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ABOUT THE GUIDE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PRINCIPLES

Public participation refers to the variety of ways in which non-state actors interact directly in public discussion and deliberation with state entities. Public participation in fiscal policy thus refers to the variety of ways in which civil society, businesses and other non-state actors interact directly with the executive on fiscal issues including government taxation and revenue collection, resource allocation, actual spending and performance, auditing and the management of public assets and liabilities.

There are two ways in which it can be initiated. Firstly, it can be initiated by state actors inviting non-state actors to participate. This is known as invited participation. Alternatively, non-state actors, such as civil society organizations or social groups can initiate the engagement. This is known as invented or claimed participation.

Public participation in fiscal policies may take many different forms: it may be through face-to-face communication, deliberation or input to decision-making, also written forms of communication including via the internet, or a combination of different mechanisms. Public participation may also be formal or informal ranging from one-off public consultations or invitations for submissions, to on-going and institutionalized relationships, such as regular public surveys, standing advisory bodies, or administrative review mechanisms. It may also include potentially participatory budgeting, this is where citizens actually vote on and decide how a specific line in the budget will be spent.

Public Participation Principles | Target Audience | Content | Contributing To The Guide

The Principles of Public Participation in Fiscal Policies aim to guide fiscal policy makers and other stakeholders in their efforts to improve government performance and public trust. They are the result of a collaborative and deliberative process in which central government finance ministry officials, officials in line ministries, local authorities, members of the legislature as well as legislative support bodies, officials from audit institutions and a wide range of civil society representatives, debated the importance of public participation in fiscal policies and national budget processes in a series of workshops. Inputs from the wider public were also gathered through the web on the draft set ‘Principles of Public Participation in Fiscal Policies’ from August to October 2015.

In particular, the Principles provide guidance for public authorities in their endeavor to ensure that citizens and other non-state actors have effective opportunities to participate directly in public debate and discussion with respect to the design, implementation and review of fiscal policies, observing the following interdependent principles:

1. Accessibility: Facilitate public participation in general by disseminating complete fiscal information and all other relevant data, in formats and using mechanisms that are easy for all to access, understand, and to use, re-use and transform, namely in open data formats.

2. Openness: Provide full information on and be responsive with respect to the purpose of each engagement, it's scope, constraints, intended outcomes, process and timelines, as well as the expected and actual results of public participation.

3. Inclusiveness: Pro-actively use multiple mechanisms to reach out to engage citizens and non-state actors, including traditionally excluded and vulnerable groups and individuals, and voices that are seldom heard, without discrimination on any basis including nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age or caste; and consider public inputs on an objective basis irrespective of their

Public Participation Cases

Glossary of Terms

Overview of Nine Initial Cases

Other International Examples

Principles of Public Participation in Fiscal Policies

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01

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04

Respect for self-expression

Allow and support individuals and communities, including those directly affected, to articulate their interests in their own ways, and to choose means of engagement that they prefer, while recognizing that there may be groups that have standing to speak on behalf of others.

05

Timeliness

Allow sufficient time in the budget and policy cycles for the public to provide inputs in each phase; engage early while a range of options is still open; and, where desirable, allow for more than one round of engagement.

06

Depth

Support each public engagement by providing all relevant information, highlighting and informing key policy objectives, options, choices and trade-offs, identifying potential social, economic, and environmental impacts, and incorporating a diversity of perspectives; provide timely and specific feedback on public inputs and how they have been incorporated or not in official policy or advice.

07

Proportionality

Use a mix of engagement mechanisms proportionate to the scale and impact of the issue or policy concerned.

08

Sustainability

All state and non-state entities conduct on-going and regular engagement to increase knowledge sharing and mutual trust over time; institutionalize public participation where appropriate and effective, ensuring that feedback provided leads to review of fiscal policy decisions; and regularly review and evaluate experience to improve future engagement.

09

Complementarity

Ensure mechanisms for public participation and citizen engagement complement and increase the effectiveness of existing governance and accountability systems.

10

Reciprocity

All state and non-state entities taking part in public engagement activities should be open about their mission, the interests they seek to advance, and who they represent; should commit to and observe all agreed rules for engagement; and should cooperate to achieve the objectives of the engagement.

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