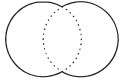


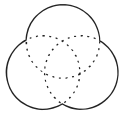
## Overview



### Transparency:

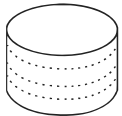
**20** /100

(Open Budget Index score)



### Public Participation:

**13** /100



### Budget Oversight:

**48** /100

## About the survey

Government budget decisions – what taxes to levy, what services to provide, and how much debt to take on – have important consequences for all people in society. When governments provide information and meaningful channels for the public to engage in these decisions, we can better ensure public money is spent on public interests.

**The Open Budget Survey (OBS)** is the world’s only independent, comparative and fact-based research instrument that uses internationally accepted criteria to assess public access to central government budget information; formal opportunities for the public to participate in the national budget process; and the role of budget oversight institutions, such as legislatures and national audit offices, in the budget process.

The survey helps local civil society assess and confer with their government on the reporting and use of public funds. This 8th edition of the OBS covers 120 countries.

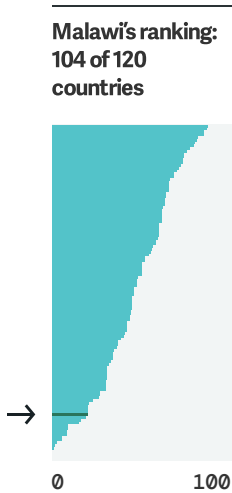
Visit [www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey](http://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey) for more information, including the full OBS methodology, the 2021 Global and Regional Reports, findings for all surveyed countries, and the Data Explorer.

# Transparency

This part of the OBS measures public access to information on how the central government raises and spends public resources. It assesses the **online availability, timeliness, and comprehensiveness** of eight key budget documents using 109 equally weighted indicators and scores each country on a scale of 0 to 100. **A transparency score of 61 or above indicates a country is likely publishing enough material to support informed public debate on the budget.**

Malawi has a transparency score of **20** (out of 100).

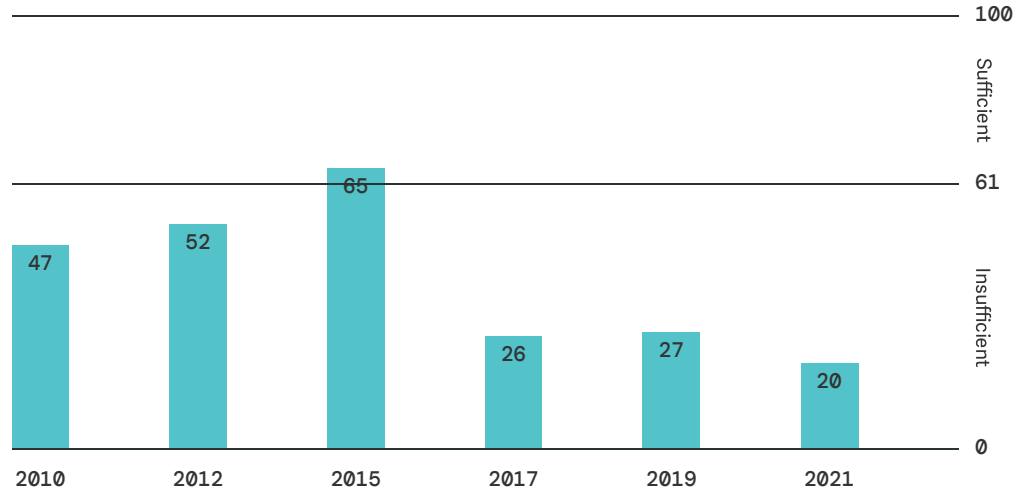
## Transparency in Malawi compared to others



Global Average	45
South Africa	86
Zimbabwe	59
Mozambique	45
Namibia	42
Botswana	34
Eswatini	31
Angola	30
Lesotho	26
Malawi	20
Zambia	19

0                      Insufficient                      61                      Sufficient                      100

# How has the transparency score for Malawi changed over time?



## Public availability of budget documents in Malawi

KEY	
<span style="color: green;">●</span>	Available to the Public
<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	Published Late, or Not Published Online, or Produced for Internal Use Only
<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	Not Produced

Document	2010	2012	2015	2017	2019	2021
Pre-Budget Statement	<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>
Executive's Budget Proposal	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Enacted Budget	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>
Citizens Budget	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
In-Year Reports	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>
Mid-Year Review	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>
Year-End Report	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>
Audit Report	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	<span style="color: green;">●</span>	<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>

# How comprehensive is the content of the key budget documents that Malawi makes available to the public?

KEY	
<span style="color: #0070C0;">●</span>	61-100 / 100
<span style="color: #00A68A;">●</span>	41-60 / 100
<span style="color: #92D050;">●</span>	1-40 / 100

Key budget document	Document purpose and contents	Fiscal year assessed	Document content score
Pre-Budget Statement	Discloses the broad parameters of fiscal policies in advance of the Executive's Budget Proposal; outlines the government's economic forecast, anticipated revenue, expenditures, and debt.	2020-21	Internal Use
Executive's Budget Proposal	Submitted by the executive to the legislature for approval; details the sources of revenue, the allocations to ministries, proposed policy changes, and other information important for understanding the country's fiscal situation.	2020-21	<span style="color: #92D050; border: 1px solid #92D050; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">31</span>
Enacted Budget	The budget that has been approved by the legislature.	2020-21	Internal Use
Citizens Budget	A simpler and less technical version of the government's Executive's Budget Proposal or the Enacted Budget, designed to convey key information to the public.	2020-21	<span style="color: #92D050; border: 1px solid #92D050; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">33</span>
In-Year Reports	Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.	2019-20 & 2020-21	Internal Use
Mid-Year Review	A comprehensive update on the implementation of the budget as of the middle of the fiscal year; includes a review of economic assumptions and an updated forecast of budget outcomes.	2019-20	<span style="color: #92D050; border: 1px solid #92D050; border-radius: 50%; padding: 2px;">37</span>
Year-End Report	Describes the situation of the government's accounts at the end of the fiscal year and, ideally, an evaluation of the progress made toward achieving the budget's policy goals.	2018-19	Internal Use
Audit Report	Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts.	2018-19	Internal Use

Malawi's transparency score of **20** in the OBS 2021 is moderately lower than its score in 2019.

## What changed in OBS 2021?

Malawi has increased the availability of budget information by:

- Publishing the Mid-Year Review online in a timely manner.

However, Malawi has decreased the availability of budget information by:

- Producing the Audit Report for internal use only.
- Reducing the information provided in the Executive's Budget Proposal. While the government published the Draft 2020/21 Financial Statement online in a timely manner, it did not publish EBP documents like the Draft Program Based Budget. This is a change in practice since the previous round of the Open Budget Survey.

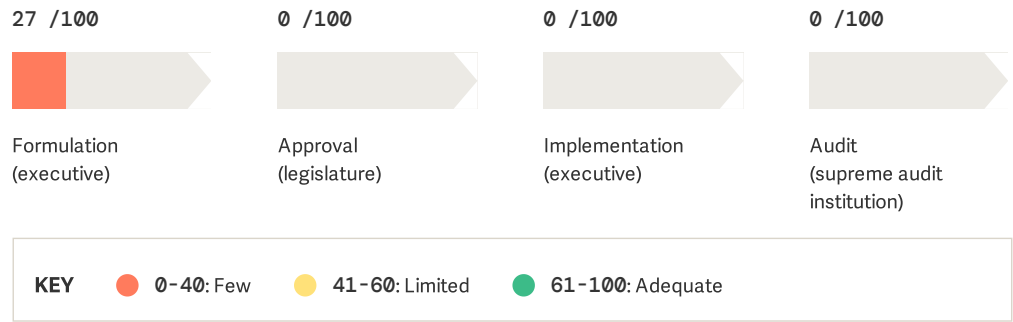
## Recommendations

Malawi should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Publish the Pre-Budget Statement, Enacted Budget, In-Year Reports, Year-End Report and Audit Report online in a timely manner. The Pre-Budget Statement should be published online at least one month prior to the Executive's Budget Proposal being submitted to the Parliament. The Enacted Budget should be published online by the Parliament within three months of its being approved into law. The In-Year Reports should be published online within three months of the end of the period that they report on. The Year-End Report should be published online within 12 months of the end of the fiscal year that it reports on. The Audit Report should be published online by the National Audit Office within 18 months of the end of the fiscal year that it reports on.
- Include in the Executive's Budget Proposal data on the financial position of the government and information on performance and policy. This includes publishing the Draft Program Based Budget.
- Improve the comprehensiveness of the Citizens Budget and Mid-Year Review.
- Develop and publish citizens versions of the Enacted Budget, Year-End Report, and Audit Report



# Extent of opportunities for public participation in the budget process



## Recommendations

Malawi's Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs has established pre-budget deliberations during budget formulation but, to further strengthen public participation in the budget process, should also prioritize the following actions:

- Pilot mechanisms to monitor budget implementation.
- Actively engage with vulnerable and underrepresented communities, such as children or people with disabilities, directly or through civil society organizations representing them.

Malawi's Parliament should prioritize the following actions:

- Allow members of the public or civil society organizations to testify during its hearings on the budget proposal prior to its approval. While the Parliament of Malawi allocates two weeks of cluster sessions for parliamentary committees and clusters to consult CSOs and other stakeholders for their input into the budget proposal, there is no evidence that the public was consulted during the budget year under assessment.
- Allow members of the public or civil society organizations to testify during its hearings on the Audit Report.

Malawi's National Audit Office should prioritize the following actions to improve public participation in the budget process:

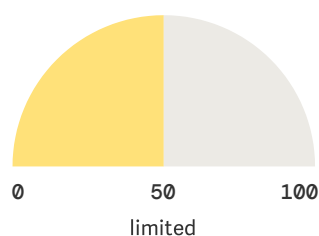
- Establish formal mechanisms for the public to assist in developing its audit program and to contribute to relevant audit investigations.

# Budget Oversight

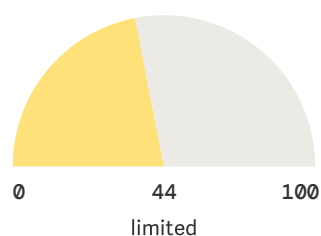
The OBS examines the role that legislatures and supreme audit institutions (SAIs) play in the budget process and the extent to which they provide oversight; each country is scored on a scale from 0 to 100 based on 18 equally weighted indicators. In addition, the survey collects supplementary information on independent fiscal institutions (see Box).

The legislature and supreme audit institution in Malawi, together, provide limited oversight during the budget process, with a composite oversight score of **48** (out of 100). Taken individually, the extent of each institution's oversight is shown below:

## Legislative oversight



## Audit oversight



**KEY** ● 0-40: Few ● 41-60: Limited ● 61-100: Adequate

## Recommendations

Malawi's Parliament provides limited oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and limited oversight during the implementation stage. To improve oversight, the following actions should be prioritized:

- The Executive's Budget Proposal should be submitted to legislators at least two months before the start of the budget year.
- Legislative committees should publish reports of their examination of the Executive's Budget Proposal online.
- The legislature should approve the Executive's Budget Proposal before the start of the budget year.



- A legislative committee should examine in-year budget implementation and publish reports with their findings online.
- In practice, ensure the legislature is consulted before the executive shifts funds specified in the Enacted Budget between administrative units during the budget year.
- A legislative committee should examine the Audit Report and publish a report with their findings online.

To strengthen independence and improve audit oversight by the Malawi National Audit Office, the following actions are recommended:

- Require legislative or judicial approval to remove the head of the supreme audit institution.
- Ensure the supreme audit institution has adequate funding to perform its duties, as determined by an independent body (e.g., the legislature or judiciary).
- Ensure audit processes are reviewed by an independent agency.

### **The emerging practice of establishing independent fiscal institutions**

Malawi's independent fiscal institution (IFI) is the Parliamentary Budget Office. Its independence is not set in law, and it reports to the legislature.

*The indicators on IFIs are not scored in the Open Budget Survey.*

# Methodology

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- Only documents published and events, activities, or developments that took place through 31 December 2020 were assessed in the OBS 2021.
- The survey is based on a questionnaire completed in each country by an independent budget expert:  
Henry Machemba, National Coordinator; Desmond Mhango, Chairperson  
NGO Coalition on Child Rights  
Private Bag A225, Lilongwe, MALAWI  
hjmachemba@gmail.com; nyumad07@gmail.com
- To further strengthen the research, each country's draft questionnaire is also reviewed by an anonymous independent expert, and in Malawi by a representative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.