information is available to the public for programs representing at least two thirds of, but not all, expenditures.	Brazil	France	South Africa	Zambia
	Bulgaria	India	South Korea	
	Costa Rica	Mexico	United Kingdom	
	Czech Republic	Norway	United States	
Highly disaggregated non-financial information is available for less than two-thirds of expenditure programs.	El Salvador	Guatemala	Vietnam	
	Georgia	Romania		
No highly disaggregated non-financial information is available.	Albania	Cameroon	Kazakhstan	Pakistan
	Algeria	Chad	Kenya	Papua New Guinea
	Angola	Croatia	Malawi	Russia
	Argentina	Ecuador	Mongolia	Sri Lanka
	Azerbaijan	Egypt	Morocco	Tanzania
	Bangladesh	Ghana	Namibia	Turkey
	Bolivia	Honduras	Nepal	Uganda
	Botswana	Indonesia	Nicaragua	
	Burkina Faso	Jordan	Nigeria	

Response by country to Question 66 on the Open Budget Questionnaire.

Table 12

Can Citizens Obtain Detailed Budget Information?

Highly disaggregated financial information is available to the public for all programs.	Croatia	Norway	Poland	Sweden
	Guatemala	Peru	Slovenia	
	New Zealand	Philippines	South Africa	
Highly disaggregated financial information is available to the public for programs representing at least two thirds of, but not all, expenditures.	Brazil	Czech Republic	Nicaragua	Zambia
	Bulgaria	France	South Korea	
	Columbia	India	United Kingdom	
	Costa Rica	Mexico	United States	
Highly disaggregated financial information is available for less than two-thirds of expenditure programs.	Albania	Georgia	Kazakhstan	
	Chad	Ghana	Romania	
No highly disaggregated financial information is available.	Algeria	Cameroon	Malawi	Russia
	Angola	Ecuador	Mongolia	Sri Lanka
	Argentina	Egypt	Morocco	Tanzania
	Azerbaijan	El Salvador	Namibia	Turkey
	Bangladesh	Honduras	Nepal	Uganda
	Bolivia	Indonesia	Nigeria	Vietnam
	Botswana	Jordan	Pakistan	
	Burkina Faso	Kenya	Papua New Guinea	

Response by country to Question 65 on the Open Budget Questionnaire.

Indicative of the legislature's lack of engagement are the large number of countries that fail to hold committee hearings on the budget. For example, the adjoining table shows that in 24 of the 59 countries surveyed, no committee hearings were held on the budget's macroeconomic parameters, while in 25 of the countries reviewed, no committee hearings were held on the individual budgets of ministries or agencies. Consideration of the budget at the committee level is essential to strengthening the legislature's role in the budget process. As a general rule, only legislative committees are conducive to the in-depth analysis and scrutiny necessary to influence budget debates constructively.

Table 13 & 14

Does the Executive Appear at Public Hearings on Ministry or Agency Budgets?

Extensive public hearings are held.	Ghana	Philippines	South Africa	Turkey
	Norway	Poland	South Korea	United States
Hearings are held, but cover only key administrative units.	Albania	Costa Rica	Kazakhstan	Slovenia
	Argentina	Czech Republic	New Zealand	Uganda
	Bolivia	El Salvador	Nigeria	Zambia
	Colombia	Guatemala	Russia	
A limited number of hearings are held.	Algeria	Egypt	Mexico	Sweden
	Brazil	France	Nicaragua	United Kingdom
	Croatia	Georgia	Peru	
Public hearings are not held.	Angola	Chad	Malawi	Romania
	Azerbaijan	Ecuador	Mongolia	Sri Lanka
	Bangladesh	Honduras	Morocco	Tanzania
	Botswana	India	Namibia	Vietnam
	Bulgaria	Indonesia	Nepal	
	Burkina Faso	Jordan	Pakistan	
	Cameroon	Kenya	Papua New Guinea	

Response by country to Question 77 on the Open Budget Questionnaire.

Are Public Hearings on the Budget's Macroeconomic Framework Held?

Testimony is heard from the executive and a wide range of constituencies.	Norway	Slovenia	Sweden	
	Philippines	South Africa	Uganda	
	Poland	South Korea		
Testimony is heard from the executive and some constituencies.	Brazil	Georgia	Kenya	United Kingdom
	Bulgaria	Guatemala	Mexico	United States
	Colombia	Kazakhstan	Russia	
Testimony is heard from the executive branch, but no testimony is heard from the public.	Albania	Croatia	Ghana	Pakistan
	Argentina	Czech Republic	Malawi	Peru
	Chad	El Salvador	New Zealand	Romania
	Costa Rica	France	Nigeria	Turkey
Public hearings are not held on the macroeconomic and fiscal framework.	Algeria	Burkina Faso	Indonesia	Nicaragua
	Angola	Cameroon	Jordan	Papua New Guinea
	Azerbaijan	Ecuador	Mongolia	Sri Lanka
	Bangladesh	Egypt	Morocco	Tanzania
	Bolivia	Honduras	Namibia	Vietnam
	Botswana	India	Nepal	Zambia

Response by country to Question 76 on the Open Budget Questionnaire.

VI. THE ROLE OF THE SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTION

All the countries included in the survey have established supreme audit institutions, which are sometimes known as the chamber of accounts, court of accounts, or auditor general. This auditing body is intended to serve as a public watchdog, providing an independent assessment of the government's accounts and financial practices. But regrettably, in many countries this important institution is weak and lacks basic attributes that would contribute to its independence from the executive.

One indication of the weakness of a supreme audit institution is the inability of the public to obtain timely copies of the auditor's annual report. In 23 of the 59 countries surveyed, an auditing report was still unavailable more than two years after the end of the budget year. The *OECD Best Practices for Budget Transparency* recommends that such a report be available no more than six months after the budget year ends.

The survey also found alarming institutional weaknesses in many of the agencies. For example, in 16 of the countries, the executive can fire the head of the country's external auditing body without the consent of the legislature or judiciary. This failure to provide basic security of tenure to the chief of the national auditing agency indicates the lack of a fundamental safeguard to guarantee the office's independence from the executive. Another important guarantee of independence is control of the office's budget. In 15 of the 59 countries, the executive branch determined the budget of the supreme audit institution, and the office was so severely under-funded it was unable to carry out its duties. The executive controlled the institution's budget in an additional six countries, although under-funding was not considered a significant problem.

Table 15 & 16

When are Audited Accounts Available?

Final audited accounts are released to the public six months or less after the end of the fiscal year.	Brazil	Georgia	New Zealand	South Africa
	Colombia	Guatemala	Philippines	Sweden
	Costa Rica	Kazakhstan	Poland	United States
	Czech Republic	Mongolia	Slovenia	
Final audited accounts are released to the public 12 months or less (but more than six months) after the end of the fiscal year.	Albania	Indonesia	Peru	United Kingdom
	Botswana	Jordan	South Korea	Zambia
	Croatia	Nepal	Turkey	
	France	Norway	Uganda	
Final audited accounts are released to the public more than 12 months but within 24 months of the end of the fiscal year.	Honduras	Kenya	Pakistan	Tanzania
	India	Mexico	Russia	
Final audited accounts are not completed within 24 months after the end of the fiscal year.	Algeria	Bulgaria	El Salvador	Nigeria
	Angola	Burkina Faso	Ghana	Papua New Guinea
	Argentina	Cameroon	Malawi	Romania
	Azerbaijan	Chad	Morocco	Sri Lanka
	Bangladesh	Ecuador	Namibia	Vietnam
	Bolivia	Egypt	Nicaragua	

Response by country to Question 112 on the Open Budget Questionnaire.

Can the Independent Auditor be removed by the Executive?

No, the head of the SAI may only be removed by the legislature, judiciary, or they must give final consent before the head of the SAI is removed.	Albania	Ecuador	Mongolia	Russia
	Argentina	El Salvador	Namibia	Slovenia
	Bangladesh	France	New Zealand	South Africa
	Bolivia	Georgia	Nicaragua	Sri Lanka
	Botswana	Ghana	Norway	Sweden
	Brazil	Guatemala	Pakistan	Turkey
	Bulgaria	Honduras	Papua New Guinea	United Kingdom
	Colombia	India	Peru	United States
	Costa Rica	Indonesia	Philippines	Vietnam
	Croatia	Kenya	Poland	Zambia
	Czech Republic	Mexico	Romania	
Yes, the executive may remove the head of the SAI without the final consent of the legislature or judiciary.	Algeria	Cameroon	Kazakhstan	Nigeria
	Angola	Chad	Malawi	South Korea
	Azerbaijan	Egypt	Morocco	Tanzania
	Burkina Faso	Jordan	Nepal	Uganda

Response by country to Question 115 on the Open Budget Questionnaire.

Table 17

Who Decides the Independent Auditor's Budget?

The legislature or judiciary, and the funding level is broadly consistent with the resources needed to fulfill its mandate.	Albania	Czech Republic	New Zealand	South Africa
	Argentina	Egypt	Norway	South Korea
	Bulgaria	El Salvador	Poland	Sweden
	Colombia	France	Romania	United Kingdom
	Costa Rica	Mongolia	Russia	United States
	Croatia	Namibia	Slovenia	Vietnam
The executive and the funding level is broadly consistent with the resources needed to fulfill its mandate.	Algeria	Botswana	Pakistan	
	Bolivia	India	Philippines	
The legislature or judiciary, and the funding level is not consistent with the resources needed to fulfill its mandate.	Bangladesh	Ghana	Mexico	Turkey
	Brazil	Guatemala	Nicaragua	Uganda
	Burkina Faso	Honduras	Peru	
	Georgia	Kenya	Sri Lanka	
The executive and the funding level is not consistent with the resources needed to fulfill its mandate.	Angola	Ecuador	Malawi	Papua New Guinea
	Azerbaijan	Indonesia	Morocco	Tanzania
	Cameroon	Jordan	Nepal	Zambia
	Chad	Kazakhstan	Nigeria	

Response by country to Question 118 on the Open Budget Questionnaire.

VII. FUTURE STEPS

The *Open Budge Index* was produced to assist civil society organizations, journalists, researchers, international and national policymakers, and economic development specialists in identifying and advocating for increased access to information and the adoption of accountable budgeting practices. The completed questionnaire for each country included in the *Open Budget Index* is available on the IBP's website to provide government officials with practical measures to improve their country's performance.

IBP intends to undertake the study every two years, with the intention of evaluating changes in government performance over time. The next study will published during the last quarter of 2008, with an expansion of the number of countries included to at least 80.

IBP hopes that subsequent studies will show sharp improvements in access to information and accountable budgeting — and that these will eventually contribute to combating corruption, ensuring accountability for the delivery of public services, decentralizing government, and community-led development, which will in turn improve people's lives.

ANNEX: COUNTRY- BY-COUNTRY PERCENTAGE SCORES

Open Budget Index 2006

Country	Percentage Score
France	89
United Kingdom	88
New Zealand	86
South Africa	85
Slovenia	81
United States	81
Peru	77
Sweden	76
Poland	73
Brazil	73
South Korea	73
Norway	72
Romania	66
Botswana	65
Czech Republic	64
Colombia	57
India	52
Papua New Guinea	51
Namibia	51
Pakistan	51
Philippines	51
Jordan	50
Mexico	50
Kenya	48
Tanzania	48
Bulgaria	47
Sri Lanka	47
Russia	47
Guatemala	46
Costa Rica	44
Kazakhstan	43
Ghana	42
Croatia	42
Malawi	41
Indonesia	41
Turkey	41
Bangladesh	40
Argentina	39
Honduras	38
Zambia	37
Nepal	36
Georgia	33
Uganda	31
Ecuador	31
Azerbaijan	30
Cameroon	29
Algeria	28
El Salvador	27
Albania	24
Bolivia	20
Nigeria	20
Nicaragua	20
Morocco	19
Mongolia	18
Egypt	18
Burkina Faso	11
Chad	5
Angola	4
Vietnam	2

The country's percentage score for the Open Budget Index is the average of the responses to Questions 1-55, 61, 67, 68, 69, 72-74, 84-91, 93-96, 102-114, 116 and 120-122 on the Open Budget Questionnaire. These questions cover the executive's budget proposal, any supporting documents, the citizens budget, the pre-budget statement, the in-year reports, the mid-year review, the year-end report, and the auditors report. The countries that scored between 100-81% were placed in the performance category *Provides Extensive Information*, those with scores 80-61% in *Provides Significant Information*, those with scores 60-41% in *Provides Some Information,* those with scores 40-21% in *Provides Minimal Information*, and those with scores 20%-0% in *Provides Scant or No Information.*

Executive's Budget Proposal

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Country	Percentage Score
United Kingdom	95
New Zealand	89
France	86
South Africa	83
United States	81
Brazil	79
Sweden	78
South Korea	76
Peru	75
Botswana	75
Norway	74
Romania	73
Slovenia	72
Papua New Guinea	70
Namibia	68
Colombia	67
Poland	66
Ghana	64
Malawi	64
Czech Republic	64
Pakistan	59
Tanzania	57
Philippines	57
Bangladesh	56
Jordan	56
India	55
Costa Rica	54
Sri Lanka	53
Guatemala	50
Azerbaijan	48
Nepal	47
Indonesia	45
Bulgaria	45
Honduras	45
Argentina	45
Turkey	44
Uganda	43
Kazakhstan	43
Kenya	42
Mexico	41
Cameroon	41
Algeria	41
Ecuador	36
Zambia	35
Russia	34
Croatia	32
El Salvador	29
Georgia	28
Nigeria	23
Bolivia	22
Albania	17
Nicaragua	17
Morocco	17
Angola	0
Burkina Faso	0
Chad	0
Egypt	0
Mongolia	0
Vietnam	0

The country's percentage score for the Executive's Budget Proposal is the average of the responses to Questions 1-55 on the Open Budget Questionnaire. These questions cover the executive's budget proposal and any supporting documents that may accompany it at the time that it is presented for consideration to the country's legislature. The countries that scored between 100-81% were placed in the performance category *Provides Extensive Information,* those with scores 80-61% in *Provides Significant Information,* those with scores 60-41% in *Provides Some Information,* those with scores 40-21% in *Provides Minimal Information*, and those with scores 20%-0% in *Provides Scant or No Information.*

Pre-Budget Statement

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Country	Percentage Score
Brazil	100
France	100
Kenya	100
New Zealand	100
Nigeria	100
Papua New Guinea	100
Peru	100
Poland	100
Slovenia	100
South Africa	100
South Korea	100
Sweden	100
Zambia	100
Mongolia	89
United Kingdom	89
Turkey	78
Uganda	78
Croatia	78
Russia	67
Cameroon	67
Georgia	56
Tanzania	56
Kazakhstan	44
Albania	0
Algeria	0
Angola	0
Argentina	0
Azerbaijan	0
Bangladesh	0
Bolivia	0
Botswana	0
Bulgaria	0
Burkina Faso	0
Chad	0
Colombia	0
Costa Rica	0
Czech Republic	0
Ecuador	0
Egypt	0
El Salvador	0
Ghana	0
Guatemala	0
Honduras	0
India	0
Indonesia	0
Jordan	0
Malawi	0
Mexico	0
Morocco	0
Namibia	0
Nepal	0
Nicaragua	0
Norway	0
Pakistan	0
Philippines	0
Romania	0
Sri Lanka	0
United States	0
Vietnam	0

The country's percentage score for Pre-Budget Statement was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 72, 73, and 74 on the Open Budget Questionnaire. The countries that scored 100 percent were placed in the performance category *Provides Substantial Information,* those with scores below 100 percent, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Some Information,* those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No Pre-Budget Statement Made Available to the Public.*

In-Year Reports on Execution

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Country	Percentage Score
Bulgaria	100
Peru	100
Romania	100
South Africa	100
Turkey	100
United States	100
France	96
Mexico	96
New Zealand	96
Poland	96
Slovenia	96
Mongolia	93
Sri Lanka	93
Brazil	93
Sweden	93
Croatia	89
Kazakhstan	89
Russia	89
United Kingdom	89
Czech Republic	89
Ecuador	85
Kenya	85
India	81
Jordan	81
Guatemala	78
Botswana	78
Albania	74
Tanzania	74
Morocco	70
Egypt	70
Nicaragua	70
Philippines	67
Argentina	67
Norway	63
Papua New Guinea	56
Bangladesh	56
Georgia	52
El Salvador	48
Burkina Faso	48
Nepal	44
Honduras	44
Namibia	44
Pakistan	44
Colombia	44
Zambia	41
South Korea	26
Malawi	15
Algeria	0
Angola	0
Azerbaijan	0
Bolivia	0
Cameroon	0
Chad	0
Costa Rica	0
Ghana	0
Indonesia	0
Nigeria	0
Uganda	0
Vietnam	0

The country's percentage score for In-Year Reports on Execution was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 84-92 on the Open Budget Questionnaire. The countries that scored 100-90 percent were placed in the performance category *Provides Substantial Information,* those with scores 89 percent or below, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Some Information,* those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No In-Year Reports Made Available to the Public.*

Mid-Year Review

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Country	Percentage Score
Slovenia	100
South Africa	100
France	92
New Zealand	92
Norway	92
United Kingdom	92
United States	92
Indonesia	83
Peru	83
Czech Republic	83
Georgia	67
Mexico	67
Namibia	67
Russia	67
South Korea	67
India	50
Ghana	42
Burkina Faso	42
Poland	33
Pakistan	33
Cameroon	25
Philippines	25
Egypt	17
Sri Lanka	17
Zambia	17
Nepal	8
Albania	0
Algeria	0
Angola	0
Argentina	0
Azerbaijan	0
Bangladesh	0
Bolivia	0
Botswana	0
Brazil	0
Bulgaria	0
Chad	0
Colombia	0
Costa Rica	0
Croatia	0
Ecuador	0
El Salvador	0
Guatemala	0
Honduras	0
Jordan	0
Kazakhstan	0
Kenya	0
Malawi	0
Mongolia	0
Morocco	0
Nicaragua	0
Nigeria	0
Papua New Guinea	0
Romania	0
Sweden	0
Tanzania	0
Turkey	0
Uganda	0
Vietnam	0

The country's percentage score for Mid-Year Review was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 93-96 on the Open Budget Questionnaire. The countries that scored 100-90 percent were placed in the performance category *Provides Substantial Information,* those with scores 89 percent or below, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Some Information,* those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No Mid-Year Review Made Available to the Public.*

Year-End Report

Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Country	Percentage Score
Slovenia	100
France	97
South Africa	93
Poland	90
South Korea	87
United Kingdom	87
Brazil	83
Sweden	83
New Zealand	80
Czech Republic	77
United States	77
Peru	73
Romania	73
Norway	70
Bulgaria	63
Mexico	60
Egypt	57
Indonesia	53
Kenya	53
Pakistan	53
Costa Rica	50
Russia	50
Botswana	47
Bolivia	40
Honduras	40
Zambia	40
India	37
Colombia	37
Chad	33
Croatia	33
Burkina Faso	30
El Salvador	30
Algeria	30
Jordan	30
Georgia	27
Argentina	27
Angola	23
Guatemala	23
Philippines	23
Nicaragua	20
Sri Lanka	20
Albania	20
Namibia	20
Kazakhstan	17
Mongolia	10
Ecuador	7
Morocco	7
Nepal	7
Vietnam	7
Papua New Guinea	3
Azerbaijan	0
Bangladesh	0
Cameroon	0
Ghana	0
Malawi	0
Nigeria	0
Tanzania	0
Turkey	0
Uganda	0

The country's percentage score for Year-End Report was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 102-111 on the Open Budget Questionnaire. The countries that scored 100-80 percent were placed in the performance category *Provides Substantial Information,* those with scores 79 percent or below, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Some Information,* those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No Year-End Report Made Available to the Public."*

Auditor's Report
Quantity of Publicly Available Information by Country

Country	Percentage Score
New Zealand	100
Philippines	100
Poland	100
Slovenia	100
South Africa	100
Sweden	100
United States	100
Croatia	92
France	92
Norway	92
South Korea	92
United Kingdom	92
India	83
Russia	83
Colombia	83
Mongolia	83
Guatemala	75
Botswana	67
Czech Republic	67
Kazakhstan	67
Mexico	67
Peru	67
Brazil	67
Pakistan	58
Sri Lanka	58
Tanzania	58
Indonesia	58
Nepal	58
Jordan	58
Romania	50
Kenya	50
Costa Rica	50
Georgia	50
Uganda	50
Zambia	42
Albania	33
Bolivia	25
Namibia	25
Turkey	25
Bulgaria	17
Honduras	17
Algeria	0
Angola	0
Argentina	0
Azerbaijan	0
Bangladesh	0
Burkina Faso	0
Cameroon	0
Chad	0
Ecuador	0
Egypt	0
El Salvador	0
Ghana	0
Malawi	0
Morocco	0
Nicaragua	0
Nigeria	0
Papua New Guinea	0
Vietnam	0

The country's percentage score for Auditor's Reports was obtained by averaging the responses to Questions 112-114, and 116 on the Open Budget Questionnaire. The countries that scored 100-80 percent were placed in the performance category *Provides Substantial Information,* those with scores 79 percent or below, but more than 0 percent were placed in performance category *Provides Some Information,* those with scores of 0 percent were placed in the category *No Auditor's Report Made Available to the Public.*