



Civil Society Monitoring of PRSPs



Examples from Malawi
and Zambia

October 16, 2003



Why should CSOs monitor?

- To ensure that PRSP is not simply a plan with no results -- governments held accountable for follow-through on commitments
- To ensure transparency and accountability for use of resources (including prevention of corruption)
- To institutionalize civil society participation in PRSP beyond formulation stage



What to monitor?

- Budget allocations and expenditures: "Follow the money"
- Delivery of government services
- People's perception of government performance -- "Report card" approach
- Final outcomes (changes in poverty measurements)

What to monitor? (cont.)

- Most CSOs undertake combination of monitoring budgets and service delivery
- Monitoring final poverty outcomes requires considerable technical capacity, usually left to governments
- CSOs must decide whether to participate in government monitoring or carry out parallel system



How to Monitor?

- Develop and test tools (questionnaires, guides for local researchers, etc.)
- Train local monitors
- Collect and analyze data
- Disseminate findings (through publications, mass media) and use to influence decisions



Practical Examples

- Only handful of experiences with CSO monitoring of PRSP – Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia
- With possible exception of Uganda, governments lack openness, transparency, and view civil society with measure of suspicion

The Malawi Experience

- Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) persuaded Parliamentary Budget and Finance Committee to adopt 9 “Priority Poverty Expenditures” (PPEs) in the 2001-2002 budget
- Malawi Ministry of Finance agreed to produce expenditure figures on the PPEs during the year – but did not agree to protect PPEs from cuts

- MEJN formed 3 networks of CSOs in sectors of Health, Education, & Agriculture
- MEJN networks agreed to monitor the delivery of services in these sectors
- Parliamentary Budget and Finance committee agreed to look at revenue targets and allocation of money to relevant line ministries
- Networks selected districts where MEJN local committees were strong – e.g. 6 in the case of education – and provided 3- to 5-day training to local leaders in use of survey instruments

- Local leaders use questionnaire to discover whether clinics had medicines, schools had books and teaching/learning materials, teachers were trained, etc.
- Surveys submitted to national MEJN office.
- Data analyzed by a team using computer statistical package, supervised by expert.
- Validated statistics and results with relevant government departments (Education, Health, Agriculture, Finance, etc.)
- Final report compiled

Monitoring Results

Sample results:

- Government spending on vital medicines was much lower than commitment. On average, clinics did not have 50% of their vital medicines.
- Despite a 221% increase in spending on teaching materials, 41% of schools did not receive any new materials during the 6 months since the budget was adopted.

Monitoring Results (cont.)

- Teachers salaries increased an average of 68%, but were not included in budget – likely because the increases were made to gain political loyalties and/or because of concern about reaction from donors.
- Overall, budget was a fiction – did not reflect the actual expenditures

Use of Monitoring Results

- Results shared first with communities
- Results then shared with government, donors, other stakeholders
- Prepared 1-page summaries, PP presentations
- Media strategy to disseminate results via radio, newspaper, paid ads
- MEJN used results to lobby Members of Parliament before their deliberations on budget

Other monitoring activities

- In addition, MEJN conducted a “Service Delivery Satisfaction Survey” completed in April 2003
- Survey measured people’s attitudes and perceptions about government services in health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, and security
- Politicians were responsive to these surveys, saw it as a referendum on their performance and therefore their election prospects

Impact of Monitoring

- In response to findings, budget was recently revised, adding items such as salary increases, and shifting allocations from some non-priority expenditures (foreign travel, office of President, etc.) to PPEs – recognizing the principle of prioritization to poverty programs
- Some ministries (e.g. Education) using the findings in their own planning
- Parliament has taken on some findings as their own, using them to question/challenge the line ministries; CSOs legitimized as credible partner

Zambia Experience

- Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) decided to continue beyond PRSP for purposes of monitoring implementation
- In October 2002, CSPR carried out qualitative poverty assessment to generate baseline data against which to measure future progress
- In May 2003, carried out a follow-up study to measure concrete impacts, and people's perceptions

Monitoring Approach

- Baseline study followed by monitoring survey examined progress in agriculture, education, health, water and sanitation, industry, tourism, mining and cross cutting issues (gender, HIV/AIDS) in 15 villages in 5 provinces, including 4 of the poorest
- Also monitored the receipt and use of HIPC funds for poverty reduction purposes

Monitoring Approach (cont.)

- Monitoring carried out by team of 21 researchers from CSOs
- Used variety of qualitative Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques (social maps, wealth ranking, semi-structured interviews, etc.) as well as quantitative measures to gather data.



Sample findings

- Disbursement and use of HIPC funds has resulted in some investments in schools and health care centers;
- Low level of understanding and awareness of PRSP among local level officials – therefore disconnect between national PRSP and district development plans

Sample findings (cont.)

- Government only disbursed 25 percent of the total resources earmarked for poverty reduction programs – government claims funds diverted to address drought and food crisis, but CSOs suspect other reasons (increases in funds for executive branch, buying votes from opposition)
- Continuing lack of information from government about what, where and by whom poverty reduction programs are being implemented.



Lessons Learned

- The budget is the critical vehicle for putting PRSP commitments into practice
- “Ring-fencing” poverty budget expenditures helps considerably in ensuring that poverty programs are not cut – and easier to monitor
- CSOs can monitor PRSPs (even local-level CSOs) and produce credible information that has major impact – even when the government is not very cooperative
- Best to focus on a few key expenditures

Lessons Learned, cont.

- Collaboration with Parliamentary Committees can increase access to information and increase credibility
- Media and information dissemination strategy can expose government to greater scrutiny
- Tremendous need for improvement in access to information about PRSP at all levels, especially implementation plans