

CHAPTER 2

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN FISSEL, SENEGAL

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This chapter presents a case study on participatory budgeting as a tool to promote inclusive and transparent mechanisms of local governance. The initiative took place in the *communauté rurale* (rural commune) of Fissel, one of the first rural communes in Senegal to be decentralized in 1972. Fissel also benefits from many years of active community life, which has encouraged the creation of dynamic local organizations.

A long process led Fissel to participatory budgeting. It started when people became aware of their weak participation in local decision making, despite national government support for decentralization and natural resource management, and in spite of capacity-building programs on local administration initiated by local officials. Once aware of the situation, local government and nongovernmental actors decided to start a participatory process that would help them identify the factors that promote or inhibit citizen participation.

It is within this context that a nongovernmental organization (NGO)—Innovations, Environnement et Développement en Afrique (Innovations Environment Development Africa, or IED Afrique)¹ helped Regroupement Communautaire pour le Développement de Fissel (Fissel Community Group for Self-Development, or RECODEF) to develop a pilot research program on monitoring and reinforcement of citizen participation in local development.

Fissel's participatory budgeting initiative is the result of not only the community's research but also the implementation of the community's recommendations. While the product of indigenous collective analysis

promoted by local civil society through RECODEF, the participatory budget process was also strongly supported by the rural council,² the local government management body.

The process required a lot of time and patience, and was challenged by the relatively low education level of some councilors, the high illiteracy rate among the local population, and the high turnover of facilitators. The biggest challenge to supporting the participatory budgeting process was finding sufficient funding.

Despite these challenges, however, the participatory budgeting process has spread. In 2004, Fissel organized a forum on budget transparency for 30 rural communities. Then in 2006, Fissel presented a workshop in which members of the Decentralization Commission of the National Assembly took part. Over the two-year period of 2008–09, almost 70 municipalities sent councilors to visit Fissel and learn about its experience. Two mayors from Burkina Faso visited Fissel in March 2009, and Fissel and four other communes were selected to host field visits during the international conference organized by the World Bank in partnership with other African institutions, including IED Afrique. Since Fissel's experience, two Senegalese municipalities (Matam and Guediawaye) and one other rural commune (Ndiagianiao) have adopted the participatory budgeting process. Despite this progress, traditional resistance to some aspects of the process persists, especially to the empowerment of women.

This chapter describes the conditions under which the experience emerged. The chapter also analyzes the methods of implementing the participatory budgeting process, the most important challenges to be faced before it is institutionalized, the results and impacts, and the lessons learned.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Senegal's economy is still dependent on its agricultural sector, which employs more than half the population. Due to the combined effects of globalization, recurrent droughts, structural adjustment policies, and inadequate national policies, the agricultural sector is going through a structural crisis. The country is faced with extreme poverty; 65 percent of the population falls below the poverty line. One-third of the nation's poor live in the cities, while two-thirds reside in rural areas. The Kolda region, and to a lesser extent Rambacounda, which are the most impoverished,

are also the richest in natural resources, demonstrating that poverty in Senegal is not always due to the lack of resources but to the lack of adequate policies to share the nation's benefits more equitably.

Like most French-speaking countries, Senegal's executive, legislative, and judicial systems have been inspired largely by the French system. Senegal has significant experience with a multiparty political system, and since its independence, it has benefited from political stability—holding regular elections that allowed for a change in power in 2000. It is one of the few African countries that, since independence, have been governed by elected civil administrations. Three political regimes have ruled Senegal since its independence. The most recent one encourages liberalism, and the first two were socialist governments. Religion plays an important role in the mobilization and choice of candidates for election, even though its influence has diminished.

Senegal's position as the capital territory of West Africa during the colonial period made it a crucible of workers' movements. As a result, the dynamism of the union movement and of civil society in general has been a key factor in reinforcing freedom of association and expression. This freedom is reflected by the particularly strong presence of NGOs, associations, press organizations, newspapers, private television channels, and private and community radio stations. Experience shows, however, that continuous efforts are needed to protect freedom of expression, even in democracies, because the usual tensions between civil society and government often induce government reactions that may attempt to constrain this freedom. Senegal is no exception, and there have been recent conflicts between the state and the media.

Social practice is not always in line with the values underpinning this open political context and its legislative and regulatory standards. The political and economic power of women is still quite limited. Efforts are being made to guarantee some of their rights, but the balance of power in traditional society does not always allow effective enforcement. For example, women have the constitutional right to own land, but this is not allowed in practice because of the predominance of customary law over modern land access legislation. Similarly, the power of women in decision making is limited. In 2008, of the 320 rural councils, only one was headed by a woman. There was only one woman president among the 11 regional councils, and 25 women out of 120 deputies. Women represent 19 percent of municipal councilors and 11 percent of rural councilors (Ngaidé 2006).

These gender gaps prompted civil society organizations (CSOs) and political parties to campaign for the adoption of a law on gender parity for candidates in the June 2007 legislative elections. The National Assembly adopted the law, but it has not been enforced due to an action for annulment brought by the opposition party and some CSOs. The matter remains controversial because large sectors of civil society are against the adoption of the law, arguing that the issue of representation is not only a question of quantity, and that more emphasis should be given to the capacity of women to influence decisions.

Senegal has extensive experience in decentralization. The first urban communes date back to the 19th century. Rural decentralization began in 1972 with the creation of the first rural communes. A gradual pilot approach was adopted, and it took 10 years to complete the network of rural communes throughout the nation. Today, 320 rural communes are distributed across 11 administrative regions. Urban administrative organs include 67 *communes de villes* (urban communes or municipalities) and 43 *communes d'arrondissement* (subdivisions of urban communes).

Since 1972, several reforms have aimed at strengthening the power of local governments. With the 1990 reform, the president of the rural council became the main authorizing officer for the budget, replacing the subprefect (representative of the administration), who still has control over decisions before they are taken up by the rural council (management body of the rural commune). During the same period, municipal status changed considerably when the mayor became the executive body, with reinforced powers, and also replaced the municipal administrator, who had been a government official. The definite break took place in 1996, when the regions became *collectivités territoriales* (territorial authorities), and responsibility in nine areas³ was devolved to local governments. The financial means to implement these responsibilities effectively, however, have not been transferred.

The implementation of decentralization in rural areas faces several problems, including the following:

- Scant resources available to local authorities, limiting their intervention capacity
- Lack of adequately trained elected officials who, for the most part, have only a vague idea of their mission
- A highly politicized process for choosing elected representatives and for decision making in rural councils

- Sporadic or nonexistent mechanisms to monitor local public action
- Most citizens' lack of awareness of, or disinterest in, their right to control the actions of their elected representatives

Even if progress has been made in good governance (Transparency International's 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index ranked Senegal 70th among 163 countries), problems persist. Senegal has created a national commission for the fight against corruption and misappropriation of public funds. A new code on public procurement is also being prepared, with the primary objective of making public procurement more transparent and equitable. Some CSOs and development partners are concerned about delays in the adoption and application of this code—delays that may be due to the government's reluctance to adopt the code. CSOs also regret that parliamentary action is limited to budget analysis by specialized committees before its adoption and that any monitoring action is rarely taken after budget approval.

CSOs also have undertaken actions to promote good governance. For example, Forum Civil, the CSO that represents Transparency International in Senegal, recently launched a series of research programs to collect information on corruption in key sectors such as health services and natural resource management. The independent press also plays an active role by publishing any corruption cases brought to its attention. Nonetheless, the reinforcement of a culture of transparency and social responsibility is undermined by the fact that few CSOs in rural areas are capable of understanding the decentralization process and of developing citizen capacity to hold their local councilors accountable.

THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROCESS

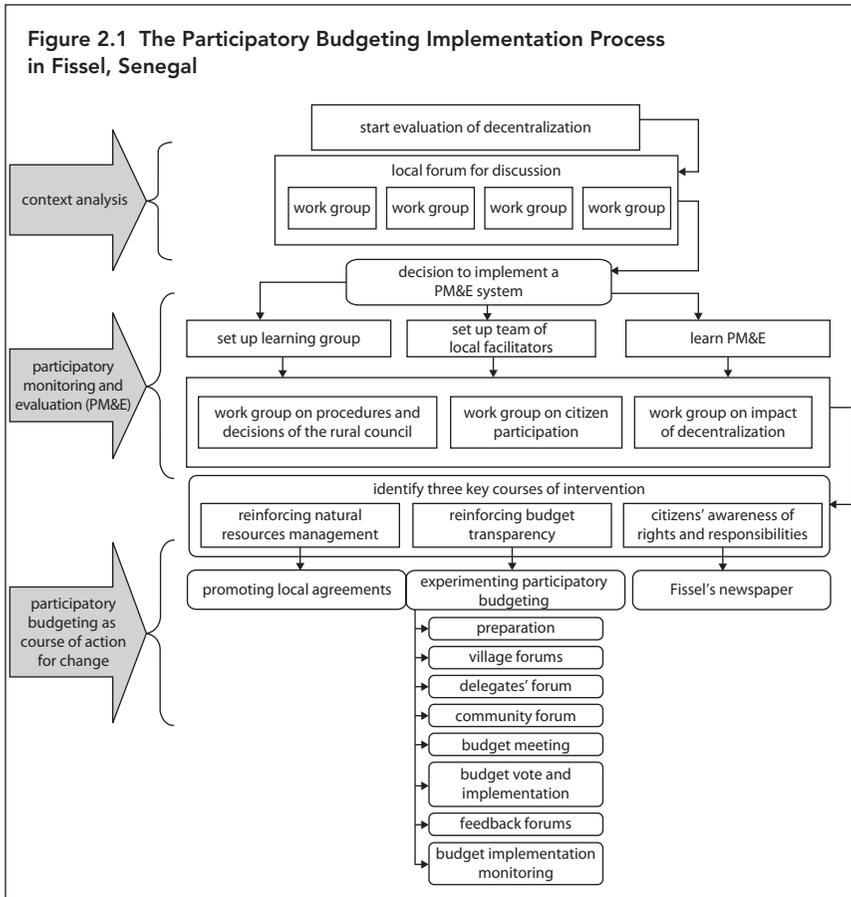
The process that led to adoption of participatory budgeting in Fissel started in 2002. It was initiated by local civil society through RECODEF, with the support of the rural council and village and religious chiefs as representatives of traditional authorities. RECODEF and the council asked for IED Afrique's support to carry out a local planning process. The entry point was a forum to assess the impact of decentralization on Fissel, better understand the factors that limit local actors' participation in decentralization, and improve decentralization performance in the rural commune. Participatory budgeting was not one of the initial objectives but became

one of the results of the deliberative process. Figure 2.1 portrays the participatory budgeting process in Fissel, the steps and stages of which are described in detail below.

Step 1: Organizing a Community Forum

Four work groups were set up to reflect on the following themes:

- Local planning approach and methods
- Decentralization, participation, and local institutions (local authorities, farmers' organizations, and traditional institutions)



Source: Guèye 2005.

Note: PM&E = participatory monitoring and evaluation.

- Forms and impact of participation in local development
- The role of communication and information in citizen participation

Each group analyzed the strengths and weaknesses in each thematic area and suggested actions aimed at improving local development performance and decentralization of the rural commune.

Step 2: Deciding to Implement a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation System

The work carried out in the work groups revealed constraints related to the lack of coordination of various actors, limited popular participation in the decision-making process, the lack of adequate mechanisms and procedures to account for rural council decisions, citizens' lack of knowledge about their rights and responsibilities—particularly on monitoring the performance of elected officials—and the lack of adequate information and communication tools. To tackle these problems, the forum decided to implement a participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) system for the decentralization process.

Step 3: Establishing a Learning Group

In consideration of the repetitive nature of the process and the need to enhance the knowledge of various actors, it was decided to establish a learning group as an inclusive and participatory mechanism through which key players could share their knowledge. To function effectively, the learning group had to meet certain conditions:

- All actors involved must clearly see their participation in the evaluation process as useful to them.
- The participants must be open-minded and willing to accept that the group will analyze their perceptions and ideas.
- The participants must respect prerogatives of various actors and agree on the need to use visualization tools in learning groups to facilitate general participation.

Step 4: Choosing and Training a Team of Local Facilitators

The team had 14 members, 6 of whom were women. Facilitators were chosen according to the following criteria: facilitation skills; fluency in

Wolof, Serere (two main local languages), or French; availability and commitment to serve the community; personal motivation; not being a member of the rural council; and approval by all members of the learning group. Geographic criteria were introduced to represent various zones of the rural commune. The facilitators received PM&E training.

Step 5: Organizing a Community Forum on PM&E of Decentralization

A community forum brought together facilitators, heads of rural council technical committees, village chiefs, chairpersons of village development committees, and representatives of women's associations. During debates, three themes were identified that would underpin the PM&E system:

1. Participation of actors in the decentralization process
2. Decision-making mechanisms and procedures within the rural council
3. The impact of decentralization on living standards

Table 2.1 summarizes the PM&E criteria for each theme generated by the community forum.

Step 6: Applying PM&E to the Chosen Priorities

During the evaluation process, each thematic group ranked criteria on a 1-to-10 scale. Figure 2.2 shows the evaluation tools used for citizen participation and for decision-making mechanisms and procedures within the rural council. For a better assessment of the scores, see table 2.A.1 in the annex for a collective analysis that identified the constraints, opportunities, and strengths related to various criteria.

Step 7: Identifying Actions for Change

Results of the evaluation were presented and validated during a community meeting. To address the most important problems found during the evaluation, three actions were identified:

1. Increase the transparency of rural council budget management through participatory budgeting
2. Strengthen natural resource management by implementing local agreements
3. Improve citizen knowledge and awareness of their rights and responsibilities by formulating a strategy for information and communication

Table 2.1 PM&E Criteria Identified by the Learning Group

Criteria for citizen participation in the decentralization process	Criteria for decision-making mechanisms and procedures within the rural council	Criteria for impact of decentralization on living standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization of population • Dissemination of decisions • Nature of participation • Importance of financial participation • Influence on decisions • Roles of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen attendance at rural council meetings • Number of decisions by rural council • Number of meetings organized by rural council • Councilors' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities • Councilor attendance at meetings • Frequency of reports prepared by councilors • Diversity of information tools • Accessibility of information • Availability of participatory planning tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes observed • Investments by rural council • Matching investments and needs • Local participation in choice of investments • Improved access of vulnerable groups to natural resources • Improved access of vulnerable groups to basic social services

Source: Author.

Note: PM&E is participatory monitoring and evaluation.

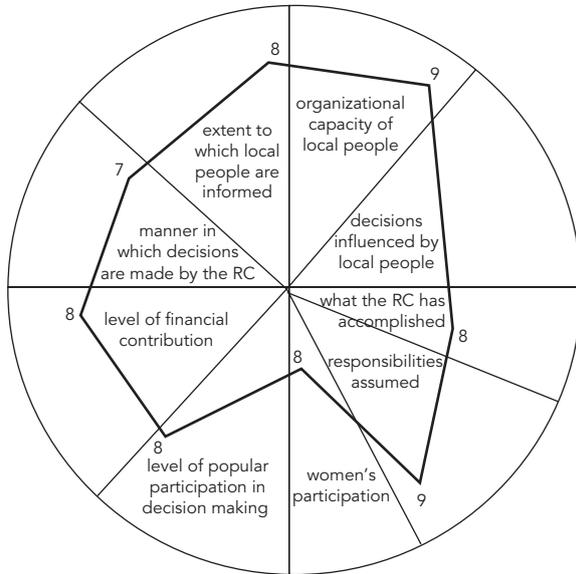
Step 8: Implementing Actions for Change: Participatory Budgeting

The following stages summarize the participatory budget process implemented in Fissel.

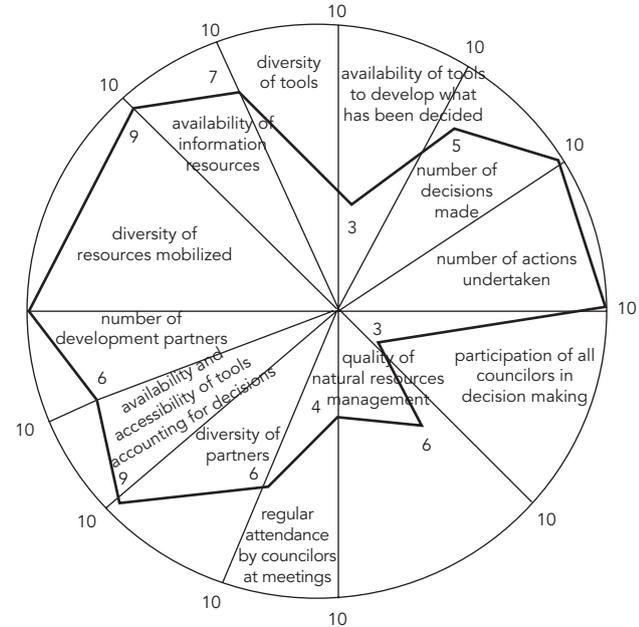
Preparation. The participatory budgeting participants needed to understand the concept and modalities of implementation and to clearly define their roles and responsibilities. Emphasis was made on the advantages this approach can bring to local authorities and people by enabling them to better identify the population's needs, improve the rural council's performance, and restore trust between elected officials and local people through more transparent management of public affairs. During this stage, the various actors attended courses on budget preparation that prepared them for the participatory budgeting process.

Figure 2.2 Criteria for Citizen and Council Participation in Participatory Budgeting

Evaluation criteria for popular participation



Evaluation criteria for decision-making mechanisms and procedures of the rural council^a



Source: Author.

Notes: This figure shows the evaluation tools used for citizen participation and for decision-making mechanisms within the rural council.

Numerals represent work groups' score of each criterion on a 1-to-10 scale.

RC = rural council.

a. See annex table 2.A.1 for further assessment of rural council criteria.

Village forums. The rural council presented the fiscal-year budget in village forums, where citizens identified constraints and priorities and inventoried existing infrastructure. The rural council's presentation of budgetary implementation was a key moment in the process and a major innovation. Interesting debates took place between local authorities and citizens who had the opportunity to ask questions about budget implementation.

Local facilitators helped to organize forums in each of the 28 villages in Fissel according to the needs of each group.⁴ In each village, separate focus groups were held for men and women to identify the most urgent problems and priority actions. Each group (men and women) identified a maximum of five key problems and suggested five priority actions. After the focus groups, men and women met together to prepare a synthesis of their proposals. After the synthesis, the five most important problems and the five highest priority actions were identified through a process of collective analysis and negotiation, taking into account the separate views of men and women. Men did not dominate these meetings because the results of the synthesis carried out in various villages showed that, in most cases, the priorities identified by women came out on top (for example, in 22 villages, the highest priority was access to water). Once the local diagnosis was completed, each village chose two delegates, one man and one woman, to represent them in the delegates' forum.

Delegates' forum. Fifty-six delegates, two (one man and one woman) for each village, met to synthesize the proposals from all 28 villages in Fissel. To facilitate prioritization, the delegates identified the 10 most important problems for Fissel as a whole and the 10 highest-priority actions using a five-point scale. Proposals made during the delegates' forum served as guidelines for the preparation and organization of the next stage, during which the budget was formulated. Table 2.2 shows the results for Fissel.

Community forum. Next, delegates and elected officials came together in a forum where delegates presented the community synthesis (the priority action matrix) and rural council members presented their budget estimates for the upcoming year. Based on these estimates, investment proposals were made. This information was complemented by the results of the infrastructure inventory to guide decisions on the location of infrastructure. The delegates also selected a monitoring committee for budget implementation. This committee is composed of seven members, including three women, chosen from among the delegates.

Table 2.2 Fissel Priority Action Matrix (2004 Budget)

Actions	Number of times ranked as a top-four priority				Total	Rank
	1	2	3	4		
Water supply	17	4	2	2	25	1
Millet mill for women	2	3	3	3	11	2
Vocational training for women	1	2	2	3	8	3
Funding	1	4	1	2	8	3
Construct classrooms		2	3	1	6	5
Build classroom for younger children	1	1		4	6	5
Enclose schools	1	3		1	5	7
Construct village shops	2		3		5	7
Enclose health centers		2	1	1	4	9
Provide rooms for literacy classes		1	2	1	4	9
Provide areas for children and young people			1	3	4	9

Source: Guèye 2005.

Budget meeting. Proposals made during the community forum were studied, and decisions were made on the actions to be undertaken, based on estimated resources. This is a joint deliberative process with village delegates. Budget decisions conform to the proposed priority list and validate the proposals made. It is noteworthy that the forum also takes into account the types of investments made in previous years, beneficiary villages and groups, and compliance with budgetary nomenclature.

Budget vote and implementation. The budget is submitted to the subprefect, and implementation may start only after subprefect approval. Even if members of the monitoring committee are present during the budget vote, the law does not allow their participation, conferring this power exclusively on locally elected officials.

Feedback forum. In the past two years, the introduction of three feedback forums has further strengthened the accountability process:

- The first forum, called the restitution forum, is held just after the subprefect approves the budget. Its objective is to present the new budget to

the communities to allow them to assess how well it aligns with the set priorities.

- The second forum, in July, is called the mid-term feedback forum. Its objective is to assess budget implementation halfway through the fiscal year. It also provides the opportunity for the council to raise any concerns regarding resource mobilization. Usually this forum serves as a sensitization platform for tax payment.
- The third forum is held at the end of the fiscal year in November or December. During this forum, the final budget results are presented and a collective evaluation carried out. It also launches the planning process for next year's budget.

Budget implementation monitoring. Another major innovation of this initiative is the formation of a citizen committee to organize forums that present budget results at the end of the fiscal year, ensure that budget review meetings are held, use adequate tools to disseminate information to local people, collect feedback from the people, and submit its requests to the rural council.

KEY CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

The participatory budgeting process requires a lot of time and patience because of the capacity-building needs of the various participants. Moreover, the rural commune's scarce resources cannot cover related expenses—a situation exacerbated because the responsibilities devolved to local authorities have not been matched with corresponding transfers of financial resources, making local governments even more dependent on the central government and external partners. This dependence undermines sustainability. The problem could be addressed by providing funds for the participatory budgeting process in the rural commune budget. The long-term solution would be for public authorities to earmark support funds to urban or rural communes that have adopted participatory budgeting, which would encourage more local authorities to adopt the process.

Local Challenges

Another constraint is the relatively low educational level of some councilors, which limits their capacity to disseminate information in their

villages. The rural councilor's education is especially critical in Fissel, where his or her responsibility of informing the population is particularly important. Some councilors are illiterate and have difficulty preparing tools or recording information on meetings and forums for feedback to their villages. The high rate of illiteracy among the local population is also a challenge for effective participation, especially in the absence of adequate information tools.

High turnover of facilitators is another concern. Facilitators with extensive family responsibilities could not participate regularly, and some even asked to be replaced. That facilitators work on a voluntary basis worsens the situation because, during certain periods of the year, some give priority to other activities to meet their families' needs. Eventually, the commune budget could pay facilitators for some of the time they spend on the participatory budgeting process. Such a decision would be justified because it contributes to commune performance.

The budget planning process is subject to a fixed and rigid schedule that is sometimes incompatible with the flexible and repetitive nature of the participatory process. Nevertheless, over time, the participants began to accept this and planned their activities to meet the legal deadlines for budget presentation.

Nationwide Challenges

At the national level, the main obstacle to institutionalizing the participatory budgeting process is the highly political nature of the mechanisms and procedures to designate councilors, which depend more on political parties' decisions than on the local people's choice. In communities where civil society's role is not strong enough to counterbalance this pressure, councilors feel more accountable to their political party than to their constituents. Citizens' lack of knowledge about their rights and responsibilities adds to the problem and can slow down the introduction of participatory mechanisms.

The results of the March 2009 local elections raised a new challenge as Fissel, like many municipalities in Senegal, saw the opposition party return to power. The challenge may depend less on the local communities' willingness and commitment to strengthen their citizen engagement than on the new ruling coalition's readiness to genuinely accept and build on the previous councils' achievements. However, the first signals from the new council are positive. In any case, it is the role of local CSOs to act

as watchdogs for the consolidation of the process regardless of the politics of the council.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

Although the initiative is still in its early stages, a recent external evaluation found that social groups traditionally less involved in local decision making (in particular, women and young people) declared that participatory budgeting had allowed them to better understand the local planning process and now gives them a say on the allocation of local resources. The participatory process and its village forums have generated great enthusiasm among participants, who naturally expect that most of the proposed actions will be taken into account in the rural commune budget. Because available resources cannot fund all proposals, however, choices must be made. Even so, villages represented in the community forum in charge of setting priorities and making decisions trust the results that emerge from this inclusive process.

Eventually, it will be necessary to diversify financial resources. During the meetings, proposals have already been formulated concerning the reinforcement of decentralized cooperation; support to sectors with high potential to generate revenue (such as tourism based on the area's rich cultural heritage); and better control and monitoring of traditional fee collection (licenses, rural taxes, and so forth).

Another important result of the participatory process is that it strengthens community capacity. Since the beginning, more than 10 thematic workshops have prepared various actors for effective participation in the process. Contrary to common practice, these workshops are not addressed primarily to local officials. Instead, they target local people even though officials also take part in the training. Workshops were held on decentralized natural resource management, budget structure, budgetary nomenclature, PM&E, facilitation techniques, gender and decentralization, and writing local newspaper articles. These workshops enabled some facilitators to become resource persons for other organizations working in Fissel.

Popular participation in the decentralization process has improved significantly. Even if it seems difficult to associate all the progress made in tax recovery with the participatory process, many citizens have declared that, since the participatory initiative, they are more willing to pay their rural taxes because they have more control over the use of their

contributions and because they have a monitoring mechanism. A member of the budget monitoring committee attests to this progress perfectly (Dioh 2007): “Before the participatory budget initiative, many in my village were not interested in matters concerning the budget because they didn’t know much about it. I remember my thoughts were elsewhere when I heard people talking about the budget. Today, it is different. Thanks to participatory budgeting, I have learned to plan and to adopt a systematic approach to solve problems.”

It is important to point out another significant impact of this experience: a stronger, more confident relationship between the rural council and grassroots organizations in programs related to devolved responsibilities such as natural resource management, health, education, and culture. Even though the village and community forums were organized within the framework of participatory budgeting, they also gave stakeholders the opportunity to discuss other programs in Fissel. The participatory process improved the reputation of local officials. Previously, citizens saw local officials as a privileged group engaged in the opaque management of local resources.

In addition, participatory budgeting yielded this primary innovation: more relevant infrastructure choices and more objective decisions—particularly, higher ranking of women’s needs on the priorities list. All local stakeholders, beginning with women themselves, agree that participatory budgeting made it possible to place the needs expressed by women among the highest priorities for the commune investment plan. Fissel is preparing a local development plan that will integrate actions decided through participatory budgeting. The plan will allow Fissel to ask other sources (NGOs and government) for actions that will complement those of the rural council. Funds from these other sources could be used for priority actions that the commune cannot finance itself.

Perhaps it is too early to speak of impact; sustainable change from institutionalizing the participatory budgeting approach takes time. However, recent actions or initiatives at both the local and national levels show that Fissel’s experience is beginning to influence other Senegalese communities and even international development efforts.

After establishing its own participatory budgeting initiative, Fissel shared its experience with visitors from NGOs, government, and the National Assembly. Fissel itself launched the first action to scale up the experience when it organized a 2004 forum on budget transparency, which representatives from more than 30 rural communities throughout Senegal attended. In 2006, Fissel and IED Afrique were invited to an international

participatory budgeting colloquium in France, in which the mayor of Fissel and a female councilor participated.

Also in 2006, the Fissel experience was presented at a workshop on participatory budgeting that was organized at the request of the National Assembly and facilitated by IED Afrique with the financial support of the Ministry of Economy and Finance. Members of the financial committee of the National Assembly participated in the workshop, which resulted in several proposals, including the following:

- Translating the national budget into national languages
- Organizing field visits for members of parliament who will explain the national budget to local people
- Creating a parliamentary committee on participatory budgeting within the National Assembly
- Creating awareness on participatory budgeting in associations of local officials
- Implementing a national advocacy program on participatory budgeting with members of parliament, local officials, civil society, and the administration
- Printing and disseminating material on participatory budgeting experiences

From 2008 through 2009, almost 70 municipalities sent councilors to visit Fissel and learn about its experience. Even two mayors from Burkina Faso visited Fissel in March 2009. Fissel and four other communes were selected to host the field visits organized during an international conference in Dakar organized by the World Bank in partnership with other African institutions including IED Afrique.

As previously mentioned, two Senegalese municipalities (Matam and Guédiawaye) and a rural commune (Ndiagianiao)⁵ already have adopted the participatory budgeting process. Based on the Fissel and Ndiagianiao experiences, IED Afrique issued a manual on participatory budgeting and a short film portraying these experiences. These materials are in high demand from communes and CSOs in the region.

In addition, the National School of Applied Economy and the National School of Administration have introduced courses on participatory budgeting. Three of their students, supervised by IED Afrique, are preparing theses about the Fissel experience.

Finally, some of the collaborative activities between the Decentralization Directorate and IED Afrique focus on the dissemination of participatory budgeting experiences in Senegal.

LESSONS LEARNED

Several factors contributed to the success of the participatory budgeting process. First, Fissel has many years of experience in community development. Its local organizations, among the most dynamic in Senegal, have been engaged in awareness and capacity building for decades. Many local officials are experienced in local development and are therefore more inclined to be open to a participatory approach to decentralization. Therefore, Fissel is fertile ground for strong civil society.

Second, Fissel was one of the first rural communes chosen to pilot rural decentralization. Several tools for local development and decentralization were tested in Fissel, promoting a positive attitude toward innovation.

Third, the partnership of RECODEF, the rural commune, and IED Afrique over a relatively long period reinforced the capacities, methods, and techniques essential for stakeholders' effective participation in, and full ownership of, the participatory process.

Fourth, the rural council's open-mindedness and a long tradition of collaboration between the council and grassroots community organizations were critical in securing the council's strong support for the budgeting process. The council quickly realized the advantages that could result from a partnership with community organizations for budget transparency. For example, by improving the council's performance and effectiveness, the participatory process would increase citizen participation and commitment to the council's actions. The council president's open approach is explained by his personal knowledge and experience in rural activities, his active participation in community life, the experience he acquired during several terms as council president, and the dynamism of grassroots organizations that have sound knowledge on local development.

Finally, a local radio station was an essential tool for extensive information dissemination.

Persistent Challenges

These findings highlight the importance of building the capacity of the various actors, a dynamic local civil society, and good communication and information dissemination. However, the still-predominant position of traditional institutions and a persistent power struggle prevent vulnerable groups from having stronger representation in strategic positions.

Achieving such inclusive representation is most certainly one of the long-term challenges that the process in Fissel must address. Social pressures still relegate women to a secondary role, emphasizing their domestic responsibilities instead of the role they could play in Fissel's political life. Most political parties want to reassure their electorate, and their candidate lists for the rural council reflect their reluctance to upset tradition.

Conditions for Emulation

To replicate Fissel's successful participatory budgeting initiative, certain conditions must be met.

First, local or central governments must be committed not only to actively participate in the process but also to present participatory budgeting as a political option and not as a simple test or exercise. The cost in terms of the time invested and expectations created is so significant that the process must be conceived as a long-term effort and supported with adequate means to ensure its sustainability.

Second, strong and well-structured local organizations are necessary to carry out the deliberative process. Certain aptitudes, such as being able to read and write in national languages, played a decisive role in the Fissel experience. Facilitators were able to record the main stages of the process and publish an information bulletin.

Third, a simple methodological tool should be created based on the Fissel experience. This tool is particularly important during the dissemination stage because not all local authorities will have the substantial guidance and training that was available in Fissel.

THE OUTLOOK FOR PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN SENEGAL AND BEYOND

Clearly, the participatory process must be included in national institutional and legislative mechanisms to ensure large-scale adoption. To date, it is difficult to say when there will be any legislation on participatory mechanisms such as participatory budgeting. In the meantime, it could be useful to develop a coalition of local authorities currently working on participatory budgeting and to obtain financial support from the state that would ensure the initiative's sustainability.

The Fissel experience is admittedly in its early stages, but its lessons point to inclusive and transparent local governance procedures as tools to substantially improve the local government performance and encourage greater citizen participation. However, the in-depth and crucial reforms needed in the operating modes of local political or social institutions require significant investments in time and capacity building to ensure ownership and sustainability of the process. The need for local reforms is why the state's strong political commitment is essential to institutionalize these mechanisms and to provide financial support to local authorities engaged in their implementation.

Advocacy based on the results in Fissel and elsewhere is needed, and this could start by supporting similar pilot experiences in Senegal and other West African countries and by organizing workshops and forums at a national or subregional level to share experiences and discuss mechanisms for their dissemination. These meetings would bring together decision makers, members of parliament, training and research institutions, CSOs, community representatives, local government, and development partners. It is this kind of strong advocacy that can encourage other local authorities to incorporate citizen control mechanisms and thereby create a critical mass that can influence policy making.

ANNEX

Table 2.A.1 Criteria for the Decision-Making Process in the Fissel Rural Council

Criteria	Weaknesses	Strengths
Frequency of rural council meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in convening rural councilors • Responsibility of each councilor for own transport and food • Difficulty in watering horses when traveling by cart • Dissension within rural council • Late notice of meetings • Difficulty in achieving quorums • Difficulty in reaching agreement due to political differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions documented • Decisions in accordance with texts • Decisions often well thought out • Decisions based on everyone's ideas • Councilors well-informed about decisions
Councilor participation in meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several functions for some councilors • Distance from certain villages • Uncovered attendance-related expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of procedures and deliberations • Development of decision-making capacities

(Table continues on the following page)

Table 2.A.1 (continued)

Criteria	Weaknesses	Strengths
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty of councilors about roles and responsibilities • Lack of motivation • Silence of some councilors at meetings • Tardiness in sending information or meeting notices • Absenteeism among certain councilors • Varying educational levels among councilors • Interest in only certain activities by some councilors • Underestimation by some councilors of their potential impact • Lack of knowledge about rights and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expression of attendee points of view
Number of development partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions demanded by some partners not in accordance with rural council's capacities or means • Difficulty of mobilizing financial resources from local people • Poor financial management capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better training of local people • Diversification of development programs • Development of local economy
Existence of planning and management tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of means • Few development partners • Decentralization of responsibilities not matched by decentralization of means • Lack of transportation • Inaccessibility of existing materials to some councilors • Inadequate coverage of all competencies in existing materials • Lack of importance accorded to national languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a functional office • Equipment for organizing meetings • Planning skills of some councilors • Availability and initiative of rural council president • Availability of certain materials
Existence of means to disseminate information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of financial resources • Lack of transportation • Distance of villages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a community radio station • Existence of weekly markets

(Table continues on the following page)

Table 2.A.1 (continued)

Criteria	Weaknesses	Strengths
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of literacy • Irregular access or attention to community radio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of community secretary • Existence of documented decisions
Management of financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distant holding of local government authority funds • Ponderous decision-making procedures • Lack of grassroots community involvement in monitoring management of rural council resources • Financial management training not extended beyond councilors • Need for more training of councilors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions in accordance with decisions • Councilors generally well-informed about decisions • Transparency of decisions
Availability of materials publicizing decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult access to documents recording the decisions • Limited range of materials for disseminating information • Lack of translation of informational materials from French to national languages • Local people unaccustomed to seeking information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of extension agents • Posting of several decisions • Dissemination of several decisions via community radio
Nature and diversity of available resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited possibilities for generating resources at local level • Isolation of area, with few agencies operating there • Lack of natural resources to exploit • Low level of rural tax recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from the state and partners • Local efforts to train local people on revenue generation • Actions to protect environment

Source: Guèye 2005.

NOTES

1. Formerly the Sahel Program of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).
2. The rural council is an elected body in charge of the commune's management. It is composed of representatives of villages or groups of villages and a president. Members

- are elected by universal suffrage for five years, and all lists of candidates who wish to participate in the election must be presented by a political party. Independent candidates are not authorized in local elections.
3. Town planning, natural resources, state property, education, health, culture, youth and sports, land use, and planning.
 4. In 2006, results of budget implementation were presented at the subzone scale. The rural community was divided into four subzones, each with an average of seven villages. Each village had 10 representatives.
 5. Ndiagianiao is a rural commune supported by IED Afrique for the implementation of the participatory budgeting process. The process is similar to the Fissel experience.

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