

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Public Participation in Budget Processes

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Author: Anoukh de Soysa

Reviewer: Matthew Jenkins

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WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING?

Participatory Budgeting is broadly defined as a process or mechanism through which citizens participate in decision-making around the allocation of public resources (Wampler cited in Shah 2007). This may be more narrowly defined as a process by which citizens, acting as individuals or represented through civic associations, voluntarily and regularly contribute to decision-making at a certain stage(s) of a budget cycle (Goldfrank 2006). Through public participation in the budget process, Participatory Budgeting can reinforce democratic legitimacy and serve as an important tool of vertical accountability.¹

The budget cycle, whether it is at a national or state/local level, is typically a year-long process divided into four main stages: formulation, approval, execution, and oversight (Ramkumar 2008). Distinct stakeholders are involved in different decisions at each stage of the budget cycle. In the budget formulation stage, the executive branch of a national government, or its equivalent at the local level, puts together the budget plan. During budget approval, the relevant legislative branch debates, alters, and approves the tabled plan. Once the plan is approved, the executive branch of the national or local government implements the budgeted policies during the budget execution stage, producing reports on expenditure in the process. In the final stage of the cycle, the national or supreme audit institution and legislature, or the appropriate local equivalent, independently account for and evaluate expenditure made under the budget (IBP 2010).

While participatory mechanisms can be introduced at each of these stages, the process of Participatory Budgeting is most common in the pre-budget phase of the budget cycle—i.e., during budget formulation (OECD 2019). Budget formulation is less technical than post-budget stages of the budget cycle and can thus be more readily attuned to gather the needs and priorities of communities through public input at the start of the budget process.

Similarly, while participatory practices exist across the budget process, including at the national or central level, opportunities for public engagement in budget formulation are primarily situated at the local level (Wampler & Touchton 2017). As the level of government with greatest proximity to citizens, local governments are ideally placed to facilitate public participation in decision-making processes and, in principle, best suited to

¹ Vertical accountability refers to the relationship between public officials (agents) and citizens (principals), and specifically to the capacity of citizens to directly hold public officials to account. Routes to vertical accountability include formal institutional channels such as free and fair elections or a range of informal, bottom-up initiatives to improve the openness of institutions and broaden public participation in decision-making process.

understand local needs and priorities (UNHRC 2015). This proximity to the public makes local government a natural conduit for Participatory Budgeting.

However, as Participatory Budgeting initiatives and programmes are generally structured in response to unique political, social, and economic contexts (Wampler 2000), it is difficult to propose a single approach or model as being universally replicable. Instead, cross-country studies (Miller & Matic 2017; Sintomer et al 2010) that have reviewed Participatory Budgeting initiatives identify the following common features and elements:

- **Set-Up:** The government or executive initiates the project; a certain portion of the budget is designated for citizen input; and an area or municipality is divided into regions to facilitate public meetings. The meetings serve as a venue to understand and ascertain community needs and priorities and allocate resources accordingly.
- **Engagement:** The government organises information programmes, outreach campaigns, and public orientation meetings on the budget; civil society organisations support public comprehension of the process and encourage public engagement.
- **Discussion:** Participants deliberate, negotiate, and vote for proposals at public meetings, and allocate funding for projects to be included in the budget.
- **Approval:** Elected officials approve and adopt the budget proposed by the participants; the legislature or a similar entity may also be involved in this process.
- **Oversight:** Committees, including citizen participants, are established to produce reports and monitor budget implementation throughout the budget cycle.

The features listed above are largely taken from the experiences of Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil. It is in this municipality that the modern practice of Participatory Budgeting emerged in 1989 and has since been adopted and adapted by over 1,700 local governments across 40 countries (Cabannes 2015). While it continues to be most widely implemented at the municipal level, in towns, villages, and cities, variations of the original model of Participatory Budgeting now exist at all levels of government including counties, states, and national governments (Wampler, McNulty, & Touchton 2018).

To help distinguish between thousands of Participatory Budgeting experiences, Sintomer et al, (2010) propose a typology of six distinct, idealised models constructed around four key criteria:

1. **Origin:** The origin of Participatory Budgeting
2. **Organisation:** The organisation of meetings
3. **Deliberation:** The scope and quality of deliberation
4. **Civil Society:** The nature of the participants and the role of civil society in general.

The following table² provides an overview of each model, and how they relate to each of the criteria.

² The six models outlined in the table are discussed in greater detail by Sintomer et al (2010) and the University of Rostock 2020. For ease of reference, however, the following **Glossary** describes select terms used in the table:

<i>POA Model</i>	Porto Alegre Model
<i>Alterglobalist Movement</i>	A social movement in support of global cooperation and interaction, but one which opposes the negative effects of economic globalisation. The movement is characterised by “the demand for ‘another way’; i.e., a world in which human rights, freedom, and justice would be recognised within globalisation (Moore 2011).
Participatory Cycle	A project cycle through which participatory processes are promoted and incorporated across different stages of project design and implementation (IFAD 2001).
Distributive Justice	The public’s perceived fairness of resource allocations, or how the public perceives what they receive through a distributive process (Cropanzano & Molina 2015).
Proximity Management	A management concept that facilitates coexistence of effective working relationships and paradigms of mutual respect in contexts of asymmetric power (Bourion & Persson 2006).
Neo-Corporatist Projects	Projects characterised by the tripartite partnership of a strong centralised state and the critical interest groups of capital (or employers) and labour (Barry Jones 2001).
Agenda 21s	Global, national, and local plans of action around a comprehensive range of areas in which humans impact the environment (UNCED 1992).
NPM	New Public Management (NPM) refers to a diverse range of management theories, reforms, or techniques often characterised by, <i>inter alia</i> , strategies, autonomous management, new budgeting systems, innovation, accountability, transparency, performance measurement, and a private-sector style of management (Caperchione 2006)

	1. Adaption of Porto Alegre	2. Proximity participation	3. Consultation on public finance	4. Multi- stakeholder participation	5. Community participatory budgeting	6. Participation of organised interests
Origins	- Adaptation of the POA model; often, break with existing traditions - A standardised procedure in the alterglobalist movement	- Neighbourhood councils, neighbourhood funds, proximity management, extension to town level - Not very standardised procedure	- Reformmodell - The public services reform in Christchurch (New Zealand), participatory versions of NPM, strategic planning - A procedure standardised by foundations	- Participatory version of public/private partnerships - A certain degree of standardisation through international organisations	- Community development projects and empowerment (in the framework of general urban regeneration policies) - A certain standardisation due to NGOs	- Local neo-corporatist projects, Agenda 21s, participatory strategic planning, participatory procedures for local NGOs - A certain standardisation due to international organisations
Organisation of meetings	- Open meetings at neighbourhood level, delegates at town level - Participatory cycle	- Open meetings at neighbourhood and town level - Participatory cycle	- Open meetings (or meetings with citizens selected at random) at town level - Frequently no participatory cycle	- Closed meetings at town level - Not necessarily a participatory cycle	- Different kinds of meetings at neighbourhood level, delegates at town level - Not necessarily a participatory cycle	- Closed meetings at town level - Not necessarily a participatory cycle
Deliberation	- Discussion centred on public investments - Projects ranked according to criteria of distributive justice, formalised rules - Good quality of deliberation	- Discussion centred on micro-local public investments or broad guidelines of town policy - No ranking of investments or actions, informal rules - Average to weak quality of deliberation	- Discussion centred on overall budget or offer of services - No ranking of services, possible ranking of priorities, rather informal rules - Poor quality of deliberation	- Discussion centred on concrete projects financed by public/private partnerships - Projects ranked, formal rules - Good to average quality of deliberation	- Discussion centred on concrete community projects - Projects ranked, formal rules - Good to average quality of deliberation	- Discussion centred on various public policies and possibly on specific projects - Flexible ranking of major guidelines, rules not necessarily formalised - Variable quality of deliberation
Civil society	- Particularly active citizens (or organised groups) - Civil society has genuine procedural autonomy - Decision-making power	- Particularly active citizens (or organised groups) - Civil society has little procedural autonomy - Consultative role	- Active or ordinary (randomly selected) citizens - Civil society has little procedural autonomy - Consultative role	- Organised citizens together with private enterprise - Civil society has little procedural autonomy - Decision-making power	- Especially organised citizens - Civil society has genuine procedural autonomy - Decision-making power	- Organised citizens/ local institutions/ employers' unions - Very variable degree of autonomy for civil society - Variable power

Source: Sintomer et al, 2010

These models underscore the fact that there is limited consensus on a single approach to Participatory Budgeting. In approaches that adapt the Porto Alegre model, or even 'Community Participatory Budgeting', the focus of deliberations, for instance, centres around concrete public investments. In contrast, in the 'organised interests' model, discussions focus on public policies and political objectives. Similar distinctions and variances are evident across all six models under each criterion.

These distinctions, though idealised for theoretical purposes, help elucidate the varying nature and diversity of Participatory Budgeting initiatives. In doing so, these models also

highlight the contrasting depth and ‘quality’ of public participation in budget processes—as further illustrated in the case-studies below. Fundamentally, these distinctions provide a framework to examine and assess the extent to which citizens and civil society can meaningfully influence decision-making around the distribution, or allocation, of public resources.

Participatory Budgeting in Practice

The concept of Participatory Budgeting has proliferated rapidly since its inception in 1989 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Today, thousands of people across towns, villages, cities, states, and countries participate in various decision-making processes around the distribution of resources. Often supported by different combinations of enabling factors, a number of these cases stand out as potentially replicable cases of best practice.

Although the specific mechanism of Participatory Budgeting is most associated with the budget formulation stage of the budget cycle, the cases outlined below provide a brief snapshot of how the concept has evolved and expanded over time, and how the underlying principle of public participation is applied with great effect, in different ways, throughout the budget process.

In **Brazil**, the concept of Participatory Budgeting has been implemented in over 350 municipalities (Ardigó 2019). While the pioneering and successful case of Porto Alegre is the focus of extensive literature (Wampler & Touchton 2014; Cabannes 2015; Goncalves 2014), the case of Belo Horizonte provides an interesting example of how the municipal government successfully leveraged technology and strengthened inclusive participation in the budget process.

In 2006, when the municipality introduced electronic voting on budget proposals, it anticipated issues around equitable access to internet. The municipality provided mobile ‘Digital Inclusion Centres’ across the region to ensure that all citizens could use the electronic voting system and that digital literacy was not a barrier to participation (Prefeitura BH n.d.). This e-Participatory Budgeting initiative resulted in the participation of nearly 10% of 1.7 million electors—a significant achievement in the domain of e-democracy (Malena & Khallaf n.d.). In 2008, building on this success, the municipality introduced a toll-free number to facilitate voting on budget proposals via telephone (Miller & Matic 2017).

A similar initiative was undertaken in **Estonia**, though citizens were found to possess a high degree of digital literacy, and the municipality had high-levels of technical capacity, sharpened by years of running technology-based programmes. Here, existing e-

governance systems were integrated into Participatory Budgeting processes, enabling citizens to vote on budgets almost exclusively through digital platforms (Krenjova & Raudla 2017; Ardigó 2019).

In **South Korea**, Participatory Budgeting has been practiced for several years at the level of local government with significant success. Since 2003, extensive public participation mechanisms have been introduced in parallel with budget reforms. One such mechanism is the 'Open Discussion', where citizens are invited to a public meeting hall to discuss expenditure ceilings and programme priorities for 12 sectors over five or six days. The discussions are also televised nationally (IMF 2018). Public input into the budget is also facilitated through field trips organised by the Ministry of Finance to learn about local contexts (IBP 2012).

In the **Philippines**, the grassroots participatory budgeting (GPB) initiative has received global acclaim for its success in deepening citizen engagement in the budget process (Official Gazette 2014). Through the initiative, GPB has worked to bring together local communities, CSOs, and government stakeholders in over 1,500 cities and municipalities to propose projects to be included in the national budget (Morgner & Chêne 2015).

In **Argentina**, the municipality of Rosario implements successful Participatory Budgeting initiatives in collaboration with young people. Here, youth are elected on to youth councils which are empowered to decide on budget allocations for youth services. The success of this effort has had a positive knock-on effect on youth participation in other areas of municipal governance as well (Avis 2015).

In the area of monitoring budget implementation, **France** and the city of Paris provides a particularly strong example, with the publication of a [website](#) that lists projects being implemented and features implementation updates. In Malaga (**Spain**) and South Kivu (**Congo**) citizens can register for SMS updates around project implementation (Miller & Matic 2017).

These diverse case-studies merely scratch the surface of the numerous innovative initiatives being implemented in the area of Participatory Budgeting. This mechanism is in itself a subset of the diverse participatory approaches that may be adopted across the budget cycle. Having described the specific mechanism of Participatory Budgeting, the next sections discuss the broader case for public participation in the budget process, key enablers of such participation, and ways in which such participation can be assessed.

PARTICIPATION IN THE BUDGET PROCESS

Public participation entails direct engagement between members of the public and public officials on public policies (Transparency International 2021). Members of the public may include taxpayers acting in individual capacities, civil society organisations, and other non-state actors (GIFT, 2015). There are two kinds of overlapping spaces in which such participation can take place: 1) 'invited' institutionalised spaces, initiated 'from above' by state actors, or 2) 'autonomous' non-institutionalised spaces, claimed 'from below' by non-state actors (Haider 2012). Evidence suggests that successful participative initiatives are often found at a confluence of these spaces which combine supply and demand-side factors (Carlitz 2012).

Participation in budget and fiscal processes can take many different forms. This may range from informal one-off public consultations to more formal, institutional mechanisms at various stages of the budget cycle. Formal processes and mechanisms of public participation in the budget cycle include Participatory Budgeting, Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS), and Social Audits or Quantitative Service Delivery Surveys (QSDS). These processes aim to introduce participation at different stages of the budget cycle and thus serve distinct purposes. PETS and QSDS, for example, support participatory expenditure monitoring during and after budget execution, to ensure that allocated funds are spent as intended (Ramkumar, 2008). Participatory Budgeting, in contrast, is often implemented at the pre-budget phase and primarily contributes to budget formulation.

The proliferation and success of participatory processes and mechanisms across the budget cycle point to a shift away from the view that the public has insufficient knowledge or expertise to contribute to the budget process (de Renzio 2015). This growing recognition of the importance of public participation has been reflected in key global standards and principles.

In 2012, for example, the Global Initiative on Fiscal Transparency (GIFT)³ outlined ten high-level principles on fiscal transparency, participation, and accountability (GIFT 2012). These principles include reference to public participation in fiscal policies; encouraging policy makers to ensure that citizens can exercise the right to participate directly in public debate and discussion over the design and implementation of fiscal policies. Similarly, in 2014, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) updated its' Fiscal Transparency Code (FTC) to include a principle (Principle 2.3.3) around public participation in budget preparation and execution

³ The GIFT Network includes the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank Group, the International Budget Partnership (IBP), the International Federation of Accountants (IFAF), and the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Programme (PEFA).

(IMF 2014; 2019). A year later, the OECD’s principles of good budgetary governance also called on member states to ‘provide for an inclusive, participative, and realistic debate on budget choices’ (OECD 2015).

While these standards and principles broadly recognise the importance of public participation in budget and fiscal processes, GIFT has built on this foundation to elaborate a more comprehensive, dedicated framework (GIFT 2015). Through ten interdependent principles, as described in the table below, GIFT provides useful guidance and outlines key supply-side considerations for any public authority or stakeholder looking to introduce or advocate for effective participatory mechanisms in budget processes. In general, the principles—which range from ensuring access to fiscal information to allowing appropriate and sufficient time for public input—aim to ensure that citizens and other non-governmental stakeholders can participate meaningfully at every stage of the budget process.

GIFT’s Ten Principles of Public Participation in Fiscal Policy

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>1. Accessibility</i>	Facilitate public participation in general by disseminating complete fiscal information and all other relevant data, in formats and using mechanisms that are easy for all to access, understand, and to use, re-use and transform, namely in open data formats.
<i>2. Openness</i>	Provide full information on and be responsive with respect to the purpose of each engagement, its scope, constraints, intended outcomes, process and timelines, as well as the expected and actual results of public participation.
<i>3. Inclusiveness</i>	Pro-actively use multiple mechanisms to reach out to engage citizens and non-state actors, including traditionally excluded and vulnerable groups and individuals, and voices that are seldom heard, without discrimination on any basis including nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age or caste; and consider public inputs on an objective basis irrespective of their source.
<i>4. Respect for Self-Expression</i>	Allow and support individuals and communities, including those directly affected, to articulate their interests in their own ways, and to choose means of engagement that they prefer, while recognising that there may be groups that have standing to speak on behalf of others.
<i>5. Timeliness</i>	Allow sufficient time in the budget and policy cycles for the public to provide inputs in each phase; engage early while a range of options is still open; and, where desirable, allow for more than one round of engagement.
<i>6. Depth</i>	Support each public engagement by providing all relevant information, highlighting and informing key policy objectives, options, choices and trade-offs, identifying potential social, economic, and environmental impacts, and incorporating a diversity of perspectives; provide timely and specific feedback on public inputs and how they have been incorporated or not in official policy or advice.
<i>7. Proportionality</i>	Use a mix of engagement mechanisms proportionate to the scale and impact of the issue or policy concerned.

8. <i>Sustainability</i>	All state and non-state entities conduct on-going and regular engagement to increase knowledge sharing and mutual trust over time; institutionalise public participation where appropriate and effective, ensuring that feedback provided leads to review of fiscal policy decisions; and regularly review and evaluate experience to improve future engagement.
9. <i>Complementarity</i>	Ensure mechanisms for public participation and citizen engagement complement and increase the effectiveness of existing governance and accountability systems.
10. <i>Reciprocity</i>	All state and non-state entities taking part in public engagement activities should be open about their mission, the interests they seek to advance, and who they represent; should commit to and observe all agreed rules for engagement; and should cooperate to achieve the objectives of the engagement.

Source: *Global Initiative on Fiscal Transparency, 2015*

These principles represent important supply-side factors that state actors should consider when initiating participatory processes in ‘invited’ institutionalised spaces. However, as successful participative initiatives often combine supply and demand-side factors, it is also important to make the case for public participation in budget processes. These demand-side factors, as discussed below, form the basis of civil society advocacy in favour of greater public participation.

The Case for Public Participation in the Budget Process

The popularity and appeal of efforts to introduce participation in the budget process are premised on a recognition of the value it can bring. Whether it is to strengthen democracy, promote transparency and accountability, enhance inclusivity, or improve fiscal efficiency, meaningful public participation in the budget process can lead to a variety of positive outcomes for different stakeholders. These outcomes are summarised below.

Strengthen Democracy & Governance

Public participation in the budget process presents an opportunity to revitalise democracies by engaging citizens in fundamental decisions (IBP 2013; Schugurensky 2004). This is particularly important in the global context of democratic deficits and dwindling trust in politicians and political institutions (Torcal & Christmann 2021). In such contexts, open, participative processes can help empower citizens, overcome public distrust, and increase the legitimacy of government (Tanaka, 2007).

The process of Participatory Budgeting reinforces this narrative. Stemming from a political project that aimed to generate greater citizen involvement in democratic venues (Wampler & Touchton 2017), Participatory Budgeting was originally intended as a ‘radical democratic effort’ (Wampler et al 2018). More recently, Participatory Budgeting has evolved to gain

wide acceptance as a viable tool for enhancing local democracy, while working within the context of a modern, complex state (Wampler & Touchton 2017).

Participatory Budgeting addresses and enhances the continuity of democracy by providing venues for governments to engage citizens between—or beyond—elections; fostering an active and informed citizenry, and civil society, to provide checks and balances on the budget process; and deepening debate and enabling wider consensus around difficult issues and policy trade-offs (Shapiro 2001).

Promote Transparency & Accountability

A transparent budget process is an important precursor to meaningful public participation. An informed public will be able to access and understand the process of budget formulation, the elements and components of a proposed budget, and access information on budget expenditure and implementation. In turn, an informed public will be able to engage in meaningful deliberation with other stakeholders in the budget process. That said, budget transparency, or an informed public, does not on its own lead to greater public participation. As discussed later in this paper, state actors and civil society organisations also have crucial roles to play in proactively leveraging budget transparency to enable and facilitate participation.

Similarly, meaningful public participation, through formal or informal processes, stands to enhance transparency and accountability at different stages of the budget cycle (Morgner & Chêne 2014). In opening the budget process to public participation and scrutiny, citizens are empowered to hold governments accountable and ensure that duty-bearers are responsive and responsible for the decisions they make (Malena & Khallaf n.d). As a result, effective public participation in the budget process reduces opportunities for corruption (OECD 2017) and supports the creation of a community of citizen-led corruption monitors (Miller & Matic 2017). This critical outcome has been widely substantiated by cases that demonstrate positive association between participation, responsiveness, and accountability (Speer 2012).

Enhance Inclusivity & Improve Lives

Broadly speaking, public participation in decision-making processes has been shown to improve the lives of citizens (Wampler & Touchton 2014; Goncalves 2014). As budget decisions have a particularly significant impact on the lives of citizens, it follows that citizens should be able to participate in and influence the design and implementation of budgets (Tanaka 2007). Through such efforts, citizens can ensure that public resources are

allocated to respond to their needs and priorities and tangentially strengthen citizen-government relations (Malena & Khallaf n.d).

In addition to ensuring that a budget reflects the needs and priorities of citizens, participatory processes also present an important opportunity to deliver resources to under-represented and under-serviced communities (Wampler & Touchton 2017). Specifically, processes like Participatory Budgeting can proactively foster and provide inclusive spaces for under-represented communities to table their priorities. In this way, public participation in the budget process can contribute to enhancing inclusivity in decision-making processes, strengthen social harmony (Transparency International 2021) and contribute to efforts to ensure that no one is left behind.

Improve Service Delivery & Fiscal Efficiency

Closely linked to the outcome of improving lives, public participation in the budget process can also contribute to better planning, increased responsiveness, improved public service delivery, and more efficient, and impactful, allocation of resources (Transparency International 2021; OECD 2017). While participatory processes address democratic deficits, it is this service delivery angle, and the ability to respond to citizen demand, that carries most appeal to many governments and international organisations (Wampler & Touchton 2017).

Involving citizens early in the budget process can help governments pre-empt and better understand the potential impact of a decision on a community and, importantly, guard against unintended consequences (IBP 2012). Evidence suggests that the use of Participatory Budgeting, for example, leads to resources being allocated in line with popular preferences (Goncalves 2014). Later in the process, citizen participation can help to monitor expenditure and ensure that budgeted projects are completed in a timely fashion (Miller & Matioc 2017).

The outcomes associated with public participation in the budget process help to explain why mechanisms like Participatory Budgeting have gained significant global support. These outcomes appeal to a broad spectrum of stakeholders and provide diverse incentives to support and engage in participatory processes. Local governments may support a participatory process to build political support, distribute resources more equitably, and promote transparent governance. Citizens enjoy increased access to decision-making venues, gain access to information, and are empowered to directly influence the trajectory and quality of services they receive. Civil society can act as intermediaries between governments and citizens, serving as advocates, activists, critics, or even participants of a process (Wampler 2000).

Qualifiers

While the outcomes outlined above make a compelling case for public participation in the budget process, some critics remain sceptical about its transformational potential. Some argue, for instance, that citizens do not have sufficient knowledge or expertise to justify their participation in the budget process (de Renzio 2015). This position has, however, been changing thanks in part to the interlocutory role of civil society in simplifying and improving citizen access to, and understanding of, budgets, participatory processes, and related information.

Other observers have suggested that processes like Participatory Budgeting have failed to foster political emancipation and have instead been hijacked to reinforce existing political power structures (Kuruppu et al 2016). Cabannes (2015), for example, observed that although most Participatory Budgeting initiatives resulted in improved governance and service delivery, they often did not fundamentally change existing power imbalances between governments and citizens. This may be compounded where governments perceive participatory processes as undermining the decision-making discretion of government, diverting funds away from projects that government officials consider crucial, or inhibiting the professionalisation of their functions (Gillman 2016; Haider 2012).

There is also contradictory evidence on the question of whether participatory processes improve equity and make institutions more inclusive (GSDRC 2015). Studies have found that participatory processes can either promote or exacerbate inequalities depending on who participates (Mansuri & Rao 2013). For example, requirements such as competitive application processes, or the use of a single central venue, can exclude under-represented communities from participatory processes and favour the select involvement of those that are literate, geographically central, or best connected to those in power. In such circumstances, citizens are likely to view the effort as being tokenistic, resulting in apathy or disengagement from the process (GSDRC, 2015).

Although these qualifiers do not discredit the value of public participation in decision-making processes, they do emphasise the critical importance of carefully designing and framing such initiatives. Key considerations include eliminating exclusionary barriers to entry; ensuring that all groups of citizens, without exception, can participate meaningfully and indiscriminately; and ensuring that any participatory process is premised and promoted on a strong understanding of the operating context. In addition, the concern over power imbalances reinforces the need for participatory initiatives to be accompanied by credible mechanisms of accountability (Mansuri & Rao 2013). It also stresses the importance of clear messaging and promotion of the multifaceted value that participatory processes and mechanisms offer.

ENABLERS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE BUDGET PROCESS

Although public participation in the budget process appeals to a broad range of stakeholders for diverse reasons, participation does not occur or arise in a vacuum (Wampler & Touchton 2017). It requires careful consideration and enabling structures that provide accessible and inclusive spaces for meaningful participation. The key elements, or essential pre-conditions, of effective participation in budget processes include the availability and accessibility of budget information; strong political will; appropriate legal and bureaucratic frameworks; adequate resources; and an organised civil society (Wampler et al 2018; Miller & Matioc 2017).

Budget Information & Transparency

The availability of, and easy access to, budget-related information is a necessary pre-requisite of public participation in the budget process. The inability to access such information prevents the public or civil society stakeholders from making informed choices and contributing meaningfully to budget deliberations. For example, according to surveys by the International Budget Partnership (IBP), several countries do not even publish the government's budget proposals. As a result, civil society efforts to promote public participation in the budget process often begin with advocacy to strengthen transparency and access to budget information (Kukutschka 2016).

There is extensive literature, guidance, and standards around how stakeholders can work to promote budget transparency (OECD n.d.). Notable global standards include the International Monetary Fund's Fiscal Transparency Code (IMF 2014), the high-level principles on fiscal transparency by the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT 2012), and the OECD's Principles on Budgetary Governance (OECD 2015). These standards have been supplemented with a variety of guidance material ranging from the IMF's Fiscal Transparency Handbook (IMF 2018) and the OECD's Budget Transparency Toolkit (OECD 2017) to the Guide to Transparency in Government Budget Reports by the International Budget Partnership (IBP 2010).

While budget transparency can promote public participation in budget processes it cannot alone guarantee such participation. As highlighted in the 2019 Open Budget Survey, not all countries with high levels of budget transparency provide meaningful opportunities for public participation (IBP 2020a). Jordan, for example, is ranked among the top countries in the MENA region on international measures of budget transparency but fails to translate

this into meaningful opportunities for public participation at any stage of the budget process (IBP 2019). According to Khagram et al (2013), greater transparency leads to improved public participation only under certain conditions. These conditions may include political transitions towards more democratic forms of deliberation, space for citizen oversight after publicised cases of corruption, or commonly external influences such as domestic reformers or civil society actors that promote global norms around public participation in decision-making processes (Carter 2013).

Political Will

Political will is a critical enabler of meaningful public participation in decision-making processes. If those in authority are not in favour or are unwilling to delegate decision-making power, mechanisms of participation are unlikely to yield expected outcomes. As budget formulation processes such as Participatory Budgeting fundamentally involve governments sharing the discretion to allocate funds with citizens, some degree of government support is essential to its success (Ardigó 2019).

Participatory programmes are more likely to succeed when government officials are committed to implementing them (Wampler & Touchton 2014). In fact, case-studies have demonstrated that when Participatory Budgeting efforts are initiated by government officials ('invited spaces' of participation), the officials have been largely committed to the process (Haider 2012). Similarly, and unsurprisingly, it follows that participatory processes across the budget cycle are more likely to succeed if there is weak or non-existent opposition from politicians (Miller & Matioc 2017). As a result, international institutions, and other non-governmental stakeholders, that fund and support participatory programmes often look for government 'champions' to lead and commit to such reform (Wampler & Touchton 2014).

In cases where governments entirely exclude the public—or where there is an apparent lack of political will to provide opportunities for public participation in budget processes—alternative budget initiatives, such as parallel budgeting, provide a potential avenue to highlight limitations and shortcomings of the government's budget process (Kukutschka 2016). Although such initiatives are highly technical, resource intensive, and require the cooperation of broad alliances of civil society, parallel budgets can serve as a compelling advocacy strategy and encourage governments to provide space for public participation in budget processes.

Civil society can also use other strategies and approaches to increase buy-in from government officials and raise political will for greater and more meaningful participation in budget processes. This may include direct advocacy with key officials or widely promoting the manifold benefits that arise for different stakeholders through greater

public participation in budget processes. If officials are reluctant to engage in such reform processes, civil society can consider a variety of [strategies](#) to stimulate engagement. This may include using robust evidence to convince officials of the value of public participation, seizing appropriate entry-points, working in broad coalitions, and adopting effective communication strategies to appeal to interests and incentives (de Soysa 2022).

Efforts to carve out spaces for public participation in budget and policy-making processes have mainly been led by civil society (Schouten & Powell 2021). While civil society remains a key enabler of public participation (as examined below), the importance of political will and a favourable political economy highlight the vital role that national and local government officials stand to play in formalising, sustaining, and scaling up channels for greater public participation.

Legal Mandates

Supplementing—or feasibly enforcing—political will, appropriate legal mandates can also help to define and foster an enabling environment for public participation. In 2004, Indonesia became the second country in the world, after Peru in 2003, to introduce legislation defining a bottom-up planning and budgeting mechanism (MNDP 2004). Since 2014, the related Law on Village (Number 6 of 2014) obliges the national government to transfer 10% of its revenue to 74,000 villages across Indonesia, with guidelines for the allocation of these funds to be defined through a Participatory Budgeting process. Although this law does not specify a methodology or regulatory mechanism, it does explicitly provide for the involvement of a wide variety of non-governmental stakeholders in the budgeting process (Participatory Budgeting World Atlas n.d.).

Operational Frameworks

The growing interest in legal mandates suggests that participatory approaches to decision-making succeed when they are compatible with national or local legal frameworks. It is equally crucial that such approaches complement, or do not undermine, bureaucratic protocols and established processes of representative democracy (OECD 2017). This includes ensuring that spaces and opportunities for participation are introduced at appropriate and timely junctures of the formal budget cycle. For example, public hearings in Parliament will be most beneficial and stand to enhance accountability when conducted in parallel with the legislative function of budget approval.

Further in this context, the quality of the budget process and system overall can also decisively impact public participation (Shapiro 2001). While an institutionalised, transparent, and efficient budget process is well placed to provide opportunities for

meaningful participation, an ad-hoc or malfunctioning process may limit the type and extent of engagement that citizens can partake in. If, for example, a budget system allows budget proposals to be submitted for public comment but also unduly restricts the time-period for such comment, citizens are likely to disengage and view the process as tokenistic. Best practice and established principles around public participation in the budget process (GIFT 2015) stand to provide especially useful guidance to ensure that the budget system is operationally set up to facilitate effective participation.

Resources

Financial and other resources play an important role in enabling and sustaining participation in the budget process. For example, appropriate investment by governments or other organising stakeholders in participatory programmes, technology, and infrastructure can help ensure that venues and channels are widely accessible and designed to facilitate inclusive participation. This may include ring-fencing a certain percentage of the budget to design and implement an impactful and inclusive participatory programme. Such investment is especially important as studies suggest that, by default, participants of community-driven projects tend to be wealthier, better educated, hold higher social status, or be better connected (Hough & Verdenicci 2015).

Studies have also found a positive correlation between the resources available for allocation by the public through participatory mechanisms and the corresponding impact of such mechanisms (Wampler et al 2018). If, for example, only a small portion of the budget is available for allocation via the participatory mechanism, such mechanisms are likely to “underwhelm expectations of participants” (Ardigó 2019) and lead to the disengagement of citizens in future iterations of the process (Cabannes 2015).

Civil Society

Civil society stakeholders are often concurrently advocates, interlocutors, participants, and enablers of participatory approaches to public decision-making. While public budgets are key instruments through which governments make such decisions, civil society is widely considered the “greatest tool” to ensure that people are part of that process (Shapiro 2001). In general, civil society can support wide participation in the budget process by, *inter alia*, campaigning for and supporting budget transparency, leading citizen engagement and awareness of budget processes, or even providing technical assistance and funding to implement a participatory process. In doing so, civil society can raise the standards of a budget process and improve budget outcomes overall.

The core contributions of civil society can be broadly categorised into four main areas: Advocacy, Accessibility, Assistance, and Accountability.

- **Advocacy:** Civil society activists play an important role in campaigning for (other) enablers of participation in budget processes. This may include advocating for greater budget transparency; campaigning for legislation mandating the adoption of participatory processes; or lobbying decision-makers to provide or make space for wider participation in decision-making processes.

As the key interlocutor between citizens and governments, civil society also rally and encourage citizens to participate in the budget process. This is done by raising awareness about opportunities and spaces for participation and highlighting the importance and value of citizen engagement in decision-making processes.

Civil society are also ideally—and functionally—positioned to represent, highlight, and advocate for the issues, needs, and priorities of under-represented groups in society. As civil society regularly work with different interest groups and sectors of society, they have unmatched capacity to elevate overlooked or marginalised voices and feed these perspectives into budget processes.

- **Accessibility:** Closely linked to the role of strengthening inclusion in participatory budget processes, civil society can also help to improve budget literacy and citizen access to the budget, budget information, and the budget process. This may entail a range of citizen education initiatives and applied budget work such as ‘de-mystifying’ arcane budgets and technical processes to support the participation of a wider range of stakeholders. The IBP, for example, recommends publishing ‘citizen budgets’ that eliminate technical jargon and make budgets simpler and more accessible to citizens (IBP 2012a; 2010).

In its role as an interlocutor, civil society can also facilitate increased access to invited or autonomous spaces of public participation in the budget process. This can include hosting citizen consultations on budget proposals in under-served areas, using local networks to increase the availability of participatory mechanisms, and leveraging technology such as ‘e-participation’ platforms (UNDESA n.d.) to augment participation as well.

- **Assistance:** In addition to leading education and awareness initiatives to improve citizen access to budget processes, civil society often possess the necessary expertise to provide technical assistance to governments or international organisations that may be interested in implementing or supporting participatory initiatives. This training and expertise are also often directed at increasing the

analytical and advocacy capacity of other civil society organisations to support stronger interventions and oversight of the budget process.

An invaluable component of such technical assistance is the capacity of civil society to conduct independent research to identify local and international best practices. These best practices can then be adapted to enhance approaches to public participation in budget processes and thus contribute to better budget policy. In addition, and crucially, civil society may also complement technical assistance with resources and financial assistance to support governments to establish or strengthen invited spaces for participation.

- **Accountability:** Another core function and competency of independent civil society is its capacity to reinforce channels of accountability. Through its applied budget work and independent analyses, for example, civil society can generate and publicise a wealth of accessible information that citizens, the legislature, or even the Auditor General can use to participate in budget deliberations, monitor progress on budget commitments, and hold governments accountable.

Civil society also directly promotes greater accountability by, *inter alia*, using evidence to demand that governments adhere to certain standards and implement effective participatory programmes. This may include designing and administering assessment tools to measure a government's adherence to best practices around public participation in the budget process and using these findings to inform advocacy efforts.

As civil society concurrently plays a variety of roles in promoting, supporting, participating, and assessing participatory approaches to budget-related decision-making, it is particularly important to ensure that civil society remains independent in the delivery of its diverse functions. For this reason, civic space and an environment that protects civil liberties is an essential pre-condition of a successful participatory process (Transparency International 2021).

Ultimately, the responsibility of civil society is to ensure that citizens, without exception, can participate meaningfully in decisions around the distribution of public resources. In doing so, civil society can serve as a bulwark against public distrust and disengagement that often thwarts effective participation in budget processes. By building citizen trust in collective action, civil society will not only be empowered to encourage greater public participation in budget processes, but also to advocate for and support the removal of institutional, legal, and operational barriers that inhibit participation.

ASSESSING PARTICIPATION IN THE BUDGET PROCESS

Informed by the understanding of the broad principles and common enablers of participation, any assessment of public participation in budget processes necessitates an appraisal of multiple considerations. The components of such an assessment may include questions around, *inter alia*, the existence of a specific participatory mechanism at one or more stage of the budget process (Participatory Budgeting or Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, for example); the availability and ease of access to budget information; how inclusive a participatory mechanism is; the extent to which the mechanism or process is formally institutionalised; the associated existence of legal mandates; the availability of adequate resources for allocation by citizens or civil society stakeholders; the depth of deliberations; or even the extent to which the process closes the feedback loop by informing participants about how their views have shaped decisions.

This list suggests that although there is limited consensus around a standard approach to public participation in the budget process,⁴ the main features of a successful or effective participatory effort are less ambiguous. Despite this, there is currently limited guidance and few tools that focus on assessing public participation in the budget process. Instead, existing tools and methodologies primarily centre around the examination of aspects of budget transparency, often introducing an assessment of participation as a secondary component of budget openness.

The following section will explore these tools and methodologies in order to isolate and elucidate existing considerations and indicators used to assess participation in budget processes. It is anticipated that this exercise will provide a useful framework upon which to conceive a dedicated, consolidated tool to assess participation and, thereafter, help relevant stakeholders diagnose specific ways in which these processes and mechanisms can be improved.

⁴ Public participation in the budget process may vary along the lines of the types of groups involved, the organisation of meetings, the scope for citizen or civil society input into deliberations, the stage of the budget cycle, or even in terms of the methods and mechanisms used to facilitate participation (Transparency International 2021).

Tools & Methodologies

The International Budget Partnership (IBP) is an important source of basic methodologies for assessing budget openness and transparency. One scorecard—developed in partnership with the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa (IDASA)—for example, examines whether the budget process has a legal framework for transparency, clarity of roles in resource management, the public availability of budget information, and independent checks and balances on budget data and execution (Pekkonen & Malena n.d.).

Participation in the budget decision-making process is included as one component of this assessment scorecard—and views effective participation as the presence of “opportunities for the legislature and civil society to make their viewpoints known and to have these views taken seriously” (Pekkonen & Malena n.d.). While this represents a broad assessment of participation in the budget process, other tools and methodologies provide more detailed coverage of potential assessment criteria. These include the IBP’s Open Budget Survey, the OECD’s Budget Practices and Procedures Survey, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Indices and Indicators, and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ Measurement and Evaluation Tool for Citizen Engagement and e-Participation.

IBP’s Open Budget Survey

The IBP’s *Open Budget Survey* measures the state of budget transparency, budget participation, and oversight in 117 countries (IBP 2020b). First launched in 2006, the biennial survey is promoted as “the world’s only independent, comparative, and fact-based research instrument to measure these essential aspects of governance” (IBP n.d.). The survey results are based on a questionnaire comprising 228 questions, completed by independent researchers based in the countries assessed.

Out of the 228 survey questions, 145 questions are ‘scored’, and assess the three aspects of governance, while 83 are ‘unscored’ questions, collecting background information on key budget documents and other broad aspects of public financial management in a country. Consistent with the position that existing tools focus primarily on measuring budget transparency, 109 of the 145 scored questions (75%) assess the public availability of budget information (IBP 2020b).

Questions around public participation were first introduced as part of the 2012 version of the Open Budget Survey (IBP 2012). This original set of questions reflected six general principles, including the need to ensure public participation throughout all stages of the

budget process and that such participation should have a legal basis. Building on this, the 2017 survey added a new set of measures aimed at assessing the efforts of executives, legislatures, and supreme audit institutions to engage citizens and civil society organisations across the budget cycle. In the latest published iteration of the Open Budget Survey in 2019, 18 of the 145 scored questions (12%) assess opportunities for public participation in the budget process.

Open Budget Survey 2019 - Participation Score Questions

#	Question
125	Does the executive use participation mechanisms through which the public can provide input during the formulation of the annual budget (prior to the budget being tabled in parliament)?
126	With regard to the mechanism identified in question 125, does the executive take concrete steps to include vulnerable and under-represented parts of the population in the formulation of the annual budget?
127	During the budget formulation stage, which of the following key topics does the executive's engagement with citizens cover? For the purpose of this question, key topics are considered to be: 1. Macroeconomic issues 2. Revenue forecasts, policies, and administration 3. Social spending policies 4. Deficit and debt levels 5. Public investment projects 6. Public services
128	Does the executive use participation mechanisms through which the public can provide input in monitoring the implementation of the annual budget?
129	With regard to the mechanism identified in question 128, does the executive take concrete steps to receive input from vulnerable and underrepresented parts of the population on the implementation of the annual
130	During the implementation of the annual budget, which of the following topics does the executive's engagement with citizens cover? For the purpose of this question, key topics are considered to be: 1. Changes in macroeconomic circumstances 2. Delivery of public services 3. Collection of revenue 4. Implementation of social spending 5. Changes in deficit and debt levels 6. Implementation of public investment projects
131	When the executive engages with the public, does it provide comprehensive prior information on the process of the engagement, so that the public can participate in an informed manner? Comprehensive information must include at least three of the following elements: 1. Purpose 2. Scope 3. Constraints 4. Intended outcomes 5. Process and timeline
132	With regard to the mechanism identified in question 125, does the executive provide the public with feedback on how citizens' inputs have been used in the formulation of the annual budget?
133	With regard to the mechanism identified in question 128, does the executive provide the public with information on how citizens' inputs have been used to assist in monitoring the implementation of the annual budget?
134	Are participation mechanisms incorporated into the timetable for formulating the Executive's Budget Proposal?
135	Do one or more line ministries use participation mechanisms through which the public can provide input during the formulation or implementation of the annual budget?
136	Does the legislature or the relevant legislative committee(s) hold public hearings and/or use other participation mechanisms through which the public can provide input during its public deliberations on the formulation of the annual budget (pre-budget and/or approval stages)?

137	During the legislative deliberations on the annual budget (pre-budget or approval stages), which of the following key topics does the legislature's (or relevant legislative budget committee) engagement with citizens cover? For the purpose of this question, key topics are considered to be: 1. Macroeconomic issues 2. Revenue forecasts, policies, and administration 3. Social spending policies 4. Deficit and debt levels 5. Public investment projects 6. Public services
138	Does the legislature provide feedback to the public on how citizens' inputs have been used during legislative deliberations on the annual budget?
139	Does the legislature hold public hearings and/or use other participation mechanisms through which the public can provide input during its public deliberations on the Audit Report?
140	Does the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) maintain formal mechanisms through which the public can suggest issues/topics to include in the SAI's audit programme (for example, by bringing ideas on agencies, programmes, or projects that could be audited)?
141	Does the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) provide the public with feedback on how citizens' inputs have been used to determine its audit programme?
142	Does the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) maintain formal mechanisms through which the public can contribute to audit investigations (as respondents, witnesses, etc.)?

Source: *International Budget Partnership, 2019b*

These questions aim to assess countries against the GIFT principles of public participation in fiscal policies (GIFT 2015). In general, the questions examine the number of participatory mechanisms introduced by the responsible government institutions at different stages of the budget cycle and whether these mechanisms offer meaningful opportunities for public participation (IBP 2020a).

The survey is guided by the following questions in assessing how meaningful the mechanisms are:

- Can everyone's voice be heard, with efforts to include vulnerable and under-represented groups? (Corresponding GIFT principles: *Inclusiveness & Respect for Self-Expression*)
- Can people find out about the purpose, scope, and intended outcomes for public engagement? (Corresponding GIFT principles: *Openness & Reciprocity*)
- Does the government share the feedback it has received and how it has been used? (Corresponding GIFT principles: *Depth & Sustainability*)
- Is participation embedded in the budget process to provide regular input into decision-making? (Corresponding GIFT principles: *Complementarity*)

Through responses to the 18 questions, countries are given a 'participation score'—the simple average of the questions, each assessed on a scale from 0 to 100. Results have indicated that most countries (113 out of 117 countries assessed) provide few or no

opportunities for public engagement across the budget cycle (IBP 2020a). Only South Korea and the United Kingdom have been found to offer 'adequate' opportunities for participation, with an overall participation score of 61 or higher.

The scarcity of meaningful public participation, as assessed by the Open Budget Survey, is also evident across the 21 countries participating in Transparency International's *Strengthening Accountability Networks among Civil Society* (SANCUS) project.⁵ The findings suggest that while there are generally few opportunities for participation at any stage of the budget cycle, a few countries such as Guatemala, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria stand out as exceptions. Zimbabwe, for example, is found to offer meaningful opportunities for participation at the budget formulation stage, while Brazil is particularly strong at providing such opportunities during budget oversight.

Open Budget Survey 2019 Participation Scores – SANCUS Project Countries

SANCUS Country	Participation Score (/100)	Formulation (Execution)	Approval (Legislature)	Implementation (Executive)	Oversight (Audit - SAI)
<i>Armenia</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Bosnia & Herzegovina</i>	7	0	11	0	33
<i>Brazil</i>	17	0	22	0	78
<i>Cameroon</i>	11	13	0	17	0
<i>Chile</i>	9	0	11	0	44
<i>Colombia</i>	17	0	11	17	67
<i>The Gambia</i>	9	13	0	0	33
<i>Guatemala</i>	35	47	67	0	44
<i>Honduras</i>	17	33	0	0	33
<i>Indonesia</i>	20	13	0	25	56
<i>Jordan</i>	7	0	22	0	0
<i>Kenya</i>	20	27	67	0	0
<i>Lebanon</i>	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Maldives</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Morocco</i>	6	0	0	25	0
<i>Nigeria</i>	22	40	33	17	0
<i>Palestine</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Rwanda</i>	15	40	11	0	0

⁵ Transparency International's Strengthening Accountability Networks among Civil Society (SANCUS) project helps ordinary citizens in 21 countries to call for greater accountability from governments and the institutions responsible for overseeing them. See [here](#) for more information.

<i>Sri Lanka</i>	17	20	11	0	33
<i>Zambia</i>	20	20	55	17	0
<i>Zimbabwe</i>	33	67	67	0	0

Source: *International Budget Partnership, 2020a*

OECD's Budget Practices and Procedures Survey

The OECD's *Budget Practices and Procedures Survey* aims to provide an internationally comparable set of data to facilitate the analysis and benchmarking of good budgeting practice among OECD countries (OECD 2018). First executed in 2003, the survey is conducted by the OECD Secretariat and is iterated every four to five years.

The questionnaire covers the full budgeting cycle—from formulation to execution and reporting—and includes questions around a range of cross-cutting issues such as fiscal risks and sustainability and budget transparency (OECD 2018). As with the Open Budget Survey and the GIFT principles of public participation, the OECD survey has been designed to reflect the OECD's principles of good budgetary governance (OECD 2015). As a result, the survey includes questions to help determine the extent to which a budget process facilitates 'participative, inclusive, and realistic debate'.

The questions around participation are divided into two main areas: parliament engagement and realistic debate on budgetary choices. It is this latter category that deals with public participation in the budget process, and it comprises three questions:

Budget Practices and Procedures Survey 2017/18 – Realistic Debate on Budgetary Choices

#	Question
42	What forms of public consultation and engagement, if any, are used by public institutions in the context of budgetary process?
43	Does your country practise some form of "participatory budgeting" at central/federal level?
44	In the context of budget-related consultation, engagement and/or participation, does your country have specific mechanisms in place to seek the views and inputs of people from minority communities and/or marginalised groups?

Source: *OECD, 2018*

In contrast to the Open Budget Survey, the OECD questionnaire does not examine whether the participatory mechanism is meaningful and limits its inquiry to identifying whether a mechanism exists at a particular public institution and stage of the budget cycle. It does, however, reinforce the importance of inclusion in efforts to foster participation by exploring whether the views and inputs of people from minority communities and/or marginalised groups are accounted for.

V-Dem Indicators

Although not directly an assessment of public participation in the budget process, the *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Research Project* is an important contribution to attempts to measure public participation in democratic decision-making processes. In taking a comprehensive approach to understanding democratisation, the V-Dem database measures country performance against a range of democratic principles, indices, and components, together comprising over 450 indicators (Coppedge et al 2021).

Select indicators under the ‘Deliberative Democracy Index’ and the ‘Participatory Democracy Index’ are particularly relevant to assessments of participation in the budget process. The deliberative principle of democracy, for example, is concerned with the process by which decisions are reached. According to V-Dem, a deliberative process is one in which “public reasoning focused on the common good motivates political decisions” (V-Dem 2021). In this context, respectful dialogue among informed participants at all levels—from preference formation to final decision—is considered a critical feature of democracy (V-Dem 2021). The participatory principle of democracy emphasises the importance of active public participation in all political processes.

V-Dem Indices – Select Indicators Assessing Deliberation & Participation

Deliberative Democracy Index	
Engaged Society	When important policy changes are being considered, how wide and how independent are public deliberations?
Reasoned Justification	When important policy changes are being considered, i.e., before a decision has been made, to what extent do political elites give public and reasoned justifications for their positions?
Respect Counterarguments	When important policy changes are being considered, to what extent do political elites acknowledge and respect counterarguments?
Common Good	When important policy changes are being considered, to what extent do political elites justify their positions in terms of the common good?
Participatory Democracy Index	
CSO Consultation	Are major civil society organisations (CSOs) routinely consulted by policymakers on policies relevant to their members?
CSO Participatory Environment	Which of these best describes the involvement of people in civil society organizations (CSOs)? [0: Most associations are state-sponsored, and although a large number of people may be active in them, their participation is not purely voluntary. 1: Voluntary CSOs exist but few people are active in them. 2: There are many diverse CSOs, but popular involvement is minimal. 3: There are many diverse CSOs, and it is considered normal for people to be at least occasionally active in at least one of them.]
CSO Women's Participation	Are women prevented from participating in civil society organisations (CSOs)?

Source: *V-Dem, 2021*

The idea of introducing deliberative processes of decision-making responds to literature that argues that public participation alone is insufficient to deliver successfully co-created budgeting outcomes (Transparency International 2021; Lakin & Nyagaka 2016). Proponents argue that participatory processes should instead be assessed by the exacting standards of systematic public deliberation—which includes providing clear, comprehensive, and timely justifications for public actions and allowing citizens to discuss and debate them (IBP Kenya 2016).

This argument is premised on the understanding that if participatory mechanisms are “unable to voice citizens’ collective goals and ways to achieve them...they fail to achieve their purpose” (Transparency International 2021). The selected V-Dem indicators reflect this shift in standard and provide a blueprint for more stringent assessments of public participation in the budget process.

Measurement & Evaluation Tool for Citizen Engagement & e-Participation

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ (UNDESA) *Measurement and Evaluation Tool for Citizen Engagement and e-Participation* (METEP) (UNDESA 2014) primarily aims to diagnose the success or failure of e-Participation initiatives (Rivière 2017). Acknowledging that engaging citizens throughout the policy process is beneficial for several reasons, the METEP proposes to help countries better understand how ICT can be leveraged to advance citizen engagement and public participation.

To do this, the METEP considers three areas of citizen engagement: 1) the provision of information to citizens, 2) consultation on development matters, and 3) engaging citizens in decision-making—and aims to review the performance of public institutions along the following dimensions:

- *Legal Frameworks:* Questions to determine the existence, nature, and / or implementation of a legal and regulatory framework that outlines government responsibilities and delineates the roles of related public institutions in promoting and advancing e-Participation.
- *Organisational Frameworks:* Questions around the existence, nature, and / or implementation of an organisational framework through which engagement and e-participation services are divided and coordinated.
- *Channels/Modalities:* Questions to determine the efficiency and / or relevance (culturally or financially, for example) of channels / modalities selected and used to facilitate e-participation.

- *Outreach:* Questions to assess the extent to which e-participation measures are inclusive and consider the needs of under-represented marginalised stakeholders; and whether these measures are aligned with complementary education and ICT skills development.

The questionnaire itself is divided into three categories of questions—i.e., fact-based questions that take stock of the regulatory and organisational frameworks; agency-specific questions that evaluate channels and modalities introduced by individual government agencies; and experience-based questions that assess the implementation of the four dimensions described above (UNDESA 2014).

Administered as a self-evaluation questionnaire, the METEP can thus serve as an importance guide for improving public participation via electronic means, and help to engage more citizens, more meaningfully in decision-making processes. The importance of promoting and supporting this form of participation is particularly important in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the concomitant restrictions on stakeholders convening at physical venues (IBP 2020c).

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Transparency International
International Secretariat
Alt-Moabit 96, 10559 Berlin
Germany

Phone: +49 30 34 38 200
Fax: +49 30 34 70 39 12

ti@transparency.org
www.transparency.org

Blog: transparency.org/en/blog
Facebook: [/transparencyinternational](https://www.facebook.com/transparencyinternational)
Twitter: [@anticorruption](https://twitter.com/anticorruption)