

Overview



Transparency:

39 /100

(Open Budget Index score)



Public
Participation:

31 /100



Budget Oversight:

42 /100

About the survey

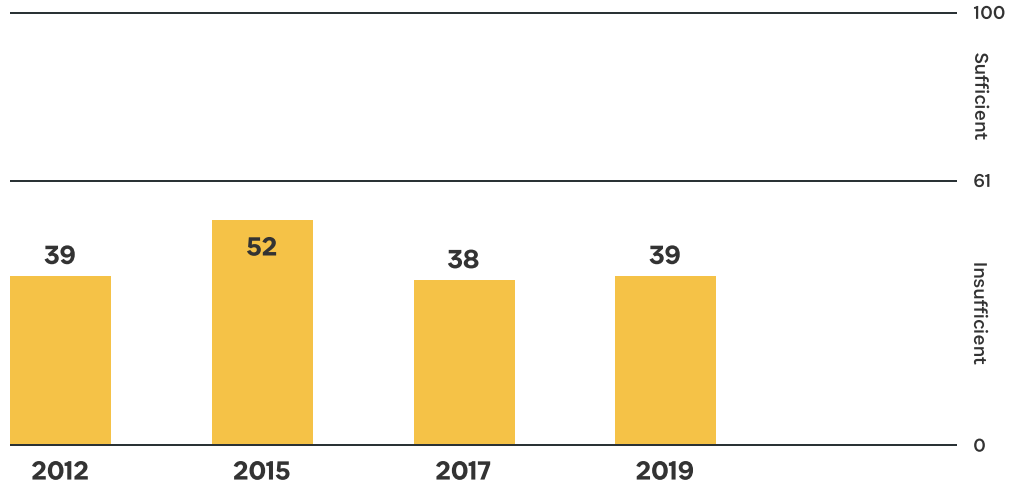
Government budget decisions – what taxes to levy, what services to provide, and how much debt to take on – affect how equal a society is and the well-being of its people, including whether the most disadvantaged will have real opportunities for a better life. It is critical that governments inform and engage the public on these vital decisions that impact their lives.

The Open Budget Survey (OBS) is the world's only independent, comparative and fact-based research instrument that uses internationally accepted criteria to assess public access to central government budget information; formal opportunities for the public to participate in the national budget process; and the role of budget oversight institutions such as the legislature and auditor in the budget process.

The survey helps local civil society assess and confer with their government on the reporting and use of public funds. This 7th edition of the OBS covers 117 countries.

Visit www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey ↗ for more information, including the full OBS methodology, the 2019 Global Report, findings for all surveyed countries, and the Data Explorer.

How has the transparency score for Sierra Leone changed over time?



Public availability of budget documents in Sierra Leone

- Available to the Public
- Published Late, or Not Published Online, or Produced for Internal Use Only
- ⊘ Not Produced

Document	2012	2015	2017	2019
Pre-Budget Statement	●	●	●	●
Executive's Budget Proposal	●	●	●	●
Enacted Budget	●	●	⊘	●
Citizens Budget	⊘	●	●	⊘
In-Year Reports	●	●	●	●
Mid-Year Review	●	●	●	●
Year-End Report	●	●	●	●
Audit Report	●	●	●	●

How comprehensive is the content of the key budget documents that Sierra Leone makes available to the public?

- 61-100 / 100
- 41-60 / 100
- 1-40 / 100

Key budget document	Document purpose and contents	Fiscal year assessed	Document content score
Pre-Budget Statement	Discloses the broad parameters of fiscal policies in advance of the Executive's Budget Proposal; outlines the government's economic forecast, anticipated revenue, expenditures, and debt.	2019	Published Late
Executive's Budget Proposal	Submitted by the executive to the legislature for approval; details the sources of revenue, the allocations to ministries, proposed policy changes, and other information important for understanding the country's fiscal situation.	2019	46
Enacted Budget	The budget that has been approved by the legislature.	2019	61
Citizens Budget	A simpler and less technical version of the government's Executive's Budget Proposal or the Enacted Budget, designed to convey key information to the public.	2018	Not Produced
In-Year Reports	Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.	2017 & 2018	33
Mid-Year Review	A comprehensive update on the implementation of the budget as of the middle of the fiscal year; includes a review of economic assumptions and an updated forecast of budget outcomes.	2018	Internal Use
Year-End Report	Describes the situation of the government's accounts at the end of the fiscal year and, ideally, an evaluation of the progress made toward achieving the budget's policy goals.	2017	45
Audit Report	Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts.	2016	62

Sierra Leone's transparency score of **39** in the OBS 2019 is near its score in 2017.

What changed in OBS 2019?

Sierra Leone has increased the availability of budget information by:

- Publishing the Enacted Budget and Year-End Report online.

However, Sierra Leone has decreased the availability of budget information by:

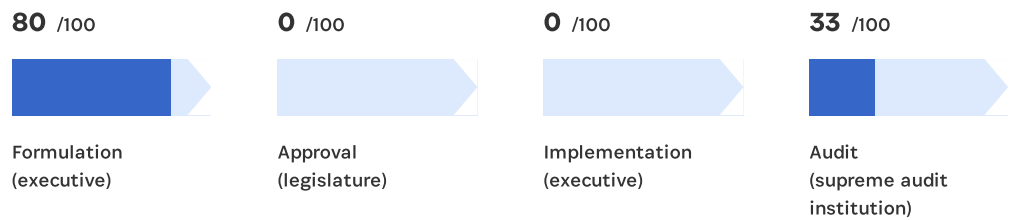
- Failing to produce the Citizens Budget for the Executive's Budget Proposal or Enacted Budget.
- Reducing the information provided in the Executive's Budget Proposal by removing figures on total domestic debt and tax expenditures.

Recommendations

Sierra Leone should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Publish the Pre-Budget Statement and Mid-Year Review online in a timely manner. The Pre-Budget Statement should be published online at least one month before the Executive's Budget Proposal is submitted to Parliament, while the Mid-Year Review should be published no later than three months after the mid-point of the fiscal year.
- Produce and publish the Citizens Budget for the Executive's Budget Proposal or Enacted Budget online in a timely manner. While Sierra Leone did produce and publish citizens versions of the Supplementary Budget and Audit Report during the research period for this OBS, it did not publish a simplified version of either the Executive's Budget Proposal or Enacted Budget.
- Include expenditure and policy information in the Executive's Budget Proposal. This includes publishing estimates of all expenditure by administrative, economic, and functional classification for previous, current, and future years, as well as estimates that show how all new policy proposals affect expenditures and revenues.
- Include debt information and detailed actual outcomes for expenditures in the Year-End Report. Information on domestic debt should also be included in the Year-End Report.
- Improve the comprehensiveness of the In-Year Reports.

Extent of opportunities for public participation in the budget process



few: 0 - 40; limited: 41 - 60; adequate: 61 - 100

Recommendations

Sierra Leone's Ministry of Finance has established pre-budget deliberations during budget formulation but, to further strengthen public participation in the budget process, should also prioritize the following actions:

- Pilot mechanisms to monitor budget implementation.
- Actively engage with vulnerable and underrepresented communities, directly or through civil society organizations representing them.

Sierra Leone's Parliament should prioritize the following actions:

- Allow members of the public or civil society organizations to testify during its hearings on the budget proposal prior to its approval.
- Allow members of the public or civil society organizations to testify during its hearings on the Audit Report.

Sierra Leone's Audit Service has established mechanisms for the public to assist in developing its audit program. It should prioritize the following actions to improve public participation in the budget process:

- Establish formal mechanisms for the public to contribute to relevant audit investigations.

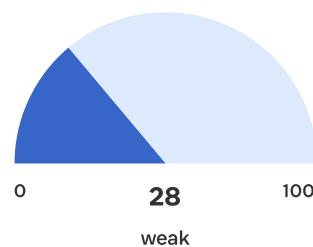


Budget Oversight

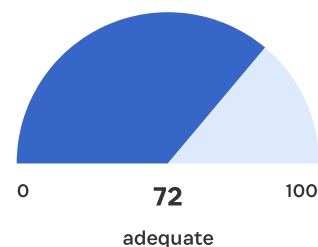
The OBS also examines the role that legislatures and supreme audit institutions (SAIs) play in the budget process and the extent to which they provide oversight; each country is scored on a scale from 0 to 100 based on 18 equally weighted indicators. In addition, the survey collects supplementary information on independent fiscal institutions (see Box).

The legislature and supreme audit institution in Sierra Leone, together, provide limited oversight during the budget process, with a composite oversight score of **42** (out of 100). Taken individually, the extent of each institution's oversight is shown below:

Legislative oversight



Audit oversight



weak: 0 - 40; limited: 41 - 60; adequate: 61 - 100

Recommendations

Sierra Leone's Parliament provides weak oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and weak oversight during the implementation stage. To improve oversight, the following actions should be prioritized:

- The legislature should debate budget policy before the Executive's Budget Proposal is tabled and approve recommendations for the upcoming budget.
- The Executive's Budget Proposal should be submitted to legislators at least two months before the start of the budget year.
- Legislative committees should examine the Executive's Budget Proposal and publish reports with their analysis online.

- A legislative committee should examine in-year budget implementation and publish reports with their findings online.
- In practice, ensure the legislature is consulted before the executive shifts funds specified in the Enacted Budget between administrative units; spends any unanticipated revenue; or reduces spending due to revenue shortfalls during the budget year.
- A legislative committee should examine the Audit Report and publish a report with their findings online.

To strengthen its independence and improve audit oversight by Sierra Leone's Audit Service, the following actions are recommended:

- Ensure the supreme audit institution has adequate funding to perform its duties, as determined by an independent body (e.g., the legislature or judiciary).
- Ensure audit processes are reviewed by an independent agency.

The emerging practice of establishing independent fiscal institutions

Sierra Leone's independent fiscal institution (IFI) is the Parliamentary Budget Office. Its independence is not set in law, and it reports to the legislature. It publishes an assessment of the official fiscal forecasts produced by the executive.

**The indicators for IFIs are *not* scored*

Methodology

- Only documents published and events, activities, or developments that took place through 31 December 2018 were assessed in the OBS 2019.
- The survey is based on a questionnaire completed in each country by an independent budget expert:
Abu Bakarr Kamara
Budget Advocacy Network (BAN)
22E Carlton Carew Road, Freetown, Sierra Leone
abkamara@bansl.org
- To further strengthen the research, each country's draft questionnaire is also reviewed by an anonymous independent expert, and in Sierra Leone by a representative of the Ministry of Finance.