

Africa Regional Seminar on Participatory Budgeting

Overview of the Key factors Underlying Policy Reforms in Africa to Strengthen Budget Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight

H.E. Mayor Eneas Comiche

Durban, 10th March 2008

Content

- 1) Context
 - 2) Challenges associated with policy reform to strengthen transparency, voice and independent oversight
 - 3) How can Participatory Budgeting promote Transparency, Accountability of Local Governments?
 - 4) Policy Reform Innovations to Promote Budgeting Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight.
 - 5) Way Ahead
-

1. Context

- We start from the consensus that a great deal of African problems are due to poor governance and lack of effective States (*Commission for Africa: our common interest*).
 - Voice promotion, citizens' participation in decision making processes and decentralization are some of the basic principles of good governance advocated by the African continent (ex. NEPAD).
 - The citizen's participation in the decision making process does not necessarily imply power sharing, although it does not exclude it. It strengthens citizenship.
-

1. Context (cont.)

- However, the reality in which policy reforms in Africa is visualised is characterised by high illiteracy rates and very reduced women's political participation due to historical reasons. It is difficult to conceive a serious society democratization process, to involve people in decision making actions in countries with high illiteracy rates, since participation consciousness and illiteracy can exclude mutually.
-

2. Key Factors Underlying Policy Reforms for Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight

- The majority of African countries hold regular, fair and transparent elections. However, the level of participation is variable: for example, in three electoral constituencies, all Southern African countries showed an electoral participation of 76%, 79% and 75%, respectively – structural or only intermittent abstention?
-

2. Key Factors Underlying Policy Reforms for Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight (cont.)

- There is, though, consensus that, in spite of the problems, tensions and unpredicted results which result from participatory processes, the experience appears in the form of citizen's access to local decision making processes. This access is, however, induced and coordinated by the governments.
-

2. Key Factors Underlying Policy Reforms for Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight (cont.)

- There are empirical and theoretical constraints which could make the adoption of participatory budgeting difficult. Those constraints could be summarized in the form of open questions:
 - Why would elected representatives want to share power, even in a consultative way only?
 - What incentives would rational people have to be willing to participate, on a continent typically labelled by favouritisms and which has historical deficits of civic engagement?
-

2. Key Factors Underlying Policy Reforms for Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight (cont.)

- Do African countries, as a whole, have enough resources to accomplish what is decided by the population?
 - How to avoid manipulations, corruption and favouritism in countries where the population has a law education, is not used to playing an active role in overseeing governments and where the majority is so poor that all their efforts and time are channelled to their own survival?
-

2. Key Factors Underlying Policy Reforms for Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight (cont.)

- How could governments which seek participation convince people to dedicate themselves to resolving collective problems instead of fighting for immediate needs, even because many of those programmes are abolished when a new political group takes over?
 - How to conciliate the practice of participatory policies oriented to self-governance with formal institutions of representative democracy, especially the legislative power?
-

2. Key Factors Underlying Policy Reforms for Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight (cont.)

According to *African Governance Inventory* and other studies which deepen the policy reform issue in Africa, important challenges are:

- To increase decentralization: mainly fiscal decentralization;
 - Strengthen Public Administration capacities;
 - To strengthen the civil society through encouragement and clarity of “rules of the game”;
 - The impact of globalization at the local level through which information flows to the citizen in real time.
 - To mobilize resources for local governments;
 - The role of external aid (earmarked resources versus heavy financial and administrative procedures);
 - Strategic public-private partnerships; and
 - To improve leadership.
-

3. Participatory Budgeting in the Promotion of Local Governments' Transparency and Accountability

- In order for the participatory budgeting to promote local executive and legislative powers, it is important to:
 - Raise the exercise of “voice” as a way to raise or expand the exercise of citizenship rights;
 - Establish legal and regulation framework for the participation of communities and access to information;
-

3. Participatory Budgeting in the Promotion of Local Governments' Transparency and Accountability (cont.)

- Create mechanisms and spaces for the citizens to participate in and have access to information which is important for their engagement in monitoring and controlling their leaders' actions;
 - Turn judicial institutions functional, independent and just in order to make possible the predictability in law enforcement and adequate channelling of the citizens' demands.
-

4. Policy Reform Innovations for the Promotion of Budgeting Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight – Mozambique

□ Experience 1:

- The poverty observatory: dialogue platform between the Mozambican Government and the civil society (governance tool);
 - Representation in all Mozambican provinces and in each one of them the civil society (G20) meets with the respective local governments to discuss governance issues.
-

4. Policy Reform Innovations for the Promotion of Budgeting Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight – Mozambique (cont.)

- Oversight of PARPA (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) whose design counted on the participation of the civil society.
 - Annually, the civil society shows results achieved in the discussions held with the communities, in each of the PARPA priority areas and recommends ways for the government to act in each area of intervention, as well as propose targets which deserve more government's attention.
-

4. Policy Reform Innovations for the Promotion of Budgeting Transparency, Voice and Independent Oversight – Mozambique (cont.)

Experience 2:

- Mozambican Government is implementing a district participatory planning programme. Each district has consultative councils.
 - The consultative councils define participatory processes as projects of social nature.
 - The government allocates annually about US\$335.000.
-

5. Way Ahead

- ❑ Improve coordination and harmonization of governance implementation actions to response to the agreed principles and common interest of African countries.
 - ❑ Each African country improve coordination of actions among development partners: state, private sector, civil society, and aid agencies.
 - ❑ Improve CSO participatory mechanisms, financial and human resources mobilization to local government in order to turn participatory budgeting effective and sustainable.
-



Thank You

