

E1. How can the media support UHC budget accountability?

The main activities are to:

- **empower audiences** to hold health budget decision-makers to account;
- **give audiences a voice** to share their concerns, ask questions and give opinions;
- **create a space for decision-makers and citizens** to discuss challenges and find solutions (99);
- **highlight initiatives and interventions** that could improve access to good-quality services and financial protection for people and communities; and
- **hold policy-makers and politicians accountable.**

For these activities, the knowledge and understanding of audiences should be built by providing clear, relevant, easy to understand, factually accurate information in various formats. Audiences should be given the opportunity to ask questions of health budget-makers and financial experts in call-ins, debates and small group discussions. The confidence and motivation of the audience should be built with support, skills, personal stories from people like them and experts to understand how to act, why it is worth engaging in health budget accountability and consider themselves able to do it. This should be done as creatively as possible. News journalism may be a part, but other formats can be used to engage audiences who prefer non-traditional media. The range of factual, drama, stories, voices, short formats, rhymes, music and influencers should be used to interest and engage your audience. Use of multiple channels, platforms and outputs can normalize the general public's engagement in health budget accountability.

Examples of media activities to support participatory budgeting include the following (102):

1. Convey expert information on the topic, for instance by creating appealing visualizations, drama or personal stories from information provided by a municipality, which will strongly support participatory budgeting.
2. Help audiences to participate. Participatory budgeting that is mentioned on only a small notice on the last page of a newspaper will not become a topic of public discussion or engage the wider public.
3. During the accountability phase, share information and update the public on decisions. The media and the public could enquire when information on the outcome of the participation phase will be provided.
4. Act as the “fourth power”, with the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The media have an important role in scrutinizing policies and the administration, for example by denouncing lack of transparency.

5. Cover health budget processes in various ways. Critical journalism and also other styles and tones can be used to engage a range of audiences and help them to understand successes, failures and opportunities for improvement.