

Overview



Transparency:

27 /100

(Open Budget Index score)



Public
Participation:

15 /100



Budget Oversight:

54 /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.



Transparency

This part of the OBS measures public access to information on how the central government raises and spends public resources. It assesses the online availability, timeliness, and comprehensiveness of eight key budget documents using 109 equally weighted indicators and scores each country on a scale of 0 to 100. A transparency score of 61 or above indicates a country is likely publishing enough material to support informed public debate on the budget.

Malawi has a transparency score of **27** (out of 100).

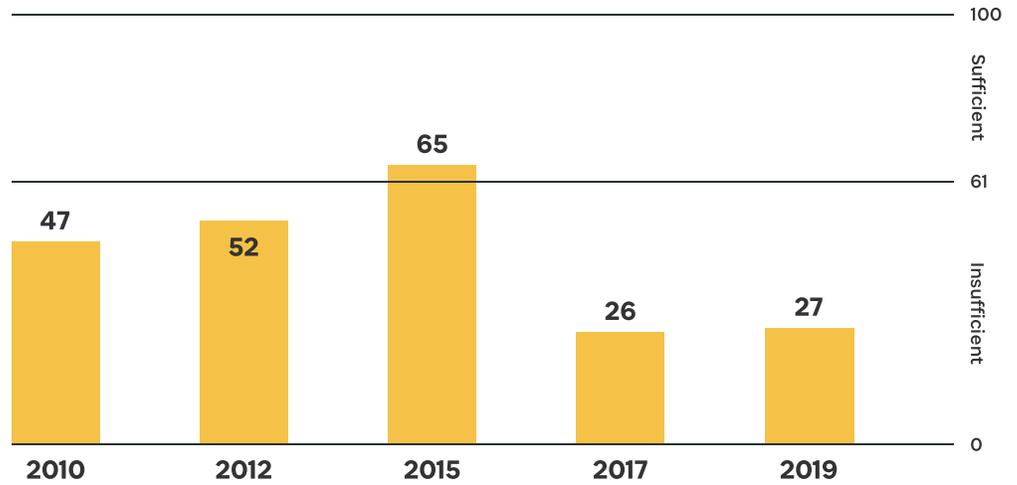
Transparency in Malawi compared to others



Global Average	45
South Africa	87
Namibia	51
Zimbabwe	49
Mozambique	42
Botswana	38
Angola	36
Lesotho	31
Zambia	30
Malawi	27
Eswatini	0

0 Insufficient 61 Sufficient 100

How has the transparency score for Malawi changed over time?



Public availability of budget documents in Malawi

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

Document	2010	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 Malawi 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.	2018-19	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.	2018-19	47
Enacted Budget	The budget that has been approved by the legislature.	2018-19	Hard Copy
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.	2018-19	25
In-Year Reports	Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.	2017-18 & 2018-19	Internal Use
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.	2017-18	Published Late
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.	2016-17	Internal Use
Audit Report	Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts.	2016-17	48

Malawi's transparency score of **27** in the OBS 2019 is near its score in 2017.

What changed in OBS 2019?

Malawi has increased the availability of budget information by:

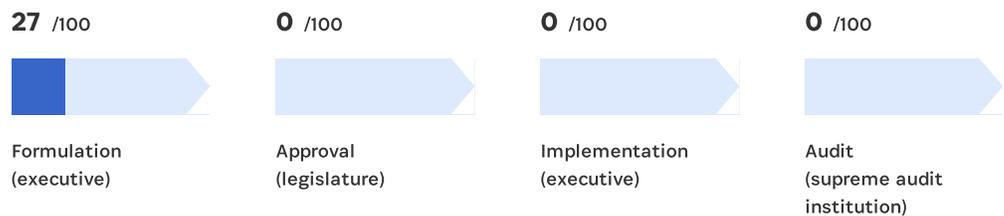
- Publishing the Citizens Budget and Audit Report online.

Recommendations

Malawi should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Publish the Pre-Budget Statement, Enacted Budget, In-Year Reports, Mid-Year Review, and Year-End Report online in a timely manner.
- Include debt and macroeconomic information in the Executive's Budget Proposal. This includes publishing information on the composition of total debt (e.g., the total debt burden at the end of the year, the interest rates on the debt, the maturity profile of the debt, and whether the debt is domestic or external), as well as estimates of the nominal GDP level and interest rates for the upcoming budget year.
- Improve the comprehensiveness of the Audit Report and Citizens Budget.

Extent of opportunities for public participation in the budget process



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

Recommendations

Malawi's Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning & Development has established pre-budget consultations during budget formulation but, to further strengthen public participation in the budget process, should also prioritize the following actions:

- Pilot and promote mechanisms for public participation in the budget implementation stage (e.g. budget monitoring).
- Strengthen active engagement with vulnerable and underrepresented communities, directly or through civil society organizations representing them.

Malawi's National Assembly has established public hearings related to the review of the Audit Report, but should also 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 any member of the public or any civil society organization to testify during its hearings on the Audit Report.

Malawi's National Audit Office should prioritize the following actions to improve public participation in the budget process:

- Establish formal mechanisms for the public to assist in developing its audit program and 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 Malawi, together, provide limited oversight during the budget process, with a composite oversight score of **54** (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

Malawi's National Assembly provides limited oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and adequate 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.

- Ensure that the legislature approves the Executive’s Budget Proposal before the start of the budget year.
- A legislative committee should examine in-year budget implementation and publish reports with their findings online.
- A legislative committee should examine the Audit Report and publish a report with their findings online.

To strengthen independence and improve audit oversight by the Malawi National Audit Office, the following actions are recommended:

- Require legislative or judicial approval to remove the head of the supreme audit institution.
- 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

Malawi does not have an independent fiscal institution (IFI). IFIs are increasingly recognized as valuable independent and nonpartisan information providers to the Executive and/or Parliament during the budget process.

**These indicators are *not* scored in the Open Budget Survey.*

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:
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- To further strengthen the research, each country's draft questionnaire is also reviewed by an anonymous independent expert.