



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** “When there is citizen participation in budgeting and closer engagement of citizens in the monitoring of civic works, there are better outcomes and fewer leakages.” In the light of the given statement discuss the utility of the Participatory Budgeting.

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### Approach

- Introduce by writing what is meant by the Participatory Budgeting.
- Write the benefits of the Participatory Budgeting in the governance.
- Mention some of the issues with the participatory budgeting.
- Conclude suitably.

### Introduction

**Participatory Budgeting (PB)** is an innovative policy making process. Citizens are directly involved in making policy decisions. These programs are designed to **incorporate citizens into the policymaking process**, spur administrative reform, and distribute public resources to low-income neighborhoods.

The concept that was **pioneered in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre** in the mid-1980s is now practiced in one form or other in thousands of cities around the world.

### Body

#### ▪ Benefits of Participatory Budgeting

- **Voice in Civic Governance:** It makes citizens feel like they have a voice in civic governance and thereby builds trust.
  - It facilitates a targeted, hyperlocal focus on budgeting and problem-solving.
  - It also ensures that the diverse needs and experiences of local communities are understood and a range of voices is heard in local decision-making.
- **Community Ownership:** This would foster far greater ownership in communities for civic assets and amenities, thereby resulting in better maintenance and upkeep.
  - At the local level, it is a win-win for communities, elected councilors, and the city administration.
  - It addresses inefficiencies arising from misplaced prioritization of civic works relative to citizen needs.
- **Facilitating Equity:** Actively engaging with communities to advance equality and eliminate inequalities is integral to participatory decision-making and the allocation of public resources.
  - Finally, it improves accountability for civic works at the last mile (as citizens would monitor budget execution).
- **Increasing Trust Between Government & People:** Citizens could work with ward-level

engineers to use these funds to get their urban commons (street lights fixed, make their footpaths walkable, spruce up their parks, create a new childcare center or public toilet in an urban poor settlement) fixed.

- This would change the lives of the people and build trust between citizens and governments.
- **Inclusive:** It ensures social and political inclusion as low income and traditionally excluded political actors are given the opportunity to make policy decisions.
- **Challenges with the participatory budgeting approach:**
  - **Lack of Information And Knowledge Participants:** Citizens with low levels of information and expertise are involved in making important public policy decisions.
    - Some participants have good knowledge of a particular issue (i.e. health care, housing, or education), still their knowledge about other policy issues may be low.
  - **Time-consuming:** It is time-consuming compared to an imposed budget by Union/states. Since the budget preparation starts from the local level to the top, too much participation may occur that may derail the process.
  - **Limited Scope:** It sacrifices long-term planning to short-term gains given that most demands of citizens are immediate.
  - **Thinking local, acting local:** It tends to prioritize local issues and ignore regional, national or global issues.

## Conclusion

Thus, there is a need to focus on participatory budgeting in order to adopt a bottom- up approach and **increase social justice** by providing a platform for traditionally excluded members of society to have a voice in decision-making processes, potentially leading to more just and equitable governance and improve the living conditions of the poor.