

Understanding Participatory PRS Monitoring Systems from a Civil Society Perspective

Guidance for practitioners

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Foreword

Until not so long ago, the monitoring of national poverty reduction strategy was a matter for foreign experts. Their task was mainly to review the outcomes of interventions by foreign donor institutions. Systematic monitoring under the leadership of national stakeholders was more the exception than the rule. The Paris Declaration by the OECD donor community is now expected to change this. The argument is made that if governments do not bear the main responsibility for reviewing results, they lack ownership of poverty reduction policies. It is expected that a unified monitoring system with national actors will take the place of the "monitoring bazaar" that has so far existed, where individual activities were hardly coordinated. Since 2004, Alliance Sud has been working on a range of PRS monitoring issues on behalf of the two Swiss development agencies, namely the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC. The main focus has been the role of non-governmental actors. Within this project, three country studies have been conducted in collaboration with local partners in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nicaragua. The studies were aimed at identifying obstacles to and potential for civil society involvement in monitoring of national Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS monitoring). The survey focused mainly on non-governmental actors that could undertake some PRS monitoring task. An analytical tool was developed specifically for the purpose and validated in the country studies.

It was our intention from the very beginning to be in a close dialogue not only with actors in Switzerland but also with civil society organisations in the partner countries. The latter was not easy. The main reason was that Alliance Sud has no local presence in the partner countries. Besides, civil society participation in PRS monitoring is only in its infancy. The result was that the non-governmental players we interviewed could speak only of very limited concrete experiences. In Burkina Faso and Ghana (Braunschweig & Stöckli, 2006a), we encountered a mixture of unawareness and lack of interest on the part of many civil society organisations (CSOs). The main underlying reasons cited included difficult access to information, only sporadic consultation, and hardly any long-term commitment. A somewhat different picture emerged from the survey done in Nicaragua (Braunschweig & Stöckli, 2006b). One group of non-governmental organisations is fundamentally critical of the PRS approach; another took the view that the basic prerequisites for collaboration with the government were not in place.

The present guidelines are the provisional conclusion of this cooperation between Alliance Sud and the two government agencies. We decided to develop these guidelines for local practitioners for two reasons. First, with the exception of a few countries, strategic questions pertaining to a national PRS monitoring system are hardly being discussed outside of specialised circles. The task of making the topic generally understandable to practitioners is only just beginning. Second, civil society participation in PRS monitoring calls not just for an offer on the part of government, but also for concrete demand on the part of non-governmental actors. And such a demand will arise only after a critical examination of the subject by informed actors. The guidelines are an attempt to foster this process. They were developed as an informational and diagnostic instrument and do not purport to be a fully-fledged analytical tool. In drawing up the guidelines we were careful to ensure that they took account of various needs and that, as necessary, they may be expanded and adapted. We would be grateful for any critical feedback from users.

What is the purpose of these guidelines?

Background

PRS monitoring, the main weakness of many PRS. Although national PRS have been in implementation for many years now, PRS monitoring is working optimally in just a handful of countries. Individual monitoring activities are hardly coordinated and are largely tailored to suit the specific reporting needs of the donors. This means that when it comes to formulating better poverty reduction policies and strategies, evidence is missing.

Today, monitoring is a high priority for PRS architects. Experts speak of a paradigm shift. Isolated monitoring activities should be replaced by a unified monitoring system supported by national players. Yet such a transition cannot materialise overnight. It must start with existing activities and be gradually built up and established.

Target groups

Civil society and private players that are concerned with PRS monitoring systems and/or interested to answer their specific questions.

Hardly anyone disputes that the knowledge held by civil society stakeholders can complement and expand monitoring information. It would be a good thing for them to participate in creating monitoring outcomes. Yet civil society organisations (CSOs) should also demand monitoring information and take part in the policy dialogue. But the preconditions are yet to be created if these two things are to happen.

Aim and purpose

Promote demand on the part of CSOs for PRS monitoring information, as well as CSOs' interest to invest in PRS monitoring.

Non-governmental organisations do not automatically respond to the challenge to participate in the structuring of monitoring systems and in policy dialogue. The incentives are often lacking. Empirical interviews showed that some CSOs consider their integration as a risk. Participating in monitoring and policy dialogue thus requires not merely informed and competent players, but also interested ones.

These guidelines are directly targeted civil society and private groups of players, as well as members of parliament. They constitute a source of information for all players who merely wish to inform themselves about and come to grips with the subject. The guidelines can also serve as a simple analytical tool for addressing specific questions from CSOs. One such question could be whether they can and ought to get involved in this field. Another would concern the potential spin-off from PRS monitoring for their work. Still another would pertain to the significance of PRS monitoring and their area of activity.

Basic Assumptions

The most important considerations underlying the development of the guidelines have been summed up in five initial assumptions. They were derived from the lessons learned from three studies conducted by Alliance Sud in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nicaragua. Of central importance is the role of civil society players and the specific requirements involved in structuring participatory PRS monitoring systems. The final assumption sets out reasons and arguments as to why CSOs should engage with monitoring systems early on and with a critical spirit.

Conceptual Framework: What is a Monitoring System?

The guidelines take the form of modules and follow a simple systems analysis approach. The first module identifies and describes the most important components of a functioning PRS monitoring system. The second module sets out the factors determining the "scope for civil society participation". It complements the somewhat more technical first module by dealing with participation-related issues, which is a core requirement in all PRS processes.

No knowledge of systems analysis or of PRS monitoring systems is required in order to apply the guidelines. The approach consists of a series of steps. First, the systemic nature of PRS monitoring systems is explained. The fundamental question is then raised as to how to ensure order and clarity in complex systems. The last three steps then go on to develop the implementation of the two modules.

Module 1: Key components of a PRS monitoring system

Module 1 describes 12 key components of a PRS monitoring system. Each of these components comprises three to six elements. In addition to the description, they contain explanatory examples and a list of sources for further reading available on the Internet. These components are combined into a matrix that provides an analytical model for addressing technical as well as institutional matters.

Module 2: Environment of Civil Society Participation

Module two shows the grid of factors that form the context in which participation takes place, and which determine the leeway open to CSOs. The specific topics addressed include the social conditions in a country, the role of the most important stakeholders, as well as institutional and legal aspects. In combination with Module 1, it enables CSOs to assess their scope for concrete action. Otherwise stated, Module 2 attempts to pinpoint the determining factors that help or hinder the structuring of participatory PRS monitoring systems.

Selected Guiding Questions

In the last part we list a series of key questions that are assigned to the components of Module 1 and to the factors of Module 2. The questions are mostly diagnostic in nature, but are also intended to help pave the way for position fixing and for simple analyses.

Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CSPP	Civil Society Partnership Programme
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Federal Agency for Technical Cooperation, Germany)
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (Brighton, UK)
INEF	Institute for Development and Peace (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PEM	Public Expenditure Management
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PMS	Participatory Monitoring System
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSIA	Poverty and Social Impact Analysis
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
Verro	Verband Entwicklungspolitik deutscher Nichtregierungsorganisationen (Association of German development non-governmental organisations)

Foreword	i
What is the purpose of these guidelines?	ii
Structure	iii
Abbreviations	iv
Contents	v
Basic Assumptions	
A PRS monitoring, a continuous learning process	1
B. There must be demand for monitoring information	2
C. Multiple reasons for limited participation	3
D. PRS monitoring is a political process	4
E. PRS monitoring: a learning object that creates demand	5
Conceptual Framework	
I. When do we speak of systems?	6
II. What is a PRS monitoring system?	7
III. What is a participatory PRS monitoring system?	8
IV. PRS monitoring systems evolve cyclically	9
V. How well is the system to be known?	10
VI. Orientation in the monitoring system (Module 1)	11
VII. Dimensions of participation (Module 2)	12
VIII. Using modules in combination	13
Module 1: System Components	
1. The monitoring chain	14
2. PRS monitoring functions	16
3. Actors in participatory PRS monitoring	18
4.A Initial steps in developing a monitoring system	20
4.B Institutional design	22
4.C Developing an indicator system	24
5.A Producing information (supply side)	26
5.B Data sources	28
5.C Participatory monitoring instruments	30
6.A Using information (demand side)	32
6.B Feeding political processes	34
6.C Civil society actors in policy dialogue	36

Contents

Module 2: Environment of Participation

1.	Political climate and social conditions	38
2.	Government leadership and attitude	40
3.	Donor community commitment	42
4.	Legitimacy and political rights	44
5.	Institutional arrangements	46
6.	Capacities and willingness of CSOs	48

Selected Guiding Questions **50**

Module 1: System Components 50

Module 1: Environment of Participation 53

References **55**

A. PRS monitoring, a continuous learning process

No one in project work would seriously think of overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of experts in order to improve on it. In participatory monitoring of PRS activities, however, things are somewhat different. It is no chance matter that the concept is that of a monitoring system with numerous activities and players, and one that must be built up over a period of years and continuously improved upon. This is hardly possible without ongoing learning processes.

Major efforts have been deployed for years now to implement poverty reduction strategies in most countries in the South. The problem is that it is only in a handful of countries that we know how successful these efforts have been. In most countries, monitoring systems are no more than rudimentary, despite the fact that national strategies and master plans have been adopted.

Data concerning PRS activities assembled through monitoring is important for two reasons. First, they provide the governments concerned with a basis for accountability to the country's citizens and to donors. Second, monitoring information is indispensable to formulating better PRS strategies and more effective programmes.

In recent times, many experts have been sifting through existing knowledge about the central role of monitoring for shortcomings and ways of improving on PRS monitoring. Their findings tell of insufficient technical capabilities in the responsible government departments, difficulty in finding good indicators, or the length of time it takes for a poverty reduction policy to start being felt on the ground. The problems are not always technical in nature. In many cases there has been no clear allocation of responsibilities between government departments or any coordination of individual monitoring tasks.

PRS monitoring also poses both a technical and an institutional challenge, especially when it is to be participatory and hence involve several players at national and local levels. Whereas in the past M&E work was entrusted mainly to teams of experts funded by donors, the PRS philosophy now requires that such tasks be placed in the hands of the country concerned.

Yet one thing is clear from the arduous task of building up a national PRS monitoring system: national learning processes are needed not just in implementing PRS strategies, but also in the monitoring itself. Since each learning process will require information to be available, there will need to be a kind of "monitoring of the PRS monitoring".

B. There must be demand for monitoring information

The best monitoring information is of little use if it is not used. Part and parcel of the PRS monitoring system is also the dissemination of information for the purposes of implementation. This is why the experts speak of a demand and a supply side. Non-governmental players can be producers as well as users of the system.

The first assumption underlines the importance of learning processes for developing efficient monitoring systems. But the key question concerns the content of the "learning programme". Is merely the quality of observation and analysis concerned, or is there more involved?

At the project and programme levels there is no basic difference between the purposes of PRS monitoring and other M&E activities. By looking back, we can give account for what has been accomplished so far and lay the groundwork for future improvements. In PRS monitoring, however, looking forward is a much more complex matter. It is not enough just to formulate proposals. If it is to be used, the output from monitoring must reach its intended recipients in the right form and at the right time.

Let us begin with the intended recipients. These include all government departments with operational responsibilities, as well as policymakers responsible for budgetary and sector planning. Parliaments bear only indirect governmental responsibility. As lawmaking bodies, however, they are the highest oversight entities for the planning and implementation of poverty reduction strategies. Parliaments are unable to carry out this oversight function in some countries.

Under PRS principles, the intended recipients of monitoring information also include the poverty reduction target groups as well as donors. The government is accountable to the two groups. This twofold accountability requires various reporting formats and channels of information. Besides, a strategy is needed for transmitting information in such a way that monitoring results not only reach the intended recipients, but can also be understood.

Just as for organising and coordinating monitoring activities, mechanisms and processes must also be created to generate demand. What must be clarified therefore is the role of civil society in the distribution and processing of knowledge on poverty reduction strategies and policies - and how civil society can make its voice heard in the policy dialogue.

C. Multiple reasons for limited participation

Lacking technical capacities are often cited as the reason why civil society participation in PRS monitoring is so limited. But most often the problem runs deeper than that, as CSOs have no incentives to take up the offer of participation.

"Country owned" and "country produced" are the two key principles of the PRS philosophy. The effect of these principles is that those directly affected and the organisations advocating their interests are active on both the supply and demand side of PRS monitoring. Yet there are major differences from one country to the next with respect to individual activities and the level of participation. Participation is often restricted to data collection, and merely to consultation during the analytical phase. Bringing civil society players on board is a protracted process and one that must be actively fostered. The overriding question is how to organise participation.

Many country studies cite weak capacities and at times reluctance on the part of non-governmental groups as the reason for limited civil society involvement in PRS processes. The three country studies of Alliance Sud nevertheless show that when the question is put to those actually affected, a much more multi-dimensional picture emerges.

In Burkina Faso and Ghana the main source of frustration has been CSOs' experiences so far: there has been virtually no access to relevant information, only sporadic consultation and very little long-term commitment. One added factor in Burkina Faso is that many organisations are ignorant of PRS, or know of them only from second-hand information. The situation in Nicaragua is somewhat different. One group of CSOs is indeed critical of the PRS approach. For another, requisite conditions do not exist for cooperation with the government. Other surveys also bring out a mix of scepticism, distrust and lack of interest on the part of CSOs.

This raises the fundamental question as to whether there is any demand for the participation of CSOs or whether the responsible parties are offering any opportunity for participation. The question could also be phrased as follows: are CSOs not (yet) ready for participation, or are the general conditions lacking that would pave the way for their participation in PRS and PRS monitoring? Only in a handful of countries can answers be found to these questions. Where they are not raised, there are no answers.

D. PRS monitoring is a political process

There is only limited coincidence between the interests of individual stakeholders in participatory PRS monitoring, as the information needs of governments, donors and non-governmental organisations vary considerably. Thus, participatory PRS monitoring is also a political process that asks for dialogue amongst the stakeholders.

If the donor community, government and CSOs were asked respectively to structure a monitoring system, the result would be three very different systems. There would be major divergences with respect to the subject of investigation, the choice of indicators, and monitoring instruments. Donors would give central importance to the impact of their interventions, government would emphasise the outcomes of its social policies, and CSOs would underline the institutional and political dimensions of poverty reduction.

Arguments could be made to justify such an approach. Individual stakeholder groups create specific information that facilitates their task and forms a basis on which to be accountable to their constituency for their activities. A further argument could be that such an approach would guarantee the plurality of independent opinions.

Still, there are some weighty reasons in favour of a more unified approach. First, costly duplications would be eliminated. Second, one of the main purposes of PRS monitoring is to formulate better poverty reduction strategies and programmes. If donors analyse no more than the impact of their interventions, for instance, they would be contributing very little in that regard, as the link to national policy would be missing. Second, the pluralist approach entails the danger that important facets of poverty reduction could be overlooked. As an example of this, government departments could simply place sensitive matters beyond the reach of monitoring.

Greater involvement of stakeholders does have one decisive consequence, however: given the divergence of interests, PRS monitoring becomes a highly political process. Observers voice the criticism that those responsible put too much emphasis on the technical and too little on the political nature of PRS monitoring. The few available success stories show that PRS monitoring works adequately in countries where political processes go hand-in-hand with technical ones and where there is dialogue amongst various stakeholders about the shaping of monitoring systems. This dialogue is indispensable if the numerous monitoring activities are to become a unified system.

E. PRS monitoring: a learning object that creates demand

A low level of participation in the implementation and monitoring of PRS processes is no reason for CSOs not to engage with PRS monitoring systems. On the contrary, engaging with the topic builds analytical capabilities and generates demand for participation.

Participation is not a self-propelling process that starts automatically with the launch of a training programme. An effective partnership is created only if the two sides want it and if institutional rules are devised that determine their reciprocal rights and duties. Thus it takes not just the supply, but also demand for participation. In many places that demand has yet to be created.

In the past, participation in PRS monitoring was often organised through outside "partnership brokers". This explains why civil society actors have rarely asked themselves what they expect from partnerships in PRS processes or how they conceive of such partnerships. Yet there are substantial reasons why these actors should engage with PRS monitoring systems and bring their perspectives into the planning of participation.

First, coming to grips with the subject of PRS monitoring can bring out expectations that had hitherto escaped the attention of those responsible for monitoring. Hence involvement for CSOs, for example, may bring not just opportunities but may also involve the risk of a loss of legitimacy. Examples of participatory monitoring models also show beyond doubt that CSOs have indeed made novel proposals in the planning of PRS monitoring.

Second, observing PRS monitoring is a must if CSOs are to be perceived as informed and serious partners in the "multi-stakeholder" dialogue. CSOs must first come to grips with partnership models before moving to the phase of concrete participation. Observing PRS monitoring creates demand and opens the way for suggestions to be brought to the planning review with respect to PRS monitoring.

Third, PRS monitoring is an excellent learning opportunity. It affords direct access to strategic and operational PRS issues. In addition to fostering operational capabilities for implementing poverty reduction strategies, this also develops the monitoring capabilities of civil society actors.

I.

When do we speak of systems?

The concept of monitoring systems has only recently emerged in the discourse on the monitoring of poverty reduction strategies. Why is this so? Before answering that question, we must address yet another: what exactly constitutes a system?

The concept of a system is used whenever a matter becomes complex and there is a series of more or less known factors mutually influencing one another. It is accepted that a system is an entity that can be distinguished from its environment. This may be based, for example, on its functioning. An ecosystem in the Antarctic functions differently from one in the tropics, for instance. Or a system may be identifiable by the interplay of system components: a good trading system needs not just actors and goods, but also means of transport. Naturally, an immune system operates with other components.

A look at the literature for a definition of system will reveal a wide variety of interpretations. We are using the following definition for our purposes: a system is an entity comprising several parts (components) within the system confines. These components interact in such a way as to give rise to an entity. As a rule, this entity makes sense or serves a specific purpose. This is just as true for institutional or social systems, as for technological or natural systems.

A monitoring system is both a technical and an institutional system in which people use technical means to generate data. The collection of that data must be organised and the data must be used, for example, by politicians. Collecting the data would otherwise be pointless.

All systems change over time. A weak, unstable system can become a strong and stable one, or vice versa. The first alternative is the one preferred for monitoring systems. This means using what already exists to build, pilot and constantly improve the system.

Unfortunately, only very few systems are easy to understand. We are perhaps able to observe their impacts, yet we have virtually no idea why and how they function. One way of deciphering the "black box" is to start by identifying the most important system components. Next, we would need to understand the interplay between these components and their impact on the system.

II.

What is a PRS monitoring system?

Monitoring is intended to create knowledge with which projects, programmes and political interventions can be improved or reshaped. PRS monitoring is expected to combine all activities to form a system. What is the goal being pursued?

PRS monitoring serves a dual purpose. It provides political decision-makers with the knowledge required to formulate better policies and strategies in the future. In addition to this forward-looking perspective, it also allows for a retrospective view. PRS monitoring enables the government to be accountable to the population as well as to outside development agencies. In that connection, PRS monitoring is not expected to observe and explain as much as possible. What is most important here is reviewing the policy goals and the expected results.

The focus of PRS monitoring is neither on an individual sectoral programme nor a particular poverty reduction policy measure, but on the policy or strategy as a whole. Such an ambitious undertaking not only poses considerable technical challenges for the actors, but also requires a high degree of coordination. Monitoring activities must be dovetailed with one another so as to avoid duplication and redundancy. The various local monitoring activities must then be coordinated so that information from the regions can be combined into one "national picture".

There is yet another argument in favour of approaching monitoring as a system. The best data will serve no purpose if they are neglected and left lying unused in databases. Therefore not only must a monitoring system generate data, but it must also organise for that data to be used. As in the market system, the specialists speak of a demand and a supply side.

A good PRS monitoring system therefore does not merely consist of an ideal mix of tools. Based on the established information needs, an ideal monitoring system is one in which the right actors do the right thing at the right time, and with adequate tools. Naturally, such an ideal will never exist in practice. Yet continuous efforts can be made to move closer to a monitoring system that creates more evidence with less effort.

III. What is a participatory PRS monitoring system?

Civil society actors are integrated in a participatory monitoring system in accordance with their capabilities and practical knowledge. This ideal cannot be attained overnight. A series of general conditions must first be created.

Government accountability to outside donors has always been a component of development cooperation. Under PRS principles, this accountability now extends to the poor and their organisations, as well as to parliaments. All these groups are therefore potential consumers of monitoring products. Should civil society also play a role on the supply side and in policy analysis, i.e. in all phases of the monitoring cycle?

The utility of civil society participation can hardly be measured. Yet nowadays no one disputes that a participatory PRS monitoring system yields more than a non-participatory one. The utility of participation is assessed in different ways. Whilst the PRS architects emphasise concepts such as "country ownership" or the opening up of "policy space", others put the emphasis on the broadened spectrum of knowledge. In their view, the wider the coverage of the information sources, the better the quality of information.

In practice, participation in a PRS monitoring system may take various forms. First, it may range from noncommittal consultation all the way to co-determination, also spanning cooperation. Second, participation may be limited to particular areas of monitoring only, or may encompass the entire monitoring cycle. Third, participation does not necessarily mean being drafted into working on behalf of the government. In many countries, CSOs are entrusted with assignments by the government or by donors. In others, they undertake their own activities, partly supported by international NGOs.

In theory, a functioning monitoring system is one in which CSOs, parliaments and grassroots groups participate in accordance with their capabilities and practical knowledge. For this to be possible, certain legal conditions must exist, such as the right to freedom of expression. Besides, the CSOs should be those that have been legitimised by their constituency to speak on its behalf. And a government must be willing to listen to critical opinions from civil society.

Experiences so far with participatory systems also show something else: if civil society is to take up the "supply of participation", a system of incentives is needed. Working for someone is different from working with someone.

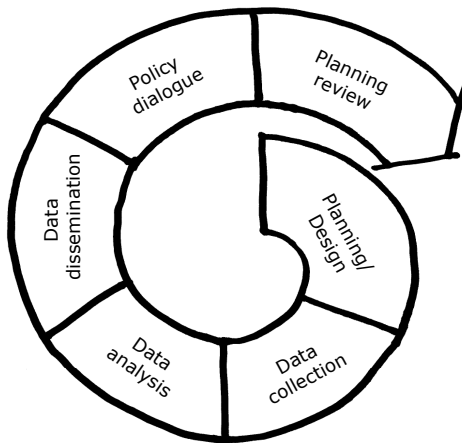
IV. PRS monitoring systems evolve cyclically

PRS monitoring systems evolve by means of a continuous learning process. The more that is known about PRS monitoring, the better it will function. This learning process is cyclical and so is the development of the monitoring system.

The individual activities in PRS monitoring may be described as a succession of steps over a timeline. The first step is the planning of all monitoring activities, which is followed by the actual generation of monitoring information, in other words collecting and evaluating data. A further step on the supply side is the distribution and "policy application" of the monitoring information generated. When these processes are complete, another cycle begins with the planning review.

As stated above, all PRS monitoring systems call for a continuous process of building and expansion. The start of a new cycle offers the opportunity to move the monitoring system to a higher conceptual and operational level. One methodical prerequisite for not be determined by outside this is analysing earlier experiences and feeding them into the planning review for monitoring activities. In other words, if there is no learning process, the system's continuous development will be jeopardised.

PRS Monitoring Cycle



Systematic monitoring of the PRS monitoring cycle also lays the groundwork for the question of participation in the planning review to be constantly raised afresh. Naturally, the future involvement of civil society should system architects, but in dialogue with the stakeholders. Such a dialogue will require informed participants. This is why we advocate that civil society bodies should actively observe PRS monitoring systems, even if they themselves are not yet actors in PRS monitoring. The learning process goes hand-in-hand with observation and prepares the basis for entering the stakeholder dialogue equipped with information and for putting forward proposals.

Ideally, the above-described cycle begins with the approval of the national budget and ends with the new budget negotiation. This timeline is too tight for a PRS monitoring system that is still being built up. Only at more advanced stages of development will it be possible to adopt an annual frequency. In such a case, an alternative would be to review experiences while assessing and reorienting the PRS. As a rule, this takes place three or four years after the launch of the PRS.

V. How well is the system to be known?

Individual CSOs do not always need a thorough knowledge of the intricacies of a monitoring system in order to use and help shape it where necessary. The level of understanding required depends on the role and the interest of the actor concerned.

To provide some guidance, the various monitoring activities have been divided up into recurrent cyclical areas (see section IV). Not every group of actors has specific capabilities in each area. The supply side of the system should interest those players with experience in monitoring and in analytical techniques. Potential consumers of monitoring information are basically all non-governmental players involved in advocacy work.

Government bodies bear the brunt of the responsibility for generating monitoring information (supply side). CSOs are included only incidentally. This is the case for example for investigations into the quality of public services or in observing public expenditure flows. In the demand side, the situation is somewhat different. Monitoring information is a public good. Like donors and government, the population and civil society should be among the users, in PRS theory at least. They should be assessing monitoring outcomes and taking an active part in the policy dialogue.

Monitoring systems are complex. What is it that matters from the perspective of a CSO? How well does it need to know the system? Its interest is primarily directed to the specific functions and tasks that it could fulfil in PRS monitoring. An organisation involved in advocacy work will be more interested in the monitoring outcomes, whilst a more technically oriented CSO will be on the lookout for possible monitoring tasks.

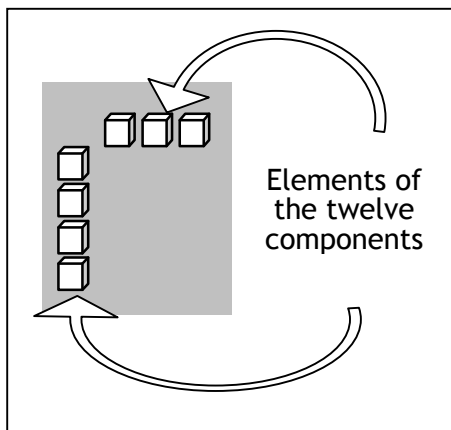
It also makes sense for CSOs to get involved in the learning process regarding monitoring systems (or meta-monitoring). In this way they could help to develop the system, as well as benefit from the knowledge regarding PRS monitoring, which is an excellent terrain from which to gain an understanding of all PRS processes. This type of meta-monitoring requires that a CSO should have an understanding that goes beyond its potential areas of intervention. The two modules described hereafter are addressed to CSOs that are interested in gauging their own possibilities as players in PRS monitoring, as well as to those that are primarily interested in the meta-level described above.

VI. Orientation in the monitoring system (Module 1)

A PRS monitoring system is a multifunctional and hence a complex structure comprised of several components. How are non-specialists expected to find their way within this structure? Module 1 provides some guidance by identifying and explaining the principal components and elements of a PRS monitoring system.

At its simplest, a monitoring system is composed of an observer, something that is being observed (e.g. a project) and a monitoring tool (e.g. a survey). It may also be necessary to determine the right time (e.g. at the end of the project) and the right place for the observation (e.g. in selected villages). In assessing the information, the question also arises as to target groups (for whom?).

Who should observe what, when, where, with what tools, and for whom? Asking six questions at the same time means that there are several combinations of answers. This poses a challenge even to the best systems analysts. One possible solution to this problem is to create groups of two questions each, such as "who does what?"



Module 1 follows this basic idea, with the difference that it is not questions but the twelve most important components of a participatory PRS monitoring system that are arranged in pairs. Each system component, e.g., the PRS monitoring function, is subdivided into its constituent elements (in this case, poverty monitoring, implementation monitoring, and expenditure monitoring). The juxtaposition of the elements of two components gives rise to a matrix (see figure), which can help answer such questions as (who does what?, or where is a group's action potential to be found?).

Every method has its strengths and weaknesses. On the plus side, Module 1 is a simple guide for non-specialists. It can serve both informational as well as analytical purposes. It thus affords the possibility for a CSO that may initially be interested only in information gathering to use the module for in-depth analysis at a later date. Besides, a matrix presentation makes it possible to visualise the way a monitoring system works. Yet there is a drawback to this simplification. Not all analytical issues can be explained by means of the most important system components. Nevertheless, Module 1 is an open tool that leaves it up to users to determine further components and reformulate existing ones.

VII. Dimensions of participation (Module 2)

There are obstacles for CSOs that are keen to participate in and possibly shape the PRS monitoring process. But there is also potential that is not always used. Module 2 sets out the factors that hamper or encourage participation. These include both social and institutional conditions, as well as the commitment of the key actors.

Non-governmental groups can become active in national PRS monitoring at two levels. First, they may be actors in the monitoring of PRS processes, or they may be consumers of information (action levels), and second, they may be observers and, if necessary, they may help shape PRS monitoring systems (meta-levels).

The problem that is posed at both levels is that answering the questions raised in Module 1, such as "who should do what, when, where, with what tools and for whom?", is not enough to yield participation of civil society. Participatory action is the result of the will of the stakeholders to achieve common goals. But this is not enough. Participation requires legal rules and institutional arrangements, and these in turn are a reflection of a country's social conditions.

Module 2 reflects this. It supplements Module 1 by adding the context that determines CSOs' ability to act. Like Module 1, Module 2 serves to illustrate complex interrelationships. In so doing, it distinguishes between six groups of determining factors. Unlike Module 1, however, these groups of factors cannot be arranged into pairs and presented in the form of a matrix. Module 2 is more of a framework that serves to determine obstacles and potentialities in structuring participatory monitoring systems. As such, it is a complement to the Module 1 (see section VIII).

In the short term, the existing potential for concrete action by CSOs should be exploited. Removing legal and institutional obstacles on the other hand is more of a long-term task. A functioning PRS monitoring system can play a part in eliminating such obstacles, or at least in identifying them. This is so because it does not merely create knowledge about poverty reduction, but also about political and social conditions. Observing monitoring systems is also an excellent means by which to gain a better understanding of the realities of life in a country's civil society.

Module 1 breaks down a PRS monitoring system into its most important components and discusses the role and tasks of individual groups of actors. Yet it is only in combination with Module 2 that concrete action possibilities for non-governmental groups can be arrived at. How can the modules be combined?

Unlike national monitoring, the context in which participation takes place does not really function as a system. This context has no "system confines" and is dependent on a wide range of virtually unrelated factors. But it does influence the development of the participatory system. This is why these influencing factors must be taken into account when structuring PRS monitoring. Naturally, they represent a central element for analysis by CSOs.

How are these interrelationships to be established so that the two modules can be used for analytical purposes? First, not every system component in the first module is influenced by the factors identified in the second module. This applies above all to the technical system components. In contrast, there is a clearer relationship between the components that are institutional in nature (e.g. Institutional design), or those components that have been assigned to the demand side (e.g. policy dialogue).

One initial possibility for combined use is the investigation of encouraging or inhibiting contextual factors with reference to one or several system components. One analytical question that could be raised in this connection is, for example, what factors account for the low level of demand for monitoring information on the part of civil society actors. Or, what are the factors hampering the policy dialogue. The list of possible questions could further be expanded as desired.

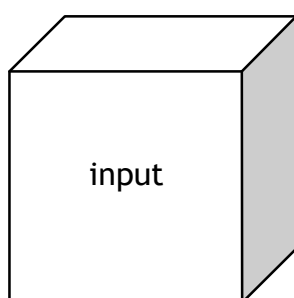
Another approach could be to investigate the influence of one of the six groups of contextual factors on the monitoring system, such as the extent to which the lack of civilian rights and may be obstructing the development of systems and which system components are underdeveloped as a result. Or, where institutional arrangements are lacking. Or the willingness of CSOs to contribute their knowledge to the policy dialogue.

The two modules are so construed that in principle no question is excluded. Not even of those CSOs that are merely searching for practical intervention opportunities. The sole prerequisite is the existence of a concrete question. The guidelines attempt to help to further specify such questions and find answers to them.

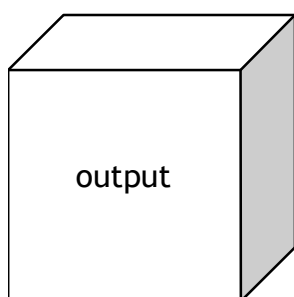
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The monitoring chain

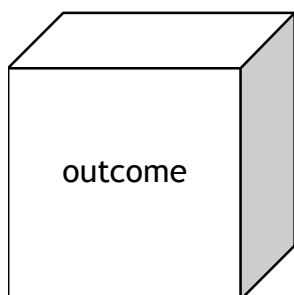
The duration of an intervention until the expected result is achieved may be relatively long or relatively brief. New schools can be built in a short time, for instance, but improving the level of education is a longer-term goal. Hence in the practice of monitoring, monitoring chains have come into use. They allow for monitoring of results as well as interim outcomes, up to the ultimate goal of alleviating poverty.



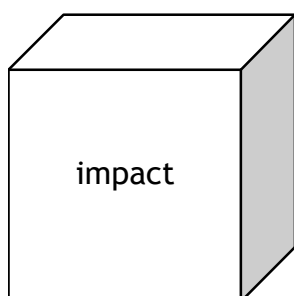
The more precisely formulated the goals, results and actions of a programme or a strategy are, the clearer the monitoring task. Goals are frequently formulated in general terms; for example: improving women's access to water. This presents a problem of what to observe in the monitoring process. Thus it makes sense to formulate the concrete results that are expected. For instance: all women will have access to at least ten litres of water. Or: access to water will make it possible to halve the incidence of disease.



The time frame plays an important role in determining results. It may take only a short time to construct a well, but a drop in the incidence of disease will be possible only some time later. For this reason the concept of the result chain is also employed: the desired result may be an output (the well), an outcome (access to water for everyone), or an impact (better health). In order to achieve such results, an input is required at the outset in the form of capital or labour.



The components of a monitoring chain are derived from these different elements. *Input monitoring* is used primarily in relation to budgetary financial flows: What portion of the state's financial resources reached the intended target area? Were these resources used properly? Input monitoring is often combined with *output monitoring*. In this case the focus is less on financial flows than on the results of activities or investments – for example, construction of roads or schoolhouses.



Outcome monitoring records the immediate effect of a particular investment or measure – for example, the school enrolment rate after construction of a school. *Impact monitoring* focuses on a "final goal," such as a drop in the illiteracy rate. The Millennium Development Goals and the overall goals of PRS are final goals in this sense.

PRS based monitoring

The PRSP based monitoring splits in two separate steps, first addressing input - output monitoring but limited to PRSP activities and second addressing outcome - impact monitoring/evaluation of the achievements gained by not only PRSP activities, but even other activities and policies. In other words, the *de facto* PRSP monitoring and evaluation first comprises input - output monitoring of specific activities. Second, PRSP addresses policy outcome - impact evaluation on the same issues. However it is important to point out that outcome and impact can be caused or affected either by these activities or other activities which are not monitored.

(Source: Wold B., Opdahl S., Rauan E., Johannessen R., Olsen I., 2004, Tracking Resource and Policy Impact.)

Uganda: Monitoring chain in the water sector

In Uganda, there is a strong correlation between access to safe water (an intermediate outcome) and reductions in infant mortality (a final outcome), which suggests that more money should be invested in the water sector (an input). However, a PMAU study in 2002 revealed that investment of more money had not resulted in more water point sources (outputs) that would give access to safe water. It was therefore questioned whether additional inputs to the water sector would represent value for money. The study was influential in the decision that the water sector would need further reform before more money would be invested. In this case, the key data for the policymakers was not final or intermediate outcome data, but input/output ratios.

(Source: PRSP Monitoring and Synthesis Project, June 2003, Synthesis Note.)

Tanzania monitors the entire monitoring chain in education

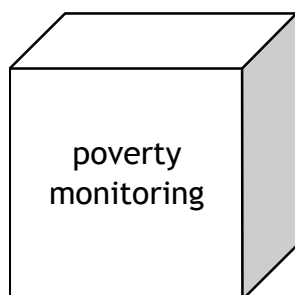
In Tanzania, the focus of the exercise has been on school committee training and teacher INSET (In-Service Education and Training) looking at inputs, outputs and outcomes / results. In particular, the focus has been on how much money has been allocated and disbursed. The questions asked at the district level, concern information on the level of funding from the Ministry of Finance, and how much had been disbursed to school bank accounts. How much money retained at district level? How many teachers trained? How many school committees have been trained? At the school level, the questions address how much money has been received. How much money spent on these two areas? Has the training taken place? How many women and men have been involved? Also was the training useful to them? How should it be done differently?

(Source: Oxfam GB, 2004, Civil Society Budget Monitoring for National Accountability, Workshop in Malawi.)

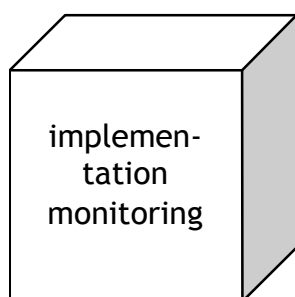
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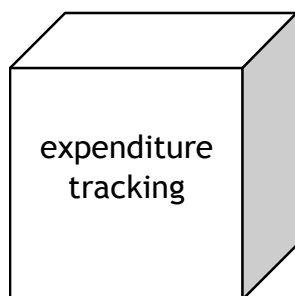
In relation to observing and evaluating interventions to reduce poverty, a distinction can be made among three main monitoring functions that determine different elements in the monitoring chain.



Poverty monitoring: When the Millennium Development Goals were formulated, concrete, measurable goals were established (i.e. halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015). Result-oriented goals with the character of finality are also a part of most national PRS. Poverty monitoring comes into play when the outcomes and impacts of policies and programmes are under observation. Poverty monitoring is a well-developed concept, above all in African countries, and is supported in part by external development agencies.



Implementation Monitoring: Within the framework of PRS, the focus of interest is on the degree to which a goal is achieved, as well as on concrete progress in implementing PRS programmes and strategies. "How well are things being done and what could be done better?" are the initial questions. Activities and processes concerned with implementing programmes and policies are observed in this light. An activity may, for example, take the form of a campaign against AIDS, with the expected result that information will reach a certain number of people. Implementation monitoring attempts to determine whether such a campaign was well organized and adequately executed.



Coordination efforts and methodological challenges vary greatly and depend on the complexity of the activities undertaken. In a campaign with a short-term focus and duration, the number of actors and the time frame are limited. The situation is fundamentally different, however, when monitoring focuses on a sectoral strategy where different ministries are involved.

Expenditure tracking: Although part of the process of implementation monitoring in conceptual terms, expenditure tracking is considered a form of monitoring in itself. This is because, on the one hand, other actors are responsible for it (above all finance ministries). Furthermore, allocation of resources (input) is the principle area being monitored. Programmes and policies will only be successful if resources are allocated at the proper time, and in the necessary amount at the proper place. Efforts are being made in all PRS countries, meantime, to monitor expenditures, sometimes with the help of CSOs.

Poverty monitoring or PRS implementation monitoring?

Monitoring poverty outcomes is only one part of monitoring PRS implementation. Additional elements may include monitoring the implementation of one-off policy commitments; monitoring allocation and expenditure of resources; or monitoring intermediate indicators such as numbers of health posts or numbers of vaccinations. Most of the monitoring systems outlined in PRSs (Ethiopia, Zambia, Rwanda) address input monitoring and process/intermediate monitoring, but are noticeably weighted towards the monitoring of final poverty impacts. Some systems do appear to be evolving to incorporate broader concerns (Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique). Mozambique, for instance, is developing a PARPA monitoring system that includes poverty monitoring, the monitoring of processes and sector results, and the monitoring of inputs. Uganda and Tanzania's PRS outline monitoring systems that focus on both poverty and PRS implementation, although the subsequent operational systems are almost exclusively poverty monitoring systems.

(Source: PRSP Monitoring and Synthesis Project, June 2003, Synthesis Note.)

An input monitoring success story

Uganda provides a now classic example of what can be gained from tracking inputs more effectively. The series of surveys of 250 public primary schools carried out during 1991-95 found that on average as little as 13 per cent of the central government's contributions to the schools' non-wage expenditure was reaching them. A strong campaign, arising from the survey results, to publicise the funds sent to districts for schools resulted in over 90 per cent of an increased allocation reaching its destination in subsequent years.

(Source: Booth D., Lucas H., 2002, Good Practice in the Development of PRSP Indicators and Monitoring Systems, ODI Working Paper 172.)

Budget monitoring in South Africa

Another often-quoted example of budget monitoring relates to the work of the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa). This is a South African public interest organisation which established the Budget Information Service (BIS) to analyse the allocation and use of public resources and to understand the impact of the budget on the poor. BIS has become an important source of independent, critical analysis of the budget. Equally important, it aims to enhance and facilitate the participation of civil society, the media and legislatures in the budget process through education, support and awareness-raising. Idasa has recently stepped up its efforts to analyse the impact on budgets of the HIV/AIDS crisis, following the release of data on the high level of HIV/AIDS incidence among the poor.

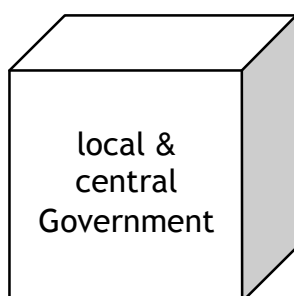
(Source: Lucas H., Evans D., Pasteur K., 2004, Research on the current state of PRS monitoring systems, IDS Discussion Paper 382.)

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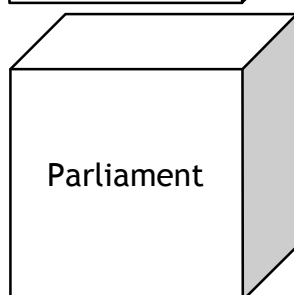
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3. Actors in participatory PRS monitoring

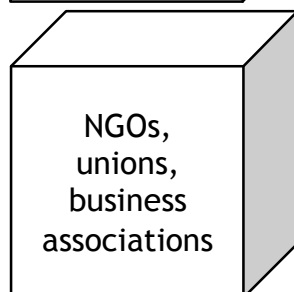
A monitoring system obviously cannot function without competent actors. Participatory processes involve different groups of actors. In PRS terminology, they are known as the “stakeholders” in poverty reduction strategies.



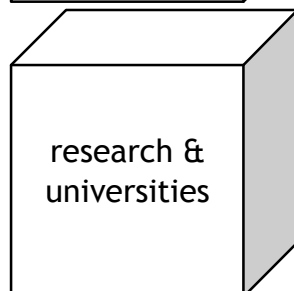
The *central government* bears the main responsibility for implementing poverty reduction strategies. In meeting their obligations of accountability, governments are also responsible for monitoring. As a rule, finance and planning ministries are responsible for coordination of monitoring tasks and preparation and analysis of indicator-supported information. Certain monitoring tasks can also be transferred to *local governments*, whether they are involved in national efforts or responsible for autonomous local poverty reduction strategies.



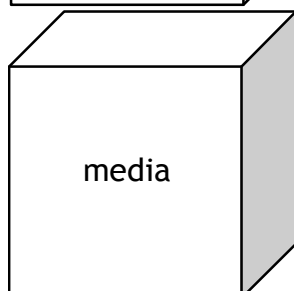
Members of parliament have key tasks to fulfil in PRS monitoring as part of their legislative function. They oversee budgetary processes and are the first recipients of accountability reports made by the government. In fulfilling these functions, parliaments assume an oversight role in monitoring processes.



Civil society organisations (CSOs) include NGOs and their networks, church organizations, trade unions, business associations and, to some extent, the media and scientific institutions. Many of these organizations, particularly *NGOs*, usually represent specific interests. These may range from “lawyers for the poor” to specific advocacy of the interests of professional groups. In countries with advanced forms of PRS monitoring, CSOs exclusively concerned with specific monitoring tasks have come into existence.



Independent research and academic institutions, with their analytical competence, constitute an important actor group. By contrast with other CSOs, they do not represent group interests and hence are considered to have certain independence when it comes to analysis and synthesis. They are also able to assume important functions in the development of appropriate methods and training.



Independent national *media* are central actors in disseminating monitoring information. They transmit information in the context and the language of their target groups and can legitimately express critical opinions and adopt critical points of view.

3. Actors in participatory PRS monitoring

The role of parliaments

In a joint declaration in Dakar in September 2001, African members of parliament involved in the PRSP forum, stressed that “parliament must not be marginalized in the formulation and implementation of poverty reduction strategies”. Examples of this marginalization are common. Uganda, for instance, has been especially energetic in assuring civil society participation in PRSP development and monitoring, but formal parliamentary review of plans and progress has been neglected. In contrast, the Burkina Faso PRSP was presented to parliament for ratification prior to its official transmission to the Bank and the Fund. And in Mauritania, parliamentarians were members of the PRSP working parties and of the committee monitoring the PRSP process; a debate was held in parliament with NGOs, other civil society organizations and development partners, and parliament approved the PRSP.

(Source: Holtz U., 2003, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Country Strategy Papers and their relationship to the combat against desertification.)

Uganda’s CSOs commitment for monitoring

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are also playing an increasingly effective role in planning and review of the budget process, demonstrating the importance of tapping communities in continuous monitoring of public expenditures for proper service delivery. For example, the Uganda Debt Network has established a PAF (Poverty Action Fund) monitoring committee in each of seventeen districts to monitor progress on activities funded to address poverty reduction. This has contributed to consistent adherence to budget allocations, so resources are used for their intended purposes and in a manner yielding value for public money. Public dialogue meetings have also helped improve community awareness on government decisions on budget resource allocation.

(Source: World Bank, 2004, Monitoring and Evaluation for Results – Lessons from Uganda, Findings 242.)

Independent research

In some of the countries, independent research institutes, located at universities or NGOs, have become sources of analysis and policy advice for governments. Given the shortage of in-house analytical capacity in many government departments, this may sometimes be a key role for civil society. It is an area in which diversity is recognized as a value. The Tanzanian PRS monitoring system recognizes the dangers involved in investing the full ownership and control of research and analysis within a single or lead agency model. Hence, a conscious choice has been made for a more pluralistic and dynamic engagement in research focused on poverty.

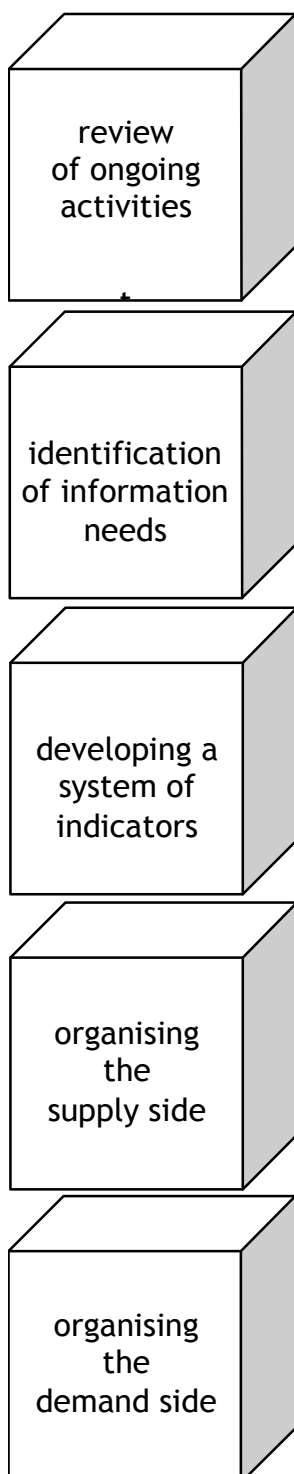
(Source: World Bank, 2006, Beyond the Numbers, Understanding the Institutions for Monitoring Poverty Reduction Strategies.)

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4.A Initial steps in developing a monitoring system

The creation of a PRS monitoring system is a process of continual development and expansion. At the outset, existing initiatives must be coordinated, duplication eliminated, and responsibilities clarified. What specific planning steps are required for minimal functioning of the system?



A PRS monitoring system need not be built from nothing. All countries have monitoring activities at some level, many of them initiated and financed by external development agencies. Most of these activities serve a specific purpose, however; hence they are rarely coordinated and harmonized.

A number of proposed concepts have been advanced to define the steps in developing a unified system. There is general agreement that the first step must consist of *assessing existing activities*: who does what, for what purpose, with what instruments, and with what aims. This assessment provides a rational basis for combining the desirable with the feasible.

In the second step, the *field of observation* must be defined and several preliminary questions answered. What information is indispensable for better policies? Should implementation of PRS policies be a priority, or should priority be given to public expenditures or the impact of sectoral programmes? What part of the monitoring chain should receive priority in terms of observation?

Once these questions have been answered, it is necessary to seek both appropriate *monitoring instruments* and a suitable *system of indicators*. The latter constitutes a special challenge in the development of monitoring systems. On the one hand, a unified system must be created from the abundance of existing systems. On the other hand, there is need to take account not only of need for information on the part of external development agencies and government offices, but also the needs of target groups.

Along with development of a system of indicators, a supply- and demand-side *institutional framework* must be created. Who will compile and analyse information, and to whom will it be addressed? What tasks will be assumed by civil society groups? How will this information be translated into more effective policies, and by whom?

4.A Initial steps in developing a monitoring system

Challenges in adapting current monitoring activities

A recent review in Cambodia (Lucas 2002), for example, lists some 20 health monitoring systems, some essentially moribund through lack of funding but others linked to programmes (TB, HIV/AIDS, Malaria, etc.) with substantial donor support. The latter often have very specific, agreed reporting requirements. This may be an advantage if the associated indicators are compatible with the needs of PRS monitoring but if not there may be considerable reluctance to suggestions that established procedures should be modified in any way.

(Source: Lucas H., Evans D., Pasteur K., 2004, Research on the current state of PRS monitoring systems, IDS Discussion Paper 382.)

Difficult buy-in from stakeholders

Both rationalisation and coordination pose substantial challenges. Of the thirteen case studies, all but four of them have taken steps towards the creation of a common PRS monitoring system, although in some cases it remains at proposal phase. However, of these, only three (Tanzania, Uganda and Honduras) have so far begun to operate as a system – that is, with a fair degree of correspondence between formal design and actual practice. Even in these cases, the authors report continuing problems of coordination. In other cases, efforts to systematise PRS monitoring remain at an early stage.

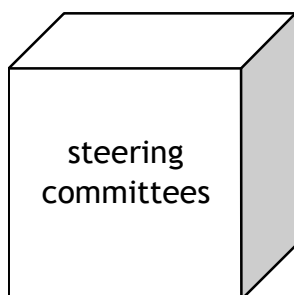
Across the case studies, the authors report strong disincentives to rationalisation and genuine coordination. As the Tanzania case study notes, agencies tend to defend their separate monitoring activities because they justify more staff and attract *per diems* and field expenses, which are an important source of civil-service earnings.[...] In the face of these disincentives, the obvious danger is that PRS monitoring systems will remain purely notional, without changing bureaucratic realities. Though it may be too early to judge, this appears to have been the result in a number of the case studies. Many coordination efforts are abandoned or simply run out of steam within a short time, leaving monitoring to continue in an *ad hoc* fashion. Some of the case studies have already gone through several different design processes, without much implementation. In such cases, the problem is probably not in the institutional design, but in the process of design and development, which has failed to secure the necessary buy-in from stakeholders.

(Source: Cox M., Thornton N., 2005, PRS Monitoring Systems: An Analysis of Institutional Arrangements, Synthesis Report.)

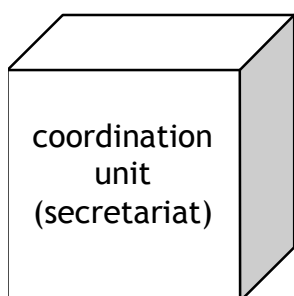
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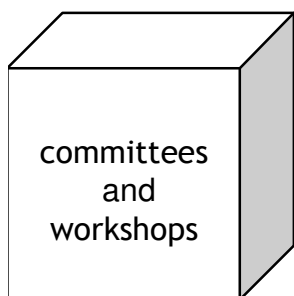
Development of a monitoring system is more than a technical exercise. First, governments should not only require monitoring information; they should also produce it. Secondly, participation is a basic principle of PRS as well as of PRS monitoring. In both cases basic institutional conditions must be created first.



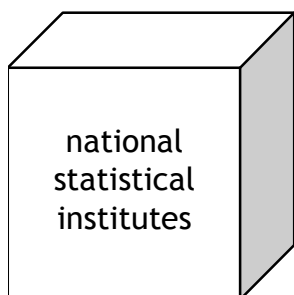
PRS will have no impact without political support at the highest levels of government. In many countries *high-level steering committees* have final responsibility for the supervision of monitoring systems. They designate the different committees involved and approve strategic principles and action plans.



In order to guarantee flow of information and transfer of data at different levels of the monitoring cycle, a coordinating body is necessary. In most countries *coordination units* have been created for this purpose, usually as part of the planning or finance ministry. In countries where PRS is well advanced, institutions outside the central government administration also perform coordinating tasks.



Information gained through monitoring must be processed, analysed and documented. This function is carried out by *committees and workshops*. They address specific thematic areas and promote dialogue with different stakeholders. These committees may also be asked to prepare reports. The nature of these tasks makes it clear why consultation with CSOs in this area is furthest advanced.



In recent years *national statistical institutes* have come into existence in most countries, sometimes with considerable financial and logistical support from donors. In some countries these institutes have developed into national centres of competence that not only compile and analyse data but also share their technical know-how with other actors.

Institutional development of a monitoring system is not finished once the necessary institutions have been created. The rights and duties of central and local government offices must be determined. Institutional arrangements must then be made with non-governmental actors, concerning consultation, cooperation and even collaboration.

Coordination mechanisms

In *Moldova*, the Poverty Monitoring Unit in the Ministry of Economy will be responsible for elaborating indicators and monitoring poverty reduction. The Inter-Ministerial Committee will be the co-ordinator responsible for PRS monitoring. Monitoring groups will be established in central and local state bodies on the basis of territorial and sectoral criteria. The Participation Council will ensure that all stakeholders are involved in monitoring, while line ministries will be responsible for monitoring policies in their sectors. The Household Budget Survey run by the Department of Statistics will be strengthened to provide adequate data.

In *Pakistan*, the government is developing a framework integrating inputs, outputs and outcomes in each sector, concentrating initially on health and education, but now broadening to cover employment, environment and gender. Data sources are straightforward for expenditure, but Pakistan is debating whether to use household-survey or administrative data, or a combination of the two. The PRSP Secretariat has the responsibility for compiling quarterly reports on PRS implementation.

In *Yemen*, there is a PRS ministerial-level committee responsible for follow-up and monitoring. A technical committee for policy is headed by the Vice Minister for Planning and includes other government departments, donors and private-sector representatives. The Ministry of Planning is trying to involve civil society and the governorate level and local sub-units will be established next year.

In *Zambia*, there are many stakeholders with clear responsibilities, including civil society organisations. Line ministries use their own monitoring systems (well advanced in education and health) and the Ministry of Finance and National Planning provides a central co-ordination point. Core indicators to track inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts have been agreed for each thematic area.

(Source: ODI, 2003, PRSP Monitoring and Synthesis Project, The PRSP Process and DFID Engagement: Survey of Progress 2003.)

Centralised versus decentralised systems

PRS monitoring systems tend to be established at the national level. However, in many countries, government policy includes a commitment to decentralisation, at least in terms of service delivery, and it is argued that in such cases the PRS process should support the development of a capacity for data collection and analysis at lower administrative levels. In Tajikistan, for example, a Presidential decree has ordered the establishment of poverty monitoring systems at regional and local level (personal communication). Asche (2003), suggests three possible reasons why decentralised monitoring might be considered appropriate: (a) it is regarded as having the potential to deliver findings of a higher technical quality; (b) in order to support administrative decentralisation; or (c) to allow an effective 'division of labour' between collaborating donor agencies.

(Source: Lucas H., Evans D., Pasteur K., 2004, Research on the current state of PRS monitoring systems.)

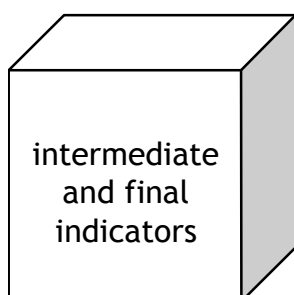
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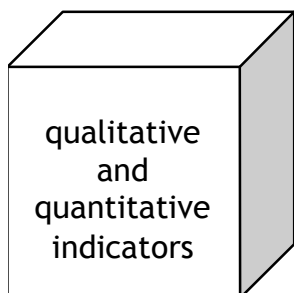
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Developing an indicator system

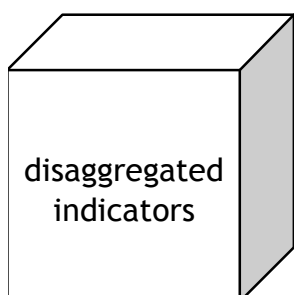
Developing indicator systems is a technical challenge. The reason for this lies in the difficulty of establishing a correlation between a policy intervention and the expected result. It also has to do with the multi-dimensional concept of poverty.



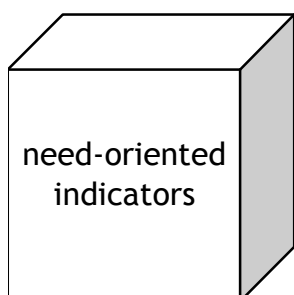
At every stage in the monitoring chain information is generated with the help of indicators that focus on results. A distinction needs to be made between *intermediate* (output) indicators and *final* (outcome, impact) indicators. The problem in practice is not so much to find significant outcome and impact indicators as to establish a causal relation to input. In other words, what, for instance, does information supported by final indicators (such as an increase in farmers' income) have to do with agricultural policy or poverty reduction policy?



In practice there must be an attempt to link individual components in the monitoring chain with suitable indicators. Under certain circumstances a plausibility analysis may be useful: in field trials attempts can be made to trace the "path of the monitoring chain" by determining, for example, whether farmers had access to seed or to extension centres.



Developing indicator systems for PRS monitoring involves more than consideration of the time frame and of causal relations. The multi-dimensionality of poverty must also be taken into account. Changes in the conditions of poverty cannot be portrayed by *quantitative* and monetary data alone. Social security and empowerment of the poor are examples of important goals in poverty reduction that can only be measured by *qualitative* and non-monetary indicators. For effective poverty reduction policies, *disaggregated indicators* are also necessary, differentiated by region, gender or social group.



A good indicator system generates relevant information that sheds light on the links between policies and results. A good indicator, however, is also something more. For one thing, costs must be taken into account; there must be a reasonable cost-benefit ratio. At the same time, a good indicator will satisfy all stakeholders' *needs for information* – donors as well as governments and civil society. Indicator systems thus present not only technical but also political challenges.

4.C

Developing an indicator system

Features of good indicators

A good indicator

- Is a direct and unambiguous measure of progress – more (or less) is unmistakably better;
- Is relevant – it measures factors that reflect the objectives;
- Varies across areas, groups, over time, and is sensitive to changes in policies, programs, and institutions
- Is not easily diverted by unrelated developments and cannot be easily manipulated to show achievement where non exists; and
- Can be tracked (better if already available), is available frequently, and is not too costly to track.

(Source: World Bank, 2002, A Sourcebook for Poverty Reduction Strategies, Chapter 3: Monitoring and Evaluation.)

The “missing middle”

Ideally, PRS monitoring should allow assessment of the extent to which identified policy actions have a positive impact on targeted populations. This requires that all the 'links in the chain' between policy and impact should in principle be determined and quantified. Monitoring must therefore be concerned with inputs, proximate (intermediate) outputs, outcomes and final impacts. Booth and Lucas (2004) are among a number of authors to focus on the failure to address this requirement in early PRSPs, which generally focused on the relatively easier tasks of budgetary or expenditure analysis at one end of the chain and survey-based impact evaluation at the other. This failure has come to be known as one instance of the general problem of the 'missing middle' - the need to specify more precisely how well-intentioned policies will deliver promised outcomes/impacts. It is of considerable concern because intermediate/output indicators which can predict longer term outcomes with reasonable reliability have come to be seen as central to the PRS implementation process. They are the only way to obtain short term feedback on the practical consequences of policy actions and hence the possibility of modifying those which are not on track.

(Source: Lucas H., Evans D., Pasteur K., 2004, Research on the current state of PRS monitoring systems.)

Identification of indicators

PRSPs are often vague, making the identification of indicators very difficult. In fact, it sometimes seems that the process has been reversed: monitoring practitioners are requested to provide "important indicators related to poverty reduction", which then will make it clearer what the strategy should look like. In many cases, the lack of clear guidance from the body of the PRSP has led to large numbers of sector indicators being taken over indiscriminately, or to indicators being developed along a "shopping list" for problem areas related to poverty.

(Source: GTZ, 2005, Making Poverty Reduction Strategies Work – Good Practices, Issues and Stakeholder.)

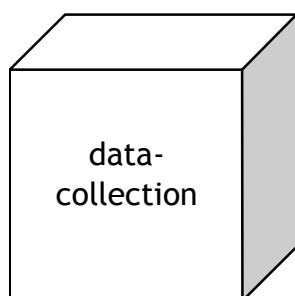
Further information

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- Booth D., Lucas L., 2002, Good Practices in the Development of PRSP Indicators and Monitoring Systems, ODI Working Paper 172.

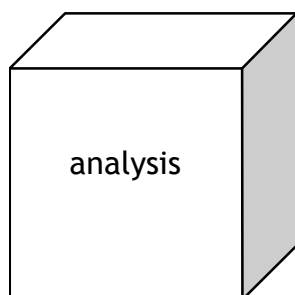
5.A

Producing information (supply side)

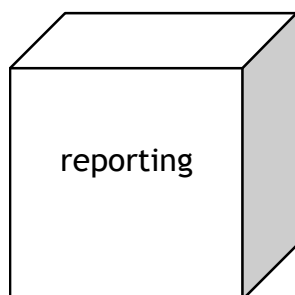
The core task of PRS monitoring is to provide specific answers to questions about the results achieved by a strategy, a policy or a programme. Information is produced in three steps: collection, analysis, and dissemination.



Although monitoring is spoken of in terms of a single system, observation must focus on different elements (see section 2). Accordingly, there are also different sources of data. They range from centrally compiled statistics to household surveys and questionnaires on specific issues. Organisation of *data collection* is usually provided for in monitoring master plans, where it is stipulated who has operational responsibility in which monitoring areas, and with which instruments and indicators.



Although most data are based on (measurable) indicators and hence constitute quantitative information, *data analysis* is nevertheless indispensable for specific purposes. Arranging data in tabular form provides only limited answers to initial questions. Data for all monitoring functions must be interpreted and their significance tested. Requirements concerning analysis and the operational context are therefore defined for this purpose in master plans, on the basis of questions whose answers are to receive priority.



The process of generating information from monitoring is not finished when analysis has been completed, however. Information must be processed in such a way that different stakeholders can understand it and pose questions about it. Periodic progress reports filled with mounds of data may be appreciated by technicians and donors, but rarely by politicians, local CSOs or community officials. Experience in practice shows that it is advisable to carry out the *reporting* process in different formats and to take account of various interests and capacities. Timing is also important – for instance, submitting reports in time for budgetary planning.

The extent of participation by NGOs in the compiling and analysis of data, as well as in the reporting process, varies in different countries. Local NGOs are primarily involved in data compilation, while analysis is the responsibility of the academic community. Only in a few countries, however, do NGOs take part in the reporting process.

5.A

Producing information (supply side)

Developing a monitoring program

The process of developing a monitoring and evaluation program involves four steps, which are designed to address the following questions:

1. What information is needed?
2. What tools have we got? What tools do we need?
3. What outputs should the system generate? Who will produce them?
4. What resources are needed to implement the program?

This approach should help to ensure that , core data needs have been identified, a work program established, and an institutional framework defined.

(Source: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTISPMA/Resources/383704-1153333441931/4265_approach.pdf) - visited June 2007)

Different formats for different audiences

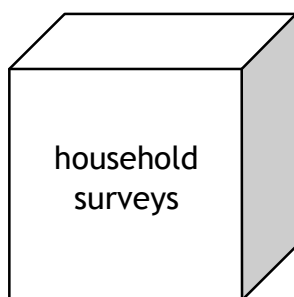
Monitoring information and analysis must be compiled into outputs and distributed as widely as possible both within and outside government. [...] In practice, however, they are often viewed as an external reporting requirement and not part of the national policy cycle. Annual progress reports are typically not distributed widely and are poorly suited to domestic audiences. In designing a PRS monitoring system, one should seek to ensure that annual progress reports serve the government's own needs and, if appropriate, introduce additional outputs to meet specific needs or fulfill specific steps in the policy cycle. Making information available to civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media is also a key objective if the PRS monitoring system is to support public accountability. This has also been widely neglected. There are a few cases in which annual progress reports have been circulated in draft form for public comment or monitoring data and reports are published on official Web sites. However, there are very few examples of the production of monitoring reports in a style or format aimed specifically at the public.

(Source: World Bank, 2006, Beyond the Numbers, Understanding the Institutions for Monitoring Poverty Reduction Strategies.)

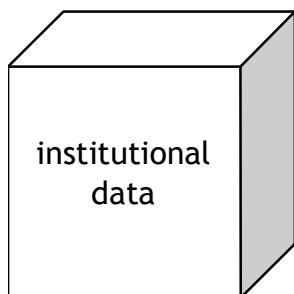
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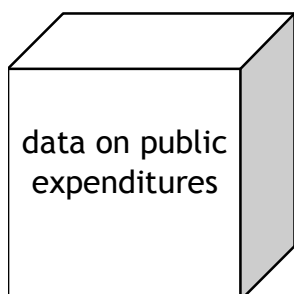
The causes of poverty are as complex as approaches to alleviating poverty. Data from many different sources are needed in order to get a picture of what has actually changed.



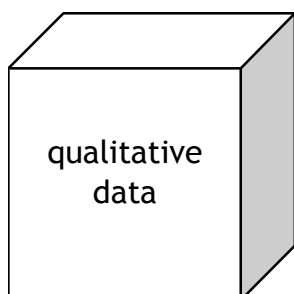
Household surveys are the most important instrument for use in understanding the roots of poverty and devising appropriate political action. They are normally carried out periodically in order to assess change (positive and negative). Household surveys can provide a very direct reflection of the economic and social situation of people living in poverty. But they are only of indirect help in searching for causes. Household surveys are also time-consuming and very costly when carried out at the national level. In most countries they have a long tradition and have thus developed effective techniques (see section 5.C).



Institutional data consist of information and statistics from national and occasionally from local administrations. They are used primarily in poverty monitoring. Responsibility for conceptual design and compilation lies with national statistical offices or offices created within ministries specifically for this purpose. In many countries today, particularly in the health and educational sectors, significant data are available that portray the conditions of poverty among certain population groups.



Only since the late 1990s has information about *public expenditures* been systematically compiled and evaluated (expenditure tracking). Efforts in this area are closely linked with public expenditure management, which is strongly supported by donors, and with medium-term planning of expenditures (see section 6.B). Expenditure management is a key element in policy dialogue between donors and governments. Monitoring of budgetary expenditures includes information about financial flows as well as data about expenditure management. Responsibility for generating this information usually lies with finance ministries.



In order to gain better understanding of the causal relations between policy interventions and their impacts, more time is devoted nowadays to obtaining *qualitative data*. Hypotheses are sometimes tested for plausibility as part of this process. Poverty and Social Impact Analysis, used by the World Bank (see section 6.B), is an instrument that seeks to understand these relations. National initiatives for evaluating the effects of policy exist in only a few countries.

Household surveys

Both UN and the World Bank promoted comprehensive programs from the end 80s and up to the last half of the 90s. UN with its National Household Survey Capability project in the decade around 1990 aimed at building the capacity for a comprehensive program of household surveys covering a rotating set of sectors. The World Bank introduced their Social Dimension of Adjustment survey program based upon an Integrated Household Survey such as every 5 years followed by annual simple Priority Surveys both including a Community Survey. And every National Statistical Institute with self-respect planned 5 or 10 year programs with a range of either sector survey or integrated surveys. These survey programs have been very useful for some purpose, for dedicated use such as for construction of a commodity basket for a consumer price index and for national accounts, for research and for provision of statistics of issues which do not change too fast.

(Source: Wold B., Roll-Hansen D., Mathiassen A., Opdahl S., 2004, A Sustainable Household Survey Based Poverty Monitoring System.)

Balanced mix of data and methods

Ideally, PRS monitoring comprises a balanced mix of quantitative, qualitative and participatory approaches. A good mix provides complementary information that, on one hand, tracks trends in poverty (quantitative exercises) and on the other, explains the trends from the perspective of the poor and also uncovers the dynamics of poverty (qualitative and participatory methods). A well-constructed mix of methods can keep costs down: household surveys and censuses are the fundamental sources of information at the level of impact, but they are costly and time-consuming. Several types of qualitative methods can be implemented more quickly and at a lower cost. In addition, qualitative and participatory approaches, by nature, tend to reinforce a medium-term orientation by casting light on the levels of outputs and outcomes, emphasizing such issues as access to and quality of public services.

(Source: GTZ, 2005, Making Poverty Reduction Strategies Work – Good Practices, Issues and Stakeholder.)

Administrative data

Other than the statistical offices, many sector ministries have fairly good statistical units, and the sector departments collect a good deal of administrative data, which could be (but not always are) processed and analyzed for PRS monitoring. [...] These data are often collected in a fairly disaggregated manner, which is essential to the monitoring of poverty and anti-poverty policy. Facility surveys, public expenditure reviews, and expenditure tracking studies provide supplementary information. Data on actual public expenditures are the central source of information for the monitoring of inputs, and government reports become much more meaningful as budget system and PFM reform processes progress.

(Source: GTZ, 2005, Making Poverty Reduction Strategies Work – Good Practices, Issues and Stakeholder.)

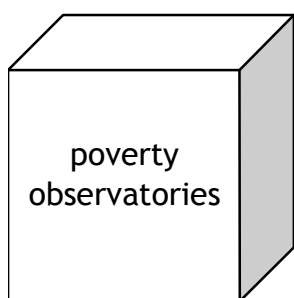
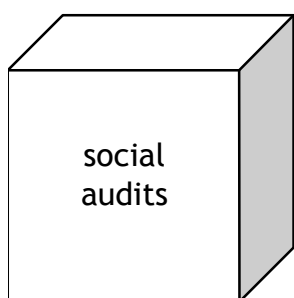
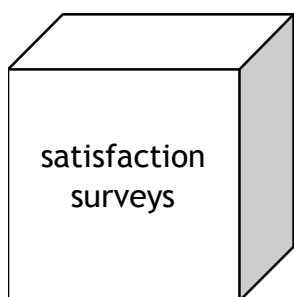
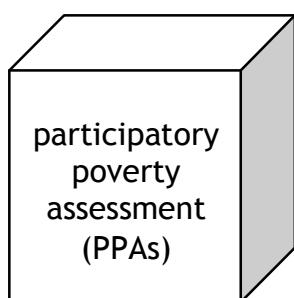
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5.C

Participatory monitoring instruments

The road to a participatory PRS monitoring system is a long one. The entry points for participation, as demonstrated by previous experience, are found primarily at the local level. Different participatory monitoring instruments have proven effective in this context. These instruments are used primarily in poverty monitoring and monitoring of public expenditures.



Participatory poverty assessments (PPAs) are the best-known participatory monitoring instruments for obtaining local information. In contrast to household surveys, which use standardized questionnaires, PPAs have no general methodology. The methods employed combine different visual techniques (matrices, diagrams) and also make use of different types of interviews and group discussions. The strengths of this particular tool lie in the perception of poverty it provides. In addition, the priorities of people directly affected by poverty can be determined. In many places PPAs are required by governments as a component of poverty monitoring. PPAs are also used by CSOs for their own analytical purposes.

Like PPAs, citizen report cards (*satisfaction surveys*) are directly concerned with people affected by poverty but they address a different issue: how do local people assess the quality of public services and products? This allows decision-makers to receive direct feedback from the grassroots level. As with PPAs, satisfaction surveys are used flexibly and usually combined with group discussions. These surveys are used in all countries with well-developed monitoring systems.

Social audits are used in many countries to complement public expenditure reviews or public tracking surveys. Their purpose is to resolve the question of whether resources allocated in the context of PRS reach the intended target groups and achieve their purpose. Like other participatory monitoring instruments, they examine local realities. Social audits are usually applied at the independent initiative of CSOs and are most widely used in Latin America.

So-called *poverty observatories* were introduced at the initiative of the UNDP. These are used above all in West African countries. They are based on active participation by the people concerned and provide results at the grassroots level and for responsible government offices. A great variety of instruments is used, in accordance with local capacities and local issues.

5.C

Participatory monitoring instruments

Citizen Report Cards experiences in Zanzibar

This Citizens' Report Cards' methodology is increasingly used internationally and has recently been piloted in Zanzibar [...] The Zanzibar pilot focused on two public services (drinking water and primary education), covering 101 households in two districts. It was implemented jointly by Government (the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and the Office of the Chief Government Statistician) and civil society (the Association of NGOs in Zanzibar-ANGOZA). Questions included the socio-economic profile of respondents and their feedback on services including access, use, quality, costs and reliability as well as citizens' suggestions for service improvements or alternatives.

(Source: Social Development Direct, 2006, PPA Evaluation and Recommendations for the Poverty Monitoring Systems in Tanzania.)

Social audit in India

The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) is a grassroots organization based in Rajasthan made up of local residents and a handful of committed activists from other parts of India. One of MKSS's most important innovations has been the development of a collective method for analyzing official information. In a series of *jan sunwais* – or public hearings – detailed accounts derived from official expenditure records or other supporting documents are read aloud to assembled villagers. Local people are invited to give a testimony, which highlights discrepancies between the official record and their own testimonies as labourers on public-works projects, applicants for means tested anti poverty schemes or consumers in ration shops. Through this form of social audit many people found they have been listed as beneficiaries of anti poverty schemes, but never had received any benefits. Or that payments had been made to local contractors for work that had never been completed. The *jan sunwais* led to the exposure of corruption by local politicians, government engineers and private contractors and demonstrated the potential of collective public action among groups which normally shun organized political activity.

(Source: Foresti M., Lawson M., Wilkinson J., 2002, What role for civil society in monitoring poverty reduction policies?)

PPA and gender (Tanzania)

The Research and Analysis Working Group is undertaking in-depth research studies to identify the trends behind the statistics. A core element of their work takes the form of successive rounds of Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) in 30 different localities. The Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), whose experience and expertise on qualitative methodologies arises out of previous participatory poverty work in Tanzania, are carrying these out. The ESRF is committed to gender sensitivity in conducting the PPAs, with men's and women's groups discussing issues separately and then exploring the differences in their views together.

(Source: Whitehead A., 2003, Failing women, sustaining poverty: Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.)

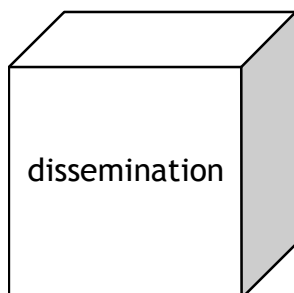
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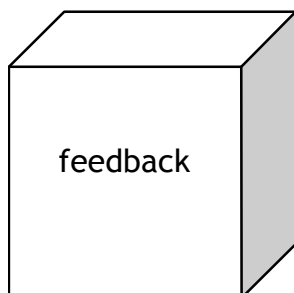
6.A

Using information (demand side)

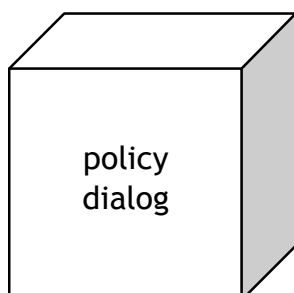
PRS monitoring information is not produced as an end in itself. The aim of the PRS strategy is to use monitoring information to trigger a broad national learning process. This should result in better policies, strengthen country ownership, and lead to the development of participatory policy dialogue.



Reporting (see section 5.A) is the interface between production and use of monitoring information. This applies in principle to all types of monitoring. In the PRS context, however, use of information takes on disproportionately greater importance. Not only external donors but all PRS stakeholders need to be informed, ranging from political decision-makers to directly affected population groups and their organizations.



It cannot be assumed, at least while a monitoring system is still under development, that widespread demand for information already exists. A broad information campaign must be organised, and this requires a *dissemination strategy*. Who is to be informed by whom, in what form, and when? In principle, all national stakeholder groups can be considered both disseminators and receivers of information. An effective dissemination process therefore needs to be participatory.



Monitoring information should not, however, be regarded simply as a type of accountability report and then set aside. Rather, information generated should be incorporated into political decision-making processes. Nor should non-state actors consume information only passively. Their feedback should constitute an integral part of an effective PRS monitoring system.

This practice is prevalent in only a few countries, and governments require non-state stakeholders to provide feedback only sporadically. *Feedback* from civil society is important above all in countries where civil society is not integrated into the process of analysing the results of monitoring, or where it is only insignificantly involved. Hence the question that arises for CSOs is: to whom should they provide feedback?

The main purpose of PRS monitoring is its use in budgetary processes, planning of sectoral programmes, and revision of PRS strategies. Ideally, a multi-stakeholder dialogue will precede these processes. Budget-making is undoubtedly the acid test of participatory action.

6.A

Using information (demand side)

Strategies for strengthening demand for monitoring systems

Strengthening the practice of analysis and evaluation: For PRS monitoring to influence policy, the practice of analysis and evaluation needs to be institutionalized. This is a striking deficit in most systems to date. Some countries have created central analytical units in the presidency, ministry of finance or national statistics institute, and these units have worked best where they remained small, close to government and focused purely on analysis. Another useful technique has been joint analytical exercises with donors, including Public Expenditure Reviews and Poverty and Social Impact Analysis.

Tailoring and disseminating outputs: Monitoring information and analysis must be compiled into outputs and disseminated across government and to the public. This is another major weakness in existing systems. Most PRS monitoring systems are focused exclusively on the production of reports for donors, which are often inappropriate for domestic use. A PRS monitoring system must develop outputs which are tailored to the needs of the national policy cycle. Making the information accessible to the general public is also a key objective. Presenting monitoring data in a non-technical way is a new skill for governments, and is an area where cooperation with civil society partners would be valuable.

Linking PRS monitoring to the budget process: The various occasions when government agencies bid for public funds—for example, during the elaboration of the annual budget, public investment plans, or a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework—present opportunities to require a justification of the bids by reference to PRS objectives and evidence on performance. This has been done in Uganda and Tanzania, with a notable (if uneven) boost to results-oriented policy making. To be more effective, it is helpful to have an agency close to the center of government with the capacity and authority to engage with the sectors on their policy choices. When linking the monitoring system to the budget, care needs to be taken to avoid creating perverse incentives which may distort the monitoring process.

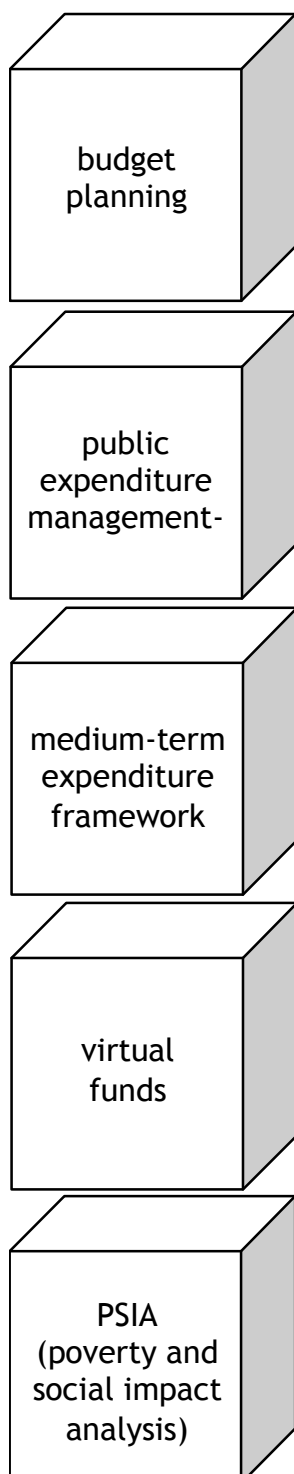
Involve parliaments: Parliaments should be a key user of monitoring information, but in practice have been involved very little in monitoring systems. This is partly explained by the low capacity of parliaments in many PRS countries, which are unable to engage effectively with the executive on policy issues without a strong committee system supported by analytical and research staff. Institutionalizing a role for parliamentary committees within the PRS monitoring system, supporting parliaments in this area, and forging alliances between parliaments and civil society could allow them to broaden their inputs into the policy process.“

(Source: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPRS1/Resources/PRSP-Review/2005_Review_Final.pdf - Visited: March 2007)

Further information

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Information from monitoring should be used in different political decision-making processes. Budget planners are the primary users, followed by expenditure managers and sectoral planners. In addition, donors want to know how to focus future interventions.



Capitalising on monitoring experience in budget planning is one of the main goals of PRS monitoring. In principle, expenditure priorities should be continually updated in the light of previous experience. In many countries the reality is different, however: budget planning is not based on analysis of needs and rarely takes account of monitoring information.

The concept of *Public Expenditure Management* (PEM) focuses more closely on results than traditional budget-making. It serves as a controlling instrument that can be applied to use of financial resources (were results achieved?) and operational efficiency (is the cost-benefit ratio acceptable?). Reforms related to public expenditures are a central concern of donors. Periodic reviews are the basis for dialogue between government and society; civil society actors are rarely involved in such dialogue.

The *Medium-Term Expenditure Framework* (MTEF) is another tool for medium-term planning and monitoring of public expenditures. MTEFs are usually an element in sectoral strategies and a basis for assignment of external budgetary assistance. They translate generally formulated PRS priorities into concrete figures. MTEFs are thus an appropriate vehicle in which to use monitoring information.

Not every country has operational MTEFs at its disposal. One alternative is so-called *virtual funds*, such as the Poverty Action Fund in Uganda. Funds such as these are incorporated into national budgets and are disbursed over the long term. Plans for investment based on these funds are usually made in a participatory manner and focus on sectoral policies.

Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) is a type of study supported by the World Bank that monitors the extent to which policy measures have an impact. PSIAs are part of the policy process and should be carried out in a participatory manner. Previous national experience gives no clear indication about whether PSIA studies are carried out as part of the PRS monitoring system or concurrently.

MTEF in Tanzania

The budget reforms undertaken through the introduction of Public Expenditure Reviews (PERs) and Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) have been particularly useful in fostering wide participation of stakeholders in the budget process. These reforms have strengthened the links between sector policies and resource allocation, providing valuable analysis and feedback on budget execution that has improved resource use. These processes, however, can be improved further by enhancing government ownership of the processes and expanding their coverage to include all sectors of the economy.

(Source: Ngowi D., 2005, Effects of Budgetary Process; Reforms on Economic Governance, Evidence from Tanzania.)

Uganda's Debt Network monitors Poverty Action Fund

The Ugandan Debt Network [UDN] has facilitated civil society monitoring of Poverty Action Funds in Uganda. It has achieved this through the establishment of local Poverty Monitoring Committee composed of grassroots community representatives. Through a number of workshops, the UDN has developed the skills of these committees to be able to organise their own monitoring exercises, publish reports and use them as tools for dialogue with local government officials. Such committees now exist across 17 (of around 50) districts in Uganda. The UDN reports that a number of these have experienced difficulty in accessing budget data and that members are often afraid to issue public complaints. Some monitoring committees have extended their activities to campaign against corruption and have joined the Anti Corruption Coalition of Uganda.

(Source: Lucas H., Evans D., Pasteur K., 2004, Research on the current state of PRS monitoring systems, IDS Discussion Paper 382.)

PSIA-Approaches

Ex ante Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) provides an approach to analyse the distributional impacts of macro policy reforms on the well-being or welfare of different stakeholder groups, particularly the poor and vulnerable. PSIA is intended to inform the design of a particular policy, identify risks of the implementation of that policy and to point out early the potential winners and losers from reform. The objective of PSIA is to help design more pro-poor policies and to make the policy making process more transparent by enabling public debate on trade-offs between policy choices. It should enable the development of mitigating measures, either in policy redesign or in additional policy implemented for poverty reduction. Ultimately an ex-ante PSIA should lead to broad support for proposed policy change or the identification of alternative policy choices for poverty reduction.

(Source: http://dfidweb.dfid.gov.uk/prismdocs/ASIA_AND_PACIFIC_DIVISION/171542085n1.doc– Visited : March 2007)

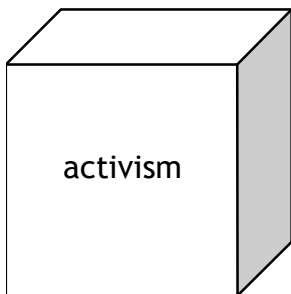
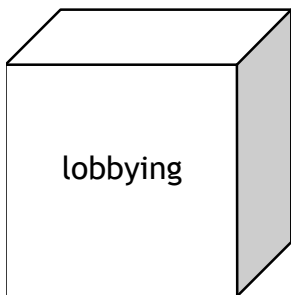
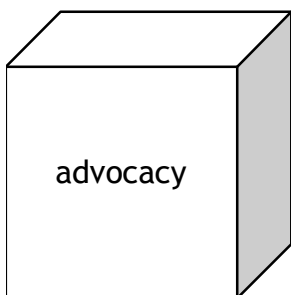
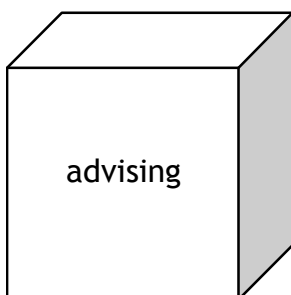
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6.C

Civil society actors in policy dialogue

Civil society organizations attempt to influence policy in all countries, even in difficult political circumstances. However, their motives for action and the nature of their influence vary.



Policy dialogue is institutionalised in only a few countries where, in addition to governments and donors, non-state actors also participate. This does not mean that CSOs do not have a voice in other countries and assume advocacy functions outside official dialogue channels.

The strategic functions of civil society groups can be distinguished according to two pairs of opposing dimensions: cooperation versus confrontation, and fact-oriented versus interest-oriented. The former pair is primarily concerned with types of influence (influence on decision-makers or public opinion), whereas the second makes distinctions among actors' motives for taking action.

Civil society organisations that seek cooperation and focus on facts are classified as *Advising Organisations*. Among these are academic institutes as well as certain NGOs. They provide analyses on a consulting basis, and seek only limited public attention. NGOs in many African countries are largely in this category.

Advocacy Organisations constitute a second group of civil society actors. Like *Advising Organisations* they are fact-oriented, but they also seek political confrontation. Their activities are aimed at reaching a broad public, members of parliament, and donors. *Advocacy Organisations* are active above all in Latin American countries.

By contrast with *Advocacy Organisations*, the work of *Lobbying Organisations* is not as public in nature. These organizations attempt to have a direct influence on political decision-makers, administrations, and members of parliament. Unlike *Advocacy Organisations*, they also represent specific interests and are less fact-oriented.

The fourth and final group, *Activists*, also represents special interests, although groups in this category seek public confrontation. Activist groups such as Greenpeace are usually internationally organized. They operate at the national level, above all in Asia.

6.C

Civil society actors in policy dialogue

Centro de Estudios de Desarrollo Laboral y Agrícola (Bolivia)

In Bolivia CELDA has been very involved in the national debate around the PRS, the National Dialogue process and was highly critical of the outcome document. They have written detailed research papers critiquing these policies, which they then used to feed into lobbying activities with other civil society groups. CELDA plans to continue to monitor poverty levels in Bolivia and to undertake research to track their connection to PRSP policies. These statistics and analysis will be used for media work to raise public awareness of progress against the PRSP policies. This policy work will also be used to generate a debate among social and labour organizations that are less involved with economic and social policy debates than NGOs.

(Source: Foresti M., Lawson M., Wilkinson J., 2002, what role for civil society in monitoring poverty reduction policies?)

Tanzania Gender Networking Programme

The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) is a non-governmental organization working to obtain social transformation with a gender focus in all levels of society. The NGO has been pioneering a Gender Budget Initiative (GBI) since mid-1997 in close collaboration with other NGOs who compose the Feminist Activism Coalition (FemAct). The GBI was developed in the context of cost sharing and retrenchment policies implemented as part of structural adjustment programs in the 1980s. These programs precipitated vital social services, particularly health care and education, being dramatically cut at the same time as liberalization and privatization caused massive layoffs of government workers. It was also coming at a time when the majority of civil society was feeling marginalized from policymaking and budgetary processes in the country.

(Source: http://www.tgnp.org/Ogbi_background.htm - Visited: March 2007)

Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project

Another celebrated instance of innovation in data collection resulting in policy change is UPPAP. UPPAP, and particularly its influential first report, is an example of how, even the context of a weak 'systemic' demand for evidence-based policy making, a relatively ad hoc type of data collection can result in significant policy shifts – given conducive political conditions. Interestingly, the influence of UPPAP arose from its ability to generate telling case studies illustrating flaws in policy implementation, and not from its nominally more distinctive quality, that of highlighting non-income conceptualisations of poverty and vulnerability among the poor.

(Source: Booth D., Nsabagasani X., 2005, PMS: An Analysis of Institutional Arrangements in Uganda, ODI Working Paper 246.)

Further information

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- Eberlei W. (Ed.), 2007, Stakeholder Participation in Poverty Reduction, INEF Report 86/2007.
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1. Political climate and social conditions

The forms and rules of interaction between the government and civil society vary from country to country. They are the outcome of social conditions that have developed over time. Civil society participation does not follow a uniform pattern, nor does it materialise overnight.

Any attempt to explain or structure the context for participation must take account of one thing, which is that the factors determining civil society participation in public life can hardly be changed in the short term. The interaction between the government and civil society institutions is shaped by a series of conditions that have evolved over time. And this holds implications for structuring the participatory monitoring system. It is imperative, above all in the initial stages, to identify factors that could be subject to short-term change. This does not mean that socially conditioned obstacles too must necessarily be eliminated over time.

The time element (when to begin) and the extent of the potential for change (where to start) are therefore two factors that must be weighed when identifying obstacles and potentialities for participation. The first of the six groups of determining factors brings together socially conditioned factors. It includes economic and political power relationships, as well as cultural value systems.

Identifying such factors is no simple task. Some insights can be gained from country comparisons or from analysing the dynamics of social change. One good indicator of social realities is also the situation of women, who are particularly marginalized and poverty-stricken in many places. These guidelines are not a basis for any in-depth analysis of this kind. Nor are they intended to be. In diagnostic terms, they are much more about a search for understanding and for possible ways of participatory action.

There are forms of cooperation between the government and civil society even in countries with no "democratic tradition". Changes in the general conditions would indeed be desirable but are not indispensable for interaction between government and civil society forces. The inverse relationship is also possible: joint action can bring about institutional change. This means that even in difficult overall social conditions, there is no reason to await "democracy" before building up monitoring systems with civil society involvement.

1. Political climate and social conditions

'Political moment' and the medium to long-term 'drivers of change'

Historical and conjunctural considerations play an important part in shaping the possible reach of the PRSP process, and determining what can reasonably be expected from it. It is essential to understand both the 'political moment' and the medium to long-term 'drivers of change'. As a corollary, what was possible and useful in one conjuncture may not be a good guide to what can and should be expected at another moment, even in the same country with the same political actors.

(Source: Piron L.-H. with Evans A., 2004, Politics and the PRSP Approach: Synthesis Paper, ODI Working Paper 237.)

Understanding policy processes

One of the biggest issues to emerge from the Indonesian, Sri Lankan, Ugandan and Zambian consultations was that CSOs must work harder at understanding how the whole policy process works in their respective countries. It is a complex process with overlapping phases, including agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making and policy implementation, as well as the processes of monitoring and evaluation, adjusting or terminating the policy. Even within these phases, there are many sublevels.

(Source: Chowdhury N., Finlay-Notman C., Hovland I., 2006, CSO Capacity for Policy Engagement: Lessons Learned from the CSPP Consultations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, ODI Working Paper 272.)

Women and political power

Overall, gender inequality remains high; and in all countries of the world the Gender Development Index (GDI) is lower than the HDI [Human Development Index]. This means that in poor societies as in rich ones, women have markedly less chance to lead their lives in dignity and prosperity. [...]

The social status of women in today's global society is determined to a substantial extent by factors of legal, political, cultural, and religious discrimination. The relation between poverty and lack of rights is the overriding concern of the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which seeks to gauge inequality in political and economic opportunities (proportion of women in national parliaments). Comparisons of the various indices introduced by the UNDP show that women's chances to share political and economic power, and thereby to play a role in shaping social development, are significantly lower than their chances of sharing in the more fundamental aspects of human development.

(Source: Rodenberg B., 2004, Gender and Poverty Reduction, New Conceptual Approaches in International Development Cooperation.)

Further information

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- Bell E., 2003, Gender and PRSPs: with experiences from Tanzania, Bolivia, Viet Nam and Mozambique.
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2.

Government leadership and attitude

A functioning monitoring system assumes that there is political responsibility at the highest level. Without leadership from the government, no national PRS monitoring will function, let alone a participatory one. It is an open secret that governments have a patchy record when it comes to encouraging civil society participation.

The launching of PRS has considerably altered the roles of the various national actors. Governments are being called upon to assume ownership and leadership in all PRS processes and hence also in the structuring of PRS monitoring systems. To reinforce a country's ownership, civil society should also be involved. The donor community expects development aid to be much more effective as a result. In the 2005 Paris Declaration, the donors for their part pledged to gear their aid toward the programmes and strategies of the receiving country.

At present, it is governments that are largely responsible for determining just how participatory PRS processes are. But although participation is an important PRS principle, it is not clearly defined. Participation may mean consultation or helping to structure the system, or it may mean joint decision making or monitoring. Besides, participation may concern various different levels: it does make a difference whether this takes place at the operational programme level or at the policy formulation level.

It is therefore largely up to individual governments to decide the extent to which they include civil society in PRS monitoring and allow them to take part in the learning processes pertaining to PRS monitoring systems. The ideal situation would be participation in design and decision making in all stages of the monitoring cycle (see section IV), in other words, in both the planning and review as well as the supply and demand side. The reality is often quite different, however, and the question arises as to how much participation a government allows non-governmental players and in which areas.

Yet it is not just the "good will" of the government that determines its offer of participation. Every government operates in a social context and in a complex power structure comprised of external and internal forces. Civil society participation in PRS monitoring is therefore only a partial reflection of actual political realities. The crucial question that arises here is the extent to which a government makes use of its room for manoeuvre, in other words whether it actively hampers or encourages civil society participation.

Government will

In a recent study of civil society participation in PRSP development processes in Malawi, Bolivia and Rwanda [Painter, G., 2002, Quality Participation in Poverty Reduction Strategies: Experiences from Malawi, Bolivia and Rwanda.] it was found that there are some key factors that affect the quality of civil society organisations participation in PRS processes. The context of civil society and government, relations between civil society and the state and the strength of democracy had a huge impact on the quality of participation. The most important factor in the quality of participation is government will – if the government is unwilling to open up space to civil society debate, it is very difficult for civil society organisations to push these boundaries. Government and civil society expectations of levels of participation are diverse and often incompatible, leading to frustrations and conflict.

(Source: Foresti M., Lawson M., and Wilkinson J., 2002, What role for civil society in monitoring poverty reduction policies?)

The role of local communities

Different monitoring structures involve community members to different degrees. At the very minimum it is typical that effort will be made to mobilise and empower local communities by informing them of their rights and government commitments regarding provision of public services and community development programmes to encourage them to claim and make use of these. Empowerment of this sort can shift the relationship and locus of respect between communities and local service providers. In some mechanisms local communities are also involved in local meetings to report back monitoring results at which they can raise their own concerns to local officials or MPs.

(Source: Wood A., 2005, Beyond Data, A Panorama of CSO Experiences with PRSP and HIPC Monitoring.)

Parliaments

It is essential to involve democratically elected institutions (even if this may sometimes result in delays or occasionally result in populist and therefore dubious decisions). There cannot really be any mention of legitimate PRS processes without the consistent integration of parliament. Special attention could be given to enabling co-operation between parliaments and civil society regarding individual subjects – this would benefit all sides.

(Source: Venro, 2005, Fighting Poverty without Empowering the Poor?)

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3.

Donor community commitment

Without doubt external development agencies are among the key actors in the national PRS monitoring process. They promote PRS and design participative monitoring systems. According to the principles of the Paris Declaration these tasks are to be fulfilled by national actors of the partner countries. But in very few countries these principles could be already implemented.

International debates in recent years concerning appropriate development policy have been dominated by the question of how to make external aid more effective. The outcomes of these debates include the PRS principles, the focus on poverty reduction, and the Paris Declaration. To be better informed about the effectiveness of their aid, donors have considerably stepped up their monitoring activities in recent years and have in part supported the creation of national statistical institutes.

Against this backdrop, it is clear that external development agencies are paying special attention to building up workable and unified PRS monitoring systems. The debates in connection with the Paris Declaration have also made clear that PRS monitoring must be a national task. This is seen as a prerequisite if governments are to assume ownership and be accountable to donors and to their own populations.

Therefore, instead of donors, national actors should take over the leadership of PRS monitoring. In principle, this should also apply to translating monitoring expertise into better policies and strategies. Yet donors do not wish to withdraw altogether. They are still keen to feed their concerns into the policy dialogue with the government.

The transition from "donorship" to "ownership" has already taken place in a small number of countries. The "broad-based dialogue" on PRS monitoring systems has not yet effectively replaced agenda setting by donors. It is only in a very small number of countries that civil society actors do indeed take part in policy dialogues.

Most PRS monitoring systems are only now being built up, which might explain the fact that the promised change in policy is still in progress, and participation by non-governmental actors is still limited. Only time will tell how consistently donors will be willing and able to implement their objectives. The acid test will be the extent to which civil society is taken on board in a multi-stakeholder dialogue and the role that they are assigned in "learning about monitoring systems".

Donor alignment and harmonisation

These twin notions are crucial in the new aid vocabulary. With alignment is meant that donors accept recipient policy priorities and use recipient systems of implementation and control. Alignment thus pertains to the domain of north-south relations. With harmonization is meant that donors work together in order to reduce the high administrative 'transaction costs' their own aid procedures inflict on recipient governments. Common rules for international competitive procurement or joint evaluation missions are cases in point. This is the domain of north-north relations. The relationship between donor alignment and recipient country institutional capabilities in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation goes in two directions. Stress on donor harmonisation and alignment is conditional upon recipient countries' institutional capabilities: if there are no institutional capabilities, donors will be reluctant to wind down their own M&E procedures and may continue to micro-manage projects using their own systems. Strengthening and building of a recipient countries' institutional capability also critically depends upon the willingness of donors to abandon their own parallel M&E procedures that are very demanding on recipient bureaucracies, thus releasing capacities and resources for building up of the latter's institutional apparatus. The remaining multiple donor-driven M&E procedures constitute a huge opportunity cost for recipient countries.

(Source: Holvoet N., Robrecht R., 2005, Putting the new aid paradigm to work: challenges for monitoring and evaluation.)

Volume and modalities of donor financing

When the level of development assistance is high, there are risks that it can shift the focus of attention to providers of aid. In addition, when assistance is "off-budget," line ministries (and CSOs) have incentives to align their interests to donors in a bid for financial resources, and to focus on donor reporting requirements. This can distort or short-circuit broader based efforts to enhance domestic accountability. It makes monitoring problematic and governments cannot plan for recurrent cost obligations or balance overall public expenditures across sectors since it is not clear what donors are actually disbursing. Vertical aid programs, such as global funds aimed at specific sectors or problems, can create the same distortions and are unlikely to produce sustainable country-level results unless they are aligned to and linked with country priorities, budgets, and systems. Furthermore, donor aid modalities at times entail setting up parallel systems for project implementation. Unless carefully designed, these too can undermine rather than strengthen country systems. A survey of 14 countries (including 12 PRS countries) showed that, on average, only about 30 percent of the portfolio of projects were managed according to national procedures (OECD-DAC, 2004).

(Source: World Bank and IMF, 2005, 2005 Review of the PRS Approach: Balancing Accountabilities and Scaling Up Results.)

Further information

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4.

Legitimacy and political rights

To be able to participate actively in PRS monitoring, CSOs need basic political rights. These rights are often discussed in relation to their legitimacy for representing civil society interests. It is argued that CSOs are not elected by the people and are not representative of civil society as a whole.

There is a long way from information gathering to the application of monitoring outcomes in concrete policies. Along the way, the generation of information may be obstructed, information may be withheld from the public, or even tampered with. The free flow of information is a myth and does not exist in the real world. Monitoring and analysis generates knowledge, and it is well-known that knowledge is power. Without political rights, the actors involved will hardly be able to discharge their functions.

Political rights are discussed in connection with another issue in many countries, that is, just how legitimate are CSOs, if at all, for representing civil society interests in the public political arena. CSOs are not democratically elected institutions. What gives them the entitlement "to help govern" and to participate? And to whom must they be accountable?

CSOs generally point to their constituency as the source of their legitimacy. They feel empowered to draw attention to its problems and they see themselves as fulfilling a bridging and intermediary function. This rule does not apply in all countries. In totalitarian countries, where legitimacy exists at all, is determined by the government, a fact that rules out any independence on the part of organisations. The opposite of this is a country that leaves it entirely up to civil society to determine all issues regarding their extra-parliamentary representation of interests.

In most countries, the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. In many places, political rights such as freedom of expression, free access to information or the right of association are guaranteed under the Constitution. In day-to-day work, however, the leeway for action by CSOs is limited by administrative hurdles. These could for instance take the form of compulsory government accreditation for CSOs, for which certain conditions are imposed. It may be stipulated, for instance, that projects can be created only with government approval. The reach of these limitations could be such that the "legitimate interests" of civil society are determined by the government, and that CSOs must be accountable to the government rather than to their constituency. These examples show that it must be possible not just to determine political rights but also to implement them.

What is access to information?

A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) practice note on the subject offers a useful guide through the conceptual maze: Freedom of expression and the right to information held by public authorities are related but different concepts. Freedom of expression and the free flow of information and ideas include the right to information, but the right to official information is a more narrowly defined concept, which requires specific legislation. Access to information is not only about promoting and protecting rights to information but is equally concerned with promoting and protecting communication (use of information) to voice one's views, to participate in democratic processes that take place at all levels community, national, regional and global) and to set priorities for action.

(Source: UNDP, 2003, Access to Information Practice Note.)

Legitimacy

In principle, the legitimacy of civil society participation has been recognised by all countries involved in the PRS process. Not only is the right of people and groups in society to participate in decision-making processes enshrined in international human rights [Footnote: The key documents are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Civil Pact, 1966), the UN Convention on Women's Rights (1979) and the UN Convention on Children's Rights (1989).], but it is also an element of many constitutions of developing countries. Moreover, societal participation has been part of a development consensus between government, non-governmental, national and international actors even before the introduction of the PRS approach. [...]

"Who are the civil society actors really representing?" is then a question that is frequently raised. [...] one can observe that the legitimacy of civil society actors in the PRS process is also enhanced by certain factors. The stronger these factors are, the greater the generally recognised political scope will be on the part of civil society actors. These factors are, above all, subject competence, gained through years of active development work (this applies to many NGOs operating in socio-political fields such as health and education); proof of a broad membership basis (e.g. churches); and finally, but of considerable importance, networking of civil society organisations. In the PRS countries in which broad civil society alliances with an extensive combination of competencies have successfully been established (e.g. in Zambia, Mozambique, Uganda or Honduras), the question of the legitimacy of civil society interventions is answered very differently in comparison to what it would be like in countries in which various groups obviously tend to represent particularistic interests."

(Source: Venro, 2005, Fighting Poverty without Empowering the Poor?)

Further information

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- Venro, 2004, How can the poor gain their rights? Poverty Reduction and Human Rights.

The involvement of CSOs in producing and applying monitoring outcomes must be clearly organised and determined from the outset. Only "agreed" - in other words institutionalised - participation will create the prerequisites for the effective involvement of stakeholders.

It was not only with the advent of PRS that civil society groups began to be consulted. The "advocates of the poor" have also been asked for their opinions in the past, though mostly on an ad hoc basis and in relation to specific problems. They have also been included in specific monitoring tasks. The concept of a participatory monitoring system calls for a new dimension. On the one hand, PRS monitoring is intended to encourage a collective learning process for all stakeholders. On the other, a clear connection must be established between creating and using monitoring information. The knowledge created should feed into policy by means of a policy dialogue involving all stakeholders.

These ambitious goals can only be realised if participation is institutionalised. Occasional consultation with civil society should be gradually transformed into an orderly dialogue with all stakeholders. This dialogue will call for protagonists that are action-oriented and capable of policy formulation, as well as for institutional arrangements that regulate the tasks and rights of individual actors clearly. The very forums for dialogue are still to be created in many countries. All these arrangements must be given some binding legal and political form by being placed in the framework of a monitoring master plan, for instance.

In principle, such arrangements should be present at all levels of the monitoring cycle. This includes the meta-level (see section V). The planning review of the monitoring system should pay particular attention to assessing the experiences of the actors, and the monitoring tasks of the individual actors should be redefined as necessary. In addition to the planning of monitoring activities, a strategy must also be formulated to regulate the reporting and dissemination of information and if possible, to determine who participates in the PRS dialogue and with what rights and duties.

The periodic planning review is an opportunity to reach agreement on institutional arrangements or to adapt them if necessary. Basically, cooperation should be regulated amongst all stakeholders as well as with parliaments. Besides, the arrangements between parliaments and CSOs should be tested and institutionalised for the purposes of the dialogue regarding PRS policies and budget issues.

Institutionalised participation

Participation can be considered institutionalized when it is based on rights, has been integrated into the political structures of the country, is legitimate, and has capable stakeholders. These conditions are necessary to prevent participation from remaining ad hoc, tentative, and fragile. Tanzania adopted this four-pronged definition of participation in its "Consultation Guidelines for the Poverty Reduction Strategy Review", which explicitly states that "...consultation aims at institutionalizing the participation process." In fact, Tanzania has already taken some first steps in the direction of institutionalizing participation for the PRS.

(Source: GTZ, 2005, Making Poverty Reduction Strategies Work – Good Practices, Issues and Stakeholder Views.)

Establishment of permanent dialogue forums

It turns out that only few countries have developed an institutional framework of policy implementation and monitoring, and even fewer countries have developed the monitoring system in a participatory way. Countries with established permanent dialogue forums that encompass government and other stakeholders are rare. They demonstrate, however, that it is possible to develop monitoring mechanisms even in countries with weak institutions and plenty of capacity constraints. A basic conceptual problem is that it remains indistinct which stakeholder should and can assume which task within a monitoring structure. [...]

Some countries have at least formed working groups that meet at regular intervals to report on and discuss the progress made in PRS implementation, e.g. Ghana (National Intra-Agency Poverty Monitoring Groups) and Zambia (Sector Working Groups) or have set up new institutions involving non-governmental stakeholders, e.g. Kenya (National Economic and Social Council) and Honduras (*Consejo Consultivo de la Estrategia de Reducción de Pobreza*). However, as in these four countries, the role of such forums is in many cases a very weak one. By contrast, a whole system of monitoring groups with different tasks was established in 2001 in Tanzania. Non-governmental stakeholders – among them civil society, academia, private sector, major faith groups and donors – are represented in the National Poverty Monitoring Steering Committee as well as in several working groups

(Source: Eberlei W., Siebold T., 2006, Stakeholder Involvement in PRS Monitoring.)

Further information

- Cox M., Thornton N., 2005, PRS Monitoring Systems: An Analysis of Institutional Arrangements, Synthesis Report.
- Booth D., Nsabagasani X., 2005, PMS: An Analysis of Institutional Arrangements in Uganda, ODI Working Paper 246.
- World Bank, 2006, Beyond the Numbers, Understanding the Institutions for Monitoring Poverty Reduction Strategies.

The lack of capabilities on the part of CSOs is often cited as the main obstacle to effective participation by non-governmental players. Yet this is just one side of the coin. The other is the interest in and the willingness for participation. Incentives are not always present.

It is only in a very small number of countries that CSOs already have experience in monitoring and analysis at the programme and policy levels. Such know-how exists in countries where the general institutional environment makes this possible and where development agencies provide specific programmes to promote this. Naturally, existing capabilities are a reflection of the level of organisation of each civil society.

Given the central importance of monitoring, several initiatives have recently been taken at national and international levels to strengthen the monitoring capabilities of local and national actors. There has been a marked increase in the number of training programmes on offer. However, these opportunities are not always being taken up, and where they are, the main users are CSOs that specialise in consultancy services. A great many non-governmental organisations are only marginally, or even not at all, aware of PRS monitoring systems.

There are many reasons for this. In many cases the drive to build up PRS monitoring systems is still unknown to many. In countries with a low level of civil society involvement, many do not really believe that the offers of participation are meant seriously. Local observers also point to another reason, which is the lack of incentives for civil society participation. CSOs find it difficult to identify with these goals, especially where there are conflictive relations with the government. But inclusion in unified, government-led PRS monitoring could give rise to a problem of legitimacy. The mere suspicion of acting on behalf of the government can lead to a loss of face.

So far, the architects of PRS monitoring systems have paid scant attention to the absence of incentives to participate, or even the existence of negative incentives. But how can these be identified? The best way is to ask the target groups themselves. Even better than this, those directly affected could analyse the situation themselves and bring their own suggestions to the dialogue with other stakeholders. This latter course is potentially the most effective in building up effective PRS monitoring. For partnerships can only be built up in dialogue.

Which path to follow?

First of all CSOs need to decide which path they wish to follow, as many are still confused as to their responsibilities. While there is still a strong demand for CSOs to 'sustain the good work' in terms of direct service delivery, there is an increasing pull for civil society to participate in policy processes. Even having decided to follow the policy-influence path, CSOs' functions can still vary greatly – from being an independent research-based organisation, to an advocacy-based role, or, with sufficient resources, combining the two.

(Source: Chowdhury N., Finlay-Notman C., Hovland I., 2006, CSO Capacity for Policy Engagement: Lessons Learned from the CSPP Consultations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, ODI Working Paper 272.)

Independent or aligned?

There are mixed views as to how closely CSOs should align themselves with government processes. Many perceive that the strength of CSO processes is that data and analysis is additional and independent of government. Whilst others perceive that some partnership with government is probably necessary in order to achieve the desired level of credibility, influence and coverage

(Source: Wood A., 2005, Beyond Data. A Panorama of CSO Experiences with PRSP and HIPC Monitoring.)

Competition or 'united voice'?

In some cases it was pointed out that it was important for CSOs in one country to work together, to form a 'united voice' on policy, rather than compete for resources and 'entry points'. Collaboration enables CSOs to pool resources, cut costs, combine knowledge with resources (and funding), learn from successes and failures, and prevent duplicated, contradictory or misinterpreted research. Uniting CSOs that are working towards the same goals also has the added bonuses of giving them strength in numbers when engaging with policymakers. At the same time it was noted that competition between CSOs has become a serious issue, especially for smaller local CSOs.

(Source: Chowdhury N., Finlay-Notman C., Hovland I., 2006, CSO Capacity for Policy Engagement: Lessons Learned from the CSPP Consultations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, ODI Working Paper 272.)

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Selected Guiding Questions

Module 1: System Components

- 1. The monitoring chain**
 - What is the government's focus in PRS monitoring (input, output, outcome, impact)?
 - Is the resulting knowledge accessible to you or to CSOs and is it considered relevant?
 - Would a different weighting in the monitoring chain significantly affect the monitoring results and would PRS performances be judged differently or better?
 - Could another weighting possibly guarantee greater participation?
- 2. PRS monitoring functions**
 - Which monitoring is at the core of national PRS monitoring (poverty monitoring, implementation monitoring, expenditure tracking)?
 - Is there a clear link between the choice of these monitoring functions and the goals of the national PRS?
 - How was the mix of monitoring functions determined and what interests were being primarily served thereby?
 - Do the chosen monitoring functions effectively address the interests and information needs of CSOs?
- 3. Actors in PRS monitoring**
 - Which were/are the groups of actors involved designing and implementing the national PRS monitoring system?
 - In what phases of the monitoring cycle are there the indications of participation?
 - Which stakeholder groups are involved in what kind of monitoring (with respect to monitoring functions)?
 - Which CSOs are primarily involved (advising, advocacy, lobbying)?
 - What is the role played by local stakeholders and in particular by local government agencies?
 - Do CSOs, parliamentarians or media representatives have concrete experiences and how are these assessed?
- 4.A Initial steps in developing a monitoring system**
 - To what extent is there already a unified PRS monitoring system that was launched by national stakeholders?
 - Is the monitoring system already beginning to look like a system that is evolving in cyclical phases?
 - Do the government agencies talk about supply and demand side, and where do their priorities lie?
 - What is the role played by the donor community and by national stakeholders in the learning process to achieve a better monitoring system (meta-levels)?
 - Have any monitoring system reviews already taken place and were non-governmental players consulted or involved in the decision-making processes?
- 4.B Institutional design**
 - Do the basic documents (master plan, etc) lay out the tasks of the government bodies mainly concerned and of non-governmental actors? If so, how?
 - Are there committees and workshops in which non-governmental players participate?
 - What are the subjects of those discussions (PRS strategy, sectors, topics, etc)?
 - Do CSOs have access to data from national statistical institutes and other government institutions that produce monitoring information?

Selected Guiding Questions

Module 1: System Components

4.C Developing an indicator system

- Has a unified system of indicators been developed and what is its nature (intermediate/final, quantitative/qualitative, etc)?
- How many indicators have been set and by whom?
- Are there specific indicators by gender, age, region?
- How were non-governmental organisations included in the process (consultation, co-design, co-determination)?
- Is the system of indicators creating evidence that is considered relevant by CSOs or important issues excluded from observation?

5.A Producing information (supply side)

- Who collects data, who analyses them, and who reports on the findings?
- To what extent are CSOs and local government bodies involved in the organisation of data collection?
- Are CSOs involved in public expenditure reviews?
- Are collected data prepared in such manner that they can be used by non-specialists for analytical purposes?
- Who advises and reports on analytical findings and how? Are the public reports generally understandable? Are there CSOs that are involved in government studies? Do some CSOs conduct their own studies? If so, what are their data sources (public, their own, international NGOs)?
- Is all the generated information published? Are there signs that the donor community is or is being better informed?

5.B Data sources

- What are the main sources and bases of information (household surveys, institutional surveys, data from donors, statistics)?
- Is the Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA) tool being used, and if so, are CSOs informed of the outcomes?
- Are CSOs and local government offices being involved in the design and implementation of national or local household surveys?

5.C Participatory monitoring instruments

- Is there in your country such a thing as a tradition in the use of participatory monitoring instruments that include target groups (PPAs, poverty observatories, etc.)? To what extent do government bodies support such efforts?
- How significant are these instruments in relation to the expenditure for PRS monitoring?
- Does the government encourage social audits by CSOs, and do government bodies use the findings in public expenditure reviews?
- Who finances these surveys (self-funding, donors, government, international NGOs)?
- Are local government bodies active in participatory monitoring? How do they use the findings?

Selected Guiding Questions

Module 1: System Components

6.A Using information (demand side)

- Is there any "national demand" for monitoring information? Is the information merely noted or do non-governmental organisations use it for their analytical purposes?
- What could be the main motives behind CSO demand for monitoring information (job opportunities, learning processes, technical know-how, participation in the policy dialogue)?
- Do CSOs perceive a will on the part of government to disseminate information? Is there an appropriate dissemination strategy?
- Are CSOs entrusted with the dissemination of information?
- Are target groups in general familiar with PRS and the results of PRS monitoring?
- Does the media deal with PRS monitoring as a topic?

6.B Feeding political processes

- Is there a clear and obvious link between PRS monitoring and budget processes? Does the government encourage this link?
- To what extent are budget priorities discussed publicly? Where?
- Are CSOs aware of the concepts of Public Expenditure Management and Medium-Term Expenditure Framework?
- Are there the rudiments of a multi-stakeholder dialogue? If so, how significant is the information from PRS monitoring?
- Do members of parliament have access to monitoring information and do they use this information in budget negotiation?
- Is it assumed that donors know more than the parliament?

6.C Civil society actors in policy dialogue

- What is the majority CSO attitude to the government (confrontational, cooperative or indifferent)?
- For what forms of activities (advice, advocacy, lobbying, activism) are the most resources available?
- Does the government encourage or suppress certain forms of participation? What is the role of international agencies?
- How much weight do women's organisations have?
- Is CSOs lobbying widespread, in other words, do they have access to important government bodies? And do they get a hearing from those bodies?
- Is there a close rapport between CSOs and members of parliament?

Selected Guiding Questions

Module 2: Environment of Participation

1. Political climate and social conditions

- Is participation being discussed by the public, the government, CSOs and in academic circles?
- If so, is the question of the social conditions of participation addressed in these debates? Are historically determined factors identified that can only be changed in the long run?
- On which occasions is there interaction between government and civil society? Are there signs of a changing or improving dialogue, for example in the context of PRS implementation?
- Where participation is considered insufficient, is it civil society as a whole that plays a marginalized role in political life? Or is this the case only for individual civil society groups?
- What is the status of women in political life? What role do target groups and their organisations play?

2. Government leadership and attitude

- How do CSOs, members of Parliament and donors judge government leadership in PRS processes in general and in PRS monitoring in particular?
- Since the introduction of PRS, have there been signs of greater promotion of participatory processes and dialogue?
- On what occasions has the government taken up the concerns of CSOs or sought dialogue? For which PRS-specific topics and which monitoring functions (poverty monitoring, implementation monitoring, expenditure tracking) in particular has this been the case and for which ones has it not?
- Does the government encourage participatory budget processes? What functions do parliamentarians carry out in that regard?
- Does the government encourage the separation of CSOs that are critical of it from those that are not? Is the dialogue with civil society broad-based or is it limited to a few national CSOs?
- Does the government invite CSOs and parliament to consider monitoring systems at the meta-level or to help design them?

3. Donor community commitment

- Do donors have a clearly recognisable strategy for promoting civil society processes and organisations?
- Are bilateral donors or the donor community pursuing a dialogue with civil society regarding the Paris Declaration? What are the topics mainly addressed (alignment, harmonisation, national monitoring system)?
- Are national stakeholders and CSOs in particular involved in the monitoring of accomplishments with respect to the goals of the Paris Declaration? If so, how independent is their judgement?
- Is the donor community showing any signs of transferring to national stakeholders the monitoring functions it has so far carried out?
- How do the donors feed their information requirements into national monitoring?

Selected Guiding Questions

Module 2: Environment of Participation

- 4. Legitimacy and political rights**
- Are important political rights (in particular freedom of expression) guaranteed under the Constitution?
 - Can legal action be taken against violations of political rights? Are there cases in which the justice system has upheld these rights?
 - What if any are the administrative regulations that make it difficult to enforce one's rights?
 - Do CSOs legitimise their activities and if so, how and to whom?
 - Does the government (and possibly the donor community) challenge the legitimacy of CSOs? Has the government forbidden CSOs to engage in specific activities?
- 5. Institutional arrangements**
- In what subject areas are there forms of bilateral dialogue with the government, or trilateral dialogue that includes donors?
 - Are there institutionalised platforms for recurring dialogue, or are there only loose, one-off contacts? What is the depth of the participatory dialogue (consultation, co-design, co-determination)?
 - If institutionalised platforms do exist, at what levels of the PRS monitoring cycle are they situated (review, supply side, demand side, budgeting?)
 - Are there binding agreements between government and CSOs, for example in PRS monitoring? Is the process of making agreements a participatory one, and what is the role played by the donor community in it?
- 6. Capacities and willingness of CSOs**
- Do PRS target groups consider themselves authorised and empowered to make their voices heard in political processes or even to put forward claims? Do CSOs call for political dialogue?
 - What are the predominant types of CSO in the country (advisory, advocacy, lobbying, activism)? What accounts for this? What is the situation with regard to distribution by gender, region, urban vs. rural, etc)?
 - How could the country's CSO landscape be characterised - as more aligned or more independent? Are there networks that encourage the building of a united voice or is the situation more one of competition?
 - In which fields do CSOs have access to public information (e.g. to PRS monitoring results)? Do CSOs have access to specific training programmes, and if so, to which ones, and who provides them?
 - What is the degree of willingness of CSOs to take up any offers of participation? For what possible reasons could they partly or fully decline such offers?
 - What could the ideal model for cooperation with the government look like? What conditions would have to be met? Further, in what fields does participation make sense, or where (e.g. monitoring) would it be desirable to strive for cooperation or collaboration?

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