



MEDIA RELEASE:

Namibia Can Improve Further On Open Budget Rankings

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NAMIBIA has improved its transparency score slightly on the Open Budget Survey (OBS) 2019 moving from 50 points out of 100 in 2017 to 51 in the just-released survey. A score of 61 is considered the minimum threshold to foster an informed public debate on budgets. The global average transparency score in the OBS 2019 was 45.

Out of the 117 countries assessed Namibia came 47th – the same position as two years ago.

“Namibia is performing better than the global average but can still do more to join the ranks of those countries considered to be providing substantial information on both the allocation and spending of public money,” said Graham Hopwood, Executive Director of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), which conducted the research for Namibia.

“Namibia could make further strides in budget transparency by improving the timing of audit reporting and making the accountability report more comprehensive, among other measures.”

Namibia published 7 of the 8 required public documents within the timeframe set by the survey. Only a comprehensive audit report on government expenditure was published late. This is an improvement on 2017 when several documents were either not issued or published late.

Hopwood added, “In the past Namibia has received plaudits for introducing a citizens guide to the budget and a mid-year review. We are now in a position to do more – particularly in the area of promoting public participation in budget formulation and monitoring.”

Namibia was the fourth best performer in Africa (behind South Africa, Uganda, and Ghana) and the second in the Southern African region (behind South Africa).

Six of the countries surveyed release extensive budget information and scored 81 or higher: New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, Mexico, Georgia and Brazil.

The current COVID-19 global pandemic has resulted in many countries imposing emergency spending measures. Namibia has postponed the tabling of its 2020/21 budget while parliament remains out of action at least until mid-May.

Hopwood said, “Fiscal transparency is absolutely crucial during times of national emergency as it is more important than ever to ensure government spending is effective and positively assists the people in need.”

Namibia performed extremely poorly on the public participation part of the survey – registering a 0 score – as there are no formal opportunities for meaningful public participation afforded by the government, parliament or the Auditor-General’s office.

The OBS recommends that the Ministry of Finance introduce pilot mechanisms to engage the public during budget formulation and to monitor budget implementation.

Parliament should also provide opportunities for members of the public to testify during hearings on the budget proposal prior to its approval as well as during hearings on audit reports.

Further details are available in the country report on Namibia to be found here: <https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/country-results/2019/namibia>

The 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 the legislature and auditor in the budget process.

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