

Using the Budget as a Mechanism for Parliamentary oversight

8 May 2024

Webinar Report



WEBINAR

Using the Budget as a mechanism for Parliamentary Oversight

Host

Rachel Fischer
 OUTA
 Parliamentary Engagement & Research Manager

Panelist

Liz McDaid
 The Green Connection
 Strategic Lead

Scan to register



DATE: 8 May 2024
TIME: 13:00 - 14:00
 Via Zoom

 Co-funded by the European Union

 **PARLIAMENTARY MONITORING GROUP**

 **openup:**

On 8 May 2024, a critical webinar titled "Using the Budget as a Mechanism for Parliamentary Oversight" was conducted via Zoom. This session, lasting from 13:00 to 14:00, was organised by OUTA in partnership with The Green Connection. The event was facilitated by Ms Ogone Motlogeloa and featured key presentations by Dr Rachel Fischer from OUTA and Ms Liz McDaid from The Green Connection and Bridges. This webinar aimed to discuss and promote the utilisation of the budget as a tool for enhancing transparency and accountability within parliamentary operations.

The webinar opened with Dr Rachel Fischer emphasising the importance of parliamentary oversight, especially in the context of the Zondo Commission's findings on state capture. Dr Fischer then highlighted the ongoing efforts by OUTA to develop a user-friendly Parliamentary Oversight Dashboard in collaboration with OpenUp and PMG, co-funded by the European Union. This project aims to enhance public access to parliamentary proceedings and reports through innovative visual aids and data interpretations.

Ms Liz McDaid focused on the practical challenges and opportunities within the parliamentary budget cycle, especially concerning new MPs' roles and responsibilities. She stressed the importance of equipping MPs with the necessary knowledge and resources to effectively scrutinise the executive and hold it accountable, particularly through budget analyses and public consultations.

Following the panel analysis, Ms Liz McDaid elucidated the parliamentary budget cycle. The cycle begins in February with the Executive's initial budget proposal, which then moves into a period of departmental review and revision from March to July (Fig.1). The Parliamentary Budget Office analyses these proposals from July to September, ensuring they align with national goals (see below). This analysis is vital for enabling MPs to make informed legislative decisions. Concurrently, public consultations are held to incorporate community input and reflect societal priorities.

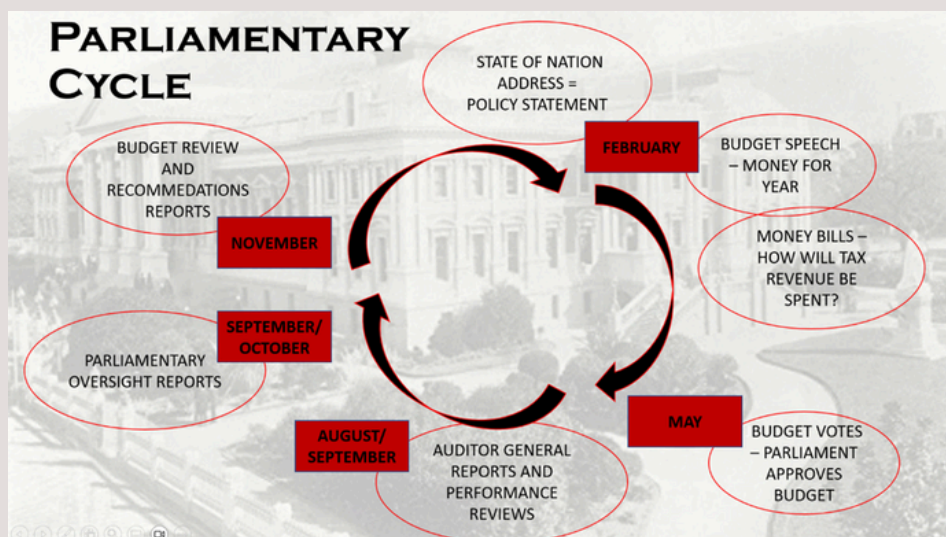


Figure 1: Parliamentary Budget Cycle

From October to November, the Budget Recommendation Review Report (BRRR) process scrutinises departmental spending and efficiency. Parliamentary committees make key recommendations for adjustments, actively involving stakeholders through initiatives like Bridges, which fosters deeper collaboration between Parliament, civil society organisations (CSOs), and environmental agencies to ensure that budget allocations address pressing issues like climate change (Fig.1 above).

This BRRR process begins as early as October, allowing for a more thorough and timely evaluation by the respective Portfolio Committees, before the reports are officially tabled and approved by the end of November. Throughout the fiscal year, ongoing monitoring ensures that the budget's implementation adheres to the planned objectives. Audits and performance reviews form a continuous basis for improvement, highlighting the necessity of active participation from all stakeholders in each phase to ensure transparent and effective governance. Ms McDaid emphasised this participatory approach, such as those practised by OUTA and through the Bridges initiative, as essential for holding the executive accountable and ensuring that parliamentary decisions are informed and impactful.

The webinar concluded with a robust discussion on the need for continued and enhanced public engagement in parliamentary processes. Both presenters highlighted the critical role of civil society and the public in shaping parliamentary oversight and budgeting practices. They called for a more inclusive approach to governance, where public input – CSOs, academia and the general public – and accountability mechanisms are not only welcomed but actively sought to ensure transparent and effective governance.

This webinar underscored the significant impact that informed parliamentary oversight can have on governance, particularly through the strategic use of the budget as a tool for transparency and accountability. The insights and recommendations provided during the webinar are expected to influence ongoing and future initiatives aimed at strengthening parliamentary processes in South Africa.

The Webinar recording is available on **YouTube here**.

For more information on the EU co-funded project on Parliamentary Oversight, please visit **OUTA's website here**.