Monitoring the Implementation of the PRSP: The Uganda Experience

A paper presented
by

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Introduction:

This paper discusses the experience of civil society in Uganda in the monitoring of the implementation of the Ugandan PEAP/PRSP. What is important to note here is that the Ugandan PEAP, which is also its PRSP predates the World Bank/IMF PRSP process. This is what makes the Ugandan case unique. The PEAP process in Uganda started as way back as 1995. In this paper, I will give a brief highlight of this process and civil society (CSO) participation, and then progress to CSO Participation in monitoring its implementation.

In 1997, Uganda launched the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), following a two years extensive national consultative process involving a cross section of stakeholders (Central and Local Government, Civil Society, and the private sector. The PEAP provides national priorities for poverty eradication.

When the demand by World Bank and IMF for countries to develop PRSPs came up, it was agreed by the government and donors that Uganda's PEAP would also be its PRSP. However this called for its revision in order for Uganda to benefit from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC).

In December 1999, Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development called a consultative meeting with donors and civil society organizations to discuss the concept paper on "strengthening Uganda's strategic framework: an interim concept paper towards revision of the PEAP". The revision was considered necessary on the grounds that the first phase of the implementation had ended since it was first designed on a three-year basis as an involving framework rather than a set of fixed priorities. It was also due to the fact since the launch in 1997 various consultations and researches had been carried out and findings needed to be incorporated in the PEAP. This new knowledge would then be useful in strengthening the PEAP.

After this consultative meeting, civil society Organizations in Uganda formed a civil society Taskforce to organize consultations for the revision of the PEAP. Uganda Debt Network took the lead of this exercise and hosted the civil society PEAP taskforce that conducted the countrywide consultation of members of the civil society and grassroots communities. This taskforce then led the consultations and extensive involvement of civil society in the revision and formulation of the PEAP (PRSP) from December 1999 to May 2001.

Funding for the PEAP

When Uganda qualified as the first country to benefit from the Highly Indebted Poor Country's (HIPCs) Initiative sponsored by the World Bank and IMF to reduce the debt burden of Third World Countries, Government of Uganda committed itself to spend the money in the priority areas in the Poverty

Eradication Action Plan (PEAP).[1]   For this purpose Government established a Poverty Action Fund (PAF) in the Financial Year 1997/98 as a mechanism for mobilizing savings from debt relief and donors for investment in the social sector for poverty eradication.   The HIPC debt relief initiative, donor contributions, and the government of Uganda's own resources finance PAF.

The PAF provides funding to the Poverty Eradication Action Plan priority areas that are directly poverty focused through:
• Increasing the ability of the poor to raise incomes, or
• Improving the quality of life of the poor, and
• Ensuring that the impact of the programmes are direct

To this effect, PAF provides funding to the following programme areas
• Primary education
• Primary health care
• Water and sanitation development
• Rural feeder roads maintenance
• Agriculture extension
• Micro finance/restocking programmes

Others include:
• Control of HIV/AIDS
• Pilot schemes for adult literacy and enhancing efficiency in the judiciary system (clearing of case backlog)

Civil Society Participation in Monitoring PAF (PEAP)

Uganda Debt Network (UDN) took the lead in monitoring the implementation of the PEAP in Uganda. Uganda Debt Network is an advocacy and lobbying coalition of NGOs (both local and international), academic, research and religious institutions, Civil Society Organizations, and individuals. It was established in 1996 as a result of civil society concerns on the level of Uganda's debt burden and its implication on the long-term economic and social development of the country. UDN now has over 90 members (organizations and individuals).

UDN was formed to primarily to campaign for debt relief for Uganda under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCS) initiative of the World Bank and IMF to reduce debts of poor countries. It was also to ensure that the savings from debt relief are spent in the social sector so as to reduce poverty. During the jubilee

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[1] The PEAP focuses on public actions on the eradication of poverty. The four key pillars of PEAP are:
• Creating an environment for enabling sustainable economic growth and transformation
• Promoting good governance and security
• Raising the incomes of the poor people
• Improving the quality of life of the poor

2000 global debt cancellation campaign UDN was the lead agency for Uganda. Upon the establishment of the PAF UDN then undertook to spearhead Civil Society monitoring the implementation and utilization of Poverty Action Fund (PAF) to ensure that resources from debt relief are spent on poverty focused programmes and also that services reach the intended beneficiaries.

Process of the monitoring exercise

In 1999 UDN started participating in monitoring the implementation of PAF on behalf of civil society. Researchers were hired to carry out the monitoring. These researchers underwent training in participatory monitoring methodologies to enable them carry out the monitoring exercise effectively. Monitoring exercise was done quarterly meaning that these researchers would go back to the districts every quarter.

 However, in May 2000, it was realized that there was need to keep track of how resources were being used both at district and local levels. This called for the establishment of locally established committees at the district level formed from amongst the beneficiaries of the PAF. This was an empowerment process that would foster ownership of the monitoring process by the members of the civil society and the grassroots people in general.

PAF Monitoring Committees (PMCs) at district level

These committees are composed of between 9- 11 members of the civil society representing NGOs, CSOs, and Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and religious organizations. Interest groups such as the women, youth, the elderly and the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) also formed part of the committees.

Representation of the various sub counties in the district was also emphasized during the formation of these committees. This representation would increase coverage at the district level for their strategic meetings to enhance their monitoring exercises and meetings.

Skills development Training

In order to build the capacity of the PMCs in carrying out this noble activity, UDN organized quarterly training workshops intended to provide these people with basic skills in participatory monitoring, and lobby and advocacy. These skills were relevant for their participation in policy formulation and monitoring of government programmes particularly those that are geared towards poverty reduction and promoting good governance.
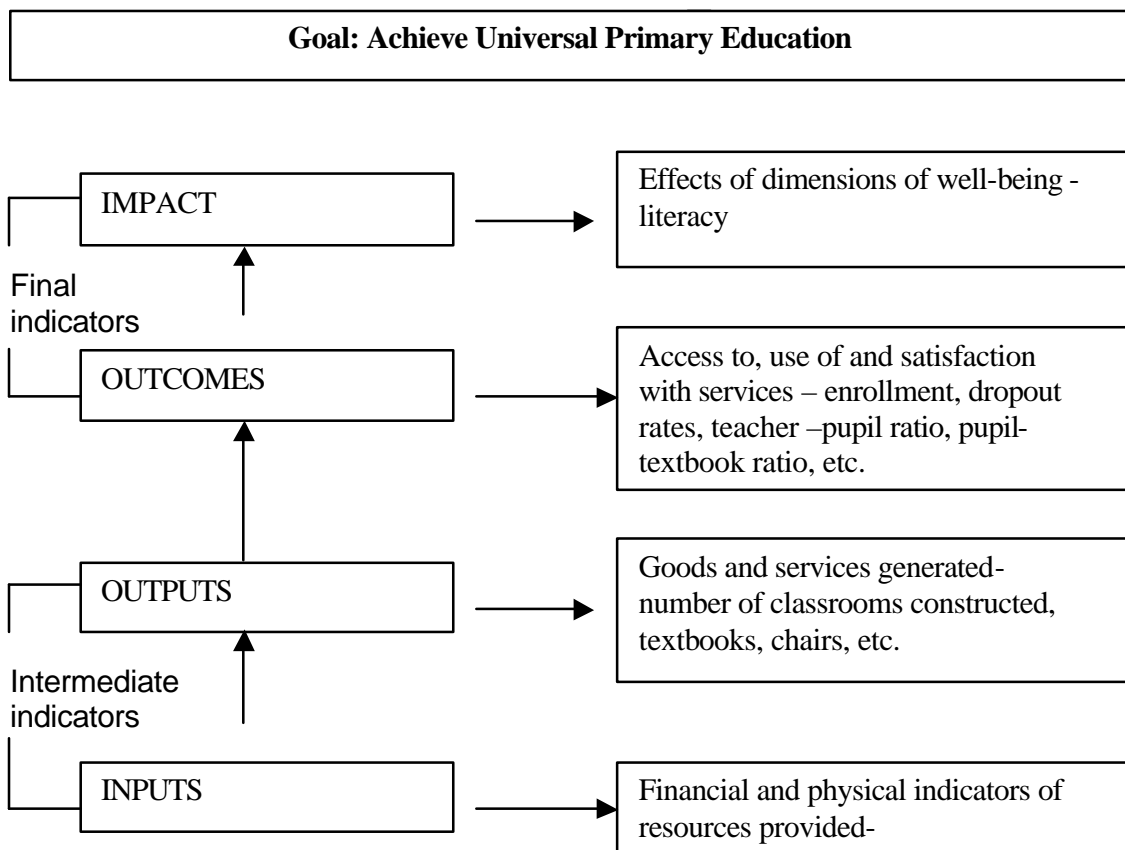
Apart from skills development through workshops, UDN through its Public Information Centre reviews and repackages information and disseminates it to

these PMCS to enhance their understanding of different aspects of poverty and how they can participate in mitigating the situation.

Monitoring by the district PAF Committees

Equipped with the knowledge and skills, the PMCs then carry periodic monitoring of the implementation of the PAF as well as disseminating PAF information in their areas of jurisdiction. These activities of the PMCs have increased ownership of the PAF programme at the grassroots level and this safeguards against improper utilization of the funds.

Levels of Monitoring by the PMCs (e.g. in Primary Education)

Goal: Achieve Universal Primary Education

IMPACT	→	Effects of dimensions of well-being - literacy

Final indicators

OUTCOMES	→	Access to, use of and satisfaction with services – enrollment, dropout rates, teacher –pupil ratio, pupil-textbook ratio, etc.

OUTPUTS	→	Goods and services generated- number of classrooms constructed, textbooks, chairs, etc.

Intermediate indicators

INPUTS	→	Financial and physical indicators of resources provided-

Feedback mechanisms

The findings from the above exercise are compiled, synthesized and presented at the quarterly meeting between the donors, government of Uganda and civil society to discuss and evaluate the performance of the PAF. As seen from the above diagram, government presents quantitative reports since their monitoring ends at input output levels. Civil society's report is more qualitative and informs the policy planners of the quality of the service provided.

At first these findings were presented to the quarterly meeting by a UDN staff. But with time and as the PMCs gained confidence, we started providing them with analysis and report writing skills. They are now able to collect the information, synthesize it and write the final report, which they themselves present at the quarterly meeting. One or two of them are selected among themselves to present the report. This has increased ownership of the process by the PMCs as well as enabling them to interact with policy planners and articulate their concerns. On the other hand, the reports have gained more authenticity, as the policy planners are able to hear the views and concerns of the people from the horse's mouth.

As time goes by, these quarterly meetings are becoming irregular. This means that findings by these people can stay long before reaching the policy planners. This has then necessitated the change of strategy from presenting the findings to national level committee to discussing these findings at source. Respective district PMCs are now encouraged to organize dialogue meetings with their district officials and present to them their findings. These have become more effective as most of the issues identified are addressed at those levels and solutions advanced. Secondly some districts have unique problems, which can only be handled uniquely. The other advantage with this process is that through the interaction with their district officials, a rapport has been created and these district officials now regard them as allies, not detractors, as was the case at the beginning of the exercise.

Introducing the Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES)

In response to the challenges of monitoring PAF and other intervention mechanisms, which include limited numbers of monitors at the district level, UDN has had to reshape the strategy of monitoring done by a few PAFMCs at the district level, to the Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES).

The CBMES aims to empower communities to articulate their development needs and priorities, as well as efforts to mobilize communities in the local development planning, management, and evaluation process of service delivery. The initiative entails local communities measuring the performance of government programmes by obtaining information about the quality and quantity outputs over a certain period of time and comparing this with the publicly declared outputs of those programmes.

This method not only offers the opportunity for tracking and monitoring government decision making but also involves constituencies in research, empowerment and building capacity to bring about significant change and facilitating in depth learning by large numbers of people on the issues which concern them.

It is envisaged that the CBMES will involve communities in large numbers to participate in monitoring and also supplement the work of PAFMCs

The CBMES Pilot in Kamuli District

A pilot project to test the feasibility of the Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES), was carried out in Kamuli district between 11th 23rd April 2002. The goal of this pilot was to establish a Community Based Monitoring & Evaluation System (CBMES) to enhance participation of local communities in decision-making and policy influence. Its main purpose was to empower grassroots communities to monitor poverty and other development-related programmes, and influence policy at the local and national levels.

During the pilot, local communities were introduced to participatory monitoring and evaluation skills, developing a tool for monitoring and evaluating community poverty programmes, and establishing a community based information management system.

At the end of this pilot local communities had come up a community-monitoring model on how communities can be involved right from village to the sub county level.

At the end of this pilot exercise members of the local communities came up with a community-based model of monitoring the implementation of poverty related programmes.

A pilot monitoring exercise was also carried out and findings of this exercise discussed at feed back meetings at sub-county and district level.

The local communities also developed community based monitoring indicators which they presented to Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic

Development on 7th June 2002, as alternative indicators to government indicators.

Achievements from monitoring the PAF

- Through the various tarinings and information sharing, the Local communities (PAFMCs) are now empowered carry out the monitoring of PAF on their own. PAFMCs can now ably conduct monitoring in their reas of jurisdiction, compile a report of findings on their own and present such findings to Local Governmnet Officails and at meetings organised at national level, by Ministry of Finance Planning and Ecomic development to review the perfomance of the PAF and other public expenditure.
- In some districts, PAFMCs, with the assistance from UDN secreatriat, have caused the publication of their own reports of findings. Kamuli district Committee was was able to publish their report of monitoring in August 2001. The report was widely circulated at local, national and international level. Findings from this report attracted has attracted the attention of many stakeholders both at local and International including the World in Washington that sent a delegation of two people who visited the Kamuli Committee on 10th November 2001 to dicuss how they are monitoring PAF.
- The PAFMCs have mobilised civil society in their districts to support the programs and develope actions against corruption. They have also committed themselves to disseminating PAF and pertinent information in their areas of jurisdiction as a way of increasing awareness of the programs. This is likely to increase transparency and accountability and in turn effective service delivery. It has also raised curiosity of other people to partcipat in the monitoring.
- The PAFMCs have taken the initiative to organize district dialogue meetings. These meetings bring together the PAF implementers and PAF beneficiaries together and discuss not only PAF implementation process but also poverty issues in general. In some instances decisions and actions to ameliorate the situation have been jointly taken at such meetings. Such opportunities have increased the grassroots participation and influencing public policy process at local and national levels as well as increasing ownership of the programmes.
- The development of a community based monitoring model by the local communities themselves is a sign of sustainability of the process.

- After the pilot on CBMES, local communities now feel empowered have started monitoring on their own on continuous basis and holding dialogues with public officials on gaps in service delivery in their own villages. A case in question is where the local communities monitored the delivery of health services in their locality and found out that health workers were giving them half doses because the medical Assistant in charge of the Centre never resided at the Centre and was never there when required. A meeting was organized between the community people and the medical assistant and resolved the problem amicably. The medical officer agreed to shift to the health Centre and commit more of his time to his work, lest the community people ask for his transfer.

Challenges that still exist

Although a lot has been achieved as seen above, the following challenges still exist and thus have to be addressed in order to realise the best out of monitoring the PAF.

♦ Ensuring the sustainability of these processes. The CBMES presents a model that is quite empowering since it ensures continuous monitoring by the local communities themselves. Ensuring continuity of these processes in the districts requires a increased human and financial capacity.

♦ With decentralization policy in Uganda, a lot of resources are being remitted to the districts in bid to improve the quality of life of the poor through social service delivery. This calls for more vigilance at the local government level given the level of awareness among the grassroots people of their rights and entitlements.

♦ There is need to involve heavily the local communities to monitor the PAF. More sensitization needs to be done targeting specifically the grassroots people. This calls for electronic and print media advocacy to increase information dissemination. Increased knowledge of the PAF will eventually increase participation of the local communities in monitoring its implementation.

2.1 Conclusion

Civil society PAF monitoring started as a Uganda Debt Network activity alone but the participation has since increased to involve the local communities who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the PAF. The formation of the PMCs at the district level and now the introduction of the CBMS have increased ownership of the PAF programme and these safeguards against improper utilization of the funds. This initiative is an avenue through which good governance has been promoted.