



New Report Finds Public Auditors Face Huge Obstacles in Enforcing Accountability

November 12, 2020, Washington, DC- The International Budget Partnership (IBP) and the INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI) released a joint report, [*All Hands on Deck: Harnessing Accountability through External Public Audits*](#), which assesses national oversight systems across 117 countries. This report is the first ever comprehensive look at the strength of audit and oversight systems globally and comes at a time when supreme audit institutions (SAIs) are under enormous pressure to ensure governments are effective stewards of COVID-19 emergency spending in ways that advance the public interest and protect development progress.

Confronting the health effects and the economic upheaval of COVID-19 has required massive money flows, estimated at a staggering \$12 trillion globally, as well as speedy decisions on government spending. Dozens of countries have created special crisis funds—sometimes bypassing parliamentary oversight and traditional controls—to mobilize donations for their emergency response to COVID. These investments are essential, but they also pose unique challenges for auditors to provide proper oversight of funding, and most importantly, to ensure that at-risk communities get the assistance they need to stay healthy and contain the disease.

This report provides practical guidance to governments, donors, and civil society to bolster oversight globally during this critical time, and most importantly, it finds that these actors need to work symbiotically to reinforce accountability.

“This is an unprecedented moment for government spending and accountability, but also an unprecedented opportunity to improve one of the weakest elements of the oversight system—public participation. We urge governments and auditors to explore innovative approaches to engage their publics in oversight efforts,” said IBP Senior Director of Policy Vivek Ramkumar.

“Auditors play an essential role, sometimes at great personal risk, but they simply cannot guarantee oversight on their own,” said Martin Aldcroft, Senior Manager of the Strategic Support Unit of IDI. “We need all hands on deck to ensure oversight of government budgets, especially during the COVID period. That means parliamentarians need to take auditor reports seriously and investigate findings. Communities have essential information on whether budgets are being spent properly and they need channels to provide that information. We need the media to keep the spotlight on spending. And we need to give governments the help they need to do better.”

The report makes the following recommendations: 1) Governments should ensure SAIs have the access, mandate and resources to produce high-quality audits, including of supplementary budget funds; 2) SAIs should publish their findings in a timely manner so that parliaments can hold hearings on findings, media outlets can make reports more visible and civil society can inform audits and track follow up by their governments; and 3) All actors should work together to ensure that government take up the recommendations that SAIs make in their audit reports.

Read the [report here](#) and [register here](#) for the report launch on November 17 at 8:30 am EDT. Please contact Cynthia Romero at cromero@internationalbudget.org, 001-202-683-7171 to schedule an interview with spokespeople from IBP, IDI and supreme audit institutions featured in the report.

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