



**ZIMCODD**

ZIMBABWE COALITION ON DEBT & DEVELOPMENT

# ZIMBABWE OPEN BUDGET SURVEY REPORT

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

BSP	Budget Strategy Paper
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
IBP	International Budget Partnership
IFFs	Illicit Financial Flows
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LA	Local Authority
MAYA	Manica Youth Assembly
MDAs	Ministries, Departments & Agencies
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MLG&PWNH	Ministry of Local Government, Public Works & National Housing
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAG	Office of the Auditor General
OBS	Open Budget Survey
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PFM	Public Finance Management
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
RA	Residents Association
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
RBZ	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
SAI	Supreme Audit Institutions
ZANUPF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZIMCODD	Zimbabwe Coalition for Debt and Development
ZINARA	Zimbabwe National Road Administration
ZUPCO	Zimbabwe United Passenger Company

# ZIMBABWE OPEN BUDGET SURVEY (2022)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the 2022 Open Budget Survey (OBS) for Zimbabwe. The survey focused on both the national and local government budgeting systems and processes. The survey was conducted in ten provinces with one local authority selected per province. The local authorities that participated in the survey are Harare, Bindura, Bulawayo, Chinhoyi, Gweru, Gwanda, Marondera, Mutare, Masvingo, and Hwange. The objectives of the Open Budget Survey were:

- To gather opinions and perceptions regarding national and local government budgeting.
- To generate knowledge for promoting fiscal transparency and accountability.
- To promote needs-based budget processes that are inclusive and people-centered.
- To contribute towards gender responsive budgeting through informed research.

A sequential mixed methods approach was utilized and data was generated using a questionnaire, key informant interviews and review of secondary data. The Google Forms application was used to generate quantitative data. A total of 44 interviews were conducted for this study while 3100 questionnaires were administered across the 10 selected local authorities, of these 51.70% of the respondents were women, while 44.30% were men, 7.65% of the respondents were people with disability, while 39.55% of the respondents were aged between 18 and 34 years. On level of education, 37.02% had secondary education, 35% had tertiary education, 17.56% had vocational training, 5.29% had primary education, while 3.13% had never been to school. The overall response rate is 82%.

## MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE OPEN BUDGET SURVEY

### **Public knowledge of the national and local government budgeting process**

The survey found out that 86% (43% male and 43% female) and 70% (33% male and 37% female) of the respondents lacked knowledge on the national government and local government budgeting process. On the other hand, only 14% (7% male and 7% female) and 30% (17% male and 13% female) of the respondents had an appreciation of the national and local government budgeting process respectively.

### **Public participation in the national and local government budgeting process**

Public participation in the national and local budgeting process remains critically low. This survey found out that 15% (8% males and 7% females) and 30% (18% males and 12% females) have participated in the national and local government budgeting respectively whereas 85% (46% females and 39% males) and 70% (36% female and 34% males) have not participated in the national and local budget making process.

### **Challenges faced in pre-budget consultations**

Effective budget consultations constitute the bedrock for sound public finance management and also promotes inclusive and people driven socio-economic development. However, in Zimbabwe pre-budget consultations have remained symbolic, a form of public grandstanding and a tick-box exercise without any intention to genuinely engage the people considering the manner in which they have been conducted over-time. The identified challenges during pre-budget consultations in national budget processes include limited time (30%), choice of venues (30%), language barrier (20%), lack of access to pre-budget documents (14%) and political interference (6%).

### **Consideration of public input into the budget before enactment**

Whilst the pre-budget consultations are meant to solicit citizens' input into the national budget, the survey results show that citizen input barely make it into the final budget. The survey reveals that 62% (32% females and 30% males) and 70% (38% males and 32% females) of respondents for the national and local government budget respectively felt that their views were not considered in preparing the final budgets whilst 38% (20% females, 18% males) and 30% (18% males and 12% females) believed that their views were adopted in the final budgets. This contradicts the statement by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development that there was a 56% uptake of citizens recommendations in the national budget. Generally, there is strong literature and trends showing lack of accountability in PFM and hence raising questions on the submissions by the Minister and thus giving credit to the survey views.

### **Public awareness of budget presentation time**

The inability to timely access budget related information prevents the public from contributing meaningfully to budget deliberations. As such, if citizens are not aware of the time of budget presentation, they cannot effectively prepare for participation. The survey results reveal that 86% (46% females and 40% males) and 92% (50% females and 42% males) were not aware of the budget presentation time for the national and local government budgets respectively while only 14% (8% males and 6% females) and 8% (5% males and 3% females) were aware of the timing.

### **Submission of objections during the budget making process**

While objections provide a critical window through which the public can express and raise issues around the budget at both national and local levels, the results of the survey show that 92% (50% females and 40% females) and 70% (38% females and 32% males) have not raised objections during budget making processes at national and local government budgets respectively. Only 8% (5% females and 3% males) and 30% (16% males and 14% females) of the respondents have submitted objections during the budget making process for national and local government budgets respectively.

### **Access to the executive budget**

Accessibility as a key GIFT principle requires governments to facilitate public participation by disseminating complete fiscal information and all other relevant data and using mechanisms that are easy for all to access, understand, use, re-use and transform, namely in open data formats. In Zimbabwe, accessibility remains an issue of concern due to a myriad of reasons or challenges. The survey found out that 29% (16% males and 13% females) and 37% (20% males and 17% females) of the respondents have accessed the national and local government budgets respectively.

On the other hand, 71% (40% females and 31% males) and 63% (33% females and 30% males) have not accessed the executive budget at national and local government levels. Although there has been positive progression from 2021, the level of accessing the executive budgets remains very low for both national and local government budgets.

### ***Access to documents highlighting government progress in implementing budgets***

Access to budget documents is the nerve-centre of public participation in the budget cycle. The accessibility of budget documents is also essential in enforcing transparency and accountability in the utilisation of public resources as well as discharge of duties by public officials. It also eliminates any form of opaqueness in information provision and guarantees quality public input during local and national budget consultative forums. The findings from the survey shows an increase from 11.69% (6.20% male and 5.49%) to 15.34% (7.96% male and 7.38% female) with respect to accessibility of yearly budget performance of the central government. An increase was also witnessed in the accessibility of local authority yearly budget performance reports. In the 2021 OBS the results of the survey were 21.22% (12% male and 9.22% female), in 2022 an increase of 4.17% was recorded culminating to 25.39% (13.77% male and 11.62% female).

### ***Transparency in the management of debt***

Zimbabwe is in debt distress. Arguments have been made over the odiousness and illegitimacy of the debt emanating from an opaque debt contraction and expenditure process. The subject of debt management has attracted debate across the country with respect to lack of transparency and accountability. This has undermined prudent public finance management which is essential in debt management. The results from the survey showed that, 13.60% (7.2% female and 6.4% male) and 25.65% (16.45% female and 9.20% male) of the respondents for the national and local government respectively were satisfied with the transparency of the debt management systems and processes for the national and local government levels respectively. 86.4% (50% male and 36.4% female) and 74.35% (41% female and 33.35% male) of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the debt management systems and process. The results therefore indicate a large propensity towards citizen dissatisfaction and hence weak frameworks for accountability in debt management.

### ***Role of oversight institutions in ensuring compliance with budgeted expenditure***

The survey examined the effectiveness of oversight institutions in ensuring compliance with budgeted expenditure at national and local level. The central government is presided over by the Parliament of Zimbabwe whilst local authorities are presided over by council and its committees. The Constitution of Zimbabwe gives the parliament a meta-governance role over all government departments and ministries. According to the survey findings 90.56% (50.55% female and 49.45% male) of the respondents were of the view that the central government has weak oversight mechanisms, while 91.34% (51.60% female and 48.90% male) believed local authorities have weak oversight systems.



### **Public action against deviation from budgeted/planned activities**

Residents associations and citizens interviewed registered great displeasure with deviation of local authorities from planned budget activities. Issue of budget rebasing took the centre of arguments and debate among residents. Local authorities were of the view that the 2022 adopted budget had lost value due to inflation and therefore, it was imperative for them to rebase their budget using the US\$ budget that was equivalent to the RTGs budget at the time they introduced the budget. For the central government, members of the academia, civil society and citizenry, great displeasure was registered on the issue of the 2022 Finance Condonation Bill in which the government had an over expenditure of over 100 billion RTGs. To this end, citizens, civil society organisations and academia resorted to petitions. According to the survey for both local and central government 25% (13% females and 12% males) wrote petitions, 27% (15% female and 12% male) complained to the councillor and Member of Parliament, 16%, (9% female and 7% male) sought clarification and 32% (18% female and 14% male) did nothing.

### **Role and impact of civil society in monitoring budget implementation**

The role and impact of civil society in budget monitoring should never be underestimated as it provides independent oversight over budget implementation and monitoring. For the World Bank (2007), the role of the civil society in public finance management has proven to be significant both in developed and emerging economies. The survey results show that 62.50% (36.50% female and 26% male) of the respondents were of the view that civil society organisations were playing an important role in promoting budget transparency and the accountability of public institutions. However, 37.50% (18.50% male and 19.10% female) of the respondents were of the opinion that the role of civil society remains largely constrained due to a number of factors among them being lack of resources, political manipulation, lack of capacity for research and evidence-based lobbying and advocacy.

### **Public knowledge of public auditing processes**

Audit reports serve as an evaluation tool for internal control mechanisms within the public sector. Furthermore, audit procedures protect budget appropriated funds from abuse, misuse, waste, and diversion into private hands. Despite all this, the survey results show that 83.8% of respondents lacked knowledge of processes undertaken in auditing public institutions. The survey established that the audit reports are not being taken seriously as there are no consequences to those who are caught violating the laws.

### **Access to audited reports**

The survey found that 18.46% (10.24% male and 8.22% female) and 14.05% (9.19% male and 4.86% female) of respondents had accessed audit reports for national and local governments respectively. The granular analysis further showed that it is the relatively young population that has accessed financial audit reports. About 16.28% (9.13% men and 7.15% female) of the age group 25-54 have accessed these financial reports compared to only 4.22% of the old age group. The survey also assessed the actions that are being undertaken by the public after the government MDAs and their LA receive adverse audit opinions. The results from the survey in respective order for national and local government showed that: 23.11% and 25.23% have raised complaints, 18.92% and 24.83% have written petitions, 23.80% and 27.18% have sought clarification while 34% and 22.76% have done nothing.

### **Implementation of audit recommendations**

Authorities are failing to fully implement the audit recommendations given by the Auditor-General. The 2019 OAG report shows that only 24% of 356 recommendations made on local authorities in 2018 were fully implemented, 25% partly implemented whilst 49% were yet to be implemented. ZIMCODD study in 2021 found that LAs in Manicaland, Midlands, Masvingo and Matebeleland Provinces failed to fully implement 45%, 67%, 19%, and 37% of the 2019 OAG recommendations respectively. The survey established that failure to fully implement these recommendations is due to political interference and corruption, COVID-19-induced lockdowns, poor access to foreign currency as the local currency is depreciating, delayed disbursement of Devolution Funds to cover financing gaps, and a lack of capacity.

### **Rating of government service delivery**

The survey established that service delivery from the government is largely poor: civil protection (50.5%), education (45.95%), health care (65.54%), and transport and telecommunications (52.23%). Interviews revealed that poor service delivery has deteriorated significantly owing to increased local currency depreciation and skyrocketing inflation. The situation was the same in local authorities as four (4) selected types of public services were all rated poor: housing (73.7%), refuse collection (74.4%), water reticulation (66.2%), and road maintenance (61.5%). Again, this was largely attributed to the currency and price crisis, weak PFM systems, and weak accountability institutions to deter corrupt activities.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report presents the findings of the 2022 Zimbabwe Open Budget Survey (OBS) which is the fourth successive OBS conducted by the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD). The OBS is a global measure of public sector budgets based on the three pillars: budget transparency, public participation, and budget oversight. The purpose of the current survey is to help understand national and local authority budgeting processes and suggest ways of increasing the participation of citizens throughout the budget cycle. On the basis of the findings of the OBS, ZIMCODD shall further develop civic education tools for promoting budget literacy at community level for better understanding of the budget making, budget allocation and budget implementation process to allow for increased citizen involvement and participation. Follow ups on OBS exercises will serve to measure progress on an annual basis, thereby providing a reflection on how civic education interventions are impacting the budgeting process.

### **1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE SURVEY**

The past two decades have seen an increase in development practitioners and donors; academics and local civil society organizations taking an interest in promoting openness in governments' budget making processes. Whereas budget transparency was once considered arcane or even undesirable, it has more recently come to be seen as a pillar of good governance (Calitz, 2014). Budgets are key documents that lay out a government's economic priorities in terms of policies and programs. Transparent budgets and public financial management processes constitute a key pillar of good governance. The relationship between good governance and better economic and social outcomes is increasingly acknowledged. Budget monitoring entails using such information to analyze, critique and track government finances in order to provide this feedback. Contemporary discourse is thus centered on promoting true transparency, as it is important not only that governments publish budget data on websites but that the data they disclose are meaningful and provide a full picture of their financial activities to the public.

The International Budget Partnership (IBP) was established in 1997 to promote civil society budget engagement in order to make budget systems more transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs of poor people. Today, the IBP partners and allies are actively engaged in public budget processes in over 100 developing and transitional countries throughout Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. In 2006, the IBP launched the Open Budget Survey (OBS) which is now recognised as the only independent, comparative assessment of how countries in the world have adopted open budgeting. The purpose of the OBS is to assess the transparency of the budgets of national governments. Based on the survey, the IBP also pioneered the open budget index which is to date widely used to compare the transparency levels of country budgets and to more generally assess their commitment to open and accountable governance. The OBS can be used as a reflection to identify the three critical tenets of an open budget, which are: transparency, oversight and public participation. Budget transparency under the OBS is assessed based on the amount and timeliness of budget information which governments make available to the public. On the other hand, public participation is based on the opportunities that governments are providing to civil society and the public to allow them to engage in decisions on how public resources are raised as well as spent. Oversight focuses on the involvement of formal oversight institutions, which include supreme audit institutions and legislatures in the budget process.

Budget transparency, defined, refers to the full disclosure of all relevant fiscal information in a timely and systematic manner. It is a multi-dimensional concept addressing the clarity, comprehensiveness, reliability, timeliness, accessibility and usability of public reporting on public finances, as well as citizen engagement in the budget process. Some of the most important benefits of budget transparency include enhanced accountability, legitimacy, integrity, inclusiveness and quality of budget decisions all of which could ultimately develop trust between governments and citizens. Beyond the disclosure of key budgetary information, budget transparency also encompasses public participation in the budget process (OECD, 2017, 2019)

Zimbabwe has been grappling with a declining human development index, a compressed economy with a huge fiscal deficit, a debt crisis and a high poverty prevalence rate. This is further exacerbated by high corruption leading to severe loss of public resources. This places a huge demand for good public fiscal governance systems in order to reinvigorate the economy against years of economic decline. From 2012, Zimbabwe has witnessed a marked improvement in its transparency rating from 20 in 2012 to 49 in 2019. As shall be seen in the report the results of this survey and the views from key interviews, this study compliments the IBP process by providing a more robust mixed methods approach utilising both a survey and in-depth interviews. The purpose is to contextualize the findings of the survey with key informant interviews.

## **1.2 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

### **1.2.1 SURVEY DESIGN AND SAMPLING**

The study applied a sequential explanatory mixed methods design and data was obtained using a survey, in-depth interviews and the review of literature. A total of 10 local authorities were selected for the survey. The sampling was done in the inaugural survey in 2019. For purposes of continuity and in order to ensure comparability of results in the four (4) years of the survey, there were no changes in the participating local authorities. One local authority per province was selected. This ensures the fair representation of local authorities across the 10 provinces of the country. Table 1 below shows the local authorities selected for the study.

In these local authorities, respondents to questionnaires were drawn from high, medium and low density areas. The survey focused on households as the sampling unit. The sample size was calculated at 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. Key informants for the OBS were purposely sampled on the basis of the role they play in national and local authority budget processes. These key informants included among others key staff in the officials of the Parliamentary Budget Office, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, local authority Chief Executive Officers, Directors of Finance, mayors and councillors, representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) working with women, young people and people with disabilities, as well as RAs. Furthermore, at community level, people with disabilities, women, and young people purposely sampled for them to share their experiences with the budget consultation process.

**Table 1: Selected Sample Local authorities to be covered by the OBS**

Province	Local Authority
Harare	Harare City Council
Bulawayo	Bulawayo City Council
Masvingo	Masvingo Municipality
Midlands	Gweru City Council
Matabeleland South	Gwanda Municipality
Matabeleland North	Hwange Local Board
Manicaland	Mutare City Council
Mashonaland Central	Bindura Municipality
Mashonaland East	Marondera Municipality
Mashonaland West	Chinhoyi Municipality

The target was to distribute 350 questionnaires in each local authority. A total of 3,100 questionnaires out of the proposed 3,500 were administered across the 10 selected local authorities, converting to 88%, a positive variance from 87.5% for the 2021 OBS. For qualitative data, representatives from the MoFED, Ministry of Local Government and Public Works and National Housing (MLG&PWNH) at national and local levels, the directors of finance and/or chairpersons of the finance committees, the town clerks, and civil society organisations that deal with issues of civic participation and budget issues at both national and local levels, including residents' associations and residents were interviewed. A key consideration was made to purposely sample men, women, young people, the elderly and people with disabilities for the survey.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE ZIMBABWE LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETING PROCESS

### 2.1 LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETING

A national budget is a legal process, governed by legislation as public expenditure by ministries must be done within the confines of the law. No public funds should be used outside the provisions of the law. Parliament is mandated by the Constitution to oversee the utilization of public funds. This section looks at the legal and institutional context of national and local government budgeting in Zimbabwe. The key legal frameworks analyzed here are the Constitution, the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), the Urban Councils Act and the supporting institutional frameworks.

#### 2.1.1 THE 2013 CONSTITUTION OF ZIMBABWE AMENDMENT (NO.20) ACT 2013

The national budget process is enshrined in the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (NO. 20) Act 2013 which demonstrates its centrality to the economy.

Section 298 of the Constitution provides principles that guide all aspects of public finance processes and management in Zimbabwe. These include among others transparency and accountability in public financial matters, clear financial management and fiscal reporting and that public funds must be expended transparently, prudently, economically and effectively. Furthermore, the Constitution empowers Parliament to oversee state revenue and expenditure (Sec 299), outlines provisions for setting up of the Consolidated Revenue Fund to safeguard public funds and property (Sec 302) and establish the office of the Auditor General (Sec 309) to audit the financial performance of government entities and agencies.

### **2.1.2 THE PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT CHAPTER 22:19**

The PFMA specifies principles to be followed in processes involving the management of public funds. Section 7 (1)(a) of the PFMA identifies the duty of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development as that of developing and implementing macroeconomic policies as well as to supervise, monitor and coordinate the finances of Zimbabwe. Section 7(1)(b) of the PFMA gives the MoFED power to advise the Government on the allocation of public resources between Ministries, reporting units, public entities, constitutional entities and any programmes of Government independent of the foregoing. Furthermore, section 13 (1) and (2) of the PFMA explicitly spells out the functions of the Minister as that of management and disbursement of public resources, taking into consideration the monthly reports submitted to him or her. The whole budget process, including dates and key activities of a budget process are set in section 10(1) of the Public Finance Management (General) Regulations, 2019.

### **2.1.3 THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENT IN BUDGET FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The function of the Parliament is at the core of democracy as the public is more interested in the amount of money taken from them in taxation and the way this money is subsequently spent by the government. In compliance with Section 28 (5) of the PFMA, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development seeks parliamentary discretion in the preparation and formulation of the national annual budget through the appropriate Portfolio Committee of Parliament. Furthermore, the Portfolio Committee is mandated to conduct public hearings to solicit the views and opinions of stakeholders to allow for inclusivity and equitable representation. Section 141 of the Constitution compels Parliament to facilitate public involvement in its legislative, other processes and in the processes of its committees as the process ensures that stakeholders are consulted about budgets being considered by Parliament. The Parliament of Zimbabwe carries out budget consultations in all the provincial capitals and other selected areas based on resource availability.

### **2.1.4 THE EXECUTIVE'S ROLE IN ZIMBABWE'S BUDGET MAKING PROCESS**

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development is the main organ at the executive level responsible for initiating and managing the budget process. The Ministry of Finance, when crafting a budget, issues a pre-budget strategy paper that sets out the formal budget framework to be followed in the preparation of budget proposals by line ministries.

Nevertheless, all government line ministries are also required to submit ministry requirements and point of views perceived as fundamental in relation to the issues covered in the Budget Strategy Paper (BSP). The BSP facilitates an understanding of the macro-fiscal situation as it provides an update on both international and domestic economic developments outlook to year end as well as projections for 2023. Further, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development is required to publish the Annual Budget documents on the internet on the same day when annual budget documents are presented to Parliament and also make available the documents to the public in printed format as soon as is practicable as depicted in the Public Finance Management (General) Regulations, 2019 (Statutory Instrument 135 of 2019) and Section 11(2) of the Public Finance Management (General) Regulations. Following the proximity of social media, it has generally been observed that the national budget is also widely circulated on various social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp on the same day that it is presented.

### **2.1.5 AUDITOR GENERAL'S OFFICE AND THE BUDGET MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

Section 309 of the Constitution provides for the establishment and functions of an Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) whose main duty is to audit the accounts, financial systems and financial management of all departments, institutions and agencies of the government in order to safeguard public funds and public entities. The functions of the Auditor-General are also stated in Section 83 of Public Finance Management Act, which requires annual reports and audited financial statements of state organs and constitutional entities to be produced. These reports should show financial performance of the state organs; particularly relating to losses arising through instances of unauthorized expenditure; irregular expenditure and wasteful expenditure; as well as recoveries and write-offs. Furthermore, section 46 of the Regulations, require all Accounting Officers of Ministries, Public Entities and Constitutional Entities to retain all financial information relating to one financial year for three years in their original form after the audit report for that financial year has been tabled in Parliament.

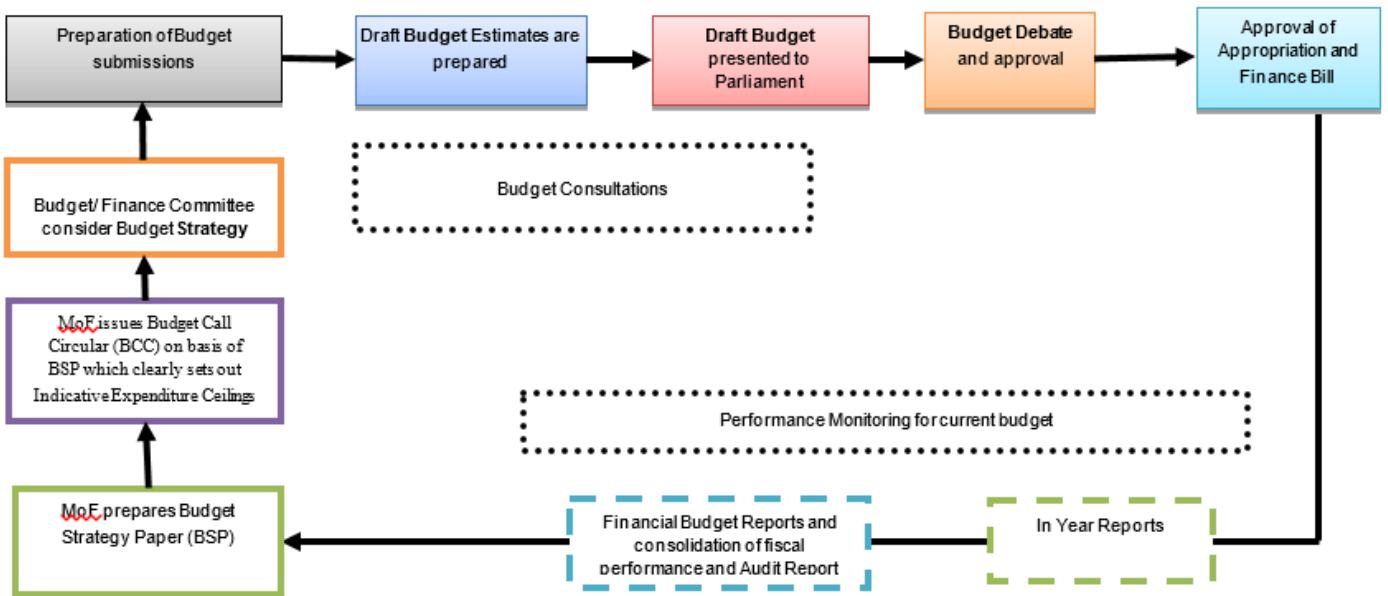
### **2.1.6 ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE ZIMBABWE BUDGET PROCESSES**

Civil society organisations remain a critical player in promoting fiscal transparency as they play a critical role of providing independent research, opinions and perspectives on various policy aspects of national development. This includes analysing the impacts of the budget on various interest groups such as women, youth, children and people with disabilities, among others. Civil society organizations are also involved in civic education on the importance of participation in budget outreach, as well as demystifying the highly technical budget language versions into citizen version budgets for easier understanding by ordinary citizens. Civic society also ensures the improvement of policy and allocation decisions by bringing different perspectives as well as creativity to budget debates.

### **2.1.7 MEDIA AND THE BUDGET PROCESS**

Budget advocacy takes place in the public arena, where events are shaped a great deal by how the media in all its forms presents and discusses budget and fiscal issues. For that reason, effective budget advocacy almost always needs to include a thoughtful media strategy.

Figure 1. Budget cycle



### 2.1.8 URBAN COUNCIL ACT CHAPTER 29:15

The Urban Councils Act Chapter 29:15 is the primary legislation detailing the governance of urban local authorities in Zimbabwe. The act provides for the financial management of Urban Councils, as sections 284-307 contains provisions on financial management in terms of budgeting, accounting of revenues and expenditures, borrowing and auditing of council books. There are 92 Local Authorities in Zimbabwe: 60 Rural and 32 Urban which fall under the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing. The Urban Councils are divided into five categories based on size. Harare and Bulawayo metropolitans are the largest, followed by City Councils (five), Municipalities (nine), Town Councils and finally Local Boards (four) as Urban Councils are provided for by the Urban Councils Act.

### 2.1.9 MINISTERIAL DIRECTIVES

From time to time, the Ministry of Local Government issues ministerial directives and circulars articulating government policy. Ministerial directives exemplify the role of national government in the supervision of local authorities, for example by issuing policy directives on financial issues in order to ensure that these authorities are governed in a manner that enable them to deliver on national and local goals.



**FIGURE 2: LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET CYCLE**



**Source: ZIMCODD 2021 OBS [Adapted from Kennedy Manduna, Tawanda Zinyama, Alfred G. Nhema (2015)]**

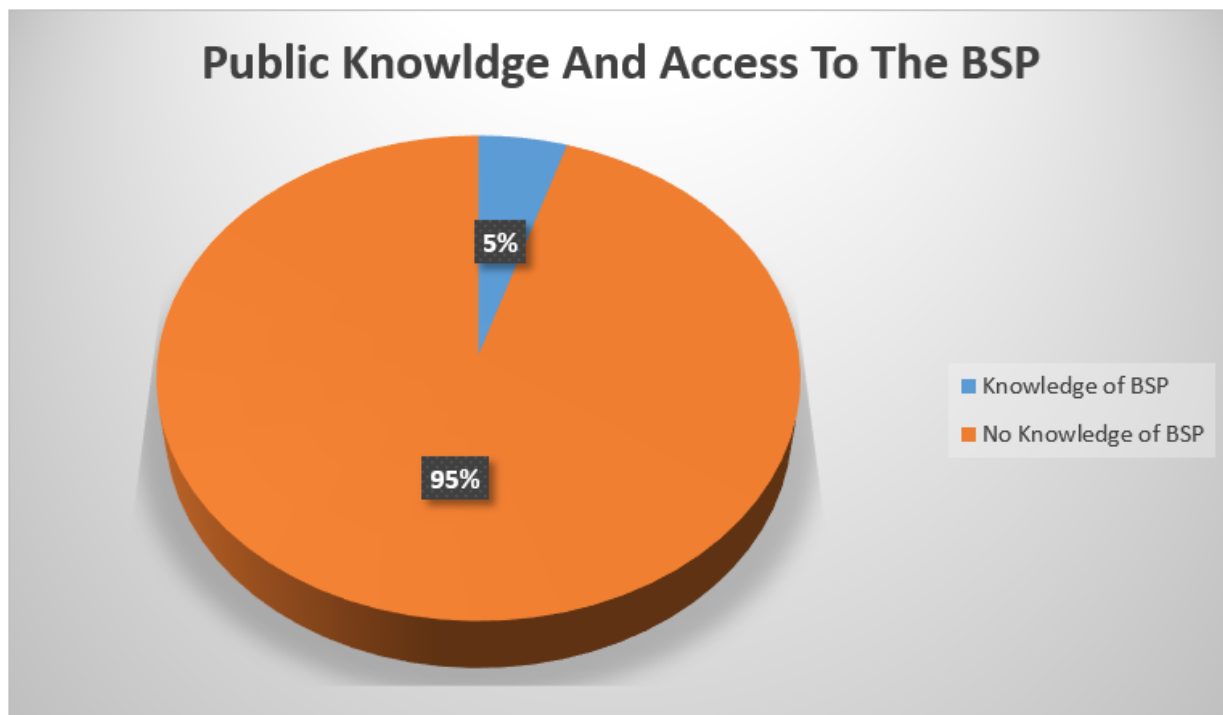
### 3. PRODUCTION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF PRE-BUDGET POLICY DOCUMENTS

From time to time, the Ministry of Local Government issues ministerial directives and circulars articulating government policy. Ministerial directives exemplify the role of national government in the supervision of local authorities, for example by issuing policy directives on financial issues in order to ensure that these authorities are governed in a manner that enable them to deliver on national and local goals.

#### 3.1 PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS TO THE BUDGET STRATEGY PAPER

Only 4.88% (2.70% male and 2.18% female) of the respondents have knowledge of the BSP while 95.11% (46% male and 49.11% female) expressed ignorance of the BSP and 4.60% accessed the 2021 BSP while 95.40% did not access the BSP for the period in question.

**FIGURE 3: PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS TO THE BSP**

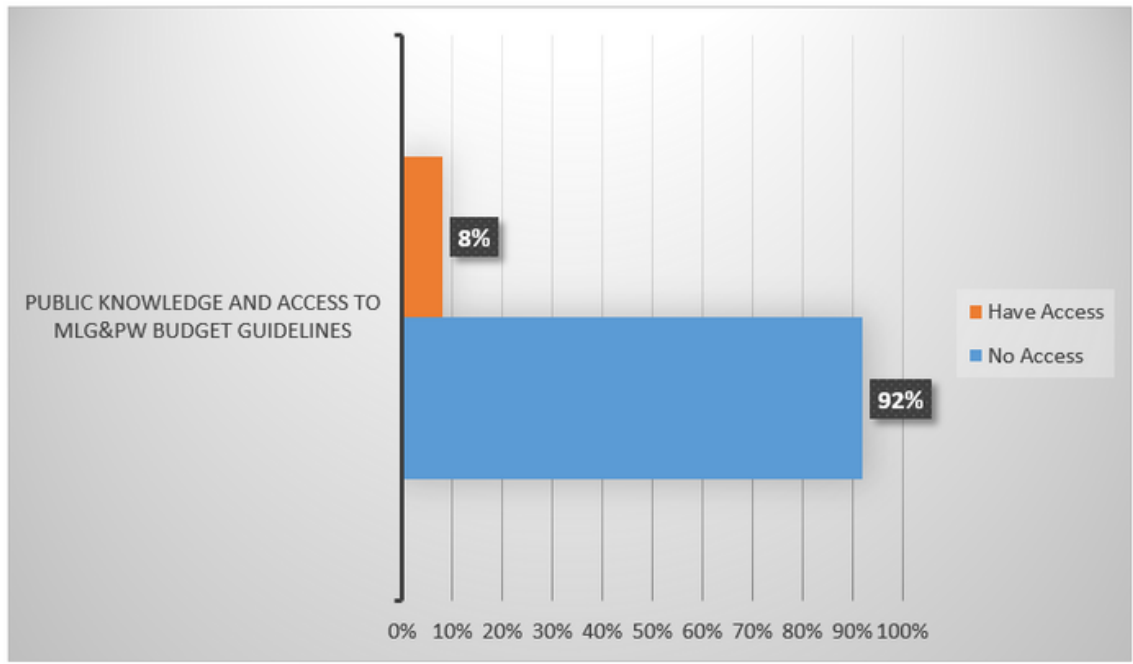


Of the key informants, 75% lacked knowledge of the existence of the BSP. The categories with very little knowledge of the existence of the BSP were Residents Associations (38%), councillors (57%) and others (5%). Town Clerks of local authorities and their Directors, MPs and other key informants from the academia and other sectors demonstrated knowledge of the BSP and its utility as the baseline document to the content of the budget. The BSP is defined as a strategic paper in the annual budget preparation process, issued to enhance understanding among stakeholders of the broader macro-fiscal issues that will guide the prioritisation of budget allocations. The BSP is meant to facilitate stakeholders' participation and debate on budgetary and macro-economic policy issues. The objective is to build consensus on specific issues to be addressed under the budget. The OECD (2010) views that the BSP serves as an important instrument for encouraging debate on the impending budget aggregates and how they interact with the economy thus serving to create appropriate expectations for the budget itself. The BSP therefore provides the public with a way of understanding the link between policies and budget allocations.

### **3.2 PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS TO THE MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET GUIDELINES**

The survey results showed that 92% of the respondents lacked knowledge and access to the 2022 MLG&PW budget guidelines while 8% have accessed the guidelines. From the 92%, 44% were male and 47% were female, while for the 9.9%, 5.3% were male. Eight (8) out of 10 councillors interviewed expressed knowledge of the budget guidelines though technical councils' officials had better appreciation of the utility of the guidelines to local government budgeting. Over 70% of the councillors interviewed (who are predominantly opposition party members) view the issue of budget guidelines as a deliberate ploy by the ruling party to impose an anti-opposition agenda disguised in those guidelines. The focus of the budget guidelines has been on devolution funds. However, the central government has taken a centrist position, directing on how to use the devolution funds. This is against the spirit encapsulated in the Constitution.

**FIGURE 4: PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESS TO MLG&PWNH BUDGET GUIDELINES**

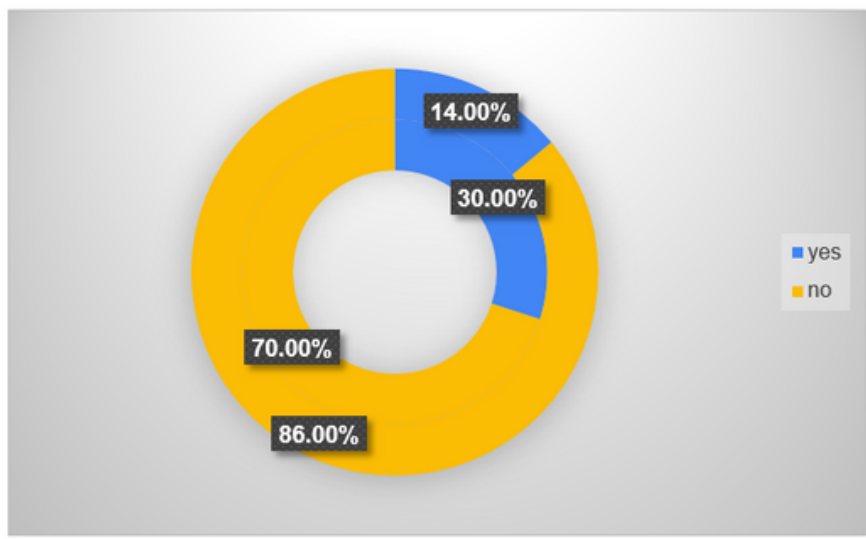


With very low public knowledge and access to the guidelines, challenges emanate in regulating and giving a context to budget consultation meetings. Interviews with officials of Residents Associations revealed that the public input into the budget is not informed by the guidelines but substantive service delivery challenges.

**4. CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT DURING THE PRE-BUDGET STAGE**  
**4.1 PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETING PROCESS**

This section focuses on the engagement of citizens in the pre-budget processes at both central and local government levels. The study sought to establish the level of knowledge of the national and local budgeting process. The survey found out that 86% (43% male and 43% female) and 70% (33% male and 37% female) of the respondents lacked knowledge on the national and local government budgeting process. On the other hand, only 14% (7% male and 7% female) and 30% (17% male and 13% female) of the respondents had an appreciation of the national and local government budgeting process respectively.

**FIGURE 5: KNOWLEDGE OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET PROCESSES**

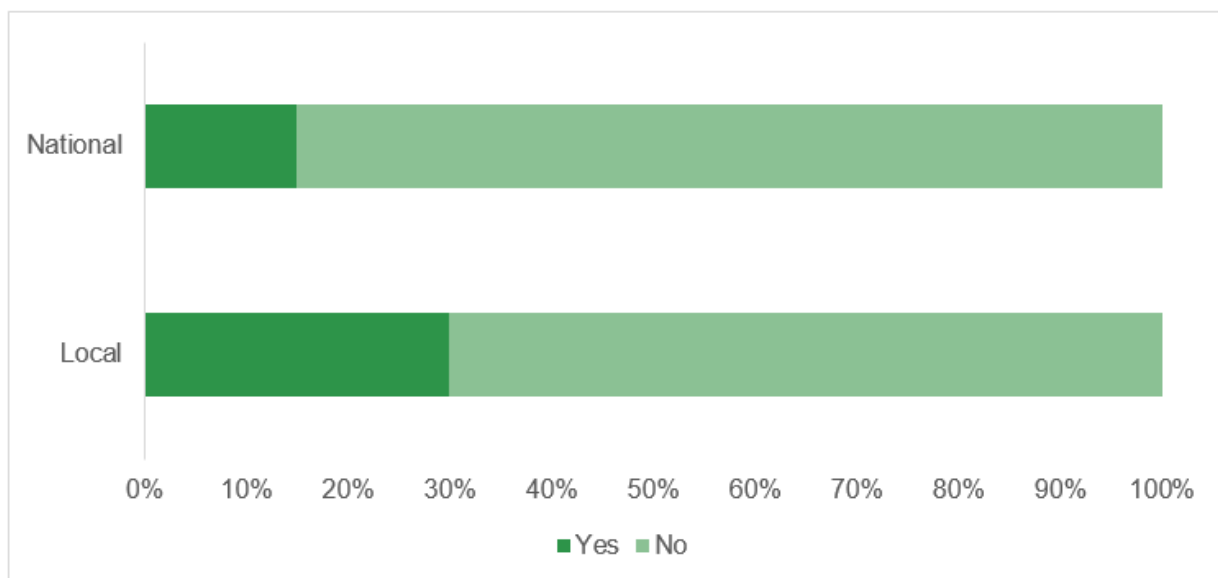


As opposed to what is presented above, interviews with mayors, town clerks, directors of finance were of the view that the public is aware and are fully informed about the budget processes at the local level though the knowledge is a bit limited on the national budget processes. However, interviews with Members of Parliament, councillors and leaders of RAs demonstrated that while knowledge of the national budget process is “far-fetched”, citizens’ knowledge of local budgeting process is very low and there is no appetite for citizens to understand both the process and the significance of budget processes. This has often manifested in the low turn-out and poor budget submissions during budget consultative meetings. This finding buttresses the 2021 Open Budget Survey report which notes that the lack of knowledge in budget processes is synonymous with all other policy areas such as the development of blueprints, strategic plans and budgets. A good example is public awareness of the National Development Strategy (NDS) 1. A 2021 Citizen Perspectives and Expectations survey conducted by SIVIO Institute established that 66% of respondents (N=1505) did not know about the NDS 1 and only 34% knew about it. Further, what was also apparent in the 2022 Open Budget survey findings is that this lack of understanding of the budget process also transcends to the people’s representatives that is the councillors and MPs who were clueless on budgetary processes when interviewed. Failure to appreciate the budget processes by councillors and members of parliament presents real challenges to their performing of the budget oversight role.

#### 4.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETING PROCESS

Public participation in the national and local budgeting process remains critically low. This survey found that 15% (8% males and 7% females) and 30% (18% males and 12% females) have participated in the national and local government budgeting respectively whereas 85% (46% females and 39% males) and 70% (36% female and 34% males) have not participated in the national and local budget making process as presented below.

**FIGURE 6: PARTICIPATION IN PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS**



Participating in pre-budget consultations provides citizens an opportunity to collectively discuss the best way of allocating public goods. Meaningful public participation in the budget process is essential for making sure decisions reflect how the public wants governments' funds raised and spent. Good economic governance therefore calls for an engaged citizenry through participatory practices in pre-budget consultations. However, in Zimbabwe participation of all vulnerable groups; - women, youth, people with disabilities is poor. While the participation of women was ranked highly across the sampled areas owing to education and literacy trainings by civil society groups, most women still do not participate in budget processes. The survey results show that attendance and participation of the youth in pre-budget consultations was extremely low in all the areas for both national (5%) and local budget (6.5%) consultations. The low participation was attributed to a number of reasons as presented below:

<b>Lack of information/ knowledge about the budget</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Lack of appreciation of its importance</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Lack of incentives for such meetings</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Inconvenient venues and times for the meetings</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Drug, substance and social media abuse</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>No time for such meetings</b>	<b>17%</b>

Through the African Youth Charter (2006), the Declaration on Youth Development and Empowerment in SADC (2015), the Zimbabwean Constitution, the Zimbabwe Youth Council Act, the National Development Strategy – 1 2021 to 2025, the National Youth Policy 2020-2025, and the National Gender Policy (2013-2017);<sup>1</sup> Zimbabwe recognises the youth, which constitutes approximately 70% of the Zimbabwean population as a critical stakeholder in governance and decision-making processes. To this end, the government must create opportunities to further enhance youth participation in budget processes. It is also anticipated that the creation of the Youth Caucus within the Parliament of Zimbabwe in 2021 will indeed strengthen the representation of Youth in the Parliament which caucus should be at the core of advocating for prioritisation of youth development and empowerment through the budget and in-line with the NDS1 targets.

Lack of information or knowledge about the budget processes was among the chief challenges/barriers to public participation in general and youth participation in particular when it comes to pre-budget consultations. A mayor from the Municipality of Chinhoyi echoed the same sentiments as he shared that, “I never participated in a budget consultation until I was elected as a councillor and I did not understand it either.” He further added that there were no efforts by community leaders or council officials to make young people understand the budget processes, a situation which persists to date. This serves to illustrate that the government is not doing enough to educate the youth and create platforms for youth to participate in economic governance of the country. What also emerged for the key informants was that civil society players are playing an active role with regards to raising economic literacy of communities especially on understanding the budget processes and mobilising communities to participate in pre-budget consultations. However, with limited resources and lack of support from the government, CSO efforts might take long to bear fruit.

1. Sunday Mail Newspaper, 2022 New National Youth Service remodelled

The IBP 2021 Open Budget Survey<sup>2</sup> notes that the global average score for public participation in the budget process is just 14<sup>3</sup> out of 100, indicating that meaningful public participation opportunities are rare. The report further notes that no country surveyed provides adequate participation opportunities (scores of 61 or higher). This survey substantiates the IBP finding as key informants engaged such as Residents Associations (RAs), civil society organisations and the academia noted that the platforms for public participation in national and local government budget making processes do not genuinely offer opportunities for the public to effectively input into the budgets. This is because the draft budget is shared on the day of the consultations or a few hours before the budget hearings thereby not giving citizens sufficient time to engage with the proposed budget so as to make meaningful and valuable contributions.

In order to realize the full benefits of public engagement, governments should open up the civic space and establish meaningful public participation opportunities throughout the four stages of the budget cycle that is budget formulation, approval, execution and oversight. There is therefore a need to prioritize inclusion and incorporation of the voices of marginalized groups, providing information in advance and promoting comprehensive engagement between the government and the public and providing feedback to citizens about their contributions. A good practice, although with room for improvement was witnessed at Mutare City Council which has expanded, its Budget Finance Committee to incorporate CSOs, Manica Youth Assembly (MAYA) to represent the youth voice, Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe to represent the women's voice, two (2) RAs representatives, the disability sector, informal traders and the business community. This has enhanced people's participation in the council's budget processes as the organisations have been assigned different thematic clusters for which they track and monitor budget expenditure and service delivery.

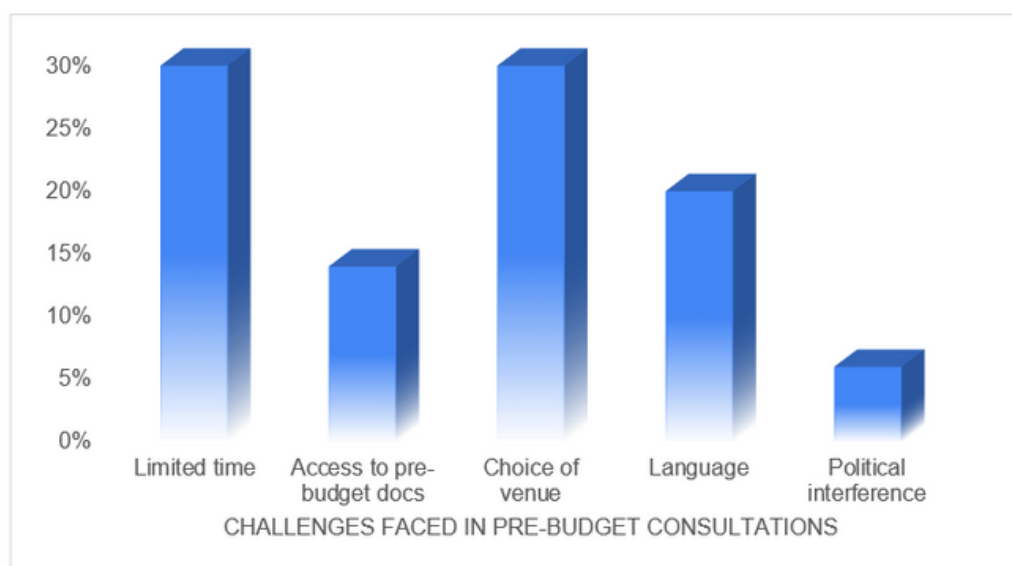
### **4.3 CHALLENGES FACED IN PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS**

Astute PFM should result in the attainment of social and economic justice which entails the creation of institutions aimed at achieving common good and punctuated by an apt economic system that allows all people to engage in economic endeavor. Part 2 of the Constitution contains political and public participation rights and stipulates that all citizens have a right to participate directly in public debate and discussion over the design and implementation of fiscal policies. This should ordinarily be achieved through pre-budget consultations, the broad national governance structure which falls under participatory governance. Effective budget consultations constitute the bedrock for sound public finance management and also promotes inclusive and people driven socio-economic development. However, in Zimbabwe pre-budget consultations have remained symbolic, a form of public grandstanding and a tick-box exercise without any intention to genuinely engage the people considering the manner in which they have been conducted over-time.

2. <https://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/Open-budget-survey-2021-1.pdf>

3. The Global average score for public participation is unchanged compared to OBS 2019 for the 117 countries assessed in both surveys

**FIGURE 7: CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS**



The nature of pre-budget consultations in Zimbabwe has presented challenges to citizens and this has negatively impacted on their participation and input into budget formulation. The survey sought to understand some of the major challenges encountered by citizens in the pre-budget phase in both national and local budget processes. The identified challenges during pre-budget consultations in national budget processes include limited time (30%), choice of venues (30%), language (20%), access to pre-budget documents (14%) and political interference (6%). According to the survey results limited time (consist of lack of sufficient notice for the consultative meetings, rushed processes hence limited opportunities to make contributions); access to pre-budget documents (lack of access to key pre-budget policy documents such as the Pre-budget strategy paper in the case of national budget process and Ministerial guidelines from the Ministry of Local Government in the case of local budget processes. These documents are critical in providing a framework to guide public, stakeholder consultations and engagements on the policy priorities of the upcoming budgets); choice of venues (venues chosen remain exclusionary with long distances involved and inaccessible by people with disabilities); language (there has been limited effort by both central and local government to breakdown very technical and financial language presented in budget documents); political interference (consists of politicisation and hi-jacking of budget platforms and processes by political hooligans), among other factors.

In local budgeting process, citizens identified the major challenges to pre-budget consultations as lack of sufficient notice of such meetings by council; councils not sharing proposed budgets before meetings; language being too technical; lack of feedback meetings and budget review meetings by councils hence pre-budget consultation meetings are diverted to address service delivery issues rather than substantive budget issues; politicisation of the budget agenda; limited time and citizen input failing to change or alter the council's position.

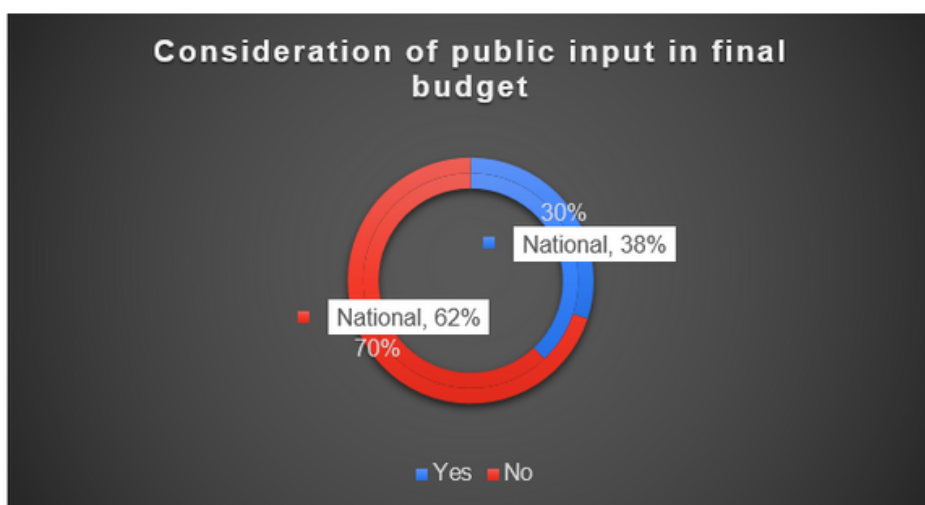
2. <https://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/Open-budget-survey-2021-1.pdf>

3. The Global average score for public participation is unchanged compared to OBS 2019 for the 117 countries assessed in both surveys

#### 4.4 CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC INPUT INTO THE BUDGET BEFORE ENACTMENT

While the pre-budget consultations are the public hearings that are conducted by parliamentary portfolio committee on Budget Finance and Economic Development and the Expanded Committee on Sustainable Goals (national level) and council budget finance committees (local level) to receive citizen input on the priorities for the next budget, survey results are a testament that citizen inputs barely make it into the final budget. The survey found out that 62% (32% females and 30% males) and 70% (38% males and 32% females) of respondents for the national and local government budget respectively felt that their views were not considered in preparing the final budgets. Only 38% (20% females, 18% males) and 30% (18% males and 12% females) of respondents for national and local budgets respectively believed that their views and inputs in pre-budget consultations were adopted in the final budgets.

FIGURE 8: CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC VIEWS IN THE BUDGET



This growing recognition of the importance of public participation has been reflected in key global standards and principles. In 2012, for example, the Global Initiative on Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) outlined ten high level principles on fiscal transparency, participation, and accountability (GIFT 2012). These principles include reference to public participation in fiscal policies; encouraging policy makers to ensure that citizens can exercise the right to participate directly in public debate and discussion over the design and implementation of fiscal policies. Similarly, in 2014, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) updated its' Fiscal Transparency Code (FTC) to include a principle (Principle 2.3.3) around public participation in budget preparation and execution (IMF 2014; 2019). A year later, the OECD's principles of good budgetary governance also called on member states to 'provide for an inclusive, participative, and realistic debate on budget choices' (OECD 2015). Further, open, participative processes can help empower citizens, overcome public distrust, and increase the legitimacy of government (Tanaka, 2007). The PFM Act mandates the Minister of Finance and Economic Development through the Parliament of Zimbabwe to solicit citizens' input into the budget. Section 28 (5) of the Public Finance Management Act provides that; The Minister may, through the appropriate portfolio committee of Parliament, seek the views of Parliament in the preparation and formulation of the national annual budget, for which purpose the appropriate portfolio committee shall conduct public hearings to elicit the opinions of as many stakeholders in the national annual budget as possible.

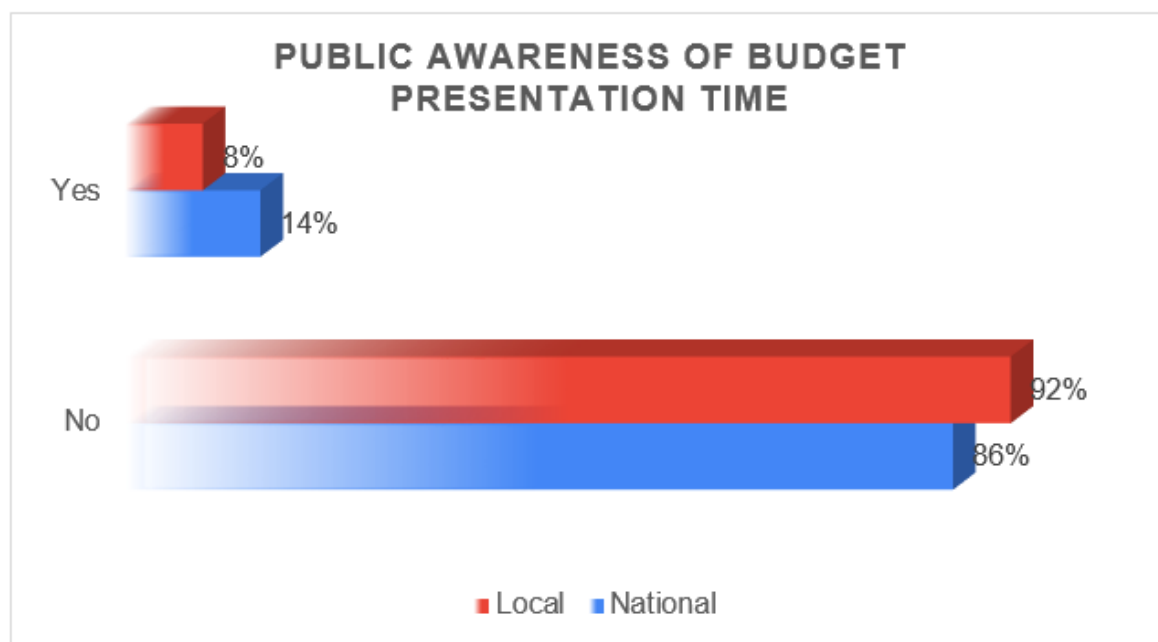


However, the provision of the PFM Act does not only ensure citizen participation in governance processes but also ensures that the national budget responds to the needs and aspirations of the general populace. Accordingly, citizens' input into the pre-budget consultations should be considered in the final budget because only then can the budget be said to be responsive to people's needs and aspirations. It is therefore high time that the government takes into account key propositions from the grassroots for consideration in the 2023 budget formulation process and makes the necessary policy shifts to facilitate a people's budget. Failure to consider citizen inputs in the final budget only culminates in cosmetic consultations which are meant to advance the interests of a few at the detriment of the masses. On the contrary, considering people's voice and inputs into the budget reflects the needs and priorities of citizens and presents an opportunity to deliver resources to marginalized and under-represented communities to ensure that no one is left behind.

#### 4.5 PUBLIC AWARENESS OF BUDGET PRESENTATION TIME

The availability of and easy access to budget-related information is a necessary pre-requisite of public participation in the budget process (Transparency International, 2022). The inability to access such information prevents the public and civil society stakeholders from making informed choices and contributing meaningfully to budget deliberations. By the same token, if citizens are not aware of the time of budget presentation, they cannot effectively prepare for participation. The survey results reveal that 86% (46% females and 40% males) and 92% (50% females and 42% males) were not aware of the budget presentation time for the national and local government budgets respectively while only 14% (8% males and 6% females) and 8% (5% males and 3% females) were aware of the timing of the budget presentation for national and local government budget respectively.

**FIGURE 9: AWARENESS OF BUDGET PRESENTATION TIME**



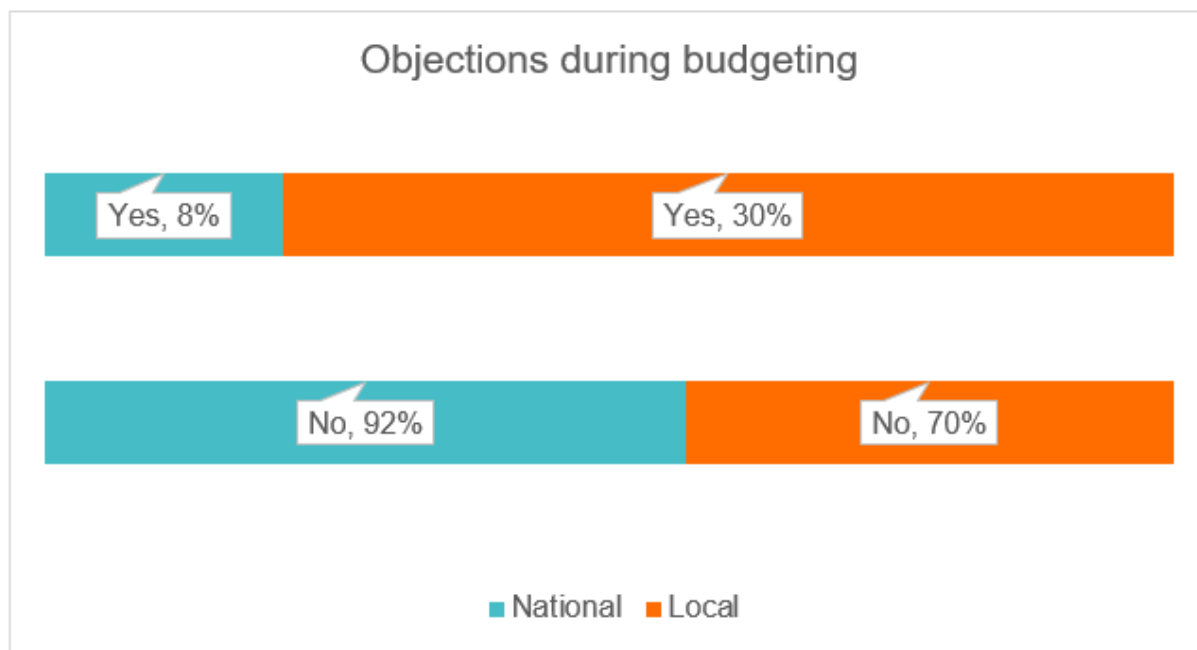
Results from key informant interviews show a higher appreciation of the budget presentation times for both national and local governments with only 5% of the respondents indicating that they are not aware.

Those who were not aware were councillors in relation to the national budget (3.4%) and 1.6% who lacked data on budget presentation time for local government budgets. The national government budget presentations are widely advertised on various platforms such as ZTV, radios, government websites and social media. This increases the coverage and citizens are fairly aware. On the contrary, the publication of local government budget presentations is subdued leading to a paucity of knowledge. A random check of council websites shows that councils have not uploaded such important information. A number of councils still rely on hailers to advertise budget meetings. An academic interviewed indicated that councils lack robust strategies of marketing public information and hence coverage of key programs is weak.

#### 4.6 SUBMISSION OF OBJECTIONS DURING THE BUDGET MAKING PROCESS

While objections provide a critical window through which the public can express and raise issues with the budget at both national and local budgeting levels, the results of the survey show that 92% (52% females and 40% males) and 70% (38% females and 32% males) have not raised objections during the budget making processes at national and local government budgets respectively. Only 8% (5% females and 3% males) and 30% (16% males and 14% females) of the respondent submitted objections during the budget making process for national and local government budgets respectively.

**FIGURE 10: OBJECTIONS DURING BUDGETING**

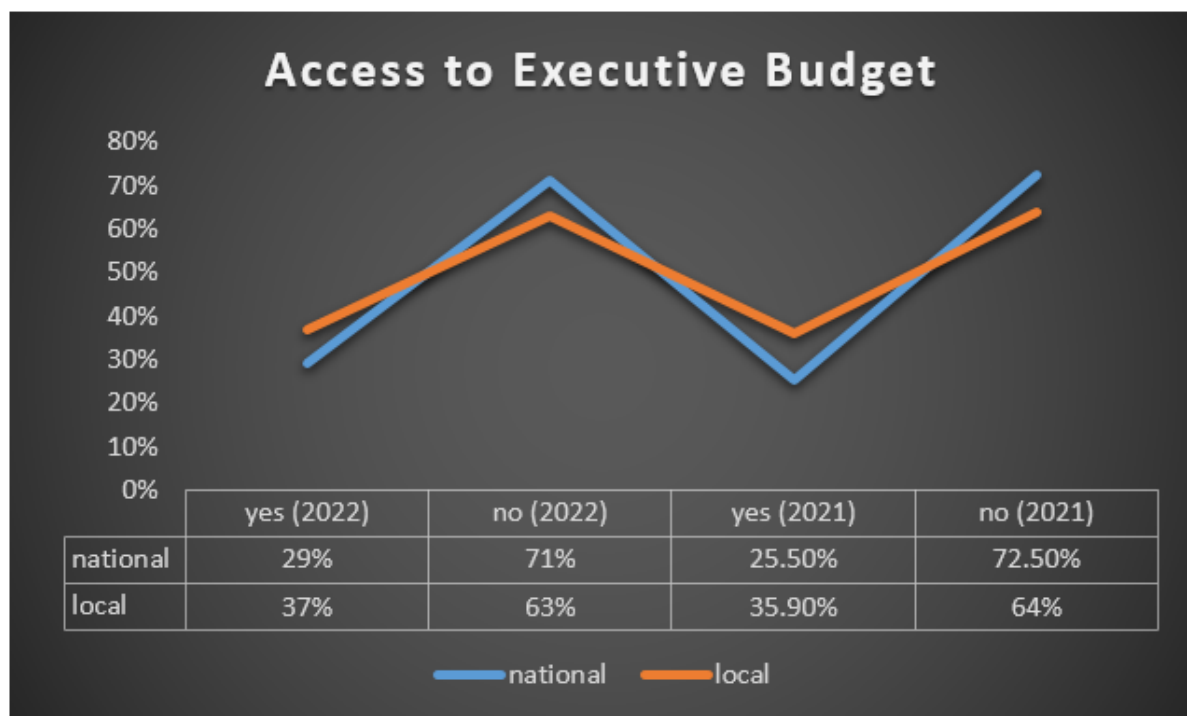


#### 4.7 ACCESS TO THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET

Accessibility as a key GIFT principle requires governments to facilitate public participation by disseminating complete fiscal information and all other relevant data and using mechanisms that are easy for all to access, understand and use, re-use and transform, namely in open data formats.

In Zimbabwe, accessibility remains an issue of concern due to a myriad of reasons or challenges. Chief amongst the challenges to accessing the executive budget was identified by key informants as the platforms used to disseminate it (mainly via internet which is exclusionary), lack of political will by the executive to break down the budgets and make them palatable to the ordinary person making it difficult for citizens to comprehend and limited print copies of the budget. Further, at the local level, there are no deliberate efforts to disseminate the budget to residents. Local Authorities (LAs) engaged in the survey indicated that their offices ‘are open for residents who want to come in and look at the budget’ and for those who want copies of either the budget or audit report, the LAs are charging a minimal fee of US \$2 per copy like in the case of Chinhoyi Municipality and Bindura to cater for printing costs. While the costs may be justified, wage erosion due to the run-away inflation is real and this has been further compounded by the food inflation in which Zimbabwe is topping the world statistics. This has resulted in further shrinking of households’ disposable income such that their priority list becomes food for the family and not budget information, this further marginalizes the majority to access such critical information at the said cost.

**FIGURE 11: ACCESS TO EXECUTIVE BUDGET**



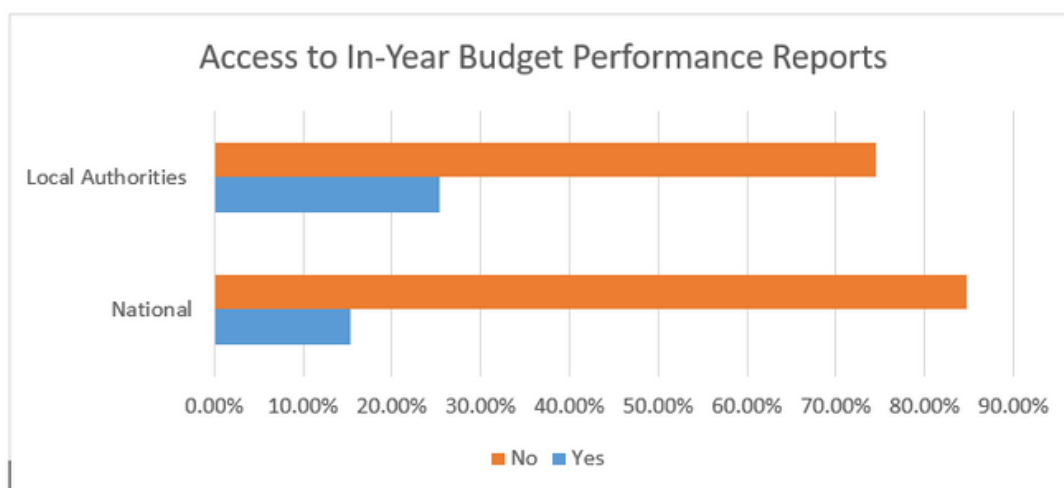
The survey found out that 29% (16% males and 13% females) and 37% (20% males and 17% females) of the respondents have accessed the national and local government budgets respectively. On the other hand, 71% (40% females and 31% males) and 63% (33% females and 30% males) have not accessed the executive budget at national and local government levels. Although there has been positive progression from 2021, the level of accessing the executive budgets remains very low for both national and local government budgets. It is critical that the government devise mechanisms to widely disseminate the budgets through print media, radio and television among other mechanisms as this enhances government accountability and ultimately improves the social contract between citizens and their government.

## 5. CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT DURING BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

### 5.1 ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS HIGHLIGHTING GOVERNMENT PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING BUDGETS

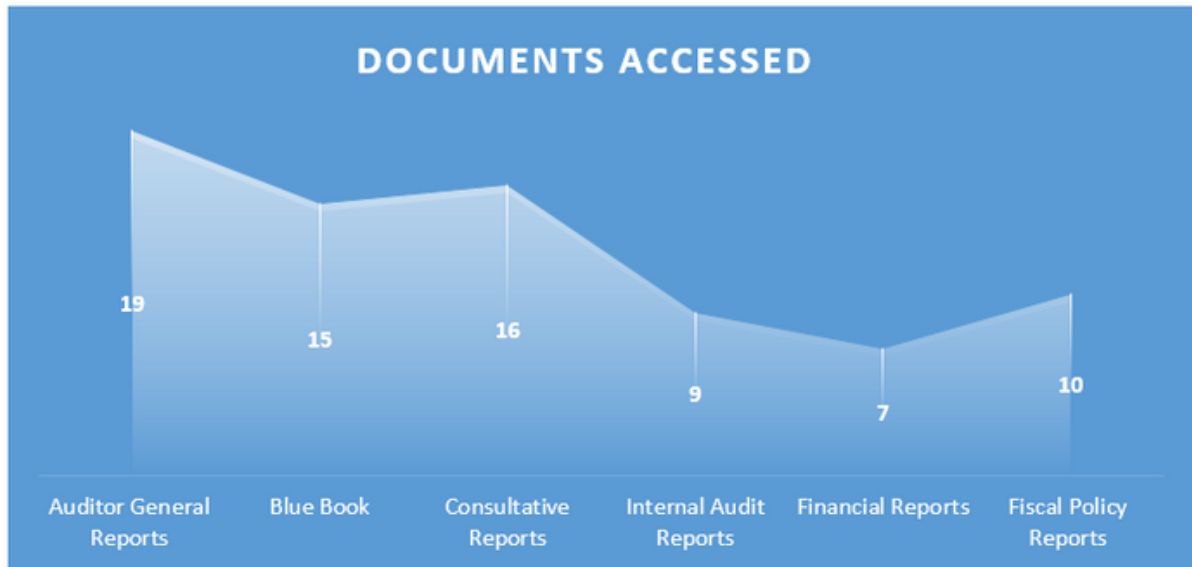
Access to budget documents is the nerve-centre of public participation in the budget cycle. The accessibility of budget documents is also essential in enforcing transparency and accountability in the utilisation of public resources as well as discharge of duties by public officials. It also eliminates any form of opaqueness in the information gap and guarantees quality public input during local and national budget consultative forums and public hearings. The findings from the survey show that, an increase from 11.69% (6.20% male and 5.49%) to 15.34% (7.96% male and 7.38% female) with respect to accessibility of yearly budget performance reports of the central government. An increase was also witnessed in the accessibility of local authority yearly budget performance reports. In the 2021 OBS the results of the survey were 21.22% (12% male and 9.22% female, in 2022 an increase of 4.17% was recorded culminating to 25.39% (13.77% male and 11.62% female).

FIGURE 12: ACCESS TO IN-YEAR BUDGET PERFORMANCE REPORTS



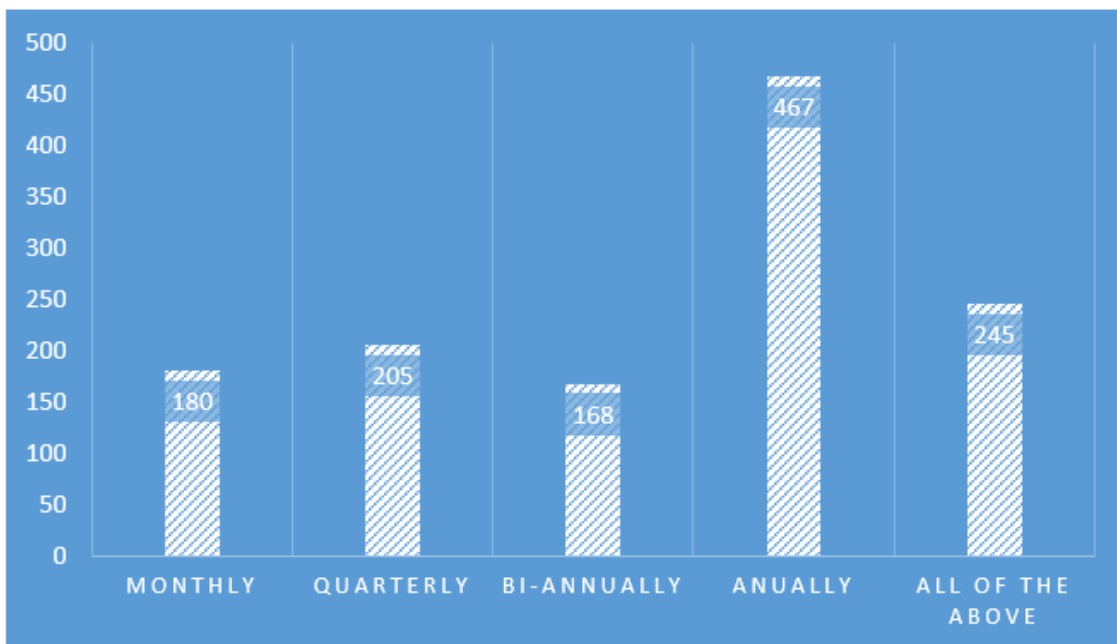
Key informant interviews show that there is still need for advocacy and lobbying as the budget review process is still a privilege of the minority. Majority of the citizens interviewed lamented that, at local level, once the budget has been enacted local authorities rarely engage with citizens. The same was said of the central government, public expenditures are not shared with the citizens except for the budget review which does not even show granular data. However, it was noted that some of the reports which were reviewed by citizens include executive budget documents/statements/reviews, Auditor General Reports, blue book, consultative reports, internal audit reports, financial reports, fiscal policy reports and council minutes.

**FIGURE 13: DOCUMENTS ACCESSED**



The results from the survey shows that there is generally a deliberate ploy to withhold information from the citizen. The above documents accessed, frequency shows of all the documents accessed, not even a single one reached 20%.

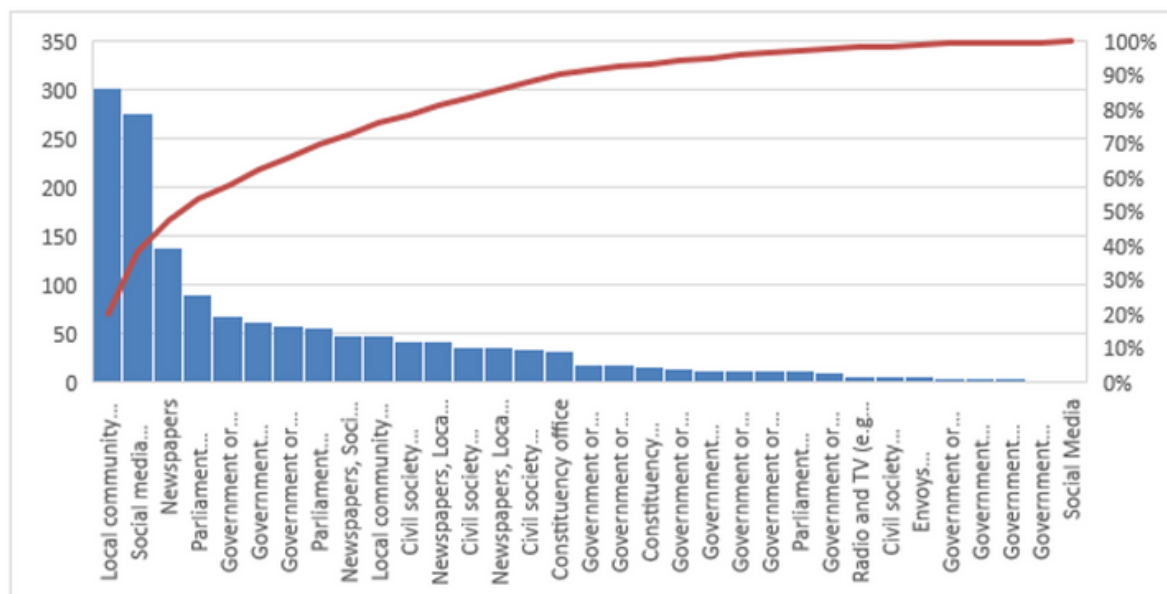
**FIGURE 14: FREQUENCY OF GETTING BUDGET PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**



There is a need to increase the frequency of public information especially in the context of the increased usage of social media and online platforms. Governments should seek to increase visibility by creating active online platforms for regularly sharing budget information with citizens.

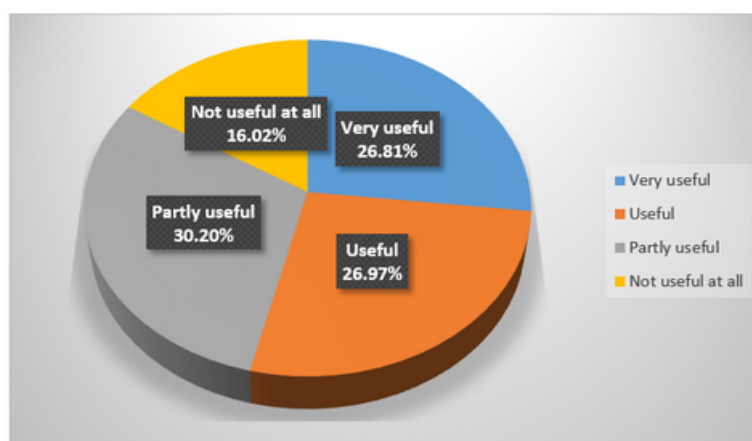
The survey respondents were asked about the media channels they are using to access budget review information. The responses ranged from social media platforms such as WhatsApp, newspapers, radio and TV stations, government websites and local CSO channels (see figure below).

**FIGURE 15: FEEDBACK SOURCES**



Interviews with key informants revealed that there is a need to guarantee the credibility of information. Some of the social media platforms have previously proved to be unreliable sources of information for policy planning. It is therefore imperative for the government to use official websites and constantly update them for the benefit of the citizens. However, a review of the websites e.g. Ministry of Local Government and Public Works for the purpose of this survey revealed that there are very few if any updates given constantly. Whilst the website of the MoFED is relatively active in updating the public about the budget at various cycle, other line ministries e.g. ministries responsible for Agriculture, primary and secondary education, higher education, Health etc. which in actual essence are dealing with actual expenditure are not updating the citizens on the expenditure against budgets allocated to them. This has led to the accumulation of budget variances without the approval of Parliament. For local authorities, the websites are rarely updated, and where such updates are given, they won't cover key budget review documents such as financial statements, audit reports and other budget performance documents. The survey respondents were asked about the utility of the budget feedback they are getting. This is particularly important as the feedback forms the basis for active engagement between the government and citizens. The responses are presented in the figure below.

**FIGURE 16: USEFULNESS OF THE FEEDBACK**

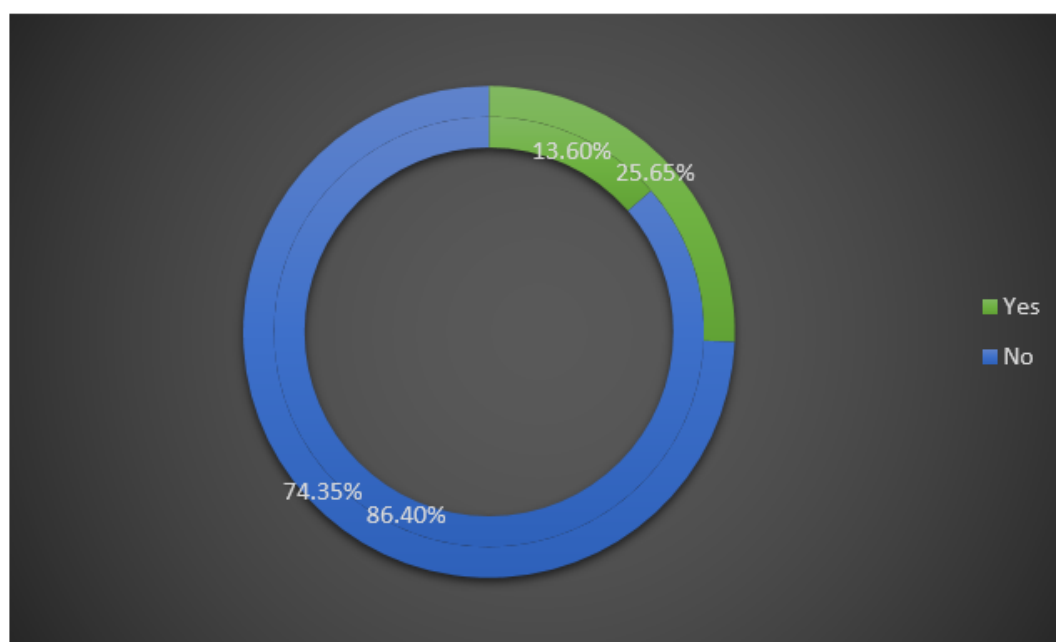


Key informants raised a number of issues over the quality of the feedback the public is getting. Fundamental information such as financial statements for local authorities, independent audit evaluations, commission reports are rarely posted. And it is such information that is important for active citizen engagement during the budget cycle.

## 5.2 TRANSPARENCY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DEBT

Zimbabwe is in debt distress. Arguments have been made over the odiousness and illegitimacy of the debt emanating from an opaque debt contraction and expenditure process. The subject of debt management has attracted debate across the country with respect to lack of transparency and accountability. This has undermined prudent public finance management which is essential in debt management. The results from the survey showed that, 13.60% (7.2% female and 6.4% male) and 25.65% (16.45% female and 9.20% male) of the respondents for the national and local government respectively were satisfied with the transparency of the debt management systems and processes for the national and local government levels respectively. 86.4% (50% male and 36.4% female) and 74.35% (41% female and 33.35% male) of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the debt management systems and process. The results therefore indicate a large propensity towards citizen dissatisfaction and hence weak frameworks for accountability in debt management.

**FIGURE 17: TRANSPARENCY OF PUBLIC AND PUBLICLY GUARANTEED DEBT**



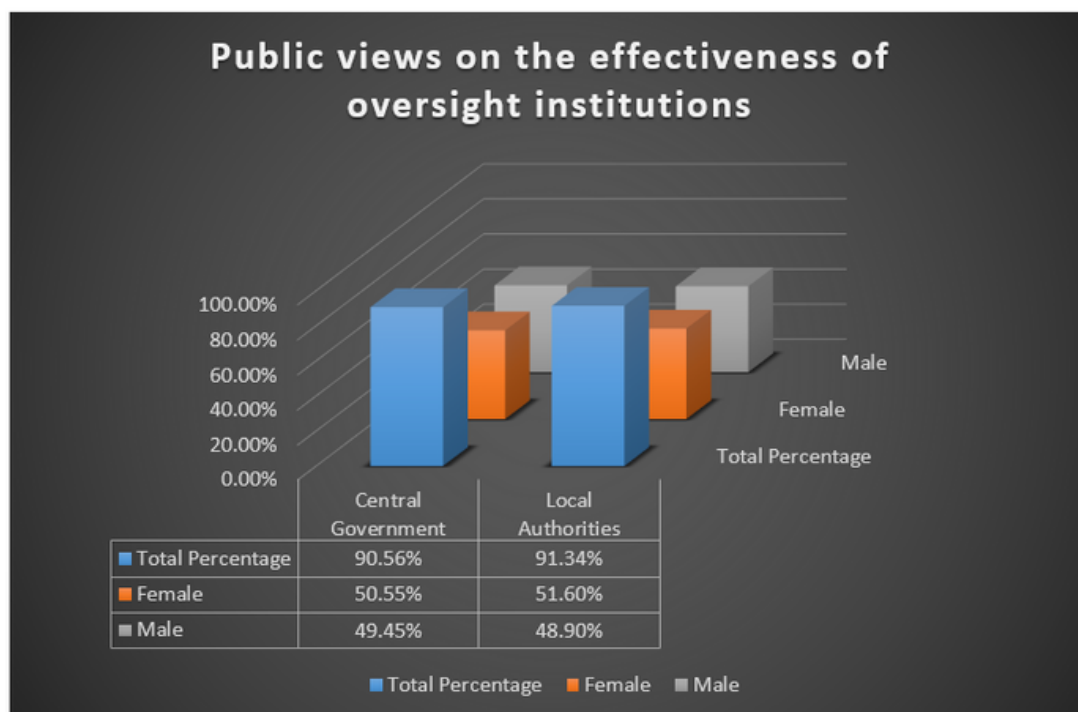
Interviewed members of civil society and the academia were of the opinion that there is lack of transparency and accountability in the management of the public debt. They were of the opinion that the intersectionality, rampant abuse of borrowed public funds, huge debt stock, fiscal indiscipline and shrinking fiscal space have undermined social spending and service delivery.

### 5.3 ROLE OF OVERSIGHT INSTITUTIONS IN ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH BUDGETED EXPENDITURE

The optimum efficiency of public finance management can be measured by the effectiveness of oversight institutions in ensuring compliance with budget expenditure. Nations that have strong oversight institutions have always proven to be more transparent and accountable with respect to utilisation of public finance. Since independence, Zimbabwe has been struggling to establish independent and strong oversight institutions that foster effective budget expenditure monitoring (Chigudu, 2020, Mtombe, 2014, Zhou, 2012). This is despite the fact that Zimbabwe has a myriad of legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks that governs public finance management. It is imperative to note that, among these frameworks there is a deliberate ploy of conflicting to create a leeway of resource abuse. The much-proclaimed vision 2030 demands prudent fiscal management if it is to be attained.

The survey examines the effectiveness of oversight institutions in two dimensions. The first one being the national level and the second one as local authorities. The central government is presided by the Parliament as an oversight institution while local authorities are presided by council and its committees. The Constitution of Zimbabwe gives the parliament a meta-governance role over all government departments and ministries. According to the survey findings 90.56% (50.55% female and 49.45% male) of the respondents were of the view that, the central government has weak oversight mechanisms, while 91.34% (51.60% female and 48.90% male) were of the opinion that, local authorities have weak oversight systems.

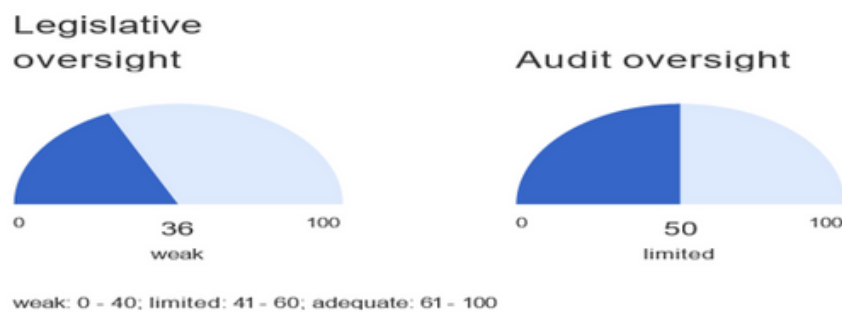
**FIGURE 18: PUBIC VIEWS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OVERSIGHT INSTITUTIONS**





A comparative analysis of the current survey with that of 2021, 2020 and 2019 shows that people are continuously losing faith in oversight institutions. For example, for 2021 the findings indicated that, 88.70% (46.20% male and 42.50% female) of the respondents and 89.4% (48.60% were male and 40.8% female) of the survey respondents for both national and local government respectively were of the opinion that oversight institutions are weak to provide sustainable oversight on budgeting and the use of public resources. The 2019 and 2020 OBS show that an average 80% of the respondents were of the opinion that oversight bodies are weak in carrying out their mandates. The 2019 IBP OBS also shows a low indexing of the competence of oversight institutions as shown in the figure below.

**FIGURE 19: 2019 IBP VIEWS ON EFFECTIVENESS OF OVERSIGHT INSTITUTIONS**



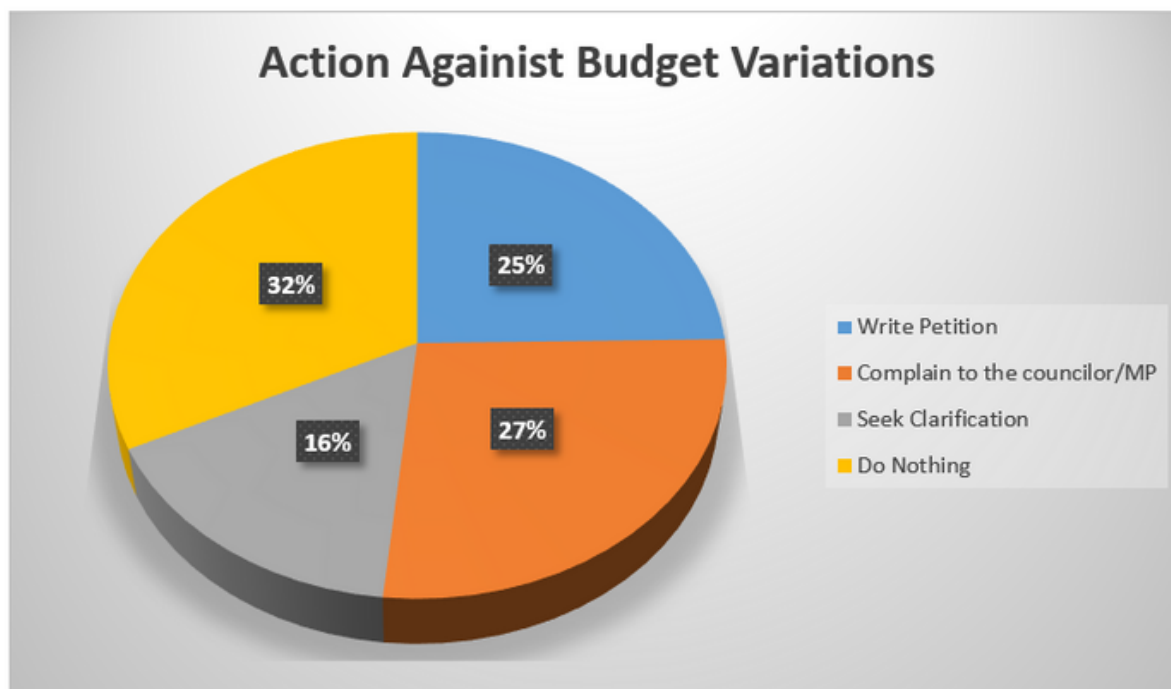
*Source: IBP, 2019*

Interview results concurred that indeed oversight institutions remain subdued in terms of capacity to hold executive arms accountable. Residents Associations raised the need for structured capacity building interventions to improve the capability of councils to monitor the budget cycle. However, there were views that MPs indeed possess the required capacity but there is need to strengthen legislation for Parliament to have more powers to sanction institutions against the abuse of public resources. An MP interviewed submitted that legislative oversight in particular seeks to ensure that the executive and its agencies, or those to whom authority is delegated, remain responsive and accountable. This will in turn lead to four fundamental outcomes. (i) fiscal discipline (ii) allocative efficiency (iii) operational efficiency and (iv) transparency and accountability. The above view is strengthened by Matebese-Notshulwanathe's (2019) submission that legislative oversight on PFM has high operational relevance for low income countries. It has the potential to improve the allocation of resources, accountability and transparency in the use of those resources, and hence a fundamental tool of strengthening democracy. Studies have shown that Zimbabwe has lost in excess of US\$32,179 billion through illicit financial flows (IFFs) via proceeds of crimes involving tax evasion, smuggling, corruption, fraud, drug trafficking and money laundering hence posing a major challenge to development financing for the country (IMF, 2017, RBZ, 2016).

## 5.4 PUBLIC ACTION AGAINST DEVIATION FROM BUDGETED/PLANNED ACTIVITIES

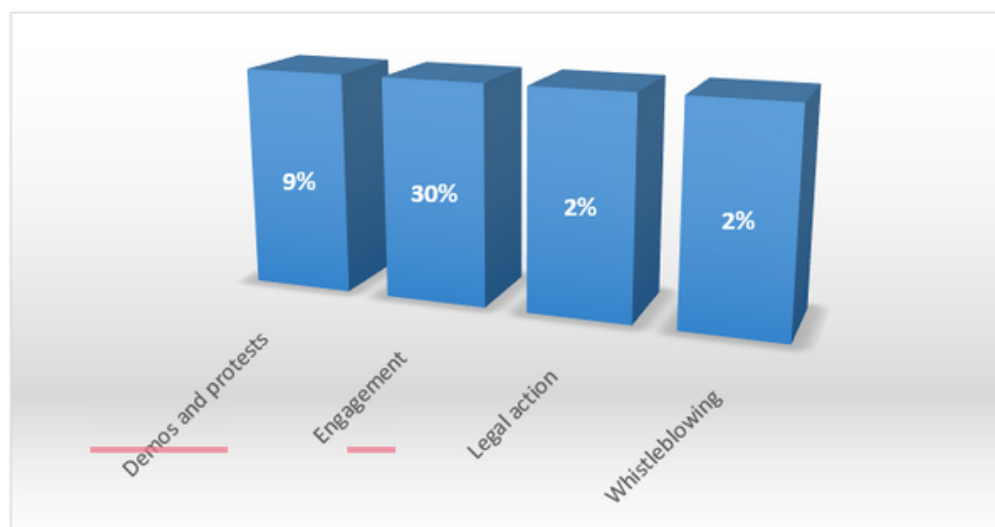
Residence Associations and citizens interviewed registered great displeasure with deviation of local authorities from planned and acceptable budget activities. Across the country, the issue of budget rebasing was the centre of the argument stimulating debate among the residents. Local authorities were of the view that the 2022 adopted budget had lost value due to inflation. Therefore, it was imperative for them to rebase their budget using the US\$ budget that was equivalent to the RTGs budget at the time they introduced the budget. For the central government, members of the academia, civil society and citizens, great displeasure was registered on the issue of the condonation bill in which the government had an over expenditure of over 100 billion RTGS. To this end, citizens, civil society organisations and academia resorted to petitions. According to the survey for both local and central government 25% (13% females and 12% males) have written petitions, 27% (15% female and 12% male) have complained to the councillor and MP, 16%, (9% female and 7% male) have sought clarification and 32% (18% female and 14% male) have done nothing.

FIGURE 20: ACTION AGAINST BUDGET VARIANCES



The survey results also showed other actions that may be taken by the public against unbudgeted expenditure. These are demonstrations and protests, legal action, engagement and whistle blowing (see figure below).

**FIGURE 21: OTHER ACTIONS TO TAKE WHEN BUDGET DEVIATES FROM PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

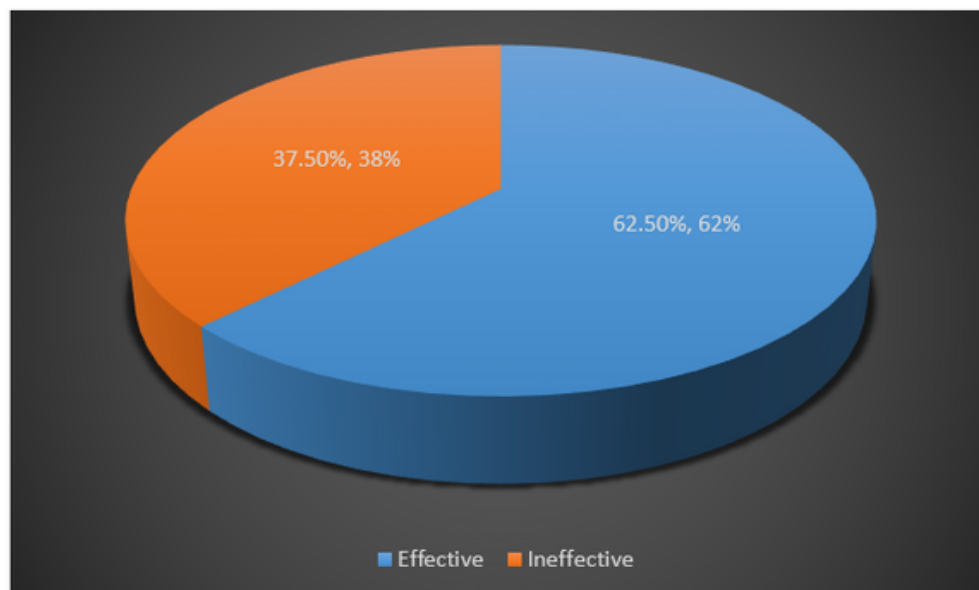


Interviews conducted show that the citizens have even lost faith in taking action against the government or local authorities. A key informant from the civil society argued that there is a growing lack of moral commitment to follow up on budget deviations across the nation. This is because, there seems to be a lack of political will in taking action against unsanctioned expenditure as the government is the primary beneficiary of unsanctioned expenditures.

### **5.5 ROLE AND IMPACT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN MONITORING BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION**

The role and impact of civil society in budget monitoring should never be underestimated as it has provided an independent meta-governance system that oversees budget implementation and monitoring. For the World Bank (2007), the role of the civil society in public finance management has proven to be significant both in developed and emerging economies. The survey results show that 62.50% (36.50% female and 26% male) of the respondents were of the view that civil society organisations were playing an important role in promoting budget transparency and the accountability of public institutions. However, 37.60% (18.50% male and 19.10% female) of the respondents were of the opinion that the role of civil society remains largely constrained due to a number of factors among them lack of resources, political manipulation, lack of capacity for research and evidence-based lobbying and advocacy.

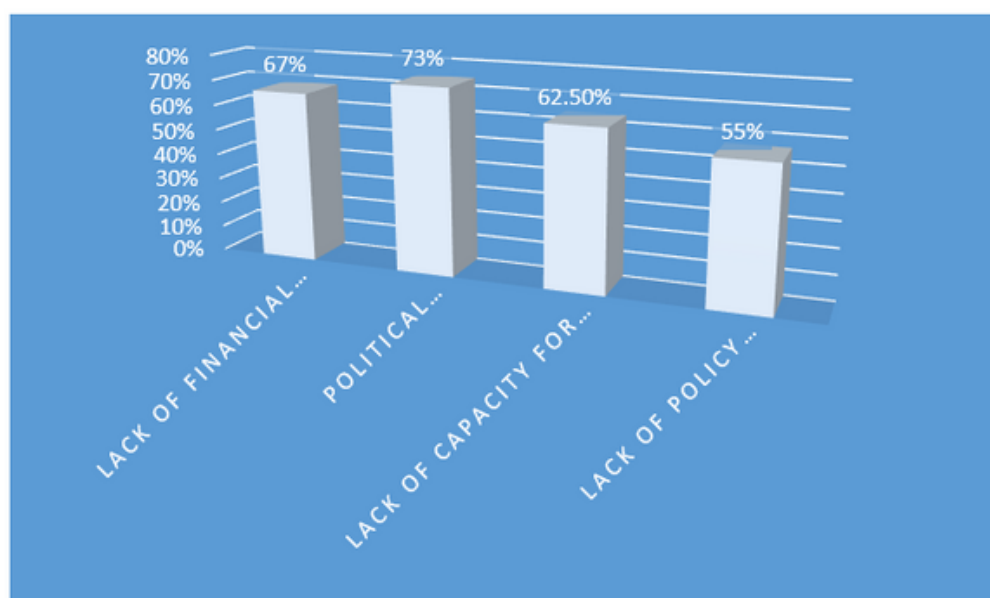
**FIGURE 22: IMPACT OF CIVIL SOCIETY ON PROMOTING BUDGET TRANSPARENCY**



Civil society has a myriad of roles in the budgeting cycle. Key informants identified six areas. By engaging in the budget process from formulation through implementation and audit, civil society can:

- contribute critical information on the public's needs and priorities that can lead to stronger policy choices;
- draw more people into the debate by collecting, summarizing into easily understandable formats, and spreading budget information;
- train members of the public to understand and analyze government budgets themselves;
- supplement government's capacity to budget effectively by providing technical support;
- give an independent opinion on budget proposals and implementation;
- hold public officials accountable for using public resources efficiently and effectively to achieve desired outcomes; and
- develop important new allies in government, including program managers in government agencies, legislators, and auditors.

**FIGURE 23: CHALLENGES FACED BY CIVIL SOCIETY IN PROMOTING BUDGETING TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY**

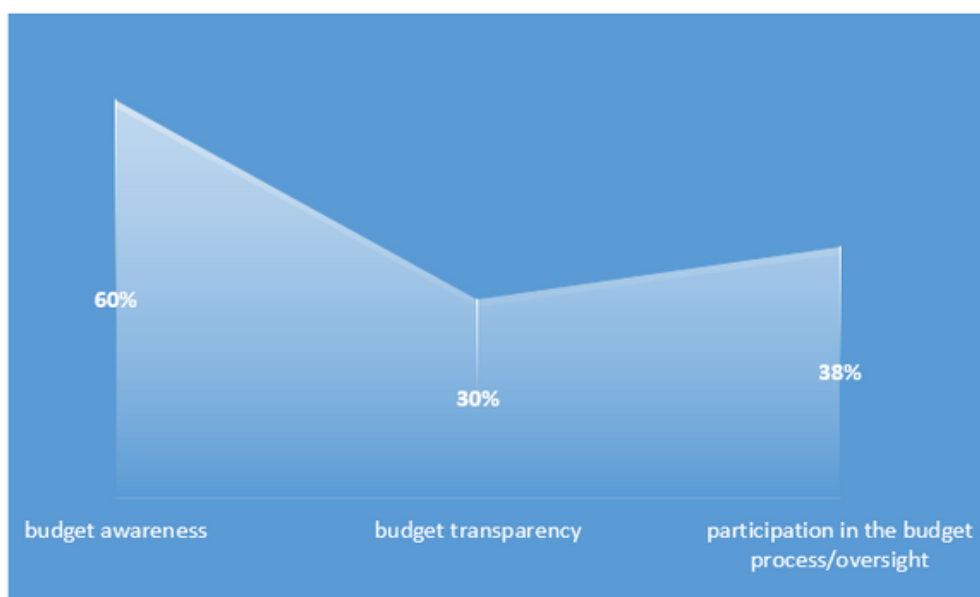


The survey shows that; civil society organisations are not immune from challenges. Lack of policy coordination was one of the weaknesses of civil society. It was rated 55% while lack of capacity for research and evidence-based lobbying and advocacy was rated 62.50%, political manipulation had 73% and lack of resources scored 67%. According to one key informant, the major challenge manifests when civil society organisations compete for resources and attention thereby causing policy discord and confusion. There is a need for civil society organisations and residence associations to obliterate the silo approach and ensure that there is smooth interaction and exchange of ideas.

Although there is a myriad of ways in which CSOs can engage in budget work, key informant interviews identified three categories:

- budget awareness: improved understanding of budget data for policy-makers, citizens and other CSOs
- budget transparency: independent scrutiny, dissemination and improved access to government data
- participation in the budget process/oversight: improved civic and legislative engagement and oversight of budget policies.

**FIGURE 24: ASSESSED COMPETENCES OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE BUDGET CYCLE**



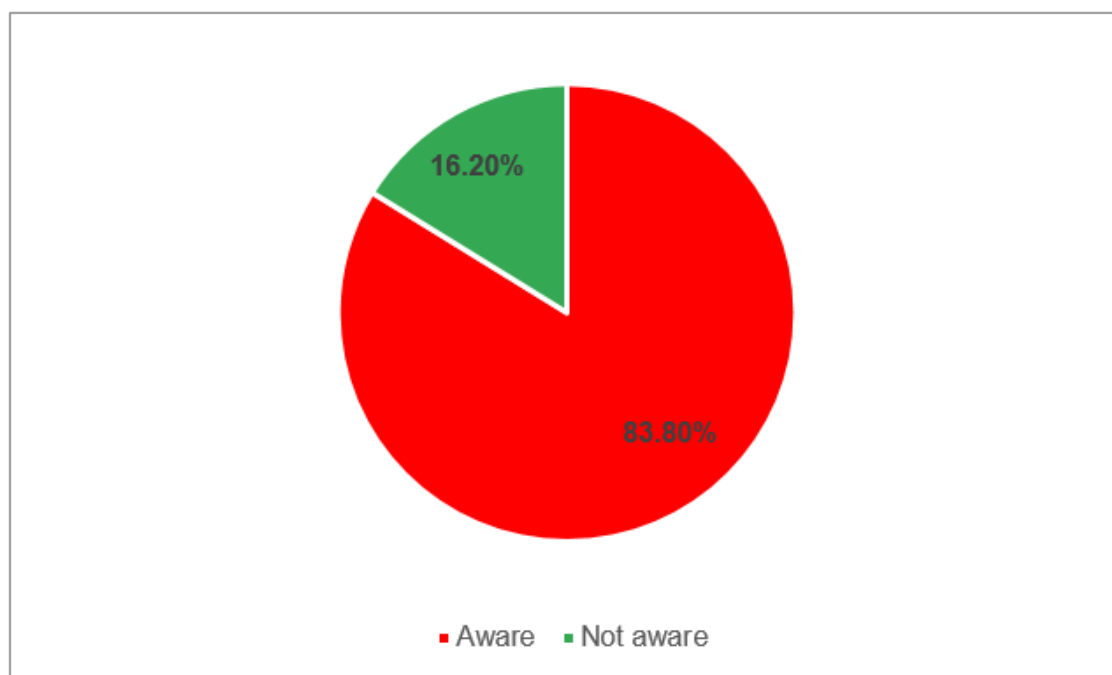
Members of the academia interviewed viewed that civil society participation in fiscal policy issues is broadly desirable as it compels elected officials to be more accountable with public revenues and also to ensure better execution of government projects. However, officials from councils, arguing on the basis of their experience of the participation of civil society organisations in demanding fiscal transparency submitted that civic engagement in public policy issues may also be problematic since in some cases civil society organisations may be captured by a dominant or vocal elite who may not represent the interests of the broader population. To the extent that civil society participation in the budget process is desirable, key informants argued that their effective participation requires improved technical capacity on relevant economic concepts.

## 6. CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN THE POST-BUDGETING PROCESS

### 6.1 PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROCESSES OF AUDITING PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

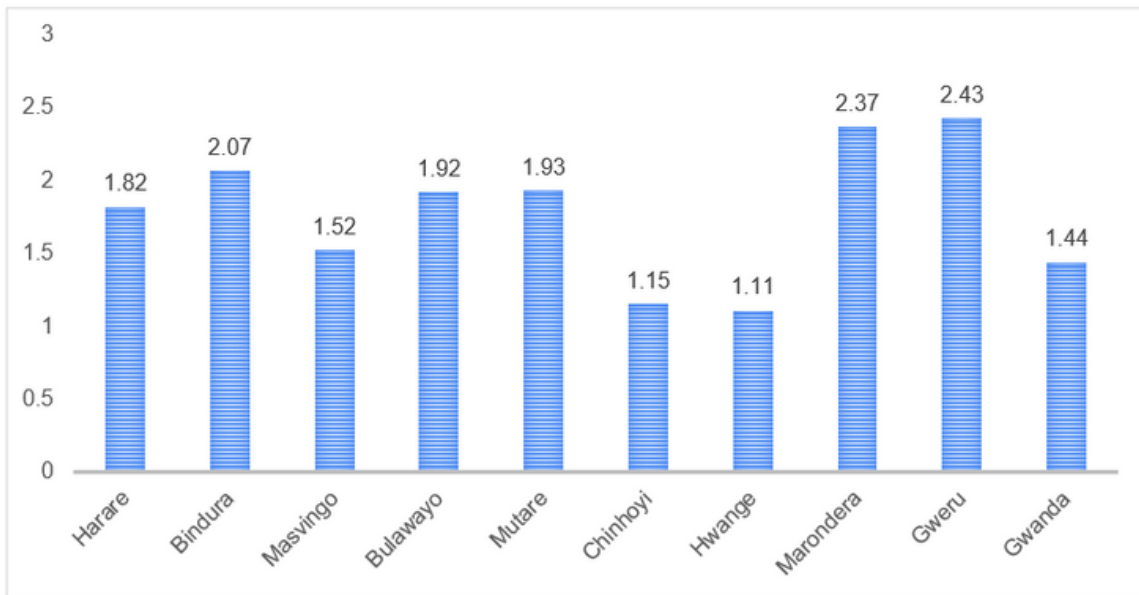
For increased fiscal transparency, Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) like Zimbabwe's Office of Auditor General (OAG) must be afforded maximum statutory independence from the Executive as well as unlimited access to relevant information, adequate resources to fulfill their audit functions and publicly report on the use of taxpayers' money. The OAG derives its powers from Section 309 of the Constitution of 2013 which allows the Auditor-General to audit all the accounts, financial systems, and financial management of all departments, institutions, and agencies of government, all provincial and metropolitan councils and all local authorities. The audit reports from the OAG serve as an essential public expenditure document that tracks government expenses. As such, it is an indispensable tool that is utilized in ensuring optimum public finance management. Also, the OAG reports serve as an evaluation tool for internal control mechanisms within the public sector. Despite all this, the survey results show that 83.8% of respondents lacked knowledge of processes undertaken in auditing public institutions.

**FIGURE 25: AWARENESS OF PUBLIC AUDITING PROCESS**



According to ZIMCODD (2022), audit procedures protect budget appropriated funds from abuse, misuse, waste and diversion into private hands. As such OAG reports are crucial in improving the effectiveness of organizational processes and the protection of organizational assets on the condition that the OAG is afforded independence in tandem with governing globally accepted audit standards for public institutions.

**FIGURE 26: DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE AUDIT PROCESS BY LOCAL AUTHORITY**

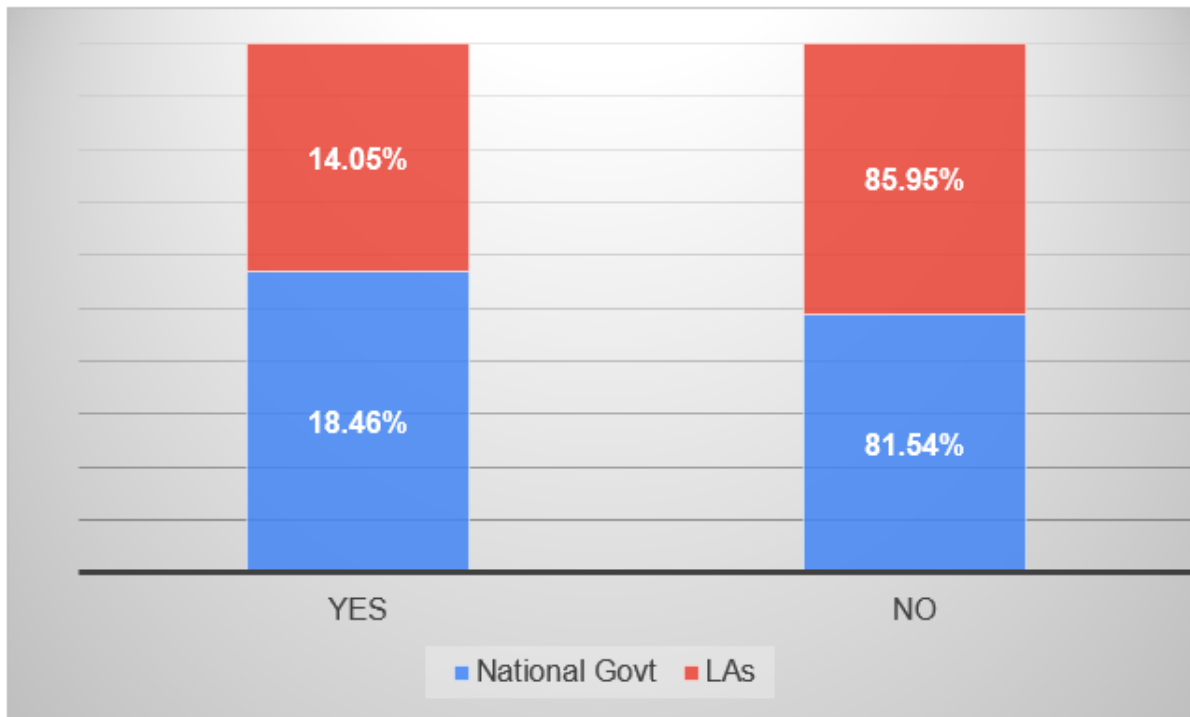


The responses from key informant interviews highlighted that publishing of OAG audit reports on Local Authorities, though not timely in some cases, is unearthing gross irregularities and in the process, helps increase public awareness of audit processes in their local authority. However, a member of the Civil Society indicated that the OAG reports are not being taken seriously as there are no consequences to those who are caught violating the laws. As such, the majority of local authorities are not implementing the recommendations given by the Auditor-General. A report by ZIMCODD (2021) shows that more than 50% of 2019 OAG recommendations on LAs were yet to be implemented while 23% were partially implemented.

## 6.2 ACCESS TO AUDITED FINANCIAL REPORTS

Generally, auditing public institutions is critical as it helps in identifying PFM red flags such as noncompliance to compliance with all laws, and regulations governing financial matters, governing financial, administration and management. It also helps unearth unfair representation and the presence of significant misstatements in financial statements while assisting Parliament to hold to account and call to account all persons entrusted with the management of public funds and resources. As such, continuous auditing prevents and deters fraud and corruption, wastage and abuse of public resources. The survey found that 18.46% (10.24% male and 8.22% female) and 14.05% (9.19% male and 4.86% female) of respondents had accessed audit reports for national and local governments respectively. Resultantly, 81.54% (32.02% male and 49.52% female) and 85.95% (41% male and 44.95% female) had not accessed audit reports for the national and local governments respectively. While the results show slight improvements from the ZIMCODD 2021 OBS report, the majority of Zimbabweans are not participating in the budget process.

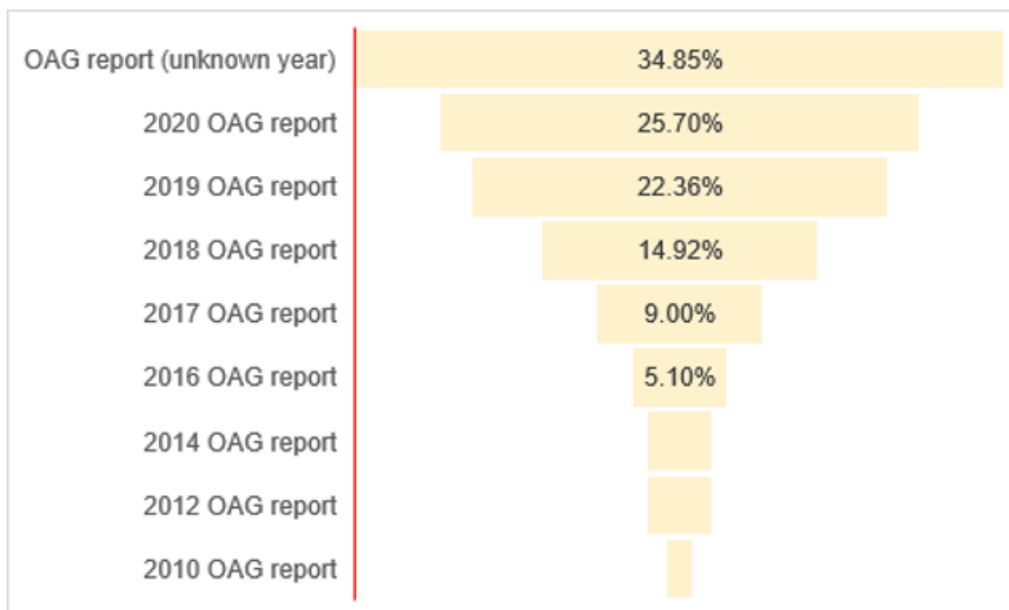
**FIGURE 27: PUBLIC ACCESS TO AUDIT REPORTS**



Granular analysis of the primary data further shows that it is the relatively young population that has accessed financial audit reports. About 16.28% (9.13% men and 7.15% female) of the age group 25-54 have accessed these financial reports compared to only 4.22% of the old age group. This is attributable to the fact that the young generation is technology savvy and thus compatible with all forms of electronic distribution of information.

In a bid to understand if there are improvements in accessing audit reports by the general public, the respondents were asked if they had access to any audit report in the previous years and the results are displayed in figure 28.

**FIGURE 28: DETAILS OF THE AUDIT REPORT ACCESSED**

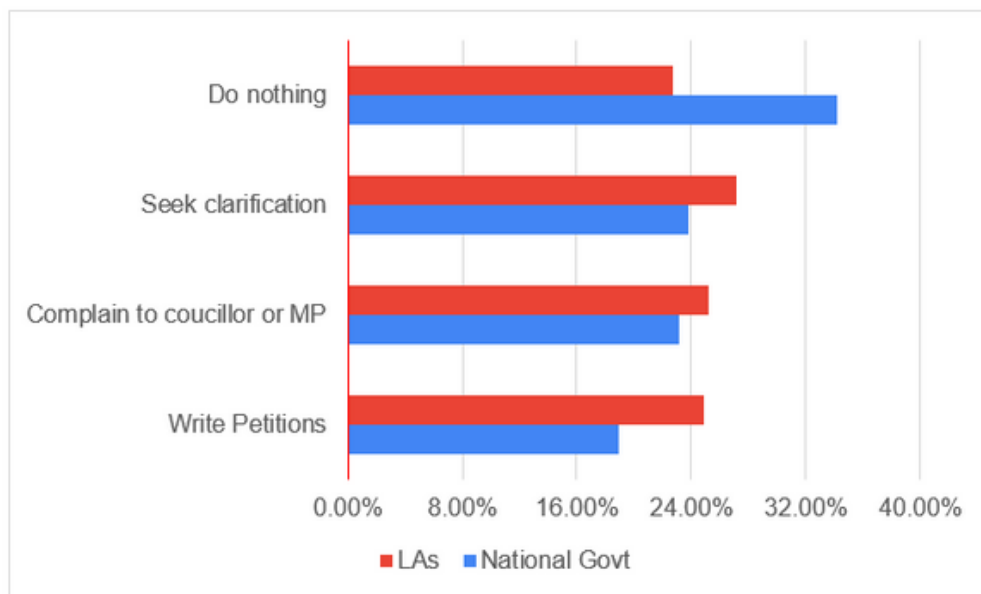




Although local authorities are doing little in disseminating audit reports in the public domain, the survey findings established a positive trend in the number of the public accessing audit reports between 2010 and 2020. A local councillor attributed the rising trend to the work being undertaken by civil society organizations in conscientizing the public on all PFM issues in Zimbabwe. The councillor registered concern about the pending Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) Bill which seeks to shrink the civic space by deliberately trying to censor CSOs. According to this Bill, all CSOs will be required to re-register, disclose their source of funding as well as submit their monthly work plans to a government minister who may in turn weaponise this legislation to silence critics of the ruling government. If the Bill becomes law, the gains accrued from civic education and increased participation will be lost. These include:

- Public policy improvement:- academics, NGOs, etc provide informed advice.
- Legitimation: appealing for public acceptance in policy-making procedures and outcomes increases policy durability.
- Persuasion – convincing skeptics and critics of the government’s intentions is essential.
- Co-optation – subduing public criticism by recruiting potential critics in the policy-making process.
- Assessment of domestic public opinion – allows the government to evaluate what citizens want, expect, or will tolerate in public policy.
- Relationship building – creating and institutionalizing a routine of consultation between the government and its agencies and interested public.

**FIGURE 29: ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE PUBLIC IN RESPONSE TO THE ADVERSE AUDIT OPINION**



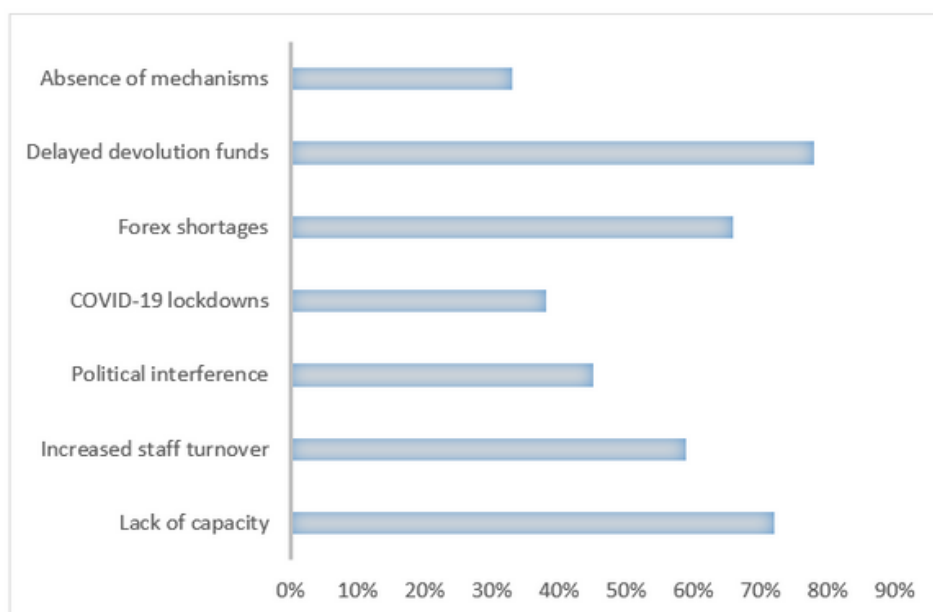
The survey also assessed the actions that are taken by the public after the government MDAs and their LAs receive adverse audit opinions. The data shows more actions being undertaken by the public at the local level than at the national level. This is in line with the proximity of locals to their local leaders and it is these local authorities that have mandates that affect the day-to-day lives of citizens. The results from the survey in respective order for national and local government showed that: 23.11% and 25.23% have raised complaints, 18.92% and 24.83% have written petitions, 23.80% and 27.18% have sought clarification while 34% and 22.76% have done nothing.

## 6.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2019 OAG report shows that only 24% of 356 recommendations made on local authorities in 2018 were fully implemented, 25% partly implemented whilst 49% were yet to be implemented. In the previous year (2017), the OAG reported that 56% of the recommendations were not implemented while a paltry 25% were fully implemented. Another independent study carried out by ZIMCODD in 2021 found that LAs in Manicaland, Midlands, Masvingo and Matabeleland Provinces had failed to fully implement 45%, 67%, 19%, and 37% of the 2019 OAG recommendations respectively. ZIMCODD 2022 OBS survey respondents indicated some of the challenges being experienced by authorities in implementing these recommendations in Zimbabwe:

- Increased staff turnover due to poor remuneration.
- Political interference and corruption.
- COVID-19 induced lockdowns.
- Poor access to foreign currency as the local currency is depreciating.
- Weak tracking, monitoring, and evaluation system especially looking at the oversight role of the council.
- Delayed disbursement of Devolution Funds to cover financing gaps.
- Lack of capacity.
- Absence of mechanisms for enforcing compliance with their audit findings.

**FIGURE 30: CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS**



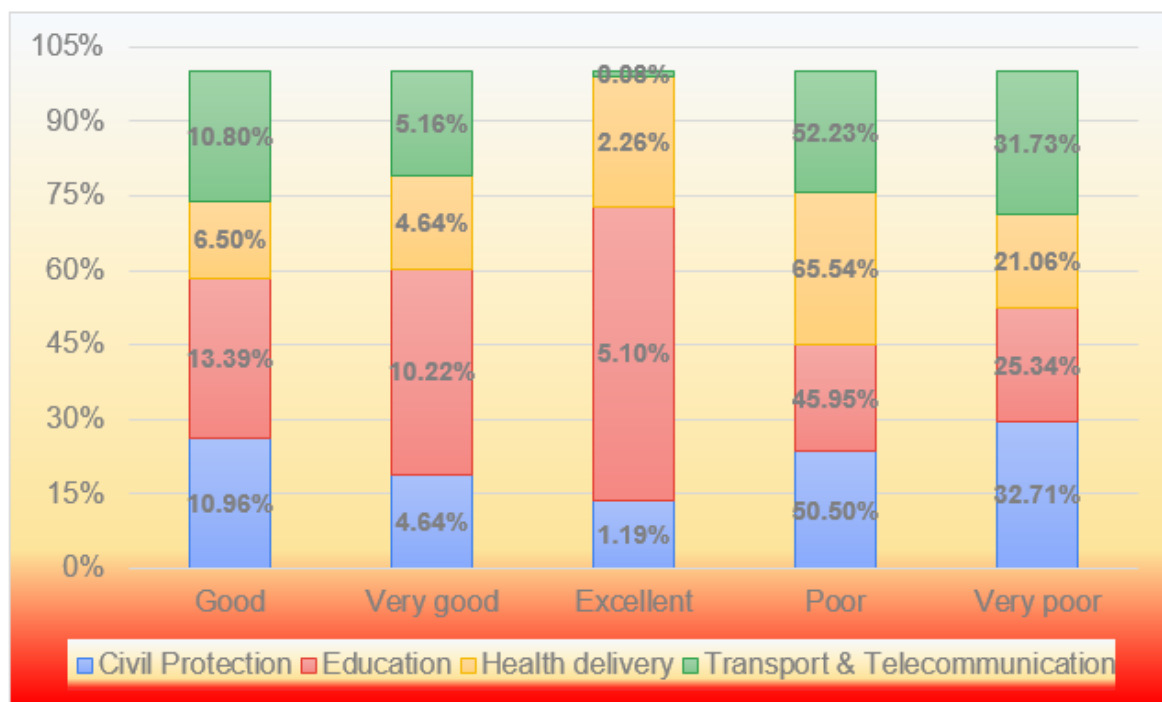
An analysis of the interview responses from government officials, local authorities and members of the civil society shows that delayed disbursements of devolution funds, lack of capacity, forex shortages, increased staff turnover, and political interference respectively are the major barriers to the implementation of audit recommendations.

## 6.4 RATING OF GOVERNMENT SERVICE DELIVERY

### 6.4.1 CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

To ensure comparability of findings, the same metrics used in ZIMCODD 2021 OBS were used to rate central government service delivery. These are civil protection, transport and communication, education, and health delivery.

**FIGURE 31: RATING OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES**



The survey established that service delivery from the government is largely poor: civil protection (50.5%), education (45.95%), health care (65.54%), and transport and telecommunications (52.23%). Interviews revealed that service delivery has deteriorated significantly owing to increased local currency depreciation and skyrocketing inflation. The IMF (2022) pointed out that because of macroeconomic volatility, about 40% of the total population is faced with food insecurity while the World Bank (2022) estimated that about 60% of the total population is wallowing in abject poverty. Global food prices have substantially increased in 2022 driven by the Russia-Ukraine war, a war that is disrupting international trade and cooperation and disproportionately affecting perennial importers like Zimbabwe through elevated imported inflation. According to a monthly economic report released by ZIMCODD in July 2022, the food situation has been exacerbated by a poor 2021/22 cropping season where the nation has realized a 44% dip in staple maize production. While authorities have suspended import duty on basics to ease obtaining food shortages, the imported goods are sold in foreign currency yet the majority of citizens, particularly civil servants, are earning in fragile local currency.

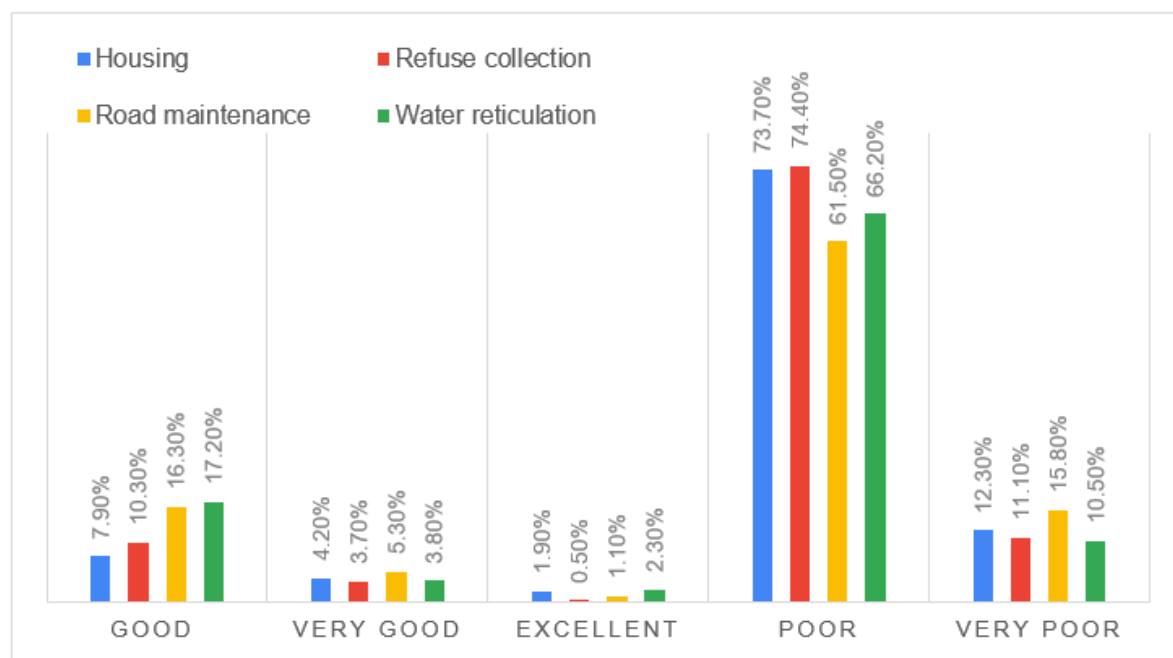
The Russia-Ukraine war has also affected global crude oil prices. This in turn affected net importers like Zimbabwe who are price takers. Consequently, high fuel pump prices led to increased transportation costs for the commuting public. With the government enjoying a near monopoly in the mass transit sector despite a poor railway connection and limited bus fleet, the public was hit with transport mayhem, spending long hours in queues. The public transport parastatal, ZUPCO, kept increasing its fares in line with rising fuel prices thus stretching household budgets.

Also, public health and education delivery massively deteriorated in 2022. With Treasury 2022 budget allocation to public health and education falling short of international benchmarks, ZWL depreciation has significantly wiped real value of the ZWL963.3 billion budget as the official exchange rate had plunged from ZWL108.67 per US dollar in December 2021 when the budget was approved to ZWL546.83 per US dollar as of the end of August 2022. A ZWL929 billion supplementary budget requested in July 2022 awarded civil servants a 100% salary increase but their salaries remained way below the poverty datum line. As such, worker morale of public health professionals and teaching staff has reached new lows thus affecting service delivery as skilled personnel migrate abroad in search of greener pastures.

### 6.4.2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

As for LAs, service delivery was rated in terms of housing, water reticulation, refuse collection, and road maintenance. The survey findings are depicted in figure 32.

**FIGURE 32: RATING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES**



Interviews with informants as well as a literature review show a significant decline in service delivery by LAs. The four (4) selected types of services were all rated poor: housing (73.7%), refuse collection (74.4%), water reticulation (66.2%), and road maintenance (61.5%). Again, this was largely attributed to the currency crisis experienced between January and August 2022 as Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) statistics show the local currency (ZWL) shedding at least 79% of its value. This, coupled with upscaling inflation which increased from 60.74% in December 2021 to 285% in August 2022 wiped the real value of the council budget. Also, market volatility has reduced LAs' revenue collection from rates and lease incomes. With LAs barred from charging key services partly in forex despite importing some key inputs like water chemicals, service provision deteriorated. An informant residing in Budiro Suburbs in Harare revealed that residents have gone for months without clean running tap water. Also, engagement with city fathers highlighted that acute forex shortages in a country with a fully dollarized fuel sector constrained their ability to frequently collect refuse. The transfer of road works from Councils to ZINARA crippled the ability of LAs to maintain local roads as ZINARA is failing to remit funds to facilitate the same.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2022 OBS explored the extent of public participation in the budgeting processes at both national and local government levels. Assessing the openness and inclusivity of the local government budgeting process is the distinctive component of the ZIMCodd OBS. This is particularly important given a trajectory towards devolution which broadens the scope of local government autonomy and functions. Developing systems and standards for sustainable PFM at the local level is thus fundamental. The study reveals that Zimbabwe has made significant strides in creating spaces for public participation in the budget processes. However, a key deficit remains on the quality of such public spaces to offer a genuine opportunity for the citizens to productively input into the budget making process. Thus, from a quantitative viewpoint attendance may be progressive but the quality of the input of the citizens and the extent to which such input is included in the final budget is a more important area. The study proffers an array of recommendations, inter alia, budget and financial management literacy training targeting RAs and selected residents, strengthening oversight institutions and introducing heavy penalties for violating PFM legislation through acts such as failure to produce financial statements.

### 7.1 NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

- Reform and compliance with laws – there is need for urgent legal reforms to safeguard public finances in Zimbabwe. The Public Finance Management Act and the Audit Office Act which form the main statutes governing public finance management in Zimbabwe need systematic review to ensure that the statutes reflect best practices in PFM. The Debt Management Act should also be reviewed to ensure that both the domestic and external debt ceilings become clear and specific.
- Devolve national budget consultation to provincial councils to ensure robust national budget consultation and a wider reach to citizens in the provinces.
- The presentation of the OAG report should be widely covered by the media and televised in the same manner the national budget is presented and publicized. This will elicit more public interest in the report while also promoting transparency and accountability.

#### 7.1.1 PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

- The parliament must assert its authority in the financial management of all public entities in the public sector.
- The cardinal principles of PFM enunciated in section 298 of the constitution have remained unaligned with the Public Finance Management Act. The Parliament of Zimbabwe must ensure that the two legislations are aligned.
- Align the PFM Act with the constitution to entrench best practices for open and inclusive budgets, plugging loopholes and resource leakages and enforcing mechanisms for the implementation of Office of the Auditor General's recommendations.
- The pre-budget public hearings/ budget consultative meetings have not been well organized as illustrated by poor citizen attendance. It is therefore recommended that these public hearings should be preceded by massive publicity and budget literacy campaigns in the areas that will be visited by portfolio committees.
- The parliament should partner with civil society groups to promote increased awareness, increased attendance and improved quality of submissions by citizens.

- On budget monitoring, the Quarterly budget performance reporting guidelines adopted by the parliament to guide ministries when reporting to parliament is good as it allows availability of detailed and credible information used by committees to monitor budget implementation. However, the rate of compliance to the guidelines by ministries is very low while the portfolio committees have also not made maximum use of the reports submitted to them as they are incapacitated. It is therefore recommended that the Parliament Budget Office plays a central role in assisting portfolio committees to enforce compliance.
- To enhance budget monitoring and oversight capacity of the parliament, it is recommended that the staff complement in the Parliament Budget Office be significantly increased by taking a leaf from other countries such as South Africa, Kenya and Uganda where budget offices have over 15 specialists. This is in line with section 299 of the Constitution which states that the Parliament must provide oversight on state revenues and expenditures at all levels of government.
- In terms of budget approval, the two-week period given to parliament portfolio committees to scrutinize the budget and prepare reports for presentation in the house following the presentation of the National Budget by the Minister of Finance is inadequate. In accordance with good practices, four weeks should be given to committees to debate the budget after its presentation. Furthermore, the regulations/standing orders must facilitate amendment of the budget by the parliament allowing it to reduce or increase the proposed budget.
- On the audit stage of the budget
- Rather than waiting to comment and act on the Auditor General's Report, the Parliament should be innovative and proactive in its oversight role on the public expenditure tracking given also the background that the Auditor's report is historical and not futuristic.
- CSOs play a watchdog role of monitoring budget formulation, disbursements of funds and budget implementation.

### **7.1.2 MINISTRY OF FINANCE**

- Citizen budget and economic literacy must be prioritized and should precede the pre-budget public hearings in the spirit of leaving no-one and no place behind.
- The government should ensure that corruption-related findings are immediately brought to the attention of anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies.
- A political will to deal with all corruption offences reported by the OAG increases transparency and induces confidence in the general public in the government's practical actions to weed out corruption.
- The cardinal principles of PFM enunciated in section 298 of the constitution have remained unaligned with the Public Finance Management Act. The Parliament of Zimbabwe must ensure that the two legislations are aligned.
- Financial and other resources play an important role in enabling and sustaining participation in the budget process. The government through the Ministry of Finance should ring-fence a certain percentage of the budget to design and implement an inclusive participatory budgeting process.
- The Ministry of Finance should engage local authorities and residents' associations in dissemination of the Budget Strategy Paper as well as other critical updates and help explain the main thrust of the budget to enrich residents' participation process.

### **7.1.3 AUDITOR GENERAL**

- The government should ensure that corruption-related findings by the Auditor General are immediately brought to the attention of anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies.
- A political will to deal with all corruption offences reported by the OAG increases transparency and induces citizen confidence in their government as the government endeavours to weed out corruption.
- Parliamentarians need to be capacitated to interrogate OAG reports and to track progress in the implementation of OAG recommendations by all public entities. This is critical for timely interventions on identified PFM red flags.
- Capacity building is also required by management and staff at the local authority level to adequately prepare local authorities for full compliance with OAG recommendations.

### **7.1.4 CIVIL SOCIETY**

- There is need for structured capacity building interventions to improve the capability of councils to monitor the budget cycle
- Civil Society organisations should harmonise their work to infuse policy coordination and cooperation among themselves. This will go a long way in obliterating policy discord.
- There is a need to do away with silo-approach and ensure that there is greater interoperability of RAs operating within the same jurisdiction.
- There is a need for civil society organisations and residents' associations to find main streams of funding so as to keep their work going.
- Periodic research and evidence gathering training must be conducted for skills transfer. This is because research and evidence gathering is the epitome of sound policy lobbying and advocacy.

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