

Webinar Series on Fiscal Transparency in METAC countries

Calendar of sessions: once a week, starting Tuesday, June 23rd at 3 PM EEST / 8 am EDT

Objectives

The IMF's Middle East Regional Technical Assistance Center (METAC), in collaboration with the Fiscal Affairs Department (FAD), and the International Budget for Partnership (IBP) are organizing three webinars on fiscal transparency for METAC countries, following the release of the 2019 Open Budget Survey (OBS). The objective of the webinars series is threefold: (i) share good practices in fiscal transparency, including the Fiscal Transparency Code and how Fiscal Transparency Evaluations can help shape the reform agenda, (ii) discuss how to achieve tangible results, including on budget execution and year-end reporting, and (iii) discuss current country experiences in fostering budget transparency, and the role of capacity development.

Rationale

Government budgets and their implementation have a direct impact on people's lives. Efficient and equitable management of public funds requires transparent and inclusive budget systems and monitoring through by strong and independent oversight institutions. Lack of fiscal transparency and limited public participation and oversight undermine fiscal discipline, increase borrowing costs, reduce the efficiency of public services, and create opportunities for corruption and other waste.

Fiscal transparency – the comprehensiveness, clarity, reliability, timeliness, and relevance of public reporting on the past, present, and future state of public finances – is critical for effective fiscal management and accountability. It helps ensure that governments have an accurate picture of their finances when making economic decisions, including of the costs and benefits of policy changes and potential risks to public finances. It also provides legislatures, markets, and citizens with the information they need to hold governments accountable. Greater fiscal transparency can also help strengthen the credibility of a country's fiscal plans and can help underpin market confidence and market perceptions of fiscal solvency. The Fiscal Transparency Code and Evaluation are the key elements of the IMF's ongoing efforts to strengthen fiscal surveillance, policymaking, and accountability among its member countries.

With an aim to assessing and promoting more open and accountable budgeting, the OBS measures whether central governments provide adequate public access to national budget information and opportunities to participate in the budget process. It also examines the role and effectiveness of legislators and auditors in the budget process. The OBS draws extensively on the IMF's Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency. The Survey is implemented by independent budget experts in each country and rigorously vetted. It provides standards that governments can use to guide their budget reforms and establishes benchmarks against which governments can measure their progress. The 2019 OBS was released at the end of April 2020.

WEBINAR 1

Open Budget Survey results for 2019 and implications for the region

Date: Tuesday, June 23, 2020

Time: 3:00PM to 4:30PM Beirut Time

Moderator: Benoit Wiest, METAC, IMF

Target audience: Broad audience of METAC countries, including civil service organization and supreme audit institutions.

Speakers:

Claire Schouten, International Budget Partnership

Jason Harris, Fiscal Affairs Department, IMF

Aicha Karafi, Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency

Discussion: What explains differences in OBS results across the region? What type of budget transparency is important in the context of COVID-19?

WEBINAR 2

How can METAC countries foster budget transparency?

The case of budget execution and year-end reporting

Date: Tuesday, June 30, 2020

Time: 3:00PM to 4:30PM Beirut

(See the time in your city [HERE](#))

Moderator: Claire Schouten, IBP

Target audience: Intended for representatives of finance ministries and OBS researchers of METAC countries

Speakers:

Suad Hasan, IBP: *OBS 2019 findings on budget execution reporting in METAC region, gaps, and opportunities for improvements.*

Benoit Wiest and Jacques Charaoui, METAC: *How to strengthen fiscal transparency on budget execution reporting: key aspects for METAC countries*

Mohammad Alawneh, Ministry of Finance, Jordan: *Content of budget execution reporting and institutionalization of transparency practices*

Hajar Cherkaoui, Ministry of Finance, Morocco: *End-of-year budget execution law and the citizen's portal*

Mohammad Naser Timory and Ibrahim Khan, Integrity Watch Afghanistan: *Civil Society's engagement in budget process and use of budget data*

Discussion: Why is meaningful reporting important? How to make it accessible to the public? What is feasible for countries to achieve in fiscal transparency?

WEBINAR 3

Country experiences in fostering budget transparency and the role of capacity development

Date: Tuesday, July 7, 2020

Time: 3:00PM to 4:30PM Beirut time

(See the time in your city [HERE](#))

Moderator: Vincent Tang, Fiscal Affairs Department, IMF

Target audience: Representatives of finance ministries and OBS researchers of METAC countries.

Speakers:

Yomna Khattab, Ministry of Finance, Egypt: *Preparing and publishing a Fiscal Risk Statement; methodology used by the macro fiscal unit of Egypt*

Hasnaa Mansour, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Lebanon Office: *Practical capacity building to the Finance and Budget Committee for improved financial oversight*

Maysara Abdulraheem, Ministry of Finance, Iraq: *Commitments to transparency through Public Financial Management Reform Project*

Jonas Frank, METAC: *Recent trends in METAC provided technical assistance on fiscal transparency and way forward*

Discussion: What has been the country experience in fiscal transparency reforms? How has capacity development supported such reforms?