



# UPTAKE AND OUTCOME EVALUATION OF IBP'S PUBLICATIONS

**Simon Hearn**

Independent Consultant and Research Associate, ODI

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# 1 Executive summary

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## 1.1 Background

The International Budget Partnership (IBP) is an international NGO which collaborates with civil society organisations (CSOs) around the world to use budget analysis and advocacy as a tool to improve governance and reduce poverty. Key to IBP's approach is the generation and dissemination of evidence, both to support civil society organisations in their efforts at national level, and to influence the global agenda through engagement with international stakeholders. In addition, there are increasing instances where IBP has started to engage directly with national governments, parliaments and other state actors, using its research to support instrumental reforms.

IBP commissioned this evaluation of its publications to determine the uptake and outcomes of its research on target audiences, particularly national government actors. The evaluation is intended to support IBP's learning and practice by providing detailed analysis on the role of research and publications in its organisation wide strategy and individual programme strategies, as well as testing implicit assumptions about these.

The evaluation is focussed on the following three broad questions:

1. What is the nature of **uptake** of IBP's research?
2. What are the **outcomes** of IBP's engagement?
3. What is the role of **evidence** in IBP's influence on budget transparency, accountability and participation?

The evaluation was designed to take an in-depth view of these question in a small number of narrow programme areas. These included: The 2015 Open Budget Survey and Index at global level and at country level in Nigeria and Cambodia, the Kenya country programme's work on equity and devolution, and a number of publications published under the international advocacy programme in 2015 and 2016, particularly those targeting national governments.

The evaluation is based on 40 interviews conducted with IBP staff and people across IBP's target audience groups and across the programmes focussed on in the evaluation. This included interviews with 9 people from CSOs, 8 people from IBP, 6 people from national governments (including parliaments), 5 people from donor organisations and development partners, 5 people from international finance organisations, 3 people from intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder organisations, 2 people from UN organisations, 1 INGO and 1 research organisation. The majority of interviewees were identified through suggestions from IBP staff.

The evaluation also attempted to analyse citations of IBP's publications through several online repositories and search engines but this resulted in limited findings.

## 1.2 Findings

### 1.2.1 What is the nature of uptake of IBP's research?

The evaluation finds significant evidence that IBP's research is being used at global level by multilateral and bilateral donors (such as GIZ and EC), International Financial Institutions (such as the IMF and the World Bank) and intergovernmental organisations (such as OGP and OECD). At national level it finds that significant evidence of uptake among CSOs, government actors,

IFIs and media. This evaluation wasn't able to investigate comprehensively at sub-national level but it did find some evidence of CSOs and sub-national governments using IBP's work, but this wasn't able to be substantiated. In terms of the three programmes focussed on in the evaluation, the OBS is used significantly by organisations and agencies at the global level, and by CSOs and governments at national level; IBP Kenya's research is used significantly by a range of audiences at national and county level, notably by CSOs and development partners (development agencies, IFIs and UN agencies); while the international advocacy research showed far less evidence of use among those interviewed.

In terms of how research is used, the evaluation looked at three uses common in the literature: conceptual use, instrumental use and symbolic use. IBP research is used conceptually through people sharing publications with their networks and organisations; by prompting and feeding discussions and debates, as seen among government actors in Kenya and among international organisations around the OBS; and by informing views and framing issues in new ways, for example their work on citizen participation in the budget process has helped shape the thinking of several global organisations.

Instrumental use is summarised in two ways - to improve people's work and to help them inform and influence others. For example, the OBS has been used in Nigeria to prioritise work to improve timeliness of budget reports, and it is used by the European Commission to monitor budget transparency of countries with which they provide budget support. It is also used by IMF as part of their macro-fiscal analysis and their fiscal transparency evaluations, and by some donors as part of their results frameworks for particular country programmes. In Kenya, IBPK's research is used by CSOs and development partners to influence and support county governments to improve their participation of citizens in budget processes.

Symbolic use involves selecting research findings to legitimate prior decisions and positions, and for IBP's research this is most prevalent in the cases of Nigeria and Cambodia, both of which showed signs of using the OBS to demonstrate progress on anti-corruption in order to maintain legitimacy among international and domestic actors, and not necessarily to improve services for citizens.

### 1.2.2 What are the outcomes of IBP's engagement?

The evaluation highlights a number of outcomes of IBP's work, although these are not exhaustive but only a sub-set of outcomes which the evaluation was able to document. In Kenya, where IBP has had permanent staff since 2013, four broad outcomes were documented. First, IBPK were among the first people to raise the issue of public participation in budget planning in the newly devolved county governments. Their publications, documenting the lack of progress in setting up County Budget and Economic Forums and their guidance documents produced with the government's Commission for Revenue Allocation, have elevated the issue on the agenda of many different actors and several counties are showing signs that they are moving in the right direction - although there is still a long way to go.

Second, by publishing information about government legislation regarding public finance at the county level and raising issues such as equity in revenue allocation, IBPK have contributed to stronger PFM systems at county level. Third, at national level, IBPK were among the first to analyse and discuss the proposals for allocating funds between different levels of government and across the 47 counties. Their research has been used at various points in the process and by government commissions, parliamentarians and county governors, maintaining a focus on the facts and strengthening decision making. Fourth, IBPK have raised the public debate on

budget issues by enabling CSOs to engage on budget issues which intersect their work, by publishing accessible information on budgets and by applying pressure to county governments to make budget information accessible to the public.

At global level, through the OBS and through using its research to engage global institutions, IBP has contributed to putting budget transparency on the global agenda, and influenced the norms and standards of international organisations. In particular, IBP's work on participation in the budget process has influenced both the IMF and, indirectly, the OECD in their global standards on budget transparency. Additionally, the OBS is used by both the European Commission and the Open Government Partnership in their requirements for their recipients and members respectively.

At country level in Nigeria and Cambodia, the OBI is being used by national governments as targets to improve their budget transparency. In Nigeria this is in order to meet the requirements of the Open Government Partnership and in Cambodia it is in response to pressure from the European Commission and others. In both countries, however, the reforms are limited and there are few signs that budget transparency is leading to an improved experience in service provision to citizens. There was limited evidence that research other than the OBI, including the parts of the OBS that go beyond publications of budget documents, is having an influence at national level.

### 1.2.3 What is the role of evidence in IBP's influence on budget transparency, accountability and participation?

There was strong agreement among the majority of interviewees that evidence is necessary in bringing about change in budget transparency, accountability and participation - necessary but insufficient. The evaluation found that in this case, IBP's evidence provided credibility, enabled fruitful discussions, helped maintain focus and shone a light on misinformation. Applying the RAPID Framework, an established model for understanding how research influences policy, the evaluation finds two areas for improvement: greater consideration of the political context in engagement in priority OBI countries to better understand where and how evidence can make the greatest contribution; and a greater focus on evidence around the quality of budget documents and the use of budget documents rather than the current emphasis on publications of budget documents. It also finds that IBP's networks and partnerships have been essential for brokering and translating evidence into use.

## 1.3 Conclusions

Overall this evaluation finds that IBP's work has filled a niche which has made it a go to place for analysis on budget transparency. Two areas in particular stand out - the OBS as an international standard which is widely used across the board, and IBP Kenya's work to support the devolution process, ensuring that issues of equity and participation are kept on the agenda. In all cases where IBP research has made an impact, through the OBS and in Kenya, a key feature of its success is the forging of relationships and networks through which its influence can grow.

As would be expected, the evaluation finds that the OBS is the most cited and used publication, owing to its broad dissemination and regular updating. The OBS has become the standard in assessing budget transparency, and alongside other high-profile instruments such as PEFA and the World Bank Doing Business survey, is one of the main vehicles for cross-country comparisons of governance. For many people the OBI is IBP's most influential work and

still manages to influence many countries towards greater transparency through comparisons with their peers. There is still a limitation in that the parts of the OBI that go beyond publication of documents are not as visible and less used, and that an emphasis on the OBI may limit the extent to which government tackle deeper and more sustainable reforms.

In Kenya, where IBP has an office and permanent staff, there is considerable evidence of uptake among all stakeholder groups. Through forging relationships, defending independence and taking on issues which no one else is discussing, IBP Kenya have made themselves invaluable in the Kenyan PFM sector. Their research is regularly used by people on all sides of the political debate, at national and sub-national level, state and non-state. However, progress is limited, as conclusions of IBP commissioned research suggests. There is little evidence that counties are taking public participation seriously, and there doesn't seem to be a lot of pressure for them to accelerate the process.

Other research at the global level is far less visible, and many people are unaware that IBP conducts research beyond the OBS. Particularly at national level, outside of those countries where IBP has an office, IBP's research is less used, and use is generally limited to the OBI score itself rather than the associated publications.

IBP's influence is well summarised with the formula: Influence = credibility + legitimacy + salience. IBP's credibility comes from its established reputation for high quality, rigorous, evidence-based research. Legitimacy comes from the fact that IBP's work is perceived as independent and bipartisan as well as the fact that it is well connected to the grass roots where budget issues affect the lives of ordinary people. The salience of IBP's research comes from being opportunistic in identifying current issues to engage on, and in working with other influential actors to promote their work at country level.

## 1.4 Recommendations

The report makes a number of recommendations to IBP related to its production and dissemination of publications, and its engagement with stakeholders. These are summarised as:

1. Keep up investment in research that goes beyond the OBI.
2. Develop engagement strategies around research programmes or campaigns.
3. Invest in a communications approach which combines structured outreach with strategic opportunism.
4. Increase the use of tools and practices such as stakeholder mapping, context analysis and outcome mapping.
5. Use online repositories to target academic audiences and monitor academic citations
6. Set specific and feasible policy objectives at global and country level.
7. At country level, seek to understand and work with the politics of the PFM and transparency agendas of the various stakeholders.
8. Be cautious about modifying the OBS methodology too much or too often.
9. In Kenya:
  - a. Continue the action research approach but monitor uptake more closely.
  - b. Think about how to add value to existing work.
  - c. Continue networking and relationship building.
  - d. Continue to support change at county level recognising that change is non-linear.
10. Consider undertaking or commissioning cross-country comparative analysis using IBP's and other data sets to understand the effects of different engagement strategies.

## 2 Background

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### 2.1 IBP's research and engagement

The International Budget Partnership (IBP) is an international NGO which collaborates with civil society organisations (CSOs) around the world to use budget analysis and advocacy as a tool to improve governance and reduce poverty. It engages in advocacy at international, national and sub-national levels to influence decision makers and eventually increase transparency, accountability and participation in public financial management systems across the world.

Key to IBP's approach is the generation and dissemination of evidence, both to support civil society organisations in their efforts at national level, and to influence the global agenda through engagement with international stakeholders. In addition, there are increasing instances where IBP has started to engage directly with national governments, parliaments and other state actors, using its research to support instrumental reforms.

In 2016 IBP produced 80+ publications through three primary routes: IBP's flagship product, the Open Budget Survey and Index; three country programmes which engage national agendas; and the international advocacy programme, producing analysis at the global level.

The approach to research communication varies across these three areas, as indicated in the sub-sections below, but in general IBP targets the following groups of actors:

- Civil society organisations
- Multilateral and bilateral Donors supporting PFM efforts at country level
- International finance institutions
- Intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder organisations
- International non-governmental organisations (INGOs)
- National and sub-national governments, parliaments and other state actors
- National and international media

#### 2.1.1 The Open Budget Survey and Index

The Open Budget Index (OBI) is published every two years and it rates the level of budget transparency of over 100 countries. It uses the results of the Open Budget Survey (OBS) which is administered in each of the participating countries by one of IBP's civil society partners. The OBS examines a number of budget issues, including whether, when and how certain key budget documents are made available to the public, how the public are engaged in the process of developing and implementing the budget and how the supreme audit authorities and parliaments carry out their oversight functions.

The survey results for each country are reviewed by a government reviewer and synthesised into a score which is directly comparable with other countries. The process results in a country report for each of the participating countries, which includes recommendations to improve their score, and a global report which presents the scores of all countries in a ranking, and discusses the major trends in the data.

The OBS has a specific dissemination approach which focusses on engaging global audiences, communicating through national and international media and supporting civil society and other actors at the country level to make use of the OBS report and data.

### 2.1.2 Country programmes

IBP has long standing commitments in three countries in particular: India, Kenya and South Africa. It employs staff in those countries, has a permanent office, has strong partnerships with civil society, directs funding to partners and engages in research and policy analysis at the national and sub-national level. Through its country offices, IBP is able to better understand the specific national context, build stronger relationships and have a greater influence on decision makers.

Country offices manage their own approaches to research communication, which is largely researcher led with fewer resources for dedicated communications teams, although rely on the head office for editing, design and layout, and publishing through the IBP website and social media.

### 2.1.3 International advocacy programme

While IBP's primary strategy is to work through civil society organisations, they also recognise that a key route to influencing budget transparency is through international agreements and global actors including IFIs, bilateral and multilateral donors, INGOs, UN agencies, INTOSAI and multi-stakeholder initiatives. As such, IBP engages at the global level through its international advocacy (IA) programme which includes building partnerships, establishing global norms, convening diverse organizations and influencing key actors through strategic engagements and publishing policy briefs, think pieces, and concept notes.

Communication of research in the IA programme is largely ad-hoc, with communication efforts depending on each particular piece and the people involved.

## 2.2 The evaluation

IBP commissioned this evaluation of its publications to determine the uptake and outcomes of its research on target audiences, particularly national government actors. The evaluation is intended to support IBP's learning and practice by providing detailed analysis on the role of research and publications in its organisation wide strategy and individual programme strategies, as well as testing implicit assumptions about these.

### 2.2.1 Evaluation questions

The evaluation focusses on two broad areas: the uptake of IBP's research, and the role of research in contributing to IBPs outcomes. These areas are defined further through a set of evaluation questions and accompanying definitions to clarify the terms used.

The following evaluation questions were agreed between the evaluator and IBP and form the basis for the analysis in this report. The first two questions represent the bulk of the evaluation while the third is an exploratory question to illicit views on IBPs role as a credible source of evidence in a context which is becoming increasingly cautious about the contribution that experts and analysts can make.

4. What is the nature of **uptake** of IBP's research?
  - a. To what extent are publications reaching intended audiences?
  - b. In what ways is research used by intended audiences?
  - c. What are the most important factors affecting uptake?
5. What are the **outcomes** of IBP's engagement?
  - a. What are the significant and relevant changes observed in target governments?
  - b. What contribution can IBP claim for these changes?

- c. What factors have contributed to IBP's influence?
6. What is the role of **evidence** in IBP's influence on budget transparency, accountability and participation?

### 2.2.2 Evaluation scope

One of the key challenges in this evaluation is the scale. With over 80 publications per year going out to a global audience, including flagship publications being disseminated in over 100 countries, the potential uptake is vast and far exceeds IBP's intended audience and will go beyond what IBP is aware of. In order to generate useful learning for IBP within the scope of a relatively small-scale evaluation, the evaluation commissioners and the evaluator decided that the evaluation should take a few deep dives into areas where there is potential to learn about IBP's contribution - rather than map uptake across the board. Instead of attempting to map the uptake of individual publications, the main focus of the evaluation would be on broader research themes, recognising that audiences would likely engage with IBP through a research topic rather than particular publications.

The OBS, being the flagship product, was the obvious choice as one of the focal areas. The 2015 publication, which was the last round conducted, offers sufficient time for potential effects to be observed, while still clear in people's minds. It was important to look at country level as well as global level and it was decided to look at the effect of the OBI in two countries, as well as on the global stage. The countries which were selected were Nigeria and Cambodia, both of which have seen recent changes in attitudes to budget transparency and potentially had stories to tell about the role that the OBI had played. Nepal was initially suggested as a focus country but after a low response to interview invitations and further discussions with the OBS team it was decided to change to Cambodia because of a higher likelihood of learning about use of IBP's research.

To investigate the role of research at country level more deeply it was decided early on that the Kenya country programme made the most sense. The research in Kenya is both extensive and highly engaged, more so than other countries where IBP has a permanent presence. IBP Kenya (IBPK) plays a leading role on many issues which, so far, have not been picked up in the same way by other CSOs. In discussion with the researchers in Kenya, it was decided to focus on two research themes out of several which the programme has explored: the work on equity which examines the horizontal allocation of resources across the country, and the work on devolution, which examines how public funds are distributed across levels of government and how they are managed at county level.

Finally, the evaluation also considers, although to a lesser degree, the uptake of publications of the international advocacy programme. Only those which are published in 2015 and 2016 and which have an advocacy aim, or are targeting national government actors, are considered. This covers 25 publications (see annex 1).

### 2.2.3 Evaluation approach (definitions, complexity of research uptake, methods)

The evaluation applies a two-stage model to understanding research impact. First, it explores research uptake, which refers to the use of research by immediate audiences. Following previous research on the use of research, the evaluation looks at three kinds of use (Pelz, 1978): conceptual use, which refers to contributing to the general knowledge or understanding of a topic; instrumental use, involving applying findings in specific, direct ways;

and symbolic use, which is about selecting research findings to legitimate prior decisions and positions.

The second stage is research outcomes, which in this case refers to patterns of practice or policy change which have come about wholly or partly as a result of research uptake. Outcomes go beyond immediate audiences and demonstrate that research use is leading to some kind of observable change. Outcomes are generally the product of multiple factors and actors, of which IBP's publications is just one. There are other actors also working to influence the budget transparency agenda from different perspectives, and audiences will be influenced by multiple contextual factors. Furthermore, it is expected that IBP's contribution is a complex interplay between the research itself, the way in which it is communicated and the many other ways IBP engages with its audiences. Isolating the specific contribution of publications may not be possible and the evaluation will often refer to IBP's work or engagement which incorporates the research itself and the way it is communicated.

This evaluation has taken two approaches to understand uptake. First, through 40 interviews with people from across IBP's target audience groups, at different levels and associated with different programmes. Interviews probed the level of uptake of IBP's work, including which pieces were used and how they were used. The majority of interviews were with people suggested by IBP on the basis of been prior contact or they were a known partner or collaborator - see table 1. In no way is this a representative sample of all IBP's audiences, rather it represents the audiences most likely to use IBP's work. One interview was conducted with a PFM expert, contacted independently of IBP. The evaluation included a field trip to Nairobi, Kenya where 13 interviews were conducted face-to-face. The remainder of the interviews were conducted remotely through Skype, teleconference or telephone. A list of interviewees is not provided for the purpose of anonymity.

Programme	Recommended by IBP	Invited to interview	Actually interviewed
Kenya	40	24	15
OBS - global	40	9	7
OBS - Nigeria	23	10	5
OBS - Cambodia	9	9	4
OBS - Nepal	14	9	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>31</b>

Table 1 Number of interview by IBP programme - only those recommended by IBP

Organisation type	Number interviewed
CSO	9
IBP	8
Government (including parliament)	6
Donors and development partners	5
IFIs	5
Intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder organisations	3
UN organisations	2
INGO	1
Research	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

Table 2 Number of interviews by organisation type

Second, the evaluation included a citation analysis to understand where IBP's publications were being mentioned. The citation analysis searched a number of sources using the publication titles as search term. The sources included: Academia.edu, ResearchGate.net,

Google Scholar, Google news, Facebook, Twitter and IBP's own media monitoring. 55 publications were selected for searching, including 29 from Kenya, 25 from the international advocacy programme and the OBS 2015 global report. These were selected using a set of criteria. Through trial and error, it was found that two separate criteria were required. The first criteria aim to include all publications directly aimed at target governments, and the second aim to include all others that have an advocacy or influencing focus.

#### Criteria 1:

- Primary targets: Executive, government agencies, legislature, SAs
- Publication type: Budget analysis, policy brief, advocacy material, reports on OBS, infographics, other
- Language: English

#### Criteria 2:

- Primary purpose: Evidence, advocacy, dissemination
- Publication type: Budget analysis, policy brief, policy research, advocacy material
- Language: English

The publications meeting these criteria are presented in Annex 1.

### 2.2.4 Limitations

1. IBP's research is publicly available and may have been picked up by any number of people, known and unknown to IBP. The evaluation was not designed to document instances of publications being used by people unknown to IBP and may therefore have missed out on potential unexpected impact pathways.
2. Research impact can take several years until it is observable, and rarely takes a linear path which means it is unpredictable as to when the effects of research will be observable. Therefore, the evaluation will only be able to present an incomplete picture of the outcomes. In addition, the evaluation only explores a few limited 'windows' of IBP's potential impact, not an exhaustive review.
3. There is limited documented evidence of uptake of IBP's research, either from real-time monitoring or from citations of IBP's publications. This means evaluation is significantly reliant on stakeholder perceptions of outcomes, use of research and IBPs contribution, which may be biased. Since the evaluation was only able to reach people who were interested and willing enough to respond to the invitation, this further introduces a bias in the sample of interviewees.
4. The evaluation was unable to reach a significant number of interviewees from governments and parliaments, other than in Kenya. This has limited the ability to draw conclusions about the effect of the OBS and other publications at national level.

## 3 Findings

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This section explores each of the three evaluation questions in turn; first looking at uptake of IBP's publications, then the outcomes that this evaluation has been able to document, finally exploring the role of evidence in budget transparency.

### 3.1 What is the nature of uptake of IBP's publications?

#### 3.1.1 To what extent are publications reaching intended audiences?

The first part of the uptake question is about reach - who receives and does something with IBP's publications, setting aside for a moment the question of what do they do with them. The findings of the citation analysis are discussed first, followed by the key informant interviews.

The citation analysis provided few insights unfortunately<sup>1</sup>. The majority of the searches provided zero results across all search platforms, which could mean many things. It may mean that most the publications selected are not being cited by anyone, anywhere. More likely it means that the method of searching is inadequate to pick up mentions.

For instance, ResearchGate.net and Academia.edu will only pick up publications which are already in their databases. The lack of search results for these search engines suggests that none of IBP's publications are added to these databases, which considering they are intended for academic articles is not surprising.

For Google News, Facebook and Twitter searching, it is likely that if people were mentioning the research that they wouldn't be using the full titles but an abbreviation, or just a hyperlink - which the search method wouldn't pick up. Because these publications were published in 2015 and 2016 it may also be that any mentions in social media and conventional digital media would be archived and more difficult to index in a search.

For results to show in Google Scholar, the publications have to be indexed, which it appears is not the case for IBP's publications. This is an automated process controlled by Google's algorithms and outside the control of IBP.

The only relevant conclusion from the citation analysis is that IBP's publications are rarely cited using the publication title.

Relying, therefore, on the interviews, the evaluation has been able to generate some broad findings about who is accessing IBP's publications. Because these findings are based on the accounts of 30+ people, selected because of their known connection with IBP, caution is advised when generalising from these findings. Nonetheless, the interviews represent a broad cross-section of types of organisation and perspectives, as summarised above, and this lends confidence to the findings.

The following tables demonstrate the evidence of uptake that this evaluation has been able to generate. Table 1 shows uptake among different stakeholder types at global, national and sub-national levels, and table 2 shows the same stakeholder types but assess the evidence of uptake for the three programmes examined in this evaluation: OBS & OBI, international advocacy and the Kenya country programme. The colour key is provided below.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1 for the data

**Colour key:**

**Strong direct evidence** - multiple examples of uptake

**Weak direct evidence** - few examples of uptake

**Indirect evidence** - suggestions of uptake which haven't been substantiated

**No evidence** - the evaluation sought evidence but did not find any

**Could not assess** - the evaluation could not make an assessment

Not applicable (n/a)

Stakeholder	Global	National	Sub-national
CSOs	n/a		
Government actors (including parliaments)	n/a		
Multilateral and bilateral donors			n/a
International Financial Institutions			n/a
International NGOs			n/a
Intergovernmental organisations			n/a
UN Agencies			n/a
Media			

Table 3: The level of evidence of uptake among different types of interviewees, and across global, national and sub-national levels.

Stakeholder	OBS	IA	Kenya
CSOs			
Government actors (including parliaments)			
Multilateral and bilateral donors			
International Financial Institutions			
International NGOs			
Intergovernmental organisations			
UN Agencies			
Media			

Table 4: The level of evidence of uptake among different types of interviewees, for the three programmes examined: OBS & OBI, international advocacy and the Kenya country programme.

The interviews have highlighted a number of findings regarding uptake:

### 1. General

- There are many more examples of research use from intermediary audiences (CSOs, donors, IFIs) than national or sub-national governments, which are the ultimate targets IBP intends to influence. This may be a limitation of the evaluation which was less able to get direct access to government officials. This also likely mirrors the relationships which IBP has, given that interviews for this evaluation relied on suggestions from IBP staff, and those that replied were likely the ones which had a stronger affinity with IBP.
- Interviewees are rarely able to cite the titles of publications. Some have particular publications in mind and can cite the general topic but most can only point to a general area of work that they are aware that IBP publishes on. However, this would likely be

the case for any kind of research. Very few research publications would become popular enough that people would be able to name them as they would a popular fiction or non-fiction book.

## 2. *OBS / OBI*

- The OBS is the most used and most familiar publication among those interviewed, as expected given that it is IBP's longest running publication, is updated on a regular basis and a significant effort goes into disseminating the OBS reports, including through IBP's network of CSOs. It is referred to at national level as much as it referred to at global level. There was no evidence that it had been taken up at sub-national level, although the evaluation was limited in its ability to collect data at sub-national level. Since the OBS focusses on central government there is not a tendency to disseminate at sub-national level so this finding is unsurprising.
- Contrary to this, in Kenya, the OBS isn't referred to very often, except by actors in government. One CSO interviewee remarked that the OBS wasn't so relevant for them. This is likely because of the richness of other resources available to actors in Kenya, on issues that go beyond what the OBS can comment on.
- Two of the seven interviewees working at the global level on PFM and governance issues said they used to read the OBS each round but now they don't as it has become more predictable and there are fewer novel findings.
- About half of interviewees for the OBS side of the evaluation were unaware that the OBS goes beyond assessing publication of budget documents. It tended to be the more technically engaged individuals who were aware of the questions on participation and oversight.
- Beyond the more common audiences of CSOs, government and international agencies, one interviewee mentioned that they were aware of investment bankers and sovereign credit ratings agencies being familiar with the OBS and using it to support assessments of fiscal risk and investment decision making.

## 3. *Kenya Country Programme*

- IBPK's work was familiar to a broad range of actors including CSOs, government, parliament, development partners; 13 out of the 15 interviewees for the Kenya programme described using IBPK's publications. Although the evaluation was better equipped to explore uptake at national level, there was evidence that their work is used at county level, at least by CSOs supporting governments and citizens.
- In Kenya, all interviewees were familiar with the broad range of work produced by IBPK, in contrast to interviewees elsewhere, which had a more limited view of what IBP produced.
- In Kenya, the practical publications and training manuals were mentioned by interviewees more than the conceptual and analytical publications. There is likely an element of recall bias here - people will be more familiar with publications which have had a direct effect on their work, e.g. by providing a template or step-by-step process, than publications which aim to introduce new ideas for example. There is also likely a targeting effect, where the more practical-oriented publications are targeted at

specific users, whereas conceptual publications will have a general and broad audience.

- Several interviewees reported hearing of IBPK's work through the newspaper column written by Jason Lakin, IBP's former country director. This appears to be a primary channel in reaching the technical PFM community in Kenya.

#### 4. *International advocacy*

- The international advocacy publications were not very familiar to most people interviewed. A small number could name a few - or at least mention the broad topic, but most people were unaware that IBP produced publications beyond the OBS. It was generally the more technically minded that were aware of IBP's other work - those that would go searching for it.

### 3.1.2 In what ways are publications used by intended audiences?

Research has long been understood to have three broad uses in policy and practice: conceptual use, instrumental use and symbolic use (Pelz, 1978). Conceptual use refers to contributing to the general knowledge or understanding of a topic; instrumental use involves applying findings in specific, direct ways, such as to improve processes; and symbolic use is about selecting research findings to legitimate prior decisions and positions. The evaluation has found evidence that IBP's research is used in all three ways - at least by those interviewed.

As mentioned above, the evaluation was more able to understand use by intermediary audiences than primary audiences and as such the kinds of use are predominantly about how intermediaries use IBP's research to reach intermediary audiences. This is no less significant for IBP, however, as most of IBP's effort around research communication has been directed towards intermediary audiences.

#### 1. *Conceptual use*

The first sign that IBP's research is contributing to a broad knowledge base is that **people are sharing publications** with their networks and organisations. This is how key messages and new ideas from research start to become popularised and accepted within a community. For the OBS, there is evidence that donors, IFIs and inter-governmental organisations share IBP's research at the global level, more with colleagues than with broader networks, however. At the national level it is mainly CSOs who were found to be sharing IBP's work, many of whom are funded specifically to do this. There is evidence that the OBS is shared among the PFM working group in Cambodia, and this may indicate that it mostly circulates among the technical communities.

In Kenya, IBPK's research is widely shared. CSOs, those that are funded by IBP as well as those who are not, channel IBPK's research to sub-national level, sharing with other CSOs (e.g. in Kisumu county) and county governments (e.g. in Nyeri county) - often through trainings. IBPK's research is regularly shared within key influencing spaces in the Kenya's PFM community - for example, the development partners PFM and devolution working groups of, the UN working group on devolution, the Senate Finance Committee and the Commission for Resource Allocation. There is also evidence that IBPK's work is shared internationally through country offices of IFIs and donors to their head offices.

The evidence suggests that there may be a 'champion' effect with IBP's research - that it is picked up by certain individuals who have an interest or relationship with IBP and that they

consume and amplify IBP's work to their networks and organisations, sometimes crossing sectoral boundaries which IBP is not as equipped to target themselves.

The second sign of conceptual use is that IBP's research is **prompting and feeding discussions and debates**. This goes further than consuming and sharing research and shows that the research is touching on relevant issues and triggering people to think and discuss with others. For example, for the OBS, PFM advisors including the World Bank and CABRI, use the OBS to raise particular issues with their government partners in Cambodia and Nigeria respectively. CABRI in particular use the participation and oversight sections of the OBS more than the index itself to prompt discussions with government officials. IBP's membership of the Fiscal Openness Working Group in particular and GIFT more generally, was mentioned by one interviewee as a space where their research has been able to gain traction and contribute to the ongoing dialogue at the global level.

In Kenya, IBPK's research fuels discussions at many levels. It is regularly reviewed and discussed among development partners in the country and according to one interviewee, recently prompted a discussion in the email list of the development partners working group on PFM. Their budget analysis at national level also provides talking points between development partners and Treasury officials, allowing a more evidence-informed dialogue. One CSO interviewee remarked that they had witnessed officials from county government asking questions to the national government on issues of cashflow, prompted by IBPK's work. IBPK's research also informs debates in the Senate Finance Committee, according to one interviewee. One interviewee from an IFI in Kenya said they frequently come across IBPK's work through the newspaper column written by Jason Lakin, IBPK's former country manager, and it regularly sparks debate with colleagues.

The third sign of conceptual use is that research is **informing people's views** - there may not be any sign that they are doing things different but they are beginning to look at different issues or the same issues in a different way. At the global level, for example, several interviewees mentioned that IBP's work on participation in particular had informed the way they think about budget transparency, to think more from the perspective of citizens. More specifically, IBP's work on citizens budgets has shaped one interviewee's thinking, particularly that they shouldn't be limited to annual events. Another interviewee found that IBP's recent work on volatility helped them shape their opinion on a topic which hadn't had much prior coverage. The OBS provides essential data for another interviewee, informing the conclusions of their cross-country analysis on transparency.

In Kenya, IBPK's work on equity was said to have influenced the thinking of donors in the country, linking the ideas of equity in budget allocation to issues of poverty, the primary mandate of most donor agencies. The equity work was also mentioned by several other people as influencing their views on devolution, including among Commission for Revenue Allocation which used IBPK's work to sharpen their arguments. IBPK's budget analysis work plays an important role in helping people understand the facts behind the government's decisions. One CSO interviewee mentioned that IBPK's work on budget analysis had changed the way they look at budgets, for example, to look down to the sectoral level at how money is spent on particular areas. A former government official remarked that IBPK's budget analysis work informed their perspectives and helped clarify their public engagement work.

## *2. Instrumental use*

There are two main ways that interviewees reported instrumental uses of IBP's work - directly to improve their work, and to inform and influence others.

The OBS is helping people to **improve their work** in several ways. At the global level, it is well documented that the OBS is used by the European Commission as a criterion for budget support, but they also use the OBS to monitor all 90 countries where they have ongoing commitments. Likewise, the Open Government Partnership uses the OBS as one of the four eligibility criteria for membership, committing those countries to demonstrate a minimum standard in budget transparency. These examples are explored more in the next section on outcomes of IBP's work. In addition, the IMF regularly uses the OBS as part of the macro-fiscal analyses, and compare OBI scores with their fiscal transparency evaluation findings.

At the national level, a greater understanding of the OBS methodology prompted government officials in Nigeria to prioritise work to improve the timeliness of their budget reports, and also to ensure that key documents are available online - something that wasn't previously prioritised. In Kenya, it was reported that the Parliamentary Budget Office uses the OBI to advise parliamentarians of Kenya's relative progress with budget transparency. One donor interviewee mentioned that they had used the OBI score for a particular country in the results framework for the country programme, to measure increases in government transparency.

In Kenya, IBPK's work has the effect of inspiring CSOs to improve their own work. For example, one interviewee commented that the details of IBPK's work on health budgets has inspired them to go to the same depth in other sectors. Another interviewee remarked that IBPK's work had given them confidence to explore budget process in the areas they work on - an angle they were not used to looking at in the past; and another said that IBPK's work has empowered them to engage with governments. Beyond CSOs, IBPK's work on county budget transparency provides evidence for development partners to support their work with counties, and their work to summarise and communicate key legislation helps IFI's working at macro level to keep their focus on the details of what is required by law and how this translates to practice.

IBP's work is used by several intermediary audiences to **inform and influence others**, usually government actors. The OBS, for example, plays a part in the bilateral relationships between several actors, for instance the EC and their recipient countries, the OGP and their members, and donors of PFM reform programmes and their government counterparts. In each of these examples, the OBS has provided a basis to exert pressure on the partner governments to improve their budget transparency. The IMF uses the OBS in their training on PFM to government officials and parliamentarians to explain about budget transparency, and are including this in an online course they are developing. The CSOs interviewed make use of the OBS in their advocacy efforts, although directly supported by IBP to do this. One interviewee explained that they use a two-pronged approach where they apply pressure by publishing the OBI scores to the public, highlighting regional comparisons, and also engage government officials directly to discuss the results and support improvements.

In Kenya there is a similar pattern where IBPK's work is used by both international agencies and national CSOs to apply pressure and support change within the national and sub-national governments. CSOs working on transparency and accountability use IBPK's reports for their advocacy - not just those that are funded by IBPK. IBPK's work provides a level of detail on budget analysis and legal requirements that the CSOs do not have the technical capacity to do themselves. In particular they use IBPK's work on how to read budget documents, the presentation of key dates in Kenya's budget cycle, county and national level budget analysis - especially the health sector work, and recent work on access to information. In one instance, the use of IBPK's work in a memo submitted to the Nyeri county assembly mean that it was taken seriously by the officials.

In terms of development partners, there is evidence that IBPK's work is providing material for one agency to influence national government on various issues around budget transparency, and another using IBPK's county-level budget transparency ratings to discuss necessary changes with the county governments they work with, e.g. Marsabit county.

Finally, one of IBPK's submissions on public participation to the Parliamentary Budget Office influenced the PBO to make a recommendation to parliament that they demonstrate the effects of public participation as part of their feedback to citizens.

### 3. *Symbolic use*

The OBS, like any indicator, is inherently at risk of being misused. It can be relatively easy for governments to see how they can improve their score with the least effort. This can lead to situations where governments are incentivised to introduce superficial changes for the sole purpose of improving their score and their ranking, without necessarily committing to the values of transparency and openness that IBP are seeking to bring about. This is classed as symbolic use as it's about changing perceptions rather than actual change.

While this evaluation has not found conclusive evidence of this kind of behaviour - primarily because it was not able to take a deep enough look at the country level - there are some indications that are concerning.

For example, one interviewee remarked about Nigeria that the recent commitment to adopt the OBI as a government target is driven by a desire to signal to domestic and international stakeholders that the government is fulfilling its commitment to tackle corruption - to attract foreign investment and trade and to maintain legitimacy and power. Their interest is solely in the score, not in any other findings that IBP may bring. This was backed up by another interviewee, that it's all about demonstrating progress on anti-corruption, and strengthening citizen engagement or government accountability more broadly doesn't come into the discussion, let alone the link to improving services to citizens. This is not to say the recent progress in Nigeria isn't significant (the next section on outcomes explores this more) and that the OBS hasn't had a positive effect, but it suggests that the effect may be limited by the instrument itself - that perhaps the index is blinding officials to deeper challenges and potential reforms. In Nigeria, at least, several interviewees suggested that it was the index that was taken notice of and beyond reforms aimed directly at improving the score, other findings and messages were not as prominent.

There is a similar situation in Cambodia, where like Nigeria, the government has made a commitment to improve its OBI scores but that, according to more than one interviewee, they are closing space for civil society at the same time. The need for the ruling party to protect their political space may be both fuelling their desire to demonstrate openness through an improving OBI score, while at the same time forcing them to close down areas of civil society which oppose them on other contentious issues. In this way, the OBI may be being used symbolically as a way of maintaining legitimacy.

#### 3.1.3 What are the most important factors affecting uptake?

Interviews have highlighted a number of factors which have contributed to IBP's work being noticed, used and appreciated.

1. **Credibility through independence.** The most cited factor, particularly in Kenya, is IBP's independence. They are seen as neutral - neither representing governments, civil society or international interests, despite their clear links to CSOs which doesn't seem

to affect the perception of independence. They are predominantly seen as bi-partisan and treat all parties in the same way.

2. **Legitimacy through reputation.** IBP's reputation is recognised very widely among all kinds of stakeholders. They are perceived as producers of high quality research that is grounded in the reality at country and sub-national levels. Over the years working in this sector, IBP has developed a lot of trust in its brand.
3. **Monopolistic.** By focussing on a defined and narrow field, IBP has been able to carve a niche which very few can compete with. The OBS is the only regular global comparison of budget transparency and in Kenya, IBPK is seen as the only organisation focussed on budget analysis. One interviewee described this as monopolistic.
4. **The allure of indices.** For the OBS, a big factor in its uptake is the fact that it's comparable over time and between countries. No matter where they are people like to read rankings.
5. **Networks and relationships.** IBP's work is far more likely to be used by those with which they have developed a relationship, or are connected through their networks. As with all organisations, IBP's most important asset is its staff, and research is used when people know the researchers behind the research. In Kenya, Jason Lakin's prolific networking is one of the primary reasons for people's familiarity and confidence in using IBP's work.
6. **Salience and relevance.** The publications which were mentioned the most were those that were relevant to people's work or current debates. In Kenya, the practical publications - how-tos, guidelines, training manuals, for example - were more likely to be mentioned as useful by interviewees. That is not to say that the more conceptual publications have less value, but their value is more difficult to see and may take longer to materialise. Where conceptual publications, such as those on equity published by IBPK have been taken up it's been because they provide evidence and perspectives on a salient topic.
7. **Collaboration and co-authorship.** Publications which are co-branded, e.g. in Kenya with CRA or CIC, or globally with GIFT, are more likely to be taken up. This is partly from the broader platform from which the publication is disseminated, but also because co-branded publications tend to have specific purposes and target particular groups. People also appreciate when IBP allow themselves to be used by other groups, e.g. in Kenya, according to one interviewee, the government put their logo on IBP's work and adopted it as their own - and this was seen as a strength, that IBP value the longer term goal rather than shorter term visibility.
8. **Dissemination channels.**
  - a. Face to face events are the most common way people find out about IBP's work. It's more often the events that people remember rather than the publication - although many do pick up the publications from the events.
  - b. The website was cited as an excellent platform for accessing the OBS data, and important in establishing credibility, but not widely used as a primary way of accessing publications. Particularly in Kenya, the website was rarely mentioned as a source for publications, and was mentioned more than one as being difficult to navigate to find publications from IBPK.

- c. The email mailing list was mentioned as a key source of information about publications.
- d. The media was one of the most important channels in Kenya for finding out about IBP's work, but this was a special case as one of IBP's researchers writes a regular column in one of the national newspapers, which everyone involved in PFM in Kenya reads. Elsewhere media was not mentioned as a source of information about IBP's work.

## 3.2 What are the outcomes of IBP's engagement?

In this section, we explore the outcomes of IBP's work across the areas of focus for this evaluation, first looking at Kenya and the work of the country programme, then looking at the influence of the OBS/OBI and the global advocacy research at the global and county levels.

This is not an exhaustive list of IBP's outcomes but a subset of outcomes which this evaluation has been able to document. Each account documented below includes background information followed by a discussion of the sub-questions mentioned above: (1) what are the relevant changes which have been observed, (2) what has been IBP's contribution and (3) what are the factors which have contributed to IBP's influence.

### 3.2.1 Kenya

IBP has a long history of working in Kenya and since 2013 has had permanent staff based in the country - as one of three country programmes where IBP engages more deeply. While the team is relatively small, with just four staff, the outputs are extensive, with 33 outputs in 2015 and 28 in 2016.

IBP's engagement in Kenya has overlapped with a process of governance devolution on a scale and at a speed the world has rarely seen. The 2010 constitution laid out a vision of devolved governance, creating 47 counties with new powers to enact laws and manage resources. The new county governments were established following the elections of 2013.

The constitution also set in motion a series of legislative reforms with the aim of enhancing public oversight and participation in governing the country, including a new Supreme Court and an empowered Parliament. Among subsequent legislation is the Public Finance Management Act 2012 which provides a framework for the budget process at national and county level and introduces a number of requirements around parliamentary oversight, public participation, and accountability of the executive branch.

IBP Kenya's (IBPK's) work has covered a variety of topics over this period, fuelled by the gaps in legislation, uncertainty around implementing devolution and the gradual increase in interest and opportunity for public engagement in budget issues. The following four areas broadly describe much of IBPK's work:

- Budget analysis at national level
- Resource allocation and PFM issues in the devolution process
- Equity in revenue sharing across the 47 counties
- PFM, budget transparency and participation at county level

IBP rarely works alone and has a network of CSO partners as well as collaborators from government and parliament, including the Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA) and the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution (CIC). Although IBP's general approach is to work in the background and support CSOs as the primary change agents, IBPK's approach has evolved in a slightly different direction. When the programme started they intended to follow IBP's general approach but found that capacity and interest among CSOs to engage on key issues, such as the revenue allocation formula (which is used to decide how to distribute public funds across the 47 counties), was limited and so they found themselves taking the lead on such issues and building a reputation in their own right.

This evaluation has identified four broad outcomes to which this work has contributed<sup>2</sup>: an increase in participation at county level for certain counties, increased capacity for PFM among county executives, informed decision making around budget allocation at national level, and public awareness of budget issues.

### *1. Public participation at county level*

One of the aims of the 2010 Constitution and the 2012 PFM Act was to provide more space for citizen engagement in the governance of the country. One of the mechanisms created to achieve this at county level is the County Budget and Executive Forum (CBEF). Each county is required to create a CBEF which is to include the Governor, other members of the County Executive Committee and an equal number of non-state members from a number of different interest groups.

The major limitation in the law is that there is no timeframe specified for when counties need to establish their CBEF; the law states that CBEFs should be established “as soon as practicable after the commencement of this Act” (Public Finance Management Act, Section 137(1)). The result of this relaxed timeframe, and the fact that the law did not provide sufficient detail or guidance to support counties in setting them up, was that 18 months after the law was passed only four counties had operational CBEFs (Muriu et al, 2014).

IBPK quickly identified CBEFs as critical factor in the devolution process. Since 2013 they had been publishing articles questioning the function and form of CBEFs and making suggestions on how to implement the legislation (Lakin, 2013). By 2014 they had begun monitoring implementation of CBEFs and documenting where progress had been made and where it hadn't (Rugo Muriu et al, 2014). At the same time, IBPK had the opportunity to work with Taita Taveta county to support their establishment of the CBEF. According to one government official IBPK were the only people talking about CBEFs at this time. A CSO interviewee remarked that “when you think CBEFs, you think IBP” because they had been so vocal on the issue.

One of IBPK's key contributions came when the Commission for Revenue Allocation (CRA) expressed interest in working with IBPK to support counties in developing CBEFs. The CRA has a mandate to support public consultations for the budget process and on hearing IBPK's work recognised the importance of supporting CBEFs to achieve this. CRA invited IBPK and another CSO, The Institute for Social Accountability (TISA), to collaborate on producing guidelines targeted at the county executives and County Assemblies. The guidelines were approved and published by CRA in early 2015. Following this, CRA, TISA and IBPK visited more than 30 counties to meet CBEF representatives and discuss the guidelines (Kamau, 2015). IBPK were able to go further and conducted a series of trainings for county executives and budget officials.

The work of IBPK in this area is seen as highly influential and instrumental in promoting citizen participation at county level - at least among the CSOs, donors, and government officials interviewed. Seven of the fifteen interviewees for this evaluation mentioned IBPK's monitoring, reporting and guidance work on CBEF's as one of their key contributions to public financial management in Kenya; this includes three government officials, three CSOs and one development partner. The perception among these interviewees is that since 2015 CBEFs have

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<sup>2</sup> Note that this evaluation did not intend to be exhaustive and there may be other outcomes beyond the four identified in this evaluation.

been established in many more counties, with one person stating that 23 counties have now established CBEFs thanks in part to the guidelines.

IBPK have continued to monitor this issue, and recent work suggests that the situation has not progressed far as it seems. Many of the established CBEFs are still not functioning as they should and many Governor's prior to the recent elections got away with not establishing CBEFs sufficiently (Lakin, 2017). Research commissioned by IBP in 2016, exploring citizen participation in three counties, concluded that the CBEFs were not functional in any of the three counties because of a lack of political will to make the necessary resources and information available for them (Larsen, 2016).

In addition to IBPK's work supporting CBEFs, they also established a partnership with URAIA Trust, to train budget facilitators in each county. Budget facilitators are citizen volunteers who train other citizens to understand county budget documents and engage with county governments to hold them to account. Drawing on their analysis on the budget process at county level, IBPK, with URAIA, trained budget facilitators in 18 counties. Workshops like these have proved an effective way of getting research into use, even enabling citizens themselves to make use of the research to work towards strengthened accountability.

This has so far led to greater public participation in budgets in several counties, and in some cases the budget facilitators have greater knowledge of the PFM legislation than the county officials. E.g. in Homa Bay the budget facilitator, using IBPK's guidance and analysis, has been able to speak out to the government when they have not complied with the PFM Act. In Baringo the budget facilitator has been able to use their analysis of the county budget to influence the County Fiscal Strategy Paper and has been encouraged by the county government to work with the budget department. In Makueni, the budget facilitator, again using IBPK's research, has worked with the county officials to develop the citizen's budget.

These examples show that by relating their research to salient issues, forming strategic partnerships and producing practical and targeted outputs, IBPK has been able to elevate the issue of public participation and support citizens in several counties to move towards greater involvement in the budget processes. However, these strategies have also been shown to be limited in the extent to which they can bring about change in citizen engagement at county level - beyond a few cases. Research commissioned by IBP has shown that even with the knowledge, skills and tools to create opportunities for citizen engagement, counties are limited by weak political will (Larsen, 2016).

## *2. County level PFM capacity*

When the new county governments were established in 2013 all the processes, institutions and relationships had to be developed from scratch. While the PFM Act provided the baseline requirements for how counties manage public funds, there was a huge knowledge and capacity gap in how to implement it. The national government continued to publish guidance through the bodies such as Commission on Revenue Allocation (CRA) and the Commission for the Implementation of Constitution (CIC) but the materials produced were generally considered to be dense and complicated to use, and often published in inaccessible places spread across several reports.

IBPK quickly seized on the opportunity to play a role in translating legislation and other guidance from the government into a form which was easier to read and understand by county governments. For example, on the whole process of allocating funds within the county from planning to audit, and around budget transparency: what goes in to certain budget documents, when they have to be published and how. This included a few publications developed in

collaboration with the Commission on the Implementation of the Constitution (CIC), including one titled *50 Things Every County Government Official Needs To Know About Public Finance Under The Constitution*.

11 of the 15 interviewees mentioned IBPK's work supporting PFM at county level as one of their key contributions. One interviewee from government commented that IBPK were among the first teams to go into the counties to meet budget officers and begin training them in their new roles. Several CSO interviewees commented that they use IBPK's work on how to do budget analysis at county level in their training of county governments. IBPK's work not only provides evidence-based guidance to inform their trainings, they also lend credibility to the CSOs, empowers them to engage with government officials, and gives confidence to their trainees.

As well as playing a knowledge translation role, IBPK also plays an advocacy role, raising key issues such as equity in revenue allocation. This work has been picked up by various actors, including UNDP, and used as the basis for spurring change in how counties decide how to use public funds. For example, Elgeyo-Marakwet county passed the County Equitable Development Act in 2015 which defines how funds are distributed among the wards. UNDP is using the example of Elgeyo-Marakwet to encourage other counties to move in the same direction.

Finally, one interviewee reported that counties have learned a lot from IBP's work on programme-based budgeting, which aimed to support government executives in implementing the requirements of the PFM Act. By using IBP's material, some counties, for example Baringo, have been able to go further than the national government in adopting programme-based budgeting, according to the interviewee.

There is general consensus among those interviewed that there is a long way to go until counties are proficient at PFM. Indeed, one interviewee remarked that less than five counties had their budget reports cleared by the auditor general in the previous cycle. There is also cause for optimism considering the scale of the challenge. Progress has been made in many counties and counties are now better equipped to address their capacity gaps.

However, the question remains of whether improvements in PFM capacity among the county governments will contribute to more open, participatory and equitable governance. It certainly provides the groundwork necessary but the obstacles to open government are deeply entrenched and require more than technical fixes. While the Constitution has ushered in a new culture of accountability, political leaders at all level have become used to a system of control, and this takes time to turn around. Citizens, despite evidence of recent engagement, are have themselves become used to being spectators of politics and policy and it may take a generation to overcome this attitude.

### *3. National revenue sharing policies and practices*

Two big questions which the national government had to quickly figure out to implement the Constitution were (i) how to distribute funds across levels of government to ensure that both have sufficient funds for their functions (vertical revenue sharing), and (ii) how to distribute funds across the 47 counties so that each has sufficient funds to meet the needs for public services (horizontal revenue sharing). The Commission for Revenue Allocation (CRA) was established through the Constitution to make recommendations for both vertical and horizontal revenue sharing and by 2012 they had made their first recommendation to Parliament. The recommendation, which was eventually revised and passed into law, provided a formula for revenue sharing and an annual process to define the funds at each level and across the counties.

IBPK were among the few people analysing and discussing the proposals. They published a series of papers exploring the issue of equity in the decisions about how to share funds in the country, including drawing on experiences in other countries such as South Africa and India. In 2014 they hosted an event with the aim of encouraging other CSOs to take up the issue of the revenue allocation formula but while they didn't find CSOs to champion the issue they did find an audience from government willing to engage. IBPK decided that because of the technical nature of the issue that they would champion it with government directly themselves. This led to a close relationship with the CRA as they regularly looked to IBPK for advice and expertise.

One example of where IBPK's research was used was in a debate between the county governors and the national government. The governors were pushing for a greater share of the national budget to be allocated to the counties, but at the beginning there was no factual basis to their argument. IBPK saw this and took the opportunity to publish some facts about the cost of delivering devolved functions in the counties. The conclusion of this work was that counties were not being funded sufficiently to deliver the services which they were mandated to deliver by the Constitution. The Council of Governors used this research as a basis for their lobbying.

As an excellent example of IBPK's bipartisanship, their research was also used to argue the exact opposite. This time it was the opposition coalition who were advocating for greater share of the budget to go to counties. They were publishing numbers to back up their demands but they didn't appear to have any factual basis. IBPK again seized on the opportunity to put their research to use and published figures which showed that if the counties were to receive the funds according to the opposition party then the national government would not have sufficient funds to do its job. This had the effect of diffusing some of the pressure which the Treasury was experiencing and they were grateful to IBPK for this.

These examples suggest that when research is targeted at specific times to specific audiences then it can have a greater effect than if it was broadly communicated. This is the case for both new research and for older research which has new uses.

IBPK's work is used by a number of other influential actors in Kenya, all working to ensure government is making the best decisions. For example, one interviewee mentioned that the Senate Finance Committee regularly reviews IBPK's analysis and uses it as evidence in their decision making. Also, the donor working group and the UN working group on budgets are both familiar with IBPK's work and regularly invite IBPK to their meetings to provide insights based on their research.

All this is having the effect that people working across Kenya on budget issues are reviewing similar research, using similar language and have a common basis for their discussions.

#### *4. Public awareness on budget issues*

One of the most significant changes in the country since the new Constitution, according to the majority of interviewees, is the public interest in the budget. In the views of several interviewees, including CSOs, government, IFIs, the public attitude to the budget is gradually shifting from something only the elites are concerned with to something that affects everyone. People are beginning to recognise that the budget is their money and they have a stake in how it should be managed and spent. The Constitution has given people confidence to speak out against government - even, in a few cases, taking their governments to court when they contravene the law.

IBPK has fed this new interest in budgets by working on three fronts. First, their research on budget transparency is applying pressure on county governments to disclose timely and accurate information to the public - through development partners. Second, they are

publishing guidance on how to read budget documents, which is used by CSOs at county level. Third, they are translating official information into a form which is understandable to the public. This has had the result of raising the public debate on budget issues. According to one interviewee, discussions are generally more in depth, concrete and evidence based, and in some specific cases, citizens have been able to question the government on key decisions, for example when one county proposed putting more funding into education than health.

IBPK's work to inform the public was recognised as one of IBPK's major contributions by several CSO interviewees. Much of the public education and awareness work carried out at county level is undertaken by CSOs, however, many CSOs in Kenya work on thematic issues such as health and education and they don't have technical expertise on budget issues. They rely on IBPK's research as a basis for informing the public on budget issues.

### 3.2.2 Global level: setting the agenda, influencing norms and standards

Decisions made by organisations working at the global level have a big influence on how countries behave around budget transparency. Bilateral and multilateral donors apply pressure on recipient governments to improve transparency as an anti-corruption and accountability measure; International Financial Institutions set guidelines for budget transparency to manage fiscal risk; and international non-governmental organisations promote budget transparency as a way to empower citizens and improve service delivery. Also, many PFM reform programmes in developing countries are funded and designed, or at least advised, by international agencies and donors and they have a large influence on the direction taken by countries, particularly in aid-dependent countries.

While this may have a positive effect on performance of public finance management systems and institutions in countries, as measured by global standards, this doesn't necessarily translate to positive change for citizens. For example, one well documented risk of imposing international standards in PFM is known as 'isomorphic mimicry'; that countries implement 'best practices' from elsewhere without necessarily thinking about how to adapt them for their context, and maybe even with no real interest in how they can benefit the country (Andrews, 2010, Hadley and Millar, 2016).

IBP target advocacy and research at actors operating at the global level for this reason. Their theory of change recognises that change in countries requires change at the global level also. To this end, IBP puts a lot of effort into maintaining relationships with global actors: through multi-stakeholder initiatives and working groups, and bilaterally with institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, OECD, EU and many development agencies.

This evaluation has highlighted two interrelated contributions at the global level: raising budget transparency as an issue on the global agenda, and influencing norms and standards of international organisations.

#### 1. *Setting the agenda*

The extent to which global actors prioritise budget transparency among the multiple other issues with which they engage has varied significantly over the past two decades. The financial crisis in East Asia in the late nineties first brought budget transparency to the attention of the international community - as a way of increasing accountability and managing fiscal risk. The IMF and the OECD were among the first to develop global standards on fiscal transparency but over time these issues have dropped down their agenda. Other organisations such as IBP and GIFT have taken the baton in promoting budget transparency.

In the words of one interviewee, “IBP is the leading NGO involved in budget transparency globally, perhaps the biggest organisation with biggest impact.” Another remarked that IBP has “played an important role and done a great job over 20 years of raising the importance of fiscal transparency”. Yet another said that IBP “has helped to focus people on budget transparency as a topic worth discussing”.

When pressed on what it is that IBP does that influences the agenda, most interviewees mention the OBS and OBI as the key instrument of IBP’s influence. One interviewee said that “the OBI has a huge currency worldwide” and another mentioned that when people talk about data for cross-country governance the OBS is the main source people refer to. The OBI has contributed to budget transparency becoming one of the key ways in which governance is measured, and hence elevated the issue.

As well as the OBS and OBI, interviewees also mentioned IBP’s presence on the global stage as one of their main influencing factors. They have assumed a role as champions of budget transparency and have been pivotal in multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the OGP and GIFT. These fora provide a channel for promoting IBP’s research and they also add credibility to IBP’s work by showing that they are willing to get involved.

## *2. Influencing norms and standards of international organisations*

According to several interviewees, IBP has an influence on the way people understand budget transparency. IBP’s work has a firm foundation on globally agreed standards and practices - e.g. the OBS is based on the IMF’s Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency, the PEFA, the OECD’s Best Practices for Fiscal Transparency, and the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions’ Lima Declaration of Guidelines of Supreme Audit Precepts. But IBP goes beyond these and uses its own research to highlight additional aspects of budget transparency which are less emphasised elsewhere.

One of the key areas it’s been able to influence is the idea that budget transparency includes openness and participation - that it’s not just about publishing documents but actively engaging citizens to debate the budget and contribute in key stages of the process. This is far from a universally accepted view - as reported earlier, only half of the interviewees recognised that the OBS included participation and oversight. However, the fact that half did recognise this shows that IBP is getting the message across to certain groups - the immediate audiences and closest collaborators. One interviewee put it in this way: “IBP has helped create a norm that civil society and citizens should be involved in budgets and that is something governments should embrace because it will help not hinder them,” and another remarked that “through its involvement in GIFT, IBP has influenced the harmonisation of standards among the major players”.

Four examples of where IBP’s work has influenced how international organisations use budget transparency emerged from the interviews. First, two interviewees mentioned that IBP had been instrumental in the IMF’s revision of its Code, particularly in the addition of participation as one of the principles. Prior to the revision of the Code, there was a principle on citizen budgets and IBP suggested that this be updated to reflect a deeper understanding of the role of citizen in the budget process.

Second, it was suggested by one interviewee, that IBP’s work on participation has indirectly influenced the OECD’s addition of participation and inclusion as one of their Principles of Budgetary Governance. The OECD has had an ongoing drive towards inclusion and consider themselves aligned with IBP’s on this, however they met resistance among their network of Senior Budget Officials (SBOs), who are involved in developing the principles. IBP’s

involvement in the Fiscal Openness Working Group (FOWG) of the Open Government Partnership was seen as the key avenue for influencing in this case, as some of OECD's SBOs are also part of the FOWG and would have been exposed to IBPs messages there.

Third, since at least 2012, the European Commission has used the OBI as an eligibility criterion for recipient countries to receive budget support. This means in theory that EU staff are able to apply pressure on partner governments to improve their scores. It also increases the likelihood that accompanying PFM reform programmes will support governments to improve their scores. There is evidence of this happening in some countries, e.g. Cambodia (see below), although the extent to which this is supporting a broader commitment to transparency is unclear.

Fourth, the Open Government Partnership also uses the OBI as part of the commitments that governments have to sign up to in order to become members. Being a member of OGP is becoming increasingly sought after as governments want to demonstrate to their taxpayers, investors and donors that they are fighting corruption. There is evidence that this is putting the OBI on the agenda of some countries - for example Nigeria (see below), although most likely in a compliance manner.

These four examples have highlighted that IBP's research has had some effect on certain influential international organisations - the EU, IMF, OECD and OGP. There has clearly been a shift in standards towards those which IBP champion, and there appears, from the remarks of a few interviewees, to be a shift in norms at this level. It isn't clear to what extent norms have shifted beyond this group, but interviewees suggest that it's unlikely that governments have been influenced at the level of norms - but more at the level of compliance.

### 3.2.3 National level (other than Kenya)

Change at the national level is ultimately what IBP is looking for - increased transparency of budget documents, increased accountability of government to citizens and parliaments, and increased participation of citizens in the budget process. Other than the three countries where IBP has permanent staff, IBP only has limited opportunities to influence at the national level. Very little of its global advocacy work is targeted at national level actors, and it is predominantly through the OBS process and the OBI ranking which IBP aims to directly influence at this level.

IBP invests significant amount of time and effort in disseminating the OBI through national media and public events, and supports the advocacy of CSOs in the majority of countries in which the survey is taken. This evaluation attempted to trace IBP's influence at national level through two examples - Nigeria and Cambodia<sup>3</sup> - and also generally through the impression of actors at the global level.

There is general agreement among interviewees that the OBI has an effect on countries. For example, one interviewee has seen Finance Ministers take notice of their OBI scores, sometimes getting agitated, another suggested that Benin's score of 1/100 in 2012 prompted it to take action resulting in a significant improvement in 2015. The impression from many interviewees, including from IFI's and intergovernmental organisations, is that the OBI provides a motivation for countries to improve their budget transparency so that they get a higher score and hopefully improve their ranking against other countries in their region. Some countries

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<sup>3</sup> Also in Kenya but since this is a country programme it is dealt with separately.

even see the OBI as a credible and legitimate measure for themselves and use their score for their own monitoring and performance assessment.

This is not always the case however, as some countries choose to ignore the OBI and seek to undermine its legitimacy, and where countries do take it seriously, many will only change superficially; enough to maintain their OBI ranking.

The two examples below demonstrate both the effect that the OBI has at national level and the limitations.

### *1. Nigeria*

Prior to the election in 2015, in which the administration changed, budget transparency was not a priority in Nigeria; one interviewee said that there was little interest in the OBI from government officials. Since the election, though, changes have been observed and the government is starting to show interest in the OBI. Significantly, earlier this year, the government announced that have set themselves a target to improve their OBI ranking, and is working closely with CSOs and the Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI), an intergovernmental organisation providing technical support on budget reforms, to achieve this. Because any changes they make to their budget transparency won't be reflected in the 2017 survey results they have set themselves a target to be in the top seven African countries in the 2019 OBI. Some interviewees also observed that public participation in budgets at national and state level is improving.

The key factor driving these changes, according to interviewees, is the new administration's public commitments to fight corruption. The current President was elected on the basis of a campaign which promised widespread reforms and crackdown on corruption, and there is a need to be seen to be achieving progress on this - not least because there is another election in 2019. Following the anti-corruption summit in London in 2016, the government announced that Nigeria would be joining the Open Governance Partnership, which includes a commitment to improve OBI scores, among several other indicators. One interviewee also commented that the government feels that previous scores are not true representation of the progress being made in Nigeria so they want to show that they have improved.

The OBI has succeeded in becoming formally recognised in Nigeria, and this is leading to observable changes, but there is a sense from those interviewed that the OBI itself is limited in what it can accomplish. It is mostly being used to improve timeliness in publishing the eight key budget documents - the issue that the government recognises is its weaknesses in the OBI. It doesn't appear that other dimensions of the OBS are being used - public participation and legislative and SAI oversight. Going beyond document publications requires engaging in the political sphere of the country - something which IBP is not well equipped to do from a distance. Other actors such as CABRI and BudgIT, one of the leading national NGOs working on budget issues, have been able to develop relationships in government and have the ability to support deeper change. IBP is well represented by these two organisations and can likely continue to use them as their main channel to inform policy at the national level.

One final comment on Nigeria is that according to one interviewee, change in budget transparency is only likely to be sustainable if it is instituted at state level rather than national level. It is at the state level where citizens are more likely to engage and progress there is more likely to survive changes in administration. The OBS was adapted and implemented at state level in 2015 but this research didn't seem to be very visible among those interviewed, indeed those working at state level don't seem to be as aware of IBPs work as those working at

national level. This may limit the progress which can be made with the recent commitments to the OBI at the national level.

## *2. Cambodia*

Cambodia has been engaged in a programme of public financial management reform since 2004, funded and supported by a multi-donor trust fund led by the World Bank. Budget transparency doesn't seem to have been a priority for the reform programme or the government in general until more recently. One interviewee remarked that the government showed very little interest in the OBI prior to the 2015 round.

Since then, though, there has been growing interest at the technocratic level and the political level. The government has made public announcements about budget transparency - including introducing the OBI as an indicator for the PFM reform programme. This year, the government published a mid-year budget report and citizens budget, and the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) recently published a circular committing to further transparency measures and urged other line ministries to also take action. There are also other positive signs such as the MEF inviting CSOs to observe the PFM reform programme's working group meetings, which they had been excluded from prior that.

The reasons for Cambodia's interest in budget transparency are two-fold: first, donors such as the EU have begun to apply more pressure on the government to address budget transparency issues, and because the EU uses the OBI as one of its criterion for budget support, the government is keen to make a visible improvement in their score. Second, the Prime Minister has been in power for over 30 years but political competition is growing and the ruling party want to make sure they stay in power. They are looking to international standards to give them legitimacy and to demonstrate that they are combatting corruption and increasing accountability to citizens.

The flipside of the increased political competition is that the government is much more defensive towards any kind of opposition. The opposition party has been expelled, many independent media companies have been closed by government and citizens have been imprisoned for public opposition to the government. In many respects the government is becoming more closed.

The case of Cambodia has highlighted several limitations of the OBI. First, it relies on CSOs to take action and advocate to government. The problem in Cambodia is that CSOs have low capacity. There are good budget analysts working in CSOs but they don't stay for long - many take jobs with development partners according one interviewee. The CSOs are not specialised at engaging with government and often rely on development partners to broker relationships. Second, the literacy rate in Cambodia is 70%, which makes it challenging for CSOs to promote citizen action around a topic as technical as budgets. Third, like Nigeria, there is more opportunity for influencing budget transparency at sub-national level, where the politics are less volatile and citizens have more confidence to speak out, but like in Nigeria, the OBI does not penetrate to sub-national level. Finally, there is more progress being made in transparency in specific sectors rather than across government as a whole, but again, the OBI is not designed to target specific sectors so there is less relevance and less opportunity for influence at sector level.

### 3.3 What is the role of evidence in IBP's influence on budget transparency, accountability and participation?

There is strong agreement among the majority of interviewees that evidence is necessary in bringing about change in budget transparency, accountability and participation - necessary but insufficient.

**Evidence provides credibility.** According to the majority of interviewees, much of IBP's influence stems from the fact that everything it produces has a clear evidence base. The data that IBP produces is seen to be filling a gap and that CSOs, donors, IFI and governments make use of this data - as documented above. Both the OBS and IBPK's research is taken seriously because it is seen as independent and evidence-based.

**Evidence enables fruitful discussions.** Evidence can have the effect of opening people's eyes and getting them to think about the issues differently - or getting them to think about them at all. As shown above, IBPs work has informed people's views and led to discussions which could have a greater effect than the original research could have alone.

**Evidence helps maintain focus.** Budget transparency is not always high on the agenda when it comes to solving problems in government. As one interviewee put it - budget processes are often misunderstood and underestimated in how important they are for addressing many problems. One interviewee from government said that IBP's evidence helps them maintain momentum in their reform efforts and prevent backsliding, which is always a risk as personnel changes, administrations turn over and politics shifts.

**Evidence shines a light on misinformation.** Interviewees also raised the point that evidence is important in a context where many other sources have been shown to be inaccurate. For example, several interviewees mentioned that the media in Kenya is not always reliable, they mis-quote or make up numbers and offer inaccurate analyses. Likewise, other interviewees mentioned that governments often obscure facts and hide behind vague statements or half-truths as a way of maintaining control, protecting itself or national interests.

**But evidence is also limited in what it can achieve.** Decision makers may draw on evidence but more likely they are influenced by their values, ideals, their own experience, resource constraints and other pressure groups. Research on the use of evidence in policy making (see figure below) shows that there are four broad domains that will affect the extent to which evidence can make a difference: *political context*, including incentives to use evidence; the *nature of the evidence*, including methodology and credibility; *how it is communicated*, by whom and what the relationships are; and a set of *external factors* including donor policies. Only by understanding and navigating these four domains can researchers maximise the influence of their work.

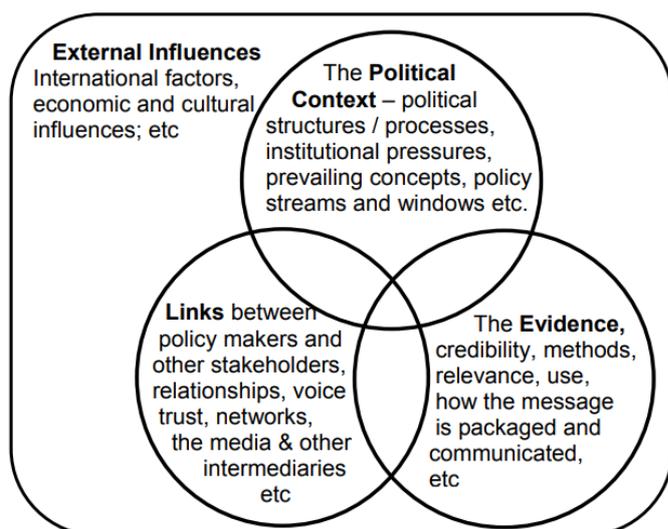


Figure 1: RAPID Framework: context, evidence links (Crewe and Young, 2002)

Interviews suggest IBP's strengths and weaknesses each of these domains. In the **political context domain**, there is a perception by some interviewees that IBP doesn't sufficiently engage in the political dimension of transparency and open governance. This is not to say that none of IBP's work explores the political side, but more a comment that their flagship product, the OBI, risks oversimplifying what is seen by some as an inherently political process. This may limit the effect of IBP's influence or at worse, it may make it easier for governments to support reforms which do not tackle underlying problems. Work in Kenya' on the other hand has demonstrated that through a detailed understanding of the political processes, research that would otherwise have gone unnoticed can be used to inform key debates. While this is substantially more feasible when the researchers are based in-country and working on that country full time, it is nonetheless important to appreciate in all research.

In the **evidence domain**, IBP clearly has accrued a great deal of credibility through its methodology. The data it produces is relied upon by many. Two areas were mentioned by interviewees, however. First that much of the data in the OBS is around presence and quantity of budget information and doesn't look closely enough at quality of that information; several interviewees noted that incomplete or difficult to interpret information is common from governments. Second, that IBP's evidence is too focussed on the production of budget information and not enough on the use of budget information; and that to connect up budget transparency with improvements in service, there is still an evidence gap in how budget information is used and by whom.

In the **links domain**, IBP has been able to draw a great deal on its networks and partnerships to get evidence into use. This has been a key strength for IBP and interviewees suggest that without these, the evidence produced would not be used to the extent it is. Relationships will continue to be an important factor, especially as IBP seeks to deepen its influence at national level. One interviewee remarked that organisations that are seen to be working too close with governments for examples, lose legitimacy with other groups - the opposite is also true.

## 4 Conclusions

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This evaluation aimed to assess the uptake and outcomes of IBP's research through a number of windows: the 2015 global Open Budget Survey and corresponding index, the research conducted by the IBP Kenya country programme, and a series of publications produced under the international advocacy programme in 2015 and 2016.

Overall it finds that IBP's work has filled a niche which has made it a go to place for analysis on budget transparency. Two areas in particular stand out - the OBS as an international standard which is widely used across the board, and IBP Kenya's work to support the devolution process, ensuring that issues of equity and participation are kept on the agenda.

It has been difficult though, to separate the influence of IBP as a whole and the influence of IBP's research specifically. Generally, people don't consider publications when they discuss IBP's influence. It is much more about their consistent presence at the global stage, involvement in key networks such as GIFT and OGP, the relationships they've developed with stakeholders at national level through sustained presence, and above all the consistency of the OBI as a recognisable brand in itself.

IBP's influence is well summarised with the formula: Influence = credibility + legitimacy + salience (Cash et al. 2002). IBP's credibility comes from its established reputation for high quality, rigorous, evidence-based research. Legitimacy comes from the fact that IBP's work is perceived as independent and bipartisan as well as the fact that it is well connected to the grass roots where budget issues affect the lives of ordinary people. IBP's convening role, bringing together the perspectives of civil society, government and international interests is highly appreciated. The salience of IBP's research comes from two places. In Kenya, much of the research was opportunistic in the sense that it related to matters which were being debated then and there. IBPK was able to respond on numerous occasions to ongoing debates with evidence-informed recommendations. For the OBS, salience comes from the fact that several other influential actors promote the OBI as an instrument for use at the country level - and national governments had to take notice.

In Kenya, IBP have been able to build a great reputation as an independent, highly skilled provider of budget analysis and commentary. By developing relationships with key institutions across the board, including government agencies, parliament, development partners, CSOs at national and county level, they have both been able to grasp the salient issues and provide avenues for promoting uptake of their research. Their research is highly regarded by a wide range of institutions, governmental, non-governmental and international, and seen by some as ahead of the curve in terms of the issues they raise. By working in partnership with CSOs and government commissions, they were able to increase attention on citizen participation through the CBEF process, and by directly supporting county governments they have been able to improve PFM systems. However, progress is limited, as conclusions of IBP commissioned research suggests. There is little evidence that counties are taking public participation seriously, and there doesn't seem to be a lot of pressure for them to accelerate the process.

For the OBS, the greatest influence has been at global level. IBP has invested significant effort at engaging actors at the global level, through initiatives such as GIFT and OGP as well as through long lasting relationships with OECD, IMF, World Bank and EU to name a few. In particular, the EU and the OGP seem to be two channels through which they've been able to indirectly exert influence at national level - where these actors have applied pressure to national governments to improve their scores. The IMF and OECD have also been influenced by

IBP's work, directly and indirectly. Both organisations include citizen participation in the principles they promote to their governmental partners.

One area where it is harder to see IBP's direct influence is at the national level in countries where there is not a country programme. While this evaluation was able to identify progress being made in budget transparency in two countries: Nigeria and Cambodia; in both these countries, the use of IBP's research is largely symbolic - that is they are using the OBI in a limited way to demonstrate to their stakeholders that they are making progress in opening up and combatting corruption. There was little evidence that improvements in the publication of budget documents were accompanied with improvements in civic participation or legislative oversight, and in fact there were concerns about both countries that the broader accountability situation was not changing or getting worse.

For many of the interviewees, particularly at national level and particularly for governments, the OBI is all they are aware of from IBP, which is unsurprising given that the index is more prominent than other more qualitative findings of the OBS, for example, in country reports and media coverage. This raises the question of what can be expected, in terms of change at national level, when the primary instrument you have is an index. In both Nigeria and Cambodia, there is determination to improve their OBI scores, but whether this will lead to improvements for citizens it is not clear. This is not a new question for IBP and in fact much of the work to expand the OBS to areas beyond publishing budget documents is an attempt to broaden their influence.

This evaluation, limited though it has been, suggests that these efforts are yet to bear fruit at national level, at least in the countries examined here. The direct influence that IBP has seems to be limited to the 'index effect' - the theory that governments can be pressured to change behaviour by scoring them and ranking them against their neighbouring governments. While this theory has not been proven here, the evidence from Nigeria and Cambodia, as well as the opinions of several interviewees working on PFM at global level, adds to its weight. The examples provided in this report also add weight to the idea that international pressure plays a strong role in influencing governments - in the case of Cambodia that organisations involved in PFM reform and donors providing budget support are strong channels, and in the case of Nigeria, which is less aid-dependent, that organisations such the Open Government Partnership and CABRI are important channels.

The major risk in promoting the OBI as a target for governments to improve, is that governments take the simplest course of action to achieve those improvements - which may not always be the most appropriate actions in their context, and may not affect the citizen-state relationship. IBP has been able to influence the standards and to some extent the norms of international organisations, resulting in greater prominence of citizen participation in their advice and support to governments, but it's not clear whether this is translating to change in norms for national governments.

## 5 Recommendations

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1. Keep up investment in research topics that go beyond the OBI. The OBI is likely to remain the primary route through which people, particularly governments, will engage with IBP but the evaluation suggests that there is value in promoting more a more ambitious agenda - even if change at national level takes time to see.
2. Publications are one part of an influencing strategy, and it's important to think about the other parts and how they fit together. Think in terms of engagement campaigns or research programmes, each including foundational research, stakeholder analysis, objectives, communication products and tactics, M&E. The choice of product itself is not as important, as having a clear objective and having a good understanding of the audience.
3. Combine structured outreach with strategic opportunism. A consistent and regular flow of research and messaging is necessary to maintain awareness on the issues, and that IBP is the place to go to find out more. But this is insufficient in generating sustainable change. Research has greatest effect in the context of established relationships. Taking this approach will entail a greater investment in strategic communications. This doesn't necessarily mean strengthening a specific communication function in the organisation, but rather recognising that researchers and analysts, particularly those with a strong reputation, are best placed to support uptake of research - and that IBP's people should be seen as much as IBP's research is. A strategic communications approach would create the space for, and facilitate researchers to promote their work and support others to make use of it.
4. Using stakeholder mapping, context analysis and outcome mapping to be more strategic, adaptive and knowledgeable. Particularly when entering a new arena, or breaking new ground. This will help get beyond formal relationships and processes to understand the informal ways in which sustainable change can be supported. Where this is already happening, e.g. for the OBS, then there is value in sharing experiences with other programmes, even adopting a common stakeholder engagement approach across the organisation.
5. For publications which target academic audiences it is advised to create a profile on Academia.edu and ResearchGate.net and upload each publication. This will make the publications searchable through these two platforms, which combined reach over 40 million users worldwide, but will also enable tracking of citations from other articles which are uploaded. Google Scholar is another platform which can enhance reach and provide data, potentially more than the other two, but it is not possible to submit publications in the same way. Instead, Google Scholar uses an algorithm to find relevant publications and automatically include them. Google provide advice to webmasters to ensure their web pages are set up in a way that will make it easier for the algorithm to find the publications.
6. Set specific and feasible policy objectives at global and country level. This can help to prioritise avenues to leverage influence, and countries to invest time in engaging. For example, bronze countries are low priority and just get broadcast coverage, silver countries receive greater support through partners, gold countries are high priority and potential high gain and require direct IBP engagement.

7. At country level, seek to understand and work with the politics of the PFM and transparency agendas of the various stakeholders. This will help identify opportunities to promote changes in function as well as form and avoid situations of 'isomorphic mimicry' which can happen if there is an overemphasis on the index rather than more in depth analysis and recommendations. This may mean working more to promote nuanced messages responding to the particular limitations and needs of countries. The challenge, though, will be to increase attention to these messages relative to the attention given to OBI score, which is a far more dominant narrative and much more likely to catch the attention of policy makers and politicians. Structuring country reports, infographics and press-releases in a way which emphasise specific messages more than the OBI score can support this ambition.
8. Be cautious about modifying the OBS methodology too much or too often. A lot of credibility is wrapped up in the fact that the OBS mirrors global standards and is comparable from year to year. Further modifications could jeopardise future use of the OBS by governments, development partners and researchers.
9. In Kenya:
  - a. Continue the action research approach but monitor uptake more closely: who is taking notice, how are they using the research. It is clear that the approach is working in engaging a variety of research users, and gaining traction at national and county levels, but it has tended to be heavily opportunistic with many individual pieces of work which has been harder to build an overall picture of influence.
  - b. Think about how to add value to existing work. There is a limit to how quickly audiences can consume new research, and IBPK produces a lot of research. There is space to slow down slightly to reflect on previous work. There was a sense that IBP's work was ahead of the curve, which is important to maintain, but also important to revisit work that is becoming more relevant, or for which there are new opportunities to engage. For example, regularly refer to previous publications on web pages, blogs and other articles; or repackage and re-publish old research in new forms when the findings become relevant to current debates.
  - c. Continue networking and relationship building - this is where much of the influence originates. There is a strong reputation of independence and bipartisanship which has been essential in building trust, but it requires work to maintain this reputation. As the new country director settles in, they will have to find their own way of building relationships - Jason's was through his column and through prolific networking at all quarters.
  - d. Continue to support change at county level recognising that change is non-linear - that more research and engagement does not necessarily translate to more change. The evaluation found that although there are signs of uptake at county level, outcomes are less prevalent - particularly in terms of public participation beyond a few isolated cases. By deepening their connections to actors at sub-national level, with increasing presence and more diverse actors, and by matching this with continued engagement at national level on issues relevant to counties, they will increase the chance that their research will be understood and acted upon.

- e. Interviewees provided the following feedback:
- i. Four people mentioned that there is a need for more publications which are targeted at ordinary citizens, to increase budget literacy and support citizen action, this includes producing outputs in different formats - e.g. videos and sketches. It should also be clarified that other interviewees commended IBPK for making budget information accessible to the public.
  - ii. Four people mentioned that there could be broader outreach to the public in general, and two of these mentioned increasing presence and discussions at county level.
  - iii. Three people mentioned that their work would have further impact if it was available in other languages spoken in Kenya, particularly Kiswahili.
  - iv. Two people mentioned that there should be greater engagement with government institutions beyond the Commissions which IBPK has worked with for some time. One suggestion (from a government interviewee) was to host breakfast meetings.
  - v. One person mentioned that there should be more proactive publications earlier on in the budget cycle rather than the current tendency for reactive pieces.
  - vi. Two people mentioned they would like to see more analysis and engagement at sectoral level, working with sector working groups, public hearings and county level sectoral institutions.
10. Cross country comparative analysis could help identify how IBP engagement has an effect, and which countries are worth investing in. One option explored briefly in the design of this evaluation, but which was decided was outside of the scope, was to undertake comparative analysis on a range of countries to explore correlations between various factors and OBS findings. For example, qualitative comparative analysis could be used to assess whether change in OBS results correlates with IBP's in-country engagement approach. It could also potentially weight other factors, such as political context, and even other indices such as World Bank's Doing Business or Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

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## 7 Annex 1: Citation analysis results

Title of the publication/Product	Ac	RG	GS	FB	Tw	GN	IBP '15	IBP '16	Total
OBS 2015 Global Report "open budget survey 2015"	12	0	9	42	24	10	644	155	896
How Much Budget Information are Counties Publishing Online?	0	0	0	6	8	0	2	1	17
How Does Civil Society Use Budget Information? Mapping Fiscal Transparency Gaps and Needs in Developing Countries	0	0	0	3	7	0	0	1	11
Fiscal Transparency in OGP Countries, and the Implementation of OGP Commitments: An Analysis	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Creating Incentives for Budget Accountability and Good Financial Governance Through an Ecosystem Approach: What Can External Actors Do?	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	4
Can India Create a New Information Revolution?	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Digital Budgets: How are Governments Disclosing Fiscal Information Online?	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Mexico's Battle for Transparency	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Budget Brief No. 32 – How Much Does it Cost to Run a County?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Budget Brief No. 29 – Have State Corporations Changed Under Devolution?	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Improving Program-Based Budgeting	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
A Fair Share of the Budget: Principles and Practices in Public Resource Distribution in Kenya	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Credibility and Reliability of Government Budgets: Does Fiscal Transparency Matter?	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Budget Brief No. 25 – Sharing Revenue: How Much of Kenya's Budget Is Already Committed and Cannot Be Shared?	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Budget Brief No. 18a – What Is Fair? Sharing Resources in Kenya	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Budget Brief No. 30 – Is the National Government Still Holding Funds that Should be Devolved?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Budget Brief No. 33 – Parliament and National Treasury: How are They Playing Their Roles in Kenya's New Budget Process?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
County Heads of Budget Meeting Rapporteur's Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
First Memorandum to Treasury on Program-Based Budget	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Memorandum to the Budget and Appropriations Committee of the National Assembly	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Review of Budget Documents Available Online for the 47 Counties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Second Memorandum to National Treasury on Program-Based Budgeting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Second Memorandum to National Treasury Suggested Improvements to 2015/16 Program-Based Budget	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Summary of the Health Sector Analysis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Are Cash Transfer Programs in Kenya Distributed Fairly?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Are Counties Sharing Resources Fairly? Evidence from Three Counties	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DELIBERATING BUDGETS: HOW PUBLIC DELIBERATION CAN MOVE US BEYOND THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION RHETORIC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
How Fair is the Elgeyo Marakwet County Equitable Development Act?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
How Fair is the Way That Major Regional Hospitals in Kenya Receive Funding?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IBP Kenya's Analysis of the 2015 National Budget Review and Outlook Paper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IBP Kenya's Analysis of the 2016 Budget Policy Statement	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Is the Equalization Fund Distributed Fairly?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Is the Way That We Share CDF Money Fair?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Principle of Fairness in Practice: Challenging Scenarios	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somewhere Along the Bumpy Road: democratizing public finances in Kenya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
What Does The 2015/16 Supplementary Budget Say About Kenya's Priorities?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joint Civil Society Response to PEFA Framework Revisions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Budget Brief No. 31 - Participation in Public Finance Reform and Gender	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Budget Transparency and Participation in Sustainable Development	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Submission to Participatory Monitoring and Accountability Consultation Report	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Submission to the High-level Thematic Debate on Means of Implementation for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Submission to the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Indicators and Monitoring Framework for Sustainable Development Goals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Briefing note for governments and investors on High-Level Dialogue on Fiscal Transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Budget Brief No 34 - Digital Budgets: Improving How Fiscal Information is Disseminated Online	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Concept note on high-level dialogue on fiscal transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Francophone Africa: An Unexpected Leader in Opening Government Books	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Invitation letter & annotated agenda for High-Level Dialogue on Fiscal Transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Statistical updates on Farhan Hameed's brief on relationship between credit and transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Summary of High Level Dialogue on Fiscal Transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Good News in Brazil's Two-Headed Crisis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Road to 61: Achieving Sufficient Levels of Budget Transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transparency Can Ease Argentina's Economic Uncertainty	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tunisia At a Governing Crossroads	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
U.S. Can Play Role in Improving Vietnam's Governance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
In Search of Adequate Public Reasons in Kenya's Budget Documents	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Key:**

Ac: Citations on Academia.edu

RG: Citations on ResearchGate.net

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IBP '15: IBP's own international media monitoring in 2015

IBP '16: IBP's own international media monitoring in 2016