

The Denial of Politics in PRSP's M&E

Experiences from Rwanda

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Presentation based on paper in progress

Please refer to as H. Rombouts and N. Holvoet, *The politics of M&E in PRSP's Monitoring and Evaluation: experiences from Rwanda*, presented at EES International Conference, October 2006, London.

Outline

1. M&E in the new aid paradigm: challenges ahead
2. The politics of M&E
3. Rwanda and politics of M&E
4. Escaping the trap

1. M&E in the new aid paradigm: challenges ahead

- PRSP/Sector Program & country ownership
- New aid instruments: General & Sector Budget Support (BS)
- Reconfirmation of importance of M&E
 - Results orientation, iterative learning, evidence based policymaking
 - Accountability
- National Government in M&E Driver's seat
 - Paris Declaration on Harmonisation & Alignment

New challenges ahead

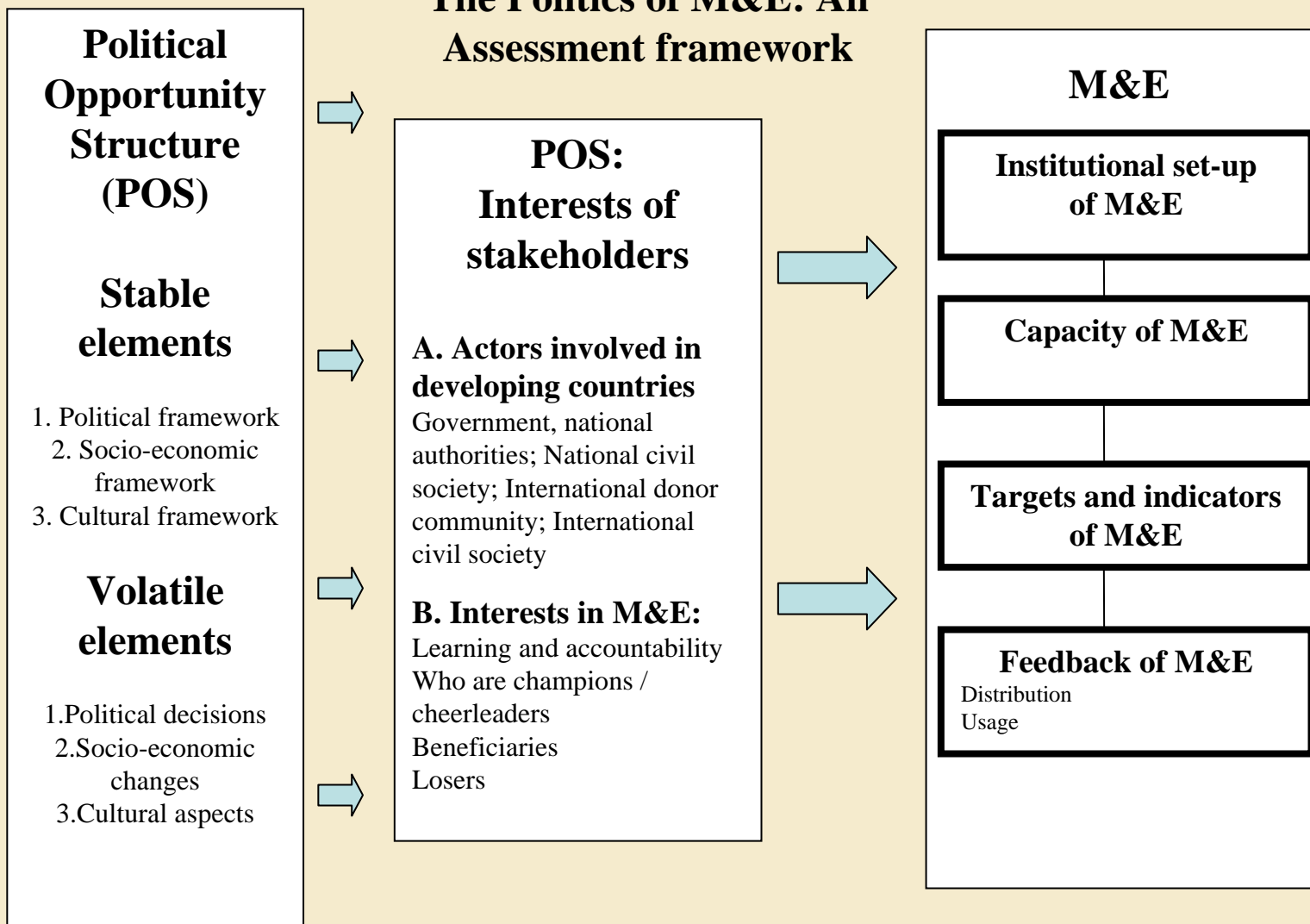
- Challenges for all stakeholders involved
 - National governments
 - National and international ngo's
 - Bi- and multilateral donors
- Observation
 - Fragmentary approach
 - Over-emphasis on handling input (PFM) – recent focus MDGs (final outcome)
 - Indicatorism
 - Monitoring at expense of evaluation
 - Emphasis on technical dimension vs institutional and broader policy M&E aspects
 - Denial of socio-political context in which M&E takes place

2. The politics of M&E

- Politics part and parcel of M&E of projects (Weiss; Palumbo)
 - Feed into decisionmaking
 - Utility, appropriateness judgments
 - Evaluations as purposes for a cause

- Politics in the New Aid Paradigm
 - What? Power relationships and interests → M&E
 - Why?:
 - More complex programs: more stakeholders & interests involved
 - National government in driver's seat

The Politics of M&E: An Assessment framework

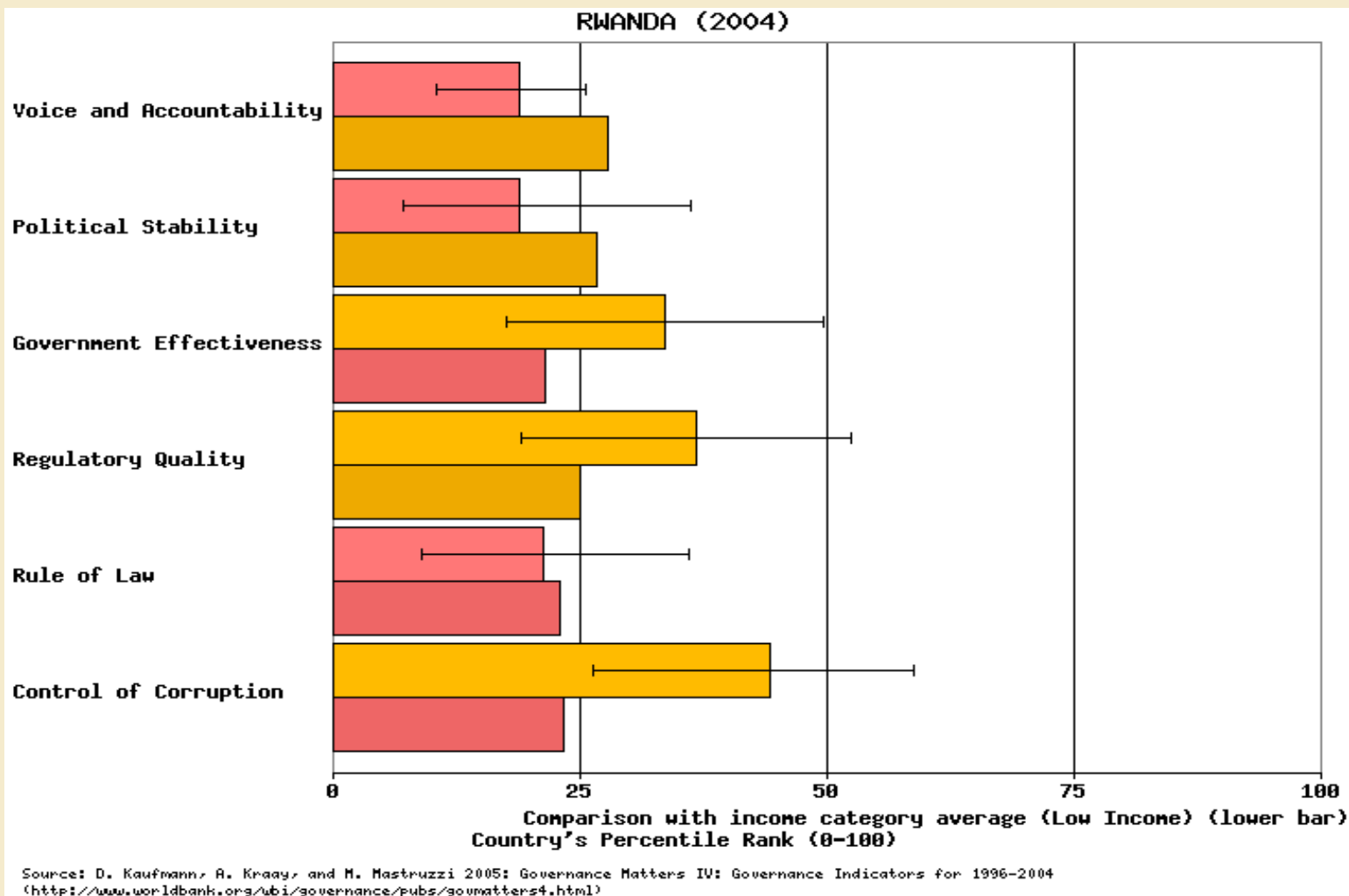


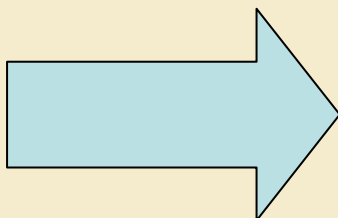
3. Politics of M&E in Rwanda

RWANDA:

- Poor & traumatised
- Large donor involvement
- Interim PRSP (2000); PRSP (2002); 2nd PRSP (2006)
- Split in donor group
 - GBS – non-BS
 - Supportive vs non-supportive to GoR
- Growing (external) concerns over pro-poor effectiveness
- Technocratically strong vs politically weak
 - See Plot Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (KKM)

Rwanda: technocratically strong vs politically weak






- * Technocratic M&E approach risks to be undermined by politics**
- * Politics impact upon M&E, its quality and usefulness**
- * Denial jeopardises technocratic correctness of M&E; undermines M&E functions (learning & accountability)**

Paper demonstrates this on the basis of specific features of Rwanda's M&E

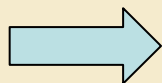
- 3.1. M&E institutional set-up
- 3.2. Champions but no cheerleaders in Rwanda
- 3.3. M&E and continuous decentralisation reforms
- 3.4. Best practices in education!?
- 3.5. Donor behaviour

3.1. M&E structure under reform

- Little progress since PRSP (2002)
 - Never ending transition, no consolidation
 - Horizontal integration problematic
 - Vertical integration problematic
 - Decentralised levels as mere outposts for data-collection
 - No institutional guarantees for independence
 - Unclear mandates – limited accountability (e.g. NIS – SPU)
- 
- **Comfortable** for GoR
 - Political will?
 - At odds with technocratic capacities and political forcefulness

3.2. Champions but no cheerleaders

- Potential champions – cheerleaders:
 - National authorities, national and international ngo's, donor community
 - Demand & supply
- Few champions, no cheerleaders
 - National authorities
 - CSO (national & international)
 - Chickens at the African market (Self-censorship)
 - Multi- and bilateral donors:
 - Donor divide: differing interests GBS (*political*) – non-GBS
 - DfID in Education: champion but does not pass cheerleader test
 - Donor self-censorship, genocide guilt
 - Reconciliation versus conflict – but prerequisites (e.g. independence)



Comfortable for GoR: limited risks of unveiling cracks and wholes in national poverty policy

3.3. Decentralisation: reform once again

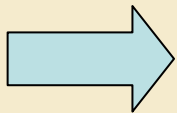
- Cooked up under the table
 - Took everyone by surprise: loss of capacity building
 - Discourse GoR:
 - Capacities ! – But central heads chopped off
 - Higher educated HR ! – But no institutional memory & regional knowledge
 - Increased bottom up accountability ! - But no free elections
- Performance contracts
 - Not evidence-based & unrealistic
 - Quick fixes wrapped up in official ceremonies
 - Risks: instruments of top-down accountability (arbitrariness)
- Lack of clear divisions of responsibilities & tasks
 - Presented as if “free” M&E – But contrary to strong top down party practice
 - Outposts for data-collection
 - Problematic understanding of “participation” (in Rwanda “persuasion”)



Comfortable: no critical decentralised entities

3.4. Best Practices in Education!?

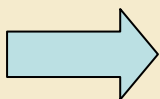
- Best practices!
 - JSR (since 2003); Government owner- & leadership
 - Key Performance Indicators identified
 - Substantial progress made (strong lead donor)
- Best practices?
 - No impact measured
 - KPI's not always reported against
 - Threat: divide between BS donors and non-BS donors
 - Denial of politically sensitive topics
 - E.g. Secondary education: high drop out should be tied to social reality: survivors receive school fee for secondary school from a Fund. Social discontent. This information should be kept in mind when dealing with education in Rwanda!



Comfortable: sensitive information is left out of the technocratic picture

3.5. Donors' Boomerang Play

- Donor Divide
 - GBS vs non-GBS
 - Supportive to GoR vs critical
 - Strong policy dialogue vs weak
- GBS: Leap of Faith
- Cracked donor front
 - Joint review of BS; problems of information sharing and interpretation; no joint position taking
 - Powerplay GoR – preference for GBS & further curtailing CSO (impacts upon donor positioning)
 - No checks and balances
- And the winner is... the GoR
 - Hands off policy by donors
 - hands off independence issues
 - hands off all sensitive matters (e.g. land)



Comfortable, but when will the denial of politics backfire in the face of donors?

4. Escaping the Trap

TRAP

Country where politics cannot be openly dealt with, yet dealing with them is crucial in order to guarantee the technical correctness of M&E and its functioning (learning & accountability)

and

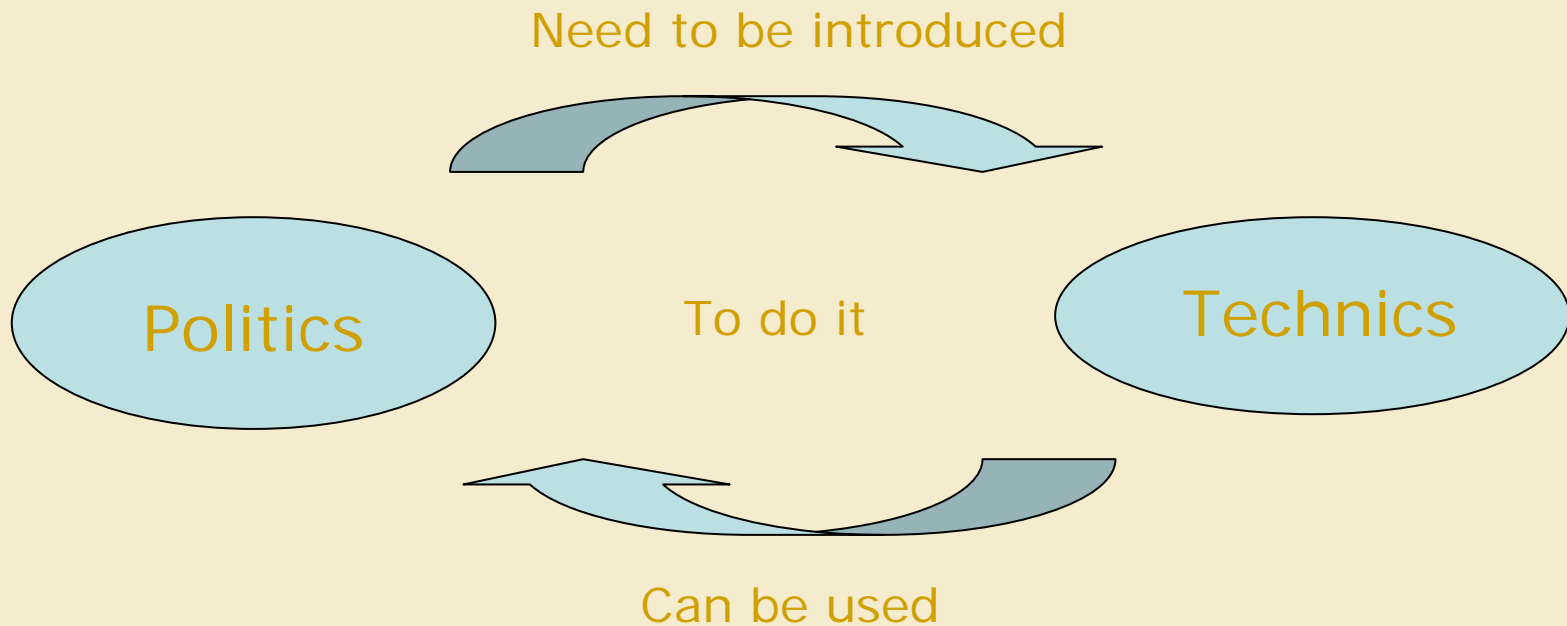
M&E is vital to the effective implementation of the new aid paradigm and its instruments

IF no escape:

Unsustainable new aid paradigm and instruments

4. Escaping the Trap

Politics in M&E: Challenges & Opportunities



Technics can be used to push for politics

- **Main challenge**
 - *“Donors should be prepared to put behind the old principle that national sovereignty forbids active involvement in policy controversies within countries, because this would be “political””* (see also Booth, 2005)
 - Donors are part of the POS
- **Smart (*vs naked*) technics to tackle politics**
 - More comprehensive approach to M&E : Holistic assessment + capacity building + follow up
 - Basic M&E principles: independence, credibility, impartiality
 - Systemic issues (coordination, integration, loops)
 - Evaluation (analysis) capacity – beyond input level
 - Independent demand side (research institutes, auditor general)?
 - Desaggregations
 - Guarantee inclusive policies
 - Politically and technically crucial
 - Identify the grey zone – think pragmatically but act brave
 - Better us marginal room
 - Downscale accountability to the advantage of learning
 - But avoid “anything goes” – culture
 - Monitor and assess effectiveness of other instruments (political dialogue)