

READING 5.1 ■ SHARPENING A BUDGET ADVOCACY OBJECTIVE

- The five elements of an advocacy strategy are as follows:
 1. Strategic Analysis
 - 2. Advocacy Objective**
 3. Stakeholder Analysis
 4. Advocacy Message (Development and Delivery)
 5. Schedule

- An advocacy objective should set out very clearly What, Who, When, How, and Where. It needs to state:
 1. **WHAT** action do you want government to take?
 2. **WHO** in government needs to take this action?
 3. **WHEN** should this action be taken? (i.e., at what stage in the budget process?)
 4. **HOW** should this action be taken? (i.e., how can the change that you're proposing be implemented?)
 5. **WHERE:** Which geographical areas should benefit from this action? The "where" should indicate the area(s) that have the most need, i.e., where the problem you want to address is most critical (e.g., urban slums in the capital city).

- The more information and evidence you have about your issue, the political/social/economic context, the opportunities available for engagement, and the actors involved, the clearer your objective is likely to be.
- Your advocacy objectives should be SMART. That is, each objectives should be:
 - S** – Specific
 - M** – Measurable
 - A** – Achievable
 - R** – Realistic/Result-Oriented
 - T** – Time-bound

SPECIFIC

- Specify the action you want government to take.

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- Be as clear and specific as you can. For example, it is too vague to set a goal to provide decent primary health clinics for all. Rather, set a specific goal to prioritize the construction of primary health clinics in rural villages where there is the most need.
- Your objective should not be a statement of the problem. It should be a statement of the solution that you would like to see implemented by decision makers.

MEASURABLE

- Be as exact as possible. You must be able to measure the change that you're advocating for.
- Provide numbers, so that you can evaluate your achievements at the end of your campaign.
- There's an old saying: "Be careful what you wish for, it may just come true." Therefore, clearly state the number of goods, structures, or services that you want government to deliver.
- It is not sufficient to state, for example, that government should "build more health clinics." An increase in the number of health clinics can be very small, which is not what you intended, and still meet the vaguely stated objective.
- Keep in mind that not all problems can be solved simply by increasing service delivery, e.g., discrimination against girl children.

ACHIEVABLE, REALISTIC/RESULT-ORIENTED, AND TIME-BOUND

- Making your advocacy objective achievable, realistic/result-oriented, and time-bound means linking it directly to the stages in government's budgeting, planning, and service delivery cycles:
 - Consider what is possible in the current context and what can realistically be achieved.
 - Always set a timeframe for the objective: this financial year, over the next three years, by 2015.
 - State *how* government can achieve the increases or improvements in service delivery that you are proposing.
- Keep in mind that not everything can be changed immediately. Existing programs and budgets are often rigid due to political compromises and legal obligations.
- Describe the end result (impact) and not what you plan to do (activities).

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- How will people's lives be different because of your advocacy?
- For big and long-term goals, think about progressive realization. (For example, if you want the government build 200 new primary health clinics, propose the following: build 70 health clinics by the end of 2012, build another 70 by the end of 2013, and build the remaining 60 by the end of 2014.)
- Partners in a coalition will probably not commit to objectives that are too far out of reach.

READING 5.2 ■ EVIDENCE-BASED BUDGET ADVOCACY

- Budget advocacy work is a unique combination of two traditions that used to be conducted quite separately, usually by very different kinds of people and organizations:
 - **Advocacy work** has been undertaken by civil society organizations (CSOs) for a long time. Historically, advocacy work has been the domain of activists and campaigners.
 - **Budget research (or analysis)** was, until not so long ago, mainly undertaken by academics and finance managers. Historically, this kind of work was seen as a technical exercise conducted by economists.
- When combining these two traditions in the field of budget advocacy work, the link that holds the two together is **evidence**. Evidence is the reason why advocacy work can become more powerful when it is supported by budget research, and why budget research can become more powerful when it is grounded in advocacy.
- Both advocacy and budget research become stronger and more effective when they brought together in budget advocacy work. This is because:
 - “Traditional” budget research produces findings, but these findings have little impact if they remain in academic articles and reports that very few people read. The findings from budget research have much more *power* and *relevance* if they are used strategically as evidence to inform the future decisions of policy makers and government officials.
 - “Traditional” advocacy calls for change, but these calls often fall on deaf ears. In many instances, activists and campaigners try to appeal to the morality or conscience of decision makers, i.e., they ask them “to do the right thing.” As we know, such calls can easily be rebuffed and ignored. Leaders can brush them away, saying demands are idealistic, already achieved, or unrealistic. Advocacy efforts are much more *compelling* and *persuasive* when calls

for change are backed up by evidence that builds a logical argument and presents feasible solutions and alternatives.

- Many CSOs are already familiar with the advocacy side, but what does budget research bring to their advocacy agenda?

WHAT IS BUDGET RESEARCH?

Budget research and budget analysis are the same thing; these terms can be used interchangeably.

There are five main types of analytical work that are considered budget research. These are:

1. **The analysis of fiscal policy**, i.e., revenue, taxing, borrowing, investing, spending, public resource management.
2. **The analysis of a government's proposed budget allocations and revenue sources.** This analysis may be conducted from a number of angles.
 - For example, you might analyze revenue sources or budget allocations to see how they will impact on poverty or on other specific development/social problems.
 - You could also analyze revenue plans or budget allocations to see whether, or to what extent, they advance or undermine economic, social, and cultural rights.
 - The analysis may be conducted to see how revenue plans and budget allocations will impact on a specific target group, like children, people with disabilities, or the elderly. The analysis could be done from a gender perspective so as to assess whether and how budget allocations might impact women and men differently.
 - Finally, an analysis of revenue sources and budget allocations may be designed to shed light on a specific sector, like health, education, the environment, etc.
3. **Analysis of the budget process:** to assess whether and how well it allows for public participation and the quality of that participation.
4. **Analysis of budget process:** to assess how transparent it is and to what extent it upholds the right to know. This type of analysis would also typically address issues of accountability and oversight of the budget process.
5. **Monitoring the implementation** of the revenue and expenditure sides of the budget.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DO EVIDENCE-BASED BUDGET ADVOCACY?

- All advocacy work starts with a problem or a situation that you are trying to address.
- Doing evidence-based budget advocacy means looking at the problem that you are trying to address through the lens of the government budget to see how decisions and practices related to public resources are making the problem better or worse.
- In this way, the budget becomes an instrument through which to understand and address the problem you are trying to solve.
- Evidence-based advocacy means undertaking high quality research and analysis to generate evidence that can be used to advance your advocacy objective.

READING 5.3 ■ RESEARCH FOR ADVOCACY: OBI 2010

THE OPEN BUDGET INDEX 2010

- The Open Budget Index, created by the International Budget Partnership, is based on the Open Budget Survey questionnaire, which consists of a total of 123 multiple-choice questions, 92 of which inquire about the public availability, timeliness, and comprehensiveness of the eight key budget documents that all governments should provide during the budget year.
- Scores assigned to these 92 questions are used to determine an overall transparency score for each country surveyed. These scores are then compiled to create the Open Budget Index (OBI), an objective ranking of each country's relative level of transparency.
- The remaining 31 survey questions assess the strength and effectiveness of legislatures and supreme audit institutions (SAIs) in each country.
- In 2010, the OBI compiled scores for 94 countries. (The 2008 OBI included 85 countries, and the 2006 OBI included 59 countries.) The key findings of the 2010 OBI are outlined below.

In 2010, 74 of 94 countries assessed fail to meet basic standards of transparency and accountability when it comes to their national budgets.

- We surveyed 94 countries and found that 40 countries release no meaningful budget information.
- The worst performers include China, Saudi Arabia, Equatorial Guinea, Senegal, and newly democratic Iraq, which provide little to no information to their citizens about how the government is spending the public's money.
- We found that only 7 of the 94 countries surveyed release extensive budget information. Those top-tier countries are: South Africa, New Zealand, United Kingdom, France, Norway, Sweden, and the United States.

There has been nearly 20 percent improvement in the average performance of the 40 countries that have been measured over three consecutive Open Budget Surveys, which is a positive sign.

- The OBI uses objective, internationally recognized criteria to give each country a transparency score on a 100-point scale.
- We found a 9-point increase in the average OBI score (from 47 in 2006 to 56 in 2010) among the 40 countries surveyed in 2006, 2008, and 2010.
- Some of the most dramatic improvements came from previously low-scoring countries, such as Mongolia and Uganda, which still do not meet best practices but have improved over time.

Governments can improve transparency and accountability quickly and easily by publishing online all of the budget information they already produce and by inviting public participation in the budget process. Over the long term, we need a set of international norms that demand transparency.

- To see improvements in transparency, public engagement, and oversight in the short term, the International Budget Partnership recommends that:
 1. governments make public all the documents they produce, which would require virtually no additional effort or cost by the governments involved but would dramatically improve the openness of budgets in large parts of the world;
 2. legislatures begin to conduct public hearings on the budget; and
 3. auditors establish mechanisms for getting public input on problems with specific programs and on what should be audited.

Greater transparency enables better oversight, better access to credit, better policy choices, and greater legitimacy.

- Without access to information legislators, auditors, civil society groups, media, and the broader public cannot effectively participate in decision making, nor can they hold the executive to account for the use of public resources.
- Transparency and public participation enhance the credibility of policy choices and the effectiveness of policy interventions.
- Lack of transparency can lead to the selection of unpopular and inappropriate programs and to corrupt and wasteful spending.
- Budget transparency can benefit countries financially, since more transparent budgets tend to have better access to international financial markets and lower borrowing costs.

Data reveal a strong correlation between lack of transparency and accountability and countries that rely heavily on oil and gas revenue, receive significant amounts of foreign aid, and have authoritarian governments.

- The 24 countries assessed that are dependent on oil and gas revenue had an average OBI 2010 score of just 26 out of 100.
- The 32 aid-dependent countries surveyed had an average OBI 2010 score of 30 out of 100, which is 14 points worse than countries not dependent on foreign aid.
- The 21 countries classified as "authoritarian" regimes by the Democracy Index received an average OBI 2010 score of 17 out of 100, while the 14 "full democracies" scored an average of 72.

- There are also some geographic correlations: Western Europe and the U.S. tend to be more transparent, while the Middle East and Africa tend to be less transparent, with other regions of the world falling in the middle.

While these correlations exist, a number of notable exceptions and surprising results demonstrate that any country can achieve transparency and accountability if its government makes it a priority.

- Notable exceptions to these correlations include: South Africa, which was the top performer of any country; India, Sri Lanka, and Ukraine, which are relatively low-income countries but perform relatively well; Colombia, Mexico, and Indonesia, which had OBI 2010 scores that were two times as high as other countries that rely on oil and gas revenue.
- While neither country is up to par, newly democratic Afghanistan scored 21 points higher than newly democratic Iraq.
- China is becoming a major donor of foreign aid, but itself is among the least transparent countries in the world, scoring just 13 out of 100.
- Saudi Arabia and Malaysia both are relatively high-income countries, but Saudi Arabia scores just 1, while Malaysia scores 39.
- Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, and Yemen, increased their scores substantially by making available on their websites the budget reports that they have previously produced but had made available only to internal government audiences or to donors.



READING 5.4 ■ QUESTIONS TO GUIDE BUDGET RESEARCH

1. **WHAT** is the problem that you are trying to solve?
2. **WHAT** does this problem look like in the budget or budget process?
 - Which allocations or practices cause the problem?
 - Which formulation, spending, non-spending, implementation, or information practices are at the root of it?
3. **HOW** can this problem be solved?
 - Not who caused it, but what would make it go away?
 - Is your objective stated in a SMART manner?
 - What changes are needed in budget information, the budget process, or in budget formulation or implementation?
4. **HOW** would this solution change the budget itself, the budget process, budget information, or budget implementation?
 1. State in detail, taking constraints into account.
 2. Where would money need to come from?
 3. What information needs to be released, and in what form?
 4. What institutional change is needed to support it?
5. **WHO** could make the changes that would fix this problem in the budget?
 - Conspiracy theories don't help in assigning responsibilities.
 - Identify a specific person with this specific responsibility.
6. **WHO** could lose by fixing this problem?
 - Identify a specific person with a specific loss.