The Government of Nicaragua provides the public with limited budget information.

The Government of Nicaragua is weak in providing the public with opportunities to engage in the budget process.

Budget oversight by the legislature in Nicaragua is adequate.

Budget oversight by the supreme audit institution in Nicaragua is limited.

Nicaragua’s score of 46 out of 100 is a little higher than the global average score of 45.
The Availability of Budget Documents Over Time

<table>
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<th>Document</th>
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<th>2015</th>
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<td>Pre-Budget Statement</td>
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<td>Executive's Budget Proposal</td>
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<td>Audit Report</td>
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Nicaragua's score of 46 on the 2015 Open Budget Index is higher than its score in 2012.

Since 2012, the Government of Nicaragua has increased the availability of budget information by:
- Improving the comprehensiveness of the Enacted Budget and Year-End Report.

However, the Government of Nicaragua has failed to make progress in the following ways:
- Not making the Pre-Budget Statement available to the public.
- Not producing a Citizens Budget or a Mid-Year Review.
- Publishing an Audit Report that only contains minimal budget information.

Evidence suggests that transparency alone is insufficient for improving governance, and that public participation in budgeting can maximize the positive outcomes associated with greater budget transparency.

To measure public participation, the Open Budget Survey assesses the degree to which the government provides opportunities for the public to engage in budget processes. Such opportunities should be provided throughout the budget cycle by the executive, the legislature, and the supreme audit institution.

Nicaragua's score of 6 out of 100 indicates that the provision of opportunities for the public to engage in the budget process is weak. This is lower than the global average score of 25.
The Open Budget Survey examines the extent to which legislatures and supreme audit institutions are able to provide effective oversight of the budget. These institutions play a critical role – often enshrined in national constitutions – in planning budgets and overseeing their implementation.

**Oversight by the Legislature**

The legislature provides **limited** oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and **adequate** oversight during the implementation stage of the budget cycle. A pre-budget debate by the legislature does not take place, nor do regular consultations on budget matters between the executive and the legislature. In both law and practice, the legislature is not consulted prior to spending contingency funds that were not identified in the Enacted Budget.

**Oversight by the Supreme Audit Institution**

The supreme audit institution provides **limited** budget oversight. Under the law, it has significant discretion to undertake audits as it sees fit. Moreover, the head of the supreme audit institution cannot be removed without legislative or judicial approval, which bolsters its independence. Finally, the supreme audit institution is provided with insufficient resources to fulfill its mandate and has no quality assurance system in place.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Improving Transparency**

Nicaragua should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Publish a Pre-Budget Statement.
- Produce and publish a Citizens Budget and Mid-Year Review.
- Increase the comprehensiveness of the Executive’s Budget Proposal by presenting more data on the total debt stock and interest for the budget year and more information on macroeconomic forecasts.

**Improving Participation**

Nicaragua should prioritize the following actions to improve budget participation:

- Establish credible and effective mechanisms (i.e., public hearings, surveys, focus groups) for capturing a range of public perspectives on budget matters.
- Hold legislative hearings on the budgets of specific ministries, departments, and agencies as well as on audit reports at which testimony from the public is heard.
- Provide detailed feedback on how public participation has been used by the supreme audit institution.

**Improving Oversight**

Nicaragua should prioritize the following actions to strengthen budget oversight:

- Ensure the legislature holds a pre-budget debate and the outcome is reflected in the Enacted Budget.
- In both law and practice, ensure the legislature is consulted prior to the spending of contingency funds that were not identified in the Enacted Budget.
- Ensure the supreme audit institution has adequate funding to perform its duties, as determined by an independent body (e.g., the legislature or judiciary).
The Open Budget Survey uses internationally accepted criteria developed by multilateral organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI). It is a fact-based research instrument that assesses what occurs in practice through readily observable phenomena. The entire research process took approximately 18 months between March 2014 and September 2015 and involved about 300 experts in 102 countries. The Survey was revised somewhat from the 2012 version to reflect emerging developments in accepted good practice and to strengthen individual questions. A full discussion of these changes can be found in a technical note on the comparability of the Open Budget Index over time (see below).

Survey responses are typically supported by citations and comments. This may include a reference to a public document, an official statement by the government, 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 an anonymous expert who also has no association to government. In addition, IBP invites national governments to comment on the draft results from the Survey and considers these comments before finalizing the Survey results.

Despite repeated efforts, IBP was unable to get comments on the draft Open Budget Questionnaire results from the Government of Nicaragua.

Research to complete this country’s Open Budget Survey was undertaken by:
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Further Information
Visit www.openbudgetsurvey.org for more information, including:
■ The Open Budget Survey 2015: Global Report
■ Individual datasets for each of the 102 countries surveyed.
■ A technical note on the comparability of the Open Budget Index over time.