

AFRODAD

Workshop Report

**On
PRSP Strategic Meeting:
Process and Content of the five African
Countries with *Full* PRSPs**

**Harare, Zimbabwe
29 - 30th April 2002**

**AFRICAN FORUM AND NETWORK ON DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT
P.O. MR 38 MARLBOROUGH
207 FIFE AVENUE
HARARE, ZIMBABWE.
TEL: (263)-4-702093 OR
FAX: (263)-4-702143
E-MAIL: afrodad@afrodad.co.zw or afrodad@samara.co.zw**

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List of Acronyms

ADP	Aide Publique au Développement (Burkina Faso)
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy (World Bank)
CSLP	Strategic framework in the Fight against poverty.
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EPRC	Economic Policy Research Centre (Uganda)
FES	Economic Funds for development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
HIV	Human Immuno deficiency Virus
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MISR	Makerere Institute of Social Research
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NPES	National Poverty Eradication Strategy (Tanzania)
NRD	National Reference Document (Mauritania)
OHADA	Organization for the Harmonization of Business Laws
PARPA	Plano de Acção para Redução da Pobreza Absoluta (Mozambique)
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SAPRI	Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative
TCDD	Tanzania Coalition on Debt and Development
IMF	International Monetary International Monetary Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Introduction

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are a mechanism designed by the World Bank and IMF following civil society pressure on the G7 countries to link debt relief to poverty reduction. Major beneficiaries from the PRSPs are assumed to be the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) who qualify for significant debt relief on completing their PRSP process. Civil society participation in the PRSP process is one of the requirements for a successful PRSP.

To date five African countries – Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Mauritania, Mozambique and Uganda – have completed their PRSPs. Civil society participation in the process has however varied tremendously in these countries in terms of the issues raised and the level of participation as well as the stages at which they participated. Also, while the PRSPs' basic structure and the underlying ideological framework is similar, they however differ in terms of detail and emphasis, largely reflecting existing national poverty reduction strategies and other development initiatives in the countries that informed the PRSPs.

AFRODAD, in collaboration with Christian Aid – London, recently commissioned a study on *A Comparative analysis of PRSPs: Process and content of the five African Countries with Full PRSPs*. A two-day workshop was convened, which brought together participants from selected civil society organizations particularly those that have been working on PRSPs from the five African countries that have successfully completed Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), as well as participants from other countries like South Africa, Kenya, UK, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The major objectives of the workshop were to:

- (a) Get information on the process and content of PRSP in the five countries with full PRSP;
- (b) Analyse the role of governments and the major shortcomings in drawing up the PRSPs vis-à-vis issues of conditionality, timeframes, relationships with CSOs and donors
- (c) Evaluate the content of the PRSPs in terms of their consistency with Africa's major development goals, especially poverty reduction, as well as to assess their similarities and differences. The workshop also sought to establish the linkages and inconsistencies, between the PRSPs and other development frameworks at national, regional and international levels.
- (d) Assess the level and quality of CSO participation in the PRSP process in their interaction with their governments and among the CSOs themselves.
- (e) Carry out a comparative analysis of these processes for lobby and advocacy work with policy makers at different levels.
- (f) Increase the capacity of African CSOs to understand and participate effectively in PRSP policy issues.
- (g) Launch AFRODAD's Research findings of a *Comparative analysis of PRSPs: Process and content of the five African Countries with Full PRSPs*.

Tanzania's PRSP in Relation to its Poverty Reduction Strategies

Tanzania's PRSP was approved by the IMF and the World Bank on 27th November 2001, making Tanzania the fourth country to have reached Completion Point, after Bolivia, Mozambique and Uganda. Under the enhanced HIPC Initiative, Tanzania will qualify for US\$3 billion in debt relief over the next 20 years. This will effectively reduce the net present value of Tanzania's total external debt by 54%.

Policy Context for the PRSP

The Tanzania study showed that even before the drafting of the PRSP, the country already had several poverty-related development initiatives. Of particular significance was the National Poverty Eradication Strategy (NPES), which was adopted in 1997. The NPES, which focuses on poverty eradication, had been developed under Tanzania's Vision 2025, along with the Tanzania Assistance Strategy, the National External Debt Strategy, and the Public Health and Expenditure Review. The Tanzania paper stressed the fact that because a poverty eradication policy was already in place, the PRSP represents a medium term strategy for the implementation of this policy.

Policy and Technical Co-ordination of the PRSP

Technical arrangements for the PRSP preparation in Tanzania involved a committee of 12 Ministers and the Governor of the Bank of Tanzania, which steered. The committee was supported by a technical committee comprising of officials from Vice President's Office and other relevant ministries.

The Technical Committee prepared the draft PRSP using inputs from other stakeholders and background papers such as the Vision 2025, Tanzania Assistance Strategy, NPES, National External Debt Strategy and the Public Expenditure Review. Sector studies on education, health, agriculture, rural development, environment, employment, HIV/AIDS, land reform and governance also provided useful background information. The report was then discussed at a consultative meeting involving government, donors and civil society representatives. The document was reviewed and approved by the cabinet in February 2000.

Other consultations on the PRSP included a consultative meeting between the government and donors in June 2000 to discuss the PRSP process and the draft PRSP. The meeting was also attended by a joint World Bank/IMF Mission. Another meeting was also convened in July 2000 to brief parliamentarians on the concerns and priorities identified at the Zonal Workshops. The meeting gave the parliamentarians an opportunity to indicate their concerns and priorities regarding poverty reduction efforts. However, the PRSP document was not tabled in the Parliament for debate and endorsement, which raises critical issues of ownership.

A national workshop to seek further inputs into the draft PRSP was held in August 2000. The workshop was attended by Permanent Secretaries, Regional Commissioners, donor representatives, the MFIs, private sector organisations, NGOs, the media, and informal sector representatives. The revised draft PRSP was then presented to Cabinet for approval in August 2000.

Civil Society Participation

A major observation from the paper was that since the introduction of multi-party democracy in Tanzania, the government has made efforts to include CSOs in economic policy making processes. To this end, civil society participated in developing the Tanzania Assistance Strategy Paper (TAS), Vision 2025 and the NPES. In the PRSP context therefore the question was not whether CSOs participated in the process but if that participation had a significant impact on the processes and contents of the document.

In the drafting of the PRSP, grassroots consultations were limited to the zonal workshops, which were conducted concurrently in the seven zones covering all regions of Mainland Tanzania on 11-12th May 2000. At these workshops, each district was represented by four villagers, a district councillor, a town councillor, and a district executive director (DED). Representatives of five NGOs also attended each of the workshops.

Although Tanzania PRSP document took 10 months to prepare, only two days were devoted to the grassroots consultations in the zonal workshops. Out of the country's population of more than 36 million people, only 804 were consulted during these workshops, and of these only 22% were women.

Throughout the PRSP processes, civil society organisations demanded more active involvement and participation. But their involvement remained at a superficial level. The government developed the document internally and CSOs had to set up a separate process under the Tanzania Coalition for Debt and Development (TCDD).

Issues Emerging from CSO Participation in Tanzania

Although civil society participated in the PRSP process in Tanzania, the level and depth of their involvement as well as the seriousness with which their inputs were considered left a lot to be desired. Among the critical issues raised in the Tanzania study were:

- Rather than make an effort to merge CSO inputs into the PRSP with those of the government, civil society was simply co-opted into the government-led processes.
- Civil society consultations were rushed and did not allow for true dialogue and debate.
- At the National Workshop carried-out after the zonal workshops, some NGOs were invited to comment on various topics in the PRSP. Although their inputs were critical, they were neither taken up nor incorporated into the final document;
- Civil society was not invited to participate in the final drafting of the PRSP.

Lessons Learnt

- For the PRSP to be more nationally owned, more people should have debated it. But the government was in a hurry to secure debt relief, through the HIPC Initiative, and could therefore not allow the time for more debate.
- Tanzania's experience brought to the fore the big gap in the power relations between the government and the IFIs on the one hand and civil society and the private sector on the other. The nascent civil society and private sector lacked the

capacity to effectively participate in the PRSP process. They also lacked the organisational and intellectual capacity to engage in the PRSP process, hence the government was able to bulldoze its way in the discussions.

- The government did not create sufficient space for civil society's effective participation in the process.
- There is a need for the government to create and maintain an institutional framework to allow close collaboration with the civil society and the private sector. This would also increase its bargaining power in negotiations with IFI and the Paris Club for further poverty reduction packages.

Issues Raised in the Plenary Discussions

Several concepts, which form part of the PRSP guidelines, warrant further discussion. These are: country driven and ownership; participation; comprehensiveness; two-way information flow promotion; and accountability.

Participation

Participation is linked to and determines ownership of processes by civil society. It is dependent not just on the willingness of states to allow space for civil society voices but also on the amount of information to which they have access on a continuing basis. Thus Mauritania began its PRSP process with an awareness campaign but it is not clear how effective this was or for how long the government continued to make information available.

'Participation' can be distinguished from other concepts such as 'involvement', 'incorporation' or 'consultation' by the fact that it encompasses taking part in decision-making.

Civil Society Participation in the PRSP Process in Burkina Faso

The development of Burkina Faso's PRSP started in 1999, following the publication of the first series of poverty indicators, in 1998. A seminar was held to consider how to measure progress in the implementation of the strategies in the targeted sectors, in particular health and education.

The major highlight from the Burkina Faso study was that the PRSP approval was preceded by sensitisation of government ministries on the PRSP and the need to ensure that development strategies focused on poverty reduction. The government also run radio and television programmes to interest civil society in the PRSP.

Local authorities co-ordinated civil society participation in the PRSP process. They identified the most active members in the different organisations, who were then invited to participate in the workshops. At the workshops, national organisations had two representatives each one from the local and the other from the national level.

Local authorities were also responsible for information dissemination and the translation of documents into local languages. Two training workshops for facilitators to lead the PRSP process in the various districts were held in April and June 2000.

PRSP Approval Process

The drafters of the Burkina Faso PRSP saw their role as bringing together, in one coherent document, national priorities drawn up through participatory process, which would be used to guide development and donor interventions. To this end, two workshops were held in February 2000 to discuss the first PRSP draft – one for government officials and donors and the other for civil society. The CSO workshop enabled the inter-ministerial committee to take note of issues raised for inclusion into the final document. Unlike in Tanzania where the PRSP was not debated in parliament, in Burkina Faso PRSP it went through both the National Assembly and the House of Representatives.

Civil Society Participation

The Burkina Faso study provided a detailed analysis of civil society participation in the PRSP process, which gave a breakdown of the numbers of civil society participants at the various meetings, the diversity of representation, the geographical coverage of the consultations and the level of representation by sex.

In terms of numbers, civil society representatives constituted an average of 25,24 % of the participants at the workshops, which was above their allocation of just over 23%. The composition of delegates at the workshops were: 69 % NGO representatives, 20% trade unions and 4% others. Female representation was low, accounting for an average of only 16.2% of participants. About 50% of civil society participants were from the provincial level, while a third were from the national level. Government representation was high, constituting 58,50 % of all the participants.

Critical Issues from Burkina Faso's Consultative Process

The critical issues to emerge from the Burkina Faso process include the following:

- Outputs from the eight national workshops on poverty did not feed into the regional and local workshops on the PRSP. The regional PRSP workshops were held from June to August 2001, which coincided with the regional evaluation workshops.
- There was poor co-ordination of popularisation workshops and workshops to discuss the PRSPS such that in some areas, popularisation workshops were held after the regional workshops to discuss the PRSP. Participants were therefore not able to make meaningful inputs into the discussions as they were not aware of the issues.
- Also because of poor co-ordination, in some cases the people who took part in the popularisation workshops did not take part in workshops to discuss the PRSP.
- Access to information was difficult for civil society and documents were not translated into local languages making it difficult for people to understand.
- Selection of civil society participants did not take into account their expertise in the subject matter to be discussed.
- The need to keep within strict time limits to meet the PRSP deadlines curtailed the time given for civil society debate. The two days set aside for the workshops were insufficient to enable participants to make meaningful inputs into the PRSP.

- The majority of the civil society participants were informed of the workshops late and did not receive the background documents, which made it difficult for them to participate effectively.
- The approach of organising regional workshops by topic did not allow a coherent analysis of the PRSP;
- The institutional framework of the follow-up Steering Committee on the workshops was not participatory and was not decentralised.
- The government failed to meet the pre-requisites of effective civil society participation in the various regional workshops by not providing sufficient information and not carrying out sensitisation programmes in some districts before holding the PRSP workshops.
- The choice of civil society participants did not allow for the inclusion of people who were familiar with the issues in PRSPs at the regional workshops.

Lessons Learnt

- Time constraints in the civil society consultations made a participatory PRSP process difficult. The urgent need for poverty education through debt relief compromised the process of wide consultations with civil society.
- On a positive note, was a change of attitude by the World bank, which showed more willingness to listen to other actors on public policy issues.

Issues raised in the Plenary

Participants observed that the PRSPs concentrated excessively on macroeconomic policies at the expense of measures that directly benefit the poor. It was pointed out that PRSPs did not look different from SAPs and therefore only partially addressed poverty. Many of the activities in the PRSPs, such as good governance and democracy, judicial reform and fighting corruption, concentrated on political administrative issues, which were not necessarily the causes of poverty. It was felt that the goal of the PRSPs was to deliver repackaged SAPs at the expense of poverty reduction strategies. Civil society in the process was merely meant to rubber-stamp the process.

Another issue of concern, which needed to be addressed was the lack of capacity among NGOs to analyse macroeconomic policies. However this did not exonerate governments from inviting CSOs to participate in drawing up macro-economic policies in the PRSPs. If civil society could not participate at that level, this had grave implications on the ownership of the document.

Uganda's PEAP and the PRSP: Implications for Ownership

The drafting of Uganda's PRSP coincided with the revision of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), a government framework for poverty eradication that was first developed in 1997 after two years of extensive consultations involving CSOs. The PEAP became Uganda's PRSP. By March 2000, therefore Uganda had already developed a full PRSP that was discussed and approved by the Executive Boards of the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) in March and became fully operational by May 2001.

Formulation of the Uganda PRSP

The drafting of Uganda's PEAP/PRSP involved extensive consultations between donors, government and civil society. A steering committee composed of senior government officials, representatives of donors and civil society organisations was set up to oversee the process. CSOs also set up their own Civil Society Task Force to revise the PEAP. Local research institutions were also included in the steering committee.

In February 2000 a consultative workshop was held, attended by donors, local authorities, civil society and the private sector. Another workshop was organised to introduce the PEAP/PRSP process to MPs who had hitherto not been involved in the discussions. But the MPs showed little or no interest with less than 20 of the 276 MPs attending. The government also organised a series of workshops for local authorities, which run parallel to civil society and grassroots consultations. The results of these consultations were incorporated into the PEAP/PRSP.

In March 2000, consultative group meetings were held where the government presented the first draft of the revised PEAP to donors. From then on, Uganda's PEAP became the PRSP. In May 2000 the government produced a final PEAP/PRSP incorporating the views and inputs of the various stakeholders.

Civil Society Participation in the PRSP

The Uganda study argues that civil society participation in the PRSP was due to pressure from CSOs, which wanted to be involved in policy-making. As far back as 1995, when the decision to develop the PEAP was mooted, CSOs lobbied and were included in the drafting committee and the various working groups to collect inputs from their constituents, analyse and present them to the technical committee responsible for developing the PEAP. Since then, Ugandan civil society has participated in several other policy initiatives involving the government and donors.

The Civil Society Task Force co-ordinated the participation of CSOs in the PRSP process. CSOs mobilised representatives of their constituents and carried out numerous consultations with the grassroots to collect their views on poverty reduction. Numerous workshops, seminars, radio and television discussions were also held as well as eight zonal meetings, which together brought together 644 participants (405 male and 239 female).

The Civil Society Task Force also carried out a media campaign, which included radio and television programmes where government officials were invited to respond to queries from the public on the PRSP. The Task Force also disseminated information through the media to guide the consultations and invited the general public to make contributions.

Findings from the civil society consultations were presented to the Technical Committee of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, which was responsible for the drafting of the PEAP document. The significant point to note from the Uganda study was that civil society inputs were sometimes wholly incorporated into the draft.

Recommendations

Despite their involvement, the Uganda study pointed out that CSOs still faced some problems. During the consultative process, it became clear that most CSOs lacked the capacity to engage donors and policy planners in meaningful dialogue on macroeconomic policy issues.

Several measures therefore needed to be taken to correct the situation. These included:

- Deliberate efforts need to be made to build the capacity of national CSOs to enable them to make a greater impact on policy.
- At local level, the need for CSOs to build the capacity of grassroots people to monitor policy implementation.
- Local authorities should also develop transparent and accountable systems that enable grassroots communities to have access to the information they need to conduct effective monitoring.

Lessons from Uganda's Experience

Uganda emerged as one of the countries where civil society participation in the PRSP process was more comprehensive, participatory and inclusive. Civil society input on poverty issues were taken more seriously and were incorporated into the final document. The study identified the following as the major reasons for the positive outcome:

- Government's commitment to the PRSP consultations was critical. The government gave the CSOs sufficient space in the PEAP/PRSP process to organise independent consultations and provided them with sufficient information, including the draft PEAP/PRSP.
- The government allowed CSOs to attend, as full members, meetings of the National Task Force (NTF) comprised of senior government officials. This enabled them to make useful inputs into the drafting of the PRSP.
- CSO inputs helped to build a consensus with the government and donors around poverty eradication as a priority issue, which did not exist before.
- CSOs were instrumental to the acceptance by donors of the concept of basket funding rather than project funding for the PRSP, by supporting their government's call for flexible financing arrangements, which would give the government a greater say in allocating poverty eradication expenditures.
- As a result of their involvement in the PEAP/PRSP process, Ugandan CSOs will also participate in monitoring poverty indicators. The government has committed itself to making all relevant information on public policies available to the different stakeholders and to build its own institutional capacity for accountability.
- The involvement of CSOs in the preparation of Uganda's PRSP raised their relations with the government to a new level. Several CSOs have become part of the budget planning process and are now represented on sector working groups such as the Macro Working Group and the Poverty Working Group.

Issues from the Plenary

Participants observed that in several countries where the PRSPs were being implemented, including Uganda, poverty continued to rise despite the high economic growth rate recorded. This meant that the PRSPs were failing to address the fundamental causes of poverty, in particular issues of redistribution and of equity. A fundamental flaw in the ideology of the PRSPs was equating economic growth with poverty reduction.

CSOs participation in the PRSP Process: Case for Mozambique

Mozambique's PRSP evolved from the PARPA, the country's poverty eradication strategy which was developed in 1995 and whose objectives were incorporated into the government's five-year Development Plan 1995-1999. The PARPA itself was informed by various other policy initiatives on poverty, which included the Social Dimension of Adjustment project (SDA) and the Office for the Support to Vulnerable Population Groups (GAPVU). Other poverty initiatives that also fed into the PARPA were the Economic and Social Rehabilitation Programme (PRES) and the Poverty Alleviation Strategy of 1990.

Following some revisions, the Bretton Woods institutions accepted the PARPA as Mozambique's Interim PRSP. The PARPA developed into a full PRSP following further consultations and revisions. The document was approved by Mozambique Council of Ministers and presented to the Bretton Woods institutions in April 2001.

The Mozambique study argued that the government developed the PARPA/PRSP primarily through an internal process. Along the way the PARPA incorporated features of a PRSP but retained its essential characteristics. The PRSP process therefore built strongly on government plans and strategies for poverty reduction.

Civil Society Participation in the PARPA

Mozambique's experience of CSO participation is unique in that civil society was only brought on board during the second phase of consultations after the PARPA had been accepted as the country's IPRSP. The first phase mostly involved internal consultations among various government sectors and departments.

Following initial consultations, a national seminar was organised in June 2000 bringing together the key stakeholders – government, civil society and donors – to discuss the way forward and agree on the roles of the various actors involved. The government convened another meeting involving civil society in August 2000 to discuss the monitoring and evaluation of PARPA.

Grassroots consultation in the PRSP process took the form of participatory rural appraisals, which were carried out in seven provinces and 21 districts in January 2001. Information from these consultations was incorporated into the revised PARPA/PRSP, which was approved by the Council of Ministers and submitted to IMF/World Bank in April 2001.

Recommendations

- The PRSP debate was not high on the agenda of Mozambican politics, which are driven by elitist interests. There is therefore a need for civil society to involve other stakeholders, including opposition parties to highlight the importance of pro poor policies.
- Because of widespread corruption in Mozambique, there should be a more integrated approach to PRSP implementation and monitoring involving civil society.
- Information on poverty expenditures should be made public to ensure more accountability.
- Working groups bringing together civil society and the business community should be set up to monitor implementation of the PRSP.
- Dialogue between the State and civil society should be institutionalised as common practice in Mozambique's decision-making process.
- Parliament should be involved in macroeconomic and financial policy decision-making, in particular where it concerns external debt.
- There should be increased access to information to facilitate research and dissemination to the public. This would enable the public to understand budget allocations and underlying policies so that issues like privatisation, that come in the SAP package of liberal policies, can be linked to their impacts such as increased unemployment.

Issues Emerging on Civil Society Participation in Mozambique

The Mozambique study raised some critical problems relating to civil society participation in the PRSP process in the country. These included:

- Insufficient time was allocated to the consultations. As a result, outputs from some of the consultative workshops held after the draft PRSP had been finalised could not be incorporated.
- Mozambique is a large country with a dispersed population that is served by poor transport and communications networks. As a result, consultations were mostly limited to the provincial capitals leaving most rural communities.
- The unavailability of documents in local languages was a major drawback considering the low level of education in the country.

Issues from the Plenary

Participants pointed out that long-term poverty reduction involved building human capacity and increasing the size and distribution function of income, but the World Bank and IMF advocated increased foreign direct investment as the solution, which is also what the NEPAD is proposing. It was argued that this approach would not solve Africa's problems.

CSO Participation in Mauritania's PRSP Process

Mauritania's PRSP was drawn up largely on the basis of existing poverty reduction strategies and has a strong rural development focus. The PRSP has the added

advantage that it also analysed the poverty situation in Mauritania including the determinants and came up with priority actions and the areas of intervention.

As in Burkina Faso, preparations for the PRSP process in Mauritania started with the launch of an awareness campaign on the national poverty reduction strategy. An inter-ministerial committee, chaired by the Prime Minister took charge of the programme while the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development (MAED) and the Human Rights Commission co-ordinated the PRSP process. Elected local leaders and civil society representatives also participated in the PRSPs process.

A technical co-ordination committee chaired by the Policy Development Adviser in the ministry of Economic Affairs and Development was responsible for the production of the PRSP. It consisted of a co-ordination secretary, technical representatives from different ministries as well as chairpersons of the 12 technical committees set up around different themes. Civil society and donors were also represented in the 12 committees.

Civil Society Participation

As in Tanzania, grassroots consultations were through workshops held over a two-day period in November 2000. Four regional seminars, which brought together representatives from the country's 13 districts. Participants included elected local leaders and NGO and other civil society representatives. Other stakeholders involved in PRSP discussions were members of the General Assembly, MPs, mayors and trade unions. Following these discussions, the PRSP was submitted to parliament for approval.

In the past NGOs in Mauritania had been involved in policy issues, but this had largely been cosmetic as they were not really part of the process and their inputs could therefore be ignored. But with the PRSP, civil society participation was a requirement and included their involvement in the preparatory work as well as in the monitoring and evaluation.

Issues Emerging from Mauritania's Experience

- The Mauritania study highlighted some critical issues for civil society. These included: The weaknesses of Mauritania's civil society and therefore the need to strengthen the capacity of NGOs, particularly those working on poverty issues.
- The importance of increasing civil society participation in the PRSP, particularly in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

Comparative analysis of CSO Participation in the PRSP Process in the Five African countries with full PRSPs

The previous section of the report summarised the studies from the five African countries with full PRSPs paying special attention to civil society participation in the formulation of the PRSP as well as the potential for its continued involvement in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. The section also analysed issues emerging from the studies and pointed to lessons learnt in the process. What follows is a comparative synthesis of the findings from these studies that was presented in a paper at the workshop.

The Policy Context in the Five Countries

The paper observed that in all the five countries, the PRSPs complemented existing poverty reduction strategies – the PARPA in Mozambique, the NPES in Tanzania, the PEAP in Uganda, 'Cadre Strategique da Lutte Contra la Pauvrete, in Burkina Faso National Reference Documents in Mauritania. Apart from their poverty focus, these strategy documents also encompassed social and economic issues. These national processes became the basis of the PRSPs, shifting focus and changing methodologies to meet the World Bank/IMF requirements.

Civil Society Participation

The paper noted that despite the emphasis on civil society participation, the PRSP is a government-led process. Thus the first step in every country was the setting up, within government structures, of a steering or co-ordinating committee although its composition and responsibilities differed from country to country. The major differences in the five countries pertained to civil society participation in terms of its level of participation, the timing of its engagement in the process and the seriousness with which its contributions were taken by the government.

The level of civil society involvement in the formulation of PRSPs seemed to be a function of the experience and preparedness of local CSOs and individual members of civil society and the willingness of governments to consult and take civil society views into account.

In Uganda, civil society was involved at every stage and, was complemented by a parallel process set up by NGOs. Most civil society inputs and recommendations were incorporated into the final PEAP/PRSP report. In Tanzanian, civil society felt it had moved from the NPES, which had a strong government ownership and leadership to the PRSP, in which "foreign influence was the most significant factor". Likewise, in Mozambique, it has been acknowledged that that the PRSP "builds strongly on the

plans and strategies of the Government” under the PARPA. Thus civil society tended to be sidelined both ways.

While the Mauritanian process took place much more firmly under government structures, there was some civil society involvement at every stage and civil society has also been involved, more recently, in the follow up process. The Tanzania report suggests inadequate civil society participation in the PRSP process and there is no suggestion that CSOs expect to be involved in the implementation or monitoring and evaluation stages.

Promotion of Two Way Information Flow

Mauritania is the only country that mentions launching its PRSP process with an awareness campaign i.e. a downward flow of information to civil society to facilitate its involvement. Aside from this, Uganda is the only other country that mentions use of the media. Its Civil Society Task Force organised a media campaign involving radio and television phone-in programmes in which government officials responded to queries on the PRSP process. The Task Force also used the print media to publicise the process and invite contributions from the public.

The PARPA in Mozambique used publicity materials, such as printed information packages, and a state-owned website. However, the report also identifies challenges in information dissemination, one of which was the need to use local languages.

Civil Society Preparedness

The Burkina Faso report gives a detailed breakdown of the participation of all groups in the process towards the formulation of the country’s PRSP and the level of their input. It is noted that CSOs in Burkina Faso are not very strong but they put themselves out to participate in the PRSP process. Women’s representation in the workshops was generally low, with only one out of seventeen civil society representatives in the Ouagadougou workshop being female.

The Tanzania study notes that civil society participation in the PRSP process was typical of their participation in most government led processes i.e. they were not officially kept in the picture and, therefore, had to initiate their own parallel process. Civil society developed a position paper on both the process and contents of the PRSP and continued to lobby Government to open up to civil society perspectives.

CSOs in Uganda participated both within the government framework and, where they felt it necessary, outside this process. Participation in the formal process was through the Civil Society Task Force composed of NGOs with the Uganda Debt Network as the civil society lead agency. The Task Force was engaged in the reformulation of the PEAP into the PRSP and was also part of the Steering Committee that drove the whole process.

Government Attitude to Civil Society

Civil society groups in Burkina Faso recognise the efforts of Government in getting the PRSP process together. However, there were frequent complaints from civil society

that they could not participate effectively as they were not informed about meetings or receive appropriate terms of reference in time. This led to a fairly low number of formal (written) contributions from civil society.

Although civil society in Mauritania had been involved in policy processes in the past, it felt that the PRSP was more open and CSOs and their involvement was more real than had been the case previously. Civil society was also happy with its involvement in the process at every stage from preparations of the PRSP through to the evaluation.

The Uganda study noted that government commitment to the consultations was an essential factor. The government facilitated a consultation process in which civil society was meaningfully involved. CSOs were also made full members of the National Task Force. The government also provided CSOs with the necessary information, including the draft PEAP/PRSP. Output from civil society consultations was also included in the final document.

Constraints Faced by Civic Organisations

According to the synthesis paper, several constraints hampered civil society in the five from carrying out effective consultative processes.

- Lack of documentation, particularly documents translated into local languages, and the poor communications and road network, limited the effectiveness of outreach programmes in several countries including Mozambique and Burkina Faso.
- Insufficient staff qualified to engage donors and policy makers in dialogue on macroeconomic policy issues was a problem in Uganda, Mozambique and Burkina Faso.
- Insufficient time for consultations resulting from the desire of governments to complete PRSPs and qualify for debt relief was a problem cited in all the five countries. This could undermine the quality of the PRSP process. In Mozambique, potentially valuable inputs were left out of the PRSP as parallel CSO consultations were still going on after the PRSP had been finalised.

The Potential of PRSPs

The paper argued that on the face of it, the PRSP process did not have the potential to transform relations between African countries and donors. Debt relief under the HIPC initiative came with its own conditions, which were the requirement to complete a PRSP with civil society participation. The relationship with donors was still skewed, reflecting well-entrenched power relations. In addition, the PRSPs that have been completed in Africa had transferred the content and process of national initiatives, such as the NPES, PARPA and PEAP, into the externally imposed PRSPs, thus lessening local ownership.

On the positive side, the paper argued that PRSPs had the potential to transform relationships between governments and their people. To start with, government had heeded the demand to involve civil society in the PRSP formulation. However, for civil society participation to take root, both donors and governments had to be genuine in their commitment to this participation.

The five country studies indicate that the PRSP processes could not entrench

meaningful civil society participation where it did not exist. Thus in Uganda, where the role of civil society in policy-making was already recognised, a co-operative relationship was formed between the two players during the PRSP process. But, in Tanzania, where the government was reluctant to involve civil society, the PRSP process was ‘business as usual’ with civil society’s involvement being mostly cosmetic.

The PRSPs also did not offer any better solution to the debt problem or to reducing poverty, than the poverty reduction initiatives that had been developed in various African countries. The country studies suggest that, in most cases, there is very little difference between the two. The PRSPs have tended to be an extension of already existing policies.

The paper argued that civil society participation in PRSP formulation increased democratic ownership, which in turn enhances the quality of policy implementation. Taken seriously, PRSPs were a fundamental departure from donor driven initiatives to locally driven policies for poverty eradication. They provided a framework for consultations with various stakeholders, including the poor themselves. CSO participation in the development of PRSPs increased the chances that the needs of the poor were taken on board.

The future of participatory PRSPs also depended on how seriously the IMF and the World Bank took them, in particular outcomes from stakeholder consultations. PRSPs also needed to clearly reflect the goals set by the governments and the people in poor countries. The Bretton Woods institutions should avoid imposing PRSPs on countries, as this would undermine their credibility and perpetuate aid conditionalities.

Best Practices and Lessons Learnt

- Mauritania launched its PRSP process with an awareness campaign so that civil society was aware that the PRSP existed, knew what it was all about and was, therefore, prepared to participate in its formulation.
- Ugandan CSOs organised a campaign using print and electronic media to enhance the two-way flow of information around the PRSP.
- Both Mauritania and Uganda tried to ensure the involvement of Parliament. This was not very successful in Uganda but in Mauritania it reinforced the need for policy coherence between the PRSP and other policies.
- CSOs in Tanzania, Mozambique and Uganda set up parallel processes to those being conducted by their governments. The success of these processes largely depended on the support they received from government.
- The Ugandan government saw CSOs as serious stakeholders in the PRSP and encouraged their participation. It facilitated the participation of the Civil Society Task Force in the PRSP Steering Committee and ensured that CSOs had access to documentation and information.
- The incorporation of civil society inputs into the PRSP in Uganda strengthened the strategy itself and satisfied civil society that they owned the document.
- Mozambique and Uganda built into their PRSPs mechanisms for continuing civil society involvement in revision and, evaluation and monitoring of the strategies.

Comparative Analysis of the Content of PRSPs in Uganda, Tanzania and Burkina Faso

This section analysed the content of the PRSPs themselves focusing on the policy and ideological framework underpinning the documents presented in the Workshop. It also examined the inconsistencies in the PRSPs that might make them less effective as policy instruments for poverty eradication. The paper also suggested changes that might be made in the design of the PRSPs to enable them to achieve better results.

Because the PRSPs were designed and approved by the World Bank and the IMF, they had to be compatible to the neo-liberal policies espoused by these institutions. These advocate for trade and market liberalisation, privatisation, the promotion of export-led growth and of the private sectors. These are the macroeconomic policies that feature in all the PRSP documents.

Apart from the new focus on social services, rural infrastructure development and water and sanitation, PRSPs in the three countries have little to offer that is not standard IMF and World Bank prescriptions. The PEAP, for instance, while acknowledging that Uganda was an unequal society, nevertheless advocates neutral growth and downplays redistribution, which is critical to poverty reduction.

The PRSPs were also failing in poverty reduction as in all the countries where they are being implemented; poverty continues to rise despite the high economic growth rates recorded. This meant that the PRSPs were failing to address the fundamental causes of poverty and also that their equating of growth with poverty reduction was a false assumption.

The paper also questioned the alacrity with which the three countries propose “to more fully open up” their economies to the outside world to attract private investment arguing that Africa had liberalised more than any other regions globally under SAPs but still received the least FDI. The paper also criticised Burkina Faso’s proposal to implement more “incentive-oriented tax policies” to sharpen the country’s competitive advantage by reducing company tax arguing that experience from elsewhere had shown that tax breaks were not effective in attracting investment. Some of the policies to be pursued under PRSP therefore would benefit exporters from developed countries but would stunt industrialisation in the three countries.

PRSPs and the Markets

Burkina Faso’s PRSP advocated further market liberalisation in agriculture but at the same time acknowledged that peasants were exploited by traders because of the inefficient markets caused by the poor road network in the country. Considering that the main objective of the PRSPs is to fight poverty, the paper questioned the failure of the government to intervene in the markets to prevent further impoverishment of peasants.

There was also a contradiction between the problem of the exploitation of peasants by traders as identified in grassroots PRSP consultations and the proposed solution of the government “disengaging” itself from marketing activities, as articulated in the PRSP document. This begged the question of the seriousness of the civil society

consultations if the PRSP did not attempt to address major problems identified through the process.

Privatising Public Goods

Although the privatisation of inefficient and non-essential parastatals is now generally accepted as necessary in most developing countries, the paper argued that PRSPs go beyond this and propose to privatise essential services. It cited the case of Burkina Faso, which proposed to privatise energy and telecommunications. It argued that privatisation of energy would still leave the new company as a monopoly and would therefore not make the services more competitive. Instead, programmes to provide services to the poor, such as the rural electrification, would suffer, as they were not attractive to private investors.

Similarities of the PRSPs

The analysis of the PRSPs showed that although they are supposed to be homegrown initiatives that are country-specific, in reality they bear uncanny resemblance to each other in terms of their areas of intervention for poverty reduction. All the PRSPs call for increased spending on primary education, health, water and sanitation, rural roads and environmental protection. They also advocate privatisation, judiciary reform, combating corruption, gender equity and fighting HIV/AIDS. Also common to all the PRSPs are issues of good governance, democracy and fighting corruption. While there can be no doubt that these are all problems affecting Africa, the paper argues that the uniformity of the interventions raises the old problem in relation to SAPs that they were not designed to answer the specific needs of countries but as a blanket solution for poverty reduction.

Also of concern in the three PRSPs was that policies from SAPs, such as user charges in health, are still evident although the introduction of free primary education in some of the PRSPs offers some relief.

The paper concluded that despite the involvement of civil society in the design, implementation and evaluation of PRSPs and their poverty focus, in essence the strategies remained extensions of SAPs. However there were some positive developments that had taken place in the process of the metamorphosis of the PRSPs, some of which would help reduce poverty. These included the focus on rural development, in particular on peasant agriculture, provision of rural infrastructure, including roads and water and sanitation as well as focus on primary education and health.

The paper also discussed the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development, which it said had been drawn up by the heads of a few governments with neither the participation of their own legislatures or that of civil society. It was pointed out that the major concern of NEPAD's architects was to have it approved by the G8, and to that extent the document had been drawn up to answer the concerns of developed countries and might not offer a solution to Africa's poverty crisis.

Issues from the Plenary

Participants were critical of the NEPAD; in particular its neo-liberal approach, which they felt, was not the answer to Africa's problem. Another major criticism of the initiative was that it had been drawn up with no civil society input. Participants argued that NEPAD was pushing Africa into a new ball game where the focus would be on creating the right environment for attracting foreign investment and increased aid without paying sufficient attention to internal resource mobilisation. But the question was whether this was the right approach. While there was an acceptance by the workshop of the need for increased FDI, it was felt necessary to put in place legislation that would regulate that investment.

Flaws in the PRSP Process

A major problem that seems to have affected all the PRSP processes was the little time civil society got to debate the issues. It was felt that there was a need for more people to debate the PRSPs to increase national ownership. Governments were in a hurry to secure debt relief through HIPC and did not therefore allow sufficient time to debate the PRSPs, but this compromised their quality and made a mockery of the consultative process. The workshop also identified flaws both in the PRSP processes and in the contents of the documents. Among these were:

- The failure of the IMF and the World Bank to change their mindsets on macroeconomic policy issues even within the PRSPs meant that the documents also had conditionalities attached to them.
- In several countries, the process of drawing up PRSPs and civil society participation lacked legitimacy, which the output from the deliberations also illegitimate.
- Lack of individual country specificity in the design of the programmes. The PRSPs offer similar solutions to Africa's poverty crisis, although the determinants are not the same in all the countries.
- Failure to present a clear definition of poverty, which resulted in the prescription of unsuitable remedies;
- The emphasis on foreign investments rather than on local resource mobilisation. This affected the focus of the macroeconomic policies, which tended to have an outward orientation at the expense of participation by local investors.
- Lack of clarity on the stage at which civil society is supposed to participate and the extent of that participation. There was a need to involve civil society in the monitoring and evaluation process of the PRSPs.
- The excessive concentration of PRSPs on macroeconomic policies, often at the expense of measures that directly benefited the poor.
- The World Bank and the IMF apply the same conditionalities to the PRSPs that they applied to SAPs.
- The main goal of the PRSPs was to deliver repackaged SAPs under the guise of poverty reduction.
- What mattered most for governments were the financial flows emanating from the debt cancellation rather than poverty reduction itself, this compromised the quality of the PRSPs and also resulted in a lack of focus on poverty issues.

Workshop Recommendations

This section of the report presents the recommendations that came out of the workshop. They largely reflect concerns with the ownership process, the ideological underpinnings of the PRSPs, as well as with the ideology, which underpins them.

Participation

- Need to come up with homegrown PRSPs but this could only happen if countries increased their capacity for local resource mobilisation to finance poverty reduction initiatives. Home grown PRSPs would allow countries to focus on the priorities they identified themselves.
- Need for broad-based civil society participation. The workshop felt that civil society needed to define its minimum criteria for participation, which should be respected by both the IFIs and governments.
- Need to build capacities at grassroots level for effective participation and for monitoring and evaluation of the PRSPs.
- Need for a clear understanding and agreement among different stakeholders on the nature of “participation” and its scope. Also need to distinguish participation (participation in decision-making at all levels/stages from planning to follow up) from “consultation” involvement (usually information sharing).

Resource mobilisation

- There is need for increased domestic resource mobilisation to finance poverty reduction strategies instead of relying entirely on the limited resources freed from debt service payments. Increased domestic resource mobilisation would reduce the reliance on the IMF and World Bank and enable countries to develop home grown programmes.

Role of Governments

- Governments should seek regional solutions to tackle poverty, debt and HIV/AIDS. There is also a need to strengthen regional trading blocks to raise additional resources for poverty reduction.
- Governments need to involve civil society in the budgetary process and to ensure that the processes are transparent.
- Governments should institutionalise methods of communications with civil society in order to improve their participation in policy making.
- For effective civil society participation, governments should also facilitate access to documents by civil society, the translation of documents and to carry out systematic information dissemination during the PRSP process, as this would enhance grassroots participation.
- There is need for governments to create and maintain institutional frameworks that allow close collaboration with the civil society and the private sector. This would also increase their bargaining power in negotiations with IFIs and the Paris Club for further poverty reduction strategies.

Liberalisation and Privatisation

- Policy prescriptions of PRSPs relating to privatisation need to be examined critically to ensure that they will not disadvantage the poor by privatising essential services without guaranteeing continued access to these services at a price they can afford.
- Government should also ensure accountability and transparency in the privatisation process to ensure that it benefits the people. Governments should also come up with frameworks that to ensure that the poor also benefit from privatisation e.g. by using the proceeds for poverty reduction or ensuring that the poor can buy shares.

Appendix One
List of Participants

	<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Participant Name</u>	<u>Contacts</u>
1	FORDIA-Tanzania	B. Kaiza	Tel : 255 222 451 655/255 741 603 381 Fax: 255 222 451 655 Email: fordia@ud.co.tz
2	UDN-Uganda	Augustine Muserero	Tel: 256 41 543 974/533840 Fax: 256 41 534 850 Email: amuserero@udn.or.ug
3	IDS Journal of Peace – building and Development	Erin McCandles	Tel. 263-4- 705604 Cell: 263-11860086 E-mail: eccand@africaonline.co.zw
4	MDG: Mozambique Debt Group	W. Mulhovo	Tel: 258 14 304 85 – 6 / 82 443 774 Fax: 258 14 23 140 Email: divida@zebra.uem.mz
5	Institut Des Sciences Societies Burkina Faso	Dr Mamadou Lamine SANOGO	Tel: 226 36 92 14 Fax: 226 36 08 62 Email: ma-sng@yahoo.fr
6	ZIMCODD	Davie Malungisa	Tel: 091 302 953 Email: zimcodd@africaonline.co.zw
7	ZIMCODD	Amos Tinarwo	Tel: 091 302 953 Email: zimcodd@africaonline.co.zw
8	Poverty Reduction Forum	Judith Kaulem	Tel: 333 341/307 900 Fax: 333 345 Email:
9	Diakonia- South Africa	Lief Newman	Tel: 27 12 342 80 58 Fax: 27 12 342 80 57 Email: leif@diakonia.co.za or Diakonia@diakonia.co.za
10	UNDP	Mrs J Chipika	Tel: 263-4-792 681 – 6 Fax: 728 695 Email: fo.jesimen.chipika@undp.org
11	Consumer Council of Zimbabwe	Mr. Victor Chisi	Fax: 778 257
12	Christian Aid Southern Africa Team	Jane Drapkin Senior Policy Officer	Email: Gbarry@christian-aid.org
13	Trades Centre	Mr. Masiwa Rusare	Tel: 790 423 / 790 425 Fax: 790 431

14	Trades Centre	Mr. Evangelista Chomuyeke	Tel: 790 423 / 790 425 Fax: 790 431 Email: tradesc@africaonline.co.zw
15	Policy Development Consultants	Leonard Maveneka	Email: maveneka@africaonline.co.zw Cell: 091 233 988
16	Freelance Consultant	Megan Allardice	Tel: 302 809 Cell: 091 246 993 Email: moonlght@mweb.co.zw
17	IMF	Jerry Johnson	Fax: 263-4-737 074/5
18	Ministry of Finance	R. Mafekeni & Dr. Dzinotizei	Tel: 794 571
19	AFRODAD	Charles Mutasa	Tel: 702 093 Fax: 702 143 Email: charles@afrodad.co.zw
20	AFRODAD	Barbara Kalima	Tel: 702 093 Fax: 702 143 Email: barbara@afrodad.co.zw
21	Civil Society For Poverty Reduction in Zambia (CSPR)	Gregory Chikwanka	Tel: 260 1 290 154 Fax: 260 1 293 489 Email: cspr@zamnet.zm
22	SDF – PSL+SW Ministry of Public Service & Social services	Mwadzipaura Magaisa	Email: magaisa@sdf.org.zw
23	Kameri Consultancy Services - Kenya	Dr. Samuel Kameri	Tel. +254-251-3418 E-mail: samkameri@yahoo.com
24	TARSC - Zimbabwe	William Chikuvanyanga	Tel. 263 – 4- 7051108 Fax. 263-4-737220
25	Southern Africa Micro Capacity Building Facility (SAMCAF)	Dr. Teresa Moyo	Tel: 744 434, 745 246, 745 212 Fax: 745 018 Cell: 011 416 059 Email: tmoyo@samcaf.co.zw
26	ONG Mauritania 2000 Mauritania	DIA Amadou Bocar	Tel: 222 644 1796/525 6128 Fax: 222 5254631 Email: mauritanie-2000@mauritel.mr
27	AFRODAD	Tirivangani Mutazu	Tel: 702 093 Fax: 702 143 tiri@afrodad.co.zw