



# **Democratic Governance and Citizen Participation: The Role of the Media in Ghana's Budget Preparation Process**

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***Disclaimer:***

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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## List of Acronyms

ACDEG	African Charter on Democracy, Election and Governance
AGI	Association of Ghana Industries
CEPS	Customs, Excise and Preventive Services
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EC	Electoral Commission
FOI	Freedom of Information
GoG	Government of Ghana
GJA	Ghana Journalist Association
IBP	International Budget Partnership
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
ISD	Information Services Department
ISODEC	Integrated Social Development Center
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDBS	Multi-Donor Budget Support
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoFEP	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MMDAs	Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies
MP	Member of Parliament
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NCA	National Communications Authority
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NMC	National Media Commission
NPP	New Patriotic Party
OBI	Open Budget Index
OBS	Open Budget Survey
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
O&OP	Opportunities and Obstacles to Development
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PEF	Private Enterprise Foundation
PNDC	Provisional National Defense Council
ROI	Right to Information
SSA	Sub-Saharan African
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation



## **Abstract**

In the last decades, processes of democratisation in Sub-Saharan African countries have put great pressure on governments to create a system of checks and balances. Beyond free and fair elections, state accountability and citizen participation in decision-making have also emerged as key issues, especially regarding the allocation of national resources and priorities to be chosen. This study explores the potentials and limitations of the role of media in the process of democratisation in Ghana, with a close examination of the budget preparation process as a critical area of transparency and accountability for managing public resources. The study employed qualitative data through interviews with public officials, civil society and media representatives; as well as review of relevant journal articles, documents and reports on the research area.

The findings reveal that the media has had a positive impact on Ghana's democratisation as conduits of political education, watchdog of political and social accountability as well as information disseminator. Thus, activities of the media has increased and involved as many people in the country's democratic discourses. Nonetheless, findings further show that several factors such as economic survival can subject the media to political manipulation. In consequence, the media rather works to shield corrupt government officials instead of exposing them - a situation that could undermine freedom of expression. In spite of this, the study argues that the budget process presents an opportunity for the media to extend its discussions on politics to include finance thereby strengthen its watchdog functions. As the findings show, presently, not all budget information is made available to the public. Additionally, three key budget documents; Pre-Budget Statement, Citizens' Budget and the Year-End Report which are vital for participation is not produced by the government. Even more, participation is rather encouraged after the budget has been read through public education campaigns.

Generally, the lack of transparency in budget processes results from unwillingness of government to provide the public with budget information. In the case of Ghana, the budget process excludes the larger public, there is limited budget information or non-availability, may provide some explanation. Given that, (i) information is intrinsic to transparency, accountability and participation; (ii) citizens may not understand the budget; and (iii) the media remains a medium through which people are able to exercise their voice; the findings suggest the involvement of the media in the budget process could lead to the improvement in the budget process. Further, among the media types, radio could be effectively used in ways that promotes transparency, accountability and participation in the budget.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

In current debates on development, democratisation is regarded as one of the key drivers of poverty reduction strategies. Right, Freedom and choice are regarded as essential components of a socially inclusive and democratic state. In this regard, transparent budget process can help to reveal structure of power and privileges hidden in such processes but with exclusionary impacts, and

thereby can open a new social space for the articulation of voices of the poor and foster their active participation in development.

**Keywords**

Democracy, Democratisation, budget transparency, transparency, accountability, participation, budget information, media, Ghana.

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

In the last decades, debates on ‘democratization’ have revisited the concept of democracy, defined along the classic Greek words ‘*demos*’ (people) and ‘*kratos*’ (rule), meaning ‘rule by the people’ (Heywood, 2007:72), and Beetham’s notion of ‘a mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control and the most democratic arrangement to be that all members of the collective enjoy effective equal rights to take part in such decisions directly...’ (1993:55). The aim is to find the right balance between democracy as the rule of law and the building of democratic institutions to include citizens’ freedom of expression and association, and right to participate in decision-making and protection of arbitrary abuse by the state. Therefore, the outcome of democratisation is seen as a social environment that guarantees political and civil liberties and ensures the quality of democracy as expressed through the institutional features mentioned above.

Democratisation on the Africa continent has taken off for more than a decade, but remains restricted to participation in free and fair elections; under the guise of democracy, free and fair elections have also become a legitimate mechanism for political leaders to retain power (Lise et al 2007, Imam, 1992; Jotia, 2012). By contrast, in development discourses, the issue of citizen participation has become central to development agencies and civil societies who are finding participatory approaches to the long-standing top-down approaches which have not yield much result for the people (Yetano et al, 2010). The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) recognises the importance of citizens’ participation and share the view that citizen participation promotes transparency and accountability; encourage openness in government; foster ownership and trust between government and citizens. Accordingly, Article 2(10) and Article 3(10) of the African Charter require African governments ‘*to promote the establishment of necessary conditions that would facilitate citizen participation...*’ and further “*ensure effective participation of citizens in democratic and development processes...*’

In as much as there are debates on citizen participation in democratic discourses, one school of thought opines that, participation should be limited to political participation. Therefore, once citizens have elected their leaders, the rest of governing is the leaders’ decision and not citizens; hence leaders should act and citizens react (Michels, 2006:323). Also massive participation of people could lead to political activity at the local level (ibid) as a result, it is better to minimise the role of citizens in a democracy. Another school of thought built on Sen’s capability approach, emphasizes the importance of substantive freedoms which requires removal of restrictions on participation but rather promotion of freedoms that help to build capacity of people to effectively participate in decisions that are collective binding and affecting individual livelihoods. In this view, citizen participation is regarded as an essential feature of democracy and good governance (Michels, 2006:323; Sen, 1999:4). But, in the case of SSA countries, elections remain the only form of participation; thus participation in social and economic discourse is somewhat minimal.

As a result, the media in Africa have emerged as an important and necessary actor in the process of democratisation – that is a medium between the government and its citizens as well as among citizens themselves. Tettey (2006) and Hydén et

al. (2002) have extensively catalogued the role of the media in the first and second wave of democratisation, noting that they have increased the levels and opportunities for people to participate in democratic discourse. More so, in the absence of laws on Right to Information, the media remains the alternative source through which citizens access government information and also exercise their right to freedom of expression. Politically, the media have contributed to political education, played watchdog functions to make the state account for its action or inaction and has allowed for the inclusion of society in democratic discourses.

Ghana is an interesting case of democratisation for several reasons. It was the first Sub-Saharan Africa country to obtain independence in 1957. Politics in Ghana have experienced a mix of authoritarian and notional democratic rule with three periods of elected government and three military rules respectively between 1957 and 1992 (Arthur 2010:207). It transitioned to democracy in 1992. The first phase of the transition involved the work of the National Commission for Democracy, the Committee of Experts and the Consultative Assembly, whilst the second involved the drafting of election rules, campaign and voting procedures respectively (Oquaye, 1995:567). Since then six sets of presidential and parliamentary elections have been successfully held (1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012). The country's political stability after these successful elections is observed to be rare among new African democracies (Gyimah-Boadi, 2009:138) as such it is categorised as one of the consolidating democracies with countries such as South Africa and Botswana (Lise et al, 2007). The most important of all these elections is that of the 2000 general elections where the National Democratic Congress (NDC<sup>1</sup>) peacefully transferred power to the main opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) which won the presidential elections and exactly half of parliamentary seats.

Regarding participation; the 1992 Constitution provides the institutional basis for participation through election of a President and Members of Parliament (Article 42). Just like other SSA countries, elections are the main form of participation for Ghanaians. Nevertheless, the country has tried to introduce participatory approaches into decision-making processes. For instance in 2001 and 2005, a *'Peoples' Assembly'* and *'The New Budgetary Approach'* was separately introduced to encourage citizens' participation in the budget and also for citizens' to have a direct interaction with the President and government officials (Afrimap et al, 2007:66)<sup>2</sup>. But these efforts tend not to last due to several factors including but not limited to non-institutionalisation and patronage. It is therefore assumed that due to limited opportunities for participation and interaction between government officials and the citizens', political accountability suffers. For example, it is a common observation in Ghana that MPs disappear after they have been voted into office only to resurface when it is time for another election. At the constituent level, Ghanaians are hardly consulted on legislative matters; MPs would prefer to concentrate on projects that would earn them political points and possible re-election into Parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> National Democratic Congress was formed from the Provisional National Defence Council had in power since 1981 till 2000 (military and democratic combined).

<sup>2</sup> These two initiatives were led by the New Patriotic Party when it was in power, (Afrimap et al, 2007:66).

To buttress this point a survey conducted by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in 2010 showed that majority of Ghanaians do not know their MPs<sup>3</sup>.

Citizens' participation in public decision-making processes, such as the budget is worthwhile studying because it does reflect the extent to which the government of Ghana is committed to the norms of democracy in its development process. According to the Open Budget Index provided by the International Budget Partnership, Ghana occupies a middle position on a scale between 0 and 100 in terms of transparency<sup>4</sup> indicating that the government do provide some budget information to the public. What is lacking is the opportunity for Ghanaian citizens to participate in the budget preparation process which is so far highly restricted within the executive. Furthermore, though the Constitution provides for all persons to have right to information<sup>5</sup>, at present, there is no law that details the content of right of information hence access to budget information or any other government information is constrained. As a consequence, the media remains a significant communication bridge between the Government and the citizenry in dissemination, interpretation of socio-economic policy and providing feedback to government through media discussions. Given that budgets are but one of the sources for misappropriation and corruption (Kpundeh, 1992:38) participation of the very people who are affected by budgetary outcomes is crucial in democratisation.

Against this background, this research explores the potentials and limitations of role of the media in Ghana's democratisation with close examination of the budget preparation process as critical areas for transparency, accountability and participation.

## 1.2 Objectives and Relevance of Research

The study seeks to contribute to existing literature on budget transparency in general and specifically to Ghana by showing that beneath results of the Open Budget Survey, the relevancy and comprehensives of the budget documents needs to be checked. Therefore, through critical discussions by the media; citizens and other interested stakeholders will be empowered to identify variations in what was intended to spend and actual spending. In addition, the study provides evidence that media can be shifted from being used as political tools to be development oriented, especially when the government has acknowledged the media as "partners for development".

The main objective of this research is to *examine the role of the media in Ghana's democratisation process and how that efforts could be extended to the budget preparation process to first of all increase citizen participation, and second bring about transparency and accountability. Specifically, the study sets out to:*

- Examine the media and its relationship with the state in democratisation.

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<sup>3</sup> For instance in Greater Accra Region, the national capital 27.5% were not aware who their MPs are.

<sup>4</sup> IBP, OBS Survey Results (2006-2012)

<sup>5</sup> Article 21(1) (f), 1992 Constitution

- Examine the processes involved in the budget preparation process; that is who the actors are, and what their roles are; and whether the process is participatory.
- Explore the budget process to identify roles the media could play in the process.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The main research question is *“What has been the role of the media in Ghana’s democratisation and in which ways its performance in the budgetary process may throw new lights on common understanding about democratisation?”*

The main question will be guided by the following sub-questions:

- What has been the relationship between democratisation and media in Ghana?
- What are the main steps in the budget preparation process; and how are citizens engaged?
- What is the role of the media in the budget process? What further role can it play to engage citizens in the process?

### 1.4 Research Methodology

This research is to a large extent qualitative; it seeks to examine, explore and understand the media and the budget preparation process. Primary data were collected through interviews to gain in-depth insights. Such interviews also provided the flexibility to explore other tangents (O’Leary, 2010:196). Interviews were conducted with officials from Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP), Parliament House, Integrated Social Development Center (ISODEC) and media organisations (one print and electronic media respectively) to gain some understanding into the budget preparation processes as well as involvement of citizenry and social actors<sup>6</sup>. Selection of respondents was not influenced in any way, because respondents were specifically assigned by their Heads of Departments to grant the interviews. In the case of Parliament, MoFEP suggested a specific officer for the interview. It suffices to mention that an introduction letter from ISS facilitated access to these organisations.

In all, ten interviews were conducted in formal settings to build some kind of trust with the interviewees and also to show that the research was mainly for academic purposes. Appointments were made through emails and phone calls with the respective officials assigned to grant the interviews. Interviews questions<sup>7</sup> were prepared before going to the field and therefore served as a guide. In some cases, these questions were made available before the appointed date and time to allow the interviewees/respondents to adequately prepare for it and where necessary make documents available. All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Notes were taken alongside the recording. Transcriptions were done by first of all listening in to the recorded interview and handwrite the notes. Second, the handwritten notes were typed. The transcribed notes were later grouped

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A: List of Interviewees

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B Interview Guide

into themes for instance: budget preparation activities, actors involved in the process among others. The grouping into themes helped in relating findings to research questions.

Secondary data included literature review of concepts used in the research, review of publications including journal articles on citizen participation and budget processes; the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana; Budget Guidelines for the Preparation of the 2014-2016 Budget; the 2008 Citizens guide to the budget as well as related documents from Open Budget Index (OBI).

## **1.5 Ethical Implications**

Permission was sought from interviewees to tape-record the interviews. In addition; an introductory letter from ISS was produced upon request. In some instances, I relied on rapport with some public officials to get access to official documents. After each interview, a thank-you note was sent to the interviewee through email.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations of Study**

Preparation of the national budgets consist of estimates from central government and local government institutions. The study specially looked at preparation of the national budget at the level of Ministries, Departments and Agencies. Therefore the findings also relates to the MDAs. Further, the media is a broad area; thus each of the media type has its own limitation and potentials. Due to timeframe, the study did not delve into the political economy of the media to draw out specific contributions of each media type say newspapers, radio or television. Therefore findings relating to the media should not be generalised for the different media types but may be considered a small part of a bigger picture which could provide useful insight for further research. Initially, the study had intended to interview a member of parliament but this was not made possible owing to administrative delays. Also, attempts to trace previous advertisements for public inputs into the budget process from MoFEP and a public library proved futile therefore the advertisement was limited to invitations for the 2014-2016 budget preparation. Another limitation was the inability to obtain a copy of the citizen assessment from the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC). The document would have confirmed results from the respondents.

## **1.7 Structure of the Paper**

Following the introductory chapter presented above, chapter 2 discusses the conceptual framework. Chapter three presents the media in Ghana. Chapter four provides a general overview of budget preparation process. Chapter five presents and discusses the role media could play in the budget process. The final chapter concludes the paper. Discussions in chapter three to five answer the research questions with respect to the budget preparation process and the media.

## **Chapter 2 Democratisation, Right to Information, Citizen Participation and the Budget: An Analytical Perspective**

This chapter discusses the concepts employed in this study and the relationships between them. It establishes that democratisation extends beyond elections to include right to information, freedom of expression, participation, transparency and accountability; the absence of which could lead to democratic deficits. It further establishes that in the absence of right to information the media remains a vital institution through which citizens can access their right to information and freedom of expression in democratic discourses. The chapter starts with a brief general analysis of democratisation in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. This is followed by discussions on right to information, transparency and accountability as elements of deliberative democracy. It is then followed by a discussion on the importance of budget transparency as a key component of democracy for which the active involvement of the media is required to create and build the necessary awareness. The final section discusses the concept of citizen participation.

### **2.1 Contextualizing Democratisation in Africa**

Theoretically, liberal democracy presupposes the exercise of unfettered freedoms whereby people could live their own aspirations in politics, economics, religion, culture, and indeed all facets of life (Imam, 1992:102). From an institutional perspective, much emphasis is placed on the meanings of democracy as the rule of law as well as respect for fundamental human rights - freedom of speech, assembly and association and the right to vote and be voted for (Zakaria, 1997:22; Imam, 1992:103). As such, discussions in public domains about democracy also tend to focus more on the aspect of “free and fair” elections and voting rights. Among the various models of democracy, political and democratic theorists suggest deliberative democracy as the ideal form of democracy since it seeks to provide opportunity for all stakeholders in a polity to come together and reason in finding solution to a public problem.

Deliberative democracy emphasises the need for discourse and debate that help to define the public interest (Heywood, 2007:80); therefore it entreats all deliberative participants to adhere to the rules of the game. This means that no matter how many people participates, who participate and where deliberation takes place, the process of reaching a decision can only be valued as democratic if such deliberations are guided by mutual respect and civility (Fishkin et al, 2005). From the views of liberal and deliberative theorists, they seem to suggest that participation in democracy is more than just voting in elections, rather, it covers every aspect of participation in political, economic and social decision-making and even extends to decision-making at the work place (Michels, 2006:325).

Democratisation in SSA has been restricted to free and fair election, characterised by the lifting of ban on multi-party and holding of competitive elections. Statistics show that 41 out of 47 SSA countries had undergone significant political reforms (Lise et al., 2007). Within that period there have been more than forty-five presidential elections; forty-two legislative elections; each involving more than one candidate and political parties, respectively (ibid). Despite the rapidness, political and civil liberties in some SSA are yet to be fully guaranteed (Zakaria, 1997:28)



since authoritarian regimes<sup>8</sup> have through elections retain power and continue to rule in their own “old ways”. The conduct of elections which is just one aspect of democratisation process remains the most popular form of participation as well as an indicator for democratic assessment at the expense of civil rights<sup>9</sup>.

Regarding democratic assessment, several scholars and institutions have developed a number of strategies such as categorical measure, scale measure, objective measure and hybrid measure (IDEA, 2008:6) to assess democracy. Notably, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) has developed an institutional framework that assesses democracy. The framework<sup>10</sup> combines a commitment to two key democratic principles, i.e. ‘*popular control*’ and ‘*political equality*’. These principles refer to the control citizens have over decision-makers and officer holders and the respect given to citizens in exercising their voice in decisions. These principles further use the following mediating values<sup>11</sup> ‘*participation*’, ‘*authorisation*’, ‘*representation*’, ‘*accountability*’, ‘*transparency*’, ‘*responsiveness*’ and ‘*solidarity*’ in assessing democracy. Similarly, Dahl (1988, cited in Arthur, 2010:205) suggests that ‘*political participation*’, ‘*freedom of expression*’, ‘*access to alternative sources of information*’, ‘*right to association*’, ‘*free and fair elections*’, and the existence of ‘*fundamental human rights*’ could also be employed for democracy assessment. Both frameworks seem to establish that democracy extends beyond the conduct of election; therefore its assessment should not be limited to same but expanded to include the elements mentioned above.

## 2.2 Right and Access to Information

Access to information and freedom of expression is considered as a basic requirement for the ultimate realisation of human rights guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>12</sup>. Freedom of Information (FoI) refers to the ‘right to access information held by public bodies’ (UNESCO). Though simply defined, it captures the fact that citizens have the basic right to know what their governments are doing, the right to be informed about decisions and perhaps the right to participate in such decisions. Within the African region, right to information is provided for in the African Charter of Human and People’s Right and the Declara-

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<sup>8</sup> As in the case of Jerry John Rawlings of Ghana (1992-2000) and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe (1987 to date)

<sup>9</sup> Experiences of Kenya, Liberia and Zimbabwe show that democracy could be measured by a number of important indicators such as freedom of speech, political stability and participation.

<sup>10</sup> The difference with the IDEA framework is that the responsibility of assessing democracy lies with citizens and others who reside in the country being assessed (IDEA, 2008:9)

<sup>11</sup> The Mediating values are the means through which the democratic principles of popular control and political equality can be realised.

<sup>12</sup> Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that “the fundamental rights of freedom of expression encompasses the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

tion of Principles of Freedom of Expression.<sup>13</sup> These provisions mandate African government to pass FoI laws.

In spite of these provisions, statistics show that only nine SSA countries have passed national FoI laws<sup>14</sup>, making access to government information expensive and time consuming. That is; either citizens' have to pay their way to get the information, make an official request for it or physically travel to get the information - if they live outside the administrative city. As a result citizens' tend to know little about what is going on in their society. The statistics paint a bleak picture of right to information as a fundamental right in Africa and to a large extent democracy. The result is that the media has become one of the many platforms they get to know what is going on, participate in political debates and also engage with their elected leaders and among themselves.

The media, according to McQuail (2005:83) is seen as 'a window on events and experiences' 'a mirror of events in society and the world', 'a filter or gatekeeper' 'a signpost, guide or interpreter', 'a forum or platform for the presentation of information and ideas' and 'as an interlocutor or informed partner in conversation'. In this view and broadly speaking, the media provides citizens with government information and also set the agenda for political debates. In sum citizens get to know their government through the eyes of the media. The media is generally categorised into print and electronic media. *Print media* refer to newspapers, magazines or books. *Electronic media* on the other hand, radio, television and internet (Heywood, 2002:202).

The history and development of the media in Africa is connected to the continent's political history as evidenced in the first and second waves of democratisation. Accordingly, Hydén et al. distinguish the contribution of the African media in these two waves. In the first wave, the media were mouthpieces and creators of a discursive realm which allowed for ongoing discussions of the nationalist cause. Newspapers, in particular, were used to organize and mobilize people for the nationalist cause (Hydén et al., 2002:32). Thus, through newspapers, nationalist leaders were able to expand its outreach programmes to individuals who would otherwise be excluded from the cause. For instance, colonial masters did not have any interest in the nationalist cause, but they got to know of the nationalist activities through newspaper reports. Given this, the media did not only help to institutionalize the democratic agenda by just communicating rights and duties of Africans but helped to produce an understanding among colonial rulers, the significance of the nationalist cause.

The second wave witnessed a more entrenched role of the media. Owing to failure of civil societies and non-governmental organizations to promote democracy, the media took up the task of promoting democracy on the continent (Hydén et al., 2002:41). Today, it is not surprising to see that the media have become conduits

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<sup>13</sup> According to UNESCO, the relevance of FOI has also being highlighted in the Brisbane Declaration on Freedom of Information: The Right to Know (2010); the Maputo Declaration on Fostering Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Empowerment of People (2008) and the Dakar Declaration on Media and Governance (2005). <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/freedom-of-expression/freedom-of-information/>

<sup>14</sup> The countries are Angola, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

of political education by which they educate citizens on voting rights. Aside this, the media has extended his role beyond this function to include investigation and watchdog through which it is able to monitor and expose acts of impropriety in state institutions and among public officials (Tettey, 2002:9). The second wave, in particular, brought about liberalization which has led to proliferation of newspapers and radio stations<sup>15</sup>. As the media landscape expands, the private media has emerged as the most significant avenues for democratic participation especially for those who felt excluded in the past (ibid).

With regard to the internet, it is emerging as a positive avenue for citizens' to communicate and express themselves on various social media. Compared to the other media types, the internet can empower ordinary citizens to have a more direct participation in their respective political systems and also access government information without intermediaries. But, this can only be realised when African governments make a commitment to; first, provide the infrastructure; second, address the literacy challenge among the people; third, implement laws that would protect users from cyber fraud; and probably the fourth, commitment of government to make information available online (Leslie, 2002). Development of the internet should be of concern to Africa governments now; because rapid changes in information technology is likely to shift the way governments are run in future. Rightly put by Ott (1997, cited by Leslie, 2002) electronic communication may in future provide a more direct democracy than what is being experienced now. As may be noted, world markets are moving towards globalisation as such interactions between markets; governments and other stakeholders may be made possible through electronic communication. This study believes that this could lead to a shift and possibly expand the debate on democracy and democratisation, thereby compel governments to review existing laws on information and human rights.

Though there is no doubt that the media is playing a critical role in Africa's democracy, it is important to note that limitations or potentials of the media may be shaped by the character of state-citizen relationship. This statement could be examined by looking at state-citizen relationship in pre and post independence. Thus, during the decolonization period, African leaders were able to communicate directly to the people on the nationalist cause without going through intermediaries. This fostered a dynamic and direct relationship between the state and the people. As a result, the media played a minimal role by mainly conveying, reporting and providing information on the nationalist cause but did not facilitate dialogue between citizens and the nationalist leaders (Hydén et al, 2002:35).

Conversely, in post-independence the potential of the media cannot be underestimated. The media's role has transcended beyond just an information disseminator to become a bridge between the government and all the different stakeholders in a polity. Though there is not enough data to support this, this study is of the view that this has come about as a result of a widened gap between politicians and citizens. Thus, politicians have become more engrossed with their political development; personal wellbeing and that of their associates. For citizens, perhaps due

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<sup>15</sup> Prior to the liberalization, a number of restrictions were imposed to gag freedom of expression and a free press; the sanctions includes criminal libel laws used by the state to protect state officials from media scrutiny, censorship, physical harassment of journalists, and sometimes seizing assets and vandalizing media houses. In Ghana, for instance, the Newspaper Licencing Law (PNDC 211) was employed by the PNDC government to silence a free press (Oquaye, 1995:565).

to the failure of the state to provide basic services to improve livelihoods; tend to focus on their daily survival thereby do not to follow government activities. The only time direct communication between politicians and the people could be observed is during electoral campaigns. In current times, if the government wants to get a message across to the people it is through the media; either by a press conference, public broadcast on national television or radio station.

## 2.3 Transparency

Transparency, according to Kaufmann et al. (2002:4) refers to the 'increased flow of timely and reliable economic, social and political information, which is accessible to all relevant stakeholders'. In this view, transparency is not just about giving any information but rather information that is relevant, informs and can be accessed by the public regardless of political coloration or social status. By that information citizens are empowered to hold their government accountable. From the viewpoint of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), transparency is a two-way communication between government and its social actors. Given this viewpoint, it can be understood that when governments are open, citizens will also feel obliged to open up to their governments, say, in tax declaration. This view is based on the understanding that when citizens do not know what their governments do with taxes collected, they are also not motivated to fully declare their taxes. Transparency if rightly implemented can provide an important guard against human right and financial abuses, mismanagement and corruption. Implementation here means that institutions are established to regularly monitor office holders and processes of public policies.

## 2.4 Accountability

Accountability is a broad concept which embraces many terms but not limited to surveillance, monitor, oversight, control, restraint, public exposure and punishment. Each of the term signifies measures that are employed as a check on office holders (Schedler, 1999:14). The concept can further be defined along the lines of Lassen as the 'degree to which the electorates can control the elected in a principal-agent relationship' (2000; 1) and Schedler's notion of *answerability* and *enforcement*. Answerability denotes that office holders have an obligation to inform, explain and justify their actions to electorates. Enforcement on the other hand refers to the capacity of state institutions to monitor and sanction office holders who have acted beyond their public duties (ibid).

Going by the principal-agent theory, answerability makes it mandatory for office holders to make information available through which principals (citizens) could determine whether the agents (office holders) have acted in good faith. Answerability only empowers citizens' to demand answers from office holders; citizens' cannot per se penalise officers if they fail to respond to the demands. This is where state institutions come in to apply enforcement. But suffice it to say that in most SSA countries including Ghana these state institutions are mostly headed by political appointees hence they hold allegiance to the government rather than the people. In the long run it undermines the very essence of monitoring and punishing officials who fall short of the law. In theory, Lassen's and Schedler's notions of accountability presents the ideal situation in a democracy, but as explained, in practice, office holders rather account to their fellow colleagues in Parliament or through committees. This form of accountability is referred to in literature as hori-

zontal accountability<sup>16</sup>. As a result, it becomes necessary for institutions independent of the government to monitor and hold it accountable. Thus, through social accountability, CSOs, NGOs and the media monitor political leaders and make them accountable for their actions. (Lise et al, 2007:7).

## 2.5 Why Does Budget Transparency Matter?

Budgets are the most single document used for national resources allocation; at the same time demonstrates government commitment to meet the needs of the citizenry. As such issues of equity, fairness in resource allocation to the various sectors and groups are matters for critical consideration. Research shows that budgets are but one source for corruption and patronage. Therefore, the less the public knows about it, the better it is to divert public resources (Kpundeh, 1992:38; Killick, 2005:3). But, in a situation where majority of people are affected by decisions arising from the budget; it becomes necessary to allow some participation so that decisions from the budget are at least informed by public opinion.

Budget transparency refers to the 'full disclosure of all relevant fiscal information in timely and systematic manner' (OECD, 2002). The Open Budget Project, (cited in Kaufmann et al, 2005:4) in turn, defines budget transparency as 'public access to budget information including publication of budget reports and efforts to facilitate public discussion and understanding of the budget'. Given this definition, it presupposes that availability of budget information form the basis for transparency, accountability and participation. .

Within the framework of budget transparency, the ideal situation is that a government consult, prepare, debate and agree on budget plans with various stakeholders before it is approved for implementation (Masud et al., 2011:64). Also, during and after implementation, government reports on actual spending. In contrast, statistics from the International Budget Partnership<sup>17</sup> (IBP) shows that majority of governments' do not make budget information available, citizens are not consulted, governments only report on budget spending when they feel like it. Even more budget processes around the world remains largely closed to the public.

For this reason, the need for openness in budgets has generated interest from international organisations like the International Monetary Fund and OECD as well civil societies notably the IBP since the early 1990s. The interest is to ensure that public resources are used in the best interest of society. Given that openness in budget is tied to aid; then it becomes a matter of concern for aid-dependant countries since they may likely face serious cuts in budgetary support in case of misman-

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<sup>16</sup> Vertical accountability enables citizens to hold office holders accountable for example in most SSA countries like Ghana, the most common form of accountability is electoral accountability where citizens vote out non-performing officials through periodic elections (Schedler, 1999:23).

<sup>17</sup> The International Budget Partnership (IBP) is a non-governmental organisation. It was established in 1997 to promote civil society engagement in budget process in order to make budget systems more transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs of people. IBP works with civil societies in low, middle and high income countries.

agement in public resources especially when there are methods<sup>18</sup> by which transparent budget processes could be assessed.

### 2.5.1 Assessing Budget Transparency: The Open Budget Survey

The Open Budget Survey (OBS) developed by the IBP is a biennial measure of budget transparency and accountability around the world (Masud et al, 2011:66). It comparatively assesses whether governments around the world provides budget information as well as opportunities for public participation in budget processes. The survey further uses the Open Budget Index (OBI) to measure the availability, timeliness and comprehensiveness of eight key budget documents<sup>19</sup>. The OBI is made up of 123 questions, 92 out of 123 are focused on budget related matters and the remaining 31 assess the strength and weakness of the legislature and supreme audit institutions<sup>20</sup> (ibid).

Results from the 2012 OBS reveal that the state of budget transparency around the world remains poor (IBP, 2012), with an average score of 43 out of 100. From available data, it is observed that up to 80% of the world's government fail to provide adequate information for the public. Out of 100 countries surveyed, only six countries (New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway and France) make extensive information available to the public; 17 countries provide substantial information; 37 provide some information; 15 provide minimal information and the remaining 26 provide scant or no information at all on their budget process to the public (IBP, 2012). An interesting observation is that the countries with lowest score of 0-20 include low-income earners like Zambia, Kyrgyz Republic and Cambodia and high-income earners like Saudi Arabia and China. This seems interesting because one would have thought that countries that are doing well economically would be more transparent with some of these processes, however the statistics shows otherwise.

Comparing the 2012 and 2010 rankings<sup>21</sup>, high income earning countries like China, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia continue to remain at the bottom. In an attempt to provide some explanation, available literature on budget transparency shows that countries that rely on natural resources are more likely to be less transparent because revenues from these sources do not go through the budget processes and scrutiny. Similarly patronage, absence of FoI laws and lack of public participation could add to the explanation for this phenomenon. The IBP statistics are alarming and points to the fact that there is need for government to be passionate with transparency in their budget process so that enough resources could be saved and used to meet the needs of the people especially the poor, the elderly, children and

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<sup>18</sup> The IMF in 1998 published a "Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency". These were later revised in 2001 and 2007, respectively. The OECD in 2002, published "Best Practices for Budget Transparency". The document recommend to government to publish seven key budget documents (De Renzio and Masud, 2011:609)

<sup>19</sup> These eight documents are used to assess whether a country budget process is transparent, accountable and participatory. See Appendix C.

<sup>20</sup> The criteria used for the survey is similar to those developed by the IMF, OECD and the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions thus making it a credible assessment.

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix D: 2010 and 2012 rankings.

the marginalised. It is in the spirit of this that developing countries like Brazil have initiated participatory budgeting<sup>22</sup> as one mechanism to engage as many people in their budget process.

## 2.6 Citizen Participation: contexts and meanings

Over the past decades the concept of participation has acquired a wide range of meanings from community participation (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999), citizen participation (Summers, 1987; Callahan, 2007), political participation (Crook and Manor, 1998) and Civic Engagement (Yetano et al, 2010). Aside that, it is also surrounded by contestations by the many meanings it carries; absence of a criterion to determine participation, as well as the terms and motives for participation. The quest for citizen participation has come about as a result of growing interest to find and adapt participative approaches to top-down approaches to policy making. It is believed that through participation, efficiency of public policies can be maximised, and public policies will also be informed by the voices of the people (Yetano et al., 2010:783; IDEA, 2008).

Arnstein (1969:216) defines citizen participation ‘as a categorical term for citizen power’; explaining that citizen participation is a form of redistributive power so that the “have-not” presently excluded from political and economic processes could be included in the future. By this definition, what it means is that citizen participation becomes a strategy to involve all citizens regardless of their political, social and economical status in public decisions as well as democratic processes with each person having equal rights.

As discussed in Chapter 1, some schools of thought argued that participation of citizens should be limited to politics leaving decision-making to elected officials. But in contrast to that, other political and democratic theorists also argued that participation is a value in itself, therefore it should not be limited to merely producing a government but should play an important role in producing and implementing laws that are acceptable to all (Rousseau, 1762; 1988, cited in Michels, 2006:326). As a value, it gives a sense of belonging to citizens in a community and thereby transcends citizenship from civil and legal to public citizens which includes participation in social, economic and civil circles (Michels, 2006:326).

Suffice it to say that Arnstein’s definition represents the ideal form of citizen participation in a deliberative democracy but in practice, participation is constrained by but not limited absence of right to information, selective participation, undefined purpose for participation and top-down approach to decision-making.

Different authors (Crook and Manor, 1998:7; Arnstein, 1969; Timney, 1995) have provided typologies of participation which explains the form of participation. The typology by Pretty (1995) illustrates these forms of participation.

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<sup>22</sup> Participatory budgeting refers to a “process in which a wide range of stakeholders debate, analyse, prioritize and monitor decisions about public expenditure and investments” (Langa and Jerome, 2004:3). It is considered as one of many innovative ways to strengthen and include citizens in government accountability. Though implemented at municipal level; evidence has also shown that the process has led to greater government transparency and accountability, increased public participation and improvements in public spending and service delivery (Wampler 2000; Cabannes 2005).

**Table 1: Forms of participation**

<b>Passive participation</b>	People participate by being told what is going to happen or what has already happened. In this context, participation relates to a unilateral top-down announcement by the authority or project manager.
<b>Participation in information giving</b>	People participate by answering questions posed in questionnaires or telephone interviews or similar public participation strategies.
<b>Participation by consultation</b>	People participate by being consulted while professionals, consultants and planners listen to their views. The professionals define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of the people's responses.
<b>Participation for material incentives</b>	People participate by providing resources, such as labour in return for food and cash.
<b>Interactive participation</b>	People participate in a joint situational analysis, the development of action plans and capacity building. In this context, participation is seen as a right, not just as a means to achieve project goals.
<b>Self-mobilisation</b>	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems.

Source: Pretty J.N. (1995)

## Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that democratization is complex processes which cannot be reduced to any singular element of democracy, but as an outcome of interplays between many forces for which media can play a positive or negative role depending on its sources of support and the legal framework on freedom of expression and the right to information. The quest for budget transparency is driven by democracy and governance agenda with particular focus on transparency, accountability and participation. As such commitments towards a transparent budget process also reflects commitments to the tenets of democracy. Political patronage, absence of right to information law and selective participation are some of the constraints to citizen participation. As a result, the role of the media in enabling citizens to hold office holders accountable to such processes cannot be overemphasised.



## Chapter 3 The Media and Democratic Participation in Ghana

The media had played an important role in the process of democratisation in Ghana in the late 1980s and 90s. As market relations deepens the issues of ownership of some types of media and politics could become a stumbling block to democratic participation, and even corrupt the media. The chapter discusses the changing roles of the media, with a focus on the provision of democratic spaces for participation, highlighting the role of radio as an accessible and affordable means of obtaining information and promoting participation; and suitable to promote budget transparency, especially from a grassroots perspective. The chapter also discusses the current role of the media in the budget process.

### 3.1 The Media in Ghana

Ghana's media is categorised into print (newspapers) and electronic (radio and television). The first newspaper was the Gold Coast Gazette and Commercial Intelligencer published in 1822. The colonial Governor of Gold Coast at the time established the first radio station in 1935 (Alhassan, 2005:211). Since then, the media has grown exponentially. There are now over 300 registered print publications (Arthur, 2010:209); over 200 radio stations operating throughout the country in English and local languages and approximately over 20 television stations (NCA, 2013). Whilst the state maintains its control on the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC<sup>23</sup>), The Daily Graphic and The Ghanaian Times; the rest are privately owned<sup>24</sup>. In recent years, internet media is gradually growing with some media establishments having website on which they stream live radio programmes granting opportunity for the Ghanaian Diaspora to participate in discussions in governance.

### 3.2 State and Media Relations

Past and present governments of Ghana acknowledge the importance of the media in the country's development. After independence, the media, radio, in particular was used as an instrument to bring together the rural, urban, elites and the masses to rebuild the country<sup>25</sup>. Despite this acknowledgement, relations between these two players cannot be described as "perfect". Thus, relations between the state and the media is often characterised by liberal and strict rules of the game. The first media law, The Criminal Libel Law<sup>26</sup> was promulgated under the 1960 Criminal Code, Act 29 by the British Colonial Administration to guard the media in

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<sup>23</sup> GBC has a radio station in every region of the country.

<sup>24</sup> See Appendix E: Overview of media ownership.

<sup>25</sup>It is noted that social diversity (class, ethnicity, gender etc) posed a challenge to the government; therefore it had to find a way to overcome the challenge. (Alhassan (2005:215)

<sup>26</sup> The libel law was used an instrument to guard media practitioners from publishing false statements.

its reportage. These laws were later inherited and applied by successive governments even after the exit of the colonial administrators. After independence, control and management of the media<sup>27</sup> changed hands from civilian to military governments; these changes reflected how the state related and interacted with the media. Accordingly, the media experienced different forms of control; stricter controls included a series of arrest, imprisonment and censorship. For example, right after the overthrow of the Nkrumah government, the National Liberation Council imposed stricter controls with a Rumours Degree in 1966 which prevented anyone from suing government owned newspapers (Oquaye, 1997)

The media is noted to have experienced a far stricter control under the PNDC government (1981 - 1992); a period generally described as a '*culture of silence*' since the laws and sanctions imposed largely curtailed press freedoms (Arthur, 2010:209; Temin et al, 2002:588). For example, the 1985 Newspaper Licensing Law required anyone wanting to publish a newspaper or magazine to obtain a licence from the Secretary of Information. Since the state did not entertain criticism, it would not be wrong to assume that licenses were issued to editors who aligned with the government. This not surprising, editors of state-owned media were dismissed on the ground of criticising the government (Oquaye, 1997:565). As a consequence of these restrictions and intimidation, the media refrained from discussing political issues; and rather focused on sports and entertainment.

To recapitulate, the way a government thinks or sees the media reflects its relationship with it. If a government considers the media as an "enemy of the state" there will be the likelihood to introduce laws to restrict the media, vice versa. In situations where the state may consider the media as a stakeholder, it can deliberately hide behind weaknesses in national laws to withhold some information from the media to avoid critical scrutiny. Creating the necessary environment fosters a balanced state-media relationship which is important for a constructive engagement in democratic discourses.

### 3.3 Media and Democratic Change

The promulgation of a new constitution in 1992 brought positive changes to the media landscape. Chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution guaranteed media freedom; further some of the PNDC laws were later repealed. In pursuant of that provision, the National Media Commission (NMC) was set up on July 7, 1993 by an Act of Parliament (Act 449) to regulate and monitor the media sector (Arthur, 2010:209). Subsequent to that, Act 524 established the National Communications Authority (NCA) in 1996 to regulate the allocation of frequencies and others in the telecommunication industry.

It may suffice to say that the NCA Act led to the liberalisation of the media which ushered in a multiplicity of radio and television stations throughout Ghana, majority of which are privately owned (Temin et al, 2002:588). As at the first quarter of 2013, 316 FM radio stations had been authorised out of which 240 are operating. Out of that number, 36 are public radio stations, 51 community radio sta-

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<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that, during that period, the media was owned by the state. Some were even owned privately by leaders of the state for their political propaganda. For example the Late Kwame Nkrumah established the Accra Evening News, Sekondi Morning Telegraph and the Daily Mail to push his party's agenda.

tions, 12 campus radio and the remaining 217 are commercially operated (NCA, 2013).

Whilst the state media remained loyal and reported favourably for the government, the private media, on the other hand, used its new freedom to criticise the government as well as its policies and programmes. In spite of the new media reforms, the government<sup>28</sup> still had some reservations about the private media calling it '*politically irresponsible*' (Arthur, 2010:209). Tensions between the state and the media largely decreased with a complete change in government<sup>29</sup>. The Criminal law was finally repealed by Parliament in 2001 to deepen press freedom<sup>30</sup> and to demonstrate government's commitment to Chapter 12 of the constitution. In addition, state involvement in the media gradually reduced; the NMC and the GJA handles media-related issues. Presently, the government identifies the media as partners in development. This explains why the name of the Ministry of Information has been re-designated as Ministry of Information and Media Relations. Not only that, a Media Development Fund has been established with the objective of supporting both state and private media institutions<sup>31</sup> (author's field work). This study considers that the positive environment has contributed to the role of the media in Ghana's democracy, for instance, there is a tremendous shift in discussions from sports and entertainment to include politics; and shortly, budgets.

A finding from field study reveals that, the private media, in particular, have made meaningful contributions to Ghana's democracy, and have also increased the levels and means through which citizens<sup>32</sup> can participate in political processes. This is not to say that the state media has not made any contributions, it is just that the contributions of the private media is more reflective taking into consideration its ability to investigate the state, and the opportunity it has afforded Ghanaians to participate in the country's democratic discourse. The findings further revealed that majority of radio stations broadcast in predominant language of areas where they are located making it possible for people at the grassroots to freely articulate their concerns; this finding establishes the diversity in the Ghanaian media.

With regard to elections, the private media has afforded Ghanaians the opportunity to be part of election monitoring. Thus during elections various radio stations provide short codes through which the public can send SMS from their mobile phones to report any violence or suspicious acts at polling stations. Correspondingly, the presence of the private media has not only reduced the rigging of elections but has also brought some credibility to election results announced by the

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<sup>28</sup> The NDC (formerly PNDC) government was elected into power in 1992.

<sup>29</sup> The New Patriotic Party led by John Agyekum Kufour won the 2000 elections bringing an end to the Rawlings of government (from 1981 to 2000, military and democratic rule).

<sup>30</sup> Press Freedom Index ranked Ghana at 27<sup>th</sup> in 2009; currently Ghana is ranked at 30<sup>th</sup> out of 179 countries and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Africa.

<sup>31</sup> Through this fund, the Ministry of Information and Media Relations was able to support media houses through the Ghana Journalists Association GJA with some laptops to facilitate the work of practitioners.

<sup>32</sup> From this chapter onwards "citizens" herein refers "Ghanaian citizens".

Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC).<sup>33</sup> (Tettey, 2002:9). The ensuing quote demonstrates the collaborative effort between the media and citizens' in monitoring elections.

'On the day of the [2000] elections there was a polling station in Accra where soldiers started destroying voting boxes,' recalled Joseph Ebo Quarshie, President of the Ghana Bar Association. 'Immediately, someone called an FM station and it was reported on the air .... Minutes later I got a call from JOY FM. ... I read over the radio the article in the Constitution which says that citizens had the right to resist interference in a polling station. JOY FM kept playing my interview over and over. A couple of hours later the soldiers were chased off by voters' (Friedman, 2001, cited in Tettey, 2002:9).

According to Milton (cited in Tettey, 2001:7) 'a free press advances the cause of democracy by performing watchdog functions over governments thereby putting the latter in check from abusing public office for personal gains and abuse of the citizenry'. In the context of Ghana, it cannot be said that the media is free, but, its watchdog functions cannot be overemphasised - finding reveals that through media monitoring and investigations a number of corrupt practices have been exposed. For example, an investigation by the private media enabled the government to abandon an attempt to raise an amount of US\$1 billion from a fictitious source which claimed to be the International Finance Company (Gadzekpo 2008, cited in Arthur, 2010:210).

From an observation, the Ghanaian public sometime accuse the media for being bias with its reportage; thus are not objective in the presentation of issues. The public may not be far from wrong; sometimes it is necessary to understand that the political, social and economic environment in which the media operates is muddled with owners' interest, economic survival, competition, politics and power. These issues can to a large extent influence the quality and comprehensiveness of information, public discussions and participation in media discussions and even deny citizens' the right of expression. In a highly politicised environment, it can be assumed that the survival of a media establishment largely depend on its alliance with politicians or government in power. These situations tend to compel journalists or media houses to 'go to bed' with the power holders in order to survive. In essence, what a media can do in a democracy is determined by the environment within which it operates.

### **3.4 Differentiated Access to Information**

Equal access to information is important for enabling citizens to have informed discussions affecting their lives (Cornwall and Coelho, n.d:8; Daruwala and Nayak, 2007:10). The possibility of this happening depends on the ability of citizens to access and use information either from government or the media (ibid). Within Ghana, access to media information can be constrained by cost, literacy, and availability of the information. Geographically, administrative cities in Ghana are

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<sup>33</sup> The media do announce election results to their listeners before the official results are announced by the EC (Arthur: 2010: 211). This is possible for the media because votes are counted right after voting is official closed and since reporters are present at polling stations they get to know how results from respective polling stations.

more able to access newspapers than those who live outside these cities<sup>34</sup>. Besides, the cost of publishing newspapers is relatively high therefore affects the price of newspapers and circulation to other parts of the country<sup>35</sup> (author's fieldwork). As a result newspapers tend to be relatively expensive for some Ghanaians to afford. It is common to find people reading just the front pages of the newspapers displayed at newsstands without buying it (Temin et al, 2002:597).

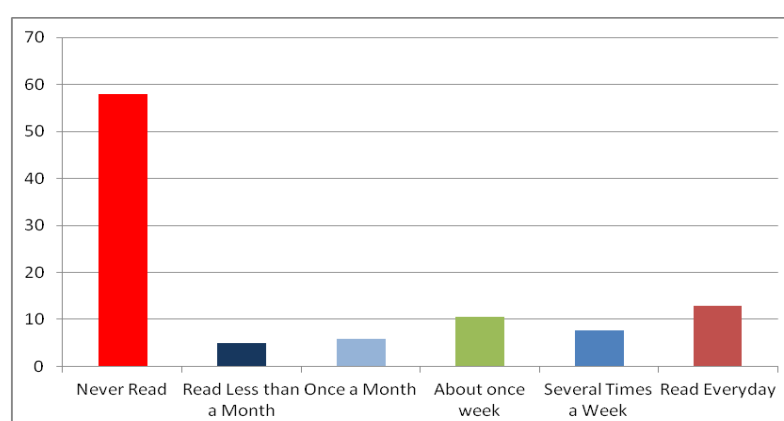
Additionally, the high level of illiteracy<sup>36</sup> restricts the print media to those who can read, write and speak English. However, an interesting revelation shows that literates do not even frequent newspapers (author's field work). This is corroborated by a survey conducted by Bratton et al. (1999, cited in Temin et al., 2002:595) which shows a sharp contrast between newspaper readership and radio.

**Table 2: Survey Results on Newspaper Readership**

Never Read	Read Less than a Month	Once a Month	About once week	Several Times a Week	Read Every-day
57.9	5	5.8	10.6	7.7	12.9

Source: Generated from Bratton et al. (1999, cited in Temin et al., 2002)

**Figure 1: Survey Results on Newspaper Readership**



Source: Generated from Bratton et al. (cited in Temin et al., 2002)

**Table 3: Survey Results on Radio**

Listen to Radio Everyday	Several Times a Week	About Once a Month	Once a Month	Less than a Month	Never Listen to Radio
41.4	15	13	4.5	5.7	20.4

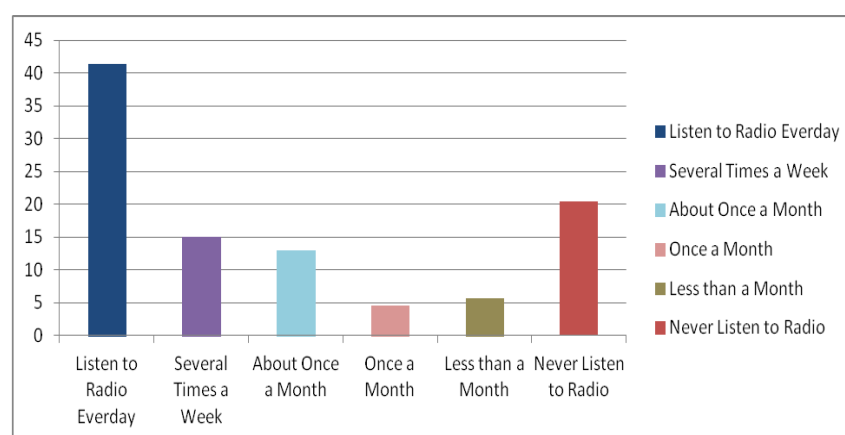
Source: Generated from Bratton et al. (1999, cited in Temin et al., 2002)

<sup>34</sup> For example, it is easy to access newspapers in Accra.

<sup>35</sup> The cost of publication and circulation relates more to private print media than the state-owned.

<sup>36</sup> The 2010 Population and Housing Census indicate 26.2% illiteracy for male and 38.4% for Female.

**Figure 2: Survey Results on Radio**



Source: Generated from Bratton et al. (1999, cited in Temin et al., 2002)

From table 2 and 3 above, it is evident that 41.4% people listened in to radio as compared to 57.9% who do not read newspapers. Given this, the findings from field work and results of the survey suggest that radio receive a high penetration rate than newspaper; therefore makes it an effective medium through which citizen can access government information and can contribute to national development. This access is even more enhanced as radio stations unlike newspapers are able to transmit in the various local languages (author's field work).

As was discussed in Chapter 2, newspapers were widely used in the first wave of democratisation. But, as can be seen from here, there is a remarkable shift from newspapers to radio as the preferred means to convey and access information; a shift that demonstrates dynamism in the media.

### **3.5 Budget Transparency, Accountability and Participation: Why Media?**

According to the IBP, there is a number of ways government hide important financial information from the public. This is referred to as 'black holes' in budgeting<sup>37</sup> (Masud and Lakin, 2011:72). One such black hole is extra-budgetary resources; these are resources that do not go through the usual budget process, therefore disclosing information about it remains prerogative of the government. In Ghana, donor assistance is now received in one basket<sup>38</sup>. Perhaps, for donors' one challenge it will need to address may be that of attribution and for Ghanaians, government accountability for such resources especially when it may not have been mentioned in the budget. Referring to earlier discussions, it is evident that accessing public information is difficult - this difficulty is even enhanced with the lack of

<sup>37</sup> Because it is information in the budget which may difficult for citizens to identify and even know what information is missing (ibid)

<sup>38</sup> Multi Donor Budget Support is a joint support mechanism of Development Partners (DPs). It is based on a contribution of financial resources by DPs to a government treasury to complement domestically generated revenue. More importantly, MDBS is to support poverty alleviation programmes. For example in 2010, MBDS provided just over US\$400 million to the national budget of Ghana (MoFEP, <http://www.mofep.gov.gh/divisions/mdbs>)

information laws. As a result, the media has become, and presently remains the medium through which majority of Ghanaians get information.

Generally, the media has made contributions to the political development in Ghana as conduits of political education and election monitoring, watchdog of political and social accountability to unearth corrupt practices within government. However, it is rather unsure whether the media has the same capacity to promote budget transparency in Ghana, though some journalists are already involved with the budget process. The budget preparation process may well provide an opportunity for the Ghanaian media to demonstrate its capacity to promote economic development of the country; and further open up spaces for participation in the budget process. A research by Killick (2005:1) on *'The Politics of Ghana's Budgetary System'* revealed that there are 'regular deviations between budget estimates and actual spending'. These deviations should be of concern for state institutions and every Ghanaian. Given this, the media's involvement can expose some of these discrepancies. The print media could play an equal role, but radio may come across as a more preferred instrument for engaging in the budget process.

Thus among the media types, radio has the most impact on the citizenry and provides a cheaper means to access information. Most people do not have time to read newspapers, but can listen to radio on their phones, whilst driving in public transports (author's field work). Therefore, it will be easy for people to call into phone-in programmes to make contributions or ask questions about the budget (Tettey, 2011:22). While it may be true that civil society organisations do equally represent the poor and marginalised, this study is of the view that the media, particularly, radio can give that equal opportunity to the weaker groups in the society to advance their cause by having direct access to policymakers and politicians. Given that most radio stations transmit in local languages, people could call into a radio programme and speak in their own local language without intimidation of the English language. Furthermore, radio may overcome some challenges (capacity, social class) associated with deliberative democracy which sometimes results in elite capture. In as much as radio can open spaces for budget discussions, the study is of view that print and traditional media can complement that effort. For instance, cinema vans (which constitute traditional media) are still used to disseminate government information at the grassroots level (author's field work).

### **3.6 The Need for a Paradigm Shift**

Currently, the role of the media in budget process is primarily to disseminate and explain budget statements to the public; this is carried out in radio and televisions as well as newspapers and magazines. MoFEP organises workshops, seminars and symposia for the Finance and Economic Journalists as a way of building media capacity to be well-informed to educate citizens on budget and economic policies of the government. Findings shows that public education is rather carried out after the budget has been read and not at the preparation stage. Additionally, not all media houses are able to attend budget hearings due to the quality of human resources in some of the media houses and profit maximisation, a lot of them shy away from functions that would not yield economic benefits to them.<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with a MoFEP representative (Friday, 12 July 2013); and a representative of Public Agenda Newspaper (5 August 2013).

Given the need to promote budget transparency through the media, there is the need for a paradigm shift from just extending an invitation to the media as information disseminators but rather invited in their right as citizens as well as a medium through which citizens can effectively engage in pre and post budget processes. The pre-budget process is important for citizen engagement because this is where the key decisions concerning the budget are made hence the media's involvement right from the start can help to engage citizens in the preparation stage because after the budget has been read and passed, not much can be done by the citizens.

## **Conclusion**

The media's contribution to Ghana's democracy as conduits of political education, watchdogs have greatly expanded opportunities for Ghanaians in political discourses. Yet, the confictions between money, politics and power remain a challenge that can influence the media and deny citizens' the opportunity to exercise their right through the media. The budget process presents the media with the opportunity to strengthen its watchdog functions. From the 1999 Afrobarometer survey (Bratton et al., 1999 cited in Temin et al., 2002) it is clear that radio seems to have the most impact on the citizenry and can expand the opportunities to engage in the budget process.



## Chapter 4: Budget Preparation Process in Ghana

The Open Budget Survey puts Ghana in a middle position on a scale of 0-100. From the survey the country seems to be doing well among its peers in the sub-region by providing some budget information to the public. But, beneath the results of the survey, how accessible and comprehensive is the budget information; and how participatory is the budget preparation process. This chapter examines the budget process in light of the Open budget survey. The first section generally describes the budget preparation process. This is then followed by analysis of the process to ascertain its participatory and transparency.

### 4.1 Overview of Budget Preparation Process

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana establishes the framework for budget preparation by sector Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as well as the Regional Coordinating Councils, and also defines the budget as Revenue and Expenditure for the ensuing year (Article 179-182). In the Ghanaian context revenues refer to incomes received from domestic or foreign aid whereas expenditures refer to how the government intends to spend the money. The Constitution further mandates the President to submit a budget to Parliament each year for approval. Consequently, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP) prepares and submits the budget on behalf of the President. The budget is noted to be prepared within the Macro Economic Framework; and further guided by the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF).<sup>40</sup>

The Legal and regulatory framework for the budgeting has been widely provided for by three main documents, 1992 Constitution (Article 179-182); the Financial Administration Regulation (2004), Financial Administration Act (2003). Supporting laws, procedures and regulations such as the Audit Service Act (Act 612) and tax laws (IRS, CEPS and VAT Act) exist to complement the general provisions. The Standing Order of Parliament (Order No. 138-150) guides the budget process with regards to presentation and approval by Parliament (Parliamentary Center, 2010:7). Besides these, there are other legislations that guide planning and budgeting at the local level, notable among them are the Local Government Act, 462 of 1993 and the Decentralised Planning Act.

### 4.2 The Budget Process<sup>41</sup>

The budget process consists of twelve (12) key steps which provide a step by step approach to preparing the budget. The process starts from January to December, beginning with an advertisement in the print media by MoFEP. This is then

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<sup>40</sup> The Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) is a three-year rolling budget with focus on the current year. The current budget under preparation is for 2014 -2106 but with much focus on the year 2014.

<sup>41</sup> The budget process and cycle was explained to the author at an interview with a MoFEP official on Friday, 12 July, 2013 and a subsequent interview with a representative from Parliament.

followed by a review of the macro-economic framework. The detailed budget process is included as Appendix F. Some of the key steps include;

- (a) **Preparation and submission of the Macro-economic Framework**<sup>42</sup> to the President, eight months before the budget is approved.
- (b) **Circulation of Budget Guidelines** to all MDAs for preparing their sector budgets.
- (c) **Cross-Sectoral meeting** to scrutinise MDA budget activity to avoid duplication and overlaps of activities and programmes within the MDAs.
- (d) **Budget Hearings**; to ensure that MDAs strategic plans and estimates are aligned with government priorities, and that activities budgeted for are within the budget ceiling
- (e) **Cabinet and Parliament approvals** to enable the passing into law and execution of the budget.

### 4.3 Budget Cycle

The budget cycle consist of four key stages of Planning and Preparation, Analysis and Approval, Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation<sup>43</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Budget Planning and Preparation Stage

Activities involved in the planning and preparation stage includes the review and determination of the macro-economic framework, projection and ceiling for budget allocation for MDAs, circulation of the budget guidelines, preparation and submission of the draft estimates, policy and technical hearing, holding of a stakeholders' forum and consolidation of all draft estimates for necessary approvals. As may be noted majority of the budget activities are undertaken at this stage, as such any delay in this stage could affect the subsequent stages in the cycle (author's field work)

#### 4.3.2 Budget Analysis and Approval Stage

Subsequent to the completion of the preparation of the draft budget estimates, MoFEP submits the draft estimates in a form of Memorandum for Cabinet's discussion and approval. Usually, ministers may take the opportunity to request Cabinet to increase sector allocations, but these requests have to be justified. The draft estimate is further amended in accordance with Cabinet's decision. The final document is then forwarded to Parliament for its examination and approval. As per constitutional provision the Budget Estimate and the Economic Policy is presented in Parliament a month before the year ends usually in November. Before Parliament's approval, the Parliamentary Select Committee on Finance meet to scrutinise the policies and budget estimates of MDAs in terms of its current year's actual expenditure and performance as well as the ensuing year's estimates (author's field work). After the presentation of the Budget statement it is thereafter debated in Parliament. Usually, Parliamentarians (mostly from the opposition side) do raise

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<sup>42</sup> The Macro-economic framework gives an indication of resources and challenges likely to be encountered in executing the budget.

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix G for budget cycle.

reservations on the budget; but despite these reservations, the budget gets to be passed eventually.

### **4.3.3 Budget Implementation Stage**

This stage is important in the budget cycle, through implementation public services are delivered to the general public and by which government priorities for the budget year is met. After the budget has been approved by Parliament usually referred to as the Appropriation Act, MoFEP disseminates the information to all MDAs. The MDAs in turn apply for releases of funds to enable it carry through with programme implementation (author's field work).

### **4.3.4 Budget Audit and Evaluation**

The 1992 Constitution mandates the Auditor General to submit within six months its audited report to Parliament after the end of the preceding financial year. The Auditor's report relates to accounts and expenditure released from the budget to ascertain whether releases were done in accordance with financial regulations. MoFEP monitors the implementation and performance of the budget by the MDAs through quarterly reports.

## **4.4 Actors in the Budget Process**

The President, Cabinet, Parliament, MoFEP, NDPC, MDAs, MMDAs, Controller and Accountant General's Department, Auditor General are key actors in the budget process with clear defined roles in the Constitution (Article 179-126). Other actors identified include Political Parties, Private Sector Associations, Civil Society Organisations, Media and the General Public mainly play consultative role. Roles of key actors are described as follows:

- (1) President and the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning:  
The President through the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning is responsible for presenting the budget before the legislature for approval. The role for the President is provided in the 1992 Constitution (Article 179(1)).
- (2) Cabinet  
Cabinet has the responsibility to discuss the draft budget estimates, make recommendation and amendments where necessary and approve for onward transmission for Parliament's approval. Cabinet's recommendation is communicated to the MoFEP in a form of a Cabinet Decision Letter.
- (3) Parliament  
Parliament scrutinises the budget through the various Parliamentary Committees before it is approved. Before the budget is presented to Parliament, budget hearings are organised for MDAs to defend their sector budget to the respective Parliamentary Select Committee. Parliament also has a major role to adopt the budget, monitor the implementation as well as performance of the MDAs. The Standing Order of Parliament provides the procedure for the presentation of the budget statement on the floor of Parliament.

(4) Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning

The Ministry plays a central and lead role in the budget process and cycle respectively. It is MoFEP's responsibility to make projections, set ceilings for budget allocations, prepare and circulate budget guidelines to all MDAs and MMDAs, collect revenue and disburse funds. Apart from these, it is the responsibility of the Ministry to invite public inputs into the budget estimates. The Ministry also prepares and submits the draft budget to Cabinet and Parliament for their approvals after which it disseminates the approved budget to MDAs and MMDAs for implementation.

(5) MDAs/MMDAs

MDAs and MMDAs are responsible for preparing their sector budget estimates and submitting same to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. MDAs and MMDAs also see to the implementation of the budget after it has been approved by Parliament.

#### **4.5 Mechanism for Engaging Citizens in the Budget Process**

Findings from field work show that citizens are engaged in the budget process through a public request for inputs and a stakeholder forum<sup>44</sup>. Thus at the start of the budget process, MoFEP places an advert in the print media precisely in the Daily Graphic and the Ghanaian Times<sup>45</sup> to request public inputs into the budget statement. These two activities are done at different steps in the budget process. Not only does MoFEP call for public inputs, it also collaborates with the Finance and Economic Journalists and the Information Services Department (ISD) to undertake public education campaigns on the annual budget statement. Sensitisation workshops are separately organised for both groups.

With respect to ISD, sensitisation workshops are organised by MoFEP for selected Regional and District Information Officers on the national budget statement. Key areas of priority such as food and agriculture, education, health ICT and infrastructure development are identified within the framework of the budget sensitisation (author's field work). After the workshops, Information Officers go back to the grassroots level where they in-turn educate peasants and rural people on the budget statement in their own local languages. It is noted that traditionally and from time in memorial, Cinema Vans were the only channel through which these public education campaigns were carried out in the rural communities. This year (2013 budget), because of the popularity of radios and FM stations in the country MoFEP adopted an innovation by adding studio panel discussions to be used by ISD officers (author's field work). To ensure its effectiveness, some Deputy Directors and senior Information Officers were deployed to various regions to monitor radio discussions on the budget statements<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Please refer to budget process; Appendix F

<sup>45</sup> See Appendix H: Newspaper Advert

<sup>46</sup> For example, a Deputy Director from ISD monitored the radio discussion programme in the Volta Region this year: Interview with official from ISD on 26 October, 2013.

## 4.6 How Participatory is the Process

Findings show that participation is rather encouraged after the budget has been read and not when it is being prepared<sup>47</sup>. More so, actors involved in the process are mainly within the state. At present, it cannot be said that the budget process is participatory simply because citizens are informed after the budget has been read or they have the opportunity to make inputs. It should be noted that participation is more about having the capacity to influence resource allocation and be able to identify discrepancies in the budget (author's field work). This view stems from the argument that citizens as taxpayers should have some decision-making powers to decide which programmes should be undertaken and how much money should be made available to implement programmes and projects. As it stands now, majority of Ghanaians do not have the capacity to engage in the budget process. On the other hand, further findings indicated that the budget process is participatory in two ways. First, opportunity to participate is now open as compared to the period before Ghana's democratic transition. Thus, before the transition, citizens did not have opportunity to talk about the budget let alone participate for the fear of being intimidated by the then military government. Second, the advert by MoFEP satisfies as an opportunity for anyone to make contribution. Perhaps, the only missing link in the process is the extent to which citizens understand the contents of the budget.

*"To a certain extent it is participatory, if you compare it to the year before 2000 when budget making was mainly the preserve of technocrats and politicians. But in recent times when people have the opportunity to discuss the content of the budget than we can say it is participatory"*

*(Interview with a Media representative)*

Given that there are two categories of actors involved in the process; it might be necessary to also understand participation from these two angles. That is; if participation in the process is mainly about the executives such as the MDAs, MoFEP etc. then confidently, it can be said that Ghana's budget process is fully participatory; currently, the budget is prepared within the executive. However, if it is on the side of the citizens, then it suffices to say that it is not participatory taking into consideration very limited opportunities exist in the process.

Within democratic governance, discussion about citizen participation could be tricky; since it has been argued that citizens do not necessarily need to directly participate in public decisions because they are adequately represented by elected officials (Michels, 2006:323). It can further be argued that apart from elected officials, citizens are also represented by Civil Society Organisations. Justifiable as these arguments may be, it can be said that in democratic governing participation is not about just voting but also participating in economic and social arenas, and through that, office holders will feel obliged to account for their actions.

Using, Pretty's typology, the table below provides information about participation in the budget process as gathered from field work.

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<sup>47</sup> In Tanzania, the budget process consists of four key stages with specific activities at each stage, but, the process provides greater opportunities for citizen participation. At the local level; local budgets cannot be submitted to the Regional Secretariat or the centre government when it had not been approved by the local councils and the village councils (HaKiElimu and Policy Forum, 2008:23).

**Table 4: Participation in the Budget Process**

Passive participation	Ghanaians are informed after the budget has been read
Participation in information giving	Participation is by submitting a written contribution to the Ministry of Finance and later attends the stakeholders' forum. However, Civil Society Organisations and other bodies do take great advantage of this form of participation.
Participation by consultation	Professional bodies such as the AGI, CEPA, IEA and PEF may be invited to participate to provide professional advice.
Participation for material incentives	People participate in order to be recognised and rewarded by the state. Such a participant will attend any fora and make contributions. This form is closely related to political patronage.
Interactive participation	This takes place after the budget has been read. This form of participation is usually done in the media; radio discussions.
Self-mobilisation	Sometimes, party sympathisers do organise like street demonstrations to contest contents of the budget. But this does not yield many results because it has been passed by Parliament, much cannot be done to make changes.

Source: Generated from field data, 2013

In a related finding, it may suffice to say that the concept of participation is indeed a contested concept. As an illustration, an official from one of the MDAs indicated agencies under the Ministry provide feedback by making inputs to improve the sector budgets, hence from his perspective, feedback constitutes participation.

## 4.7 Transparency in the Budget Process

According to the IBP, transparency in budget processes requires that the government provides timely, accurate and comprehensive information through the eight key budgets documents. The table below shows the publication status of these documents as pertains to Ghana.

**Table 5: Publication status of budget documents; Ghana**

No.	Name of Document	Status
1.	Pre-Budget Statement	Not produced
2.	Executive's Budget Proposal	Published
3.	Enacted Budget	Published
4.	Citizens Budget	Not produced
5.	In-Year Reports	Published
6.	Mid-Year Review	Published
7.	Year-End Report	Not produced
8.	Audit Report	Published

Adapted from ISODEC Report, 2013:5

From table 5, three documents (in yellow highlights) that are vital for publication are not produced; reflecting the low priority given to public participation and transparency. One of such documents, the *Citizens' budget* is important for participation because it simplifies the budget. However, since 2008, this document has not been produced, a situation that makes it difficult to follow the budget.

*“Until we have the citizens’ budget, we will not have citizens following the budget”*  
(Interview with CSO Representative)

Owing to absence of information laws, accessing government information in general is constrained. A finding reveals that government has not made any conscious efforts to release budget information to the public. In an interview with official from a media establishment, it is noted that invitations to budget hearings are not accompanied with any background information on the subject.

Since the inception of the OBS, Ghana has continuously attained a middle position on a scale of 0 to 100. This position suggests that some amount of budget information is withheld from the public. In 2010, with a score of 54% the country showed signs of improving but dropped to 50% in 2012 (OBS, 2012; Nchor, 2013:3)

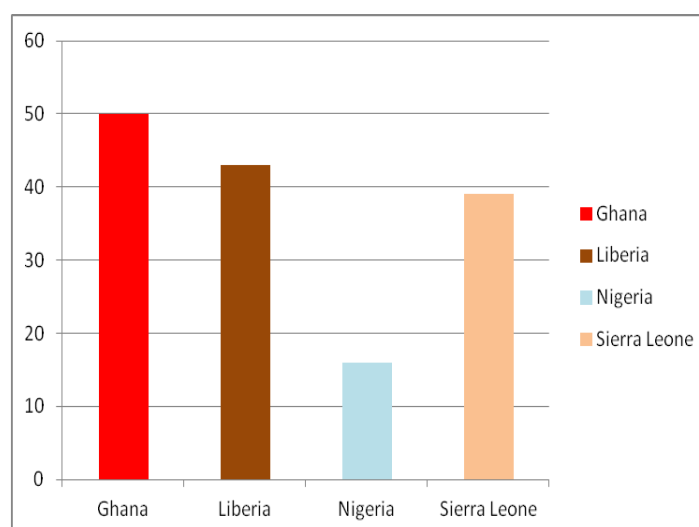
The table below shows how Ghana fared among its peers in the 2012 OBS Survey.

**Table 6: Ghana’s performance with some West Africa Countries**

Country	Score
<b>Ghana</b>	50
<b>Liberia</b>	43
<b>Nigeria</b>	16
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	39

Source: Generated from OBI Rankings, 2012

**Figure 3: Ghana's performance with some West African Countries**



Source: Generated from OBI Ranking, 2012

With a score of 50%, the OBI Ranking suggests that Ghana seems to be doing well when compared to other countries in the sub-region. Whilst the OBS results might show some good signs, beneath the results, budget information is muddled with but not limited to non-availability and accessibility. Besides, the entire process still remains closed to the larger public, a situation that makes it difficult to scrutinise budgets. It is further noted that contents of the pre-budget statement<sup>48</sup> is informed from public inputs. However, findings reveal that at present there is no common framework for citizen participation to produce the pre-budget statement. This might explain why a budget guideline is listed as a pre-budget statement on the IBP online library<sup>49</sup>. Because based on the descriptions of the eight budget document, the listed document looks more of a budget guideline than a Pre-budget statement. This finding may have important implications for the IBP to consider to also assess the comprehensiveness of information provided to ascertain whether it meets the criteria of the key budget documents; and information provided by government could be used by the public to hold it accountable, instead of checking the availability of such documents.

*We have the Pre-budget Statement which provides a guide on how the budget will be. This is where citizens need to be encouraged to play key roles by making inputs or sharing their concerns but unfortunately this is not the case. The country does not have formats by which we can confidently say this is our pre-budget statement.*  
(Interview with CSO Representative)

Another issue is the low awareness of budget process considering that MoFEP advertises only in the two national newspapers; when it is evident that majority of Ghanaians do not frequent newspapers. This is considered to be woefully inadequate and may skew participation towards a few people. In terms of Accountability, the Public Accounts Committee uses the audited accounts from the Auditor-General to examine the appropriation of sums granted by Parliament to meet public expenditure.

Referring to table 6 above; Ghana and Nigeria claim to be practicing democratic governance - Nigeria scores 16 for its budget transparency. What this study is trying to demonstrate here is that; transparency can be marred by compelling factors like weak institutional framework, weak oversight institutions and political culture. As much as a country might have gone through all stages of democratisation, weakness in its institutions can undermine its democratic efforts. It is the view of this paper that democratisation could be strengthened with interplay of various actors; who then serves as check on each other. This view then emphasises that democracy may not necessary be about elections but also how state laws and institutions work to make office holders accountable for the use of public resource.

<sup>48</sup> The pre-budget document is supposed to be issued one month before the proposed budget is submitted to Parliament. It usually contains draft estimates and allocations for each. Through that CSOs, the public and other interested groups could check whether their inputs or contributions have been considered by government.

<sup>49</sup> <https://docs.google.com/folderview?pli=1&id=0ByA9wmvBrAnZcE5RdC12NHh3UGc&tid=0ByA9wmvBrAnZN3ZrdzNzcS1JZzg>



Based on the findings and above discussions, it can be concluded that the current budget process is *not fully participatory*. The process is closed and involves actors mainly from the executive. Thus, excludes the wider public and other interested parties from the process.

*“The process is not fully participatory because it does not involve the citizenry but only involves institutions prescribed in the constitution”.*

*(Interview with public officer)*

## Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of Ghana’s budget systems discussing the budget cycle and process respectively. The Chapter demonstrated that Ghana’s budget process is not fully participatory. Though the open budget survey indicates that Ghana is improving its budget process with a Score of 50 as compared to its neighbours in the sub-region; yet a considerable amount of budget information is still not made available. Also, the entire budget process presents very limited opportunities for participation. This point to the fact that there is the need to get as many people engaged in the process. For instance extend public announcements from newspapers to include television and radio.

## Chapter 5 Role of the Media in the Budget Process

Given that lack of transparency in Ghana's budget can undermine its fiscal discipline and promote opportunities for corruption and misappropriation, there is no doubt that it is necessary to take actions to combat lapses in the process. Evidence from literature on budget transparency and governance has shown that various stakeholders<sup>50</sup> can contribute to increase transparency and accountability; it is then argued that the media is but one of such stakeholder. Thus its involvement can help to keep the public and the various stakeholders informed whilst holding government accountable. This chapter specifically discusses the role of the media with respect to the budget planning and preparation; analysis and approval; implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

### 5.1 Describing the Role of the Media

#### 5.1.1 Budget Planning and Preparation

Most of the budget activities are done at this stage; therefore the active involvement of the media and citizens' is important. The first and primary task for the media will be to inform the public about the beginning of the budget and educate them as well. Thereafter, initiate discussions on the contents of the macro-economic framework to ascertain whether it links to government priorities for the budget year and whether these priorities address the needs of society especially the poor. It is important the media especially the Finance and Economic Journalist get access to the document during the preparation stage to enable it effectively carry out discussions. The involvement of the media and citizens could expose some weaknesses in the budget plan.

Beyond the newspaper advert, the media could take the initiative to run some news items on radio and television as a way to get the public's attention to the budget process and for them to submit contributions as requested. It could also feature critical discussions on radio with representatives from MoFEP, MDAs and Parliament. It is believed that discussions would then guide the public on what inputs to make, especially for those who do not speak English, even when they cannot make inputs, at least, they gain some understanding and can make contributions on air.

As a bait to get people to participate, the media may want to carry out analyses on performance of the various sectors in the previous budget year and provide information of how public funds have been utilised. By this information citizens will know what inputs or contributions to make into the next budget. Besides this it is important for citizens to also have a fair idea of revenue mobilisation and expenditure so they could be effective by assisting government to select programmes that need prioritisation.

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<sup>50</sup> Indian social movement *Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan* (MKSSS) has launched a participatory process through which citizens could monitor the implementation of government programmes in their communities (Goetz and Jenkins, 2001, cited in De Renzio et al, 2011:608).

In every election year, some media houses collaborate with some CSOs to host election forum where citizens get the opportunity to engage with political aspirants, it is believed that the same efforts could be extended to the budget process so that the general population could understand contents of the budget which also reflects government priorities. . It is believed that through this, gradually there will be improvement in citizen participation in the budget process and in the long run; transparency and accountability could be achieved.

### **5.1.2 Analysis and Approval Stage**

At this stage, the media is to encourage the public to attend the parliamentary select committee hearings presented by MDAs. Though the public cannot make any inputs, they however become informed of government policies and programmes. The media can further make the legislature accountable by asking questions that prompts the legislature to properly scrutinise the plan and desist from rubber-stamping. This is necessary because the legislature has limited role at the preparation stage therefore it does not have the privilege to scrutinise it from the onset. At this stage the media can exert pressure on the legislature to critically look into the budget to ascertain its conformity with national priorities, and seek further clarification where necessary.

### **5.1.3 Budget Implementation**

Once the budget is approved, funds are disbursed to MDAs to implement plans and programmes as provided for in the budget. During the implementation stage, several factors such as weak oversight, misappropriation, corruption etc. could stall implementation. This is where the media could use the published Mid-year Review and In-Year reports to effectively monitor the implementation activities identify and expose any weaknesses therein<sup>51</sup>.

In addition, the Ministry of Information holds a bi-weekly “Meet the Press”,<sup>52</sup> hence the media could take advantage of this forum to probe Ministers on projects earmarked in the budget, and therefore could adequately provide information to the public on budget implementation. The on-going monitoring is necessary so as to save the state money than waiting at the end of year especially when it is an election year, a lot of things can go wrong and no one could be held accountable.

### **5.1.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The budget implementation is monitored by the Auditor’s General, MoFEP and Parliament. The Auditor General’s report is very important for accountability; therefore; the media could complement the efforts of these institutions to hold officials accountable for their use of public resources. By the report, it would be evident whether MDAs were able to deliver its commitments as planned, and if not, what explanation could be offered to the public. By discussing the report, the media can again push the legislature to pay attention to some of the missing links in

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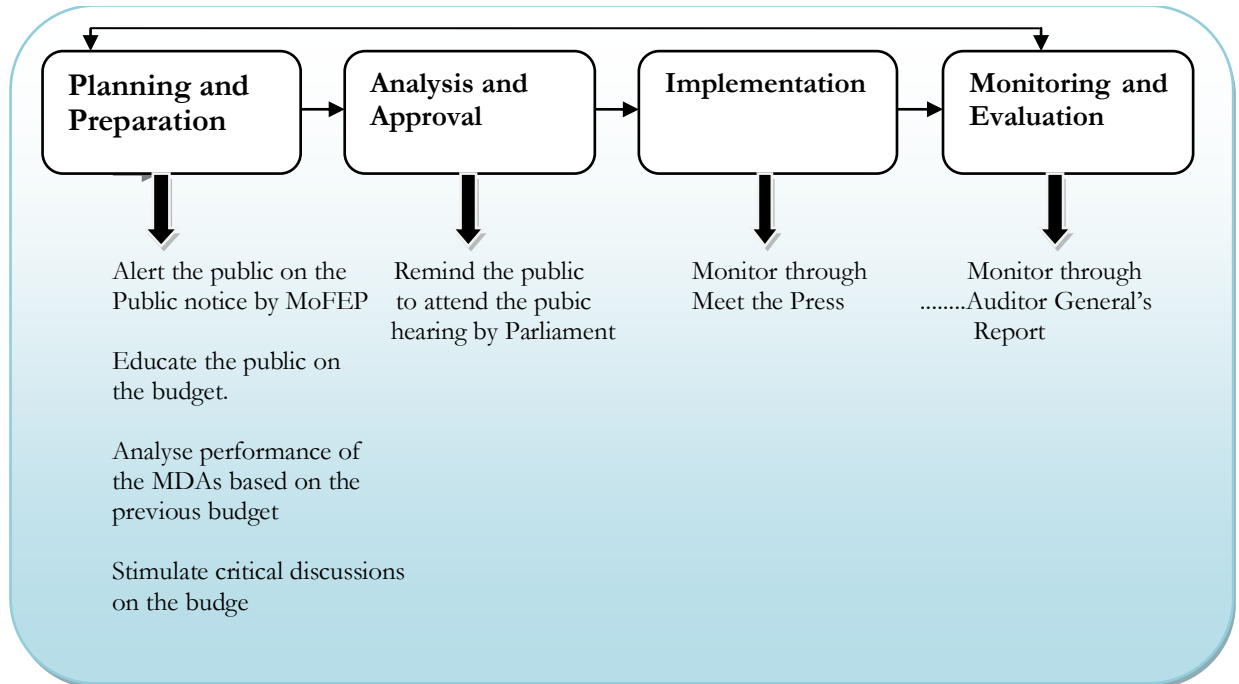
<sup>51</sup> Literature shows that in Peru and the in state of Maharashtra in India, the government makes available online information on government expenditures (Masud et al., 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Ministers take the opportunity to share the sector’s performance with the Press.

the report, through this process, citizens and media are holding officials and legislature accountable.

The diagram below provides a graphical summary of the role of the media in the budget cycle.

**Figure 4: Summary of Media Roles**



Source: Author's own construct.

## 5.2 Presenting Other Efforts

The IBP suggest that “donors can support the creation of information disclosure system that allows for government to proactively make information available to the public on the use of public resources...” By the disclosure system, it will become mandatory for the government of Ghana to make budget information available to the public. In addition, donors could also link conditions of budget transparency to the MDBS.

Another possibility would be for MoFEP to consider revising the budget calendar so that they would be enough time to undertake wide consultations with the public on the budget

An alternative will be to introduce the use of mobile technology to allow for participation in the budget process. Thus, MoFEP can partner with mobile operators so that through SMS the public could get budget information For example, the advertisement which is placed in print media could also be sent to individual mobile phones. A body of literature shows that the use of mobile technology has increased participation, transparency and accountability in budget processes. Majority of Ghanaians use mobile phones for daily communication. Presently, some financial markets in the Ghanaian economy have taken advantage of mobile technology and therefore send out customer information to mobile phones

### **Box 1: Mobile Enhanced Participatory Budgeting**

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are helping to increase citizen participation, positively transforming the relations between citizens and their governments, and, ultimately resulting in more effective service delivery. It is noted mobile phone are performing a key role in enhancing transparency and accountability.

The World Bank Institute's ICT4GOV program introduced mobile technology to enhance participatory budgeting. Citizens are now empowered to demand and work towards improved governance. Through mobile technology, citizens can now express and vote priorities that are more pressing for their communities. When an agreement is reached, the local government devotes a percentage of local investment budget to projects selected by citizens.

The mobile phone is used for the following purposes:

- invite citizens to participatory assemblies through geo-targeted SMS messages. These messages announce the date, time and location of the assemblies.
- Used for voting thereby allowing citizens to send a text to identify which of the priorities they would like to see addressed in the community.
- Used to announce the voted decisions; making the process more transparent and inclusive than ever before
- Through mobile phones, citizens are asked about project that had been chosen, through that citizens are able to offer a feedback and monitor the project.

It is noted that, over 250,000 text messages have already been sent through the different stages of this initiative. The Initiative has witnessed an increase in the transfer of funds from the provincial to the local level.

Similarly, in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, two municipalities have been busy using their mobile phones in participatory budgeting processes...

Source: IC4D Blog, World Bank (<http://blogs.worldbank.org/ic4d/mobile-enhanced-participatory-budgeting-in-the-drc>)  
World Bank Institute (<http://wbi.worldbank.org/wbi/stories/mobile-technology-empowers-citizens-budget-planning-cameroon>)

### 5.3 What are the Next Steps?

In explaining the role of the media, it is obvious that access to information is critical thus access to timely, accurate and comprehensive information would enable the media and public to critically assess government spending. As such Right to Information Act is important to the media so that they could have a mandate to participate and access budget information without hindrances.

MoFEP needs to recognise that media could help to disseminate budget documents in timely and at the same time help citizens to understand and participate in the budget process especially for the unorganised group in society so they could put their issues across. Perhaps, some education on citizenship rights will help Ghanaians to move from the notion of legal citizens to public so that they are individually motivated to participate in public processes.

Further, MoFEP could take the initiative to institute town hall meetings for budget hearings, perhaps, the stakeholder forum should be from official domain to an informal environment which is not hostile to the views of others regardless of social standing so as to encourage people to come and participate.

*“Although citizens have elected their representatives, it should not stop there; they have the responsibility to demand for accountability by ensuring that officials are conducting business in their best interest because there is no point in electing a government if you cannot influence resource allocation”.*

*(Interview with a Public Officer)*

### 5.4 Defining the forms and Substance of Participation

Noting that factors such as patronage can constrain participation, it is important to define the form, substance and outcomes of participation. Citizens will need to know why they are participating and how their inputs will be utilised; such information motivates citizens to make meaningful contributions. It is believed that when the forms and spaces of participation are defined and documented it provides a common framework for participation which could then be easily referred to when the need arises. In essence, participation should be demand and supply driven; this is to say that, citizens must make an effort to demand information instead of waiting for government to supply information, by this; they should be seen to show interest and concern with affairs of the state. If Ghanaians are able to do this, it will minimise elite capture in policymaking processes.

In addition, it is also believed that when the forms of participation are defined and institutionalised<sup>53</sup>, every citizen will get the opportunity to be part of the state rather than a situation when participation becomes selective and reduced to party elites. Institutionalisation brings about standardisation, in this case if the law provides that there should be thirty (30) public hearings of the draft budget before it is presented to Parliament – these then guide budget hearings and will be adhered by

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<sup>53</sup> Institutionalisation in this context means the forms and nature of participation should be enshrined in national laws.

those in authority regardless of party in power. Perhaps, when these are done, it will in the long run lead to:

- ***Transparency and accountability*** will improve because once citizens participate they know what is there and what to expect therefore armed with information, they can hold officials accountable.
- ***Enrich and clear budget estimates*** because government get to know the needs of citizens and direct attention towards those needs. For example, the government constructs a road which citizens need but do not want.
- ***Reduces opportunities for corruption and misappropriation*** thereby save the state money for other priorities.

## Conclusion

The discussions in this chapter reveal that information is a critical component for the media and citizens as well, without information it could serve as an obstacle to the roles described above. From the discussion, it is evident that MoFEP need to embrace the idea of actively involving the media at the start of the budget process instead at the end. The next chapter presents general conclusion for this research.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

From a historical perspective, the media had played a key role in the first and second wave of democratisation in Africa, and specifically in Ghana's political development. This study has examined the functional role of the media in Ghana's democratization with a focus on citizen participation to improve transparency and accountability in the preparation and execution of the national budget. In this respect, the budget presents an opportunity for the media to contribute to Ghana's economy through critical debates with office holders and citizens. This is considered to be possible owing to the significant contribution of the media which has increased spaces for participation and included as many people who would have been excluded from political, social and economic discourses. From the findings radio (due to low costs and adaptability through the use of local languages) emerged as an extensive and effective medium that could be used to promote budget transparency and citizen participation.

Discussions on the budget showed that, presently, the budget preparation is confined within the executive. Also, a Pre-budget Statement, Citizens Budget and the Year-End report which are vital for participation are not produced by the GoG. A situation which presents very limited opportunities for citizen to participate and follow the budget, and reflects the level of importance attached to participation in public policies in general. It should be noted that unmonitored budget processes create opportunity for corruption, misappropriation and diversion of public resources for personal gains. Accordingly, through participation and availability of budget information, these issues could be addressed and minimised.

Therefore, to encourage participation, it is suggested that the media create the necessary public awareness, carry out news feature, initiate critical debates on radio; analyse past performance of MDAs to provide information to the public to enable them make meaningful contributions and also monitor budget implementation through the Auditor's report. The roles that have been suggested is considered to be within the capability of the media because each media type already has a share of listeners, readers and audience; what is needed is to expand the focus on discussions to include economic development. Similarly, the willingness of government to share information with the media is a key factor for the realisation of these roles.

One significant finding that emerged from the study is the passive participation in the budget process by both the media and citizens. Thus, the media does public education campaigns and citizens are at the receiving end of these campaigns. This is considered not enough because the argument for participation in the budget process has been for participation in the budget process right from the start through to the end of the process. In this way, budget decisions become informed by a collective voice and are collectively binding. After the budget has been read, not much can be done by citizenry; any suggestions arising after post-budget activity may be considered for the next budgeting year. Even with that, if the suggestion is still relevant for that budget year. In view of this, there might be the need to consider shifting from a top-down approach to a more bottom-up approach to budget planning to accommodate as many suggestions and inputs as possible from the grassroots into the budget.

Turning to the media, it is recognised as the fourth arm of the government, and even acknowledged as partners of development. This is why it is considered to be unreasonable for MoFEP (acting on behalf of the government) to include the media at the end of the process. Though the Constitution does not include the



media as one of the actors in the budget process, but it suffice to say that once the government has acknowledged the media as partners of development and as an extension of government then it sound logical for MoFEP to include and involve the media right from the onset. It is expected that through early involvement, the media will be adequately informed and in turn assist the citizenry to have a meaningfully participation in the budget process.

Whilst the media has received favourable commendations, the kind of political patronage in Ghana can subject the media to political manipulation and thereby undermine its objectiveness. This raises several doubts or uncertainties for consideration. For instance, what could be the 'real' motive behind the Media Development Fund – could it be a guise to fund government propaganda in the media. These are underlying issues that determine sustainability of government initiatives. As it stands now, it is unsure whether the Media Development Fund will be continued in the event of change in government. As already mentioned, initiatives of this nature do not last. Thus, they disappear with changes in government. Perhaps, this might be a response for GoG to institutionalise this and similar initiatives to make it binding on successive governments. Another issue worth considering is the attitude towards budget discussions. Currently, there is too much politicisation of issues which tend to blind objectiveness in public policies. As such, it is assumed that as soon as the budget process gets the needed attention in the media, it will suffer the same fate.

In a forward looking perspective, it is proposed that first; GoG consider passing the Right to Information Law to establish the right to access for information not only for the media but for all Ghanaians. The passage of the Law will demonstrate the government's commitment to democracy in general, and specifically to the African Charter of Human and People's Right (1981) as well as the Declaration of Principle of Freedom of Expression in Africa (Banjul, 2002). Whilst waiting for the law to be passed, the government may want to consider sharing budget information with the media and the public. Second, the government may want to institute accountability mechanisms that allows for office holders to downwardly account to the people for the use of public resources. Third, the media collaborates with Civil Society Organisations such as the Integrated Social Development Center to exert pressure on the government to produce the three budget documents that are vital for public participation. Lastly, educating Ghanaian citizens on citizenship right might be necessary to move them from legal to public citizens.

The insights obtained from this research has contributed to our understanding of democratisation, and underscored the importance that democratisation should not be limited to free and fair elections. Right, freedom and choices are critical elements for an inclusive and democratic society. Similarly, an improved budgetary system is a reflection of a country's democratisation process - because everyone has the right to participate in the process; the processes are open and subject to scrutiny. Even more, processes for accountability are defined and established

This research has open up avenues for further investigations. For example, internet media is likely to provide citizens with the direct communication with office holders; and possibly change the face of governance (Ott, 1997, cited in Leslie, 2002). In that regard, further research might want to explore the political economy of the media to determine the influence of each media type in democratisation. Another possible area will be to investigate into the relationship between politics and sustainability of development initiatives.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: List of Interviewees

No.	Organisation(s)	Interviewee(s)
1.	Parliament	Clerk to Public Accounts Committee
2.	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning	(a) Director, Budget Reforms formerly of Budget office (b) Budget Officer
3.	Ministry of Communications	(a) Chief Director (b) Director, Finance and Administration (c) Dep. Director, Finance and Administration, in charge of budget preparation
4.	Media Organisations: Electronic media (radio) Print Media (Newspaper)	Radio Presenter, Radio Gold Editor, Public Agenda newspaper
5.	Civil Society Organisation: Integrated Social Development Center (ISODEC)	(a) Coordinator, Fiscal Policy (b) Researcher, Open Budget Processes

## **Appendix B: Interview guide used to collect primary data**

### B1: Questionnaire for Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning

- (a) How is budget defined by the Government of Ghana? Can you please explain to me the difference, if there are any?
- (b) Do the terms “budget cycle” and “budget process” have the same, or different meanings?
- (c) What is the budget process/cycle:
  - When does it start?
  - What does it involve? Meaning what activities are undertaken at each stage of the process?
  - Who are the actors involved?
- (d) I know MoFEP plays a critical role in the budget process, for sake of clarity; can you describe your responsibilities in the process/cycle?
- (e) In your own words what is participatory budgeting?
- (f) Do you think Ghana’s budget process/cycle is participatory?
- (g) Could you tell me something about the citizens’ guide to the budget? is it a mechanism to invite citizens to participate in the budget process/cycle?
- (h) Do you involve the media in the process? For instance to disseminate information about the budget process/cycle? If you do, how?
- (i) Do you think participatory budgeting is possible? What mechanism or conditions will allow that?
- (j) What can you perceive to be the challenges in participatory budgeting? OR The Ministry facing challenges in getting citizens involved in the process?

### B2: Questionnaire for Parliament Official

- (a) Can you please describe the role of Parliament and the specific Select Committee in the budget process?
- (b) In your own words, what does “participatory budgeting” means; what steps are involved; who can take part and how?
- (c) Do you think Ghana’s budget process/cycle is participatory
- (d) Parliament, being custodian of policies and laws, what would you suggest to be in place for participatory budgeting e.g. National laws? *(This question is asked on the assumption that the budget process is not participatory)*
- (e) How do we get successive governments commit to such conditions?

### B3: Questionnaire for Media

- (a) There is a mixed public perception that the media. Some say that media is doing a good job in connecting citizens to policymakers and actively engaging citizens in national development. Others say that media can also be exclusionary. What do you think about the public’s perceptions?
- (b) Briefly, can you describe what your organisation does?
- (c) How do you design your programmes (what are some of the things you consider) to attract listeners in discussion OR what programmes do you use to engage as many citizens as possible in a policy debate?



- (d) What / which programme of your programme do you think your listeners do value most?
- (e) What is your target market and who actually listens to your radio programmes?
- (f) Can you share a situation in which your organisation and the government have worked well together?
- (g) Do you know about the budget process? How are you involved? And how do you engage citizens?
- (h) Assuming the public makes inputs to the budget process on your radio show, how do you give feedback to the Ministry of Finance, how is the feedback used? Is it used?
- (i) At which level do you media organisation interact with the government.
- (j) Do you think the media has the capacity to mobilise citizens towards participatory budgeting in Ghana?

#### B4: Questionnaire for ISODEC

- (a) Has your organisation participated in any budget or policymaking process, for how long?
- (b) How do you understand participatory budgeting?
- (c) In your view is Ghana's budgeting process participatory?
- (d) What are your views on "participation"?
  - How are people engaged?
  - Who participates in participatory budgeting?
  - Are inputs from people taken into account
  - What are the benefits of participatory budgeting?
  - How do the excluded and marginalised part
- (e) Can you please share your thoughts on how to improve the process?
  - What basic conditions must be there to implement participatory budgeting?
  - Who should participate in participatory budgeting?
  - How can we get government and elected members to be passionate about participatory budgeting?
  - Who needs to be involved when planning programmes for participatory budgeting?
  - What then is the nature of the budget process
- (f) Do you see the media's role in getting people to engage in the budget process?
- (g) How do you think media includes or excludes citizen in national debate?

### Appendix C: Eight key budget documents used in assessing Budget transparency

<b>Pre-Budget Statement</b>	Should be issued at least one month before the executive submits the budget proposal to the legislature. The statement presents the assumptions used in developing the budget; expected revenue, expenditure, and debt levels; and broad allocation between sectors.
<b>Executive's Budget Proposal</b>	This presents a government's detailed declaration of the policies and priorities it wants to pursue in the upcoming budget year, including specific allocations to each ministry and agency.
<b>Enacted Budget</b>	This is the legal document that authorises the executive to implement the policy measures that the budget contains, including any approved amendments to the executive's proposal.
<b>Citizens Budget</b>	This is a simplified summary of the budget in languages and through media that are widely assessable to the public.
<b>In-Year Reports</b>	Reports on revenues collected, expenditure made and debt incurred.
<b>Mid-Year Review</b>	Discusses any changes in economic assumptions that affect approved budget policies.
<b>Year-End Report</b>	Provides a summary of situation at the end of the fiscal year, including an update on progress in achieving the policy goals in the Enacted Budget.
<b>Audit Report</b>	This reports its findings annually to the legislature, as well as to the general public, covering all activities undertaken by the executive.

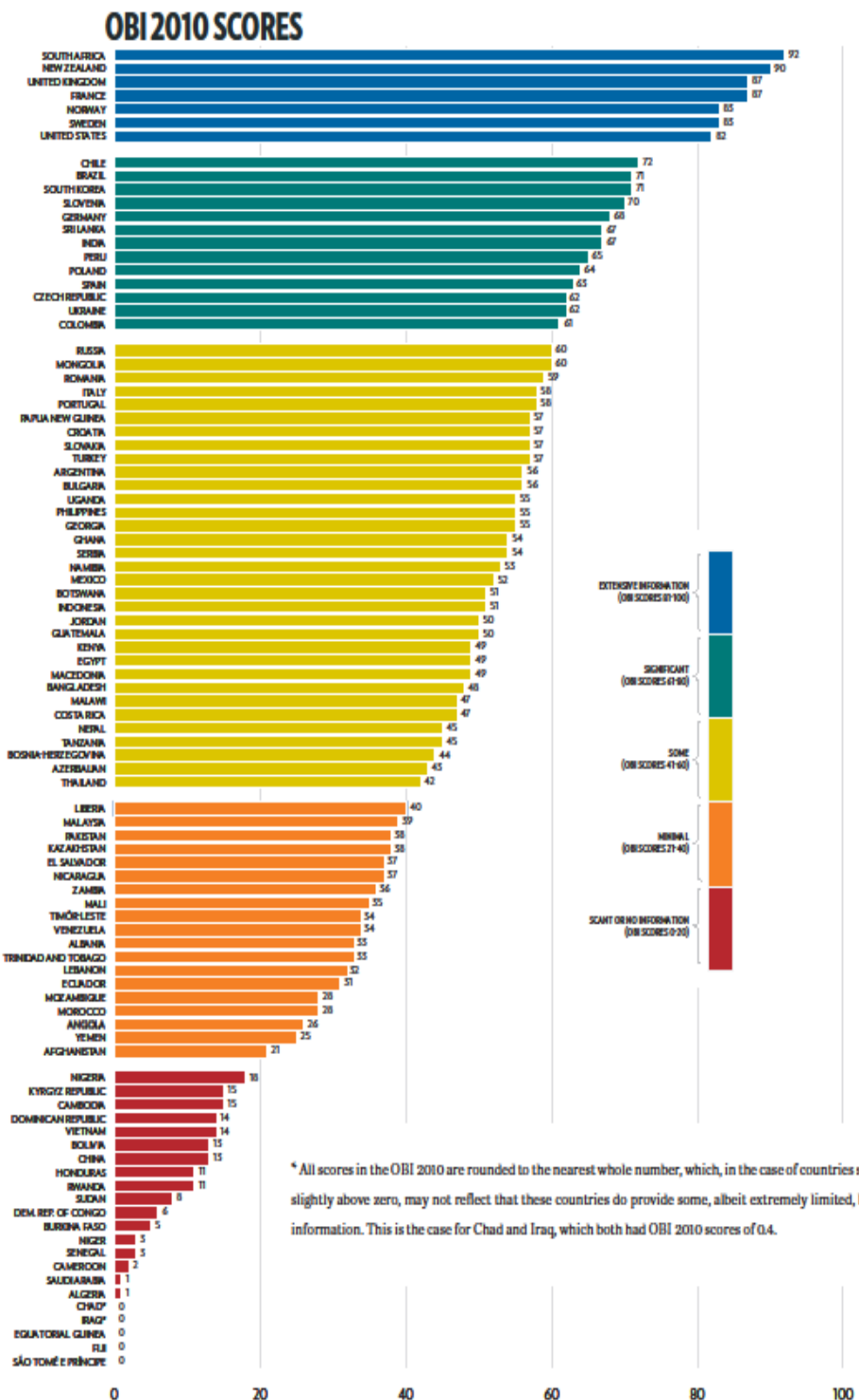
Source: Adapted from Paolo and Harika (2011)

### Appendix C1: List of Participating Countries in the Open Budget Survey

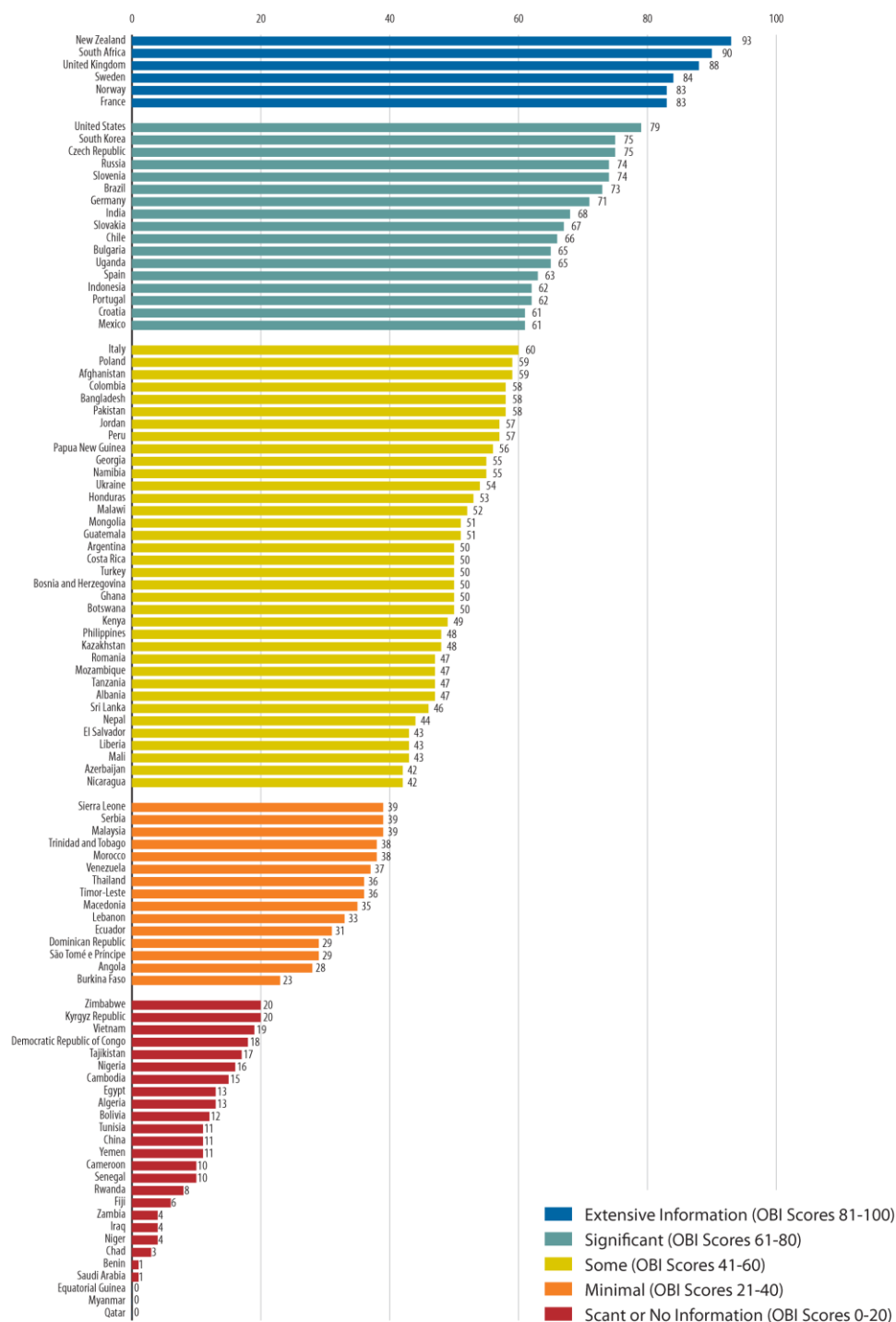
Afghanistan Albania Algeria Angola Azerbaijani	Honduras  India Indonesian Iraq Italy	Pakistan Papua New Guinea Peru Philippines Poland Portugal
Bangladesh Bolivia Bosnia and Herzegovina Botswana Brazil Bulgaria Burkina Faso	Jordan  Kazakhstan Kenya Kyrgyz Republic  Lebanon Liberia	Romania Russia Rwanda
Cameroon Chad Chile China Colombia Costa Rica Croatia Czech Republic  Dem. Republic of Congo Dominican Republic	Macedonia Malawi Malaysia Mali Mexico Mongolia Morocco Mozambique	Sao Tome Saudi Arabia Senegal Serbia Slovakia Slovenia South Africa South Korea Spain Sri Lanka Sudan Sweden
Ecuador Egypt El Salvador Equatorial Guinea  Fiji France	Namibia Nepal New Zealand Nicaragua Niger Nigeria Norway	Tanzania Thailand Timor-Leste Trinidad and Tobago Turkey  Uganda Ukraine United Kingdom United States
Georgia Germany Ghana Guatemala		Venezuela Vietnam Yemen  Zambia

Source: Generated from IBP website (<http://internationalbudget.org/what-we-do/open-budget-survey/country-info/>)

## Appendix D: OBS Ranking for 2010 and 2012



# OBS 2012 SCORES

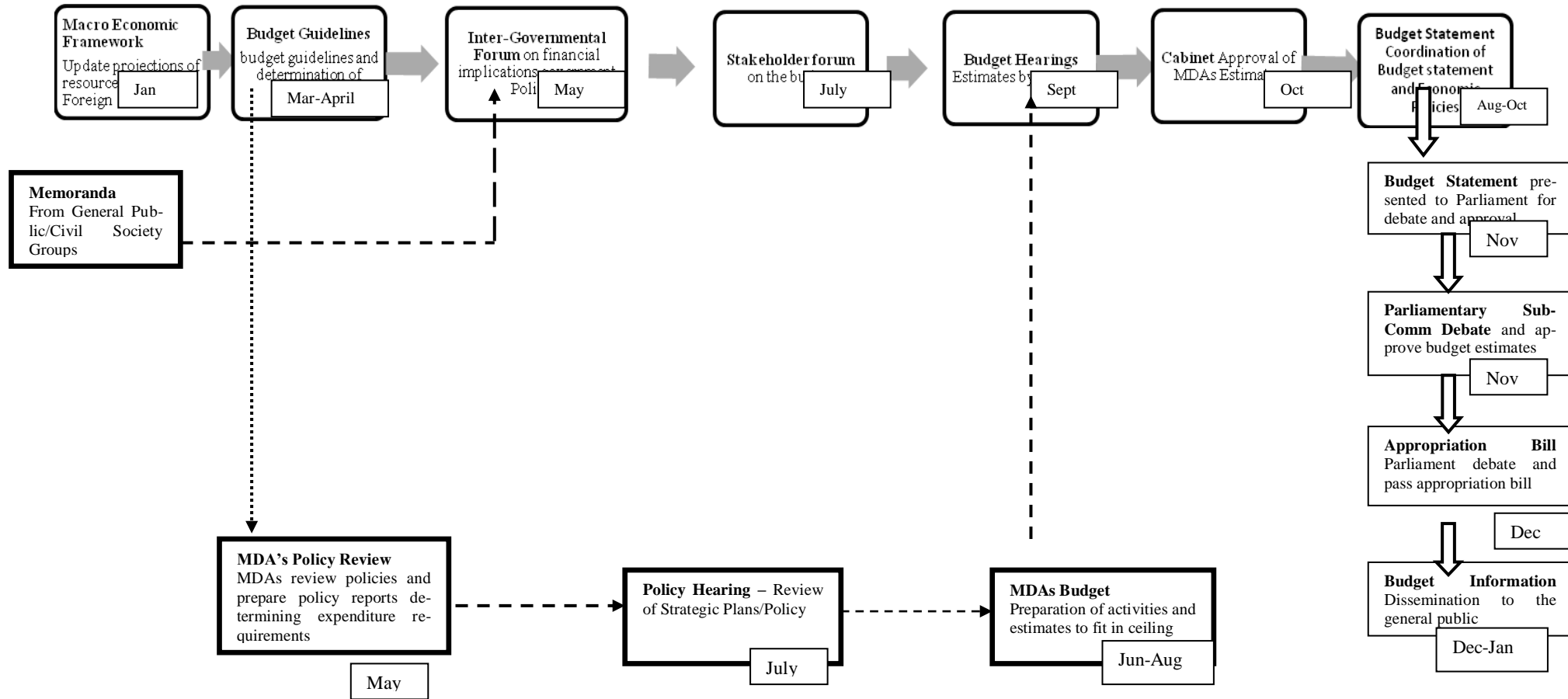


### Appendix E: Ownership of some Media Houses

No.	Print Media		
	Name of Newspaper	Language of Delivery	Ownership
1.	Daily Graphic	English	State
2.	Ghanaian Times	English	State
3.	Ghanaian Chronicle	English	Private
4.	Accra Mail	English	Private
5.	Public Agenda	English	Private
6.	Daily Despatch	English	Private
7.	Business & Financial Times	English	Private
No.	Audio/Digital TV		
	Name of TV Station	Language of Delivery	Ownership
1.	Ghana Broadcasting	English and Local	State
2.	TV3	English	Private
3.	TV Africa	English and Local	Private
4.	Metro TV	English	Joint
5.	Net2 TV	English and local	Private
6.	Viassat 1	English	Private
7.	e-TV	English	Private
8.	Joy TV	English and local	Private
9.	Smart TV	English	Private
10.	U TV	English and local	Private
No.	Electronic Media		
	Name of FM	Language of Delivery	Ownership
1.	Joy	English	Private
2.	Radio Gold	English and local	Private
3.	Happy FM	English and Local	Private
4.	Unique FM	English	State
5.	Citi FM	English	Private
6.	Adom FM	Local	Private
7.	Peace FM	Local	Private
8.	Ok FM	Local	Private
9.	Choice FM	English	Private
10.	Atlantis Radio	English	Private

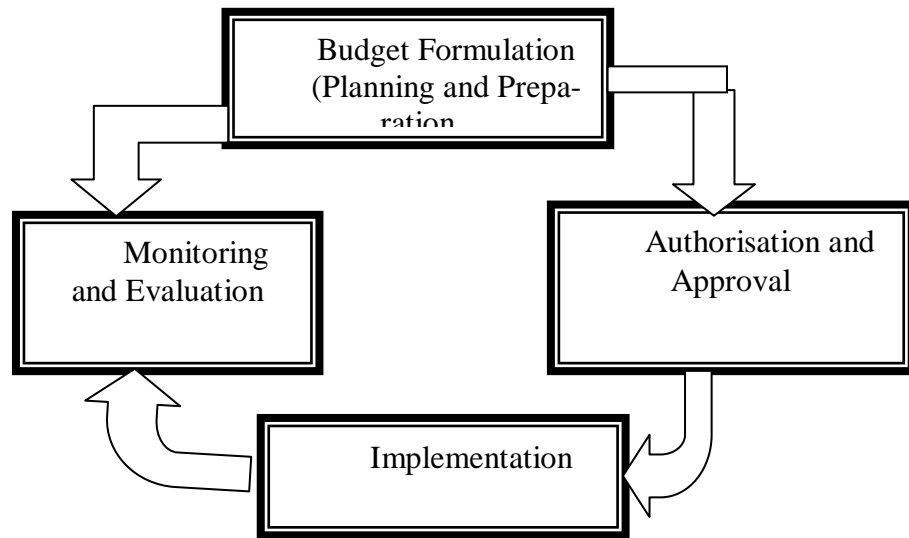
Source: Generated from field data

## Appendix F: Budget Calendar/Process



Source: Adopted in its entirety from Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning; Government of Ghana MTEF Budget Preparation Calendar/Process

## Appendix G: Budget Cycle



Source: Author's own construct





## Appendix H: Newspaper Advert for Public Inputs into the Budget

Daily Graphic, Monday, July 22, 2013.

www.graphic.com.gh

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**PUBLIC INPUT INTO THE 2014 BUDGET STATEMENT  
AND ECONOMIC POLICY**

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning wishes to inform the general public that the Budget Statement for 2014 will be read in November 2013. This is with the hope that Parliament will debate and pass it before it rises in December, 2013.

The Ministry is happy to receive from recognised professional bodies, associations, civil society organisations and individuals, ideas and contributions that may be considered during the process of formulating the Budget Statement.

You may forward your contributions directly to the attention of the **Director of Budget, Room 417, Ministry of Finance. Email: [bdu@mofep.gov.gh](mailto:bdu@mofep.gov.gh) or the Public Relations Office, Ministry of Finance P. O. Box MB40, Accra. Fax numbers 0302- 665132/663854 email: [pr@mofep.gov.gh](mailto:pr@mofep.gov.gh)**

**Deadline for receipt of such valued contributions is August 30, 2013.** The Ministry will like to take this opportunity to once again, thank all those who responded to the call last year.