

# Africa Regional Seminar on Participatory Budgeting

**AFRICAN EXPERIENCES IN  
STRENGTHENING CITIZEN'S VOICE IN  
REVENUE AN EXPENDITURE PLANNING  
BY MARY RUSIMBI (TGNP)**

## **Introduction/Context**

- Presentation on selected African experiences on strengthening citizens' voice in public resource generation and management through civic action at local level.
- Context of implementation increasing poverty, corruption and marginalisation of citizen's voice in economic planning and budgeting, weak social accountability and service delivery performance.

## Introduction/Context

- This despite efforts on strengthening “democratic” systems of governance at national and local levels (liberalisation/decentralisation).
- Also, despite on going economic planning and budget reforms: e.g. increased expenditure management and performance budgeting (PERs, MTEF, etc) for effective monitoring of progress and expenditure.

### **Why CSOs engagement in revenue and expenditure at local level?**

- Basis of engagement to enhance good governance, accountability and social justice... expanding concepts of “good governance and democracy”, accountable budgeting and accountability.
- Focus on local government for micro-level accountability, tracking quality of public spending on poor women, men, and ensuring their voice part of local dev. planning/budgeting.

## **Specific practices/mechanisms/tools in Place**

- Several but could be categorised as:  
One, gender budgeting advocacy work, which uses a set of tools to bring closer voices of women and poor groups in revenue and expenditure planning-accountability tool for closing gender and pro-poor gaps.  
Two, policy monitoring work for strengthening social accountability - giving the poor/excluded a voice for influencing allocation of public resources and tracking impact.

## **Specific practices/mechanisms/tools in Place**

- Application by CSOs in Uganda, South Africa and Tanzania:
  - South Africa adopted a Women's (and) Children's budget since mid 90's, Uganda a Gender Budget Project since late 90's, and Tanzania a Gender Budget Initiative since late 90's with objective to strengthen poor and womens' voices through demanding increased allocations in areas most affecting them (social sectors, care burden, etc), transparency and their broader participation.

## **Specific practices/mechanisms/tools in place**

- Key practices in budget and accountability monitoring include:
  - Policy monitoring and budgeting analysis to raise public awareness on revenue and budgetary issues, engaging with expenditure tracking processes (information and capacity development) - focus on delivery and outcomes e.g. CSOs active in monitoring policy outcomes in Health, Education, Gender.

## **Policies / Legislation / Institutions in place**

- Key policies and legislation include:- poverty reduction strategies, sectoral policies, local government reforms, public finance ordinances etc.
- Key institutions include local government institutions (Council, planning structures), parliament, central government structures, auditing authorities, CSOs and media.

### **Implementation of specific practice(s)**

- Empowering parliamentarians/ councilors, civil society with skills and information for analysing/debate budgets with pro-poor and pro-women approaches e.g. IDASA (South Africa), FOWODE (Uganda) and TGNP (Tanzania) through capacity building, research, budget analysis, providing issues briefs with facts and figures on revenue policies and expenditure.

### **Implementation of specific practice(s)**

- Engaging women and men councilors in understanding issues of women constituents and poor groups and to speak up for them and deepen their enquiry about how resources are spent
- e.g. in Uganda MPs/Local Councilors attend briefing workshops, in South Africa and Tanzania they attend pre-budget sessions organised by CSOs for dialogue and information.

### **Implementation of specific practice(s)**

- Strengthening partnership of civil society advocacy groups for enhanced monitoring expenditure outcomes, accountability and broadening participation of poor people in planning and budgeting... gender disaggregated beneficiary assessments and other tools
- e.g. FOWODE and Uganda Debt Network in coalition (Uganda) on corruption and tracking who benefits, TGNP and FemAct (Tanzania) on re-prioritization and pro-poor policies, IDASA and CASE (S. Africa) on increasing budgets to women and childrens' issues.

### **Implementation of specific practice(s)**

- Organising broad-based grassroots campaigns on key policies, expenditures, taxation and debt.
  - e.g. CSOs in Tanzania (TGNP/FemAct, Policy Forum etc) conduct regular campaigns on abolition of user fees in health and education, restoring subsidies for poor farmers, calling for transparency and opening spaces for dialogue between citizenry and councilors .

### **Factors to be taken into Account Prior to Implementation – Context for Implementation**

- Enabling central/local government framework for translating political agenda into policies and decisions on what to spend on and what to tax.
- Level of decentralisation and devolving – how much is democratization of local governance processes happening?
- Management of economic planning reforms including budgeting reforms – how much are mechanisms such as PER/ MTEF harmonised/functioning?

### **Enabling Factors for Implementation**

- Strong citizen engagement in participatory local planning and budgeting (i.e. transparency and inclusive processes)
- Active CSOs equipped with relevant (gender sensitive) tools, methods and approaches for citizens' participation and monitoring.
- Councils equipped with key decision making, predictable revenue and budgets, relevant skills and quality information.

### **Disabling Factors for Implementation**

- Constraining policy frameworks and lack of pro-people and gender sensitive sectoral policies impacting on local level (revenue, expenditure planning and performance tracking).
- Decentralisation processes (e.g. in Tanzania) comprises of key challenges: slow devolution processes, lack of predictable revenue base and capacity issues.

### **Disabling Factors for Implementation**

- Adoption of narrow approaches to issues of citizens accountability and empowerment.
- Weak local government councils and civil society organisations equipped with relevant decision-making, methods and information (e.g. lack of availability of budget information and skills for organising participatory engagement).

### **Results/Outcomes Obtained Post Implementation**

- Successful mobilization of poor communities and women to engage and demand transparency and accountability.
- Increasing budget allocations towards sectors benefiting the poor and marginalized social groups, (e.g. health, education etc).
- Improved budget transparency through policy analysis, monitoring and advocacy.

### **Results/Outcomes Obtained Post Implementation**

- Growth of organisational capacity and strategic coalitions between CSOs, with MPs/Councilors leading to strong base of informed actors for effective civic engagement.
- Strengthening the oversight role of legislators/councilors through using generated information during budget debates.

## **Quantitative/Qualitative Outcomes - Examples**

- Accessing budgetary information to public and councilors, utilization for advocacy and monitoring work - website, fliers etc.
- Tracking corruption in Uganda (classrooms construction) allowed for availability of resources at local level.
- Advocacy work on children issues by IDASA (S. Africa) lead to increased budgetary allocations.

## **Challenges**

- Engaging citizenry voice in revenue and expenditure planning a long term investment – is there too much expectations re major policy shift/budgetary outcomes.
- The structure of budget process limits the scope of significant civic participation.
- Outcomes of CSOs in expenditure tracking and social accountability challenged by several factors including capacity issues.

## **Lessons Learnt**

- Decentralisation and related planning and budgeting reforms offers opportunity for increased citizenry's engagement at local level. A potential for further tapping.
- CSOs, local institutions in need of effective means of support and capacity development for sustained results.
- CSOs advocacy has generated relevant experiences, tools and information for upscaling.

## **Going Forward – Things Being Done**

- CSOs budget work ongoing and focus:
  - Promoting transparency and participation, mobilization and organising for collective action to raise citizenry voice/issues, advocacy work to influence budget priority and improve on social accountability systems, also strengthening capacity and providing information.

### **Going Forward “*How to do*”**

- Strengthen research/policy analysis capability and increase advocacy skills.
- Expand advocacy efforts to address revenue issues more significantly e.g. review of taxation policies, generating evidences of tax burdens.
- Adopting holistic approaches: Analysis – participatory planning - influencing allocations – monitoring outcomes.