

POLICY

RIGHTS BASED APPROACH



PMU Policy on a Rights-Based Approach

Approved by PMU's management team 20190822

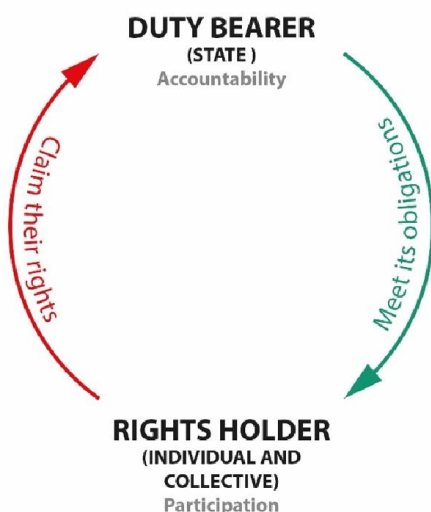
Introduction

This policy describes PMU's view on a rights-based approach (hereinafter referred to as RBA). It applies to all PMU supported interventions and programmes, and serves as a guide for decision making and implementation of development and humanitarian work, and as an instrument for designing organizational structures and systems, both in Sweden and globally. It can also be used by our partners as a tool for understanding RBA, how it is applied in our different projects and interventions, and how it can contribute, in the long term, to the transformation of societies.

PMU believes that all human beings have a unique, equal and eternal value and equal rights. This conviction corresponds to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and its adopted conventions, which also emphasizes the unique value of the individual. RBA is in short *human rights applied*, in that it helps us to assure that the equal value and rights of every individual are at the core of all development and humanitarian work that PMU is engaged in and supports financially.

What is RBA?

RBA is a normative and integrated framework and a tool for analysis that makes sure that a human rights perspective is included in a systematic way throughout the whole process of development and humanitarian interventions. RBA seeks to change the relationship between development actors and people in vulnerable situations from one defined by charity and powerlessness to one of obligations and rights. The central feature of RBA is the emphasis it puts on acknowledging the rights of individuals and the obligations and responsibilities of states and other authorities to fulfil and realize those rights.



A rights-based approach to development is rooted in the idea of empowerment. People in vulnerable situations, the rights holders, should always be included and empowered to become agents for change. Poverty has many dimensions and cannot be reduced to the lack of material resources, but includes lack of access to power, voice, security, opportunities, choices, etc. RBA helps us to address these different aspects of poverty and contribute to the transformation of society. The aim of empowerment is to improve the agency and participation of the rights holders, giving them the possibility to claim their rights and to hold duty-bearers accountable. In many cases, it is also necessary to work with duty bearers, supporting

them in building capacity as well as influencing their willingness to commit to working towards fulfilling their responsibilities.

Furthermore, challenging unjust values and questioning norms on for example gender, age, ethnicity, religion or sexuality, especially as a part of the capacity building of duty bearers, are important components of RBA.

Four key principles of RBA

The UDHR cover a wide range of rights. The following four principles, relating to the right to non-discrimination, access to information and the right of expression, are often highlighted within RBA, since they are closely connected to its work strategies.

Non-discrimination

All human beings have the same rights and no one should be discriminated against on any ground, for example gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation. The most vulnerable groups in society should be prioritized in development cooperation.

Participation

The rights holders concerned, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation, etc., should be involved in the whole process of planning, monitoring, follow-up and evaluation of development and humanitarian interventions. The perspective of people in vulnerable situations should always be the starting point for any intervention, with the goal that they participate in their own development as well as that of their community, so that their situation can change in a sustainable way.

Transparency

Transparency is a precondition for RBA in development cooperation, both in terms of participation and accountability. Through transparency in governing systems, it is possible to make sure that duty bearers take their responsibility. There is also a need of transparency and openness from donors and civil society organisations so that the rights holders, and all other stake holders, get correct information about how the development cooperation is implemented.

Accountability

The goal of development cooperation should be that legal and moral duty bearers take responsibility and make sure that human rights are being fulfilled. An important aspect of RBA is therefore to build capacity among rights holders to claim their rights and to hold duty bearers accountable. Other ways of achieving accountability is to involve, cooperate with, or build capacity among duty bearers.

RBA and the Role of PMU and Partners

As civil society actors, PMU and our partners have a role to play both in empowering the rights holders to claim their rights and hold duty bearers accountable, in building the capacity of duty bearers, and in creating platforms where rights holders and duty bearers can meet. We have access to a broad network of actors, and are able to reach stakeholders of all levels of society.

The foundation of our work is the empowerment of the rights holders, on an individual and a collective level. As civil society actors, we have a unique possibility to do this through traditional means, like education and economic empowerment, but also through a holistic approach that

addresses other areas of life and strives for meaning, purpose and a sense of self-worth for the individual.

With our broad networks and holistic approach, we are also able to work with duty bearers on different societal levels, both nationally, regionally and locally. Conventionally, within RBA, the duty bearers are mainly defined as the state and its institutions. This is an essential basic notion since the state is ultimately responsible for the people living inside its national borders. As a civil society actor, PMU also sees a great importance in addressing moral duty bearers, such as parents, religious leaders, traditional local leaders¹, and business leaders with moral obligations towards their children, congregation, local community or employees. These moral leaders are often closer to the rights holders and possess a more direct power in relation to these, especially in cases where the state is fragile or weak. Often, a key here is to begin by raising awareness among duty-bearers about their duties, be they moral or legal, and to continue by supporting them in building capacity to fulfil their obligations.

By strengthening civil society organizations, building networks and providing platforms for people to mobilize, PMU and our partners can enable the rights holders to get access to the duty bearers, and encourage a dialogue between the different stakeholders in society.

Power and Agency

An important aspect in the analysis of the society and its structures, and in the identification of rights holders and duty bearers, is power and power relations. In a broken world, power is used to oppress the powerless. An aim for RBA within development and humanitarian work is to challenge existing power structures and to create possibilities for people with less power to claim their rights. In other words, a key is to increase the agency of the marginalized and poor, so that they can form their own lives and live out their full potential. Power can be formal and informal, and power relations can be based on many different factors, such as financial means, gender, ethnicity, age, functionality, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation. The structures upholding power and poverty are complex and multifaceted, and the RBA perspective is helpful in addressing the different layers of injustice in the world.

RBA and Advocacy Work

One important method within the sphere of RBA is advocacy. Advocacy addresses both rights holders and duty bearers, in that it gives a voice to the most vulnerable, raises awareness among duty bearers and put pressure on them to fulfill their obligations. As a civil society actor, PMU strives to engage in advocacy in close cooperation with local actors and partners, so called rooted advocacy. This strengthens the RBA aspect of our advocacy work, since it contributes to the empowerment of the local rights holders, as well as reinforces the civil society and its ability to create platforms for dialogue between rights holders and duty bearers.

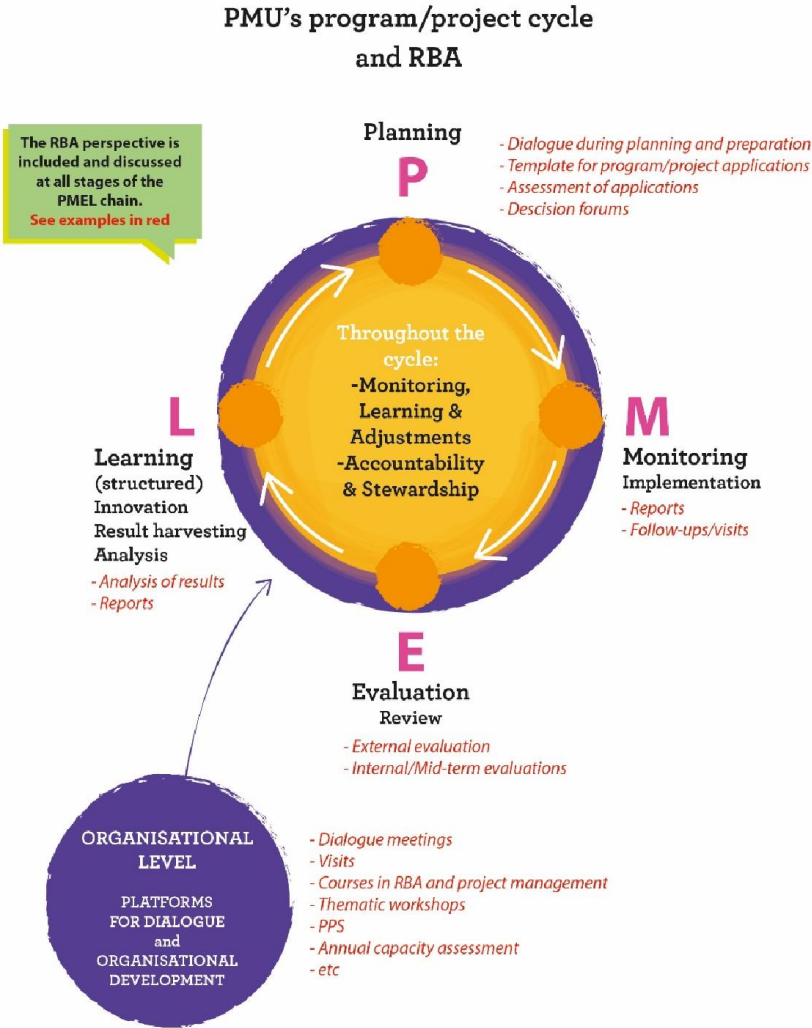
Advocacy is also a way to harness the collective strength that exists in mobilizing people and working together for a common goal. In planning, organizing and implementing advocacy campaigns,

¹ Religious leaders and traditional local leaders may also be legal duty bearers in some contexts.

marginalized and vulnerable rights holders get a chance to raise their own voices and speak as a collective for a common cause.

RBA Integrated in Systems and Methods

RBA is not an ad hoc method or an additional set of lenses through which PMU’s development and humanitarian interventions and projects can be analysed. Rather, it is the foundation of our work, and a perspective that is integrated in all phases of our project and programme cycles, as shown in the model below. In the planning stage, application and assessment templates are based on the concept of rights and duties, and RBA is a key perspective in dialogues and decisions. During monitoring and implementation, RBA guides the way project visits and follow-ups are being carried out, and how results are being reported. Internal as well as external evaluations are made with the perspective of rights holders in the first room, and ensure transparency and accountability. A structured and organized learning phase enables PMU to capitalize on lessons learned throughout the project/program cycle, to analyse projects and interventions, and to take further steps in understanding, involving and empowering the rights holders. Furthermore, on an organizational level, RBA underlies PMU’s methods development, advocacy work, capacity assessment of partners, thematic workshops and courses, etc.



Risks and Challenges

Like with all approaches and strategies, there are challenges and risks that must be taken into account in relation to RBA. These should by no means limit PMU's and our partners' work towards a more equal society, but are important to consider throughout the project and programme cycles.

- In some contexts, RBA can be perceived as a western agenda, and as a threat against status quo or against those who are privileged by existing power relations. In such contexts, the principles of RBA must still be applied, but to ensure the best possible working conditions, and to avoid putting people at risk, there might be a need to use a different vocabulary.
- In the light of the previous point, the risk of using the human rights and RBA terminology in certain contexts should not be neglected or underestimated. Spreading and publishing this policy could, in some cases, pose a threat to local partners and rights activists. It is important for everyone working or communicating on behalf of PMU in these contexts to be aware of these risks, and to consult regional leaders in case of doubt.
- RBA often highlights the rights of rights holders as individuals. However, in most contexts where PMU and our partners are working, the dominant culture is emphasizing the collective rather than the individual. It is therefore important to acknowledge the collective perspective, and to address rights holders not only as individuals, but also as groups of people living under similar conditions and striving towards the same goal.
- Misunderstanding and a misuse of the rights-based approach can lead to a view of people as passive receivers instead of actors with responsibilities. To avoid this, it is important to apply the principles of RBA, rather than focusing on vocabulary and development buzzwords.
- Working with rights is a long-term commitment which seldom leads to quick results. PMU sees the importance to cooperate with our partners over long periods of time, and to plan and follow-up on projects in a way that secures that change will take place within the project cycle, while not forgetting the perspective that we build towards transforming societies for long lasting impact.