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## **Sierra Leone Improves in Global Rankings on Budget Transparency**

**Freetown, Sierra Leone, May 31<sup>st</sup>**, – Sierra Leone has improved, slightly, on public access to budget information, according to the International Budget Partnership’s Open Budget Survey 2021 report. The Open Budget Survey is the world’s only comparative, independent and regular assessment of transparency, oversight and public participation in public budgets in 120 countries.

Sierra Leone’s transparency score increased from 39 out of 100 in 2019 to 45 out of 100 in 2021, which is the global average score. This means that citizens still have limited access to the information they need to participate in decision making and hold the government to account. The publication of the citizens budget in a timely manner contributed to the slight improvement in the transparency scores. Budget oversight also slightly improved from 42 out of 100 to 46 out of 100. More importantly, Sierra Leone’s public participation (31 out of 100) is more than two folds the global average (14 out of 100).

“Sierra Leone is making some strides towards improving transparency and budget oversight by way of having a strategy to improve the Open Budget scores,” said Abu Bakarr Kamara, the Coordinator of Budget Advocacy Network, which conducted the research for Sierra Leone. However, more needs to be done to ensure that citizens have access to adequate information that will enable them to participate in decision making and hold government to account by providing more detailed information on the Executive Budget Proposal, publishing the Mid-Year Review Report and the Pre-Budget Statement on time”

“Accountability systems are still weak globally, but several countries like South Africa, Mexico and the likes are showing that where there is political will, progress is possible,” said Anjali Garg, head of the Open Budget Survey. “Open budget practices are a winning proposition –they build public trust that governments can deliver and can lead to lower borrowing costs at a time when global debt and inequality is at all-time high. We hope more countries will be emboldened to open up their budget process to public consultation and scrutiny to ensure scarce resources reach those who need them most.”

Somewhat surprisingly, the pandemic did not undo hard-fought gains in transparent and accountable spending practices worldwide. Most countries were able to maintain, and in some cases build on earlier gains, thanks to increased digitalization of information and the institutionalization of accountability practices. The average transparency score has increased more than 20 percent since 2008.

However, the survey found that legislative oversight has declined. Some executive governments have found ways to undermine Supreme Audit Institutions. Only 31 percent of countries provide sufficiently detailed information to understand how their budget addresses poverty and only 14 percent present their expenditures by gender. Only 8 countries worldwide have formal channels to engage underserved communities in budget processes.

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