

BOTTOM-UP BUDGETING IN THE PHILIPPINES:
Navigating through the challenges, opportunities and
learnings of participatory reform

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INTRODUCTION

Participatory budgeting is a process of decision-making where citizens are given a role in negotiating and deliberating how and where public resources are used.¹ Participatory budgeting was birthed in the municipality of Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989, four years after the re-establishment of its democracy.² Since then, participatory budgeting has been implemented in all regions of the world in various forms, ranging from participation of individual citizens to participation of organized groups at sub-national and national levels.³

In the Philippines, Naga City has pioneered several mechanisms of people's participation in budgeting at the local government level.⁴ With the Aquino administration, the geographic scope of participatory budgeting in the country has significantly widened through the Bottom-up Budgeting (BUB), which is also known as Grassroots Participatory Budgeting (GPB). The program was first rolled out in early 2012 for the 2013 national budget with the goal to "contribute to poverty reduction and inclusive growth by making governance responsive to local needs and public resource allocation more efficient."⁵

The main reform of the BUB is that it provides citizens, through civil society organizations (CSOs), including basic sector organizations, the opportunity for direct participation in budgeting. The BUB is implemented in municipalities through a decision-making body at the municipal level called Local Poverty Reduction Action Team (LPRAT).⁶ This body, composed of an equal number of local government unit (LGU) and CSO members, plans where the funding allocated by the national government for the municipality will be spent.

The purpose of this report is to document the BUB experience in the Philippines by drawing from the experiences of select municipalities in the provinces of Samar, Davao Oriental and Agusan del Sur. In the report, emphasis is on the participatory reform of the BUB - whether CSOs have truly been given voice and power and to what

¹ Brian Wampler, "A Guide to Participatory Budgeting" in *Participatory Budgeting*, ed. Anwar Shah (Washington DC: World Bank, 2007), 21.

² *Ibid.*, 23.

³ Anwar Shah, "Overview" in *Participatory Budgeting*, ed. Anwar Shah (Washington DC: World Bank, 2007).

⁴ Harry Blair, *Participatory Budgeting and Local Governance*, Working Paper No 10, 2012 (Swedish International Center for Local Development, 2012), 7.

⁵ Patrick Lim, *Grassroots Budgeting: Participation Manual*, by the Department of Budget & Management, 2014, 1.

⁶ Department of Budget & Management, *Policy Guidelines and Procedures in the Implementation of the Grassroots Participatory Budgeting Process*. 2014, 3-4. (Joint Memorandum Circular No. 5.)

extent they exercise such. The stories and observations documented are based on interviews conducted with LGU and CSO representatives in late 2014 and early 2015. They capture the main challenges, best practices and opportunities that have surfaced in the three phases of the program: the preparation phase, joint planning and budgeting, and implementation and monitoring.

PREPARATION PHASE

The planning process of the BUB begins with preparing the CSOs to engage in participatory budgeting and to become part of the LPRAT. The BUB guidelines mandate the conduct of the CSO Assembly.⁷ It is during the assembly where CSOs are convened at the municipal/city level. During this one-day event, CSOs are oriented on the BUB. They elect representatives and signatories to the LPRAT. Furthermore, they are supposed to conduct an analysis of the poverty situation of their municipality and identify strategies to address poverty. It is expected that the LGU will provide updated and relevant data to the CSOs in doing such.

Challenges

Representation

The issue of representation and inclusion of CSOs in the CSO Assembly was a major challenge during the first two years of the BUB. Local government units (LGU) were not able to reach out to a wide breadth of CSOs, owing to a lack of access to and knowledge of CSOs and also at times, deliberate exclusion of CSOs that are considered political rivals. At the same time, because many CSOs were not yet aware of the BUB, they were not able to proactively join in the process. With the guidelines for BUB 2016, invitation to CSOs has become open. Invitations to the CSO Assembly now need to be given two weeks ahead of time.⁸ Moreover, CSOs who have not been invited may proactively contact the municipality for an invitation.⁹

Still, several issues hinder some CSOs from participating in the assembly. For instance, in Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur, left-leaning groups have intentionally distanced themselves from the BUB. At the same time, some other groups have also

⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

opted not to participate because of disillusionment with the government. They had, in previous years, received too many failed promises of support and funding. Lack of awareness and understanding of the BUB and how it can impact their organisations are also reasons why some groups do not participate in the assembly. Nonito Olimpo, representative of the Banaybanay Christian Small Farmers Association Incorporated commented that other farming groups have not participated in the BUB because they are too focused on their business goals, not realizing that the BUB can also help them economically.

Process

During the first years of the BUB, facilitation of the CSO Assembly was problematic because of inadequate capacity and human resources of the municipality/ government to conduct the assembly. In some municipalities, established CSOs stepped in and facilitated the assembly, such as in the case of Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur and Oras, Eastern Samar. With the designation of more Community Mobilizers (CMs) by the DILG for BUB 2016, the process of the CSO Assembly is expected to be strengthened.

Challenges in the process remain. The general feedback from the CSOs is that one day is insufficient to effectively cover all the activities to be accomplished in the assembly. Because of time constraints, a full orientation of the BUB and a thorough analysis of the poverty situation of the municipality are compromised. Where information is presented, there are also doubts about whether the information provided by the municipality are accurate. A CSO in Eastern Visayas, for instance, discovered that the municipality had been fabricating its socio-economic profile in every BUB round.

Another trend that has been observed, especially in the recent BUB rounds, is that instead of doing the poverty analysis, the assembly immediately focuses on BUB projects that have been proposed in the previous years. From here, the assembly determines if there are any gaps or expansions that may be proposed. The result is that proposed BUB projects are add-ons or expansions to previously accomplished BUB projects. It is expected that this trend will continue during BUB 2016. This process may or may not be strategic, depending on whether the previous BUB projects strategically addressed poverty in the municipality.

Capacity and legitimacy

A major challenge in the preparation phase concerns the capacity of CSOs to engage in analysis and planning. Both LGU and CSO representatives alike comment that some representatives who attend the assembly do not fully grasp the goals and mechanics of the BUB, as well as their legal mandate in the process. Lack of

confidence is also a barrier to participation during the assembly. Some CSO representatives shared that they initially felt intimidated and hesitant to engage because compared to the LGU representatives and other seasoned CSO representatives, they had less education and experience. As a result, within the assembly itself, there are power imbalances, with some CSO representatives having more voice over the others. In some municipalities, it is the same CSO representatives that have been elected for the past three consecutive BUB cycles.

The legitimacy of the representatives is also a challenge in the BUB because some attendees represent their personal views rather than bringing the concerns or views of their organizations. Some CSOs that are well-organized already have organizational level agenda/ advocacy. However, for other looser groups, this is not the case.

As more CSOs participate in the assembly, how to manage and prioritize the number and breadth of proposed agenda/ advocacy of the varying sectors becomes a bigger challenge.

Best Practices

Amidst the challenges surrounding the preparatory phase of the BUB, several best practices have emerged. To maximize the opportunity and address several of the challenges above, CSOs have begun to mobilize outside of but complementary to the process mandated by the BUB. These involve alliance building and agenda development.

Alliance/ Network Building

Alliance or network building entails bringing together autonomous groups through short or long-term arrangement towards common objectives.¹⁰ This could be either informal or formal. Building alliances and networks has become a critical CSO strategy to maximize their engagement in the BUB. Through alliances, stronger CSOs have been able to reach out and encourage smaller and less active groups to participate in the BUB. Less powerful organizations have consequently become more empowered and motivated to engage in the process. Moreover, alliances have increased the political voice, power and legitimacy of the CSOs as a collective. These networks have become venues for CSO representatives to improve both soft skills and technical skills through capacity building and sharing of knowledge and strategies. Moving forward,

¹⁰ Wilbur Cohen, "What Every Social Worker Should Know About Political Action," *Social Work*, 11 (1966): 7, cited in Charles Prigmore, "Use of the Coalition in Legislative Action," *Social Work*, 19 (1974):96.

alliance building has become a main strategy for the sustainability of CSO engagement not only in the BUB but in other participatory initiatives as well.

In the Municipality of Sta. Margarita, Samar, a network composed of more than 16 organizations from various sectors was formed in order to empower the CSOs. According to Artemio Ballos Jr. of the Ayupanan Contra Abuso (ACAS), a member organization, the network has been indispensable to the effective participation of the CSOs in the BUB. During the preparation stage, the network provided a venue for all CSOs to come together in order to effectively assess the poverty situation of the municipality and deliberate the best solutions. The network had been successful in bringing in organizations that had already been left behind, such as unaccredited organizations.

Agenda Development

Agenda development apart from the mandated CSO Assembly has proved to be a worthwhile endeavor for CSOs and alliances for the BUB and beyond. Prior to the assembly, CSOs mobilized workshops and consultations in order to have sufficient time to discuss, debate and prioritize issues and projects to be advocated to the municipality. The objective of agenda development is to ensure that the proper process of poverty analysis and project identification have been undergone, so that projects identified are truly responsive to the needs of the community. Moreover, it is to ensure that CSOs have a unified voice among themselves and when engaging with the local government.

In the Municipality of Banaybanay, Davao Oriental, three days of multi-sectoral workshops were organized by a lead CSO in preparation for the CSO Assembly for BUB 2016. Representatives from the sectors on indigenous peoples, farmers, cooperatives, labor groups, and youth, among others, participated in this process. For some of them, it was their first time to participate in such a workshop. During the event, CSO representatives were given the opportunity to express their sectoral concerns and come up with proposed solutions. It was also a venue for the representatives to negotiate and manage expectations among each other, given that not all issues and projects proposed could be incorporated into the development agenda.

The result of the workshops was a well-documented development agenda that captured not only the felt needs of a broad range of representatives, but of strategic and evidence-based proposals. As such, during the CSO Assembly, the CSOs were well-prepared with their advocacy.

Lessons Learned

- The CSO Assembly is not sufficient to adequately prepare CSOs to engage in joint planning and budgeting in the BUB. To maximize the space provided by the BUB, CSOs should mobilize outside and apart from, but complementary to the mandated processes.
- Alliance/ network building is an effective strategy in building unity among CSOs in order to strengthen their voice. It also enables the stronger CSOs in the locality to reach out to and support the weaker organizations.
- CSOs should devote time and resources to organize complementary initiatives such as agenda development workshops that allow sufficient time to deliberate on the poverty situation and priority projects. Such events may be done in partnership with the local government or national government agencies or with CSO networks and more established CSOs if local CSOs do not have enough resources.
- Representation of CSOs should be broad, covering many sectors and types of organizations, both loose and well-organized. However, as the participation of CSOs from various political, religious and sectoral groups increase, so does the risk of conflict and competing interests. Expectations and group processes should always be managed well.
- The BUB is a window of opportunity to reach out and empower inactive or smaller CSOs. Even if the voices of many smaller CSOs may be present, it is still important to study and observe whose voices are being heard and who influences decision-making.
- Evidence and results-based processes are new to many CSOs. Effective leaders or facilitators are needed to guide CSOs and build their capacity in undertaking such. Moreover, building confidence and an empowered mindset among representatives should not be neglected.

JOINT PLANNING AND BUDGETING

The main component of the BUB is the joint planning and budgeting between the CSOs and the LGU. This is undertaken by the LPRAT during the Local Poverty Reduction Action Plan (LPRAP) Workshop.¹¹ During this workshop, representatives from both the CSOs and the municipality jointly identify priority projects to be included in the LPRAP. The list of projects are then signed by both LGU and CSO representatives, represented by the Local Chief Executive (LCE) and three CSO co-signatories.¹²

Challenges

LGU Leadership

For many LGUs, the BUB is their first experience of sharing decision-making power with CSOs. As such, a common challenge in joint planning and budgeting is the dominance of the mayor or the Local Chief Executive (LCE). There are LCEs that insist on retaining full control over the process, particularly in two aspects - the composition of the CSO membership in the LPRAT and the selection of BUB-funded projects. Some LCEs have refused to convene the LPRAT because the CSO co-chair/ member that was elected during the assembly happened to be a political rival or critic of the LCE. Other LCEs have imposed their own priority projects during the planning workshop itself, at times, with vested interest. In a municipality in Eastern Visayas, the LCE criticized all the proposals of the CSOs and threatened to withhold support if the CSOs would not give in to her demands. It was also observed that the LCE had proposed farm-to-market roads that led to her personal property.

At the opposite end, there are also LCEs that are disengaged from the BUB, as was the case during the BUB 2013 run. During this time, the LCEs had not yet appreciated the value of BUB. However, through the years, CSOs have observed growing interest in the BUB among LCEs. Overall, the biggest challenge with LGU leadership is that there are LCEs do not fully understand the spirit of participatory and transparent governance underpinning the BUB.

CSO Capacity and Empowerment

Another factor that contributes to the uneven power dynamics between the LGU and CSOs during the joint planning is the actual or perceived lack of technical capability of the CSOs. An LCE in a municipality in Agusan del Sur observed that some CSO

¹¹ Department of Budget & Management, *Policy Guidelines and Procedures in the Implementation of the Grassroots Participatory Budgeting Process*. 2014, 10. (Joint Memorandum Circular No. 5.)

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

representatives are not well-equipped to engage in planning. He critiqued that CSOs propose projects that are not feasible or do not address priority problems. On the other hand, CSOs argue that LCEs prefer infrastructure projects whereas the greater need they perceive is for livelihood initiatives. Some LCEs have expressed their wariness over the effectiveness and sustainability of livelihood projects. However, this remains to be seen after implementation and monitoring. Another critique is that some CSOs also propose projects out of self-interest. There are CSOs that expect that their organization will be the automatic beneficiary of the proposed BUB projects. A CSO representative in Leyte, when asked about his understanding of the BUB explained that the BUB was a source of funds for organizations that are in need. Although some CSOs may genuinely represent the poorest of the poor, a fund-raising mindset may weaken the legitimacy of CSOs on the negotiating table.

CSO Composition

The power dynamics between the CSOs and LGUs is often given most attention but it is also important to look into the power dynamics within the CSOs themselves. Stronger CSO representatives who have had experience in engaging with the LGU are technically capable and outspoken during the LPRAT Workshop. Weaker CSO representatives, although present during the LPRAT tend to be more quiet and just agree with what has been said. However, as CSO representative Remedios Ong of the Sorsogon Farmer's Association (Hilongos, Leyte) and Hilongos Federation Treasurer observed, the CSOs' confidence has increased in the past years. In spite of this, there are still perceptions that there are CSOs that dominate the LPRAT or co-chairs that are repeatedly being elected into position. Moreover, there have been observations that certain sectors are not well represented in the LPRAT. Kenneth Tagaro, island convenor of the Youth for Peace Philippines from the municipality of Banaybanay lamented over the lack of youth representatives in the various LPRATs in the province of Agusan del Sur. It should be noted that the sectoral composition of the LPRAT varies by municipality, in accordance with the results of the elections done in the CSO Assembly as well as the BUB guidelines.

Proposal Making

The BUB process mandates the conduct of the LPRAP workshop as the major planning activity.¹³ Nevertheless, planning does not end with the workshop but rather continues on to the drafting of the detailed project proposals and submission of requirements to the National Government Agencies (NGA) through the regional offices. Herein, the support of the LGU department head level is critical. However, some department heads consider the BUB an additional burden, due to its additional time and

¹³ Ibid., 3.

administrative requirements. Especially during BUB 2013 and 2014, department heads recount how much time was spent in back-and-forth coordination between the LGU and the NGAs on the submission of documents. Nonetheless, support for the BUB among department heads in the LGU is growing as they recognize more and more that BUB projects are invaluable contributions to their municipality. As remarked by Marlita P. Cortez, Agriculture Officer of Prosperidad, "We are in favor of the BUB because it is an additional accomplishment of our office and help for our communities".

In the proposal making phase, another challenge is the identification of beneficiaries. This is especially the case when projects involve the distribution of goods or equipment to individuals rather than to the entire barangay. Many barangay leaders still have traditional mindsets that it is only the political allies of the LGU that are entitled to benefit from municipal projects. In the Municipality of Prosperidad, one department head recounted that in the distribution of motorized bancas, the barangay captains came up with a beneficiary list that included only the political allies of the LCE. The main criterion of the project which was to choose beneficiaries that were most in need was overlooked.

This points to the challenge of involving CSOs in project proposal making as well. In some municipalities where CSO involvement stopped at identifying broad projects, the potential of BUB projects to address the needs of the community had been compromised. In other municipalities such as in the municipality of Banaybanay, CSOs were asked to draft the project proposals themselves. This has both been a challenge and a benefit, depending on the capability and availability of the CSOs to undertake such.

CSO Strategies

The most serious roadblock that hinders the joint planning phase of the BUB is the disengagement of or opposition from the LCE. In the previous BUB rounds, CSOs have engaged in various strategies to address the dominance of the LCE and gain support. These include advocacy, an appeal to national or regional authority and compromise.

Assertiveness and Advocacy

The BUB is an opportunity for CSOs to assert their voice and to claim the space and power made available. When faced with a dominant LCE, one strategy that CSOs have employed is to continue being assertive while remaining diplomatic. During BUB 2014, an LCE in the province of Davao Oriental was not supportive of the joint planning process. The mayor insisted on replacing all the CSO proposals with his priority

projects. In response, the CSOs continued to vocalize and assert their right to participate in the BUB with the mayor. Moreover, CSOs identified persons of influence, aside from the mayor, that they could advocate to. They mapped out officials in the LGU who could be allies - those that had a high influence on the mayor and a supportive stance towards the CSOs. They advocated for their cause by building personal relationships and initiating informal meetings with these key persons. These allies, in turn, influenced the LCE. Consequently, during the succeeding LPRAT meeting, the LCE's attitude softened towards the CSOs. The LCE and the CSOs were able to agree on a joint LPRAP that considered both the priorities of civil society and the mayor.

Appeal to Authority

In one of the municipalities in Eastern Visayas, the LCE refused to proceed with the LPRAT because she did not want to work with the elected CSO co-chair. At first, the CSOs resisted the dominance of the LCE and vocalized their disagreement. However, the LCE continued to threaten to withdraw her support from the BUB if the CSOs did not change the CSO co-chair. Eventually, the CSOs informally appealed to the Regional DILG to intervene. The Regional DILG intervened by making contact with the LCE and explaining the legitimacy of the elected CSO co-chair. The regional authority also pushed for the proper resumption of the BUB. This prompted the LCE to become more open to finding a compromise with the CSOs.

In another region, Jocelyn Hayuma, Regional Focal Person for the BUB in the Caraga region, shared that some CSOs have formally lodged their complaints in writing to the Regional DILG. With this, the region is able to study the complaint and launch an investigation as needed.

Compromise/ submission

Within the BUB, it is most often the case that to reach an agreement with a dominant LCE, the CSOs must make a compromise. In the Eastern Visayas case, it was negotiated that the CSO co-chair would remain in the position on paper, but would not attend the LPRAT meetings. The other CSOs would still engage in the LPRAT. While this was not the ideal outcome hoped by the CSOs, the compromise was successful in that the BUB eventually proceeded.

In other municipalities where the LCE aggressively pushed for his/ her own list of priority projects, CSOs negotiated which among their projects and which among the LCE's projects would be included in the BUB. For instance, they would arrive at an agreement that half of the projects would originate from the CSOs while the other half would originate from the LGU.

In addressing opposition from the LCE, it is important to note that all these above-strategies were executed in the context of a broader CSO network that engaged in joint brainstorming on the best course of action. Without the unity and support of fellow-CSOs, the individual CSO representatives may not have had the confidence to challenge the LGU.

LGU Strategies

Some LCEs have made several strategies to more effectively engage with the CSOs in joint planning. Administratively, they have set up CSO desks or identified focal persons for the BUB. They have also taken measures to ensure that CSOs are involved not just in the planning workshop but are also consulted in developing the specifics of the project proposals.

BUB Focal Persons/ CSO Desks

To ensure the operation of the LPRAT/ BUB, some municipalities have identified BUB focal persons or set up a CSO desk. While the specific roles of these positions vary from municipality to municipality, they essentially play a secretariat function. These functions include organizing the LPRAT, ensuring proper information dissemination to the CSOs and LGU, documenting the LPRAT workshop and meetings, and making follow ups on the LPRAT. For example, in the municipality of Sta. Margarita, the CSO desk played an important role in communicating and disseminating invitations and ensuring the participation of the CSOs during the LPRAT workshop and its succeeding meetings.

CSO Participation in Project Proposal Making

Part of ensuring that the BUB projects address the needs of the grassroots is capturing the details of the requirements of the community. In the municipality of Banaybanay, the department heads have proactively sought the inputs of the CSOs throughout the planning phase of the projects. This has ensured that the projects truly address the needs of the grassroots. For example, a BUB project was approved for the procurement of sewing machines for the Bangsamoro women in Banaybanay. Through consultation, it was learned that the machines needed to be able to produce embroidery which is an essential part of the Bangsamoro dress. Had the women not been consulted, the LGU would have risked purchasing machines that would not have been culturally appropriate and useful for the intended recipients of the project.

Lessons Learned

- a) The support of the LCE is critical in the formation and effective function of the LPRAT. The equal representation of CSOs and LGU set forth in the BUB guidelines will not be realized if the LPRAT is not organized and supported by the LCE in the first place.
- b) While the support of the LCE is critical, CSOs are not without power to challenge them when needed. When the space given to the CSOs is being threatened, CSOs can employ several strategies to assert their voice. Within the support of a CSO network, CSOs should brainstorm on the best way to address the problem - whether it be to continue asserting their voice, advocate to allies within the LGU, appeal to authority in the regional or national level and/or compromise with the LCE.
- c) The joint and participatory nature of the BUB means that CSOs should consider diplomatic methods over confrontational methods. Negotiation and compromise at the table and outside the table have been effective strategies in dealing with a dominant LCE. Compromise does not necessarily signify a lessening of voice or participation by the CSOs.
- d) The authority in BUB moves across many levels from the LGU to the regional and national level. CSOs should continue to demand the opening up of participatory spaces across these levels. CSOs should also mobilize across these levels when their voices or participation are being threatened.
- e) Targeting key persons of influence in the LGU is an effective strategy in gaining the support of the LCE in the BUB.
- f) When appealing to the regional and national level, CSOs should be ready with documentation or written evidence of what has transpired.
- g) In joint planning, the participation of CSOs should not end with the identification of projects. CSOs should actively give inputs in the project proposal making phase to ensure that the specifics of the project truly address the needs of the constituents.
- h) Secretariat support to the LPRAT, in whatever form, contributes to the effective functioning of the joint planning team.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

During the first three rounds of the BUB, much focus had been given to the social preparation and joint planning process of the program. Attention is now beginning to shift towards the actual implementation of the projects because this will ultimately determine the success of BUB in addressing local poverty. In terms of implementation, BUB projects are implemented either by the NGA or LGU (municipality/city or province).¹⁴ At this time, guidelines on CSO participation in monitoring are still limited. What is only mandated is the conduct of quarterly LPRAT meetings for the purpose of assessing the over-all status of projects.¹⁵ The challenges and opportunities in implementing and monitoring the BUB are still being discovered and tested.

Challenges

Delays in Fund Downloading/ Coordination with NGA

The biggest challenge faced by municipalities in implementing the BUB is the delay in the receipt of funds from the NGAs. According to the department heads, one major cause is the documentary requirements of the NGAs which are either burdensome or unclear to the LGUs. For instance, one official from a municipality shared that the Department of Agriculture requires at least 20 documentary requirements. Municipalities have also critiqued that response times when coordinating with the NGAs have been slow. On the other hand, there has been feedback from NGAs that some LGUs do not have the capacity to produce the needed project proposals or are slow in submitting the requirements. Another cause of delay is the outstanding unliquidated funds of the LGU, which prevent them from receiving funds.

With regard to NGA-implemented projects, some municipalities have noted the lack of coordination. There have been instances when national agencies proceeded with implementation, without informing the municipality that they had already begun project works.

Sub-par Implementation and Delays

BUB projects are not exempt from the challenges typical of projects such as sub-par implementation and delays in the timetable. These happen whether the projects are contracted out to a contractor, an NGO, or directly implemented by the LGU or NGA. For instance, in the municipality of Sta. Margarita, the Salintubig project implemented by

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., 18.

the contractor did not reach the full number of households intended. A member of the Sorsogon Farmer's Association in Sta. Margarita recalls that the communities were instead requested by the contractor to shell out money to purchase additional water pipes and fittings so that the water lines would reach their households.

CSO participation in Monitoring

As mentioned earlier, the BUB guidelines on monitoring are still limited. CSO participation on monitoring depends on the willingness, capacity and resources of CSOs to monitor. BUB projects address a wide range of needs and cover infrastructure, livelihood, environmental, training and procurement projects. The monitoring requirement of each project calls for various technical abilities that the CSOs may not necessarily possess, as with infrastructure projects, for instance. However, this does not totally dismiss their ability to monitor. As mentioned by Artemio Ballos, Jr. of the Sta Margarita CSO Federation, "Even if we are not engineers, we are still able to spot obvious irregularities in project implementation." On-site monitoring by CSOs, however, requires time and financial resources which may not be readily available.

Another factor that influences CSO monitoring is the openness of the LGU. This is on a per municipality basis. In the Sta. Margarita case, the CSOs were not able to obtain the program of works of the Salintubig from the LGU despite several requests. This impeded their ability to effectively monitor the project. Nonetheless, the CSOs continued to raise their grievance to the LGU. On a positive note, the LCE was able to address the concerns of the community by providing additional funding for the project.

Opportunities and Practices

As mentioned, the nature of monitoring done on the BUB projects is largely unstructured for now. There are three key monitoring areas to look into - project status, project completion and project results. Different municipalities have employed different strategies to monitor their projects.

Over-all Status Update

The most common monitoring done by municipalities is an over-all project status update of all BUB projects. Projects are compiled on a database/ document and tracked based on status, such as - project approved by NGA, funds downloaded, awaiting documentary requirements, awaiting feedback from NGA, project initiated, project ongoing, project halted, etc. This serves as an executive snapshot for the LPRAT. This is often what is discussed and addressed during LPRAT meetings in areas where these have been held regularly. In the municipality of Hilongos, a separate LGU-CSO joint

monitoring committee was formed to discuss the status of the projects and address any problems that may arise. This monitoring committee not only discusses the status of BUB projects but also covers all other projects of the municipality.

On-site Monitoring

On-site monitoring on a per project basis is critical to ensure that projects completed are effective and efficient. For CSOs to effectively monitor specific projects, they should be able to obtain complete documentation - such as the program of works and the contract with the supplier, if any. They should also have adequate resources for transportation and documentation - such as cameras and monitoring forms. In the municipality of Hilongos, the tricycad drivers who were beneficiaries of the tricycad equipment regularly visited the contractor to ensure that the materials being used were of standard quality. They did not formalize a monitoring team. Rather, they went and monitored on site during their free time. In the municipality of Banaybanay, the fisherfolk recipients of the motorized bancas made sure that the quality of the boats were of good standard before receiving them. If given resources and capacity building, there is much opportunity to enable CSOs as watchdogs of the implementation of BUB projects in a more systematic manner.

Project Evaluation

In order to gauge the success of the BUB, it is important to consider to what extent it has truly addressed local poverty. Project evaluation is important in order to gauge the impact of projects on the community, especially with regard to livelihood projects. The nature of project evaluation is long term and also may require an external evaluator. This opportunity will be more appropriate at the national level rather than the LGU level.

CONCLUSION

The beginnings of the implementation of BUB in the Philippines have seen many challenges, good practices and opportunities. At the onset, gaps in preparing both the CSOs and LGUs for participatory budgeting were evident. The capacity and legitimacy of CSOs to engage in the planning and budgeting process were questioned. On the other hand, the LGUs and its leaders were challenged to open up and share governance. Some LGUs resisted sharing decision-making power. As the program progressed, CSOs learned ways to maximize the open space given to them. They formed alliances and organized meetings and workshops apart from those mandated in the BUB.

The planning process of the LPRAT wherein projects are jointly identified was new ground for both the LGUs and CSOs. On the negotiating table, CSOs learned to diplomatically engage with resistant LGUs. They employed a range of strategies from engaging in advocacy, appealing to authority and making compromises. As some LGUs began to appreciate the participation of CSOs, they showed strong support by setting up CSO desks for BUB participation and assigning focal persons for the BUB. A number of LGUs also ensured that CSO participation would not end in the identification of projects during the LPRAP but would continue on to the preparation of project proposals.

The implementation and monitoring of BUB projects are still ongoing. Coordination and administrative issues with the NGAs have resulted in delays in the release of funds and the subsequent implementation of the BUB projects. In response, the government has introduced improvements in its policies. As the focus of the BUB shifts to implementing the BUB projects jointly identified by the CSOs and LGUs, monitoring processes and structures must improve. This will require significant financial and technical resources for all stakeholders. Yet, there is an urgent need, especially for CSOs to step up and play a watchdog role to ensure that the projects will be implemented effectively and efficiently.

In the near future when majority of BUB projects are implemented, it will be seen to what extent the program has achieved its ultimate goal of helping eradicate poverty in the country. Despite the political, technical and administrative difficulties encountered in the BUB, it has successfully challenged traditional mindsets and entrenched practices. BUB has proved to be a significant step towards opening up local governments and empowering civil society in participatory planning and budgeting. At this point, major stakeholders, when asked, all agree that BUB is a participatory reform that should continue beyond the Aquino administration.

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