AFRODAD

AFRICAN FORUM AND NETWORK
ON DEBT AND DEVELOPEMNT

Building a Strong Parliament in West Africa

Tracking Parliamentary Involvement, Approvals and Rejections of Loans

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This regional policy brief is the product of a two-month evaluation of the AFRODAD trainings offered to members of parliaments, parliamentary staff, and other stakeholders at both regional and national levels in West Africa, and held both virtually and physically. It focuses on tracking parliamentary involvement in, approvals, and rejections of loans in West Africa. The study reviewed and applied the concepts of public borrowing, accountability, transparency, corruption, parliamentary oversight, and capacity. In building a framework, the study emphasised the need for a strong parliament in West Africa as panacea to the apparent weakness of the parliament. The plausible factors are limited understanding of debt technicalities, weak capacity due to high attrition of MPs during election cycles, and the political nature of some key public debt projects. Explanations for the weak parliament were further offered using the 3Cs lens: context, capacity, and capture. A key strategy for addressing the complexities of the 3Cs highlighted is training, which encompasses a variety of activities in addition to the acquisition of technical and managerial problem-solving skills.

The case study countries were also reviewed with emphasis on the role of parliamentary oversight in the two countries. In the main, Nigeria is a colonial inheritance and a federation with a two-chamber parliament. Senegal is also colonial inheritance of political institutions, but operates a unitary government with a one-chamber parliament. The study methods were designed to cover research question formulation, literature review and analysis, survey questionnaire, key informant interviews, and case studies of Nigeria and Senegal, but there were critical problematic issues, which were systematically addressed. The challenges encountered during the contact establishment phase inspired the refine and adoption of the survey instrument to accommodate guided interviews, using the Google Forms (in English and French). The sampling frame comprised the training participants with verifiable contacts (i.e., e-mails and telephones). The policy conclusions derived from the study are as follows:

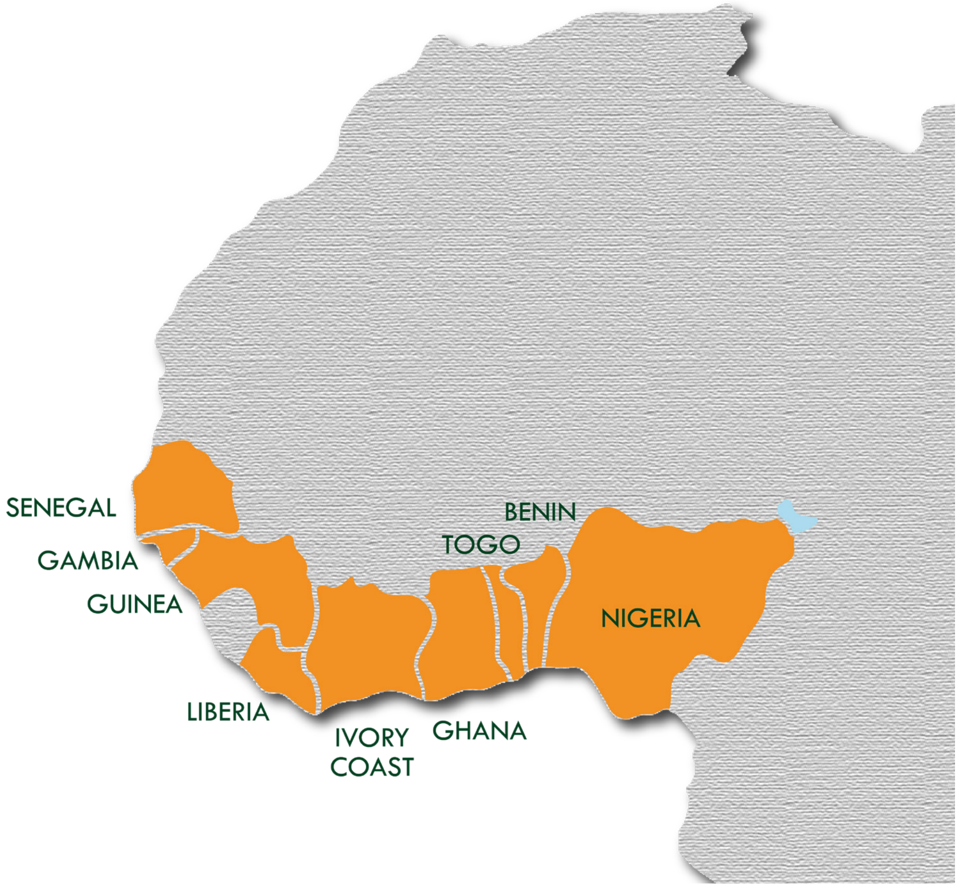
1. Parliaments have a responsibility to keep an eye on domestic and foreign debt management, as well as public procurement, particularly in the vulnerable sectors, including the long COVID induced emergencies.
2. Parliaments in West Africa are duty bound to deploy mechanisms towards averting the impending debt distress, thereby avoiding the feared ‘lost decade’ in countries being threatened by debt distress.
3. The trainings offered by AFRODAD and its partners cover the three dimensions of capacity: ‘human’, ‘organisational’, and ‘institutional’.
4. Future trainings should be evidence-based, and directed at issues of public debt management, budgetary process, stakeholders’ interface, monitoring and reporting, as well convincing the executive arms on responsible borrowing.
5. Future trainings can factor into the prepared orientation for new and returning MPs prior to inauguration.
6. The relevant committees on budget, finance and loans should be identified for differentiated trainings in future.
7. MPs also need training support in working to alter the fundamental laws of the land to build a stronger, one-chamber parliament, as well as giving more power to the parliament.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) Agenda for Sustainable Development has a central, transformative promise of 'leaving no one behind', to be achieved by 2030. Out of the 46 UN classified 'least developed countries' (LDCs) in the world, 31 are in Africa, and 10 are in the ECOWAS region. By the UN classification, the LDCs are characterised by acute deprivation, inadequate infrastructure, vulnerable economies, and short supply in capital. Therefore, these countries should be the first to leave no one behind (AFD, & UNDP 2016). The remaining five developing countries in the ECOWAS region are also in need of resources towards financing the SDGs. "About 60 percent of low-income developing countries are now at high risk or already in debt distress - compared with slightly less than 30 percent in 2015 - and continue to rely on international support to end the pandemic and ensure growth" (IMF 2022, p.9). In general, African countries were making progress in development indices, and the continent's gross domestic product (GDP) was predicted to surpass the global average of 3.4 percent in 2020 (AfDB 2020). However, the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) altered the continent's development trajectory.

Data from the World Bank reveal that, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, debts owed by African governments were on upward movements (see Assoko 2022). Between 2015 and 2020, the public external debt stock of sub-Saharan countries increased by 67.5 percent to $454bn. In 12 African countries, the public external debt stock increased by at least 100 percent between this period. The 12 countries, in order of percentage size of debt, include Comoros (+251), Nigeria (+175), Guinea-Bissau (+171), Uganda (+148), Rwanda (+147), Senegal (+155), Côte d'Ivoire (+148), Liberia (+132), Guinea (+131), Kenya (+121), Benin (+120), and Angola (+108). Within the temporal scope, the largest increases, in absolute terms, occurred in Angola (+$25.3b), Kenya (+$21.67bn), and Nigeria (+$20.8bn). The three French-speaking countries in the top 10 were Côte d'Ivoire ($22bn by 138%), Senegal ($17.2bn by +155%), and Cameroon ($15.3bn by +94%). The West African countries in the top 12 borrowers are Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, and Benin (Assoko 2022).

With the emergence of COVID-19 in the vulnerable sectors (largely due to threats from climate change, increasingly frequent extreme weather events, and health-related crises), a bad situation became worse. Commodity prices were at lowest levels in decades, and prices turned negative at some points. The COVID-19 pandemic placed African governments under extreme procurement pressure to scramble and source essential works, goods and services. Disruptions in revenue streams and loss of capacity to implement budgets elicited diverse responses, including increased appetite for borrowing by governments. Pointedly, parliaments have a responsibility to keep an eye on public procurement in emergencies, and more broadly on the management of domestic and foreign debts and guarantees. However, the use of emergency powers in procurement had allowed conventional scrutiny measures by parliaments to be circumvented. Other challenges pertain to the capacity of parliaments to truly be the 'eye' and ''voice' of the people. Towards addressing these issues, AFRODAD, with the support of its development partners, mounted series of trainings for members of parliament (MPs), parliamentary staff, and other stakeholders at both regional and national levels in Africa. The trainings were jointly held and conducted with AFRODAD's national partners in Southern African Development Community countries of Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe, East African Community countries of Rwanda, South Sudan Tanzania and Uganda, as well as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries of Nigeria and Senegal..



The trainings held in the ECOWAS region drew participants from Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, The Gambia, Togo, and Senegal. This regional policy brief is the product of a two-month (June and July 2022) evaluation of the AFRODAD trainings. It focuses on tracking parliamentary involvement in, approvals, and rejections of loans in West Africa. The study methods and caveats are discussed in the methods section.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

In order to ascertain the points of view that this study seeks to espouse, this section offers a brief review of the key concepts:

- Public borrowing
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Corruption
- Parliamentary Oversight
- Capacity

Efforts are made to apply the concepts to the subject matter of investigation.

Public Borrowing

Public borrowing is an alternative means of raising revenues to cover state expenditures. It is the creation of public debt for the purpose of financing public services. Boosting internally generated revenue is a laudable idea, but it would be counter-productive to over-burden citizens with taxes. Thus, borrowing guarantees that there is no reduction in real wealth of private individuals through taxes (Buchanan, & Flowers 1987). The state is compelled to borrow when real GDP unexpectedly falls below its full employment level (Craigwell, Rock, & Sealey 1988). Huge government size could add to external debt (Ajayi, & Khan 2000). Regional and country specific studies also identified a number of factors of public borrowing, such as worsening terms of trade, access or lack of access to petrodollars, high interest rates, as well as variability in export revenue and the real effective exchange. Some governments spending excessively prior to an election to gain electorates' favour (Ajayi, & Khan 2000), and over borrowing arises from the belief that existing debt would be paid by the in-coming government (Alesina, & Tabellini 1988).

The concept of debt is 'notoriously ambivalent' (Nygard 2020, p.1), and "countries incur debt by borrowing" (Hakura 2020, p.60). Debt produces a specific morality of the promise to honour one's debt (Lazzarato 2011). In response to this moral framing, debtor movements and activists argue that debt ought not be paid if doing so would lead to widespread human suffering (Nygard 2020).

The World Bank Africa Region's Office of the Chief Economist classified the accumulation of government gross debt in terms of the intensity of debt build-up in sub-Saharan African countries (as a percentage of GDP) into three, using the temporal scope from 2012 to 2017 (Calderón, & Zeufack 2020). First, 'light borrowers' countries, with cumulative debt variation lower than 10 percent of GDP, include Botswana, the Comoros, Congo, Dem Rep., Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, and Tanzania. Second, 'moderate borrowers' countries, with cumulative public debt variation between 10 and 20 percent of GDP, are Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Eswatini, and Uganda. Finally, 'heavy borrowers' countries, with cumulative public debt variation greater than 20 percent of GDP, comprise Angola, Benin, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Rep., Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, The Gambia, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Nigeria and Senegal were in the moderate borrower category, but there have been changes since the COVID-19 pandemic. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its Fiscal Monitor (April 2022), predicted that Nigeria's debt-to-GDP ratio, which stood at 37.0 percent at end of 2021, would rise to 37.4 percent in 2022, 38.8 percent in 2023, 40.2 percent in 2024, 41.6 percent in 2025, 42.9 percent in 2026, and 44.2 percent in 2027 (Komolafe, & Ujah 2022). For the IMF also, Senegal's public debt is expected to reach 75 percent of GDP in 2022 (IMF Press Release No. 22/21 2022). Senegal currently occupies the 15th position of 20 African countries with the highest debt-to-GDP ratio (71.9 percent) (Club of Mozambique 2022). From a recent debt sustainability analysis, Nigeria and Senegal are among 11 ECOWAS countries currently in debt distress. Other ECOWAS countries in this category include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Niger, The Gambia, and Togo. The remaining four ECOWAS countries – Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali and Sierra Leone – are at low risk of debt distress (Baiyewu, & Olatunji 2022). It suffices to mention that repayment of debt, when elevated, can be overwhelming. Thus, parliaments are duty bound to deploy mechanisms that would support efforts at averting the impending debt distress, as well as avoid a lost decade in ECOWAS, due to debt distress.

Accountability

Accountability is as essential for development efforts, as 'vital and urgent' for any society (OECD 1993).
According to Buse, Sidibe, & Whyms (2006), accountability is the provision of information and explanations for either action of inaction, and it is either reactive or proactive. Accountability is reactive when its sanctions provide the mechanism with 'teeth'. It is proactive when the measures focus less on control and more on transforming relationships between decision-makers and the citizens. For Renzio, & Mulley (2006), accountability ensures that people entrusted with power are kept under check, and office holders perform their duties effectively. In addition, accountability is broadly divided as 'answerability' and 'enforceability'. The obligation of power-holders to justify their decisions and actions is 'answerability'. On the other hand, the existence of mechanisms for punishing poor performance or abuse of power is 'enforceability' (Renzio, & Mulley 2006).

In application, the purpose of accountability is to minimise executive lawlessness and excesses in borrowing, as well as ensure efficient and effective use of borrowed proceeds. Second, citizens should be able to hold their government accountable regarding the use of borrowed proceeds. Third, parliaments are in need of the 'teeth' to deal with infractions of state laws on public borrowing and budgeting. This will help governments in the use of debt resources prudently with utmost accountability in support of social sectors, such as education, health and vulnerable groups (AFRODAD 2022a).

Corruption

Corruption is a difficult, slippery and contested concept because of the variety of activities and behavioural tendencies, which may be categorised as 'corrupt' (Osumah 2017). The accepted, however, is the use and abuse of public power, position, or office for personal advantage or gain (Androniceanu 2009). This aligns with Transparency International's (TI) definition of corruption "as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (TI 2010, p.X). A study of the linkage between corruption and public debt shows that debt could provide attractive opportunities for corrupt financial gain. For "stealing a tiny fraction of a large sum is likely to be more profitable than stealing a fraction of a line in an operating budget and almost certainly less noticeable because of the opacity of the public debt markets" (Liu, Moldogaziev, & Mikesell 2017, p.681). Therefore, curbing public corruption can help governments reduce the amount of public debt and the extra costs that the debt markets inflict on more corrupt jurisdictions (Liu, et al 2017). Another study investigated how a change in government leads to grand corruption in public procurement in Hungary and United Kingdom (Dávid-Barrett, & Fazekas 2019). Thus, political influence can shape the formation of procurement laws, and use of appointments and constitutional changes would disable institutional controls (Dávid-Barrett, & Fazekas 2019).

The literature also establishes the existence of a symbiotic relationship between corruption and illicit financial flows (IFFs), defined as either "money illegally earned, transferred or used" (Report of the AU-ECA High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa 2015, p.15), or "dirty money that crosses an international border" (Collin 2020, 47). Curiously, "corruption is both a source and enabler of IFFs" (Report of the AU-ECA High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa 2015, p.51). Due to IFFs, African economies are deprived of financial resources needed for social investment. This in part explains the deficit in governments' ability to administer social assistance, social safety nets, social security, and social welfare to deserving citizens on the continent. In sum, addressing IFFs would help African governments to expand their fiscal space for investment in the SDGs commitments.

Transparency

Transparency is complex and dynamic (Meijer 2013), and easily defined as "lifting the veil of secrecy" (Davis 1998, p.121). Transparency refers to "the ability to look clearly through the windows of an institution" (Den Boer 1998, p.105). It is the process of opening up the working procedures, which may not be immediately visible to those not directly involved in order to show that an institution is working (Moser 2001). The widely investigated objects of transparency are the 'political', 'administrative', and 'financial' or 'budget'. (Cucciniello, Nasi, & Valotti 2012). The 'political' entails the openness of elected bodies, such as parliaments, and refers to information pertaining to political representatives. The disclosure of information from the bureaucracy, regarding the activities of public organisations, mission, and operations, defines the 'administrative'. The 'financial' or 'budget' or 'fiscal' refers to the disclosure of information on the financial situation of a government, and outlines the mode of resource utilisation by the actors in government. Some literature also refers to this as "openness toward the public at large about government structure and functions, fiscal policy intentions, public sector accounts, and projections" (Kopits, & Craig 1998, p.1). The 'financial' is often treated in the literature on transparency as separate from the 'political' and/ or 'administrative'. "In reality, however, financial transparency is interconnected with both the political and administrative realms" (Porumbescu, & Grimmelikhuijsen 2017, p.34).

Central to this study is fiscal transparency, which is an essential feature of public financial management, thereby providing beneficial governance effects, such as corruption reduction. Innovations in data and methods, relying on a wide-ranging, country-level dataset of 116 countries covering 10-year period (2003-2012), support the claim that fiscal transparency is negatively correlated with corruption (De Simone, Gaeta, & Mourão 2017). The 116 countries analysed include Nigeria (2003, 2004) and Senegal (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008). In the main, debt transparency will prevent debt crises, promote debt sustainability, guide decisions about macro-economic development, promote the prudent and effective use of borrowed proceeds, enable government to create sound legal and debt management frameworks, improve financing terms for borrowers, and reduce risk for creditors (AFRODAD 2022b).

In application, African countries must learn to disclose data on debt and public borrowing. The continent is in search of transparent loan contraction processes as well as reengagement processes that would bear sustainable fruits (AFRODAD 2022c). This came out clearly at the 'Exchange and Sharing Workshop' (Dakar, September 2021), wherein it was emphasised that the authorities should increase transparency in debt management, through the capacity building of actors on debt issues and strengthened civic space. Participants also called for transparency in natural resource exploitation and contractual data (AFRODAD, & LAREM 2021).

Parliamentary Oversight

John Locke's doctrine of separation of powers envisages a subordinated executive, which is accountable to the parliament. By this doctrine, the parliament is to ensure that public policy administration reflects the people's needs. Also, the parliament has a duty to ensure the proper implementation of approved policy and efficient delivery of public services to the citizens. This is parliamentary oversight, defined as "the review, monitoring and supervision of government and public agencies, including the implementation of policy and legislation" (Yamamoto 2007, p.9). It is imperative that a parliament knows and understands government operations for the purpose of making informed decisions. Parliamentary oversight also includes the moral burden to respond to tardiness and irresponsible conduct of public officials over issues concerning citizens' welfare. By this, the parliament deploys a constitutional power to indict and subsequently remove the office holder in the executive branch when there is dereliction of duty.

A number of tools are used by the parliament in carrying out oversight functions. These tools include the constitution, rules of procedure, committees, budgetary oversight, hearings, inquiry committees, parliamentary questions, question time, the interpellations and the ombudsman. These oversight tools are veritable, but their effectiveness depend on a number of conditions, such as the statutory oversight powers given to the parliament (Pelizzo, & Stapenhurst 2006), the capability of the parliament (Loewenberg, & Patterson 1979), availability and adequacy of needed information to perform oversight tasks (Frantzich 1979), the role of individual MPs, the role of committee chairs, the performance of the opposition on critical issues (Rockman 1984).

Capacity

The effective parliament has the ability to perform its statutory functions. Thus, requisite experience, competence, mobilisation skills are vital to the exercise of parliamentary responsibilities. This pertains to capacity, defined as "the abilities of governments to plan, manage and sustain the development process of their economies and societies; and in keeping with the aspirations and potential of their respective countries people" (Antwi, Analoui, & Cusworth 2007, p.6). Capacity is presented in development circles as an enabler of the performance of organisations. It means different things to different people, and is either too narrow or too broad. In practice, the terns 'building' and 'development' are often used interchangeably (Olowu 2007; AMDIN 2008). Capacity is evidenced in a combination of dimensions, which The World Bank (2005) has categorised into three, namely: human, organisational and institutional. The human dimension covers the individual skills for analysing development needs; designing and implementing strategies, policies, and programmes; delivering services; and monitoring results. The organisational dimension involves individual groups bound by a common purpose, clear objectives and an internal structure, in addition to processes, systems, staffing, and other resources for achieving them. The institutional dimension refers to formal rules and norms at the informal realm. The institutional dimension is also presented as 'policy management capacity' (AMDIN 2008, p.27). In particular, institutional capacity is applicable to the relative regularity with which members of parliament turn over briefs (Osumah 2014). An overlap exists amongst the three dimensions, such as the influence of human capacity on organisational capacity (Guest 1999). For some, the 'human' dimension is an extension of the 'institutional' capacity.

A review of the trainings offered by AFRODAD suggests that the programmes sought to provide analytical skills for MPs, staff of parliaments and other stakeholders. This is a human dimension of capacity. With the trainings, parliamentarians are prepared for a shared purpose in public debt management. This is organisational dimension. A good example of the institutional dimension of the trainings is the 2021 Harare Declaration as an offshoot of the inaugural African Conference on Debt and Development held across 9 African Countries in August 2021.

THE FRAMEWORK: THE STRONG PARLIAMENT

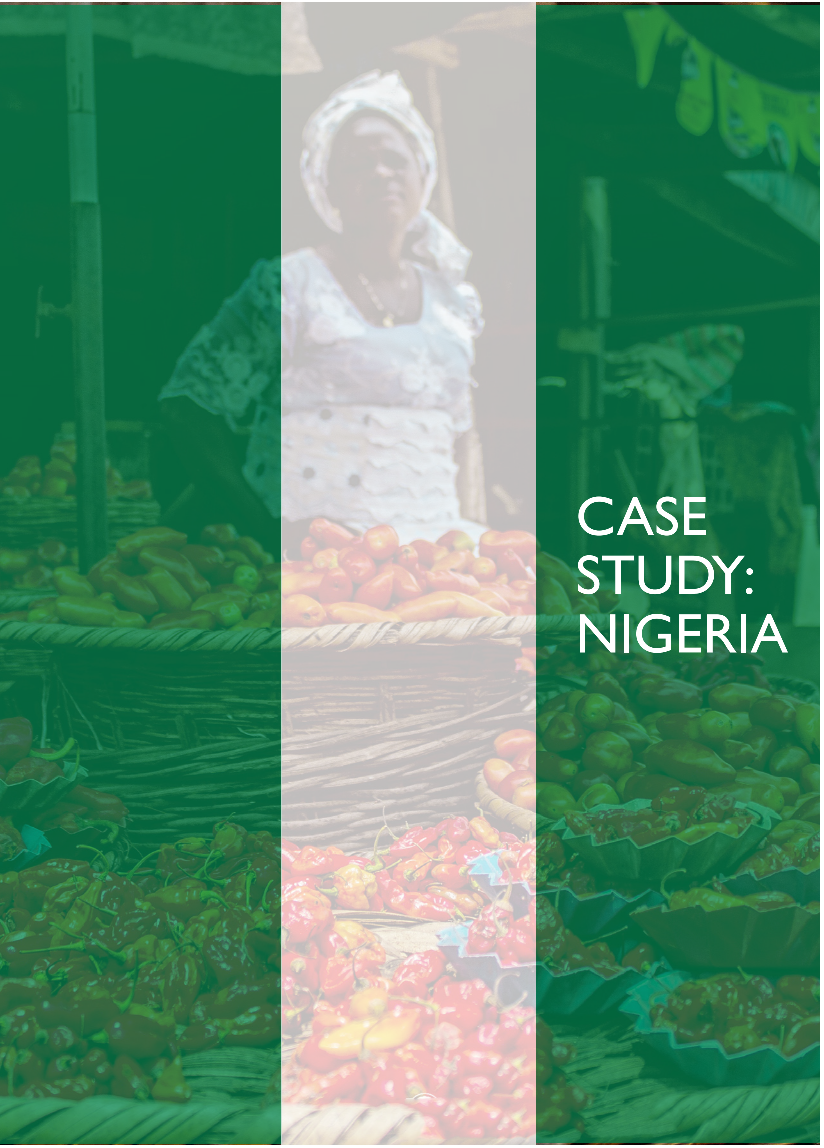
The parliament is recognised globally as a key element of democratic government. The parliament separates democracy from autocracy (Blanchet 2003), serves as check to executive excesses and monstrosity (Osaghae 2003), and guarantees efficient and effective government (Ubhenin 2004). Drawing on Alexander Hamilton's contributions to the Federalist, the 'purse' belongs to the parliament, which is the approving authority of all taxes and spending measures of the government (Hamilton 1788). This thought aligns with the constitutional power of parliament to approve important decisions on fundable programmes of government, as well as how citizens and corporations are taxed. The effective state mobilises resources for the purpose of stimulating investments and creating employment (Addison, Roe, & Smith 2006). Resource mobilisation also includes the creation of public debt for the purpose of financing public services without having to reduce the real wealth of private individuals through taxes (Buchanan, & Flowers 1987). Usually, no strings or conditions are attached to loans, but the debtor country must demonstrate the capability to pay (Ubhenin 2019).

Broadly, parliaments have a responsibility to keep an eye on public financial management, including how governments mobilise revenue, allocate public funds, undertake public spending, as well as account for funds and audit results. This also extends to the management of domestic and foreign debts and guarantees. By John Locke's doctrine of separation of powers, the parliament is duty-bound to ensure the proper implementation of approved policy and the efficient delivery of public services to the citizens. However, the intervention of parliaments in public financial management and public debt management is constrained by a number of factors, such as limited understanding of debt technicalities, weak capacity due to high attrition of MPs during election cycles, and the political nature of some key public debt projects. Anecdotal evidence suggests that parliaments tend to depend on agencies of the executive arm for funding of its activities. Also, foreign loan combines with foreign aid to make governments less accountable to elected representatives of the constituents. As observed by a group of British MPs, donors tend to work over and around parliaments rather than with them. Thus, aid "strengthens recipient governments and risks making them more accountable to their people" (The Guardian 2008, p.96). Furthermore, parliamentary reports arising from oversight investigation are sometimes not implemented by the appropriate authorities. Yet, oversight duties of the parliament are either abandoned or reduced to puerile probes and impotent investigations (Arowolo 2008).

The foregoing weakness of the parliament can be explained using the 3Cs lens: context, capacity, and capture (Ubhenin 2017). Context refers to the milieu and changing environment in which parliaments function. Africa has a reputation for enormous governance and institutional problems, characterised by instability, regime turnover, authoritarianism, and political contestations, which factor into the attitudes and incentives in public service (Lockwood 2005). Also, parliaments in Africa operate in hybrid political systems, wherein customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with rational-legal institutions (Bretton, & van de Walle 1997). Second, capacity is an enabler of organisational performance, and it is evidenced in competence and professionalism. By implication, the professional parliament is a top consideration. Third, capture focuses on the negative influence of individuals and groups on the functions of the parliament. The captured parliament shares traits with the 'captive mind', which is 'uncritical', 'imitative' and 'externally dominated' (Alatas 1974). It can be argued that the parliaments in Africa are often captured by powerful interests led by executive dominance.

A key strategy for addressing the complexities of the 3Cs highlighted above is training, which encompasses a variety of activities in addition to the acquisition of technical and managerial problem-solving skills. Other training related activities are organisation adaptations to demands from the environment, systematic efforts to adapt to long-range change, team building, conflict management, as well as attitudinal and behavioural change (Sylvia, & Meyer 2002). A functional framework of training draws on Katz, & Kahn's (1966) typology of four basic macro functions of organisation, namely: production, adaptation, socialisation, and coordination. The principal activities of a parliament are law-making, representation and oversight. Through trainings, new MPs learn the expectations of their offices. This entails the acquisition of specific job skills and provides an orientation to the country's constitution and parliamentary rules of procedure. Second, adaptation, through training, is required to make MPs accountable to their constituents. On the other hand, the leaders of executive ministries, departments and agencies are to be accountable to the parliaments. Achieving accountability, therefore, requires adaptation through systematic trainings. Third, socialisation refers to shaping the attitudes, values, and perceptions of MPs. It is a mechanism for addressing the needs of new MPs who are often in search of proper definition of roles and functions. Through socialisation, the parliaments are able to transmit rules and values to provide extensive orientation to new MPs before inauguration. In other words, training offered to 'green horns' in parliament serve to address the high attrition of MPs during election cycles. From Weber's (1974) work, coordination is characterised by a high degree of task differentiation and subunit loyalty. The purpose of coordination is to avoid conflicts task groups. It hinges on the idea of mission complexity and division of labour, which may displace the macro of the organisation. Therefore, trainings are needed to coordinate variations in the composition and purpose of the committees, which constitute the 'engine room' of parliamentary duties.

The first wave of anti-corruption coincided with the global training of MPs on how to fight corruption and support the rule of law. The underlying assumption of such training was that MPs could overcome their institutionally derived obstacles by building sufficient human capital (i.e., 'knowledge and skills'). In consideration of parliamentary incentives, however, human capital is a small component of a larger problem (Michael, & Kasemets 2005). The AFRODAD's trainings offered to MPs, staff of parliaments and other stakeholders sought to achieve the faith-based development organisation, Diakonia's supported domestic resource mobilisation programme outcome 2: 'Member states in targeted RECs held accountable for prudent public debt management in line with regional finance and investment protocols'.



Nigeria is a colonial inheritance and a federation. Nigeria's 1999 Constitution (as amended) provides for a bicameral federal legislature, namely: the Senate (Upper House) and House of Representatives (Lower House), called 'National Assembly'. The Senate comprises 109 seats while the House of Representatives has 360 seats, totaling 469 seats. The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) won at least 217 seats in the elections held on February 23, 2019, while the main opposition Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) won at least 115 seats in the elections. Members of the National Assembly are voted into office for four-year terms, and the next elections will be holding on February 25, 2023. A 2006 review of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) by the National Assembly's think tank, 'Policy Analysis and Research Project' shows 111 powers of the Nigerian parliament (Momoh, & Shikyil 2006). The 1999 Constitution (as amended) envisages possible abuse of executive powers in project execution, public spending. In response, sub-section 2(b) of section 88 the 1999 Constitution (as amended) has empowered each House of the National Assembly to "expose corruption, inefficiency or waste in the execution or administration of laws within its legislative competence and in the disbursement or administration of funds appropriated by it" (Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999). This oversight function extends to specific areas, such as public borrowing by the federal government and state governments.

Debates at African Conference on Debt and Development (AfCoDD) in Nigeria (August 26, 2021) suggest that the National Assembly has been playing its oversight role in the country's debt contraction process creditably well. The parliament works closely with the Debt Management Office (DMO) to ensure proper documentation of the country's debt without any ambiguities. This is a deviation from what existed before the creation of the DMO. However, the civil society sector was found to be weak in numbers during public hearings on aid and loan related issues. Yet, the civil society actors are quick to criticise the process (AFRODAD, & ANEEJ 2021). Apart from exercising the power of approval or rejection in government loans application, the Nigerian parliament often deploys the mechanism of probe through the committee system. A qualitative assessment of the probes by the National Assembly suggests that the MPs were accused of compromises, bribes, and vested interests. Some observers noted that the MPs make spurious claims regarding their oversight functions, which were not verifiable (Ogbuile 2011). Also, the weakness of parliamentary oversight "is made evident in the high scale of corruption and in the lapses of many federal government ministries, departments and agencies, despite the various probes" (Osumah 2014, p.135).

The IMF predicts that Nigeria would be spending over 100 percent of its revenue on debt service in 2026 (Olatunji, & Musa 2022). The country's fiscal performance in the first four months of Year 2022 (January-April) shows the total expenditure was N4.72tn, the total revenue was N1.63tn, and debt servicing was N1.94tn. By implication, the Nigerian federal government debt servicing surpassed revenue by N310bn (Okon 2022). As averred by the DMO, however, Nigeria's debt now totaling $100bn (N41tn) is not excessive. The DMO's argument is supported with reference to the world's largest economy, the United States with a debt stock of $21tn, about 105 per cent of its $19.5tn GDP (Uwah 2022). Second, Argentina is heavily dependent on borrowing, and thus described as "a country used to living with high levels of debt" (Moreno 2022). Argentina's external debt as at March 2022 was $274.4bn, that is, 69.5 percent of its $491.49bn GDP (Moreno 2022; Trading Economics 2022a). For some public analyst, however, Argentina's borrowing is for the sustenance of an egalitarian social security system, while Nigeria borrows to sustain the opulence of the country's political calls (Uwah 2022). Also, the IMF (2022) classifies Nigeria along with several highly indebted countries, such as Ghana and Myanmar, where median debt service to tax ratio is expected to remain above the pre-pandemic level and exceed 40 percent. Nigeria's tax-to-GDP ratio (i.e., total tax revenues as percentage of GDP) was 6.0 in 2019. This followed a decrease of 0.3 percentage points from 8.3 percent tax-to-GDP ratio in 2018. The highest tax-to-GDP ratio in Nigeria was 9.6 percent in 2011, with the lowest being 5.3 percent in 2016 (Revenue Statistics in Africa 2021 - Nigeria). Nigeria's tax-to-GDP ratio is the lowest in ECOWAS region, and the region's average tax-to-GDP is 15 percent (Uwah 2022).

Perhaps, Nigeria would have exited the huge debt stock, but the country's erstwhile 'cash cow', namely crude oil has taken a back seat due to theft. It is being speculated that the Nigerian coastal shores are the only veritable venue for black market crude transactions in the world. While the state oil and gas company, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited is spending huge sums on payment of subsidies, Nigeria is grappling with the challenge of meeting its quota as approved by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Uzoatu 2022). This calls for extension of parliamentary oversight to coastal security and domestic resource mobilisation. Therefore, the Nigerian parliament has a lot of oversight work to do in addressing the country's soaring debt profile.

CASE STUDY: SENEGAL

Senegal is a colonial inheritance of political institutions, and a secular Muslim democracy. Senegal operates a unitary government, that is, all power and authority for exercising the functions of the state are concentrated in the central government. Previously, Senegal's National Assembly formed part of a bicameral parliament (from 1999 to 2001, and from 2007 to 2012). By the bicameral arrangement, members of the Senate were indirectly elected until September 2012 when the upper house was abolished for a second time. The National Assembly comprises 165 seats of five-year terms, and President Macky Sall backed coalition won the previous elections held in August 2017, filling 125 seats out of the 165 of the Senegalese parliament. By the July 31, 2022 elections, President Sall's ruling coalition, Benno Bokk Yakaar (BBY) narrowly won (with 82 deputies, down from its 125 deputies elected in 2017), while the alliance of opposition coalitions, Yewwi Askane Wi (YAW) and the Wallu Senegal won 80. However, MP Pape Diop of the Bokk Gis Gis Liggeey coalition, who won one of the three remaining seats, joined forces with BBY to prevent a potential parliamentary crisis (Ba 2022).

Article 53 of the Senegal's Constitution of 2001 with Amendments through 2016 sets up the National Assembly to exercise the powers to vote, alone, the laws, control the action of the government and evaluate the public policies. "The members of the National Assembly have the title of Deputy" (see Ruchti 2016). Article 85 of the Constitution of 2001 provides for parliamentary oversight of the executive. First, "the Deputies may pose, to the Prime Minister and to the other members of the Government, who are held to respond to them, written questions." Second, "the Deputies may pose to the Prime Minister and to the other members of the Government who are held to respond to them, oral questions and questions concerning current matters (questions d'actualité). The questions and the responses which are made to them are not followed by (a) vote." Third, "the Prime Minister and the other members of the Government present themselves to the National Assembly, according to a periodicity to be established with the agreement of the parties, to respond to the questions concerning current matters of the Deputies." Fourth, "the National Assembly can designate, from within it, commissions of inquiry." Finally, "the law determines the conditions of organisation and of functioning as well as the powers of the commissions of inquiry." Also, Article 85 of the Senegal's Constitution of 2001 with Amendments through 2016 covers standing committees and budget bills (see Ruchti 2016). The parliament is consulted during budget preparation by means of budgetary debates (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1996-2013). In effect, parliamentary oversight in Senegal is ensured by all relevant committees and other specialised committees of the parliament. This function extends to investigation of budgetary issues and spending of state-owned corporations, as well as the power to obtain information during investigations (API 2012).

The constitutional provision for parliamentary oversight notwithstanding, the National Assembly of Senegal is limited in its ability to serve as a check to executive branch, which has concentrated power. In 2008, the term of the President and other officers of the National Assembly was reduced from five years to one by constitutional amendment. In May 2019, Senegal's parliament approved a constitutional reform to scrap the office of the prime minister, an apparent move to further increase the powers of the president of the republic (Oteng 2019). Also, Senegal has an exceptional oversight mechanism in the Cour des Comptes (i.e., Court of Auditors), which is not an agency of the National Assembly. The Court of Auditors is an administrative court of specialised magistrates responsible for preparing the annual report on public accounts for parliament (API 2012).

Unlike Nigeria, Senegal does not possess oil or mineral reserves of strategic significance, but the country aspires to become a significant oil and gas producer. Yet, the extractives sector generates about five percent of Senegal's national budget (147 billion CFA), and 161 billion CFA in total (Fall 2021). It has been argued in some quarters that Senegal's state oil company, PETROSEN's debt accumulation and retention could pose significant risks for public finances in the coming years (Davis, Bauer, & Diene 2021). This is the outcome of a resource-backed loan, a veritable means of raising funds for infrastructure and development projects. In January 9, 2020 agreement signed with Woodside Energy, PETROSEN obtained a loan of $450m from Woodside Energy to finance part of its needs. Reimbursement will be made from income from the sale of crude oil (PETROSEN share) at 6.5 percent interest rate per annum (Fall 2021).

The tax-to-GDP ratio in Senegal increased by 0.1 percentage points from 16.5% in 2018 to 16.6 percent in 2019. The tax-to-GDP ratio in Senegal had increased by 0.7 percentage points, from 15.9 percent to 16.6 percent. The highest tax-to-GDP ratio in Senegal was 17 percent in 2016, with the lowest being 12.6 percent in 2001 (Revenue Statistics in Africa 2021 - Senegal).

AFRODAD'S INTERVENTION TRAININGS IN WEST AFRICA

AFRODAD, with support of its development partners, organised training programmes for MPs and other stakeholders at both regional and national levels in SADC countries of Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe; EAC countries of Rwanda, South Sudan Tanzania and Uganda; ECOWAS countries of Nigeria and Senegal (2018-2022). The training programmes were implemented as part of the project, 'Promoting Domestic Resource Mobilisation in Sub-Saharan Africa' covering the period (July 1st 2018 - June 30th 2022). The trainings, jointly held and conducted with AFRODAD's national partners, were delivered through different platforms, including SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF), East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and AFRODAD Annual Summer Schools, as well as national and regional debt advocacy meetings. Also, the advent of COVID-19 inspired the training delivery in hybrid formats (i.e., both physical and virtual), thereby enabling a wider reach for AFRODAD's target audiences. Meanwhile, AFRIDAD's Summer School is being reformed to operate as the Debt and Development Academy (DaDA). The trainings that were of benefit to MPs and other stakeholders in ECOWAS region are listed below:

Debt advocacy meeting in Senegal	Debt advocacy meeting in Nigeria	West Africa Regional Hybrid Debt Advocacy Meeting and Training	Inaugural African Conference on Debt and Development (AfCoDD)	The Exchange and Sharing Workshop Debt and Development

Debt advocacy meeting in Senegal

AFRODAD, in partnership with Le Laboratoire de Recherches Économiques et Monétaires (LAREM), held a one-day debt advocacy meeting in Dakar – Senegal, on October 16, 2020. The theme was: "Interrogating debt management strategies within the context of Covid-19: the case of Senegal'. Participants were public finance management professionals and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds with interests in debt management and public investments projects. Amongst them were: Mr. Sene Serigne Moustapha (Coordinator of the Department of Economic Planning and Policy at the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Development Cooperation, Senegal), Mr. Ngom Djibril (former Minister and Civil Society expert on public debt management), and Mr. Diouf Mamadou Mignane (Social Forum and Initiative for the Cancellation of African Debts).

Debt advocacy meeting in Nigeria

AFRODAD worked with ANEEJ, to organise a debt advocacy meeting in Abuja – Nigeria, on November 30, 2020. The theme was: "Interrogating debt management strategies within the context of Covid-19: the case of Nigeria'. Attendees at the meeting included: Hon. Minister, Budget & National Planning (Mr. Clem Agba); Director-General, Nigeria Debt Management Office (DMO); parliamentarians, media, and civil society representatives. It was an opportunity for government and regional authorities to: share their experiences and lessons; espouse the need for effective debt management strategies in the face of mounting development needs and financing demands; enable the sharing of feedback and contributions to debt management by CSOs; and ascertain if debt advocacy and debt management strategies are making the changes to government and creditor ways of doing business.

West Africa Regional Hybrid Debt Advocacy Meeting and Training

The West Africa Regional Hybrid Debt Advocacy Meeting and Training Session, was held with the theme, 'Sharing experiences and galvanising a common debt advocacy position in the West Africa region' on May 20-21, 2021. The two-day meeting was an opportunity to evaluate AFRODAD;'s previous work, and generate additional knowledge and information that factor into its advocacy work and strategies. Thus, the two-in-one event built upon recent national advocacy meetings held in Ghana, Benin Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, and Nigeria. AFRODAD had also conducted studies in Benin Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo, to evaluate the extent to which loan contraction in the region reflects the principles of responsible borrowing. AFRODAD had also conducted studies on domestic debt management in Niger and Nigeria. More importantly, the meeting emphasised capacity building for parliamentarians on debt management and sustainability analysis.

Inaugural African Conference on Debt and Development (AfCoDD)

AFRODAD, through its Debt Management Portfolio, held and implemented the inaugural African Conference on Debt and Development (AfCoDD), virtually held and physically held across 9 African Countries (Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Cameroon, Senegal, Chad, and Kenya) from August 25 to 27, 2021. In-country sessions were held in Cameroon, Chad, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda (on August 26, 2012), as well as in Senegal (on September 23, 2021). The immediate outcome of the AfCODD was the Harare Declaration, which has become an important advocacy tool for the organisation with at least, 62 endorsements.

The Exchange and Sharing Workshop Debt and Development

The Exchange and Sharing Workshop Debt and Development on the Theme: 'Citizen Mobilisation for More Transparent and Responsible Governance of Public Debt Issues in Senegal', Dakar, Sep. 23, 2021. The purpose of the meeting was to launch the process of citizen mobilisation based on the construction of a national civic movement in a sustained manner beyond the current debt crisis. The meeting recorded the participation of nearly forty persons drawn from the parliament, courts of auditors, executive ministries, departments and agencies, Delegation for Rapid Entrepreneurship for Young People and Women, AFRODAD (remotely), the academic and research community, and the civil society.

STUDY METHODS

The study methods were designed to cover research question formulation, literature review and analysis, survey questionnaire, key informant interviews, and case studies of Nigeria and Senegal, but there were issues. The first critical issue was the difficulty in establishing contacts with the training participants, and extracting their commitment to participate in the interviews. This challenge was addressed with the support received from AFRODAD and its partners, regarding existing contacts and relationships with those who participated in the trainings. The training participants' list sent by AFRODAD was of tremendous help. Frantic efforts were made to establish contacts with participants at the AFRODAD's trainings held virtually and physically in Nigeria and Senegal. Where available e-mails were not functional, follow-up calls were made on telephones.

Another challenge encountered pertains to inaccessibility of the interviewees, especially MPs, perhaps due to the mounting pressure associated with parliamentary elections in Senegal (July 31, 2022), and Nigeria (February 25, 2022). In response, the researcher relied on virtual means of communication, especially WhatsApp and Google Forms, to schedule and hold interviews with partners and their organisatons. The study was also constrained by reliance on limited information that the respondents were willing to give. In addressing this issue, the researcher complemented the primary information with secondary sources of data, including specialised publications and academic journals authored by eminent scholars in the field. The researcher also envisaged that some interview partners may respond with hypocrisy by merely echoing what they perceive the interviewer wishes to hear. This issue was mitigated with the struct adherence to the ethics of openness and informed participation. Some interviewees also expressed interest in incentives, rewards and settlements for participating in the interviews. A particular partner wrote from a French speaking country to convey his or her unwillingness to complete the survey on Google Forms because the training conditions, regarding payment, were not respected. In response, the researcher severally called the interview partners to explain the potential benefits of the study to them, including invitation to future trainings by AFRODAD. Some of the participants promised to complete the survey, while others were not forthcoming. Calls were severally made to remind the interview partners of an on-going survey, and the reminder button was activated almost on daily basis. Towards mitigating the general risk in data collection, the researcher adhered strictly to the research ethics highlighted in the approved expression of EOI for the assignment. In consideration of the challenges encountered during the contact establishment phase, the survey instrument was refined and adapted to accommodate guided interviews, using the Google Forms, a survey administration software, in English and French.

The sampling frame comprised the training participants with verifiable contacts (i.e., e-mails and telephones). The total number of interview partners was 60 (i.e., 19 French and 41 English). A pilot questionnaire and several rounds of follow-up mailings consisting of 29 items resulted in 21 completed responses, for a rate of 35 percent. This is consistent with rates reported in the literature, ranging between 30 and 35 percent (see Hays, & Kearney 2001), and sometimes 44.7 percent (see Berman, & West 2011). In addition, the 10 items on guided interview provided context and also helped in validating the survey responses. In terms of gender, the responses were from 5 females (23.8 percent), and 16 females (76.2 percent). All respondents attained higher education, and 17 (80.9 percent) were non-MPs. The countries of origin of respondents were Nigeria (47.6 percent), Senegal (14.3 percent), and others (38.1 percent). Interviewees attended the five AFRODAD's trainings held virtual and physically in Nigeria and Senegal.

RESULTS

This section is devoted to the presentation of results obtained from the interviews. Efforts are also made to either corroborate or invalidate the results with evidence from past research and practice. The presentation of results is under the following sub-headings:

- Overall impact of AFRODAD's trainings
- Oversight tools
- Respondents' knowledge of key documents
- Overall rating of the trainings
- Capacity building

Overall Impact of AFRODAD's Trainings

Table 1 reports the perceived impact of the trainings offered by AFRODAD. From the table, respondents agree to the effectiveness of the trainings in their contribution to debates on government loan application (100 percent), their engagement with the parliament and executive on the need for responsible public borrowing (85.7 percent), rigour and thoroughness to studying debt papers and reports (90.5 percent), developing an eye for details of budget framework (90.5 percent). Items 5 to 8 cover the training effects on their work with colleagues. With colleagues, MPs and other stakeholders do not approve loan application without convincing rationale (90.5 percent), are able to ensure prudent debt management by government (76.2 percent), play an important role in budget cycle (90.5 percent), and work to ensure that spending decisions align with citizens' needs (85.7 percent). The assessment also covered the training impact on the parliament as a body (see items 9 to 12 on the table). Thus, the parliament is active in the annual budget formation (85.7 percent), does not approve annual estimates without scrutiny (76.2 percent), is involved in the budget implementation process (85.7 percent), and does effective monitoring of the budget implementation (71.4 percent).

Table 1:'Overall Impact of the Trainings

As a result of the training(s) provided by AFRODAD:	No (%)	Yes (%)
Able to contribute meaningfully to debates on government loan applications	*Nil*	*21 (100)*
Can engage the parliament and executive on the need for responsible public borrowing	*3 (14.3)*	*18 (85.7)*
Apply rigour and thoroughness to studying debt papers and reports	*2 (9.5)*	*19 (90.5)*
Have developed an eye for details of budget framework	*2 (9.5)*	*19 (90.5)*
With colleagues, do not approve loan applications without convincing rationale	*2 (9.5)*	*19 (90.5)*
With colleagues, able to ensure prudent debt management by government	*5 (23.8)*	*16 (76.2)*
With colleagues, play an important role in budget cycle	*2 (9.5)*	*19 (90.5)*
With colleagues, work to ensure that spending decisions align with citizens' needs	*3 (14.3)*	*18 (85.7)*
The parliament is active in the annual budget formation	*3 (14.3)*	*18 (85.7)*
The parliament does not approve annual estimates without scrutiny	*5 (23.8)*	*16 (76.2)*
The parliament is involved in the budget implementation process	*3 (14.3)*	*18 (85.7)*
The parliament does effective monitoring of the budget implementation	*6 (28.6)*	*15 (71.4)*

Source: Fieldwork (Jul. 2022)

The survey results show tremendous impact of the trainings offered by AFRODAD, but there are issues. Governments in ECOWAS are still involved in what the civic organisation, BudgIT has characterised as 'indiscriminate borrowing' (Olatunji, & Musa 2022). For example, Nigeria's President Buhari wrote to the House of Representatives seeking an increase in the 2022 budget deficit to be financed through borrowing from the domestic market in April 2022 (The Guardian 2022). Thus, Nigeria's total public debt stock had increased from N39.56tn in December 2021, to N41.60tn in the first quarter of 2022. This showed an increase of N2.04tn within a period of three months (Popoola, & Olatunji 2022). On its part, Senegal reached a staff-level agreement with the IMF on economic and financial policies that will enable the country will receive a $217m loan in May 2022 (Reuters 2022). Following months of careful review and negotiations, the IMF approved the release of $216 million, and an increase of its 18-month credit facility - launched in June 2021 - from $650m to $777m (Energy Capital & Power 2022).

A plausible explanation for the continues borrowing in affected countries is near recession. For example, President Buhari, in his 2022 budget presentation to the National Assembly, stated that government was applying borrowing to "spend its way out of the two recent recessions" (Majeed 2021). Perhaps, the parliament and other stakeholders would insist on 'responsible borrowing', but there is an all-powerful executive who would use all available instruments, including turnover, to weaken the parliament. For example, the Eighth Senate led by Bukola Saraki reportedly rejected President Buhari's $30bn loan request "to save Nigeria from sinking into the dark gully of a perpetual debt trap" (Iroanusi 2019). Senate President Bukola Saraki and the Senate Committee Chairperson on Local and Foreign Debt, Senator Shehu Sani later defected from the ruling APC. Both senators were among those who could not make it back to the current Ninth Assembly, albeit on the platform of opposition political parties. Curiously, some analysts perceive the Ninth Assembly led by Senator Ahmad Lawan as 'absolute rubber stamp' (Aborisade 2021). This is validated by the outcome of a conversation held with one of the interview partners who is a key actor of the Nigeria's National Assembly, regarding the influence of external people, particularly the executive on the parliamentary process.

In the case of Senegal, President Macky Sall's initiative to scrap the post of a prime minister in May 2019 is a pointer to his quest for more powers (Oteng 2019). A further show of the weak parliament in Senegal occurred in June 2022, when a member of an opposition, Sheikh Abdou Mbacke Bara Dolly was charged and imprisoned for offending the president and spreading false over remarks targeting President Sall. Also, the Constitutional Court banned him along with other opposition figures from taking part in the elections scheduled for July 31, 2022 (Channels Television 2022). However, President Salls' earlier support for a single-chamber parliament, few weeks into his second-tenure presidency in 2016 showed his conviction that the inherited two-chambers parliament was a drain on the much-needed funds for the Senegalese economy (Magaji 2016). Perhaps, the parliament in Nigeria can learn from Senegal's adoption of a one-chamber parliament towards saving funds in governance for the country. This would align with the numerous calls by some members of the public to scrap the upper chamber of the National Assembly on the basis of cost.

Oversight Tools

Table 2 below shows the perceived usefulness of a number of oversight tools to respondents' advocacy and work for responsible public borrowing. The tools include the constitution, parliamentary rules of procedure, parliamentary committee system, budgetary oversight, public hearings, the Harare Declaration, and the African Borrowing Charter.

Table 2: Parliamentary Oversight Tools

I find the following useful in my advocacy and work for responsible public borrowing	No (%)	Yes (%)
The Constitution	*3 (14.3)*	*18 (85.7)*
Parliamentary Rules of Procedure	*6 (28.6)*	*15 (71.4)*
Parliamentary Committee System	*1 (4.8)*	*20 (95.2)*
Budgetary Oversight	*3 (14.3)*	*18 (85.7)*
Public Hearings	*3 (14.3)*	*18 (85.7)*
The Harare Declaration	*1 (4.8)*	*20 (95.2)*
The African Borrowing Charter	*1 (4.8)*	*20 (95.2)*

Source: Fieldwork (Jul. 2022)

The Constitution

A veritable tool for the parliament to conduct effective investigation is the fundamental laws of the land. The constitution is the basis for government's claim to exercise of sovereignty of the people in all political systems. The constitution provides for limits on the use of governmental powers so that individuals or the community as a whole would be protected from arbitrary behaviour on the part of those who govern. It provides for a recall system to ensure the removal of public officers who have violated their oath of office. The constitutional basis for parliamentary oversight is derived from elected representatives' right to question executive policies and practices. Without the constitution, in the first instance, the parliament cannot come into existence The constitution authorises the parliament to conduct investigations. From table 2 (item 1) above, 85.7 percent of respondents find the Constitution in their advocacy and work for responsible public borrowing. Whereas the constitution is the departing point for parliamentary oversight, efforts should be made by parliament to ensure that public borrowing does not inhibit the pursuit of the economic and social rights of the citizens. Whereas Constitutions of the case study countries mandate the review and approval of the executive proposals for raising revenue and incurring expenditure, the trainings offered by AFRODAD is enhancing MPs' understanding of the complexities and implications of indebtedness vis-à-vis the Constitution (AFRODAD, & UE 2021).

Parliamentary Rules of Procedure

Parliamentary oversight tools are usually stipulated in the constitution, but more commonly, they are part of the rules governing parliamentary procedures (called 'standing orders') or 'rules of procedure' (Yamamoto 2007). These refer to codes of conduct made by a parliament for the purpose of regulating its proceedings. Standing rules differ from one parliament to another, although the basic contents are largely the same. Parliaments are responsible for the design and adoption of their own rules to govern their procedures, and those rules may be changed, or suspended at any time during a parliamentary session. The standing rules contain the powers and privileges of the parliament. With collectiveness, the powers and privileges of the parliament might be respected. It is also advisable that these powers and privileges are applied with caution to avoid possible disrespect from the public. Item 2 on table 2 above suggests that 71.4 percent of respondents find the Rules of Procedure useful in the advocacy and work for responsible public borrowing. Parliamentary Rules of Procedure provide the ground for MPs to question the intents of public borrowing and budgeting.

Parliamentary Committee System

Committees represent part of the mechanisms and instruments that can facilitate the development of strategies that would empower the MPs to properly represent the interests of their constituents. Committees are means by which the parliament can broaden the base of general membership participation in its affairs by division of labour. A parliamentary committee is responsible for studying a particular question of policy, project or programme, and reporting its findings and/or recommendations to the House for guidance in deliberation. Committees constitute the 'engine room' of parliamentary duties. The parliament relies on its committees to weed out frivolous, dangerous, or less important measures, and to report out only those bills deserving the consideration of the entire House. Standing rules of a legislative assembly set out the jurisdiction of each committee. Committees might also be specially created, ad-hoc, or even interim. The evidence suggests that a general oversight committee can also be established by parliament. Such general committee coordinates the oversight activities of other permanent committees. The output of a committee's work is usually organised and presented to the parliament as a report. "Committees' study reports can also be directed to the government and the general public to inform them about the committee's work and to provoke governmental action" (Yamamoto 2007, p.34). Item 3 on table 2 above shows that respondents (95.2 percent) find the Parliamentary Committee System useful in their advocacy and work for responsible public borrowing. Most recently, Nigeria's Federal House of Representatives Ad-hoc Committee investigating oil subsidy payments between 2013 and 2022 summoned the finance minister to support her claims that the sum of N6.7tr was required for subsidy (Nwabughiogu 2022).

Budgetary Oversight

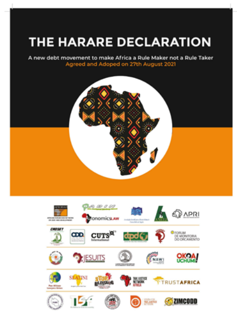
Budget is 'the ritual annual estimate' (Al-Bashir 2008, p.17). It is a major policy document where policy objectives are reconciled and implemented in real terms (Addison 2006). Budget is an important document whose contents should not be treated with flippancy. Budgetary oversight is the key tool with which departmentally related committees assess government programmes. Most government programmes entail a budget for their execution, and this is a core function of departmentally related permanent committees. Usually, the budget law authorised by parliament or documents annexed to this law would show how much money is allocated to each of the policy goals. Two standing committees are unique to budgetary oversight or implementation of budgets. First is Committee on Appropriation or Budget or Finance. The Committee on Budget or Finance corresponds to the Ministry of Budget or Finance. Second, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) occupies a unique space in the constitution. PAC is not involved in the parliamentary debates on the draft appropriation bill or budget and is frequently chaired or led by a member of the opposition. By function, PAC is statutorily empowered to examine reports from the nation's supreme audit institution led by the auditor general. From table (item 4) above, the respondents (85.7 percent) find usefulness in budgetary oversight. Despite the usefulness of budgetary oversight, available evidence suggests that budgetary systems in West Africa are still characterised by institutional and operational weaknesses, most of which are the results of capacity constraints (Emejo 2022).

Public Hearings

Hearings are official meetings for gathering information about an issue or a proposed course of action. The purpose of hearings by parliaments is to ensure that MPs are able to make informed analyses and decisions. Thus, MPs may supplement government-supplied reports with information obtained from other sources. There are variations in the purposes of committee hearings: in some parliaments, hearings are only allowed in special committees of inquiry; in other cases, hearings in permanent committees are limited to government officials. Hearings could serve solely as a form of consultation or as a means of obtaining evidence. Through hearings, government officials are able to provide committees with first-hand knowledge of administrative programe. Second, hearings afford committees the opportunity to seek the opinions of experts outside the government in order to obtain a different perspective on the subject matter. Third, interested parties, comprising policy- or programme- affected people, may request that the committee should give them the opportunity to express their opinions. Fourth, public hearings are platforms for members of the public to express their opinions on oversight issues. From table 2 (item 5) above, it was reported that the respondents (85.7 percent) find public hearings useful in their advocacy and work for responsible public borrowing. CSOs play critical role in filling needs gaps that hinder MPs from providing effective oversight in prudent debt management (AFRODAD, & UE 2021). Further to this, CSOs prefer the holding of public hearings by parliament to reflect the opinion of majority of citizens in the approval and disapproval of loan requests. This resonated in the stakeholders' call for a public hearing on the status of IMF's approved $3.4bn Special Drawing Rights as well as the utilisation of $3.4bn COVID-19 Facility, also granted by the IMF (Falaju 2022)

The Harare Declaration

The Harare Declaration 2021 is a new debt movement to make Africa 'a rule maker not a rule taker', agreed upon and adopted by representatives of civil society, media, academia, development partners, government, parliamentarians, students and citizens on August 27, 2021. The Declaration was an outcome of the inaugural African Conference on Debt and Development, which held at a time when the access of African countries to development finance was curtailed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The conference had noted that the global health pandemic was leading approximately 39 million Africans into extreme poverty in 2021; debiting the future of Africa's youthful generation, while restricting access to future financing to meet infrastructure deficits; and leading to governments prioritising debt servicing over the protection of lives and livelihood. By the declaration, priorities should be given to reforming the global debt architecture; African governments are to lead in developing a common position and consensus on sovereign debt; governments are to work with their parliaments to strengthen national legal frameworks for transparency and accountability in the full circle of public borrowing; African derived and led green recovery should be in tandem with the African Union's Agenda 2063; and the social contract, an embodiment of the citizen- state relationship should be re-enacted. Table 2 (item 6) above reports that the respondents (95.2 percent) agree that the Harare Declaration is useful to their advocacy and work for responsible public borrowing. Since adoption, the Harare Declaration is becoming a veritable tool for CSOs to mobilise citizens for responsible public borrowing in the case study states. This was re-enacted at the AfCoDD II National Conference on Debt and Development held in Abuja (August 18, 2022).

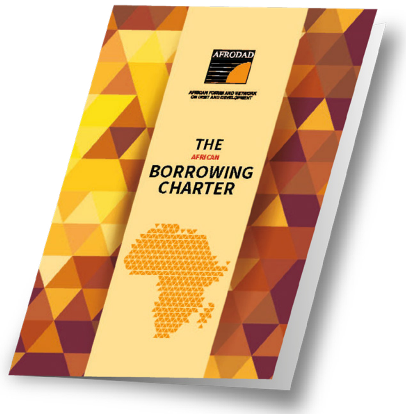


View the Harare Declaration

The African Borrowing Charter

The African Borrowing Charter is a debt governance mechanism outlining the principles, conditions, rules and responsibility structures under which the contraction, utilisation and monitoring of public debt will be done. In the main, the Charter seeks to sustainably balance public debt levels for the purpose of accelerating inclusive development and enhancing public service delivery in Africa. Central to the African Borrowing Charter is the role of parliament in serving as a platform for debating all government loans; including the parties to the loans, the amount of the loan and the currency in which it is expressed and in which it is repayable; the terms and conditions of the loan, including interest and other charges payable and the terms of repayment; the purpose for which the loan was/is used and the perceived benefit of the loan and such other information as the members of parliament may consider appropriate. The Charter expects all African nations to enact the Fiscal Responsibility Act, and public debt shall not exceed 50 percent of the GDP in any given year. Table 2 (item 7) above reports that the respondents (95.2 percent) agree that the Africa Borrowing Charter is useful to their advocacy and work for responsible public borrowing.

A key feature of the African Borrowing Charter is that it mandates African nations to enact a Fiscal Responsibility Act for the purpose of maintaining transparency, parliamentary oversight, as well as medium and long-term sustainability of public finance. It suffices to note that the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Act are grossly violated in the application of borrowed funds by government. By the Nigerian 2007 Fiscal Responsibility Act states that the level of public debt shall be a proportion of national income and held at a sustainable level, but the country's debt levels are becoming unsustainable. In particular, sub-section 1 of section 44 of the Nigerian 2007 Fiscal Responsibility Act states mandates the government to specify the purpose for which borrowing is intended, as well as present a cost-benefit analysis, which shows details of the potential economic and social borrowing of the purpose to which the intended borrowing would be applied. In practice, however, some or most of the recent debts were not accompanied by any cost-benefit analysis or repayment plans (Emejuiwe 2021). The trainings offered by AFRODAD is inspiring MPs to push for the implementation of prudent public debt management in the case study countries. On their part, CSOs have expressed a strong commitment to put debt management issues in their advocacy agenda (AFRODAD, & UE 2021).



Download the African Borrowing Charter

Respondents' Knowledge of Key Documents

Table 3 reports respondents' knowledge of relevant documents. A larger percentage of respondents (57.1) agree to having knowledge of the ECOWAS Finance and Investment Protocols. Out of the respondents (42.9 percent) without knowledge of the document, some posit that it is not a thorough concept, while others claimed to have limited knowledge. 66.7 percent had perceived knowledge of the African Borrowing Charter. Other respondents (33.3 percent) had limited or no knowledge of the document. For some also, the African Borrowing Charter is not a thorough concept. Also, the respondents (66.7 percent) had perceived knowledge of the Harare Declaration. Other respondents (33.3 percent) had limited or no knowledge of the document. Some also posit that the Harare Declaration is a not a thorough concept.

Table 3: Respondents' Knowledge of Key Documents

Knowledge	No (%)	Yes (%)
ECOWAS Finance and Investment Protocols	*9 (42.9)*	*12 (57.1)*
The African Borrowing Charter	*7 (33.3)*	*14 (66.7)*
The Harare Declaration	*7 (33.3)*	*14 (66.7)*

Source: Fieldwork (Jul. 2022)

Overall Rating of the Trainings

Table 4 shows the respondents' ratings of the trainings offered by AFRODAD. 23.8 percent perceive the trainings as 'excellent', 66.7 percent of respondents say the trainings were 'good', and 9.5 percent rated the trainings as 'satisfactory'.

Table 4: Overall Ratings of the Trainings

Overall ratings of the AFRODAD's Trainings	No (%)	Yes (%)
Excellent	*5*	*23.8*
Good	*14*	*66.7*
Satisfactory	*2*	*9.5*
Unsatisfactory	-	-

Source: Fieldwork (Jul. 2022)

Source: Fieldwork (Jul. 2022)

Capacity Building

Annexure II shows the reviewed responses on capacity building, particularly respondents' knowledge on the most useful parts of the trainings held, the specific tools and skills gained from the trainings, the challenges faced in their work with/ in parliament, and how they are overcoming the challenges with the trainings offered. The section also reports how to enhance MPs' future participation in public finance and debt management, the executive agencies they exercise oversight over, as well as ways the parliament can hold government accountable for prudent public debt management. The perceived most useful parts of the trainings offered by AFRODAD include: experience sharing, public debt, budgetary control, domestic resource mobilisation, debt analysis, public debt during the pandemic, journalists training, loan and budgeting, budget monitoring process, as well as borrowing and development. The specific tools and skills gained by participants were notions and mechanisms of debt contraction, control of citizen action, advocacy, budget setting, controlling budget expenses, debt management, post-budget procurement, budgetary process, budget circle, budget monitoring and evaluation, budget implementation, engaging MPs and critical stakeholders on borrowing for development.

The perceived challenges of MPs' involvement in budgetary work and debt management are bureaucracy, non-response to correspondences, budget preparation, limited time for engagement, lack of political will, holding face-to-face meeting, infrastructure development versus recurrent expenditure, understanding the rationale for borrowing, non-disclosure of facts and information on budget, as well as difficulty in budget implementation monitoring. MPs and other stakeholders are using the tools and skills gained from the training to overcome the challenges through engagement with parliamentary committees, advocacy and sensitisation on public debt management, constant engagement with stakeholders, strategic alliance with CSOs, sustainable approach, applying knowledge of debt management. From the survey, the training beneficiaries are awaiting the inauguration of new parliaments.

The perceptions on how to enhance MPs' future participation in debt management and budgetary process. The suggested means include evidence-based capacity building for MPs on public debt issues and potential areas of inter-face, sometimes categorised as training and re-training of MPs on public finance and debt management, conducting social audit, parliamentary strengthening debt management framework, participation of MPs in debt management framework and budgetary process, strengthening accountability and transparency of public debt, and sensitisation of citizens, regular interface with stakeholders. Other ways are to ensure key stakeholders' attendance at training, periodic and timely reporting by spending entities. The target executive agencies for exercising oversight include: Finance Law Committee, Ministry of Budget, Ministry of Finance, Office of Accountant General, Office of Auditor General, Public Procurement Bureau, Fiscal and Transparency Office, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Ministry of Budget and Planning, Debt Management Office, National Planning Commission, and CSOs, such as Friends of the Earth Togo.

The perceived ways parliament can hold government accountable for prudent public debt management. They are by: monitoring use of public resources using budget oversight tools and project monitoring to ensure value for money; ensuring transparency in the management of public debt; strengthening the capacity of parliamentary staff in-charge of budget and public debt management; involving the general public in public borrowing and public debt management; holding periodic public hearings on public borrowing and public debt management; periodic review of approved budget and regular oversight on budget implementation; holding periodic briefing sessions with government MDAs on budget implementation; periodic systematic review of government debt profile; parliamentary review of allocation and use of public resources; and exercising oversight roles over key government institutions spending borrowed funds.

POLICY CONCLUSIONS

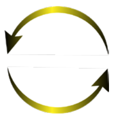
In view of the evidence derived from this study, the following policy conclusions are made:

Elevated public debt constitutes a repayment burden on the 'borrower country'. Therefore, parliaments have a responsibility to keep an eye on domestic and foreign debt management, as well as public procurement, particularly in the vulnerable sectors, including the long COVID induced emergencies.

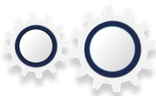
Parliaments in West Africa are duty bound to deploy mechanisms towards averting the impending debt distress, thereby avoiding the feared 'lost decade' in countries being threatened by debt distress.

A review of the trainings offered by AFRODAD and its partners suggests that the programmes sought to provide analytical skills for MPs, parliamentary staff and other stakeholders. This is a human dimension of capacity. The organisational dimension is found in the preparedness of MPs for a shared purpose in public debt management. The institutional dimension can be found in the 2021 Harare Declaration, being reinforced by the AfCODD II 2022.

The production function of training enables MPs to acquire skills and tools on mechanisms of debt contraction, citizen advocacy, budgetary oversight, but there are gaps, which can be filled using the adaptation function. Future trainings should be evidence-based, and directed at issues of public debt management, budgetary process, stakeholders' interface, monitoring and reporting. MPs also need more trainings on how to convince the executive arms on responsible borrowing.



The socialisation function of training will come into force at inauguration of future parliaments after elections (in Senegal and Nigeria). Orientation programmes are usually offered at inception of the new parliament. Therefore, the trainings can factor into the prepared orientation for new and returning MPs.



The coordination function of training is also needed to address variations and complexities of parliamentary committees. To this extent, the relevant committees on budget, finance and loans should be identified for differentiated trainings in future.

MPs also need training support in working to alter the fundamental laws of the land to build a stronger, one-chamber parliament. A good example is the Senegal's change from a two-chambers parliament to a one-chamber parliament. The same political energies can be diverted to give more power to the parliament to ensure responsible borrowing by governments.

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