Drawing on internationally accepted criteria developed by multilateral organizations, the Open Budget Survey uses 109 equally weighted indicators to measure budget transparency. These indicators assess whether the central government makes eight key budget documents available to the public online in a timely manner and whether these documents present budget information in a comprehensive and useful way.

Each country receives a composite score (out of 100) that determines its ranking on the Open Budget Index – the world’s only independent and comparative measure of budget transparency.

How has the OBI score for São Tomé e Príncipe changed over time?

How comprehensive and useful is the information provided in the key budget documents that São Tomé e Príncipe publishes?

São Tomé e Príncipe’s score of 31 out of 100 is substantially lower than the global average score of 42.
São Tomé e Príncipe’s score of 31 on the 2017 Open Budget Index is largely the same as its score in 2015.

Since 2015, São Tomé e Príncipe has increased the availability of budget information by:
- Publishing In-Year Reports online.

However, São Tomé e Príncipe has decreased the availability of budget information by:
- Failing to produce the Citizens Budget.

Moreover, São Tomé e Príncipe has failed to make progress in the following ways:
- Not making the Year-End Report available to the public.
- Not producing a Pre-Budget Statement.
- Producing Audit Reports with great delays, which limits their usefulness for oversight.

To what extent do different institutions in São Tomé e Príncipe provide opportunities for public participation?

### Key Budget Documents

- **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.
- **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.
- **Enacted Budget**: the budget that has been approved by the legislature.
- **Citizens Budget**: a simpler and less technical version of the government’s Executive’s Budget Proposal or Enacted Budget, designed to convey key information to the public.
- **In-Year Reports**: include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.
- **Mid-Year Review**: contains 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.
- **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.
- **Audit Report**: issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government’s year-end accounts.

São Tomé e Príncipe’s score of 0 out of 100 indicates that it provides the public with no opportunities to engage in budget processes. This is lower than the global average score of 12.

How does public participation in São Tomé e Príncipe compare to other countries in the region?

The questions assessing participation in the Open Budget Survey 2017 were revised to align them with the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency’s new principles on public participation, which now serve as the basis for widely accepted norms on public participation in national budget processes. Therefore, data on the extent of public participation in budgeting in the Open Budget Survey 2017 cannot be compared directly to data from earlier editions.

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### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Transparency alone is insufficient for improving governance. Public participation in budgeting is vital to realize the positive outcomes associated with greater budget transparency.

To measure public participation, the Open Budget Survey assesses the degree to which the government provides opportunities for the public to engage in budget processes. Such opportunities should be provided throughout the budget cycle by the executive, the legislature, and the supreme audit institution.

The questions assessing participation in the Open Budget Survey 2017 were revised to align them with the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency’s new principles on public participation, which now serve as the basis for widely accepted norms on public participation in national budget processes. Therefore, data on the extent of public participation in budgeting in the Open Budget Survey 2017 cannot be compared directly to data from earlier editions.
The Open Budget Survey examines the role that legislatures, supreme audit institutions, and independent fiscal institutions play in the budget process and the extent to which they are able to provide effective oversight of the budget. These institutions play a critical role — often enshrined in national constitutions or laws — in planning budgets and overseeing their implementation.

These indicators were revised to better assess the role of formal oversight institutions in ensuring integrity and accountability in the use of public resources. Therefore, data on the role and effectiveness of oversight institutions in the Open Budget Survey 2017 should not be compared directly to data from earlier editions.

To what extent does the legislature in São Tomé e Príncipe provide budget oversight?

The legislature provides weak oversight during the budget cycle. This score reflects that the legislature provides weak oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and weak oversight during the implementation stage of the budget cycle.

Oversight by an Independent Fiscal Institution

São Tomé e Príncipe does not have an independent fiscal institution (IFI). While IFIs are not yet widespread globally, they are increasingly recognized as an important source of independent, nonpartisan information. IFIs take a variety of different institutional forms. Common examples include parliamentary budget offices and fiscal councils.


RECOMMENDATIONS

How can São Tomé e Príncipe improve transparency?

São Tomé e Príncipe should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Publish a Year-End Report online.
- Produce and publish a Citizens Budget, a Pre-Budget Statement and a Mid-Year Review.

- Delays in the production of Audit Reports should be reduced, so as to allow for their publication in a timely manner.
- Increase the information provided in the Executive’s Budget Proposal by including data on extra budgetary funds and quasi-fiscal activities and by linking the budget more closely to policy by illustrating how new policies affect revenue and expenditure and by outlining nonfinancial inputs, outputs, and targets.
How can São Tomé e Príncipe improve participation?
São Tomé e Príncipe should prioritize the following actions to improve public participation in its budget process:

- Pilot mechanisms for members of the public and executive branch officials to exchange views on national budget matters during both the formulation of the national budget and the monitoring of its implementation. These mechanisms could build on innovations, such as participatory budgeting and social audits. For examples of such mechanisms, see [www.fiscaltransparency.net/mechanisms/](http://www.fiscaltransparency.net/mechanisms/).
- Hold legislative hearings on the formulation of the annual budget, during which members of the public or civil society organizations can testify.
- Establish formal mechanisms for the public to assist the supreme audit institution in formulating its audit program and to participate in relevant audit investigations.

How can São Tomé e Príncipe improve oversight?
São Tomé e Príncipe should prioritize the following actions to make budget oversight more effective:

- Ensure the legislature holds a debate on budget policy prior to the tabling of the Executive’s Budget Proposal and approves recommendations for the upcoming budget.
- Ensure a legislative committee examines and publishes reports on in-year budget implementation online.
- Ensure audit processes are reviewed by an independent agency.
- Consider setting up an independent fiscal institution to further strengthen budget oversight.

The Open Budget Survey uses internationally accepted criteria developed by multilateral organizations from sources such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) and the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT).

It is a fact-based research instrument that assesses what occurs in practice through readily observable phenomena. The entire research process took approximately 18 months between August 2016 and January 2018 and involved about 300 experts in 115 countries. The Open Budget Survey 2017 assesses only events, activities, or developments that occurred up to 31 December 2016. The survey was revised somewhat from the 2015 version to reflect evolving methods for disseminating budget information and to strengthen individual questions on public participation and budget oversight. A discussion of these changes can be found in the Open Budget Survey Global Report (see link below).

Survey responses are typically supported by citations and comments. This may include a reference to a public document, an official statement by the government, or comments from a face-to-face interview with a government official or other knowledgeable parties.