



# Mobilizing grass-roots support for the Goals

*Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assures these rights.*

—UN Millennium Declaration, p. 2

Implementing the policies and interventions required to meet the Millennium Development Goals requires the commitment of political leaders. But it also requires sustained political pressure, broad popular support and mechanisms for delivering services effectively. An open democratic state that guarantees civil and political freedoms is essential for such popular mobilization and participatory civic engagement, so that poor people can pressure their leaders to deliver on their commitments to the Goals.

Upon his inauguration as president, Brazil's Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva vowed to eradicate hunger by 2005 through his Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) programme.<sup>1</sup> This kind of political momentum, support and mobilization is critical for the Goals, and the Brazilian initiative will go a long way beyond halving the country's proportion of hungry people (Goal 1). Such mobilization around the Goals should be encouraged and sustained. Political leaders must be able to use the Goals to structure their political platforms and campaign manifestos, and electorates must be able to judge leaders' performance based on progress towards the Goals.

Such efforts are already under way in many countries:

- In Cambodia and Niger political leaders have articulated political platforms and policy agendas integrating several Goal-related concerns.
- Chile is promoting public debate on the Goals and making them a major part of parliamentary discussions.

- Paraguay has a tradition of community involvement in setting development priorities, including training community leaders.
- Albania has a strategy to follow up its report on the Goals, including a regional advocacy tour and a plan to establish a forum for civil society organizations.
- Poland has a project to integrate poverty reduction and environmental protection efforts with its national strategy for achieving the Goals.
- Kenya is promoting partnerships with civil society organizations on the Goals. The Goals will also be part of a national meeting of stakeholders in Kenya's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process.
- Zambia's 2002 national human development report focuses on poverty and hunger, bringing these concerns into public and policy debates.<sup>2</sup>

The risk is that the Millennium Development Goals will be undermined by entrenched groups that resist policies reallocating resources to the poorest, most marginal members of society. It is more the rule than the exception that more schools and health clinics are built in urban areas than in poor rural villages, and that poor communities often pay more for water than rich ones (see chapter 4).

It is also often the case that pro-poor priorities—such as basic health and education—receive little political attention. The more unequal a society, the less likely it is to generate sustained political support for the Goals, because political power is usually concentrated and overlaps with economic wealth and social dominance. In unequal societies, elite-dominated progress towards the Goals is also less likely to benefit the poorest people. Moreover, overall national progress may still mean that large sections of the population are being left behind, as in Brazil, China, India and elsewhere (see chapter 2).

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Reversing such inequities requires political pressure, with people making demands on decision-makers. But even if resources are reallocated and political pressure succeeds, a further risk is that mechanisms for effective implementation will not be created. Basic public services closest to the needs of the poorest people—health clinics, schools, hand pumps, standpipes or wells—are usually managed by bureaucrats and government employees who report to their superiors within the vertical hierarchy of line ministries. Such bureaucrats and government employees rarely feel a strong sense of accountability or belonging to the communities or neighbourhoods they administer. If they were instead held accountable to locally elected municipal bodies, services would likely be delivered more effectively. Effective, accountable responses are encouraged by local incentives—and censure.

The Millennium Development Goals are national political commitments with the potential to provide ordinary people with a powerful tool for holding their leaders accountable for results. The Goals are exciting because they articulate the dreams of ordinary people: to have a school nearby with teachers who show up for work and with books and pens for students. To have at least a hand pump that provides safe water and that women and children can walk to easily. To have a local health clinic supplied with drugs and staffed by a doctor and nurse.

But realizing the potential of the Goals requires that poor people organize and take collective action. This is not simple. Poor people tend to be less organized, less capable of articulating their concern politically, less able to gain access to public services and legal protection, less connected to influential people and most vulnerable to economic shocks.

Whether the Goals succeed partly depends on the local political environment—on whether there are avenues for citizens to participate in decision-making through formal democratic structures or through direct collective mobilization and action (box 7.1). The political processes that matter most to poor people are at the local level, because that is where they have the best chance of holding governments accountable.

The major political reforms of recent decades have made such outcomes more feasible. The

1980s and 1990s saw a huge increase in the global spread of democracy. Some 81 countries—29 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 23 in Europe, 14 in Latin America, 10 in Asia and 5 in the Arab States—took steps towards democratization.<sup>3</sup> As part of these political changes there have been moves towards decentralization and an emergence of new social movements, giving citizens new ways to take collective action. This chapter examines these two political developments to draw lessons for political reforms and social actions that can provide the political momentum needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

#### **DECENTRALIZATION—ITS RISE, ITS ROLE, ITS REQUIREMENTS**

In recent years a wide variety of countries—transition and developing, solvent and insolvent, authoritarian and democratic, with governments of the left, right and centre—have pursued decentralization. Since the early 1980s such reforms have been introduced in regimes ranging from monarchies to military juntas to single-party systems to multiparty democracies.

Decentralization involves a central government transferring to local entities some of its political authority and, crucially, some of its resources and administrative responsibilities. These local entities then provide some basic public services and functions. Multipurpose local councils have been created for this purpose in more than 60 countries.<sup>4</sup> And in Latin America, except in a few small countries, nearly all legislative and executive authorities are now elected in 13,000 units of local government.<sup>5</sup>

It is widely believed that decentralization increases popular participation in decision-making because it brings government closer to people—making it more accessible and more knowledgeable about local conditions and so more responsive to people's demands. But does evidence support this idea? More important, does decentralizing authority and resources help advance the pro-poor agenda?

#### *THE CASE FOR DECENTRALIZATION*

Where decentralization has worked (and this is no mean feat)—as in parts of Botswana, Brazil,

### Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan—education policies that deliver results

Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan—two of India's poorest states, with the country's worst social indicators—have transformed schooling for poor people. How?

In 1994 Madhya Pradesh became the first state in India to implement the newly resurrected local governance system—*panchayati raj* institutions. The panchayat leadership, along with the state government, made universal primary education a priority. Between 1991 and 2001 Madhya Pradesh increased its literacy rate by 20 percentage points, from 44% to 64%. Similarly, literacy rates in Rajasthan rose by 22 percentage points, from 39% to 61%. Clearly, both governments were doing some things right.

Rajasthan's success in increasing literacy was driven by the 1987 Shiksha Karmi project and 1992 Lok Jumbish project. These projects initiated state-wide processes that created village education councils representing every part of each village, including women and most castes. The councils made decisions about setting up local schools, monitoring teacher and student performance and raising funds for them.

In Madhya Pradesh participatory surveys under the Lok Sampark Abhiyan (Public Interaction Campaign) at the village and panchayat levels found that dropout rates were not especially high, contrary to what teachers had reported. Instead, initial enrolments were low. Low enrolments were caused by several factors—not least the problem of access to schools.

The policy response was to introduce an Education Guarantee Scheme for primary schooling in all hamlets—not just all villages. Under this scheme, if the parents of 40 children in a locality (25 in a tribal area) seek a school for their children, the state gov-

ernment must provide, within 90 days, a lower-paid teacher's salary for that purpose. The village panchayat can appoint the teacher from within the community. It must also make arrangements for spaces where teachers can hold classes.

In the 50 years since independence, 80,000 schools had opened in Madhya Pradesh as part of the regular government primary school system—while within three years of the scheme's announcement in January 1997, 30,000 new schools were created. Of particular importance is that the scheme dramatically increased enrolments of tribal children—who had among the lowest enrolment rates among vulnerable groups. The scheme also led to a larger than proportionate increase in girls' enrolment.

The Education Guarantee Scheme offers lessons for similar situations around the world. Community demand for schools triggered government action. And while state governments pay and train the teachers, communities recommend them from among local people and provide the teaching spaces. The scheme's success shows that even with severe resource constraints, policy changes and innovative participatory and accountable processes can deliver pro-poor outcomes.

The scheme was so successful that it inspired a national campaign for universal primary education. But the national plan overlooked one crucial factor: the 90-day deadline for providing teacher salaries. This change in project design removed the imperative for the government to deliver within a specified period—and predictably, the national plan has stalled. Replicating project design therefore requires the successful integration of all elements of its success.

Source: Mehrotra and Delamonica forthcoming, Institute of Development Studies 2003.

Colombia, Jordan, South Africa and many states in India (Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal)—impressive achievements have been made, including:

- *Faster responses to local needs.* Local authorities tend to act more in line with local preferences and conditions, and no longer have to wait for permission from higher levels before acting. Decentralization also provides opportunities for women to participate at the local level, enabling a more gender-sensitive approach to policy formulation and implementation. Moreover, government health programmes become more widely used because local councillors are better able than bureaucrats to explain the rationale for them in terms that local people can understand—contributing significantly to the success of

the health-related Millennium Development Goals.

- *More accountability and transparency, and less corruption.* Because decentralization tends to enhance transparency, the amount of money corruptly diverted from development programmes often declines in countries that pursue it. A recent study of 55 countries found that decentralization of government spending is closely associated with lower corruption among bureaucrats and reduced rent seeking by private parties—leaving more money to spend on basic services for poor people.<sup>6</sup>
- *Improved delivery of basic services.* Decentralization often reduces absenteeism among government employees in local schools and health clinics because elected local officials receive complaints from their constituents and

*Decentralization provides bureaucrats with early warnings of potential disasters—disease outbreaks, floods, droughts—and allows empowered local authorities to take swift remedial action*

can impose discipline. Thus reduced absenteeism enhances basic services at no extra cost—and is crucial to achieving the Goals for health and education.<sup>7</sup> Increased accountability also encourages local people to monitor programme implementation and to protest when government employees perform badly.

- *Better information flows.* Decentralization provides bureaucrats with early warnings of potential disasters—disease outbreaks, floods, droughts—and allows empowered local authorities to take swift remedial action.

- *More sustainable projects.* Decentralization makes development projects more sustainable because local people are more likely to be involved in their design, execution and monitoring (see chapter 4).<sup>8</sup> In addition, participatory budgeting and accounting enhance efficiency and transparency and make projects more gender-responsive.

- *Stronger means for resolving conflict.* Empowering regions and localities helps promote national unity and resolve conflicts, as in Ethiopia and Rwanda. In Namibia and South Africa decentralization was undertaken to redress inequalities among regions.<sup>9</sup> Reallocating resources ensured a more equitable distribution of national funds to regions previously neglected by dominant groups at the centre. It also enabled debate and renegotiation on the allocation of national resources—a source of long-standing conflicts between regions and ethnic groups.

- *Increased energy and motivation among local stakeholders.* Decentralization encourages local people to find solutions to their everyday problems—yielding innovative ideas and reducing the workload in centralized, hierarchical systems.<sup>10</sup>

- *Expanded opportunities for political representation.* Decentralization provides people with a much stronger voice in public policy decisions that affect their lives. In particular, it has increased representation among women (as in India, where one-third of council seats are reserved for women at the *panchayat*, or local, level<sup>11</sup>) and among previously marginalized ethnic groups (such as the Quechua and Aymara communities in Bolivia, the Kalingas and Gaddangs communities in the Philippines and rural ethnic groups like the Songhai and Dogon in Mali).<sup>12</sup>

Decentralization can make a particularly big difference in the provision of social services. It facilitates community participation in decision-making and can help resolve issues related to sharing the costs of service delivery. For example, in many cases where governments have been unable to provide schools, communities have pooled resources and labour to build them, with teacher salaries usually paid by the state (see chapter 5). Similarly, the Bamako Initiative has ensured the supply of essential drugs to remote rural communities in Mali and helped identify poor community members who cannot cover certain costs.

Decentralized entities are more efficient at delivering services than top-down sectoral ministries because local planning and participation ensure stronger links between interventions in health, education, water and sanitation and other services (see chapter 4). Local crises receive faster responses—especially because of the improved communications that decentralized systems facilitate. For example, in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh, India, a rural community intranet project, Gyandoot, started in January 2000, enabling prompt responses to an early e-mail warning and so preventing an outbreak of a cattle epidemic.<sup>13</sup>

Decentralization also improves implementation and monitoring of service delivery—and expedites responses to bad performance. Around the world, increased transparency and improved scrutiny have reduced both the level of corruption and the scale of embezzlement. Political power is no longer concentrated solely in the hands of national elites. As a result state employees—whether local elected representatives, civil servants or service personnel such as nurses, teachers and water engineers—are held accountable not just to the most powerful segments of society but also to the poorest citizens (box 7.2). Such a setup is critical when planning policy interventions for the Goals.

Many experiments with decentralization are under way. And while their full impact is still being assessed, early indications are promising.<sup>14</sup> The creation of locally elected authorities with jurisdiction over social services ensures

BOX 7.2

### **Mutual pressures for accountability—between local governments and civil society—strengthen governance in Ceará, Brazil**

In 1987 the newly elected state government of Ceará, Brazil, facing falling federal transfers and payroll commitments absorbing 87% of state receipts, undertook several innovative measures. It tried to overcome problems in service delivery by forming alliances with local workers and communities. The initiatives put pressure on local municipalities—from above and below—to improve their performance in areas such as public health, agricultural extension, drought relief and infrastructure construction (such as schools).

Having reduced payroll commitments to 45% in 1991, the government initiated programmes for preventive health and for public procurement from informal producers, as well as a large emergency employment generation scheme for workers laid off from government employment. The state recruited grass-roots workers to provide these services, and motivated them by publicizing their work and offer-

ing official recognition for their services—reinforcing respect for the workers.

At the same time, the government encouraged the public to have high expectations of the programmes and to hold workers accountable for their performance. It also informed people of what services they should receive, so they could put pressure on local governments to provide them if the services were not forthcoming. This publicity campaign helped mobilize collective action in communities, with technical support where necessary.

Between 1997 and 2001 the state saw impressive improvements in health indicators. Infant mortality fell by more than one-third, from 40 to 26 per 1,000 live births. Immunization coverage increased by more than one-third, with the number of fully immunized children rising from 67% to 91%. The rate of exclusive breastfeeding for the first four months of life increased from 46% to 61%, and the incidence of child malnutrition was halved to 7%.

*Source:* Fuentes and Niimi 2002, pp. 123–33; Mehrotra and Delamonica forthcoming.

that these authorities are held accountable to local leaders and citizens (box 7.3).

When decentralization initiatives are pursued with appropriate institutions and resources, they mobilize pressures from civil society and engaged citizens. Such reforms can yield significant benefits not just for poor and excluded groups but also for governments. By addressing many of the problems of poverty, such reforms tend to boost the legitimacy and popularity of governments that introduce them.

Decentralization is particularly significant for the Goals because many are contingent on the effective delivery of basic services. For Goals 2–7, for example, outcomes depend on better services and active engagement of the main stakeholders.

#### *PRECONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE DECENTRALIZATION*

Decentralization tends to be successful when the central government is stable, solvent and committed to transferring both responsibilities and resources, when local authorities are able to assume those responsibilities and when there is effective participation by poor people and by a well-organized civil society. These conditions generally

result in responsive policies and services, increasing growth, equity and human development.

Still, the mere existence of a functioning state, capable local authorities and active civil society does not ensure successful decentralization. The relationships between these three levels are crucial: local authorities must feel pressure from both above (for accountability to national governments) and below (for service delivery to local citizens) to ensure effective and appropriate policies. Thus successful decentralization requires more than just certain political reforms—it also requires establishing a three-way dynamic among local governments, civil society and an active central government.<sup>15</sup>

Decentralization efforts are strongly influenced by a country's size, population, history, political climate and geographic and ethnic diversity. These differences call for different arrangements between central and subnational levels, including devolution, delegation and deconcentration.<sup>16</sup> Experiences with decentralization point to the importance of a few core principles, particularly those related to:

- The functions to be decentralized—which must be carefully selected.
- The resources that enable local authorities to deliver services—which must be provided for in decentralization plans.



*Without fiscal decentralization, efforts to decentralize are inevitably stymied*

BOX 7.3

### Decentralization helps increase equity in Kerala, India

The Kerala People's Campaign started in 1996, sparked by the state government's decision to devolve 35–40% of state plan funds to village and municipal bodies. In its first two years the campaign led to the construction of 98,494 houses, 240,307 sanitary latrines, 17,489 public taps and 50,162 wells—all far more than in previous years.

The campaign mobilized local volunteers, notably from the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (People's Science Movement), and retired experts to assist with technical and financial appraisals of the projects, including engineers, doctors, professors and other professionals. The volunteers assessed residents' needs and resources in each locality, compiling information for *panchayats* (local elected councils), urban development reports and earmarked development projects. They also provided training in project planning, implementation and monitoring.

The participatory, consultative local deliberations increased resources by 10% for the projects because of material and labour donations—and delivered a larger percentage of project funds to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities (both historically oppressed social groups). More than 30% of project funds were dedicated to providing housing for these groups.

Under its Women Component Plan, 10% of every project budget was committed to projects benefiting women—such as vegetable gardening, sewing cooperatives, mobilization of *anganwadi* (preschool) personnel and the establishment of community centres for women. With new programmes in the public sector for health care and education, there have also been significant increases in literacy and health.

Source: Franke and Chasin 2000; Mehrotra and Delamonica forthcoming.

First, many functions with national scope require standardized, uniform provision by a central authority. Examples include defence, foreign policy, currency regulation and maintenance of national standards for primary education and immunizations and other public health interventions. The central government is best entrusted with tasks involving economies of scale and requiring higher financing and stronger regulation (such as training, oversight, technical assistance and capital-intensive facilities). For instance, Lao People's Democratic Republic experimented with decentralizing currency exchange across regions—leading to varied exchange rates and creating tremendous administrative and financial difficulties.<sup>17</sup>

Second, devolving decision-making to local authorities risks being an empty gesture unless backed by sufficient financial resources, administrative capacity and mechanisms for holding those authorities accountable. Village and town councils can sometimes raise some fiscal resources locally—provided they are given powers to do so, which is seldom the case. But much of the needed funding needs to be devolved from above. This does not necessarily require new spending, but rather transferring control over existing spending. Devolving spending does not risk fiscal irresponsibility, as some argue. Nor does it make councils hopelessly dependent on higher authorities, as others

claim—as long as councils have some power to decide how to use the funds.

Yet most central governments have failed to devolve adequate funds for local service delivery. Sometimes this is because they derive substantial tax revenues from certain sectors, such as forestry or mining, and want to retain control over them rather than turn them over to local councils or communities.<sup>18</sup> But without fiscal decentralization, efforts to decentralize are inevitably stymied.

Patronage systems—whether dominated by political parties or local elites, or reflecting an undemocratic environment—can also hijack decentralization. Inadequate, unreliable financial commitments from national governments, accompanied by political manipulation and favouritism of specific regions and constituencies, have disastrous consequences. Such shortcomings have created serious challenges for decentralization in Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria.

Some myths about preconditions for successful initiatives need to be dispelled. First, some insist that decentralization is doomed without land reform.<sup>19</sup> But experiences in Karnataka, India, and elsewhere show that is not true. Second, some maintain that a market orientation and an entrepreneurial middle class are essential to decentralization.<sup>20</sup> This too is inaccurate: there have been encouraging initiatives

in countries such as Mozambique, where the middle class is underdeveloped.<sup>21</sup>

Successful decentralization involves three indispensable elements:

- Effective state capacity.
- Empowered, committed, competent local authorities.
- Engaged, informed, organized citizens and civil societies.

*Effective state capacity.* For a central government to devolve authority to local authorities effectively, it must have power to start with. Decentralization requires coordination between levels of government and requires more regulation—not less—to guarantee basic transparency, accountability and representation. The state has to oversee, regulate and where necessary sanction local authorities so that poor people really benefit from political reform. The state also has to raise adequate fiscal resources to support decentralization. When a weak state tries to decentralize, problems arise. In Ukraine, for example, it has been a challenge for a weak, unstable central government to keep local governments functioning with vastly shrunken resources and little or no civil society engagement at the local level.<sup>22</sup> Similar problems of weak national and local capacity have plagued other former Soviet countries that have attempted decentralization.

Decentralization is about state potential, not state failure. When a weak state devolves power, more often than not it is simply making accommodations with local elites—creating what has been called decentralized despotism<sup>23</sup>—rather than expanding democratic spaces. Take Sub-Saharan Africa, where centralized regimes have tried to control rural areas by appointing their own people at the local level—the opposite of sharing political power and enhancing local accountability.<sup>24</sup> Such moves have failed to deliver desired development outcomes.

Nor have decentralization efforts in Papua New Guinea given local people a stronger voice. They have been more about staving off a breakup of the country, under pressure from secessionist movements. The absence of a strong national government able to ensure territorial integrity has undermined the country's decentralization efforts. In such circumstances reforms

cannot deliver expected benefits.

*Empowered, committed, competent local authorities.* Responsibilities for delivering social services need to be devolved to local authorities through legislative or constitutional means that transfer control over both functions and functionaries. But functionaries cannot perform their functions without adequate finance. And whether decentralization serves the interests of poor people depends on whether local authorities promote social justice and are committed to pro-poor mobilization and policies.<sup>25</sup>

In Ceará, Brazil, and Kerala, India, state authorities were strongly committed to reducing poverty and prepared to challenge local elites if they resisted such efforts. For example, in Ceará the Northeast Rural Development Programme was administered by local governments but able to bypass local patronage systems.

*Engaged, informed, organized citizens and civil societies.* For local authorities to be responsive to people's needs, the two groups must be in constant communication. A well-developed, well-informed civil society, able to collect and articulate the views of the community, is thus indispensable.

In Mozambique committed local authorities working in a decentralized system doubled health staff and focused on outreach—improving vaccination coverage and prenatal consultations by 80%.<sup>26</sup> The government is trying to overcome capacity constraints by engaging partners and commissioning services from a range of providers—public, private, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—at all levels.

In the state of West Bengal, India, where local authorities (panchayats) were empowered long before the national government required all state governments to create and empower them, poverty declined sharply in the 1980s.<sup>27</sup> Under Operation Barga the panchayats helped improve agricultural technology and reform land tenancy. They also helped register 1.4 million sharecroppers.

Since the late 1980s Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS, or Workers' and Peasants' Strength Organization) in Rajasthan, India, has been campaigning for the right to information. MKSS organizes public hearings to examine official information—detailed accounts derived

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from official spending records—and assess its validity. It uses these “social audits” to promote democratic functioning at the most tangible and immediate level: the village.

The Philippines is pursuing decentralization under the 1991 Local Government Code, which allocates new functions to locally elected bodies and provides for wide participation. Civil society has been active in promoting public accountability at the local level.<sup>28</sup> The challenge has been to keep local elites from hijacking the process.

The failures of some decentralization initiatives point to a lack of public awareness and an absence of a culture of participation. Where civil society has demanded accountability and responses from local authorities, decentralization has been more effective.

Ensuring that these three actors—state authorities, local authorities and civil society—interact to improve the lives of poor people is a complex challenge. Indeed, there is nothing automatically pro-poor about decentralization (box 7.4). Dominant groups and narrow interests can hijack it. In Bangladesh, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and Uganda such decentralization led to neither greater participation nor better social and economic outcomes for poor people. Uganda’s ambitious but poorly financed and centrally directed decentralization programme has run aground because of its overly centralized technocratic approach and system of local patronage.

#### **SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND INNOVATIONS IN POPULAR PARTICIPATION**

Direct collective action is another way for ordinary people, especially poor people, to influence decision-making and hold authorities accountable. Social movements have brought exclusion and deprivation to the political fore. They are most active where democratic freedoms have been won recently—or remain to be won. More than mere protests in the streets, they demand changes in decision-making processes. Decentralization has created new possibilities for popular engagement at the local level, leading to the proliferation of municipal activism.

#### *MOBILIZING FOR BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS IN BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA*

For decades, residents of Bogotá, Colombia—particularly those in poor neighbourhoods—have been organizing and mobilizing support to improve the quality of life in the city and reduce violence. These efforts have had some impressive results. Residents were able to elect their mayor for the first time in 1988. In 1994 they elected the first independent mayor, Antanus Mockus, ending the dominance of liberal and conservative parties in the city. The rise of Mockus was largely the result of organization efforts in poor neighbourhoods. His administration put forth a development plan based on “constructing a new city”. The following administration, of Enrique Peñalosa—another independent—emphasized the development of public spaces such as parks, plazas, sidewalks and bicycle paths.

Such efforts have tangibly improved living conditions in Bogotá. Deaths from traffic accidents are down, from a peak of 1,387 in 1995 to 745 in 2001. Homicide rates have fallen even more sharply, from a peak of 4,452 in 1993 to 2,000 in 2001. Perhaps most surprising was a voluntary tax campaign that increased city revenues by \$500,000 during the same period.<sup>29</sup> A recent study of political, fiscal and administrative indicators by the Colombian National Planning Office gave Bogotá the highest score of all Colombian municipalities.<sup>30</sup>

#### *PROMOTING A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE IN BOLIVIA*

Bolivia’s Popular Participation system is an example of the recent trend towards administrative and fiscal decentralization in developing countries.<sup>31</sup> The Popular Participation Law, passed in 1992, ensures that decentralization includes participation by local civil society and grass-roots organizations in municipal planning and oversight of development projects.

This approach was driven by the challenges facing local civil society organizations and reflected Bolivia’s long tradition of community participation in both indigenous cultures and labour and mining unions. The Popular Participation Law divided the country into 314 municipalities



### Does decentralization help reduce poverty?

<i>Area/country</i>	<i>Outcome</i>	
	<i>Participation by or responsiveness to poor people</i>	<i>Impact on social and economic poverty</i>
Bangladesh	Poor: some improvement in participation, but very weak representation of and low responsiveness to poor people	Poor on all criteria, undermined by corruption and political patronage
Brazil	Little evidence, but thought to be poor, as spoilage and patronage systems run by powerful mayors and governors still dominant	Good on equity and human development in exceptional areas where state and federal programmes combined with decentralization; poor on spatial equity
Chile	No evidence	Mixed: growth and equity good as a result of targeting, but human development and spatial equity show negative outcomes
Colombia	Fairly good: ambiguous evidence on participation and representation, but improved responsiveness	Fairly good: little evidence on growth or equity, but good results on human development and spatial equity
Côte d'Ivoire	Poor: low participation and representation, very low responsiveness	Spatial equity probably improved through government allocations to rural areas
Ghana	Mixed: improved participation by poor and community groups—but representation has hardly improved, and responsiveness is quite low	Limited evidence shows that resources were too insignificant to have made much impact; spatial equity may have improved through government allocations
Karnataka, India	Fairly good: improved representation, but poor people's participation is less effective and responsiveness low	Neutral: did little to help pro-poor growth or equity; human development and spatial equity indirectly benefited from funding allocations and development programmes
Kenya	Very poor: deconcentration scheme was politically run	Some impact on spatial equity through politically motivated redistribution
Mexico	No evidence available, but it is assumed that party-dominated patronage system has changed little	Poor despite significant central funding; equity, spatial equity and human development undermined by political patronage
Nigeria	Very poor: low participation and representation, bad record of responsiveness and lack of accountability	Poor: bad record on equity and human development; spatial equity subject to political manipulation and urban bias
Philippines	Mixed: representation and participation improved through people's organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but evidence on responsiveness contested—and local elites remain powerful	No evidence
West Bengal, India	Good: improved participation, representation and responsiveness	Good: increased growth, equity and human development; evidence lacking on spatial equity

Source: Adapted from Crook and Sturla Sverrisson 2001, forthcoming.

*In Bolivia decentralization has also increased participation by indigenous populations, especially the Quechua and Aymara communities*

that receive central funding for projects based on their populations.

While these reallocations have had mixed results in reducing poverty, they have reduced spatial inequality by providing resources to regions—such as remote rural areas—previously neglected. Decentralization has also increased participation by indigenous populations, especially the Quechua and Aymara communities. Among the new system's most important effects has been promoting an inclusive democratic culture.

#### *RAISING AWARENESS OF HIV/AIDS IN THAILAND*

Since the early 1990s Thailand's Population and Community Development Association, a non-governmental organization (NGO) previously focused on family planning, has made enormous strides in raising awareness about HIV/AIDS. It helped promote compulsory informational broadcasts on radio and television for 30 seconds every hour. It also helped establish a national AIDS education programme. And it has conducted "condom nights" and "Miss Anti-AIDS beauty pageants" in the most frequented sex districts of Bangkok, providing an opportunity to educate high-risk groups—prostitutes and their clients—and to distribute condoms.

Such efforts have helped reduce new HIV cases, highlighting the importance of local mobilization. Building awareness, promoting contraceptive use and fostering local participation and support are thus critical for achieving the Millennium Development Goal of reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases.

#### *MAINSTREAMING GENDER INTO BUDGET POLICIES IN SOUTH AFRICA*

In 1995 the South African Women's Budget Initiative was established by the Gender and Economic Policy Group of the Parliamentary Committee on Finance and by two policy-oriented NGOs focused on research and advocacy. By linking researchers and parliamentarians, the research was assured of being advanced into advocacy—while the parliamentarians were given

a solid basis for their advocacy. Not restricted to economics, the exercise promoted a multidisciplinary approach, integrating issues that conventional economic analysis does not address. Such oversights had often resulted in gender-blind policies. The initiative documented this gender blindness as well as the emerging problem of HIV/AIDS.

This work was extended when the Gender Advocacy Programme, a women's NGO, performed research in Western Cape Province on budget allocations in 2000 related to the Domestic Violence Act of 1998. Supported by the provincial government, the research examined the budget provisions made in the departments (justice, safety and security, welfare) responsible for implementing the act. Though such initiatives are still too recent to have affected policy outcomes, they are a step towards increasing participation and inputs for policy-making.<sup>32</sup>

Such policy formulation and budget measures have great significance for the Goals, especially those for hunger, education, women's empowerment, child mortality, maternal health and HIV/AIDS and other diseases. Providing basic services for targeted people and groups improves their outcomes, as do specialized services for vulnerable groups.

#### *PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL*

In Porto Alegre, in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, the Workers' Party initiated participatory budgeting in 1988, thereafter strengthened with its electoral wins in 1992 and 1996.<sup>33</sup> Clientelistic budgeting was transformed into a fully accountable, bottom-up deliberative system, driven by the needs of city residents.

The scheme has had several good results.<sup>34</sup> Citizen participation in preparing and ranking public policies has increased impressively. The share of the city population with access to water rose from 49% in 1989 to 98% in 1996.<sup>35</sup> The number of children enrolled in elementary or secondary schools doubled in the same period.

All this was made possible by a 48% increase in local revenue collection that accompanied the interventions. Municipal funding has been redistributed to fund works in poor

areas of the city. Transportation has expanded to outlying zones. The quality and reach of public works and services—such as road paving, housing and urban development projects—have increased. Many slums have been urbanized. Half the street pavement deficit has been eliminated. And corruption has been reduced.

The high level of civil society engagement and the change in attitude of the political authorities has been an enormous advantage for deliberation and consensus building. Representatives of the city's 16 administrative regions meet twice a year at plenary assemblies to settle budget issues. The events are coordinated jointly by the municipal government and community delegates, and attendees include city executives, administrators, representatives of neighbourhood associations and youth and health clubs and any other interested residents.

An annual assembly of the 16 regions in March assesses the previous year's budget and elects representatives to participate in weekly meetings for the next three months to work out the region's spending priorities for the coming year. The three months spent preparing for the second regional assembly involve local and neighbourhood consultations on issues such as transportation, sewerage, land regulation, day care centres and health care, and these findings are reported at the second assembly. Also at the second assembly, two delegates and their substitutes are elected to represent the region in the citywide Participatory Budgeting Council, to work for five months on formulating the city budget, incorporating the regional agendas.

The council is made up of the regional delegates, elected thematic representatives and delegates representing the municipal workers union, the neighbourhood associations union and central municipal agencies. This body meets weekly from July until September to formulate a municipal budget to be presented to the mayor. On 30 September every year, the annual municipal budget is presented, which the mayor can accept or remand to the council by his veto. The council can then respond by amending the budget or by overriding the mayoral veto with a two-thirds vote.

This participatory budgeting exercise has become popular, with more than 100,000 people (8% of the adult population) participating in the 1996 round of regional assemblies and the various intermediate meetings.<sup>36</sup> The work of several civil society organizations sustains the popular momentum by providing support to various meetings and raising awareness, advocating and researching for common community objectives.

The Porto Alegre experiment has been so successful that it has spread to many other Brazilian cities, including São Paulo, Santos, Belo Horizonte, Campinas and Vitoria, as well as other Latin American countries. These experiences offer important lessons for formulating strategies to address the Millennium Development Goals, especially those aimed at improving the lives of slum dwellers and ensuring sustainable access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation.

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The examples of decentralization and local mobilization provided here focus on the redistribution of public spending, especially for social services. But they do not address other key issues of access to economic opportunities and productive assets. They are less likely to be effective in exerting political pressure for public policies that contribute to growth and that raise the incomes of poor households, such as tax reform, asset redistribution and promotion of investments in employment-generating industries.

That does not mean that the scope and ambition of such efforts are modest. There are other constitutional and legal commitments for which governments are accountable where social mobilization can also play a role: the elimination of poverty, the provision of employment, the reduction of inequality and the progressive realization and guarantee of human rights. The Millennium Development Goals put a spotlight on these objectives, which are properly the focus of human development. The path for reaching those Goals also matters and, as stated in the Millennium Declaration, democratic and participatory forms are best equipped for this.

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