budgIT

OpenStates and the Politics of Public Information: Strengthening Citizen Accountability in Nigeria



openstates.ng



About BudgIT

BudgIT is a civic organisation that uses creative technology to simplify public information, stimulate a community of active citizens, and enable their right to demand accountability, institutional reforms, efficient service delivery, and an equitable society.

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Insights

01 A budget has a life cycle, and most citizens only ever see one frame of it. Proposed, approved, implemented, audited, policy. OpenStates is one of the few places that lines up all five stages for the same state, side by side, which is what actually lets someone catch the gap between what a government promised and what it delivered.

Transparency and accountability are not the same thing, and conflating them is where a lot of civic tech optimism goes wrong. Publishing a document doesn't force anyone to act on it. OpenStates supplies the evidence. Whether that evidence produces consequences still depends entirely on institutions the platform has no power over. 02

03 The biggest barrier to fiscal information in Nigeria isn't secrecy, its format. A budget written in technical English and buried in a 2000-page PDF is functionally inaccessible to most citizens. Translating into Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, and breaking data down to the local government level, does more for real access than any transparency pledge.

The platform's most important recent change isn't a feature, it's a direction reversal. For years, OpenStates only pushed information outward. The SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative) upgrade, with voice complaints and photo and video evidence, lets citizens push information back in. That's the shift from a broadcast tool to an actual feedback channel. 04

05 Civic tech tends to reach people who are already paying attention, not the people who need it most. We flag this directly: platforms like OpenStates are more likely to be used by citizens who are already educated, urban, and digitally connected than by rural or marginalised communities who often have the most at stake in how public funds get spent. Access to a tool isn't the same as reach.

OpenStates exists because a formal institution didn't do its job well enough. State Houses of Assembly are constitutionally responsible for public budget oversight and citizen communication. In practice, a CSO built the tool millions of Nigerians now use instead. That's less a compliment to BudgIT than a sobering appraisal of where Nigerian representative institutions are falling short. 06

07 OpenStates is evidence of a slow institutional shift, not a finished achievement. The closing argument isn't that Nigeria has solved fiscal transparency. It's that there's a gradual movement underway, from government-controlled information toward shared public information, and from citizens as passive recipients toward citizens who can actually check claims against a record. OpenStates is presented as one data point in that shift, not the endpoint of it.

Executive Summary

BudgIT's OpenStates platform gathers state-level budget documents from across Nigeria's thirty-six states and makes them public in a structured, searchable, multilingual format. This paper argues that OpenStates should not be read simply as a website that publishes government financial information. It functions as a civic technology that strengthens the relationship between citizens and the state, supplies the information base that social accountability depends on, and, since its recent SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative) upgrade, carries citizen demands back into the political system rather than only broadcasting information outward.

Three political science frameworks are used to make this case, and they are treated as a single connected argument rather than three separate lenses. Social contract theory explains why citizens are entitled to expect openness from a government managing public resources on their behalf. Social accountability theory explains how that openness becomes usable: accessible information allows citizens, journalists, and civil society to monitor spending, surface discrepancies, and press for responsiveness. Though the paper is careful not to claim that information alone guarantees accountability. Systems theory, drawn from David Easton's model of political systems, explains the mechanism: government outputs such as budgets need to become visible to citizens before informed feedback can flow back into the system, and OpenStates sits at exactly that point. The paper examines the platform's core features (the layered budget cycle documents, citizen budgets, local government area data, multilingual translation, and the open Application Programming Interface, or API) before turning in detail to the newest upgrade: a redesigned SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative) section offering direct complaint access, voice complaint submission, photo and video evidence upload, database queries by sector or timeframe, and back-end activity reporting. This upgrade is treated as the platform's most significant development, since it is what allows OpenStates to begin closing the feedback half of Easton's loop rather than only strengthening the input half.

OpenStates also has real limits. Digital access, financial literacy, data timeliness, and the gap between transparency and enforceable accountability all limit what a civic tech platform can realistically achieve, and the paper is explicit that OpenStates enables scrutiny rather than producing it. Its broader significance lies in a slow, incremental shift already underway in Nigerian subnational governance: from government-controlled information toward shared public information, and from citizens as passive recipients of whatever government discloses toward citizens positioned as informed actors who can check government claims against a public record, sector by sector, state by state, year by year.

Introduction

Governance in Nigeria has long been shaped by a basic imbalance. The state knows how much revenue it collects, how it allocates that revenue across ministries and sectors, and how much of what it promises actually gets built or delivered. Citizens for the most part, do not. This imbalance, commonly described as information asymmetry, sits at the root of several of Nigeria's most persistent governance problems: weak fiscal transparency, poor accountability at the subnational level, and a form of citizen participation in governance that switches on briefly at election time and goes quiet in between.

***Key Term:** Information Asymmetry A situation where one party in a relationship, (here, the state) holds far more knowledge than the other (the citizen), about a matter that affects them both. The government knows exactly how much revenue it raised, how it chose to spend it, and how much of what it promised actually got delivered. Citizens, who fund and live with the results rarely have access to that same picture. Closing this gap, not just publishing more data, is the real work of platforms like OpenStates.*

Public budgets in principle are public documents. In practice, across many of Nigeria's thirty-six states, they have often functioned as internal government paperwork that ordinary citizens rarely see and even more rarely understand. A budget written in the technical language of line items, codes, and appropriations is not especially useful to a resident trying to work out whether their local government actually built the health centre it promised. This gap between what governments produce and what citizens can meaningfully access and interpret is where BudgIT's OpenStates platform positions itself.

OpenStates was built by BudgIT, a Nigerian civic technology organisation founded in 2011 with the stated aim of applying technology to open up public finance to ordinary citizens (Participedia, n.d.; Devex, n.d.). The platform gathers state-level budget and fiscal documents from across the federation and presents them in a structured, searchable, and increasingly interactive format. The argument this paper makes is that OpenStates should not be read simply as a website that publishes government financial information. It is better understood as a civic technology that strengthens the relationship between citizens and government by making public information accessible, by supplying the informational raw material that social accountability requires, and by creating a channel through which citizen concerns can feed back into the wider political system.

To make that argument, the paper draws on three theories that are usually treated separately in political science but which, applied together, explain OpenStates far more completely than any one of them could alone. Social contract theory explains why citizens are entitled to expect openness and responsiveness from the state that manages public resources on their behalf. Social accountability theory explains the actual mechanism through which access to information can translate into scrutiny and pressure on the government. Systems theory, drawn from David Easton's work, explains how OpenStates fits inside the ongoing circulation of demands, decisions, and feedback that keeps a political system functioning. Read together, these three frameworks trace a single line: from the normative relationship between citizens and the state, through the practical process of holding government to account, to the mechanism by which information actually moves and shapes future political decisions.

What OpenStates Is

OpenStates is a data platform, but it is worth being precise about what that means in practice. The site organises Nigeria's thirty-six states into individual pages, each carrying a consistent set of fiscal documents. These typically include the proposed budget prepared by the executive and its ministries, the approved budget (once the State Assembly has debated and passed it), a simplified citizen budget written for a general audience, periodic implementation reports tracking how far a state has gotten in carrying out what it promised, the independently audited statement of what was actually earned and spent, and broader policy statements setting out a state's medium term priorities.

The platform was created to address a specific governance problem: the absence of a single, standard, publicly accessible place where a citizen, journalist, researcher, or civil society group could go to find a state's fiscal documents without needing personal contacts inside government or the patience to file a formal records request. Its target users are correspondingly broad. Journalists use it to check claims made by officials against what a budget actually says. Researchers use it for comparative work across states. Civil society organisations use it to prepare advocacy campaigns around specific sectors. Ordinary citizens, at least in principle, use it to understand what their own state government is doing with public money.

Where OpenStates goes further than a simple document archive is in how it lowers the cost of understanding that information. Complex budget documents are converted into infographics and citizen budgets that strip out technical language, e.g Akwa Ibom State. The site is translated into English, Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba, extending access beyond readers of formal English. A dedicated data page allows deeper exploration and filtering, and a separate view exists specifically for local government area budgets, which matters because a large share of Nigerian public spending happens at the local government level, where scrutiny is often weakest. A public API, listed under a developer section, opens the underlying data to anyone who wants to build additional tools on top of it, extending the platform's reach beyond its own interface.

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Major Features And Why They Matter For Governance

Each of the platform's features can be described in functional terms, but the more important question for a governance analysis is why each one matters.

The layered budget cycle documents (proposed, approved, citizen, implementation, audited, and policy) matter because they let a user follow a single fiscal story from promise to delivery to verification. A citizen who can compare the proposed budget for education against the implementation report six months later, has a concrete basis for asking why a promised project has not appeared, rather than a vague sense that something is wrong.

Citizen budgets and infographics matter because technical fluency should not be a precondition for civic participation. Reducing a budget of hundreds of pages into a visual summary lowers the barrier between complex public finance and a non-specialist audience, which is precisely the kind of barrier that keeps ordinary citizens locked out of fiscal debates that directly affect them.

Local government area data matters because Nigeria's 774 local government areas and area councils are where many citizens experience government most directly, through primary healthcare, local roads, and basic sanitation, and where budget scrutiny has historically been thinnest.

Multilingual translation matters because information access that only works in English quietly excludes a large share of the country, particularly outside urban centres. A platform that treats openness as a genuine public good has to treat language as part of that openness.

The developer API matters because it turns OpenStates from a single destination into shared infrastructure, letting journalists, researchers, and other civic tech builders extend the platform's reach rather than duplicating its data collection work from scratch.

The most recent set of upgrades to the platform, however, represents the clearest shift in what OpenStates is capable of doing, and deserves its own extended discussion.

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The SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative): From Publishing Information to Receiving It

Nested inside each state's section is the SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative) which functions as the platform's complaint and information request mechanism. The latest redesign of this section changes the platform's basic character, moving it from a structure that only pushes information outward to one that can also receive information back from citizens. Several specific upgrades matter here.

The platform now gives front end users direct, immediate access to the complaint and information request section of the SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative), rather than requiring users to search for it. Visibility matters in civic technology; a feature that exists but is hard to find might as well not exist for most users, so simply surfacing this pathway is itself a meaningful design choice.

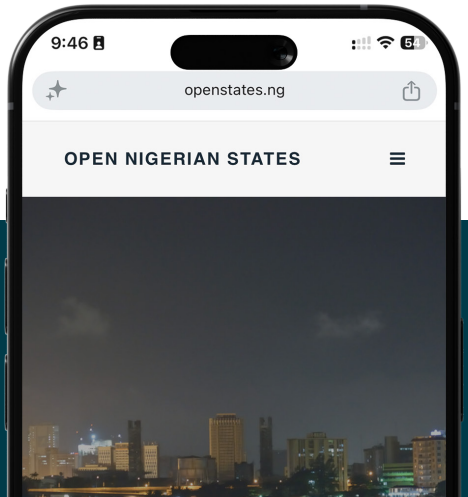
Second, the platform now allows voice complaint submission. This addresses a real barrier: not every citizen who wants to report a problem is comfortable composing a written complaint, whether because of literacy, language, or simply the friction of typing out a grievance. Letting someone speak a complaint instead removes that barrier and widens who can realistically participate.

Third, users can now upload photos and videos alongside a complaint. A report that a promised health centre was never built, or that a road project stalled halfway through, lands very differently when it comes with a picture of the actual site attached. This converts a complaint from an unverifiable claim into something closer to documented evidence.

Fourth, the platform now includes database query functionality, allowing users to generate reports filtered by a specific timeframe or sector. Instead of manually searching through years of documents, a user can ask the system directly for everything related to, say, water infrastructure spending over a particular budget cycle, which meaningfully lowers the effort required to do serious comparative or investigative work.

Fifth, the platform generates activity reports for different categories of back end users, allowing staff, whether within BudgIT or inside participating state governments, to see how the platform is actually being used. This starts to close a loop that earlier versions of the site lacked: rather than only broadcasting information outward, the platform can now be observed, measured, and adjusted based on how citizens are engaging with it.

Taken together, these five upgrades mark a genuine shift. The earlier version of OpenStates was, at its core, a communication tool. The addition of a functioning complaint and evidence submission channel makes it, for the first time, a modest but real accountability tool as well, one where citizens are not just reading about government decisions but actively registering objections to them.



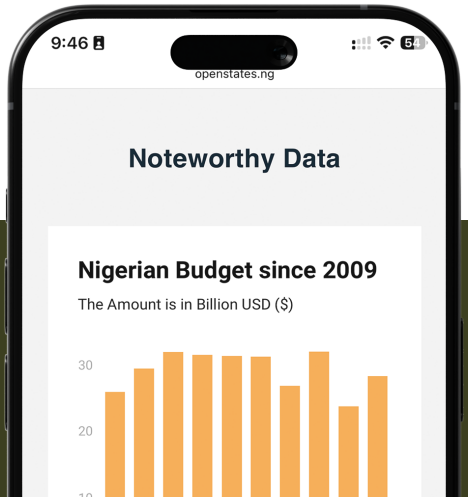
Theoretical Framework

4.1 Social Contract Theory: The Relationship

Social contract theory, developed across the work of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, begins from the premise that political authority is not simply seized but is, in some meaningful sense, granted. Citizens surrender certain freedoms and resources to a governing authority in exchange for the protection of their basic interests and the responsible management of collective affairs. Locke in particular argued that this exchange carries obligations running in both directions: government is entrusted with power and resources on behalf of the governed, and that trust implies a responsibility to act in ways citizens can recognise as legitimate and accountable (Locke, 1689/1988). Rousseau's account placed similar weight on the idea that legitimate authority rests on a continuing relationship with the will of the people it governs, not a one-time transfer of power (Rousseau, 1762/1997).

OpenStates does not create this obligation. It responds to it by giving the abstract idea of government accountability to the governed a concrete, practical form: an actual place where a citizen can go to see what a state proposed to spend, what it approved, and what it eventually delivered. In this sense, the platform strengthens the informational dimension of a relationship that political theory has long described in principle but that has often been thin in practice at the subnational level in Nigeria.

It would be an overreach to claim that the social contract grants citizens an automatic legal right to every piece of government financial data. That is not the argument this paper makes. What social contract theory offers instead is a normative frame: since public revenue is collected from citizens and public spending is undertaken in their name, a government that manages those resources responsibly should, as a matter of the underlying relationship, be willing and able to show citizens what it has done with them.



4.2 Social Accountability Theory: The Process

Where social contract theory explains why citizens should expect openness, social accountability theory explains how that openness can actually be turned into pressure on the government. The concept developed extensively in World Bank policy research by Malena, Forster, and Singh (2004) distinguishes formal accountability mechanisms, such as elections, legislative oversight, and official audits from social accountability mechanisms. The latter depend on the direct or indirect participation of citizens, civil society organisations, journalists, researchers, and community groups in monitoring government conduct.

The analytical chain here is fairly specific: accessible public information allows citizens and civil society to monitor government decisions and spending; that monitoring can surface problems or discrepancies between what was promised and what was delivered. Identifying those problems can feed public engagement and advocacy, and sustained engagement can generate pressure for government responsiveness; which is the beginning of stronger accountability. OpenStates supplies the first and arguably the most foundational link in that chain: it is the information infrastructure that makes the rest of the process possible. A journalist cannot investigate a discrepancy between a state's proposed and audited budget without first being able to find both documents in comparable form. A civil society organisation cannot mount an evidence-based advocacy campaign around unspent health funds without a reliable public record of what was allocated.

It is important not to overstate the platform's role here. Jonathan Fox (2007), in an influential critique of the assumed link between openness and accountability, cautions that transparency does not automatically produce accountability; publishing information can remain what he calls opaque, failing to reveal how institutions actually behave, and even clear information does not guarantee that institutions will respond to public pressure. OpenStates creates an enabling condition and a resource for social accountability, not a guarantee of it.

Whether that resource is actually used, and whether government institutions respond when it is, depends on factors the platform does not control: the capacity and willingness of civil society to act on the data, the responsiveness of the officials being scrutinised, and the broader political environment in which that scrutiny takes place. The SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative) upgrade pushes the platform slightly further along this chain than a pure information repository would sit, since a documented complaint with photographic evidence is closer to an actual accountability claim than a raw budget document is, but the basic caution still applies: OpenStates enables social accountability; it does not perform it on citizens' behalf.

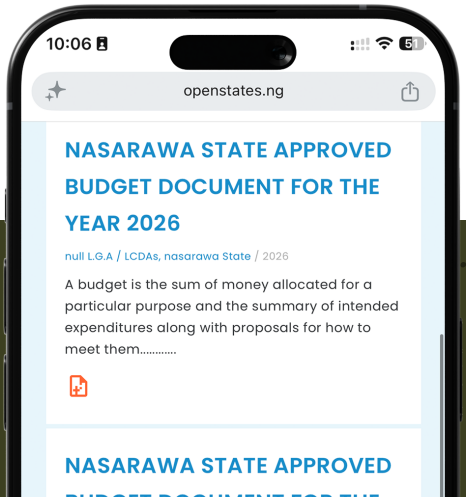
4.3 Systems Theory: The Mechanism

The third framework, drawn from David Easton's political systems theory, explains the mechanism through which information of the kind OpenStates provides actually moves within a political system over time. Easton conceptualised a political system as a continuous cycle: citizen demands and expressions of support flow into the system as inputs, the system converts those inputs into binding decisions, those decisions produce outputs such as policies, budgets, and public programmes, and the consequences of those outputs flow back into society as feedback, which shapes the next round of demands (Easton, 1965).

Government budgets, spending decisions, and implemented programmes are in Easton's terms, outputs. For a very long time in Nigerian subnational governance, these outputs were largely invisible to the citizens they affected, which meant the feedback loop Easton described was badly weakened. Citizens could not easily observe what the government had actually done, so they had limited basis for forming demands rooted in evidence about that specific state's performance rather than general impressions or rumour.

OpenStates sits inside this cycle at exactly the point where outputs are meant to become visible enough to generate informed feedback.

By publishing budgets, implementation reports, and audited statements in a consistent, comparable format, the platform makes government outputs legible to citizens and civil society, who can then analyse that information, form opinions, and communicate new demands back toward the state, whether through advocacy, journalism, electoral behaviour, or, since the SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative) upgrade, through a direct complaint channel built into the platform itself. This last point matters for the systems reading specifically: earlier versions of OpenStates strengthened only the 'output to society' half of Easton's loop, helping outputs become visible, but did comparatively little to structure the return path back into the system. The complaint and information request functionality, together with voice submission and photographic evidence, gives citizens a more concrete channel for pushing new demands back toward the government, closing the loop more completely than the platform previously could.

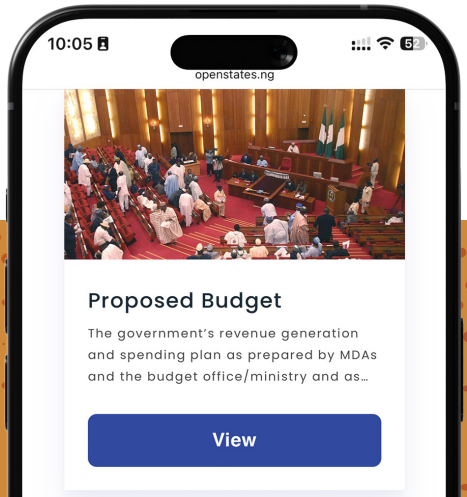


Integrating The Three Theories

These three frameworks are not simply three separate lenses trained on the same object. They form a chain, and each does work the others cannot.

Social contract theory establishes the relationship: it explains why citizens should expect a government that manages public resources on their behalf to be transparent, responsive, and accountable in the first place. Social accountability theory explains the process: it shows how, once information is available, citizens and civil society can actually use it to scrutinise government conduct and press for change. Systems theory explains the mechanism: it shows how information and feedback physically move between state and society, and where a platform like OpenStates sits inside that circulation.

Put simply, the social contract tells us why the relationship should be open. Social accountability tells us how openness gets converted into scrutiny. Systems theory tells us how that scrutiny travels back into the machinery of government as a new demand. OpenStates is not fully explained by any single one of these theories. It is a platform that responds to an obligation described by the first, supplies the resource required by the second, and occupies the structural position described by the third.



OpenStates As A Civic Technology

OpenStates belongs to a wider and rapidly growing field usually described as civic technology, or civic tech: digital tools built specifically to strengthen the relationship between citizens and government rather than to serve a purely commercial purpose. Research on civic tech in Nigeria and comparable African contexts frames these platforms as attempts to democratise access to government information, translate technical government data into a form ordinary people can use, reduce information asymmetry, strengthen citizen oversight capacity, and support evidence-based advocacy (Zisengwe, 2024).

Nigeria's civic tech ecosystem has grown substantially over the past decade, with BudgIT itself becoming one of its most established actors, alongside organisations working on election monitoring, open contracting, and public service tracking. Within that ecosystem, OpenStates occupies a fairly specific niche rather than tracking a single sector or a single election cycle. It aims for continuous standing coverage of every state's fiscal cycle, year after year, which is a routine, relatively dull and less headline-grabbing form of civic tech work than a single campaign but arguably critical for building a long-term culture of fiscal literacy.

Situated within the broader evolution of digital governance in Nigeria, OpenStates represents a shift in where the responsibility for public financial communication actually sits. Formal responsibility for making budgets public and holding the executive accountable for their implementation rests with each State House of Assembly. In practice, an NGO built a platform to do a version of that work at national scale because the formal channel was not doing it consistently. That is not a criticism unique to Nigeria. In Kenya, Ushahidi emerged in 2008 as a citizen-built crowdsourcing platform to report election violence at a moment when formal institutions could not give citizens a reliable picture of events on the ground (Rotich, 2017). In India, I Paid A Bribe has logged well over 190,000 citizen reports of petty corruption since 2010, data that formal anti-corruption bodies were not systematically capturing (Kubbe, 2025). Both are part of a wider pattern in the civic tech literature on the Global South, where non-state digital platforms step into gaps left by weak or slow-moving formal institutions.

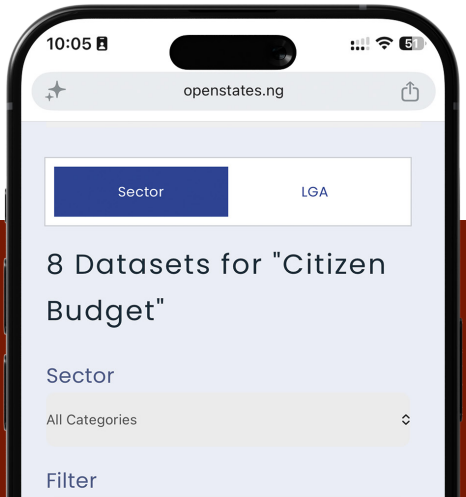
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Why OpenStates Matters For Subnational Governance

Nigeria's federal structure gives states substantial responsibility over the services citizens interact with most directly: primary and secondary education, primary healthcare, state roads, and a significant share of agricultural and rural development spending.1 How a state generates revenue, whether through federal allocations, internally generated revenue, or borrowing, and how it chooses to allocate that revenue across competing priorities, says more about a governor's actual priorities than almost any campaign speech.

A platform that lets a citizen check, in real time, whether a state's health budget was actually spent on health, or whether an approved road project ever moved past the proposal stage, extends democratic scrutiny into the long stretch of time between elections when most governance actually happens. This is arguably where OpenStates makes a clear contribution: not in any single dramatic revelation, but in the routine, unglamorous availability of comparable fiscal data across all thirty six states, year after year.

Access to this information matters for a specific reason: democratic accountability cannot be limited to a single day at the ballot box every four years. Citizens who can only judge their government's performance through vague impressions between elections are poorly positioned to make informed choices when elections do arrive, and poorly positioned to press for change in the years between them.



1 See Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), ss. 4(7) and 5(2); Second Schedule, Part II (Concurrent Legislative List), Items 18 and 30; and Fourth Schedule on local government functions. Most of these responsibilities sit on the Concurrent Legislative List, meaning both federal and state governments have legislative competence over them, with day-to-day delivery carried out largely through state structures such as each state's State Primary Health Care Development Agency (SPHCDA).

Critical Analysis

A serious analysis of OpenStates cannot be purely celebratory, and several limitations deserve direct attention.

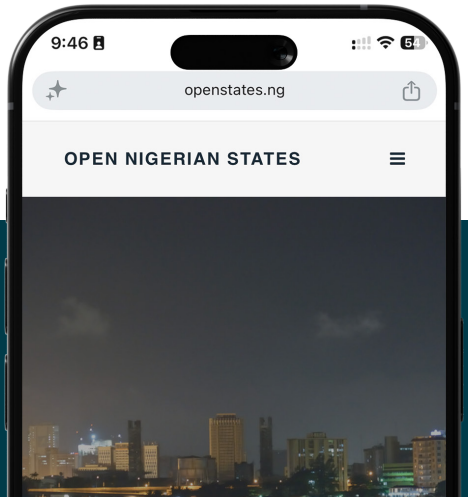
Digital access and literacy remain uneven across Nigeria. A platform, however well designed, cannot reach citizens without reliable internet access or the confidence to navigate a website, which means its most direct users are likely to skew toward those who are already relatively educated, urban, and digitally connected, rather than the rural or marginalised communities who often have the most at stake in how public funds are spent.

Even among citizens who can access the platform, complex fiscal information is not automatically comprehensible simply because it has been visualised. Citizen budgets and infographics help, but they cannot fully substitute for financial literacy, and there is a real risk that simplified summaries flatten important nuance out of the underlying numbers.

The platform's completeness also depends entirely on what state governments choose to publish or what BudgIT can independently obtain. A state that is slow to release its audited statement, or that quietly withholds an unflattering implementation report, limits what the platform can show, regardless of how well the platform itself is built. Timeliness compounds this problem: a budget document published a year late is of limited use to a citizen trying to hold the government accountable in real time.

Perhaps the most important distinction, following Fox's (2007) argument directly, is that transparency is not the same thing as accountability. Publishing a document is only the first step in a much longer process that depends on institutions actually responding to public scrutiny, whether through changed spending decisions, disciplinary action, or electoral consequences. OpenStates can document that a promised health centre never appeared. It cannot compel the ministry responsible to explain why, and it cannot force any consequence if no satisfactory explanation is given. The SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative) complaint channel narrows this gap slightly, since a formally logged, evidence-backed complaint is harder to ignore than an abstract statistic, but it does not close it; there remains no guarantee that a complaint results in action, only a somewhat stronger basis for citizens and civil society to keep asking why it has not.

Finally, there is a risk, common to civic tech more broadly, that platforms like this reach an already engaged, already informed segment of the public more effectively than they reach citizens who are disengaged or marginalised, which means their contribution to accountability may be real but unevenly distributed across the population.

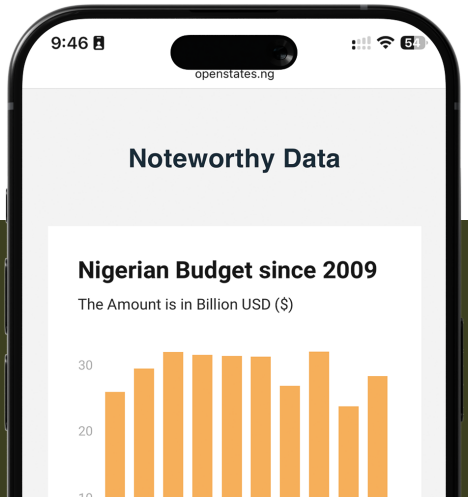


Broader Significance

None of these limitations erase what OpenStates represents. Considered against the backdrop of Nigeria's governance history, the platform is part of a broader and still unfolding shift, from government-controlled information toward shared public information, and from citizens treated as passive recipients of whatever government chooses to disclose toward citizens positioned as informed actors capable of checking government claims against a public record.

That shift is incremental rather than dramatic. A single platform does not rewire a country's political culture. But OpenStates, alongside comparable civic tech initiatives, contributes to a slowly strengthening accountability ecosystem that links government, civil society, media, researchers, and citizens together around a shared, verifiable set of facts about public spending. The SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative) upgrade suggests this ecosystem is still evolving in a specific direction: from platforms that only publish information toward platforms that also collect it, listen to it, and route it back toward the institutions being scrutinised.

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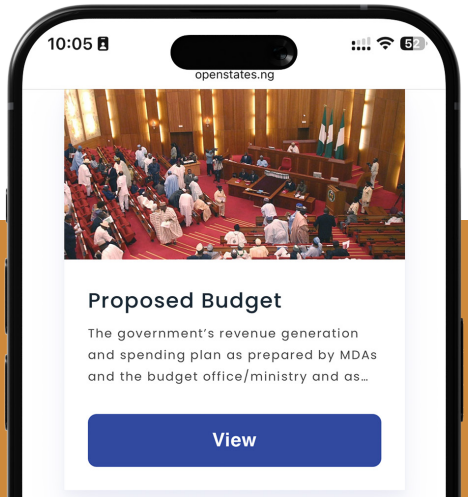


Conclusion

Read through the combined lens of social contract theory, social accountability theory, and systems theory, OpenStates emerges as considerably more than a repository of budget documents. Social contract theory frames the platform as a response to an underlying obligation: a government that manages public resources on citizens' behalf owes them some meaningful account of what it has done with those resources, and OpenStates gives that obligation a concrete, practical form. Social accountability theory frames the platform as a resource: it supplies the information infrastructure that citizens, journalists, and civil society organisations need in order to monitor government conduct and press for responsiveness, while leaving the actual work of monitoring and advocacy to those actors themselves. Systems theory frames the platform as a mechanism: it sits at the point in Nigeria's political system where government outputs are meant to become visible enough to generate informed citizen feedback, and the addition of the SSDTI (State Service Delivery Transparency Initiative) complaint channel, with its voice submissions and photographic evidence, has begun to close the return half of that loop more completely than earlier versions of the site could.

The significance of OpenStates, in the end, does not lie simply in the volume of documents it makes available. It lies in its potential, still partial and still dependent on institutions beyond its control, to transform information into citizen knowledge, knowledge into scrutiny, scrutiny into engagement, and engagement into a stronger and more sustained demand for accountable, responsive government at the level where most Nigerians actually experience the state.

OpenStates emerges as considerably more than a repository of budget documents. Social contract theory frames the platform as a response to an underlying obligation: a government that manages public resources on citizens' behalf owes them some meaningful account of what it has done with those resources, and OpenStates gives that obligation a concrete, practical form.



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Appendix: OpenStates Within Easton's Input-Output-Feedback Loop

SOCIETY

Citizens · Journalists · Civil Society Organisations

Demands — complaints, information requests, advocacy for sectors

Support — compliance, legitimacy, trust

OPENSTATES.NG

BudgIT's civic-tech platform

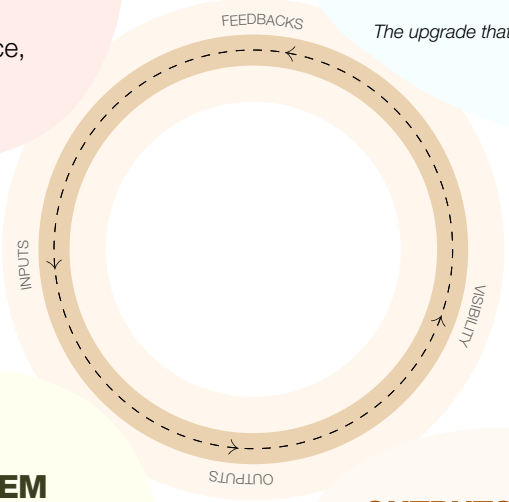
MAKES OUTPUTS VISIBLE

- 36 states + FCT, by LGA
- Citizen budgets & infographics
- English · Hausa · Igbo · Yoruba
- Data query tools + open API
- State news feed, in context

SSDTI: CARRIES DEMANDS BACK

- Direct front-end complaint and information-request access
- Voice complaint submission
- Photo & video evidence upload
- Reports by sector or timeframe
- Back-end activity reporting

The upgrade that turns a broadcast tool into a two-way channel.



POLITICAL SYSTEM

State Executive · House of Assembly · MDAs · Auditor-General

Converts citizen demands and public support into binding fiscal decisions and rules for the state.

OUTPUTS

The state budget cycle, year on year

Proposed → Approved → Implementation → Audited Statement → Policy Direction

budgIT



openstates.ng