Government Spending Watch: helping us to do campaigning and advocacy to hold governments to account

Phil Bloomer, Director of Campaigns & Policy
@PBloomer May 2013
Speaking in a personal capacity
Until now, we could only follow up on how governments *claim* to be committed to meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Never before have we been able to check if they are putting their money where their mouth is.
Government Spending Watch has enormous potential to help civil society hold governments to account - in relation to spending to achieve the MDGs, but also other commitments.
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

We are facing a twin crisis of extreme inequality and ecological crisis that is disproportionately affecting the poorest and most vulnerable.
Drivers: Inequality & Ecological Crisis

Inequality:
• 850mn live in hunger
• 70% of income on food
• Around 70% of people living in poverty are women
• Women produce more than half of all food grown in developing countries, but own a tiny fraction of the world’s farm land

Ecological Crisis:
• Climate Change: global temperature on course to rise by 3.5°C – we’ve just exceeded 400ppm
• Water: 3 billion people live in areas where demand outstrips supply
• Food Prices: set to rise by 120-180% by 2030
Need to demand a ramp up of government spending to address inequality and sustainability – and GSW can help civil society to promote responsive and active states that focus on twin crises and the common good.
> ADDRESSING THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Despite MDGs relating to sustainable development and reducing the rate of biodiversity loss, the GSW report tells us:

“There are currently no global or regional targets or costings for environment and climate change spending: most countries spend less than 1% of GDP”
ADDRESSING THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

“There is no sign of increased environmental spending to match the rhetoric of the Rio+20 and climate change meetings”

“Roughly half of countries covered by GSW have seen falls in environment spending" (2009-2012)
ADDRESSING THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

ADAPTATION

We know government investment in emergency-response capacity and in mitigating the impact of disasters saves lives (and money) both in the short and long term.
CUBA: (practically annual) hurricane strikes

‘Cuba’s success in saving lives through timely evacuation when Hurricane Michelle struck in November 2001 gives us a model of effective government-driven disaster preparedness’

- Red Cross and Red Crescent
How disaster risk reduction saves lives in Bangladesh

300,000 deaths
Cyclone Bhola 1971

138,000 deaths
Cyclone Gorky 1991

Cyclone Sidr 2007 3,000

Source: United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat (UNISDR)
Following a series of catastrophic storms in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the Government of Bangladesh instituted a 48-hour early warning system, allowing people to evacuate to safe cyclone shelters before cyclones make landfall. This has drastically reduced the death tolls from cyclones.
ADDRESSING EXTREME INEQUALITY

AGRICULTURE

Brazil
• Economic growth: modest
• Between 2000-7 hunger fell by 1/3

Vietnam
• Economic growth: significant
• Hunger levels: halved (5yrs ahead of MDG scheduled)

Ngu La Commune in Tra Vinh Province, Vietnam
EDUCATION

In 2010 44 developing country governments committed to spending 20% of total spending on education.

GSW report tells us:
12 of 51 countries have consistently spent 20% and 11 have been very close (in 2011/12).
These issues, and other areas that GSW reports government spending on are central to developing a just world for people to pull themselves out of poverty.

GSW shines a spotlight on where govts are falling behind in development. As we move towards a post 2015 agenda it’s important to know where govts are investing, and where they are not, to truly understand where we need to go next.
CAMPAIGNING AND ADVOCACY

GSW is a tool to enhance our campaigning advocacy work, particularly in developing countries:

- empowers civil society (from grassroots to global) to hold governments to account on what they claim they will do
- helps us to be propositional about how governments should spend money
Looking forward

Quality and impact and impact of spending are important too of course, but being able to assess the level of spending is an important first step in accountability.