

EXPLAINING BUDGET DEVIATION

A BUDGET CREDIBILITY SNAPSHOT

April 2019

The study of budget credibility examines the extent, nature, causes and consequences of deviations from approved budgets. In this series, part of the International Budget Partnership's Assessing Budget Credibility Project, 24 civil society partners in 23 countries probed a specific area in which execution of the national budget repeatedly diverged from the approved plan to learn whether adequate reasons were provided for the deviation. The broader synthesis report on these findings can be found [here](#).

SIERRA LEONE: MALARIA

In Sierra Leone, more than a quarter of the population suffers from malaria. Malaria contributes to an estimated twenty percent of child mortality in Sierra Leone and is the cause of nearly four in ten hospital consultations country-wide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Sierra Leone accounted for 4 percent (17,400) of the global deaths from malaria in 2017. For perspective on the severity of the malaria issue, this means that more than twice the number of people died from malaria in that one year than during the entire Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone in the last decade.

BUDGET CREDIBILITY CHALLENGE

The government's approved budget for Malaria Prevention and Control was significantly underspent between 2015 and 2017. During this period, the program's execution rate varied between one and 68 percent. This stands in stark contrast with the overall Ministry of Health and overall budgets, which have either been underspent less severely or have been over-spent. For example, in 2017 the aggregate budget was overspent by 18 percent, while the health budget was underspent by 13 percent and the Malaria Prevention and Control budget was underspent by 81 percent.

DEVIATION FROM APPROVED BUDGET: MALARIA PREVENTION AND CONTROL PROGRAM, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, 2015-2017

		Malaria Prevention and Control program	Ministry of Health	National Government
2015	Budget (billion le)	7.2	262.1	4,457.4
	Actual (billion le)	4.9	313.0	4,419.1
	Deviation (%)	-32%	19%	-1%
2016	Budget (billion le)	8.1	326.3	4,638.8
	Actual (billion le)	0.1	279.6	5,440.7
	Deviation (%)	-99%	-14%	17%
2017	Budget (billion le)	8.1	287.7	5,443.7
	Actual (billion le)	1.6	251.1	6,405.6
	Deviation (%)	-81%	-13%	18%

Source: Ministry of Finance

WERE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE DEVIATIONS FOUND IN GOVERNMENT REPORTS?

No. None of the following reports contained justifications for budget deviations:

- *Enacted Budget*
- *Annual Statement of Account*
- *National Health Strategy*
- *Auditor General Report*

DID THE GOVERNMENT AGREE TO BE INTERVIEWED TO EXPLAIN FURTHER?

Yes. Interviews were conducted with officials from the:

- Ministry of Finance: claimed the Ministry of Health failed to properly request the disbursement of funds
- Ministry of Health and Sanitation: claimed the Ministry of Finance did not release the full allocation

The Accountant General was also consulted on budgetary data.

WERE THE REASONS PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT ADEQUATE?

No, there are still basic questions left unanswered. The reasons provided by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, on the one hand, and Ministry of Finance, on the other, are directly contradictory, making it difficult to assess and fully understand the nature of the problem. Regardless of which institution is at fault, the reasons put forth are also generic, that is, they do not help to explain the variation in execution over time or among different health programs.