The Role of CSOs in Monitoring Financing for Development:
*A perspective on Influencing the Budget Process in Malawi*

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Outline

Setting the Context

Role and Influence of CSOs on Budget Advocacy

MEJN Experience in Budget Advocacy Work

Strategies, Tools used for monitoring financing

Lessons Learnt

Challenges, Opportunities

Way Forward
Setting the Context

- **CSOs** are **key players** in a democratic dispensation...
  - Democracy is almost inconceivable without CSOs
  - Democracy cannot be sustained without a robust Civil Society

- **Democracy** involves citizens having **choices**
  - Putting **ideas into practice**
    - *Policy engagement, Dialogue, Partnerships...*
• CSOs in Malawi - getting more Organized
• MEJN formed in the year 2000
  • After then 3-year old Jubilee 2000 Debt Cancellation Mw Campaign...

• Initially started with 27 member CSOs, but grew to over 110, MEJN by 2009 (still counting...)
  • Established to champion CSOs involvement in Economic Governance
The PP Engagement Realities (1): It’s a Process...

• Solicit issues, engage with the state, build coalitions
• Initially CSOs were more into policy influence

BUT NOW. . .

• CSOs have moved into budget tracking and holding government into account
Reality (2):
Policy processes are not linear...

- Identify the problem
  → Commission research
  → Analyse the results
  → Choose the best option
  → Implement the policy
  → Establish the policy
  → Evaluation
Reality (3): *Policy processes are more complex*....
MEJN’s Experience

• First engagement was participation in the **MPRS formulation**
  • Consequently first **budget monitoring** mile-stone was MPRS Budget in 2002/03 FY...
  • Moved on to soliciting of **PRS reviews and MGDS formulation coordination** of Civil Society input to-date...
  • Initial partnership with government; Budget & Finance Committee, the then Parliamentary Research Office ...**MoU signed in 2003**

• CS in Malawi has undergone metamorphosis
  • In 1994, CSOs were more into defending human rights due to Malawi's political and civil abuses
  • Late 90s and 2000 more CSOs came in broadening agenda and economic governance
  • The emergence of networks is yet another landmark, with budget advocacy as their prime concern
MEJN’s Experience (2)

• **Three- approaches** to engaging in the Oversight functions – 19 years

• *The Inside Strategy* - as part of **an organisation** (intra), done at different levels and is championed (MEJN and other networks)
  - Regional level (international)
  - National level (Sector specific networks)
  - Local level (partnerships/platforms) – District Chapters
• **The Outside Strategy** –
  • Partnered with like minded key stakeholders & institutions
  • Parliamentary Committees – B&FC, PAC, Sector Portfolios (Agric, Health, Women Caucus, etc.)
  • Local level Parliament (district/constituency)
  • Executive (Key Ministries, Departments & Agencies- Sector working groups
  • Pvt Sector (Public-Private Dialogues) and
  • Development Partners (Common Approach to Budget Support / Devpt. Cooperation Grp, Joint Annual Reviews)

• **Instruments:** - Targeted media (Radios, TV, print)
Role of CS on Budget Oversight

• National Budgets have been of main focus for CS advocacy
  • Influence on pro-poor policy engagement
  • Tracking Revenue & Expenditures side of the budget

• The How?.. budget monitoring, budget analysis, budget simplification, budget translation and budget information dissemination...
The Concept of PPPs-

• This is the new and growing concept that needs further engaging
  • Between CSOs, State & non-State interlocutors for social accountability and good governance...

• The Constitution of Malawi provides for the right to education, right to health, right to economic opportunities,...
  • Article 13 states that “... State shall actively promote the welfare and development of the people of Malawi by progressively adopting and implementing policies and legislation aimed at achieving various goals...”

• Private service provision (schools and private health facilities) in Malawi are on the increase
  • Largely due to the growing demand for the public services; but all this is against the reality of dwindling quality of the public service delivery...

• CSOs need to vigilantly follow up if the PPPs are truly yielding the necessary balancing act and rising to the expectations...
The Role of CSOs in PPPs Monitoring

• It is the CSOs’ role is to **diligently** monitor PPPs’ service delivery
  • by understanding and keenly following up on the public institutions
  • on the premise that PPs drain skilled personnel from public to the private sector, sometimes allegedly compromising on the service provision

• MEJN believes that PPPs might also be prone to shady and Corrupt dealings
  • It is the occurrence of corruption that has further weakened the outlook for development results in Malawi...

• Conflict of interest/State Capture and Profiteering
  • The question of Stake Ownership in PPPs versus the fact that Private entities are at times a property of the public ruling elites that at same time are decision makers...
Strategies and Tools used

• CS for **generating evidence** to demand accountability and answerability
  • Through tracking inputs vs. outputs (PETS)
  • Through focusing on outcomes or qualitative monitoring (SDSS/OBS)

• CS for **simplifying budget information** into user-friendly packages
  • Budget Analysis
  • Budget Simplification and Translation

• CSO as a **conduits for channeling views** of the general public
  • Tools used include multi-media programming i.e. radio and TV programs, newspaper inserts,...
Lessons Learned

• **Credibility** through evidence-based advocacy
  • Able to open doors for greater participation in economic policy process at local and international levels

• **Ability to Network and mobilize the critical mass**
  • Maximizing synergies as a bridge i.e. Chapters and Sister Networks...
  • Established platform for economic justice

• **Raising the profile of CSOs/citizens**
  • With heightened general economic literacy and budget accountability for governance (ELBAG)
Lessons Learned (2)

• **Division of Labor**, through networking - Maximizing Synergies pays off

• **There’s no substitute for Integrity/Honesty** – internal and external

• **Constituency building** - remaining connected to the grassroots is quite key relevant
  • National, Districts and Constituencies
Opportunities

- Growing reputation and confidence
- Growing relevance in policy advocacy
- Growing citizen-Led Demands
Opportunities

• Growing reputation and confidence
  • strengthened partnerships and networking virtues at national and local level (Parliament, DPs, Pvt. sector and Govt)

• Growing relevance in policy advocacy
  • pursuance of evidence-based advocacy, using quality & participatory research;
  • Pre-budget consultations (District and National); and
  • Citizens’ Budget Submissions, Lobbying and Advocacy.

• Citizen-led demands
Challenges

• **Shrinking CSOs enabling environment** vs. Resilient and fool-proof Partnerships (CSOs, Legislature, Executive)?!
  • Relations with Government & the policy process...

• **Networking dynamics** vs. internal capacity strengthening
  • Who leads; Who follows; Who benefits?

• **Limited fiscal space?**
  • Program and Administrative costs

• **Limited Transparency & Accountability** (Lack of vital Budget Information)
  • vs. Inconsistent budget figures
Case of Info Disclosure by Govt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Document</th>
<th>Financial Years 2017/18 - 2018/19</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. District Development Plan (DDP)</td>
<td>Available to the Public online and or in hard copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Draft District Budget Estimates (DDBE)¹</td>
<td>Produced, but with limited circulation – mostly to Councilors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Approved District Budget (ADB)</td>
<td>Produced for internal staff use only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In - Year Quarterly Reports (IYR)</td>
<td>Not Available/ Produced in FY2017/18 and FY2018/19</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Annual Investment Plan (AIP)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Summarized Budget Document (SBD)/ Citizens Budget.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Central Government Transfers Report (CGTR)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Audit Report (AR)</td>
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Key

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Summary

• It is never too late for effective dialogue
  • The key is knowing where to start from!!
  • The rest becomes a learning curve

• What to Consider
  • What could be the best for the citizens...
  • How can it be operationalized and be played out...
  • By Who? ...
  • Who takes lead
  • What Lessons do we draw?...

• That is it....
Thank You