

How to Get Started with Budget Analysis: A Quick Guide

If you work on human rights or social justice — you already work on the budget. Here's how to get started on making a submission on the budget to Parliament 🙌

#1 Understand the Moment

After the Budget Speech, Parliament opens public participation.

The budget is **not final** when announced.

It is tabled → debated → voted on.

That's your window to influence it. The budget is rarely changed once tabled, but submissions highlight critical issues and shape future decisions.

Your submission is being made in response to a call to the public to make submissions on the draft budget bills. For example, on the appropriations bill. Look out on [Parliamentary Monitoring Group](#) for the call for submissions. Check on the deadline.

You can make:

-  A written submission
-  An oral submission to the Parliamentary committees (if selected)
- Or both (stronger impact)

Parliament has a website section on preparing submissions, which is available [here](#).

Start with the Basics

- ✦ Read or listen to the Budget Speech.
- ✦ Download the Budget documents that can be found [here](#).
- ✦ Go to the section about your sector in the *Estimates of National Expenditure* (ENE).

You don't need to read everything. You need a plan.

#3 Identify the vote for YOUR Issue

What is your work concerned about - Water? Health? Housing? GBV? Social grants? Education?

Go directly to the relevant “**vote**” in the Estimates of National Expenditure.

Why is it called a “vote”? Because MPs vote on the Appropriations Bill — and once they vote yes, those budget allocations become law.

#4 Ask Key Questions to Focus your Analysis

- Is funding increasing or decreasing in real terms (adjusting a financial figure to account for the effects of inflation?)
- Is it enough to meet the need?
- Is money being returned unspent?
- Is there enough funding for staffing and maintenance?

Look for:

- Infrastructure gaps
- Underspending
- Capacity constraints
- Mismatches between need and allocation

That’s advocacy gold 🕒 Form the basis of your analysis on what you find.

#5 Connect Numbers to Real Life

Budget analysis is strongest when paired with lived experience. Add:

- Community testimony
- Photos
- Service delivery evidence
- Case studies

Five to eight pages is enough. Clear and focused beats long and complicated.

#6 Structure Your Written Submission

Include:

- A short executive summary (MPs must read a lot of submissions)
- Clear recommendations to Parliament and Treasury
- Indicate if you'd like to present orally (usually 10 minutes max)
- Send your submission to the relevant Committee secretary by the deadline

Written-only is fine – when you mail the submission, indicate that you would like to make an oral submission too, which means you will present to the Committee (online).

#7 Preparing for an Oral Submission

- Watch past hearings on PMG to understand tone & structure
- Prepare a short, formal input (PowerPoint or focused speech to read)
- Send your slides to the Committee Secretary in advance
- Rehearse - strict ± 10 min time limit
- Stay for Q&A - MPs will ask follow-up questions. Anticipate potential questions in advance, so that you are ready to respond confidently.

You may hear submissions are “too sector-specific.” But if people lack water, healthcare, or housing because of budget decisions - that *is* a budget issue.

Budgets decide: Who gets services, who waits, who benefits and who is left out.

This is about power.

#8 Get Support

If you're unsure where to begin, reach out to the Budget Justice Coalition members who have been doing budget analysis for some time.

Occasionally, Budget Justice Coalition offers training on budget analysis and has templates and resources that you can request. You can also attend our post budget debriefing session which is usually offered online ([Follow us on X for more](#))



You already have the evidence from your work. Budget analysis simply connects it to the numbers. Let's build a people's budget. 💪 📊