

THE AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY INDEX (API) 2012



**SUMMARY COUNTRY REPORT
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BENIN**

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
NA	National Assembly
NSA	Non-State Actor
APNAC	African Parliamentarians Network against Corruption
CAPAN	Committee for the Analysis of the Development Policies of the National Assembly
PC	Parliamentary Centre
API	African Parliamentary Index
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
PARMAN	Project for the Support, Strengthening and Modernization of the National Assembly
APSP	Africa Parliamentary Strengthening Program
TFP	Technical and Financial Partners
UNACEB	Committee for the Analysis, Control and Assessment of the National Budget

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This self-assessment report of the Béninois Parliament is aimed at leading MPs, parliamentary staff and representatives of civil society organizations to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the National Assembly in the budget process.

The exercise led to the estimation of the 2012 African Parliamentary Index for Benin, one of the seven (07) African Parliaments involved in the Africa Parliamentary Strengthening Program (APSP) implemented by the Parliamentary Centre and funded by CIDA. The seven countries are Benin, Ghana and Senegal for West Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania for East Africa, and Zambia for Southern Africa.

The methodology used consists of the following stages: (i) after a presentation of the methodology for calculating the API by the assessor, the MPs and parliamentary staff attending the workshop were put into three work-groups for the self-assessment (ii) thereafter, the representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) discussed the self-assessment report submitted by the assessor during a one-day workshop, as part of the validation procedure; (iii) Finally, the self-assessors – parliamentarians and parliamentary staff – and representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) met in the final part of the validation exercise to harmonize their viewpoints on the scores or ratings, reasons or evidences, and the recommendations.

The value of the Round II API for the National Assembly of Benin is 64.01. This index, stemming both from ratings assigned by the MPs and parliamentary staff and the weighting system, is slightly higher than Round I API score of 60.80. The average of the scores assigned ranged from 3.00 to 4.75 out of a possible maximum of 6.

The Budget Review and Hearings, Oversight Committees and the Organic Law relating to Finance Acts received the highest average scores, whilst the lowest scores were recorded by Audit, Finance Committee, Accessibility and Legal Mandate, in ascending order. There is a decline in the scores of the last two capacity or functional areas as compared to what was observed at the Round I survey.

In addition, the representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) asserted that the MPs and parliamentary staff were broadly objective with the assigned scores, the justifications provided and the recommendations proposed.

Finally, the validation session conducted in the presence of MPs, parliamentary staff and CSOs representatives allowed them to agree on all the recommendations made on each functional or capacity area for a stronger.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The National Assembly of Benin

Since 1990, African states are increasingly engaging in democratic processes. One of the expressions of this is the establishment of institutions among which Parliament holds a prominent position.

In Benin, after the constitutional referendum of 1990 and the beginning of a democratic period marked by the holding of elections, the changeover of political power between parties was observed at all levels of the political sphere. The National Assembly is then in its sixth term and is increasingly playing its role, particularly as regards budget voting and oversight.

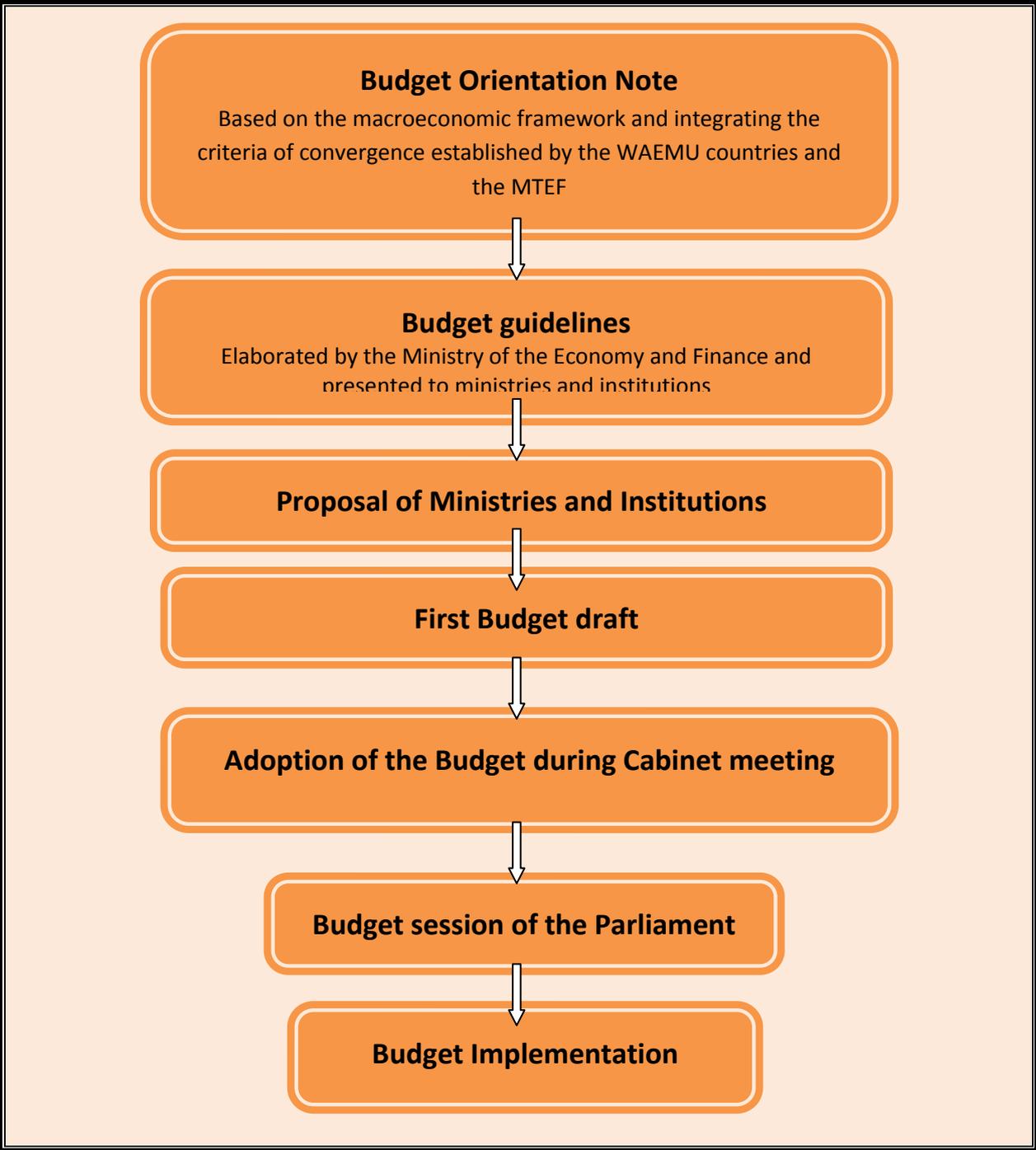
Under the Constitution of 11 December 1990, the Parliament intervenes in the adoption of the draft budget presented by the government. In fact, under the constitutional provisions, parliament plays no role during the development phase of the Finance Act.

To effectively ensure this constitutional role, the Finance Committee is the main entity that ensures a thorough review of the budget proposal submitted by the government. This committee is composed of elected officials and is assisted by civil servants with high competence in finance. It also benefits from the expertise of other support structures like the Committee for the Analysis, Control and Assessment of the State Budget (UNACEB) and the Unit for the Analysis of the Parliament's Development Policies (CAPAN). These units are not provided for by law, but were established with the assistance of Technical and Financial Partners (TFPs). Furthermore, the Finance Committee auditions the representatives of Civil Society Organizations so as to record their opinion on the Appropriations Bill.

Budget discussions are held according to a specific schedule. They take place during the last quarter of the year preceding the execution of the budget and the latter is adopted no later than December 31 of the year preceding its implementation.

Voting the budget is just a step in the budget process in Benin since overall the process involves several phases. It starts from the determination of the macroeconomic and financial framework, which is within the remit of the Executive, to the approval of the Finance Act, which is within the remit of the Parliament.

Figure 1: The Budget Process in Benin



Source: Adapted by the authors¹

It should however be noted that most of the powers devolved to the Parliament remains unexercised by the Benin Parliament and some gaps remain to be filled regarding the development and monitoring of budget execution as well as the control of government action.

¹ Adapted by the authors based on The Budgeting Process, Ministry of Finance and the Economy of Benin <http://www.finances.bj/spip.php?article64>

From the first self-assessment, it was clear that the major strengths of the Beninois Parliament are related to its legal mandate and its weaknesses related to accessibility and audit capacities.

The Africa Parliamentary Strengthening Program (APSP) executed by the Parliamentary Centre and funded by CIDA was designed towards increasing the capacity and authority of African Parliaments. The major focus of APSP is on the role of parliaments in the budget process. It therefore aims at strengthening the capacities of partner Parliaments to effectively carry out their legislative, financial, supervisory and representation function. Its ultimate goal is to generate governance and values of accountability, transparency and participation, especially in the budget process.

Budgeting is a priority area for the Parliaments and is closely related to the reduction of poverty. As a matter of fact, state budgets constitute an instrument of economic policy and affect the lives of citizens, who are represented by the Members of Parliament in democratic States. It is therefore imperative that MPs be equipped with tools they required to perform their role in the budget process. This will also enhance their understanding of those aspects directly related to Poverty Reduction Strategies in their respective countries.

Furthermore, although the APSP was established to assist partner parliaments to elaborate and implement plans to strengthen their roles through an effective monitoring of the national budget process, it also recognizes that the organization, the powers and the effectiveness of parliaments vary significantly. This recognition has intensified the need to establish a set of indicators by which the performance of partner parliaments is measured. This set of indicators is synthesized into an index to describe the various parliaments in terms of key APSP indicators. This index, called the African Parliamentarian Index (API), allows assessing the level of commitment of the selected African Parliaments to the budget process of their respective countries.

This self-assessment report is intended to bring the MPs as well as the parliamentary staff and Civil Society Organizations to shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of the Beninois Parliament regarding the budget process, which is a major field of their mandate.

Chapter Two of the report presents the goals and scope of the African Parliamentary Index and the methodology for its estimation in Benin. Chapter Three presents the results and discussions. Finally, recommendations are proposed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO: PRESENTATION OF THE AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY INDEX

2.1 Goal and scope of the API

The goal of the African Parliamentary Index is to help assess the effectiveness of parliaments in Africa, especially the seven APSP countries. The API then represents a simplified means for the assessment of the parliaments engaged in the APSP towards the key objectives of the program. The objectives of the API are:

- Evaluate the partner Parliaments against international practices in the field of budget oversight;
- Present a simplified model of assessing the performance of member parliaments in budget oversight;
- Identify priorities and areas where there is need for building up the capacities of partner parliaments
- Stimulate parliamentary progress towards achieving the goals of the program

The first phase of the API was involved the seven African Parliaments: Benin, Ghana and Senegal in West Africa and Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania in East Africa and Zambia in southern Africa.

The level of the indicators is defined based on two main questions: the functions and roles of Parliaments, and the understanding of the Parliamentary Centre (PC) on the role of Parliaments in the budget process and oversight. These include parliamentary involvement in all the stages of the budget cycle, especially in relation to the important representation and legislation roles. It also includes other key issues addressed by this program.

2.2 Methodology

The three major steps leading to the assessment of the API for Benin is described as follows:

1. The first step basically concerns MPs and parliamentary staff. It comprised the presentation of the self-assessment (methodology for estimating the API) by the assessor and the rating or scoring (with reasons and recommendations) by the MPs and parliamentary staff. The assessors were put into three work-groups.

2. The second step conducted over two days involved, not only the MPs and parliamentary staff, but also representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):
 - i. The first day was devoted to an open debate session with the representatives of CSOs. The assessment team presented the methodology, the API approach and the result of the self-assessment made by the MPs to the CSO representatives in order to record their comments. These comments were documented and were used to improve the final report after amendments by the MPs and parliamentary staff.
 - ii. The second day was dedicated to the validation of the results of the self-assessment of the MPs and the judgment made by the representatives of CSOs in the presence of all the stakeholders (parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and CSO representatives).
3. The final step is the completion of the self-assessment report based on comments made at the validation session.

The self-assessment instrument covers six key areas, namely: representation, legislation, finance, oversight, institutional capacity and institutional integrity. These areas are related to the parliamentary budget oversight and the other key functional areas that directly affect the financial and oversight roles of Parliaments.

The approach used in Benin consisted in breaking the assessment team into three working groups: the first group dealt with questions relating to Accessibility and Outreach, Legal Mandate, and Budget Act and Budget Office; the second group responded to questions on Periodic Review of the Budget, Oversight Committees and the Public Accounts Committee; the third work-group responded to the Audit, Financial and Material Resource, Human Resource and Transparency and Integrity.

The work was conducted in parallel sessions and the results of each working group were presented and validated² in plenary sessions. All three groups had free debates on each question and scores were assigned unanimously to each indicator on a 0 to 6 scale.

The respondents used the survey instruments to assess the effectiveness of the Parliament in each functional area, voting and budget oversight.

² This validation is different from the CSO-validation. This involved only the self-assessors discussing the responses provided by the work-groups.

The ranking or performance scale (ranging from 0 to 6) is defined as follows:

0	Not Applicable	1	Not Quite Conform	2	Not Conform
3	not a bit conform	4	A bit Conform	5	Conform
6	Fully Conform				

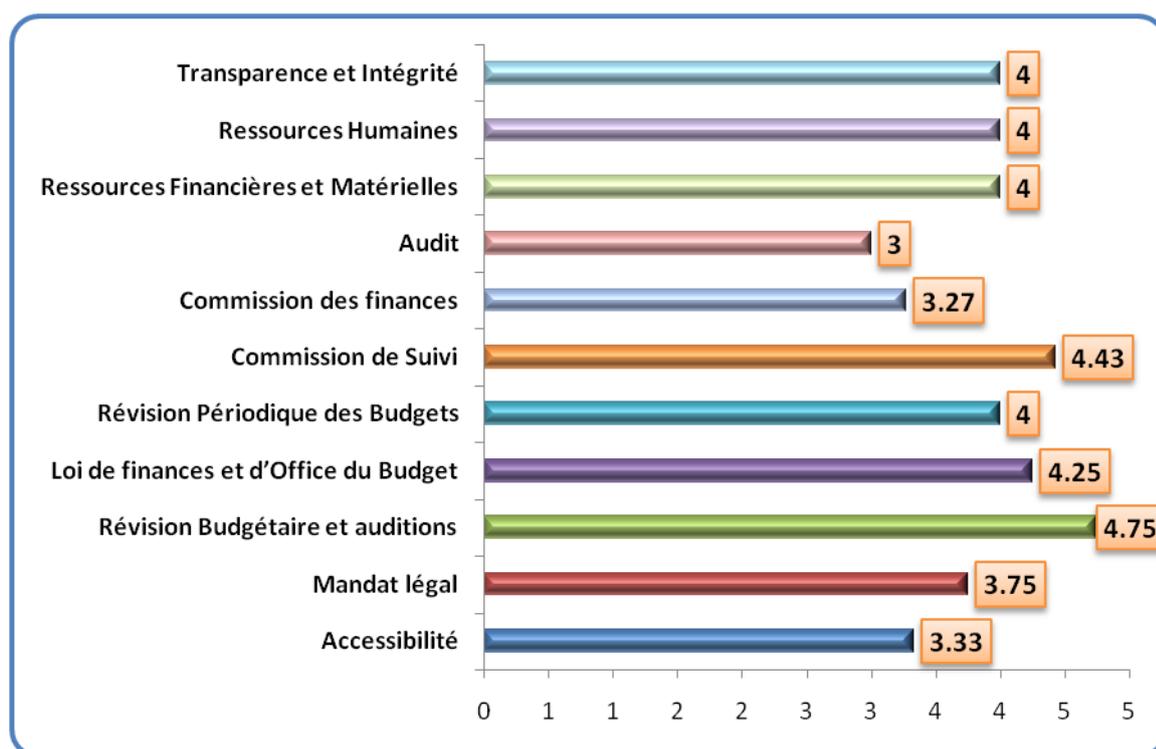
The participants gave evidences or reasons and recommendations to the scores assigned to each functional or capacity area. The reasons as well as recommendations were used by the assessor for deeper analysis. “Zero” is assigned in case a question is not applicable. It is not considered in the calculation of the average scores.

CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The table below shows the value of the Round II African Parliamentary Index (API) of Benin and the scores for the eleven (11) capacity areas. Following the self-assessment of the Beninois Parliament conducted in July 2012, the value of the 2011 IPA is 64.01. This value that results from ratings assigned by MPs and parliamentary staff and the weighting system is higher than the score of 60.8 obtained in 2010.

As Figure 1 shows, the average scores range from 3 to 4.75 out of a possible maximum score of 6. These are functional elements related to the Periodic Review of the Budget and Hearing, the Oversight Committee, and the Organic Law on Finance Acts that have the highest values

Figure 2: Ratings of the Capacity Areas



Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

The functional areas with the lowest averages are respectively: Audit, Finance Committee, accessibility and legal mandate. This epitomizes the downgrading of the last two functional elements as compared to the first edition.

Table 1: Summary of Scores per Functional Area

Areas	Subareas	Capacity average score (Scale : 1 - 6) ³	Capacity weighted score
Representation	Accessibility	3.33	102.22
Legislative function	Legal Mandate	3.75	45.00
Financial Function	Budget review and hearings	4.75	60.17
	Finance and budget office Act	4.25	62.33
	Periodic Review of Budgets	4.00	40.00
Oversight function	Monitoring Commission	4.43	53.14
	Public Accounts Committee	3.27	32.73
	Audit	3.00	38.00
Institutional capacity of the Parliament	Financial and Material Resources	4.00	58.67
	Human Resources	4.00	26.67
Transparency and integrity	Transparency and Integrity	4.00	85.33
API (score)			604.26
API (%)			64.01

Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

The following sections are dedicated to a thorough analysis of the results per functional area. Similarly, only the comments and scores relating to aspects of disagreement between parliamentarians and representatives of Civil Society Organizations were be adjusted.

³ Note that a score of zero (0) means Not Applicable and is not included in the estimation of the ratings

3.1: REPRESENTATION

3.1.1 Accessibility

Six (6) capacity areas identified and translated into assessment questions were used to evaluate the "accessibility" function.

The legislature is open to citizens and the media. In Benin, the accessibility of the Parliament to citizens and the media has improved. The MPs provided several reasons: (i) the existence of a parliamentary radio station (ii) participation of the public and the Media in plenary works (iii) existence of a magazine *l'Hémicycle* published twice a year. This is why the rating 4 was assigned to this capacity area with the following limitations:

- The public does not participate in committee sessions. However, the Committees may audition Civil Society Organizations they wish to;
- The radio station of the parliament only covers the Porto Novo region;
- The space available at Parliament is small and cannot therefore accommodate a large number of citizens.

As for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), they argued that the score of 4 assigned by MPs and the parliamentary staff to this indicator is a little high. For them, parliament is not accessible to the public as work sessions at the National Assembly are not broadcasted in local languages on radio and the magazine *l'Hémicycle* is published in French. This excludes a large part of the population that does not understand French.

The Legislature has non-partisan media relations. According to the members of the assessment team, partnership and non-partisan relations exist with both private and public media as well as with some community-based radio stations. They unanimously agreed that the major concern of the National Assembly is to have organs to relay information.

Similarly, the representatives of CSOs argued that a score of 3 will better fit the indicator on the existence of non-partisan relations between the Parliament and the "Maison de la Presse" "House of the Press". In their opinion, the independence of the media is still not well established, which influences much the relationship between the Maison de la Presse and the Parliament.

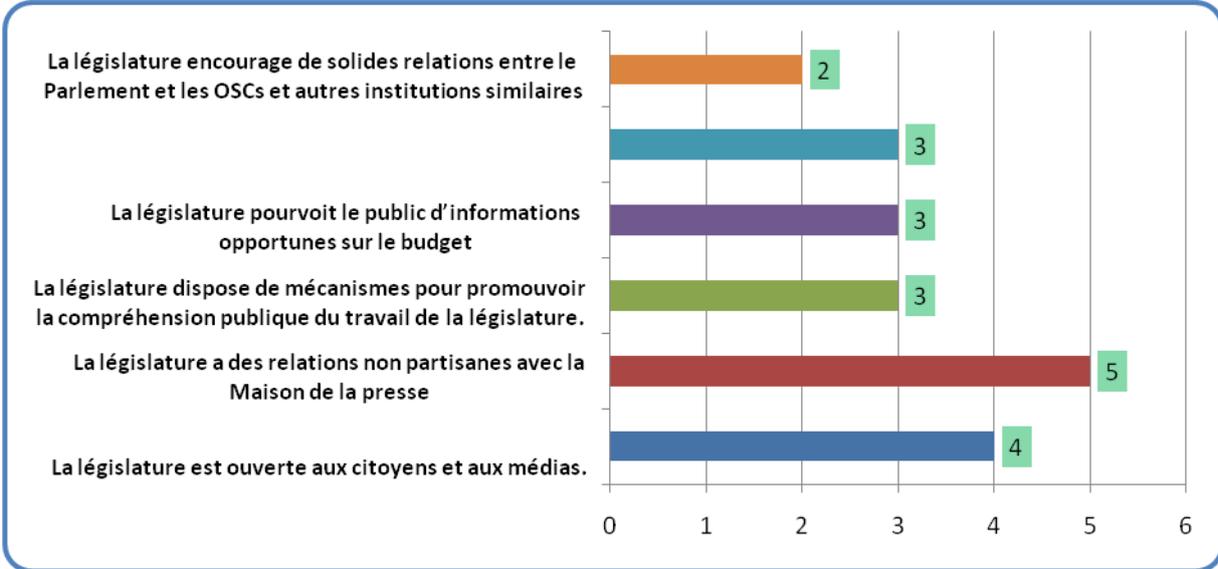
The Legislature has mechanisms to promote public understanding of its work. At this level, the team pointed out the lack of a mechanism for promoting public understanding of the work of the National Assembly although the media relay information. Field visits, parliamentary information assignments, commissions of inquiry and parliamentary control contribute to public understanding of the role of the Parliament. However, much remains to be done to take into account this capacity of the National Assembly.

The legislature provides timely information to the public on the budget. There is hardly any action related to that. Before the voting of the budget, there are briefings to CSOs, employers, trade unions and Non-State Actors (NSAs). However, this action remains insufficient. The audience should be expanded to a larger public.

Promote knowledge and understanding of citizens on the role of MPs in the budget process. Formally, there is no mechanism in this area. The participants gave 3 to this area.

The legislature fosters strong relationships between Parliament and CSOs and other similar institutions. There is no formal relationship between parliament and CSOs. There is no regulation providing for that.

Figure 3: Assessment of Indicators under the Accessibility Function



Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

Through this graph, it comes out that two assessment questions, namely “the legislature has non-partisan media relations” and "the legislature is open to citizens and the media" got the

highest scores, respectively 5 and 4 higher than the average rating of 3.3 of this functional element.

"The legislature fosters strong relationships between Parliament and CSOs and other related institutions" obtained the poor score of 2 points, which means the participating MPs and parliamentary staff had a bad perception of this function.

3.2: LEGISLATIVE FUNCTION

3.2.1 Legal mandate

The strength of Benin parliament is essentially based on its statutory mandate. Particular attention is given to this issue by MPs.

With regard to the implementation and oversight of the budget and the Finance Act, the legal mandate is firmly grounded in law. Law authorizes the parliament to oversee the budget and finance act. Therefore, this role perfectly matches the constitutional mandate of the Parliament; hence the score of 6 was assigned to this assessment question.

The Legislature has the power to amend the Finance Act. By mutual agreement, the Working Group recognizes that the legislature does not have full power. This power is restricted by the laws in force which require the MPs to find the corresponding compensatory resources in case of additional spending.

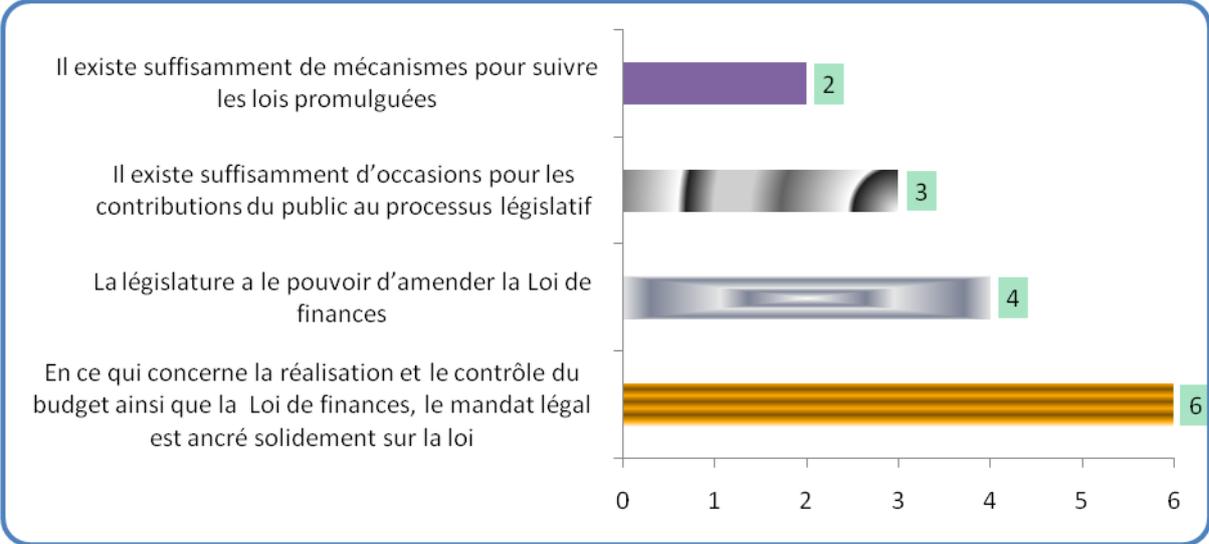
There are enough opportunities for public input in the legislative process. The public is not involved in committee works and the Parliament does not have the means to get in touch with the public to record their concerns properly.

Adequate mechanisms exist to track laws that have been enacted. According to the participants, there is no mechanism in place to follow up enacted laws. This justifies the low grade of 2 assigned to this component.

As shown in Figure 4, the main lessons that emerge are:

- The legal mandate of the parliament regarding the implementation and oversight of the budget and the Finance Act is perfectly enshrined in the constitutional mandate of the Parliament;
- There are no adequate mechanisms for public input in the legislative process and to follow up enacted laws.

Figure 4: Assessment of Indicators under Legal Mandate



Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

3.3: FINANCIAL FUNCTION

The financial function includes: (i) budget review and hearing, (ii) Finance Act and Budget Office, (iii) Periodic review of the Finance Act.

3.3.1 Budget review and hearing

The legislature has sufficient time to review the budget: In Benin the legislature has two and half months to review the draft budget tabled by the Executive usually in the second half of October.

The legislature has a finance/budget committee whose role is to meticulously review the Finance Act: the Finance Committee is the body in charge of conducting an in-depth study of the draft budget. This Committee and the other Committees hold public hearings on the budget during which members of the Executive are heard. Unanimously, a score of 6 was attributed to this area.

The Finance/ budget Committee as well as sector committees hold public hearings to register the justifications of the public and the Executive: such an arrangement does exist but is limited to few organizations.

The legislature has an efficient, well documented and well popularized process for citizen participation in the budget process: There is no regulatory process in this field.

By approving the grade proposed by parliamentarians, the CSOs added other arguments including:

- The declining incomes of municipalities are due to the non-participation of the grass-roots communities. A law must be enacted to require the mayor to develop a participatory budget;
- The MPs have limited power in reading the general budget regarding the transfer of resources to municipalities. This poses a real problem to MPs as the Organic Law did not provide details at the General Budget level for the MPs regarding municipalities.

The legislature has authority to amend the budget proposed by the Executive including proposed spending and revenues: the Parliament has the right to amend the general budget of the State. However, this right is limited in the sense that the MPs do not participate in the

budget orientation debate. This is why the score 4 was assigned to this indicator.

The Legislature has the power to send back proposed Budget to the Executive for review: the parliament can indeed reject the budget for reasons of its own as is often the case at the Beninois parliament. The participants gave 6 to this capacity area. The CSO accepted the grade assigned by the Parliamentarians but they required that the rejection should be well motivated and not based on "politicking."

The Legislature may make amendments to increase revenues and expenses: amendments to increase spending and revenues are normally performed but this right is limited by the legislation in force. The working group assigned 4 to this question. According to the CSOs, the right to amend is ineffective. It was decided that a score of 3 would be appropriate for this indicator.

The Finance Act passed by the Legislature contains details about all allocations of resources to ministries, departments and public institutions: Participants agreed with this indicator entirely and assigned it a score of 6.

In summary, the functional element “budget review and hearing” is mainly handicapped by the fact that the legislature does not have an efficient, well documented and well popularized process ensuring citizen participation in the budget process in Benin.

Table 2: Assessment of Indicators under Budget Review and Hearing

Assessment questions	Grade
The legislature has sufficient time to review the budget	5
The legislature has a finance/ budget committee whose role is to fully review the Finance Act	6
The Finance/ budget Committee as well as sector committees hold public hearings to register the justifications of the public and the Executive	5
The legislature has an efficient, well documented and well popularized process for citizen participation in the budget process.	2
The legislature has authority to amend the budget proposed by the Executive including proposed expenditures and revenues	4
The Legislature has the power to send back proposed Budget to the Executive for review	6
The Legislature may make amendments to increase revenues and expenses	4

Assessment questions	Grade
The Finance Act passed by the Legislature contains details about all allocations of resources to ministries, departments and public institutions	6

Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

3.3.2 Finance Act and Budget Office

There is an organic law on Finance Acts that clearly defines the role of the legislature in the budget process: There is such a law and it is enshrined in the constitution.

The legislature has a Budget Office established by law to support the parliament for in-depth study of the draft budget: there is no law instituting such a structure. However, in the National Assembly there are technical support committees that are administrative structures such as CAPAN and UNACEB. This indicator was rated 3.

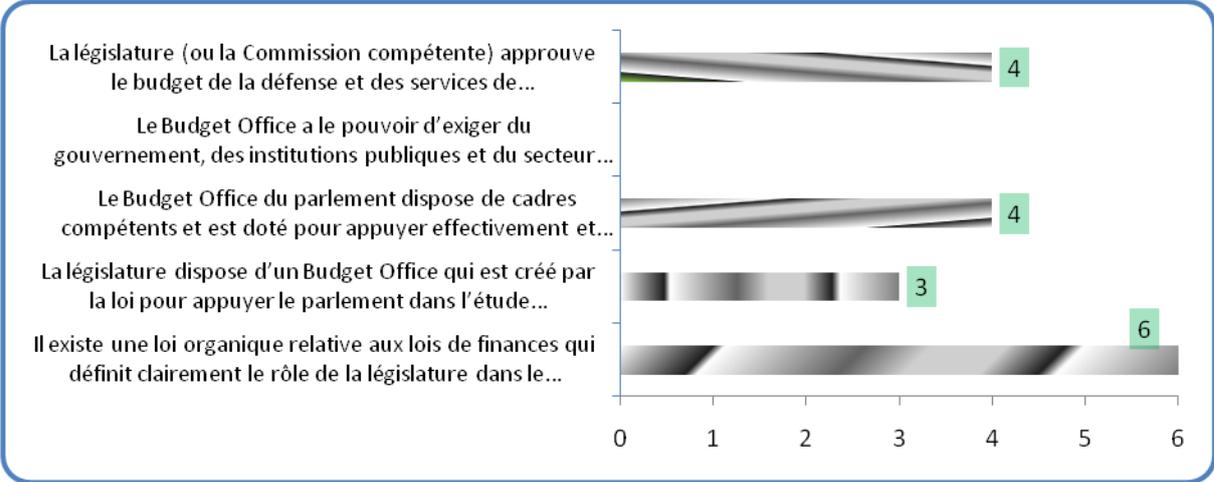
The Parliamentary Budget Office has qualified and competent Executives and the Office is equipped to efficiently and effectively assist Parliament with informed analysis: the participants recognized that Committee for the Analysis, Control and Assessment of the National Budget (UNACEB) and Committee for the Analysis of the Development Policies of the National Assembly (CAPAN) are endowed with technical and financial resources to support the parliament.

The Budget Office has power to call for information and documents from Government Departments and the private sector and when necessary (Power of Subpoena): This authority is not applicable in the Beninois context. A score of 0 was then assigned. The CSOs pointed out the need to promote the establishment of a formal structure like the "Budget Office" within the Benin Parliament.

The legislature (or the relevant Commission) approves the budget of the defense and intelligence agencies and they are given the details of the forecasts and figures: An unfavorable response was given to this mechanism. In fact, the budgets of the defense and intelligence agencies are reviewed the same way as all other sector budgets with the particularity that the "defense secret" characterizes some aspects of these budgets. The working group assigned a rating of 4 to this assessment question. While validating the rating, the CSOs proposed that despite the importance of defense and intelligence, the budget should be more oriented towards social sectors.

In summary, it should be noted that the Budget Office does not yet exist in Benin at the constitutional level.

Figure 5: Assessment of Indicators under Finance Act and Budget Office



Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

3.3.3 Periodic budget review

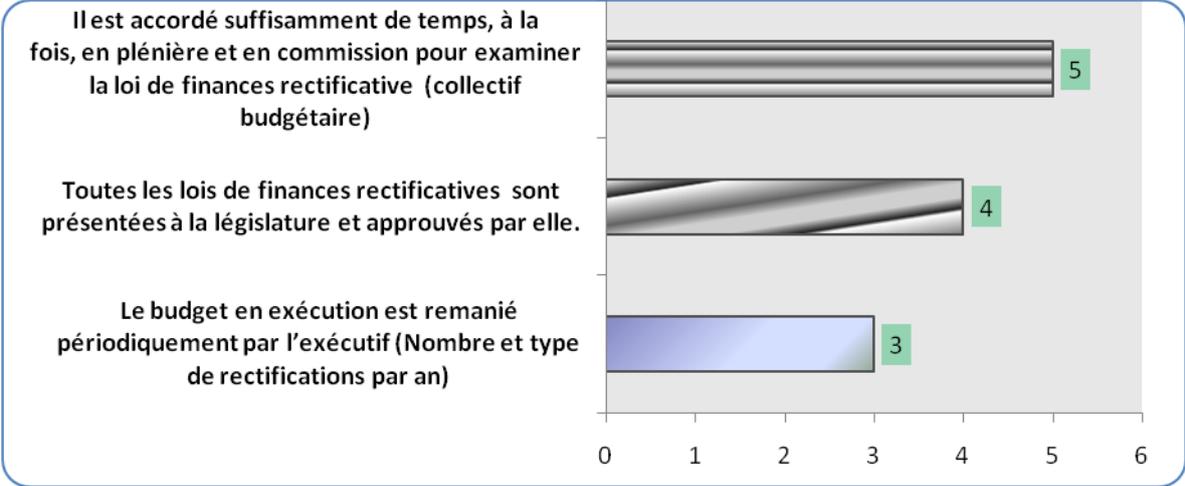
The budget under implementation is revised periodically by the Executive (Number and type of review per year): Indeed, the review of the budget is provided by the laws in force in Benin but not based on a predefined schedule. This review is done only in certain circumstances. It may be a disaster, a change of government after elections, any situations that require the alteration of the initial resources (increase or decrease). Unfortunately, there have been situations where the budget was reviewed and implemented without being resubmitted to parliament for approval.

All Periodic Reviews of the Budget are submitted to the approval of the legislature: The working group assigned 4 to this indicator. This score is justified by the fact that according to the participants, the Constitution of the Republic of Benin, the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly and the organic law allow this principle but in practice things are different.

Enough time is allowed both in plenary and in committee to examine the revised Finance Law (revised budget): the 5 points assigned to this section means that adequate time is allocated to discuss the reviewed budget be it in plenary or committee. But sometimes, the

delays in transmitting the budget prevent the MPs to have enough time for better review of the budget.

Figure 6: Assessment of Indicators under Periodic Budget Review



Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

3.4: THE OVERSIGHT FUNCTION

3.4.1 Oversight committee

The budget oversight function of the Legislature is performed by all sector-related committees and other special committees: The Constitution of 11 December 1990 and the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly endorsed that the oversight function should be performed by the Parliament.

The oversight committees of the legislature have strong investigative authority in budgetary matters: this provision also exists in the constitution of 1990. On proposal of the CSOs, the parliamentarians reduced the rating to 5 instead of 6 since the commission of inquiry is divested of the matter where the courts intervene.

Legislative Oversight Committees exercise sufficient oversight of the expenditures of State Enterprises: there is limited oversight and especially in state companies. Considering this, the score of 3 was assigned by the Working Group.

Oversight committees have enough mechanisms to obtain information from the Executive during their investigations: the members of the working group gave 5 points to this component. Indeed, they face no obstruction with institutions or organizations to be overseen while conducting their investigations. The Committees may even resort to constitutional means prescribed by Article 113 of the Constitution which stipulates that "The Government shall provide the National Assembly any explanations that will be required about its management and its activities." The means for information and oversight of the National Assembly on government actions are:

- Calling upon the government in accordance with article 71;
- Written question;
- Oral question with or without debate, not followed by voting;
- Parliamentary investigation committee.

These means are exercised under conditions laid down by the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly. Sometimes the MPs may use these means as part of the exercise of their constitutional function. CSO representatives argued the grade should be revised to 4. The MPs approved this proposal, and then the grade for this capacity area was reduced to 4.

Oversight Committees have adequate powers in law to request and receive updates on actions taken by the Executive on the Committees'/Parliament's recommendations: this process is adequately led in Benin and therefore faces no barrier. Assigned grade: 6.

The oversight committees are provided with sufficient resources to carry out their activities: the Working Group noted the committees do not have sufficient resources to conduct their activities properly. This indicator was scored 2.

The minority parties / opposition play an effective role in oversight committees: The minority parties actually exercise this role in the committees. It even happens that the minority group requests and obtains the establishment of a parliamentary committee in the context of a specific case. But the effectiveness of this committee poses some problems as the results are not always presented in plenary. They attributed 5 to this area.

CSO representatives have raised several arguments supporting the grade given by the Parliament:

- The reports of the committees in which the minority group is the majority are not often even considered, although these reports are filed late due to limited resources;
- The actual role of the minority does not always bring good results.

Table 3: Assessment of Indicators under Oversight Committees

Assessment Question	Grade assigned
The budget oversight function of the Legislature is performed by all sector related committees and other special committees	5
The oversight committees of the legislature have strong investigative authority in budgetary matters	6
Legislative Oversight Committees exercise sufficient oversight of the expenditures of State Enterprises	3
The oversight committees have enough mechanisms to obtain information from the Executive during their investigations	4
Oversight Committees have adequate powers in law to request and receive updates on actions taken by the Executive on the Committees'/ Parliament's recommendations	6
The oversight committees are provided with sufficient resources to carry out their activities	2
The minority parties / opposition play an effective role in oversight committees	5

Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

In conclusion, the oversight committees (parliamentary committees) are not adequately resourced to carry out their work properly and this handicaps them in the exercise of their role of overseeing government spending and management of state companies.

3.4.2 Finance and Budget Committee

The legislature has a finance and budget committee with skills to examine public expenditure: At the Beninois Parliament, there is indeed a Finance Committee which plays this role effectively. The Working Group assigned a score of 6 to this point.

The Finance and Budget Committee is chaired by a member who does not belong to the ruling party: In Benin, the Finance and Budget Committee is chaired by a member of the ruling party. The members of the working group gave the lowest score (of 1) to this component. They recommended reforms in this direction, as is the case in other countries for better management of public funds.

The Finance and Budget Committee has authority granted by law to subpoena witnesses and documents: The Working Group gave 5 to this area because such authority really exists and is provided for by law. But because its enforcement is not recurrent, the participants thought that the Beninois parliament should be able to make use of this legal provision in the exercise of its mandate.

All those who use public funds including Ministers are obliged to appear before the finance and budget committee when summoned: This process indicator is fully applied and the participants gave it a score of 6 points. Following discussions with the representatives of CSOs supported by MPs, the score was reduced to 5.

The law requires that the Finance and Budget Committee hold its meetings in public: The law does not require the Finance and Budget Committee to hold meetings in public. The participants called for reforms that would lead them to the organization of public sessions.

The Finance and Budget Committee reviews all reports of the Court of Auditors / Chamber of Audit timely: This capacity is low at the parliament of Benin. The Working Group gave 2 to it because a delay is observed in the preparation of these reports as well as in the study of those transmitted.

The Finance and Budget Committee may initiate independent investigations wherever there is public interest: the score of 5 was assigned to this capacity because it is a fully exercised in the Benin parliament. But for lack of financial resources, this practice is sometimes limited.

The Executive is constrained by law to implement the recommendations of the Finance and Budget Committee and this is strictly observed: Here, the participants agreed that there is no legislation requiring the implementation of the recommendations of the Finance and Budget Committee by the Executive.

There are mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of recommendations of the Finance and Budget Committee; mechanisms that can be verified and are open to the public: Score assigned: 1.

The Finance and Budget Committee has sufficient resources to undertake its activities: Like the previous capacity, the participants agreed on a score of 1. The CSOs argued that given the current situation the score seems low and with the support of the parliamentarians they proposed the score 3 to this capacity area.

The Finance Committee works without any hindrance with other institutions fighting against corruption: at this level the working group observed that this provision is fully taken into account in Benin. The group gave 6 points to this capacity area.

In summary, the Finance and Budget Committee in Benin is limited in its actions by the following:

- Its presidency is held by a member belonging to the ruling party;
- The fact that the law does not require that these meetings be held in public
- The fact the Executive is not compelled by law to implement the recommendations of the Finance and Budget Committee;
- Lack of mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the Finance and Budget Committee
- Inadequate financial resources to undertake its activities.

3.4.3 Audit

The Court/Chamber of Auditors is an agency of Parliament. Under the constitution, the Chamber of Auditors is attached to the Supreme Court. This question does not apply to the National Assembly of Benin; therefore the MPs assigned a score of 0.

All reports of the Chamber of auditors are submitted to Parliament. This point does not correspond completely to the real type of relationship that exists between the Chamber of Auditors and the Parliament as only reports on the budget review act published by the Chamber of Auditors are presented to Parliament.

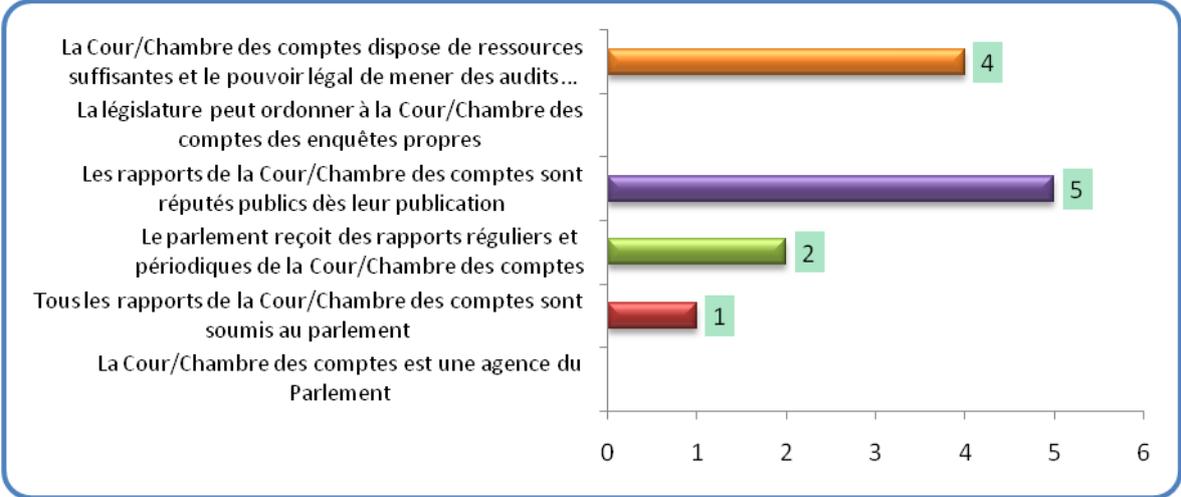
The Legislature receives regular and timely reports from the Court/Chamber of Auditors. The MPs replied “no” because it is not consistent with what is happening on the ground and therefore gave the score of 2. In fact, the Parliament receives irregular and often late reporting from the Court of Auditors. By approving the score attributed by the Parliamentarians, the CSOs suggested that the reforms should be implemented to turn the Chamber of Accounts into a Court of Auditors.

The reports of the Court/Chamber of Auditors are deemed public upon publication. The reports of the Chamber of Auditors are public. Consequently, 5 points were assigned to this point. They are published in the Gazette, but very few people show interest in it. While approving the position of the MPS, the CSOs suggested that the reports of the Chamber of Auditors should be accessible to all (translate / disseminate).

The Legislature can request the Court/Chamber of Auditors to conduct special investigations on its behalf. This case does not apply in Benin because according to the principle of separation of powers contained in the Constitution the Parliament cannot give orders to the Chamber of Auditors. Score: 0.

Court/Chamber of auditors has sufficient resources and legal authority to conduct audits without hindrance. To this question, the MPs responded “yes” and “no”. “Yes”, because the Chamber has legal authority, but “no” because it does not have enough resources to conduct audits. Consequently, 4 points were assigned.

Figure 7: Assessment of Indicators under Audit Function



Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

3.5: INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF THE PARLIAMENT

3.5.1 Material and financial resources

The Legislature is financially independent; it prepares its annual budget and the Executive cannot vary it. This is fully consistent with the reality of Benin. The Parliament has an autonomous budget provided by the Constitution and the Executive cannot change it.

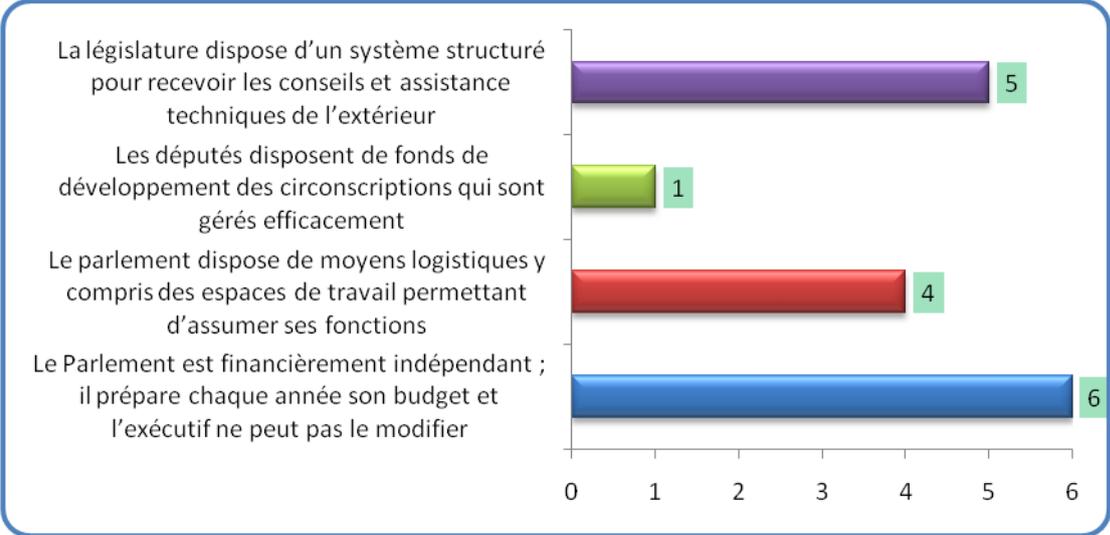
The Parliament has adequate logistics including office space to operate adequately. The MPs gave 4 to this question because only members of the Bureau, presidents of parliamentary groups, committee chairmen and executive administrative staff possess offices. CSOs recommended the allocation of financial resources to the MPs for the provision and running of their offices.

The MPs have constituency development funds that are managed effectively. This received the score of 1 point, because it is not the case in Benin. In fact, the MPs do not have constituency development funds.

The legislature has a structured system for receiving technical and advisory assistance from external sources. Yes. There are external structures like CAPAN (Committee for the Analysis of Development Policies of the National Assembly), UNACEB (*Committee for the Analysis, Control and Evaluation of the National Budget*) PARMAN (*Project for Support, Strengthening and Modernization of the National Assembly*) that provide the necessary assistance to the Parliament. The contribution of CSOs is related to the capacity-building of the committees.

In the light of Figure 8, it is clear that in Benin MPs do not have constituency development funds that are effectively managed.

Figure 8: Assessment of Indicators under Financial and Material Resources



Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

3.5.2 Human resources

The Parliament is an equal opportunity employer. A score of 4 was assigned to this indicator because the situation slightly reflects what happens at the National Assembly. In principle the National Assembly is an equal opportunity employer, however, in practice there are other considerations (political for instance) in the recruitment process. At this level, the CSOs recommended that recruitment should take into account gender and vulnerable people (disabled and others).

Parliament enjoys enough support from highly skilled personnel and researchers. This indicator was assigned 4 points, because the staff is neither sufficient in terms of number nor competent enough.

3.6: TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY

3.6.1 Transparency

The Parliament has an enforceable code of conduct that guides the behaviors and actions of parliamentarians. The MPs provided a positive answer and agreed on a score of 5 for this indicator. Indeed, Article 35 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly includes provisions relating to financial sanctions on absentee MPs. However, one of the limits of the rules of procedures is that they fail to make the presence of parliamentary secretaries mandatory.

MPs maintain high levels of accountability, transparency and responsibility in ensuring their public service function and parliamentary work. The MPs responded “no” and assigned a score of 4 to the indicator, because it is not always the case.

MPs do not always report to people and do not maintain high levels of transparency and responsibility in conducting their public service and parliamentary work.

3.6.2 Integrity

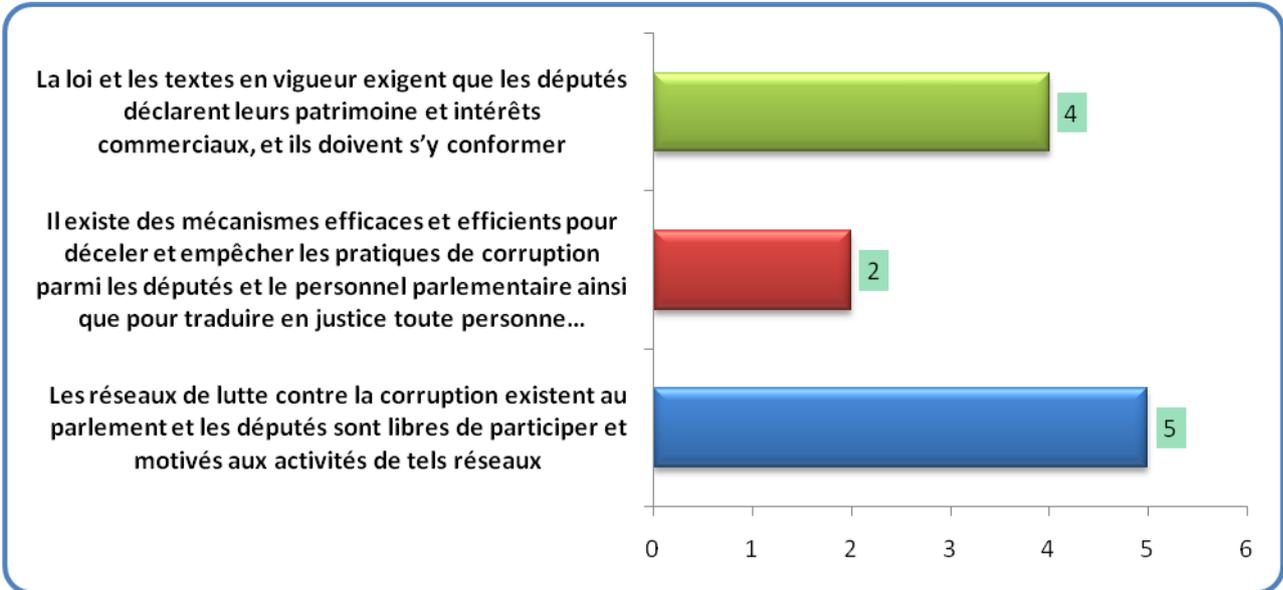
Networks against corruption exist in the Parliament and the MPs are free to participate and motivated to involve in the activities of such networks. There is an anti-corruption network: APNAC (African Parliamentarians Network against Corruption) and MPs may participate freely. The MPs assigned 5 to that area and the CSOs suggested that the anti-corruption network in the Benin Parliament should be promoted for more visibility and dynamism.

There are effective and efficient mechanisms for detecting and preventing corrupt practices among MPs and parliamentary staff as well as to prosecute all those involved in such activities. No, there is no such mechanism at the parliament and the corresponding score is assigned 2. Agreeing to the score proposed by parliamentarians, the CSOs suggested the anti-corruption law should be enforced effectively.

The law and regulations in force require that MPs declare their assets and business interests, and they must comply. In the past, the law only provided that MPs cannot manage companies, whether public or private. Since the voting of the 2011-20 law on the fight against corruption MPs are compelled to declare their assets and business interests.

In conclusion, integrity in the Benin parliament is problem since there are no effective and efficient mechanisms for detecting and preventing corrupt practices among MPs and parliamentary staff as well as for prosecuting them.

Figure 9: Assessment of Indicators under the Integrity



Source: Results of the assessment, July 2012

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2012 API process engendered remarkable enthusiasm on the part of MPs and parliamentary staff invited who participated in it. It was also marked by the presence of both MPs of the ruling party and the opposition, and a strong representation of outstanding CSOs during validation.

This also allowed participants to identify the constraints, limitations and weaknesses of National Assembly of Benin regarding the role of parliament in the budget process and the Béninois economy. At the end of this process, three of the eleven functional areas assessed were found as strengths of the Béninois parliament, these are: (i) Budget review and hearing (ii) Oversight Committees and (iii) the organic law on finance acts. However, such functional areas as Audit, Finance Committee, Accessibility and Legal Mandate are fields that require strengthening.

The representatives of Civil Society Organizations opined that the MPs and parliamentary staff were broadly very objective in attributing scores, providing explanations and formulating recommendations. However, they made two general recommendations which are: (i) the inclusion of gender indicators (ii) formulate questions on how MPs perceive the communities' opinions on their role in the budget process.

Finally, the recommendations that came up during the validation session held in the presence of MPs, parliamentary staff and CSOs' representatives are presented below for each capacity:

Functional Area	Recommendations
Accessibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand the coverage area of the Parliament 's radio station 2. Improve regulations to open committee sessions to the public and media 3. Create a Parliamentary Television channel usable fairly 4. Give as much priority to parliamentary information as to government information on the National Television and Radio (ORTB), which must disseminate parliamentary information in national languages in priority. 5. The radio station of the Parliament may broadcast in national language since its actions are not visible to people 6. Make quarterly publication for the magazine "Hemicycle". Make a briefing by the standing committees for enhanced visibility of their work 7. Systematize partnership with community radio stations 8. Implement the “debate” journal” to facilitate the publication of the full records of such debates (Article 47 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly) 9. Magazines in local languages 10. Institutionalize live broadcasting of parliamentary debates on TV 11. Establish and publish eligibility criteria for media organs with which the National Assembly may sign agreements to foster transparency 12. Promote the establishment of community radio stations in all the municipalities in Benin 13. The partnership must be full and prioritized with community radio stations by taking into account the 77 municipalities and the guaranteed independence of the media

Functional Area	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Strengthen parliamentary oversight mechanisms 15. Establish systematic monitoring of the enforcement of laws passed and the execution of the general budget 16. Draft a document popularizing each law enacted (to be prepared by the committee that has studied that law) 17. Extend public hearings to other organizations such as those of farmers, producers, chambers of agriculture and crafts, women's organizations, etc. 18. Formalize hearings and establish a mechanism to inform the public after budget voting, during and after the implementation of the budget 19. Establish a mechanism to explain to the public the role of parliament in the budget process 20. Formalize relationships between CSOs and parliament for more visibility of parliamentary activities
Legal Mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Involve Parliament in the general budget orientation debate 22. Open committee work to the public by amending the Rules of Procedure accordingly 23. Strengthen the capacity of parliament to facilitate contacts between MPs and the public to raise their expectations 24. Establish mechanisms for parliamentary oversight and administrative monitoring of enacted laws 25. Establish a system for popularizing enacted laws

Functional Area	Recommendations
Budget review and hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 26. Dedicate the budget session primarily to the study and voting of the budget. However, the session may deal with other pressing matters and ratification of loan agreements to finance development for poverty alleviation 27. Extend public hearings to other organizations such as those of farmers, producers, chambers of agriculture and crafts, women's organizations, etc. 28. Create a process for citizen involvement in the budget process. 29. Pass a law enabling to vote on the state budget before that of the municipalities 30. Make the general budget of the state accessible to the public 31. Pass a law that allows the public and CSOs to access information 32. Require clarification on the transfer of resources to municipalities during the review of the general budget 33. Involve Parliament in the general budget orientation debate 34. Adequately justify the rejection of the Finance Act without politicking
Organic law on Finance Acts and Budget Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35. This law must be reread and corrected in order to fit the current situation of the country 36. Formalize and perpetuate structures like CAPAN and UNACEB and provide them with sufficient resources. 37. Promote the establishment of a formal structure like the budget office at the parliament of Benin 38. Despite the importance of defense and intelligence, the general budget of the state should be more geared towards social sectors

Functional Area	Recommendations
Periodic Review of the Budget	<p>39. Abide by regulations in order to compel the Executive to refer to parliament, whenever necessary to review</p> <p>40. Periodic review (once a year by an organic law) of the budget as in other countries</p> <p>41. Report the implementation progress of the budget to the Parliament</p>
Oversight Committee (s)	<p>42. Allocate more resources to the oversight committees</p> <p>43. Create ad hoc committees in accordance with law</p> <p>44. Systematize the use of legal means by MPs</p> <p>45. Plan the budget of inquiry commissions and make sure their allocation is sound</p> <p>46. Systematize the presentation of committee reports in plenary and require timely submission of these reports to the appropriate person</p> <p>47. Ensure resources are allocated in a timely manner and adopt a realistic and appropriate schedule.</p>
Finance and Budget Committee	<p>48. Revise the current legislation so that all members of the Bureau of the National Assembly are not exclusively from the ruling party.</p> <p>49. Institutionalize the holding of public sessions by the Finance Committee</p> <p>50. Give importance to the committee reports and especially review laws as is the case for ratification authorizations.</p> <p>51. Provide means for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations and require the production of, for</p>

Functional Area	Recommendations
	<p>example, periodic reports which will be part and parcel of the activity report of the Spokesman of the National Assembly</p> <p>52. Introduce reforms that enable to provide the Committee with sufficient resources</p>
Audit	<p>53. Submit all finance-related reports to Parliament when they relate to the management of state entities (municipalities and others)</p> <p>54. Increase the personnel and build up the capacities of the Chamber of Auditors and the Ministry of Finance</p> <p>55. Turn the Chamber of Auditors into a Court of Auditors</p> <p>56. Strengthen the dissemination of reports of the Chamber of Auditors through channels other than the Gazette (publication on Internet, in the Daily State Journal 'The Nation' or large audience newspapers, information tours by MPs ...)</p> <p>57. Strengthen collaboration between the Chamber of Auditors and the Parliament in information sharing especially regarding auditing of state finances management</p> <p>58. Make reports of the Chamber of Auditors accessible to all (translate / disseminate)</p> <p>59. Provide more (human and financial) resources to the Chamber of Auditors</p>
Financial and material Resources	<p>60. Provide all other MPs with office space and adequate working tools</p> <p>61. Provide MPs with financial resources for the installation and running of their offices</p> <p>62. Update the website of the National Assembly</p>

Functional Area	Recommendations
	<p>63. Provide MPs with Constituency Development Funds</p> <p>64. Strengthen technical assistance structures at the Parliament by providing them with human, financial, material and technical resources</p> <p>65. Strengthen the capacities of committees</p>
Human Resources	<p>66. Consider recruiting researchers and experts</p> <p>67. Ensure recruitment is conducted without any considerations other than skills and qualifications</p> <p>68. Ensure the candidate's qualifications match the position's requirements</p> <p>69. Respect recruitment laws and regulations by taking into account gender and vulnerable people (disabled and others)</p> <p>70. Increase the number and competence of staff</p> <p>71. Consider hiring researchers and experts</p>
Transparency and integrity	<p>72. Reread the rules of procedure in order to correct the loopholes observed in practice</p> <p>73. Review the work schedule of MPs (reduce the number of extraordinary sessions and the number of working days)</p> <p>74. Strengthen the resources of MPs and establish an organization for better Parliamentary work</p>

Functional Area	Recommendations
	<p>75. Provide more resources to the only network against corruption existing in the Parliament</p> <p>76. Make the APNAC network more visible and dynamic</p> <p>77. Establish effective and efficient mechanisms for detecting and preventing corruption practices among MPs and parliamentary staff</p> <p>78. Integrate the development of such mechanisms in the Annual Work Plan of the APNAC</p> <p>79. Make sure the law on corruption is effectively enforced</p> <p>80. Urgently enact regulations implementing law 2011-20 on corruption control for effective implementation</p> <p>81. Consider incorporating into the Constitution the requirement for Quaestors and Spokesmen of Parliament to declare their assets.</p>

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APPENDIX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

	Name and surname	Structure/Institution	Function	Gender
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT				
1.	LAOUROU Grégoire	Finance Committee/National Assembly	Spokesman	M
2.	ADAM BAGRI Moumouni	Finance And Exchange Committee/National Assembly	Vice-Spokesman	M
3.	GOBI Bado	Finance And Exchange Committee/National Assembly	Rapporteur	M
4.	SOULE Sabi Moussa	Planning Committee	Vice-Spokesman	H
5.	BANGANA Gilbert	Finance Committee	Rapporteur	M
6.	HOUNDETE Eric	National Assembly		M
7.	FAGNON KOTCHAMI Nicaise	National Assembly		M
8.	ZINSOU Edmond	National Assembly		
STAFF OF PARLIAMENT				
1.	FAYOMI Isaac	Legislative Services - DSL/ National Assembly	Director	H
2.	KAKPO ZANNOU Babatounde	Planning Equipment And Production Committee / National Assembly		M
3.	LAOUROU Amour	Finance And Exchange Committee/National Assembly		M
4.	KOTO SOUNON Ren	National Assembly	Deputy Secretary General	H
5.	BENON Pascal	National Assembly	CSE	H
6.	BOTOM Barthelemy	National Assembly	Administrative Executive	M
7.	LATOUNDI Edmond Olusegun	National Assembly	Assistant To Finance And Exchange Committee	M
8.	KOUSSEY K. Noel	National Assembly	Technical Counsellor of the Spokesman of the National Assembly	M
9.	ASSAH M. Geoffrey	National Assembly	Head Of Finance Department	M
10.	BAHOUNDJE Yao	National Assembly	Personnel Manager,	M
11.	OGOUTOLOU Mariano		Executive Of The Parliamentary Administration	M
12.	AKPOLOU Nicolas	Journalist		M
13.	DJITRINOU Bertin	Journalist And Vice President, NELGE - Benin		M

REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SERVICE ORGANISATIONS				
	Name and surname	Structure/Institution	Function	Gender
1.	AZALOU TINGBE Emilia M.	Centre of Research on Policies and Actions for Development (CEPAD)	Programmes Director	F
2.	OGA K. Armelle	Chantier Jeunes	Research Assistant	F
3.	ADJIBODOU Epse MAKOUTODE A. Jeanne	Network For The Integration Of Women From African NGOS And Associations-Benin Office (RIFONGA)	DSG, RIFONGA	F
4.	FALADE B. Hippolyte	Platform Of Civil Society Actors In Benin (PASCIB)		M
5.	Prudence DAHODEKOU	Wanep-Benin	SG/ Board of Directors	M
6.	Marie-Louise Bidias MATCHOUDO	ICOG/ Benin	SG	F
7.	Bruno HOUSSOU	Social Watch	Communication Manager	M
8.	BOCO GBEDO Marie-Noelle	Rifonga- Benin	Teacher	F
9.	SONON Blanche	Social Watch		F
10.	OROU T. Jeremie	Faaba-Ong	Country Director	M
11.	ATAYI- GUEDEGBE Joel	Osc Nouvelle Ethique		M
12.	ALLADATIN Orden	Wanep- Benin		M
13.	IDOHOU Léontine	Rifonga-Benin		F
14.	ASSAH Gustave	Social Watch	Coordinator	M
Parliamentary Centre				
15.	Soule Adam	Parliamentary Centre		M
16.	YAO Stephen	Parliamentary Centre		M
17.	Valentina TETTEH	Parliamentary Centre		F
INDEPENDENT ASSESSORS				
	Name and surname	Structure/Institution	Function	Gender
1.	ADJOVI Epiphane	CAPOD	Chief Assessor	M
2.	HOUEDOKOU Wilfred	CAPOD	Assistant	M
3.	KEKE Jean- Claude	CAPOD	Assistant	M
4.	GNANSOUNOU Sosthène	CAPOD	Assistant	M
5.	TCHOKPON MEDENOU Nicole	CAPOD	Assistant	F
6.	GANGBO MAMAVI Gisèle	CAPOD	Assistant	F