

FACTSHEET



The National Budget and Citizen Participation

What is a budget?

A budget is a plan for future income and expenditure that is used as guideline for spending, saving or investing.

What is a budget cycle?

The budget cycle refers to and includes all the processes, procedures and activities by which government builds and prepares the national budget, gets it approved by the Cabinet and Parliament and also includes the implementation and auditing stages.

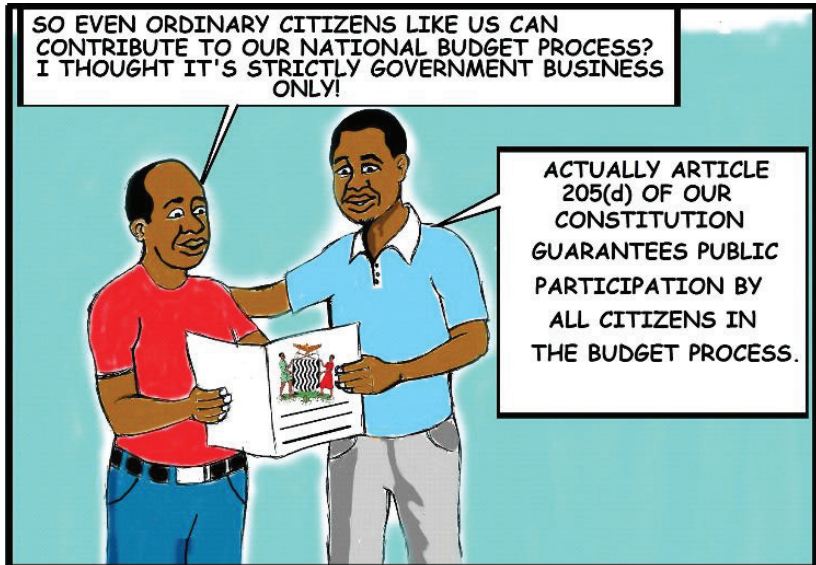
Why must community members be involved?

- Citizens participation influences the setting of development priorities and budget allocations that are responsive to their needs;
- To ensure that their needs are incorporated into the planning process for government to allocate funds to them;
- Government can only budget for those needs that they know. They can only know the needs of the community when the community participates in the budgeting process;



Constitutional provisions

The constitution of Zambia Article 205(d) guarantees public participation for all citizens. The planning and budgeting policy also guarantees the right of citizens to participate in the budget process.



- While the constitution provides for citizens participation in the budgeting process, government is yet to enact the planning and budgeting act that will stipulate the details on community participation

STEP BY STEP CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE BUDGETING PROCESS

Step 1: Prepare to participate

- Identify what the community needs. It does not take technical knowledge to see that the community needs particular social amenities such as clinics, schools and a market.
- Prepare a write up of a priority list of what your needs are for them to be considered in some forum at community or district level.

Step 2: Know where to participate

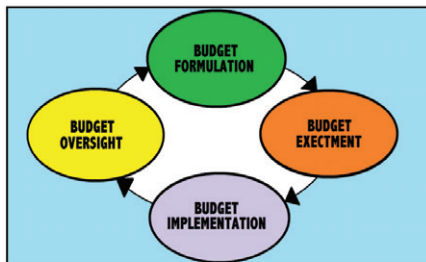
Communities must identify a group in which they can participate. Either;

- Ward development Committee,
- District Development Committee,
- The Council or the constituency offices
- Directly submit to Ministry of Finance when a call for submission is made



Community members should seek to participate in these spaces by engaging with community leaders and Community Based Organizations.

Step 3: Know the Stages and Calendar



The calendar of the budgeting process must be known as the forum of participation at the lower level must take place before the opportunity is given for submissions, which is from May to July of every year for all citizens, Ministries and Spending Agencies. For this reason, communities should make their positions known by March or April.

Step 4: Make the submission

The call for submissions is made sometime in May or June but the submission in various forums must have already been made. This must have the issue and a clear justification on why this must be done with an economic benefit stated.

Step 5: Follow up on submissions

- A follow up on the issues raised must be done to note if issues submitted were incorporated into the presented budget. Feedback on the presented budget must be given by all from all levels that made submissions, both negative and positive. This can only be done if community members follow the budget presentation.



Step 6: Give Feedback to the Budget Speech

The community must organize a small meeting to discuss the contents of the budget and whether or not they are happy with it and which parts exactly. This feedback is important and must be done in a timely manner. Feedback can be written to the local authority or directly to the Ministry of Finance and copied to the closest public office (District or Provincial).

Step 7: Monitoring the budget



During this time, citizens can participate by monitoring the implementation of the budget to ensure that resources at their level are being used accordingly.

Step 8. The Auditor General's Report

Citizens can follow up on how funds were utilized in a financial year sector by sector by accessing the Auditor General's report. They can also follow up on recommendations that were made and ensure that they are considered in the following year's budget submissions.



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Booklet

Advocacy on Public Finance Accountability

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