Parliaments and Pro-Poor Policy

The State of PRSPs in Africa

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Overview

• Introduction – basis of analysis:
  – Rapid Appraisal of PRSPs in 4 countries
  – Parliamentary Audit Performance of 6 Parliaments
  – Community Monitoring of Poverty Training for 12 Parliaments

• Key Messages

• Method

• Framework of Analysis

• Role of Parliament in Pro-poor Policy

• Reality Check

• Pro-poor Policy Challenges

• Conclusions and Challenges

• Assessment of PRSP performance
Key Messages

• Careful review of PRSPs in 4 cases shows weaknesses:
  – **Budgets not followed**
  – **HIPC funds distorted**
  – **Poor monitoring poor and gender equity gaps**

• Parliamentary Audits in Benin, Kenya, Ghana, Niger, Senegal and Tanzania confirmed the rather bleak picture from the study: Parliaments not irrelevant, but continue to be ineffectual in poverty and budget policies

• Community Monitoring of Poverty Reduction further confirms above and designed to address gaps and give MPs the tools and skills to be effective

• All above suggest present economic policy not being implemented
Methodology

• Selected 4 cases of PRSP activity, set up intensive visits, background studies, ongoing follow-up
• PC team in each country did detailed roundtable, community outreach
• Parliamentary audit – focus groups in 6 countries
• Community Monitoring training in Ghana and Benin

Community Outreach Meeting, Mchinji, Malawi
Framework for Analysis

- Five parts of PRSP process connect
  - Diagnosis leads to decisions re priorities
  - Must be reflected in budget cycle process
  - Then implementation
  - Monitoring should change analysis, etc.
Role of Parliament in Pro-Poor Policy

- Parliaments inserted in political economy, with special oversight role on:
  - Civil society participation in diagnosis
  - How budget reflects PRSP priorities
  - Monitoring of results on the ground
- Parliament’s role small in start of PRSPs
- But several cases show more leverage, e.g.
  - Tanzania school growth pushed hard by MPs, rate up 58 to 85%, 13000 classrooms
  - Malawi Budget Committee stressed HIV/AIDS mainstream spending
- Treatment of gender another area where there is an increasing role for Parliament
Reality Check?

Budget Cycle Role:

• Widespread parliamentary focus on the budget cycle and its linkage to the PRSP process
• But, parliamentary budget work nevertheless seems to represent, on balance, a weakness to overcome
• Main weakness of parliaments is that they spend very little time and devote few financial resources to detailed budget scrutiny
  – Tanzania – MPs stressed how short the period was in parliament in considering the budget
  – Budget adoption done very rapidly in Niger
  – Time limitations are a common complaint in Ghana
Reality – ctd.

Monitoring Role:
• Clear and serious gaps – lack of resources, skills etc.
• But, parliaments working to be more active and effective
• Learning new community-based methods (community score-cards, citizens report cards)
• Strength in this area widely perceived and links with civil society will help
• Tanzania and Malawi both developing monitoring systems to catch up
• Ghana and Niger have taken few steps
• HIPC Watch in Ghana plays main role
• Close ties to the poor also useful
Reality – ctd.

Gender focus:
• Gender equity emphasis hard to see anywhere
• But, emerging gender leadership across various parliaments
• Key female-led committees active in pushing PRSP and pro-poor roles
• Tanzania, e.g., working to get PRSP say for ‘special seat’ MPs
• Malawi applying ‘gender budget’ analysis to PRSP
Pro-Poor Policy Challenge

- Very serious gaps in understanding and analysis of budgets
- Pro-poor policy spending not being followed in budget performance
- HIPC resources handled outside budget; in some cases, replace budget PRSP promises
- Political allocations common
- Poor seem remote from PRSPs, very clear performance gaps
- Women key poverty focus, yet sidelined in most countries
- MDBS in trouble?
Main Conclusions and Challenges

- Must start with evidence of widespread pro-poor and PRSP performance failures – should there be more focus on this as priority?
- Parliamentary role overall a mix of strengths (links to civil society, gender focus, monitoring momentum) – and of weaknesses (budget cycle role, links with poor, limits to policy leverage)
- Biggest concern to stress is lack of budget and financial control – must build own capacity, improve staffing, work for impact earlier in budget cycle
- Plus continuing challenge of truly reaching poor for serious interaction
- To meet these goals, international and national emphases must change to reinforce Parliaments and contributions they can make