36

OPEN BUDGET INDEX SCORE
— OUT OF 100 —

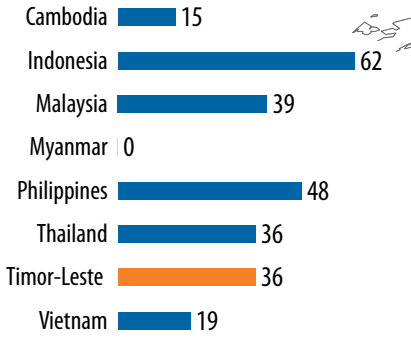
81-100	Extensive
61-80	Substantial
41-60	Some
21-40	**Minimal**
0-20	Scant or None

TIMOR-LESTE

Provides minimal information to the public in its budget documents during the year.

Open Budget Survey 2012

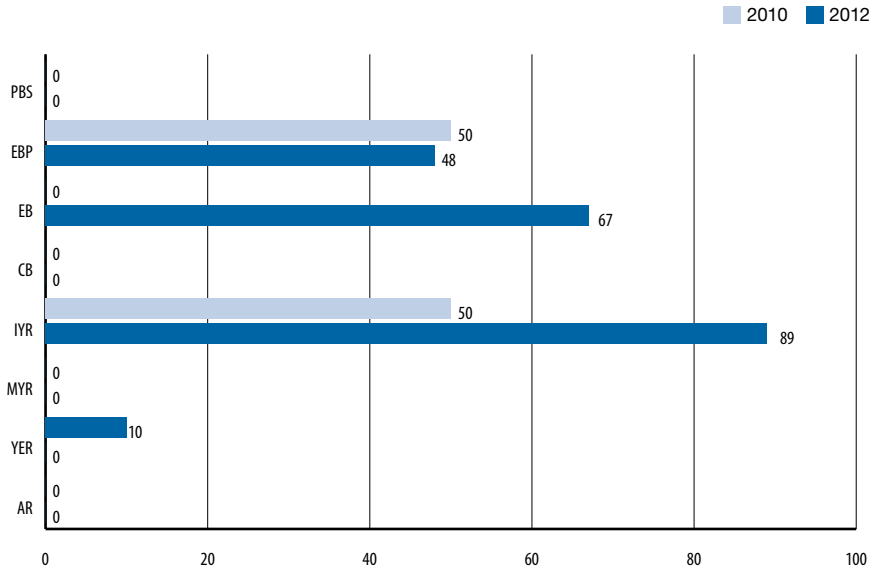
How does Timor-Leste compare to its neighbors in Southeast Asia?



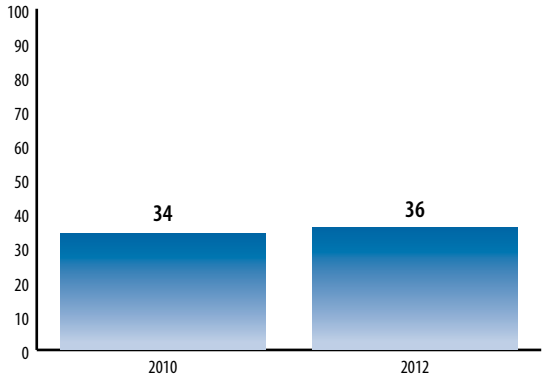
What are each of the eight key budget documents, and does the public have access to them?

Document	Description of Document	Publication Status
PBS	**Pre-Budget Statement**: Provides information that links government policies and budgets and typically sets forth the broad parameters that will define the budget proposal that is presented to the legislature.	Not Produced
EBP	**Executive's Budget Proposal**: Presents the government plans to raise revenues through taxes and other sources and spend these monies to support its priorities, thus transforming policy goals into action.	Published
EB	**Enacted Budget**: The legal instrument authorizing the executive to raise revenues, make expenditures, and incur debt.	Published
CB	**Citizens Budget**: A nontechnical presentation to enable broad public understanding of a government's plans for raising revenues and spending public funds in order to achieve policy goals.	Not Produced
IYR	**In-Year Reports**: Periodic (monthly or quarterly) measures of the trends in actual revenues, expenditures, and debt, which allow for comparisons with the budget figures and adjustments.	Published
MYR	**Mid-Year Review:** An overview of the budget's effects at the midpoint of a budget year and discusses any changes in economic assumptions that affect approved budget policies.	Not Produced
YER	**Year-End Report**: Information comparing the actual budget execution relative to the Enacted Budget.	Not Produced
AR	**Audit Report**: Independent evaluation of the government's accounts by the country's supreme audit institution. It typically assesses whether the executive has raised revenues and spent monies in line with the authorized budget, and whether the government's accounts of its revenues and expenses are accurate and provide a reliable picture of the fiscal situation.	Not Produced

From Zero to 100: Has Timor-Leste increased the amount of information it makes available in the eight key budget reports?



OBI scores over two Surveys



IBP INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP

Open Budget Index

The **Open Budget Survey** assesses whether the central government in each country surveyed makes eight key budget documents available to the public, as well as whether the data contained in these documents is comprehensive, timely, and useful. The Survey uses internationally accepted criteria to assess each country's budget transparency developed by multilateral organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI).

The scores on 95 of the 125 Open Budget Survey questions are used to calculate objective scores and rankings of each surveyed country's relative transparency. These composite scores constitute the Open Budget Index (OBI), the world's only independent and comparative measure of budget transparency.

Timor-Leste's score is 36 out of 100, which is below the average score of 43 for all the 100 countries surveyed. It is also lower than the scores of its neighbors in the region: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, but above the scores of Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Timor-Leste's score indicates that the government provides the public with minimal information on the national government's budget and financial activities during the course of the budget year. This makes it challenging for citizens to hold the government accountable for its management of the public's money.

Timor-Leste's OBI 2012 score of 36 has gone up by two points from its score of 34 on the OBI 2010.

The Open Budget Index is composed of subscores for each of the eight key budget documents assessed in the Survey. These subscores represent the average of the scores received on a set of questions in the Survey that measure the public availability of and amount of information in the documents. The subscores are comparable across all of the countries included in the Survey.

Recommendations

Timor-Leste's score on the Open Budget Index has gone up from the last round of the Open Budget Survey, which is an encouraging development and for which the government is congratulated. However, with a score of 36 out of 100 on the Open Budget Index 2012, the government of Timor-Leste has the potential to greatly expand budget transparency by introducing a number of short-term and medium-term measures, some of which can be achieved at almost no cost to the government.

The International Budget Partnership recommends that Timor-Leste undertake the following steps to improve budget transparency:

- Produce and publish a Pre-Budget Statement, Citizens Budget, Mid-Year Review, Year-End Report, and Audit Report. Detailed guidance on the contents of these documents can be found in these guidebooks: http://bit.ly/QGzHv8 and http://bit.ly/QGzFmJ. As per the Open Budget Survey 2012, 47 countries publish a Pre-Budget Statement, including Timor-Leste's neighbors Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam; 26 countries publish a Citizens Budget, including its neighbors Indonesia and Thailand; 29 countries publish a Mid-Year Review, including its neighbor Indonesia; 72 countries publish a Year-End Report, including its neighbors Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam; and 68 countries publish an Audit Report, including its neighbors Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Links to the budget documents published by these countries can be accessed from the IBP's website: http://bit.ly/P8NPOV.
- Increase the comprehensiveness of the Executive's Budget Proposal, specifically by focusing on providing information in the following areas:
  - expenditures for the budget year and prior budget years, using a functional classification of data, and expenditures for individual programs for the budget and previous year (see questions 2, 4, 19, and 21 of the Open Budget Questionnaire);
  - six or more months of actual expenditures and revenues of the year prior to the budget year (see questions 22 and 29 of the Open Budget Questionnaire);
  - macroeconomic forecasts and assumptions used in developing the budget (see questions 14-15 of the Open Budget Questionnaire);
  - presenting information on the following: extra-budgetary funds, transfers to public corporations, quasi-fiscal activities, expenditure arrears, earmarked revenues, contingent and future liabilities, financial and nonfinancial assets, tax expenditures, and percentage of the budget devoted to secret items (see questions 35, 37-43, and 45-47 of the Open Budget Questionnaire);
  - information for the budget year and multiyear period that shows how policy proposals, as distinct from existing policies, affect expenditures and revenues and policies (both proposals and existing commitments) that are intended to benefit directly the country's most impoverished populations (see questions 16-17 and 55 of the Open Budget Questionnaire); and
  - a detailed timetable on the budget formulation process (see questions 57-58 of the Open Budget Questionnaire).
- Increase the comprehensiveness of the Enacted Budget by providing program-level details in it (see question 101 of the Open Budget Questionnaire).

Strength of Legislatures and Supreme Audit Institutions in Budget Oversight

The Open Budget Survey examines the extent of effective oversight provided by legislatures and supreme audit institutions (SAIs). These institutions play a critical role — often enshrined in national constitutions — in planning and overseeing the implementation of national budgets.

The Open Budget Survey assesses whether legislatures provide effective budget oversight by measuring performance on 11 indicators, including: consultations with the executive prior to the tabling in the legislature of the draft budget, research capacity, formal debate on overall budget policy, time available to discuss and approve the budget, legal authority to amend the budget proposal, approval of shifts in expenditure budget and excess revenues collected, supplemental budget powers, authority to approve use of contingency funds, and scrutiny of audit reports.

The Open Budget Survey assesses whether supreme audit institutions are empowered to provide effective budget oversight by using the following four indicators: authority to remove the head of the supreme audit institution, legal power to audit public finances, financial resources available, and availability of skilled audit personnel.

Recommendations

The International Budget Partnership recommends that Timor-Leste undertake the following actions to improve budget oversight:

- The legislature should have a formal pre-budget policy debate prior to the tabling of the Executive's Budget Proposal as well as scrutinize all audit reports, the executive should consult with members of the legislature as part of its process of determining budget priorities, and the executive should be required to seek approval from the legislature prior to shifting funds between administrative units and budget lines as well as prior to using contingency funds (see questions 59, 98, 102-103, and 106-107 of the Open Budget Questionnaire).

Timor-Leste is not among the leaders in Southeast Asia on budget oversight and engagement

Country	Legislative Strength	SAI Strength	Public Engagement
Cambodia	Moderate	Moderate	Weak
Timór-Leste	Moderate	Strong	Weak
Indonesia	Strong	Strong	Weak
Malaysia	Moderate	Strong	Weak
Myanmar	Weak	Weak	Weak
Philippines	Moderate	Strong	Moderate
Thailand	Strong	Strong	Weak
Vietnam	Strong	Strong	Weak

Strong: average score above 66 of 100; **Moderate**: average score between 34 and 66; **Weak**: average score below 34

Opportunities for Public Participation

Research and advocacy experience of civil society over the past 15 years has demonstrated that transparency by itself is insufficient for improving governance. Transparency along with opportunities for public participation in budgeting can maximize the positive outcomes associated with open budgeting. Therefore, the Open Budget Survey assesses opportunities available to the public to participate in national budget decision-making processes. Such opportunities can be provided throughout the budget cycle by the executive, legislature, and supreme audit institution.

Based on these indicators, the Open Budget Survey 2012 finds that opportunities for public participation in the budget process in Timor-Leste are limited.

Recommendations

The International Budget Partnership recommends that Timor-Leste expand public engagement in budgeting after considering the Open Budget Survey indicators on which the country performs poorly (see table below and questions 114-177 and 119-125 in the Open Budget Questionnaire).

Timor-Leste has much room to improve public participation

Requirement	Finding
Process Followed Before Consultation	
Formal requirement for public participation (Q114)	Does not exist
Articulation of purposes for public participation (Q115)	Does not exist
Communication by the SAI of audit findings beyond publication of audit reports (Q124)	Does not exist
Process of Consultation	
Mechanisms developed by the executive for participation during budget planning (Q116)	Does not exist
Public hearings in the legislature on macroeconomic budget framework (Q119)	Exists but could be improved
Public hearings in the legislature on individual agency budgets (Q120)	Exists but could be improved
Opportunities in the legislature for testimonials by the public during budget hearings (Q121)	Exists but could be improved
Mechanisms developed by the executive for participation during budget execution (Q117)	Does not exist
Mechanisms developed by the SAI for participation in audit agenda (Q123)	Does not exist
Process Followed After Consultation	
Feedback by the executive on use of inputs provided by the public (Q118)	Does not exist
Release by the legislature of reports on budget hearings (Q122)	Exists but could be improved
Feedback by the SAI on use of inputs provided by the public (Q125)	Does not exist

Description of Survey, Methodology, Reliability, and Researcher Contact Information

The Open Budget Survey is a fact-based research instrument that uses easily observable phenomena to assess what occurs in practice. The research conclusions are typically supported by citations and comments, including reference to a budget document, a law, or other public document; a public statement by a government official; or comments from a face-to-face interview with a government official or other knowledgeable party. The Survey is compiled from a questionnaire completed for each country by independent budget experts who are not associated with the national government. Each country's questionnaire is then independently reviewed by two anonymous experts who also have no association with government. In addition, the IBP invites national governments to comment on the draft results from the Survey and considers these comments before finalizing the Survey results. The entire research process for 2012 took over 18 months between July 2011 and December 2012 and involved approximately 400 experts.

The Open Budget Survey provides a reliable source of data on national budget transparency practices for governments, development practitioners, the media, and citizens. Current users of the Survey results include the Open Government Partnership, Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative, INTOSAI, the World Bank in its Worldwide Governance Indicators, and a number of bilateral aid agencies and international and regional multilateral bodies. The publication of the Open Budget Survey 2012 has reinforced the Survey's preeminent position as a global data repository on budget transparency, participation, and accountability.

Research to complete this country's Open Budget Survey was undertaken by Dr. Christopher Henry Samson, Lalenok Ba Ema Hotu (LABEH), No. 30. de Agosto Depan SDN 07, Malinamoc,Comoro,Dili, Timor-Leste, labeh2003@yahoo.com.

Despite repeated efforts, the IBP was unable to get comments on the draft Open Budget Questionnaire results from the Timor-Leste government.