The Philippines’s score on the Open Budget Index shows that the
government provides the public with some information on the central
government’s budget and financial activities during the course of the budget
year. This makes it somewhat difficult for citizens to hold government
accountable for its management of the public’s money.

The Open Budget Index 2008 evaluates the quantity and type of
information that governments make available to their publics in the seven
key budget documents that should be issued during the budget year. One of
the most important documents is the executive’s budget proposal. It should
contain the executive’s plans for the upcoming year along with the cost of
the proposed activities. The proposal should be available to the public and
to the legislature prior to being finalized, at least three months before the
start of the budget year to allow for sufficient review and public debate.

In the Philippines, the proposal provides some information to the public,
meaning citizens have a somewhat comprehensive picture of the
government’s plans for taxing and spending for the upcoming year.

Moreover, it is difficult to track spending, revenue collection and
borrowing during the year. The Philippines publishes its in-year reports and
the mid-year review, but these lack some important details. Publishing
complete in-year reports and mid-year review would greatly strengthen
public accountability, since they provide updates on how the budget is
being implemented during the year.

It is also difficult to assess budget performance in the Philippines once the
budget year is over. A year-end report is produced, allowing comparisons
between what was budgeted and what was actually spent and collected.
However, the report does not provide a detailed explanation of these
differences. Also, while the Philippines makes its audit report public, it does not provide any information on
whether the audit report’s recommendations are successfully implemented.

Access to the highly detailed budget information needed to understand the government’s progress in
undertaking a specific project or activity remains somewhat limited. The Philippines has not passed an Access to
Information law, but the right to information has been codified through the Constitution and the Republic Act
6713.

Beyond improving access to key budget documents, there are other ways in which Philippines’s budget process
could be made more open.

Opportunities for citizen participation in budget debates could be increased. For example, the legislature does
not hold hearings on the budget in which the public can participate.

The independence of Philippines’s Supreme Audit Institution is somewhat limited. While the SAI has discretion to
decide which audits to undertake, it does not have a budget sufficient to fulfill its mandate.
The Open Budget Index evaluates the quantity and type of information available to the public in a country’s budget documents. A country’s placement within a performance category was determined by averaging the response to 91 questions on the Open Budget Questionnaire related to information contained in the eight key budget documents that all countries should make available to the public.

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The International Budget Project was established as part of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington, DC-based non-partisan non-profit research organization, in 1997 to support civil society organizations around the world interested in strengthening public budget processes, institutions and outcomes. For more information on the IBP and the Open Budget Initiative 2008, please visit www.openbudgetindex.org