

Challenges of participation in PRSP implementation

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Veena Siddharth

Senior Partnership Officer

World Bank- Africa Region

vsiddharth@worldbank.org

1. Factors that led to the PRSP

Global campaign for debt relief and greater transparency;
Change in the World Bank position on debt after James Wolfensohn took over in 1995;
New development literature (“Assessing Aid” 1998) showed that ownership and good policies rather than quantity of aid were the influential factors for development;
1997 ESAF Evaluation recommended greater discussion in-country of the reform process;
Incorporating principles of transparency and ownership into agreements made at 1999 Cologne G-8 Summit

2. PRSP began as a requirement for HIPC Debt relief – Announced September 1999

Early PRSPs and interim PRSPs tended to have shorter time for participation because of pressure to obtain debt relief;
Over time, PRSPs have spread to non-HIPC countries (Sri Lanka, Albania, Tajikistan, Guatemala, etc.)

3. Elements of the PRSP

Government leadership and ownership;
Participation of various stakeholders;
Donor support of programs vs. individual projects;
Links to MDGs and poverty reduction;
Three year framework;
Monitoring and Evaluation plans.

4. Empowerment in PRSP implementation

Most PRSP papers mention elements of empowerment in their planning (participation, accountability, access to information and local organizational capacity) but this does not follow through in implementation;
Active involvement of ultimate stakeholders, the poor, is difficult because of the complex and time-consuming nature of PRSP consultation and implementation;
Participatory Poverty Assessments can be an indirect method to incorporate the perspective of the poor by altering policy in the PRSP;
Donors and governments do not have well developed means of involving the poor, leading to CSOs as a proxy for the poor.

5. Tools to measure PRSP implementation

Annual progress reports;
includes stakeholder reports;
CSO monitoring;
parliamentary committee reports.

6. Implementation Challenges

Bringing the PRSP to public attention and securing public support

- a. Translation into local languages: Vietnam and Ghana
- b. Niger: Communication plan

Integrating participation into policy reform

- a. With exception of Uganda Education Sector Reform PRSC and Vietnam GPRGF, not many examples of participatory process around reform.
- b. PRSC guidelines require participatory discussion of policies;
- c. Governments prefer policy to investment/project lending because of less onerous reporting and administrative requirements;
- d. Poverty Social and Impact Assessment has potential for greater transparency and involvement of civil society. With the exception of Uganda, not mentioned in the PRSP. Taking place in Guyana, Malawi, Benin, Vietnam, Rwanda and Armenia, among other countries.

Sectoralizing and decentralizing participatory process related to PRSP implementation

- a. Mauritania – health sector reform strategy focuses on dual need for more effective implementation planning and for costing of sector reforms, linking these to the budget;
- b. Poverty Action Fund in Uganda – now received one-third of Uganda government budget. Managed at the district level and requires local level participatory planning and monitoring, partly facilitated by CSOs;
- c. Vietnam – The government considers the information of the finalized strategy in regional and local planning processes;
- d. Ghana – attempts by representatives in districts of the northern region to design their priorities for implementing the PRSP;
- e. Mauritania – involvement of mayors of rural communes with content of national PRSP to involve them in planning their local PRSPs.

Piloting participatory approaches to public expenditure management

- a. Malawi – MEJN analyzes the national budget on a yearly basis
- b. Ghana – A group of CSOs are now analyzing and tracking budget decisions;
- c. Albania – Citizen report cards in Tirana on municipal services

Promoting enabling legal frameworks for civic engagement

- a. Mauritania and Yemen – legislation for CSO participation has been drafted;

- b. Bolivia – Government has passed a new National Dialogue Law, instituting consultative approaches; disbursement of HIPC debt relief through municipalities and the establishment of local oversight committees to monitor poverty reduction programs;
- c. PRSP consultations have been institutionalized through a new Law of National Dialogue in Nicaragua

Supporting Parliaments in fulfilling their national roles

- a. Parliaments can provide support in accountability and implementation but face both technical and political constraints;
- b. In the area of budget execution, the Zambia, Albania and Niger PRSPs emphasize parliament's role in overseeing the draft budget proposal. In Malawi and Guyana, parliamentary committees have been established.

Establishing appropriate monitoring and feedback mechanisms

- a. In Ethiopia, CSOs are reviewing experiences in non-PRSP countries, such as India and the Philippines and are preparing to independently monitor the PRSP.
- b. Governments are using PPAs in Uganda, Vietnam and Albania as well as a Qualitative Impact Assessment in Kenya. In the Gambia, a simple rating methodology is being used to measure perceived development outcomes and changes to be integrated into the government's PRSP monitoring system.
- c. In Uganda and Ghana the budget and its execution are key entry points.

Positive Outcomes

An increased focus on poverty monitoring and poverty data is one positive result of the PRSP process – examples include Albania, Burkina-Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Vietnam, Niger and Nicaragua carried out **participatory poverty assessment** exercises to influence the poverty analysis for the PRSP but without an explicitly commitment to use them regularly for monitoring.

Public expenditure system is one key area to open up participation through budget analysis, citizen report cards and community monitoring;

Budget Analysis

(taking place in Malawi with the MEJN), public expenditure reviews and public expenditure tracking surveys (to be launched by Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). These are traditionally technical exercises that do not have dynamic links to implementation. Uganda and Tanzania have been cited for best practice in expenditure tracking in Africa and this approach has also been used in Latin America under the term "social audit" in countries such as Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Citizen Report Cards

At the outcome level, citizen report cards evaluate public services in a fairly technical manner, including poor people's views, using criteria they themselves define. There is usually a wide public dissemination of the results,

putting pressure on public and government action. They are mentioned in PRSPs for Albania, Gambia, Ghana, Rwanda and Uganda.

Community Monitoring

Involves target groups directly in the monitoring of public services both in defining indicators and collecting and analyzing the data. They can partially overlap with expenditure tracking exercises at the local level. This is mentioned in PRSPs for Albania, Burkina Faso, Yemen and Ethiopia, mainly in the areas of health and water systems. It could be that more initiatives exist that are not mentioned.

Decentralization and good governance strategies

Public Information and Debate

Almost every PRSP mentions the need to increase transparency and public access to information but there are few details. In some cases, specific issues are highlighted, such as providing public information about the results of budget tracking exercises (Gambia), publicizing information on public expenditure through the media (Malawi, Mauritania,) publication of a "Citizens' Guide to the Budget Process" (Uganda) or dissemination of the results of PP A exercises (Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia). These steps require that civil society is able to press for more transparency and informing the public to promote change.

However, efforts to promote public debates on PRSP-issues are scarce. There are plans in Mauritania and Guinea for communication strategies linked to the PRSP and there may be more such examples.

Participation in Progress Reports and PRSP Review

Progress Review

When civil society is strong enough, they can draw up their own progress review of the PRSP. This is mentioned in the Albania PRSP, which the government intends to add as an annex to its own progress report. There is a risk here that it could be disconnected from implementation.

Consultative Body

These exist in Honduras and Nicaragua and are composed of civil society, central ministries, private sector, donors, parliamentarians and poor peoples' organizations.

Consultative Workshops under government leadership

These are mentioned in PRSPs for Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, Malawi and Uganda. They can be used to inform or examine a government progress report or to contribute to a general debate between stakeholders and can be held at a national level and include representative institutions relevant for the topics discussed.

Limitations

1. Civil society does not have the capacity to cover all issues relevant to PRSP implementation. While focusing on key aspects is realistic, the civil society review process risks getting lost in too many issues
2. While civil society does introduce more data in the PRSP-debate, it risks remaining under-utilized

by decision-makers, if the lobby and advocacy efforts surrounding the CS-review are not strong enough.

Recommendations

World Bank

continue to identify, collect and share experiences among PRSP countries and international community

direct support and capacity development of stakeholders engaged in developing participatory arrangements, mechanisms and approaches,

particularly in the area of participatory M and E supporting participatory public expenditure management

strengthen institutional capacities in the area of civic engagement

Follow up actions

Donors, governments and Northern NGOs could support greater capacity building to improve participation and empowerment in PRS implementation; Northern NGOs and Southern networks could continue to provide information and strategic advice about global processes;

Donor harmonization to coordinate their aid must be deepened so as to put less strain on governments;

Governments must work with civil society and other stakeholders to improve transparency and accountability, thus reducing needs for external imposition of accountability frameworks;

Link PRSP implementation with monitoring of the economic reform program and the accompanying Poverty and Social Impact Assessment;

Link PRS with Medium Term Expenditure Framework and concrete budget allocations;

Improve relatively weak participation of private sector and local government.

This paper draws from papers written by:

1 - Sabina Schnell during a short-term assignment for the World Bank:

“Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation of PRSPs: A Document Review of Trends and Approaches Emerging from 21 Full PRSPs.” March 2003

2 – Reiner Forster

Draft: *“Trends and Challenges in Institutionalizing Stakeholder Participation in the PRSP Process.”*