

Sectoral Budget Committees in the Gambia: A case of positive deviance

Public Finance and Public Management in Africa
workshop

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Agenda

- I. The use of positive deviance for PFM reforms
- II. Sectoral Budget Committees in the Gambia



The use of positive deviance in PFM reforms

What is Positive deviance?

- In every community, certain individuals uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers.
- The PD approach aims to develop a plan to promote the adoption of these successful behaviors and strategies.
- The PD approach was first operationalized and applied in in the field by Jerry and Monique Sternin through their work with Save the Children in Vietnam in the 1990s.
- Extended to other fields (health, education, corporate, ...)

The cases of positive deviance highlight positive results that have emerged organically

(1) Find positive results

- Look for evidence of higher functionality
- Use data and evidence to check that this is a true outlier

(2) Analyse the causes

- Understand differences in approaches / circumstances
- Test causality by looking for differences / similarities with peers

(3) Consider implications

- Give clear descriptions of how the positive results were achieved
- Provide practical and motivational inspiration

Positive deviance cases require higher functionality achieved by a different approach

Functional results...

- Comparative data can help understand differences in functionality
- Good form is not the focus of this work
- Initial hypotheses for this should come from local officials, and then be tested with available data

... due to a differing approach

- Better outcomes at an MDA that is better funded, or has more political power, are not the type of positive deviance we look for because they cannot be mimicked by other MDAs
- The de jure approaches do not need to be different, only the de facto




(2) The cause should be a difference in approach between groups

Understanding the successful group's approach is insufficient, as that doesn't explain why other groups perform less well

Steps for understanding the causes of the different results:

- Map the approach taken by the successful group
- Compare it to the approaches taken by the less successful group
- Look for different results linked to the differences in approach
- New findings may require adjusting conclusions from first stage



(3) Other MDAs reading the case should gain a practical understanding of potential changes

Details on the successful group's results should include:

- Where they started from (ideally, this would be similar to other groups today)
- What changes were made in their processes over time to achieve the higher results
- How opposition to those changes was handled
- Differences with their peers today in both de jure and de facto structures & processes



Sectoral Budget Committees in The Gambia



Sectoral budget committees are not functional: an entry point for action

- Through the Building PFM Capabilities program (using the PDIA approach) the Gambia team tackled the problem of high virements and arrears.
- Lack of functional budget committees prevents the prioritization of MDAs budgets and disconnects between the political leadership and technicians.
- Budget committees: check expenditure regulations, analyze expenditure and cash plans submissions.

Where to find ideas to improve the functionality of budget committees?

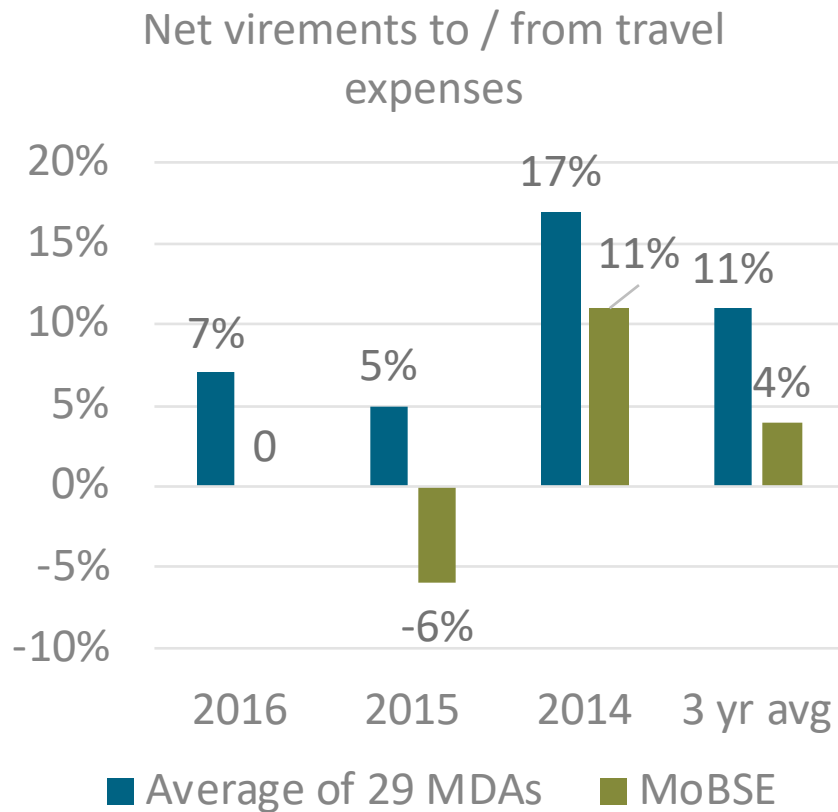
Technically correct ideas (we see they solve the problem)

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| 2. External best practice from far away | 2a. External best practice from neighbors | | | 4. Positive deviance (local best practice) |
| | | | | |
| | | | | 3. Latent practice |
| | | | | 1. Current practice |

Feasible ideas (we know we can implement it in our context)

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) is identified as a positive deviant

Lower virements to travel



Better outcomes on budget execution & procurement

- Fewer internal audit issues have been highlighted at MoBSE
- MoBSE's budget processes are recognised as effective by MoFEA & other MDAs
- Budget execution against priorities is higher

We saw three key differences in the budget committee at MoBSE compared to other MDAs

Active budgetary management

- Budget committee meet monthly
- Budget committee are informed
- Budget committee reprioritize funding

Accountability & engagement

- Officials are held accountable privately & publicly
- Responsibility for the budget is shared
- Internal engagement is in-depth

Training and support

- Officials are supported in overseas training
- Returning officials encouraged to implement change
- Returning officials are given flexibility in their roles

The first difference was active budgetary management

Budget committee meets monthly

- Regular meetings are chaired by the PS
- Minutes are shared with all members
- Follow-up actions are checked at subsequent meetings

Budget committee are informed

- The budget committee members all sit in the Coordination Committee Meeting as well, meaning they understand MoBSE's wider activities

Budget committee reprioritise funding actively

- Funding is proactively reprioritised where changes to budget are necessary
- These changes favour MoBSE's priorities – basic education – over other activities

The second difference was the accountability & engagement

Officials are held accountable privately & publicly

- Service Level Agreements set out agreed targets for more senior officials
- Coordination Committee Meeting examines & questions results publicly

Responsibility for the budget is shared

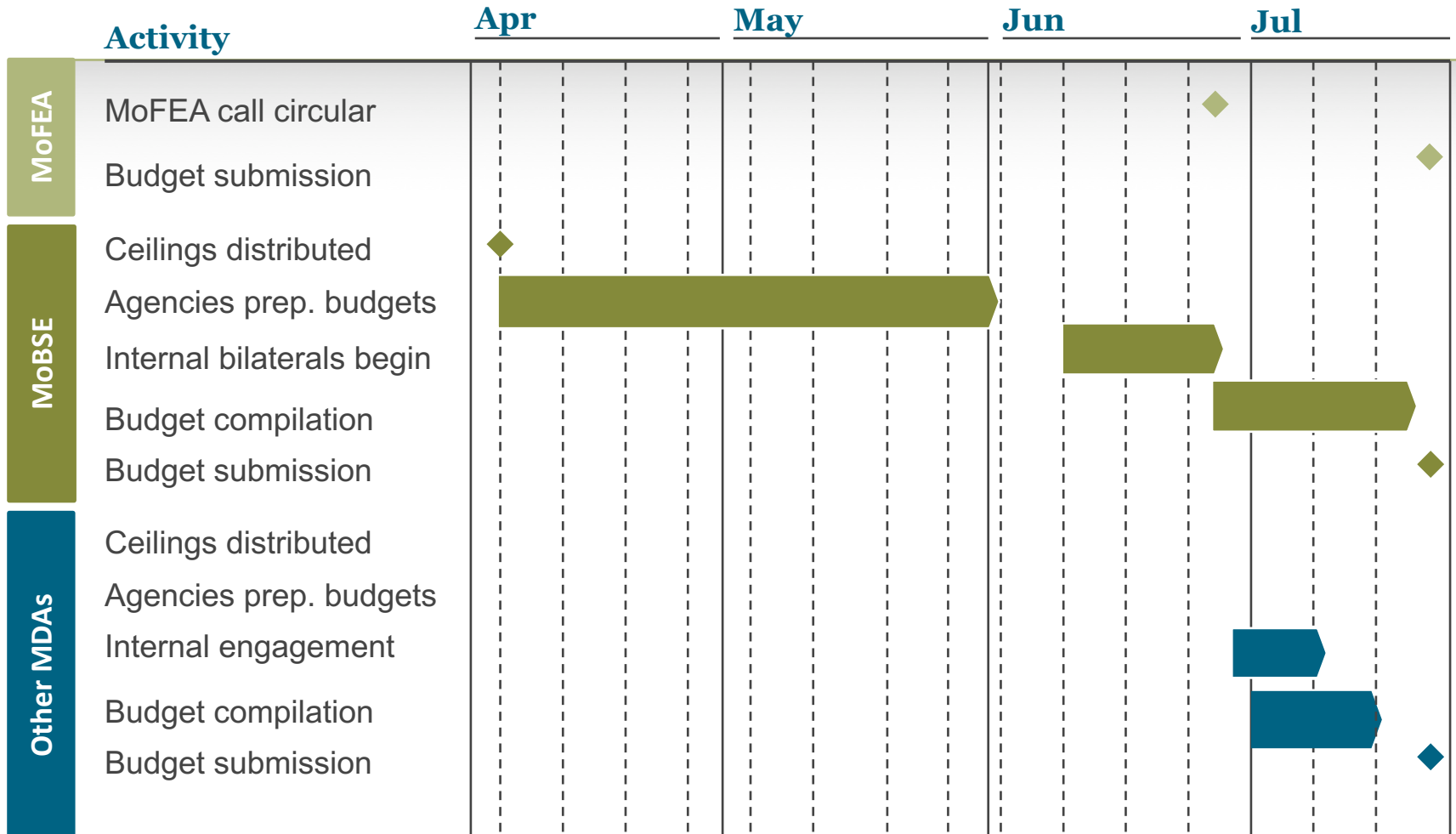
- Directors & agency heads prepare their own draft budgets for submission to MoBSE's budget unit

Internal engagement is in-depth

- Internal bilaterals are held with directors & agency heads to scrutinise draft budgets
- Internal engagement starts early and shapes the final budget

Preparation starts substantially earlier to allow engagement internally

- ◆ MoFEA
- ◆ MoBSE
- ◆ Other MDA



The third difference was the training and support given to MoBSE officials

Officials are supported in overseas training

- Training – including post-graduate degrees – is supported by MoBSE
- MoBSE invest in non-education-specific training, e.g., finance masters, for officials

Returning officials encouraged to implement change

- Returning officials are given authority to change procedures based on new skills
- Returning officials are given managerial roles

Returning officials are given flexibility in their roles

- Part-time lecturing or educational work is supported by MoBSE as long as performance does not suffer
- This aids in retention



Conclusion: MoBSE's reforms developed slowly over time and are mutually reinforcing

The budget committee's effectiveness...

- Proved the value of budgeting first
- Developed the committee's capacity slowly
- Relied on other structures to gather information

... is supported by accountability ...

- Introduced personal performance reviews
- Started reviewing progress publicly at CCM
- Ensured budget remained linked to activities

... and relevant expertise

- Developed skills to support these processes
- Implemented ideas of returning staff
- Relied on fewer well-trained officials

Thank you

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