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WORLD BANK PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH IN COUNTRY ASSISTANCE STRATEGY: THE CASES OF MOZAMBIQUE AND OF THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL

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Abstract

This paper uses Mozambique and Senegal as case studies to assess the World Bank’s claim to be following a process of participatory development process in providing assistance to countries. The participatory process has been popular with academics and practitioners in the field of Economic Development, as well as institutions looking for ways of addressing concerns over lack of stakeholder inputs in the development process. We compare what the Bank claims to be doing on this front with what the stakeholders in Mozambique and Senegal claim to have actually experienced. The evidence suggests the Bank tend to follow a process that gives the appearance of participation; but in actuality the process excluded the people of Senegal and Mozambique from the decision process. Our results question whether the World Bank process represents a façade that legitimates policies decided without consultations with the presumed beneficiaries of the development process.

Introduction

In this paper, we attempt a critical examination of participatory development practice using a case study approach, the case being that of the World Bank’s development project: The 2007 Country Assistance Strategy

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(CAS) for the republic of Senegal. The project straddles the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The stated goal of the CAS is to help borrowing countries accomplish their key development goals and to attain sustainable development by incorporating country authorities, civil society organizations, development partners, and other stakeholders in the design of the development strategy and in its implementation. We emphasize the persistence of the Bank in claiming that CAS gives the highest weight to the host country’s own vision for its own development. This is bandied about in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) which according to the Bank, are to be prepared for member countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders as well as other external development agencies. Indeed, the Bank emphasize that CASs are designed to promote collaboration and coordination among development partners in a country. However, when it comes to implementation, one finds a great deal of skepticism on the part of field workers and scholars in economic development. Clearly, the majority of those affiliated with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) express their skepticism about the Bank’s willingness to practice what it preaches.

In this paper we briefly review some of the writings on participatory development contrasting reality with rhetoric in the cases of Mozambique and Senegal. We hope to inform the readers’ assessment of how the Bank’s participatory development rhetoric compares with the facts on the ground. A detailed case study of the process in the Republic of Senegal may be found in Nadiaya (2008).

**Claims versus Reality**

Several have been critical of the Bank’s implementation of what it claims to be a country-focused consultative and participatory process of designing economic development strategy. We start with the Meltzer report, written by Alan Metzler, where it was demonstrated that the Bank was irrelevant in accomplishing its mission of ending global poverty.³ The main findings of the report are: (i) 70% of Bank’s loans were concentrated in eleven developing countries, leaving the remaining 30% to 145 other countries; (ii) 80% of Bank’s resources were devoted to the better-off countries that have better credit ratings; and (iii) 65-70% of Bank’s projects failed in the poorest societies and 55-60% failed in all developing countries.

The failure of the Bank to attain its stated objectives could very well be due to the flawed consultation process it followed and continues to follow. The reason for consultation about CAS and the Poverty Reduction Strategy

Papers (PRSP), is claimed to be for the purpose of setting development goals consistent with the citizens’ societal priorities. However, according to NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs), the Bank did not follow the participatory approach it claims to have followed. Indeed, the Bank itself acknowledges that participation is the most intense form of engagement. In order to further illustrate, we discuss the Bank’s consultation process in implementing the CAS in Mozambique and Senegal. Most critics point to the fact that participation and consultations are usually less than thorough and that the Bank consults NGOs but does not take into account their perspectives when drafting the CAS. What follows are two case studies of criticism of the Bank on its participatory development approach.

An analysis of the Mozambican 1997 CAS illuminates many issues related to the consultation process with the Bank and the civil society. First, according to the Mozambican debt group, the Bank did consult and discuss with local citizens, but it failed to include their opinions in the CAS, which were the presumed purpose of the consultation. In addition, NGOs were denied access to documents where their views were to be incorporated, while representatives of foreign governments had full access to these documents. Because of the lack of participation, CSOs in Mozambique asked that the Bank should delay the drafting of the CAS and it should include more inputs from local stakeholders. However, the request was denied.

The participation process in Senegal was similar to the process in Mozambique. According to Demba Moussa Dembale of the Forum des alternatives Africaines, CSOs in Senegal were frustrated by the process because they were not considered as partners. This view is also shared by Philips (2005) and Whaites (2002). Philips (2005) asserts that the Bank has too much influence in the drafting of PRSPs, and that the borrowing countries are frequently passive. Whaites (2002) points out that borrowing countries say in their draft of PRSP what the Bank would like to “see” rather than what would accord with their development priorities. After complaints from the Government and CSOs in Senegal, the Bank asked the government to draft another PRSP, which should be more realistic given Bank policies. This reworking of the PRSP cost critical delay to the Senegalese government because the government was hoping to get some projects financed during the 2002 fiscal year.

Is it credible for the Bank to claim it would like to develop a sense of ownership with the implementation of CAS and PRSP by putting the people in the driver’s seat? According to CSOs in Mozambique and Senegal, and the conclusion from Whaites (2002) and Philips (2005), the answer to the question is no.

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4 See [http://www.africaaction.org/docs97/moz9712.htm](http://www.africaaction.org/docs97/moz9712.htm)

5 See [http://brettonwoodsproject.org/art.shtml?x=19091](http://brettonwoodsproject.org/art.shtml?x=19091)
