

Research Report 52

Assessing participation in poverty reduction strategy papers: a desk-based synthesis of experience in sub-Saharan Africa

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Contents

Acknowledgements	iv
List of abbreviations	v
Executive summary	vii
1 Scope of this review	1
2 The principle and practice of participation	3
2.1 How have international financial institutions, civil society organisations, bilateral donors and Governments interpreted the principle of participation in the poverty reduction strategy paper context?	3
2.2 Which roles have the various actors assumed in translating principles into practice?	6
2.3 What do participatory poverty reduction strategy paper processes look like in practice?	7
2.4 Which methods and approaches have been adopted?	8
3 What value has civil society participation added?	10
3.1 In terms of impact on the poverty reduction strategy paper process	10
3.2 In terms of impact on poverty reduction strategy paper content	12
3.3 In terms of impact on Government-donor dialogue	14
3.4 In terms of impact on poverty discourse	16
3.5 In terms of impact on policy processes more broadly	17
3.6 In terms of generating examples of good participatory practice	20
4 Conclusions and recommendations	22
4.1 Modest, but only modest, expectations have been satisfied on the depth and quality of participatory processes	23
4.2 Significant second-round effects from participation in poverty reduction strategy paper formulation can be expected	24
4.3 Recommendations	25
Annex 1 Terms of Reference	27
Annex 2 Country Profiles	30
Bolivia	30
Ghana	35
Kenya	38
Lesotho	43
Malawi	49
Mozambique	54
Rwanda	59
Tanzania	65
Uganda	69
Zambia	72
Annex 3 Summary of findings on participation in SPA PRSP Institutionalisation Study	77
Annex 4 Sources consulted	79

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The views expressed in this paper are the authors' and draw on the perspectives of those whom we interviewed and whose material we reviewed. They do not necessarily represent those of the Department for International Development (DFID).

Abbreviations

APED	Africa Policy and Economics Department, DFID
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy of the World Bank
CS	Civil society
CSO	Civil society organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
GTZ	German Technical Co-operation
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative
IDS	Institute of Development Studies, UK
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IDA	International Development Association
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute, UK
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRSC	Poverty Reduction Support Credit
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SPA	Strategic Partnership with Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	World Bank

Executive summary

This desk review provides an update on practice and experiences of civil society participation in the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). It was commissioned by Department for International Development (DFID) and conducted from August–October 2001 by the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in the UK.

Findings

This report starts with an overview of how the principle of participation has been interpreted by a range of actors involved in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Interpretations vary between International Financial Institutions (IFIs), civil society and governments. Underpinning these variations is the difference between civil society participation as a means to a more effective poverty reduction strategy, and participation as a means for non-governmental actors to gain voice in their country's policy-making and political processes. The expectation by the IFIs that participation will generate a strong sense of country ownership seems to run counter to the sense among many governments, at least in the early stages of their PRSP process, that it is an externally-imposed condition to be met. A diversity of understandings emerges about how far to extend participation, and whether, and how, Parliaments should be involved. Different actors have assumed different roles according to their interpretations and expectations.

In practice, in the first round of PRSP formulation, 'participation' has generally been limited to consultation, leading to frustration among many civil society actors. The consultation practices adopted have been flawed in many respects, especially in terms of weak information provision, which limits the value of consulting. There are several reasons why consultation was the only realistic expectation in many countries; these relate to capacity, time pressure and limited exposure of governments, in particular, to other possible approaches and the benefits that they can bring beyond satisfying IFI requirements. That Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) have been conducted, or are being planned, in several countries, is a welcome development, but efforts will be needed to ensure that PPA practice too goes beyond mere consultation. Attention to participatory practices 'within' the civil society organisations, which have spoken on behalf of the poor in PRSP formulation merits greater attention than it has received to date.

Civil society participation has added value to PRSP processes in a range of ways. In terms of process, civil society lobbying has secured a more holistic, better-quality approach to participation than could have been expected otherwise. It has been crucial in widening public awareness of the process, and has also helped to orient the process and its leading actors better towards the realities of poverty on the ground. In the course of PRSP design, civil society organisations in many countries have learnt fast, and begun to formulate approaches to monitoring implementation of the strategy.

There is some evidence that civil society's efforts have affected PRSP content, particularly in drawing attention to issues of marginalisation, exclusion, regional differences in deprivation, in highlighting the impoverishing effects of corruption and poor governance. These contributions derive from the strongly multi-dimensional perspectives on poverty which civil society analysis and the findings from PPAs have brought to PRSP processes.

There are countries where civil society organisations (CSOs) have had little influence on the process or content of the PRSP, notably in the area of macro-economic policy, in which they have been permitted no part. Weaknesses in CSOs' capacity for policy analysis and advocacy have been such as to preclude effective involvement, particularly in this area.

Participatory processes appear to have had some effect on donor-government dialogue. Where governments have approached such processes with a degree of commitment, they have enhanced governments' negotiating power *vis-a-vis* IFIs, as well as adding legitimacy and credibility to the strategies presented for approval, and to governance systems more broadly. There is cause for concern, however, that by casting donors in the role of 'brokers of participation' PRSPs have increased donors' mandate to get involved in domestic social and political processes, thus accentuating their power over governments in ways which are not conducive to strengthened country ownership.

There appears to be some connection between civil society participation and a changing poverty discourse in several countries. The most observable changes centre on the adoption of a more multi-dimensional understanding of poverty, its causes and its solutions. However, given the general shift in this direction that have occurred in recent years in international poverty discourse, it is hard to assess how much these changes result from forces within and how much from the influence of these broader contextual changes.

What is perhaps most significant, though, is that civil society participation in PRSP processes in all countries is leading to a broadening and diversification of the actors who engage in poverty discourse and the policy process. The traditional dominance of technocrats and their expert knowledge is being challenged and enhanced by a range of different kinds of poverty knowledge, including experiential knowledge. Increased interaction has led to changes in government officials' attitudes towards CSOs and their ability to contribute to policy processes. The galvanising effect of PRSP processes on civil society, and the measures taken to increase CSOs' capacity for advocacy, have been critical in enabling civil society to prove itself in these new arenas.

This broadening of the poverty policy community is likely to enrich the substance of the discourse, but in itself, the opening up of the policy process to a wider range of interlocutors, including advocacy organisations, is a progressive outcome which suggests improvements in government responsiveness and in the chances that the concerns of the poor will be voiced and heard. The challenge now is to ensure that the multi-stakeholder structures established to promote participation in the PRSP process do not atrophy as soon as approval stage is reached, as appears to be happening in some countries, but that they continue and consolidate the gains made so far.

In the course of this review a number of interesting and innovative cases have come to light, which seem to represent good participatory practices. These are listed in section 3.6 and detailed further in the Country Profiles in Annex 2. While these merit attention and exploration, there is always a danger that looking for ‘models’ will lead to attempts to replicate them without due attention to the context and to the circumstances which enabled them. If there is one over-riding lesson from the experiences that we have reviewed in this study, it is about the importance of context and starting positions in determining outcomes.

Conclusions

This review suggests that on balance, civil society participation can add considerable value to PRSP processes and to transforming policy environments in ways that are beneficial to the poor and supportive of better governance and more responsive behaviour by governments and donor institutions. However, while we would assert with confidence that participation can add value, the review does not demonstrate conclusively that in all countries significant value has been added to date, nor that as much has been added as could be with better-quality participatory processes. Much remains to be done to consolidate and sustain the advances made so far.

As concluded by the prior Strategic Partnership with Africa (SPA)-commissioned study on PRSP Institutionalisation, modest expectations on the depth and quality of participatory processes have indeed been satisfied. But for the full potential of civil society participation to be realised, considerably higher intensity and better quality will be needed. This review supports the conclusion of the PRSP Institutionalisation Study that the many kinds of impact detected in this first round of PRSP formulation have left both civil society and, to a lesser extent, governments much better equipped to engage with each other fruitfully in future iterations of their PRSP processes. We would emphasise, though, that before looking to second-round processes, there is much to be done to ensure that participatory processes deliver their full potential in the implementation and monitoring of first-round PRSPs. In this regard, plans for participatory PRSP monitoring need further elaboration and support.

Recommendations

There are many limitations to a desk review as the approach for assessing some of the issues we have attempted to cover here. It is therefore strongly recommended that this review be followed up with empirical research in a selection of countries, which permits more in-depth analysis and understanding on several issues highlighted in the Terms of Reference of the desk review, and also looks at some new issues arising from it. These are:

- How the poor have experienced PRSP processes, and whether and how these have changed their relationship to policy-making;
- to what extent the changes in policy rhetoric evinced in PRSP documents are accompanied by actual shifts in poverty discourses;

- which weaknesses in capacity need to be addressed in civil society and government in order that plans for participatory monitoring of PRSP implementation can be realised;
- the extent to which participatory practices can be identified within civil society, and how this affects the credibility and legitimacy of CSO representatives;
- which conflicts arose in the course of civil society participation in PRSP processes and how they were resolved (or not), and
- what the various actors' expectations of civil society participation are and how they have evolved as the process moves forward.

1 Scope of this review

This desk review was commissioned by DFID to provide broad preliminary answers to a set of questions about the nature and impact of civil society participation in PRSP processes (listed in full in the Terms of Reference at Annex 1).¹ It was undertaken between August and October 2001, with a view to following up with a second phase in which in-country research would provide more substantial and in-depth answers to similar questions for a selection of countries.

A variety of information sources were used. First, existing studies, reports and electronic information bulletins on PRSPs were identified. General and targeted searches for further documentation then ensued, through requests to a wide range of contacts in donor headquarters, donor in-country missions, international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), southern NGOs, southern academic establishments and southern government departments. In several cases, telephone interviews were conducted with respondents who could provide an informed perspective on the PRSP process in a particular country. Relevant events held in the UK during the study's time-frame were attended and treated as information-gathering opportunities. An important secondary source was the SPA-commissioned PRSP Institutionalisation Study, which reviewed participation as one among many aspects of PRSP processes in the eight countries it covered.² Since this was the main research study to have looked at the issue, its findings on participation constituted a significant input.³

Time was short, especially since the team was heavily dependent on positive and swift responses from those they approached for information. In a period of two months, documentation was gathered; key respondents were identified in several countries; telephone interviews were conducted; a preliminary review was made of the documentation that was forthcoming; a conceptual framework was developed and refined, based on the Terms of Reference; ten country profiles were produced;⁴ and drawing on these country profiles plus other non-country-specific information, the report was drafted.

As a desk study of short duration, and moreover a snapshot of a process which is 'live' and ongoing in African countries, and in early stages in many of them, this review was subject to a range of constraints. All actors involved in PRSP processes occupy a particular institutional or organisational role, which shapes their perspective.⁵ In attempting to draw a balanced assessment from these multiple viewpoints it is desirable to analyse as many and as comprehensive a range of perspectives as possible. A number of factors limited our scope to achieve this, so we start by acknowledging some limitations.

Information requested was in some cases not forthcoming within the study period. In particular, it proved hard to contact respondents for telephone interviews. Efforts at purposive sampling of a good

¹ The review aimed to update a study carried out by IDS in 2000 which looked at PRSPs in prospect and synthesised past experience with using participatory approaches to policy-making, implementation and monitoring. (See McGee with Norton 2000).

² Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania (ODI 2000; ODI 2001).

³ See Annex 3 for a summary of these.

⁴ See Annex 2. These cover Bolivia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

⁵ We include ourselves, as analysts of these processes.

spread of respondents necessarily turned into a somewhat random trawl for inputs. Few contacts and information sources were identified in Francophone countries (except Rwanda) and as a result these were covered only minimally, using secondary sources. For many countries more information is available on Interim PRSP⁶ processes than on full PRSPs and what is available on full PRSPs generally refers to the formulation stage only. I-PRSPs are of course not subject to the same requirement of a participatory process that full PRSPs are, so participation in them cannot be assessed on the same criteria as for full PRSPs. In many countries, only plans for PRSP formulation have been spelt out in any detail, and plans for implementation and monitoring remain somewhat vague, especially in their reference to civil society's role. There has been little time or opportunity so far for most Government and civil society actors involved in the intensive and complex task of developing PRSPs to reflect, analyse and write about the process. Civil society organisations especially have little capacity to document, systematise and publicise their experiences of engagement; a heavy reliance on documented sources implies that their perspectives are covered only in patchy fashion. Because of these factors, at this point no study can be sure of gaining a balanced and comprehensive view of the process in any single country, or overall.

Broader contextual factors also need to be recognised. Different country contexts are either conducive or not conducive to participatory PRSP processes in various degrees and ways. In this short desk review, which spanned a large number of countries, it was not always possible to take full cognisance of context and duly reflect it in our assessment. Furthermore, PRSPs are but one among a range of policy initiatives under way in all the countries we looked at. The nature, consequences and impacts of the PRSP process are hard to isolate from other ongoing processes.

Overall, these constraints meant that only tentative answers can be given to some of the questions in our Terms of Reference. Some questions cannot be reliably answered: in particular how the poor have experienced and understood PRSPs, and whether PRSPs have changed the poor's relationship to policy-making processes and their influence on policy content. Answering this in a brief desk review presupposed good access to informants who had been closely involved with poor communities during PRSP processes. The only sources we could contact who claimed to represent the poor in PRSP processes were urban-based organisations, in some cases with tenuous links to poor communities, and none had evaluated the process from the perspective of their poor constituencies. For similar reasons of access to appropriate sources, we could make no reliable assessment of the implications of participatory PRSP processes on informal policy-making processes. Pragmatism was therefore needed in developing the framework for this report.

A number of measures were taken to compensate for the limitations noted. Efforts were made to cross-check and triangulate documents against each other and where possible with insights of observers. Caution was exercised in using and interpreting the term 'civil society', since we could not be certain how

⁶ Interim PRSPs are preliminary documents produced within a shorter period than the full PRSP, to enable the country to qualify for debt relief. They are meant to provide a 'road-map' to the process by which the full PRSP will be produced.

representative our sources were of all civil society views. The main report uses the term fairly uncritically as shorthand, but in the country profiles wherever possible we state which elements of ‘civil society’ we are referring to. Given the special difficulties of contacting government officials for interview, we sought advice from the team conducting the SPA PRSP Institutionalisation Study as to how comprehensive their coverage of government views had been in the eight countries studied therein. Having ascertained that we were unlikely to capture a significant amount of new information by pursuing interviews with government respondents (Booth pers. comm. 2001), we used their country reports as secondary sources on these instead.

Once it became clear that we would only have enough information on nine or ten African countries to make reasonably confident assertions about them, a decision was taken to produce detailed profiles on these countries and draw largely on them. One non-African country, Bolivia, was also profiled, because we felt it offered useful insights on participatory processes that could be relevant in African cases. Sections 2–5 of this report draw heavily on these ten country profiles. Information on other countries or from cross-country perspectives has not been discarded, but has been taken into consideration in drafting the report, though often treated with more circumspection because it is not well-triangulated.

On the positive side, these limitations have been useful in formulating the conclusions and recommendations offered in this desk review. Our Terms of Reference include helping to shape a prospective follow-up phase of work comprising a longer-term multi-country study. Several of the limitations we faced in this first phase can be overcome in such a follow-up study, as we propose in section 5. Meanwhile, this preliminary review, with all the qualifications outlined here, provides both an overview of current status that is of immediate use to those engaging with PRSP processes, and a basis for informing and designing a more in-depth future analysis.

Section 2 gives an assessment of how the principle of participation has been understood and put into practice by donors, IFIs and CSOs. Section 3 addresses the question of what value participation has added to PRSPs, focusing on several different areas of process, policy content and broader policy environment where change might be expected to occur as a result of participatory processes; and summarises some good-practice examples. Section 4 presents concluding comments and recommendations.

2 The principle and practice of participation

2.1 How have international financial institutions, civil society organisations, bilateral donors and Governments interpreted the principle of participation in the poverty reduction strategy paper context?

Assessing the nature and impact of participatory PRSP processes requires prior analysis of how the principle of participation has been understood and supported by donors, IFIs, governments and civil society actors engaging in PRSPs, and of how that understanding has been put into practice.

Pre-dating the introduction of PRSPs, several understandings of participation were current among development actors around the globe. Some of these related specifically to the expectations of what

participatory processes can achieve in relation to poverty reduction, policy-making, or poverty reduction policy. Some of these expectations were explicitly built into the PRSP framework, or at least the PRSP rhetoric. Others were projected onto the PRSP by variously-positioned actors, on the basis of their broader understanding of participation, when they were contemplating taking on the role of participants in PRSP processes. Some actors have understood PRSPs to promote participation by civil society alone, and others to promote parliamentary participation as well.

Embodied in the PRSP framework by the IFIs, is the expectation that participation by civil society in developing and implementing the strategies will, first, deliver a sense of broad-based ownership, not only by government, but by civil and political society at large. To the IFIs, national ownership is an important political imperative⁷ and also favours commitment to, and successful implementation of, policies. Secondly, participation is expected to strengthen democratic governance and accountability in countries where poverty is related to weak government accountability and the disenfranchisement of large sectors of the population.

Translating these expectations into operational recommendations, the PRSP framework advocates participation of poor people in poverty analysis, prioritisation of public actions to be addressed in the strategy, and monitoring governments' delivery of the commitments made in strategies. The World Bank has promoted these recommendations by making its approval of PRSPs conditional, in principle, on an acceptable participatory process; and initially by offering a 'toolkit' of participatory approaches, as evidenced in its PRSP Sourcebook (World Bank n.d.). The Bank has not specified what constitutes an acceptable participatory process, recognising that there is a great diversity of country contexts and capacities to develop one. It appears not to have applied this condition systematically when approving PRSPs.⁸ Despite protestations to the contrary, the short time which the PRSP framework allowed for countries to produce a PRSP, based on 'broad-based participation' suggests, at least at the outset, that the Bank understood participation as something that could be achieved using a standard set of tools and methods, rather than as a lengthy process with its own, sometimes unpredictable, dynamics.

An alternative or additional understanding of civil society participation is held by many NGOs, which have long pursued participatory approaches to development projects, planning and, more recently, policy advocacy. For them, the participation of poor and disenfranchised people in the decisions affecting their lives is a right. Rather than a means to an end, it is an end in itself, which, by creating a space in which people can have some voice, reduces their poverty.

The expectations of CSOs, and to some extent bilateral donors, appear to have conflicted in some PRSP processes with IFIs' more instrumentalist positions.

⁷ The imperative derives largely from experience with structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s and 1990s. See World Bank (2001) on the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative, especially p4.

⁸ The guidelines for Joint Staff Assessments of PRSPs produced by the World Bank and IMF requires staff missions to make an assessment of all other areas to which conditions apply, but to give a 'description' of the participatory process, suggesting that this cannot be a decisive factor in approving or rejecting the paper.

Some Governments appear to have started the PRSP process with no particular understanding of participation as a principle, nor expectations of it beyond satisfying the IFIs' requirements (Ghana). Some perceive it as a challenge, which they have limited capacity to meet.⁹ Others juxtapose the dominant IFI approach to civil society participation through Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs), consultation meetings and citizen monitoring, with longstanding national traditions of participation, and in some cases find significant differences between the two (Mozambique). Others still consider themselves ahead of IFIs in promoting a participatory approach to policy-making, with little need to change their current practice in response to IF requirements, and indeed, with much to teach IFIs on the subject.¹⁰ A few view participation as a way to achieve key national aims which go broader than attaining debt relief or achieving implementable PRSPs.¹¹

Thus, some Governments have approached participatory PRSP processes with a minimalist attitude, in many cases dictated by constrained circumstances and capacity,¹² while others have embraced them more holistically, aiming at strong cross-government or Parliamentary involvement as well as gathering inputs from civil society.¹³ Whether minimalist or holistic in approach, most governments appear to interpret 'participation' as virtually synonymous with 'consultation'. Given their limited experience with participation, this does not necessarily indicate unwillingness to go further than consulting: tools for consultation are readily available and can be applied even by the relatively inexperienced and under time pressure, whereas the same cannot be said for more far-reaching and intensive participatory approaches.

In some quarters, calls have arisen for benchmarks against which the course of the participatory process and its acceptability can be judged. Pressure to establish international benchmarks has so far been resisted by the World Bank and DFID on the grounds that starting conditions and scope vary widely between countries. Rejecting universal standards, however, does not preclude donors supporting actors in-country to develop benchmarks of good quality and assess progress towards them, something in which various bilaterals have shown interest.¹⁴

The issue of Parliamentary participation has gained prominence over the two years since the PRSP framework was introduced. Strong positions are now articulated: 'Where Parliament is not participating then civil society participation is in danger of re-inventing democracy' (Levine (Lesotho) pers. comm. 2001; Pepera pers. comm. 2001). In several cases Parliamentary participation has been slight (Booth 2001: 11). In cases like Tanzania where understandings of participation have extended to ensuring Parliament has a significant role, the part it has played is considered to have been an important investment

⁹ The provision of expertise by donors is strongly appreciated in some of these cases, e.g. by the Bank in the Gambia.

¹⁰ In Uganda, some claim the PRSP model was based on what was already happening there, with heavy support from bilateral donors and strong leadership by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.

¹¹ For example, Rwanda, where the overriding national objective to which participation is expected to contribute is national reconciliation from communities upward, and the fostering of local self-reliance in a post-conflict situation.

¹² Ghana, Mozambique.

¹³ This seems to be the case for the Gambia, at least as far as can be judged from Government statements of intent.

¹⁴ To our knowledge, DFID and GTZ.

in the country's democratic process (KK Consulting Associates (Tanzania) 2001). However, the SPA-commissioned PRSP Institutionalisation Study (ODI 2000; ODI 2001; Booth 2001) also cautions that there may be good reasons why Parliaments have not been brought into the PRSP. Rather than their involvement being a matter of course, it suggests, their quality should be a factor in deciding whether and how far to involve them.

2.2 Which roles have the various actors assumed in translating principles into practice?

The IMF seems scarcely to have been involved with participatory processes, except through the advisory role its Social Development Advisors have played, which has been critical in supporting governments in some countries (Mozambique). World Bank staff have adopted different roles in different countries. These range from direct intervention to mediating between governments and CSOs to responding to invitations from CSOs to hold dialogues with them.¹⁵

Of the roles bilateral donors have played, our information only permits us to speak confidently about DFID. DFID's role appears to have been more consistent across countries than that of the Bank. It has sought to mediate and support rather than intervene; to promote donor co-ordination and harmonisation of approaches to participation, and to work on strengthening both sides (civil society and government) to engage with each other.¹⁶

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) determined in 2001 that its focus in PRSP countries would be on improving participatory and consultative processes (van Diesen pers. comm. 2001). We do not have enough information on its actual activities to gauge how far this intention is being realised, except for Lesotho, where it is playing this role strongly in PRSP formulation.

CSOs have played two roles, often led in both by umbrella organisations. In most countries, they have been, initially at least, willing and uncritical participants in Government-led processes; more recently dissenting voices have been raised about the agenda behind Government consultation and the impact CSOs have been allowed to have.¹⁷ As well as, or instead of, this role, depending on their assessment of the likely impact of participating in Government-led processes, CSOs have also established parallel processes in which they invite broader civil society or the public to participate or, more accurately, to be consulted.¹⁸ They then use various entry-points: sympathetic officials, media campaigns, well-targeted lobbying at public meetings, to feed the outputs of these processes into official deliberations. Nearly everywhere it seems, large numbers of urban and rural CSOs feel that their background in service delivery

¹⁵ In Ghana the IFIs have convened meetings between CSOs and Government; in Zambia and Kenya they have facilitated CSOs' access to documentation Government is not willing to provide; in Malawi and Mozambique they have accepted CSOs' invitations to dialogues.

¹⁶ In Mozambique, the DFID commissioned a consultancy to identify ways a like-minded group of bilaterals could support both government and civil society in engaging with each other in the PRSP process and beyond (see McGee and Taimo 2001).

¹⁷ For example, a 'Kampala Declaration' rejecting the PRSP framework and the restricted form of participation that CSOs are offered in it was issued in May 2001 by a consortium of African NGOs.

¹⁸ Bolivia, Tanzania.

leaves them ill-equipped to participate in policy advocacy (Calaguas pers. comm. 2001). Some have therefore left direct participation to the NGO umbrella organisations to which they belong and which are generally urban and have some advocacy experience (though often narrowly sectoral or thematic, rather than on broader poverty issues) and connections in policy circles.

2.3 What do participatory poverty reduction strategy paper processes look like in practice?

The flaws in participatory processes have been much noted by those involved in them.¹⁹ Attention has focused particularly on poorly-conceived, rushed, exclusive and badly-organised consultation procedures, failure to provide essential information to participants, inadequate time allowed for participants to analyse drafts before commenting on them, and lack of transparency in selecting participants. Rather than labouring these defects here, we take it that they exist and have been amply signalled by others, and that the ways to remedy them are known and will be increasingly applied.²⁰ We focus here instead on broader issues of the process.

The vast majority of governments, if not all, have designed and implemented strategies for civil society participation, which in the participatory development lexicon would be more accurately termed ‘consultative’.²¹ This has been said of even the Ugandan process (Vadera pers. comm. 2001), widely held to be a good model.

However, the significance and influence of consultations depends heavily on the dynamics that surround them, which vary widely from case to case. In some cases, consultations happen as part of a process, which CSOs have helped to design and/or in which the consultation agenda has been heavily influenced by earlier PPAs, as in Uganda. Sometimes consultation has been considered the appropriate approach at PRSP formulation stage, with more meaningful participation contemplated, though rarely clearly articulated yet, for later stages like monitoring. In other cases, consultation has been the chosen approach because of lack of knowledge or experience in other approaches and the relative technical ease with which they can be organised and carried out.²² Some governments have probably opted for consultation, because approaches that imply more civil society influence in policy, are unpalatable to them. Some acknowledge that restricting ‘participation’ to ‘consultation’ is a short-term expedient, falling short

¹⁹ These are listed in many of the CSO documents we reviewed, as well as being noted as likely weak points before PRSP processes got off the ground (see McGee with Norton 2000).

²⁰ MEJN 2001d sets out steps for good procedure, as does McGee with Norton (2000).

²¹ The participatory development literature offers several schema, typologies or ‘ladders’ of participation, setting out the forms it can take. ‘Consultation’ is generally taken as a relatively low-intensity form in which participants may express views without any commitment from those inviting their participation that these views will be taken into account. A more intensive form, where such commitment does exist, is often referred to as ‘joint decision-making’ (see McGee with Norton 2000).

²² This is not to imply that they have been well organised and well conducted in all cases.

of the ideal, and commit themselves to more meaningful participatory processes in future once capacity levels are higher.²³

Where there was already a government drive to foster civil society participation in policy processes, PRSP processes have strengthened it and left actors on all sides better equipped for it (Uganda, Bolivia). Where there was not, there appears to be a risk, or actual evidence, that poorly conducted consultative processes, with ambivalent outcomes, have undermined chances that a more participatory policy culture will develop.²⁴

2.4 Which methods and approaches have been adopted?

The standard approach by Governments has been to hold a series of consultations in regions and at the national level to which ‘representatives’ of civil society, often identified by government but in some cases by CSOs at government’s behest, are invited to contribute inputs to analysing poverty and prioritising public actions. In these tasks they are expected to draw on their operational and advocacy experience and on their familiarity with poor communities and their needs. National consultations have in some cases been general in scope, and in others organised along sectoral or thematic lines. Regional, zonal or District consultations usually focus on the locality and, where administrations are significantly decentralised, are expected to influence local plans, budgets and actions. Some governments, recognising CSOs’ stronger networks in poor rural areas and superior experience in facilitating workshops, have contracted out the facilitation of consultations to CSOs.²⁵

In some countries CSOs have also been provided with draft PRSP documents on which to comment or submit written feedback (Mozambique), often within time limits that do not allow them to consult with their own constituencies.

In some cases, clear channels are established for the outputs of consultations or feedback on drafts to filter into the deliberations of the government task force or steering committee responsible for drafting the PRSP, or into local government plans and actions. But in many, what is said at consultations is perceived by participants to have disappeared into a ‘black box’ where Ministry of Finance officials, equipped with donor-supported technical assistance and budgetary information not available to the public, write a plan which little reflects their inputs (Houghton (Kenya) pers. comm. 2001).

A handful of tried and tested participatory approaches to poverty analysis have been used in various countries to guide PRSP formulation. Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) have been undertaken to inform the poverty analysis that underpins the PRSP²⁶ and/or PPAs have been written into

²³ The Government of Mozambique acknowledges this in the PRSP document itself, which also contains measures for improving government capacity to develop more participatory processes (Republic of Mozambique 2001). Lesotho’s I-PRSP does so too.

²⁴ In Mozambique this appeared to be the case, until the final draft of the PRSP appeared with the commitments mentioned earlier, which may restore legitimacy to Government’s actions in civil society’s eyes.

²⁵ For example, the Gambia, Uganda, Kenya, Bolivia.

²⁶ Kenya, Rwanda, Lesotho in preparation. In Uganda the PPA predated the PRSP concept, but was used extensively in revising the national strategy, which became the PRSP.

implementation plans as monitoring mechanisms or data-gathering exercises to inform second-round PRSPs.²⁷

Despite the name, PPAs have not always been participatory, and some would be more aptly termed qualitative data-gathering exercises.²⁸ Some of those conducted for PRSP purposes, however, have included problem-ranking or solution ranking which are designed to inform policy prioritisation and budget allocations.²⁹

The sharing of information with CSOs who take an active part in PRSP processes has been patchy. Governments have often appeared reluctant to share early drafts of PRSPs or budgetary information, which would be pertinent in consultative prioritisation exercises. Information dissemination to the population at large has been variously undertaken by government, conducted by CSOs, or left to the will of the media. Forms range from TV, radio and newspaper announcements,³⁰ to the use of popular song and drama (The Gambia). In general, information seems not to have reached rural populations in time to encourage broad and well-informed participation in consultations; civil society has sometimes taken over the task of information dissemination when they consider government's efforts or plans inadequate (Mozambique).

The question of who has been able to take part, or whose views have been represented by those civil society actors able to take part, is a thorny one. The fact that civil society (often NGO) umbrellas have been the most active participants in many countries has its positive side. Networks of policy advocates have sprung up where none existed, or have been strengthened in numbers, capacity, confidence, contacts and influence. Some of these represent people or interests that were previously very marginalised, like the Pastoralist Strategy Group in Kenya. Governments have been induced to recognise their useful contributions.

But an important factor in assessing participation by civil society in government-led processes is whether participatory processes take place within civil society, lending legitimacy, representativity, transparency and credibility to the inputs which CSO spokespersons bring to their dialogue with governments. How representative CSO networks and umbrellas are of civil society in general, and in particular of poor communities, needs to be questioned. In some cases, representativity is limited by the CSO restricted capacity to do outreach and consult constituencies; in others because they are dominated by urban professionals with little 'natural' constituency among poor communities, or by interest groups more interested in pressing their own case.³¹ With participatory processes happening under the pressures of conditionality and time shortage, the representativity of key civil society participants and their ability

²⁷ Tanzania, Mozambique.

²⁸ On this general point about PPAs Whitehead and Lockwood (1999) is instructive.

²⁹ The Rwanda PPA is part of a complex of consultative and participatory approaches and does seem to enable poor communities' participation in local government planning through the development and funding of Community Action Plans.

³⁰ In Uganda, Malawi, Tanzania, Rwanda and Kenya.

³¹ For example, the Mozambique PRSP seems to have been influenced more by private sector consortiums than by the NGO network which spearheaded NGO engagement.

and disposition to express the poor's concerns has not always been sufficiently explored by Governments, IFIs, donors or CSOs themselves. In these circumstances, any actor seeking to constrain civil society influence on the PRSP or undermine participation, has good grounds for challenging CSOs to prove their mandate, and allege that they represent no-one, whereas government officials are elected representatives of the people.

Whatever one's position on the feasibility and desirability of direct participation by poor people in formulating national policy, it remains a concern that some of the main CSO actors in PRSPs do not have broad legitimacy as representatives of the poor's interests. This issue needs deeper analysis than is possible in a short desk review, but is a vitally important element that must be addressed in an effort to improve the quality and impact of participation in PRSPs.

It is noteworthy that of all the countries we analysed in detail, only Rwanda seems to have designed a participatory process, which builds consciously and closely on local participatory traditions and cultural norms.³² This is not because such traditions do not exist elsewhere, but because they have become submerged by, or integrated with, the dominant approach promoted by IFIs, donors and national actors, who have been exposed to the international discourse and practice of participatory policy-making.

3 What value has civil society participation added?

Have the expected benefits ensued from civil society participation? This section looks at various aspects of PRSP processes and the policy environments in PRSP countries, and assesses how far expectations have been met.

3.1 In terms of impact on the poverty reduction strategy paper process

Civil society efforts to influence the PRSP process can be divided into initiatives which sought to ensure that a participatory process took place, and ways in which participation influenced other aspects of the process.

In promoting participatory processes, civil society's main achievements were in the areas of information-sharing, broadening the range of the process through inclusion of civil society members in official PRSP task forces, and quality enhancement.

Civil society efforts have undoubtedly helped to raise public awareness of PRSP processes. Much CSO effort went into informing, first, CSOs themselves, and then the broader public. In Malawi, the main civil society network pushed for media advertisements to be placed, explaining the PRSP, and for Government to publish progress reports at various stages. In Uganda, the Uganda Debt Network and the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process³³ ran radio and television information spots; in Tanzania, civil society, with donor support, produced a 'plain language guide to the PRSP' (Hakikazi Catalyst and Masoud 2001), which was distributed widely in English and local languages.

³² See Annex 2, Rwanda.

In PRSP formulation, the inclusion of civil society members in government-led PRSP Task Forces and Steering Groups has occurred everywhere, albeit to different degrees and requiring different amounts of CSO pressure to make it happen. This has enhanced the acceptability and legitimacy attached to the process by civil society and the public, especially where representatives were nominated by CSOs, as in Malawi and Uganda, among others.

Civil society concern over the quality of the participatory process has led to lobbying for an extension of the time-frame in some cases. In Zambia and Malawi, CSOs campaigned successfully for time extensions, but in Malawi, the CSOs themselves doubt whether the additional time has increased the quality of the process at all (Lawson pers. comm. 2001). In Mozambique IFI encouragement to slow down the process so as to attend more closely to civil society participation has added to the degree of interaction between civil society and government.

Apart from contributing to making PRSP processes participatory, civil society can be credited for broadening the range of perspectives that oriented the formulation process. This has happened largely through the agency of civil society members on official Task Forces, or through the lobbying efforts of CSOs engaged in parallel poverty analysis and strategy processes. The perspectives on poverty that CSO actors brought to PRSP processes³⁴ were generally less income-based and more rooted in the live experience of poor people than those of government officials, and their grassroots experience was an important complement to the technical knowledge of their government counterparts.³⁵ In Zambia, civil society made its inputs to the PRSP by forming working groups along similar lines to those of Government, but extending the remit of some of these to better reflect issues of concern to the poor, adding 'HIV/AIDS' to the theme of Health, and 'Growth, Agriculture and Food Security' to the theme of Agriculture. In Kenya, the CSO Pastoralist Strategy Group lobbied successfully for pastoralist areas and concerns to be covered by the PPA and thereafter incorporated into the PRSP (Scott-Villiers pers. comm. 2001; Kisopia 2001) and a gender advocacy group lobbied for gender-awareness in the PRSP process, inserting spokespersons for gender equality at strategic points in the process (Shiverenje n.d.)³⁶. In Rwanda the influence of an international NGO advisor in designing the PRSP process for Government was strong, making operational the government's commitment to participation despite the lack of local capacity in this area.

The involvement of civil society in monitoring implementation of PRSPs has been proposed in some cases by CSOs and in others by government. In Uganda the Uganda Debt Network instigated Civil Society Monitoring Committees to monitor the expenditure of the Poverty Action Fund (ring-fenced debt relief monies) and worked to secure central and local government co-operation. In Mozambique

³³ Supported by and housed in the Ministry of Finance but managed by OXFAM-Uganda and with close ties to civil society poverty advocacy groups.

³⁴ In Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda among others.

³⁵ This is true for some cases at least, notwithstanding the questions raised in the previous section about CSOs' ability to represent the poor.

³⁶ Civil society involvement has not always secured greater attention to gender issues in poverty diagnosis, however; one weakness noted in the first round of the Gambia PPA was its lack of attention to these. Gender was addressed better in the second round (Touray, I. pers. comm. 2001).

Government invited CSOs to develop plans for monitoring implementation; and in Tanzania engagement with CSOs throughout formulation has led Government to recognise their potential role in monitoring. CSO participation at that stage can be expected to make expenditure more transparent and more widely publicised, and to reduce misuse of debt relief funds. It may also give civil society participants a greater sense of empowerment than any other form of engagement, perhaps encouraging the continued involvement of even the CSOs, which have become disillusioned with the limits of consultation as a form of participation.

CSOs in some countries have not made a significant attempt to influence the process, because the opportunity to engage with it came at short notice and/or caught them unprepared, under-resourced or lacking sufficient information to formulate proposals (Houghton pers. comm. 2001).³⁷ In Rwanda it is only international NGOs, which worked to influence the process, given lack of capacity among local ones.³⁸ International NGO weight has been added to local lobbying for a participatory PRSP process in Bolivia;³⁹ and sharing of experiences by international NGOs have helped civil society in Lesotho and Mozambique, among others, to shape their demands for meaningful participation.

We must also note cases where even significant CSO efforts achieved little impact on the PRSP process. Some of these are in countries where civil society was trying to exert influence through accepting invitations to participate in government-led consultations.⁴⁰ Other countries where impact on process proved elusive, perhaps predictably, are Tanzania and Bolivia, where civil society established its own process of consultation, visioning and critique, recognising the low potential for influence through processes into which they were invited by governments.

3.2 In terms of impact on poverty reduction strategy paper content

There are several respects in which civil society participation does seem to have influenced the content of PRSPs, and some in which it definitely has not.

Civil society inputs have influenced the way that the nature, causes, and spatial and demographic distribution of poverty have been represented and addressed in PRSPs. Strong advocacy for certain themes, notably gender inequality and HIV/AIDS to be treated as cross-cutting dimensions of poverty, was successful in Malawi and Kenya, although not in Tanzania (Tanzania Gender Networking Project 2001), and not in general according to one international NGO's review of several PRSPs (Marshall *et al.* 2001). That traditional agricultural policies appear to have been tempered by broader 'sustainable livelihood' perspectives, seems to be connected to civil society lobbying for this in Kenya, Zambia and Bolivia.

³⁷ For example, Lesotho: Levine pers. comm. (2001); Mozambique: McGee and Taimo (2001).

³⁸ These international NGO inputs took up and made operational in the participatory process, the stress on local forms of participation embraced by Government.

³⁹ Notably through the Jubilee 2000 coalition.

⁴⁰ Ghana, for example; and Kenya where CSOs failed in their efforts to get Government to revise at full PRSP stage positions set out in the I-PRSP.

More attention to analysing the different ways that poverty affects different population groups is in some cases followed through with policy measures targeting these groups.⁴¹ Measures to address gender gaps are included in the Rwanda PRSP, probably as a result of civil society consultations on the subject funded by a donor; in Bolivia and Ghana pressure in these areas did not result in concrete policy measures. Regional disparities in poverty levels have in some cases come to the fore or been reiterated through PPAs, and in at least one case, Uganda, commitments made to address these.⁴²

In terms of achieving shifts in policy priorities, civil society lobbying or consultation findings seem to have had some effect. In the Bolivia PRSP, small producers and the informal sector receive recognition as sub-sectors requiring supportive policies to enhance their potential contribution to growth. There are clear indications in Uganda that findings from the PPA and civil society consultations on the PRSP led directly to shifts in government's policy priorities for poverty reduction, with water provision and insecurity receiving increased prominence (Bird pers. comm. 2001; Kakande pers. comm. 2001). Priority-ranking by poor communities in the Rwandan PPA directly informed policy prioritisation and budget allocations in the PRSP. In Tanzania, however, government sources acknowledge that the PRSP contains no significant policy shifts, whether arising from civil society demands or not, with respect to earlier strategies, or whether arising from civil society inputs or not. Civil society advocacy for the abolition of user fees for social services was not successful there (Tanzania Gender Networking Project 2001).

New and previously sensitive issues have appeared on the poverty agenda in various countries as a result of revelations made in PPAs or civil society consultation workshops. Widespread public denouncement of the impoverishing effects of corruption, lack of accountability, poor governance and political interference in development planning in Malawi, Uganda, Ghana and Mozambique have led to the inclusion in some PRSPs (Uganda, Mozambique) of measures to address these.

Having listed several respects in which civil society participation has had an impact on policy content, we must now turn to the respects in which they have not. One information source, with a broad overview of civil society efforts to participate in PRSPs in Africa, stressed that in analysing what difference participation had made, it was more relevant, in his experience, to look for continuity than change in policy content (Houghton pers. comm. 2001). There is broad consensus among our civil society sources in Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Bolivia that NGOs and their coalitions have been totally unable to influence macroeconomic policy or even engage governments in dialogue about it. We should note here that this does not include the views of any private sector sources; there is other evidence that private sector actors have influenced macroeconomic and investment policy in at least one case where development NGOs have been unable to.⁴³ Neither have we much information about how research institutions and academic advisors have influenced PRSPs' macroeconomic policy content; though this is

⁴¹ For example, relatively high budgets for education bursaries for girls in pastoralist areas in Kenya (Kisopia 2001); child nutrition programmes for children in Malawi (Marcus 2001).

⁴² In Uganda the PPA findings regarding different levels and manifestations of poverty in different Districts are said to be influencing the way in which 'equalisation grants' are calculated and the criteria governing their use (Bird and Kakande, in Norton *et al.* 2001)

⁴³ For example Mozambique, see McGee and Taimo (2001); IMF and IDA (2001).

likely the case, these actors have probably not generally sought to represent the interests of poor populations.

Many civil society sources cite weaknesses in their own capacity as a prime reason why they failed to make an impact on PRSP content, besides the reluctance of governments and IFIs to extend consultations to macroeconomic policy issues. Many consider themselves ill-equipped to do advocacy at all, and especially to conduct rigorous analysis of policy documents. (Calaguas pers. comm. 2001; Godfrey and Sheehy 2001; Christian Aid 2001). While the 'soft policy areas' of health and education are ones they are often familiar with through operational work or professional training, capacity to analyse and formulate macroeconomic policy is virtually non-existent in the southern NGO sector.

A further explanation for the CSO failure to influence PRSP content in some cases is the low degree to which they were able to engage with the process at all. Where their participation was limited to giving feedback on complete draft documents or voicing opinions at large consultation workshops, or their access to relevant documentation was highly restricted, influencing content was never a strong possibility (Ghana, Mozambique).

3.3 In terms of impact on Government-donor dialogue

The requirement that PRSP processes be participatory is intended to lead to the development of a broader base for policy. There are several ways in which civil society participation itself, or the fact that the participation requirement has been considered by IFIs and donors to be adequately met, might in principle be expected to have affected Government-donor dialogue. This might be summarised as enhancing governments' negotiating power, *vis-a-vis* IFIs, legitimacy, and credibility.

First, the introduction of process conditionality in the PRSP framework, mainly in the form of the promotion of national ownership and the requirement for broad-based participatory processes, is linked theoretically with a reduction in the attachment of specific policy conditions. This might be expected to alter the power balance between governments and donors in favour of governments, by allowing these more freedom in identifying national priorities and formulating policy responses. Also, by casting donors and IFIs in the role of 'brokers of participation', the PRSP framework adds to donors' previous roles of funders and sources of policy advice; indisputably, roles which ascribe to them authority over their 'partner' governments, the new role of mediators or catalysts of dialogue between governments and civil society organisations, which implies the adoption of an attitude that is more persuasive than directive. While this may imply a levelling-out of power relations between donors and governments, the 'broker of participation' role can also be interpreted as increasing donors' mandate to get involved in social and political processes in-country, and thus as an accentuation of their power over governments.

Secondly, the fact that policy proposals by governments to donors and IFIs come from a broader base than previous policies may add legitimacy to government efforts to secure donor or IFI approval of policies and approaches, which are new or which diverge from what IFIs and donors might expect or recommend.

Thirdly, in participatory processes, government cultures of secrecy are challenged and transparency tends to be increased, either as a result of direct civil society pressure or because participatory processes cannot succeed without this. Greater government transparency is pursued by many donors as a governance objective in itself, so can be expected to win donors' approval, bolster their confidence and cement their partnerships with governments.

On the negative side, civil society participation and closer CSO relations with the donors that have supported it, may be perceived by governments as a threat to their special relationships with donors, and/or a new source of competition for donor funds.

In practice, have these expectations been realised? As noted above, civil society participation appears to have had no impact at all in the field of macroeconomic policy, so has not altered power balances or government legitimacy in that area, although there are signs that more governments are releasing to civil society and the public macroeconomic data and budget information, the latter often after long struggles by advocacy CSOs. In other respects, participation appears to have affected donor–Government relationships in several countries.

The shift from policy conditionality to process conditionality has made little difference in some countries (Bolivia, Mozambique), because they have already adjusted so much to the policies and professional mindsets favoured by the World Bank and IMF that policy conditions are now not needed to reinforce these. In Mozambique 'there are no great divergences between government and donor views on appropriate poverty reduction strategies' (IMF and IDA 2000), so the government did not want or need civil society's involvement to give it a stronger negotiating position or widen the policy alternatives it put forward in its dialogues with donors and creditors.

The strengthening of civil society-government relations through their increased interaction in Zambia and Uganda has lent legitimacy to some governments in eyes of donors as well as the public at large. In some cases, this has happened through the mechanism of direct civil society pressure for greater transparency in government bureaucracies and political processes, with the likely outcome of greater donor confidence in budget process and more willingness to untie funding and move towards basket funding (Malawi).

The Ugandan Government's good track record on participation in developing and implementing its PRSP (Poverty Eradication Action Plan or PEAP) is one factor that has emboldened it to draw up and negotiate with donors a strategy document outlining its vision of 'Building Partnerships [with donors] to Implement the PEAP' (MFPED 2001).

In general, donors have either proactively mediated in dialogue between CSOs and government (Ghana), or have been responsive to civil society requests to mediate on their behalf with government (Malawi). Both scenarios imply donors adopting a more persuasive style towards governments, and the latter also implies a shift in power balances between donors and CSOs. As for governments feeling threatened by the strengthening of relationships between donors and CSOs through the PRSP process, there is no evidence that this has occurred.

3.4 In terms of impact on poverty discourse

An outcome that might be anticipated from participatory PRSP processes is a change in the national poverty discourse. The inclusion of civil society perspectives on poverty and poverty reduction might be expected to stimulate a truly national discourse; and also to insert into the discourse, issues that have previously been sidelined because they are considered politically sensitive or too minor to be worth addressing, such as inequality or ethnicity.

Actual changes in discourse, as opposed to rhetoric, are hard to identify from documents.⁴⁴ Our analysis here is based almost exclusively on documentation produced in the PRSP formulation process and some PRSP documents.⁴⁵ More significant than new concepts or definitions of poverty expounded in PRSP documents is how poverty is framed in poverty debates subsequently; this cannot be judged at this early stage. What follows is, therefore, based mainly on the text of PRSPs. Until PRSPs pass the tests of time and implementation, we cannot be sure that apparent changes in discourse are not in fact mere policy rhetoric.

Having said that, civil society participation itself testifies to a broadening and diversification of the circle of actors who make and use poverty discourse. In some countries, e.g. Uganda, governments have recognised that civil society actors have useful knowledge to contribute and are therefore legitimate interlocutors on poverty and policy issues.⁴⁶

There is ample evidence that, at least in PRSP documents, poverty is increasingly recognised to be a multi-dimensional phenomenon, the ramifications of which go far beyond consumption or income shortfall.⁴⁷ In some cases (Uganda, Rwanda) this is largely thanks to PPA research conducted as part of (Rwanda) or prior to (Uganda) the elaboration of the PRSP, although the influence of the shifting international discourse on poverty to embrace multi-dimensionality, vulnerability and exclusion cannot be discounted here. In some countries where poverty discourse appears to have shifted little in the PRSP process, there is the expectation that PPAs and other participatory exercises to be conducted in the near future, will enrich conventional understandings of poverty with a more multi-dimensional perspective (Tanzania, Mozambique).

New dimensions that have come to be acknowledged include powerlessness and voicelessness, which have brought governance issues firmly into the poverty discourse. In Uganda, measures have been designed already to address these by improving the provision of information to poor people about their entitlements (Bird and Kakande, in Norton *et al.* 2001). A DFID review of PRSPs in 23 countries from a

⁴⁴ At this point we should distinguish rhetoric from discourse. Rhetoric we take to be static statements, often imbued with political meaning. Discourse, in contrast, refers to dynamic dialogue between a variety of social actors, through which meanings and understandings are co-created and in which those involved develop their understandings and shift their positions over time.

⁴⁵ Those we interviewed had little to say on poverty discourse.

⁴⁶ This broadening of the poverty policy community is covered at length in the discussion on the broader impact that participatory PRSP processes have had on policy processes.

⁴⁷ The exception here is Ghana, where the treatment of poverty in the PRSP remains dominated by the discourse of growth and macro-economics.

governance perspective concludes, conversely, that absence of attention to power issues in most of these indicates that the poverty analysis informing them cannot have been very participatory (Casson 2001).

A deepened understanding of the human implications of poverty statistics is said to have developed in Lesotho among IMF and Central Bank officials (UNDP 2001), although if this is a result of participation is unclear. Vulnerability appears to have entered the poverty discourse in some countries, related to particular livelihood groups,⁴⁸ often as a result of PPA data on poor people's perceptions (Gambia, Uganda). Social, economic and ethnic exclusion have made their way into the Bolivia PRSP, but issues of ethnicity are little evident in most.

Although it was hoped in many quarters (especially gender advocacy groups) that participatory PRSP processes would 'engender' poverty discourse, this appears not to have happened as a rule;⁴⁹ exceptions are Kenya where domestic violence against women gets a mention, and Rwanda where the PRSP recognises the time poverty and relative vulnerability of women *vis-à-vis* men (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning MINECOFIN 2001a: 24).

Poverty discourse in a handful of countries looks likely to be enriched in future with a sustainable livelihoods perspective and acknowledgement of the importance of natural resources as asset bases (Kenya). In Malawi and Zambia, as a result of civil society pressure the sensitive issue of HIV/AIDS seems poised to enter mainstream poverty discourse.

There are signs in Zambia that the poverty discourse current among CSOs has also been broadened as a result of their engagement with government in the PRSP process. The main civil society coalition is venturing into new terrain with research on approaches to pro-poor growth.

While we can only speculate on this at present, it seems likely that participatory PRSP processes have laid the foundations for a more country-based poverty discourse than that which dominated hitherto. Poverty analysis in particular looks set to become more informed by national realities, among them civil society perspectives, and to be directed more to satisfying country information requirements than to meeting the international norms of poverty concepts and data (McGee and Brock 2001). The fact that PRSP processes have generated (or promise to generate in the near future) more and better national poverty information than most African countries had at their disposal, supports this view.

3.5 In terms of impact on policy processes more broadly

There are several ways in which participatory PRSP processes might be seen to have altered the nature of policy processes beyond the duration of PRSP formulation and beyond the scope of the PRSP itself. Outcomes that can be identified are changes in attitude among governments, increases in both government and civil society capacity, the development of sustained structures for interaction and

⁴⁸ For example, pastoralists in the Kenyan PRSP, or women in several countries' PRSPs.

⁴⁹ Marshall *et al's* (2001) overview expresses disappointment in this respect; for Tanzania, the Tanzania Gender Networking Project (2001) and FEMACT (2001) do likewise.

participation, and the forging of conceptual and operational linkages between participation and governance issues.

Changes in attitude are manifested in many countries by a broadening and diversification of the 'policy community'; the actors considered to have a valid contribution to make to poverty reduction policy analysis, formulation, implementation and monitoring. In some countries, it would be premature to interpret as a broadened policy community, the development of dialogue between government and civil society where none existed before (Lesotho, Mozambique). In others, government is said by civil society to remain defensive even while entering into longer-term relationships with the CSOs it has interacted with in the PRSP (Zambia); but in a wide range of countries more collaborative dynamics are certainly appearing that might well be nurtured and sustained. In Rwanda the government's whole-hearted embracing of participatory approaches from micro to macro level as the potential solution to several key national challenges suggests that the post-conflict policy community, currently being established, will be qualitatively different from that in other countries. In Bolivia, transformations in the policy community, linked to the PRSP process, extend to the entry into formal governance structures (municipal councils) of peasants and indigenous peoples, previously marginalised through class- and racial-discrimination. In Uganda the diversification of the policy community, pre-dating the PRSP process but reinforced by it, has been profound and far-reaching.

Attitude changes also include explicit or implicit recognition by governments in several countries of the value that can be added to policy processes by participatory approaches and the perspectives contributed by civil society.⁵⁰ This appreciation extends in some government and civil society quarters to understanding participation, as not only tools and methods, but also attitudes, behaviour and relationships, as in Malawi, Uganda and Rwanda. One dimension of this is the increase in government transparency that is observed in many countries, at the simple level of better public information provision. A more self-critical attitude has arisen in civil society in Bolivia, largely as a result of tensions over representativity issues throughout the PRSP. Some governments with no prior experience of participatory approaches are learning that their application can improve the targeting of resources to the poor and thus enhance the efficiency of public expenditures (Lesotho).

Capacities appear to have been increased in several respects: government capacity to engage in policy dialogue with non-governmental actors and to facilitate consultations; and civil society's capacity to conduct policy analysis, advocacy, networking and participatory approaches at a range of levels. While government capacity has been strengthened in some countries, the most substantial increases in capacity have occurred in civil society. Networking has increased dramatically, with information sources in Malawi, Lesotho and Mozambique noting this as a positive development, with long-term transformative potential. Better organisational skills are noted among CSOs in Bolivia and Zambia, including more disposition to pool resources for greater effect (Zambia) and an increased tendency for NGOs to draw on their

⁵⁰ Bolivia, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

international NGO partners' experiences and skills.⁵¹ Civil society capacity for policy advocacy and economic literacy has developed in Tanzania, Zambia, Lesotho, Uganda and Bolivia, among other countries. In Malawi and Bolivia there are efforts by the main civil society coalitions to build grassroots capacity for influencing policy locally. There has been a general recognition among civil society and even some governments that good quality participation requires resources, and some moves to mobilise or allocate more funds to this end. In Uganda, a new NGO coalition against corruption has sprouted out of civil society advocacy on debt relief, aided by the intensive civil society networking that happened in the course of PRSP development.

Structures created to enable civil society participation in PRSP formulation have outlived the formulation stage in some countries. Examples are Uganda, where the Civil Society Task Force is reviewing its mission and taking up a new, more permanent institutional home in the National NGO Forum; Malawi, where the Economic Justice Network goes from strength to strength; and Zambia where Civil Society for Poverty Reduction continues with a new focus on PRSP monitoring. The links that many NGOs have formed with international partners also promise to extend beyond PRSP formulation stage in some cases, particularly where international NGOs, such as Oxfam and Christian Aid have developed long-term capacity-building programmes in advocacy and policy analysis for their partners. In Uganda, institutional linkages that began to be built between the PPA and the Bureau of Statistics before the PRSP process are to be strengthened in future in the context of poverty monitoring. In Mozambique and Kenya among others, it remains to be seen how well and how long the civil society-government coalitions formed for PRSP formulation purposes, will survive the formulation stage.

There is much evidence that PRSP processes have helped to forge conceptual and operational linkages between participatory approaches and governance issues. This is manifested in the development of a culture of transparency and accountability in government, in heightened attention to resource targeting for poverty reduction purposes, in the inception of participatory budgeting initiatives and in the strengthening of ongoing decentralisation processes. In Bolivia, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia, the establishment of civil society committees to monitor PRSP implementation is reported, with varying degrees of government co-operation. In Uganda, Ghana, Malawi and Kenya, new civil society accountability initiatives extend beyond monitoring debt relief funds to scrutinising budget processes and public expenditures more broadly. In Rwanda, decentralised planning and budgeting are being strengthened as part and parcel of the participatory PRSP process. In Uganda, as noted previously, the atmosphere of heightened government/civil society interaction has permitted the establishment of an Anti-Corruption NGO Coalition, with government co-operation.

⁵¹ Oxfam appears to have been particularly successful at building up a strong network among Oxfam programmes in countries engaged in PRSPs around the world. Christian Aid has also taken initiatives to spread experience between partners in PRSP countries (Mozambique, Bolivia, Malawi) and support these to document and analyse PRSP processes.

In some countries, CSO sources report that after the intense activity and interaction around PRSP formulation, CSO-government relationships have returned to ‘business as usual’.⁵² Even where the nature of policy processes does appear to be undergoing change as a consequence of participation in the PRSP, there is a risk that the general proliferation of institutional structures for participation is obscuring the issue of whether political will to take note of their outputs has grown. Without this, the creation of structures becomes a mere legitimisation device. A further risk, noted by some civil society sources, is that nascent transformative processes will falter without continued donor support, as well as political will, beyond the PRSP formulation process.

3.6 In terms of generating examples of good participatory practice

In this section, we highlight examples of good participatory practice that have emerged in the course of PRSP processes. More are mentioned in Country Profiles (Annex 4), and further information is also given in Annex 4, on those mentioned here. We readily acknowledge that there will be others that have not come to light in the course of this desk review; but those presented here are the particularly innovative or effective ones that were identifiable.

We must highlight at this point the fact that we are reliant on what our documents and informants have told us, and have not been able to explore most of these for ourselves. We also caution that seeing particular cases as ‘models’ has often led to attempts to replicate practices without due attention to the context and the circumstances which enabled them; and that unworthy cases are easily turned into ‘good-practice’ examples for those seeking them. For instance, a reading of the cases outlined here gives no impression that the process or initiative described involved any conflict between different actors, yet conflict is inherent in most participatory processes.

Bolivia

The CSO-led National Forum, and linked departmental consultation process, are important examples of consultative exercises in the context of a broadly participatory process led by civil society in parallel to that which is government-led.

The strong regulatory framework for participation that pre-dated the PRSP (the Law of Popular Participation and decentralisation legislation) provided legitimacy and credibility for civil society participation in the PRSP and has been reinforced in the course of it by the introduction of Dialogue Law (*see* Annex 2.1). One issue that merits further analysis, however, is the extent to which the existence of such comprehensive legal and regulatory frameworks for ‘invited’ participation may stifle the development

⁵² One example is Ghana. Another is Tanzania, where FEMACT (2001) cites government preparations for a Consultative Group meeting as illustrating that government has learnt lessons about how to consult civil society and has not developed a more open attitude. However, as a result of the galvanising and capacity-building effects of the PRSP process Tanzanian civil society was able to prepare a suitable response to the government’s approach to the CG (Cooksey 2001).

of spontaneous and autonomous civil society initiatives arising outside of them, or detract from the legitimacy and impact of these.

Kenya

The formation and activities of the Pastoralist Strategy Group provide an example of civil society organising outside the government-led PRSP process to considerable effect, insofar as this can be judged at present.

The efforts of the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development to ‘engender’ both PRSP process and content stands out as a rare successful example of gender-focused advocacy. Its success in the future will depend on the maintenance and strengthening of the links developed between the gender lobby and government officials involved in the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework process.

Malawi

The Malawi Economic Justice Network has emerged as a significant force for participation in policy-making at both national and international level. Its success reflects timely and strategic collaboration between the international NGO community (especially Oxfam) and an in-country network. From the start of the PRSP process, it has pursued a broad approach to participation, framing this in terms of attaining economic justice, which gives it a long-term *raison d'être* and implies that its impact will be far-reaching.

Rwanda

There are two aspects of the participatory process, which particularly merit highlighting: Policy Relevance Tests and *Ubedebe*. Policy Relevance Tests aim to clarify and improve sectoral policies by testing their relevance in the eyes of the poor. They were intended to generate quantifiable information to feed directly into budget decisions; in practice the approach has proved too complex so will be replaced with a simpler one based on Citizen Report Cards. *Ubedebe*, based on traditional Rwandan cultural practices and values, has been adopted in the PRSP process as a means by which 9,000 cellules use participatory approaches to produce priority rankings and community development plans with a strong degree of community ownership and a stress on local people’s control over implementing and monitoring them. Besides the expedience of promoting self-reliance in this post-conflict context where government capacity to respond to needs is severely limited, the negotiations that *Ubedebe* implies at community level are expected to fuel reconciliation and peace-building processes.

At a more general level, the Rwandan approach to the participatory PRSP process is the most home-grown and nationally-owned that we have come across in this desk review.

Tanzania

Collaboration between Tanzanian civil society and donors has led to the production of *Tanzania without Poverty: A plain-language guide to the PRSP* (Hazikazi Catalyst and Masoud 2001). This is an excellent example of the popularising and demystifying of complex policy messages to inform the public about the PRSP.

The document describes itself as a contribution to realising government's commitment to 'seek fuller representation of the poor and other stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the poverty reduction strategy' (*ibid.*: 1). It provides actual PRSP targets, explaining them and putting them into context; gives an overview of the history of policy-making in Tanzania to show how the current approach has evolved; and ends with a section on 'What the Big Words Mean', where economic and policy jargon is unpacked for ordinary people. Liberally illustrated with appealing cartoons, it was produced in English and several national languages, and was distributed throughout the country by Coca-Cola.

Uganda

There are numerous examples from Uganda, many of them pre-dating the PRSP process, that have been widely publicised and ably described elsewhere (*see* Annex 2: sources consulted). Worth highlighting here is the Uganda Debt Network's pioneering efforts to establish civil society committees to monitor the Poverty Action Fund (PAF) at the District level. Committees are composed of local 'opinion leaders', members of community-based organisations, and other individuals committed to better local governance and accountability. The conduct quarterly monitoring of the expenditure of Poverty Action Funds by both site visits and scrutiny of District government accounts are also worth highlighting. Their monitoring reports are used in two ways: supplied to UDN in Kampala as independent information for it to use in the Ministry of Finance's PAF Monitoring Committee, on which it has representatives; and presented to and debated with officials at the District level in an effort to improve performance and accounting. Progressive as this approach is, it does not (yet) extend to monitoring the supposedly participatory process, which is meant to determine the local level the uses to which PAF resources will be put.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

The desk review suggests that on balance, civil society participation can add considerable value to PRSP processes and to transforming policy environments in ways which are beneficial to the poor and supportive of better governance and more responsive behaviour by governments and donor institutions. However, while we would assert with confidence that participation can add value, the review does not demonstrate conclusively that in all countries significant value has been added to date, nor that as much has been added as could be with better-quality participatory processes. Much remains to be done to consolidate and sustain the advances made so far.

That we cannot conclusively demonstrate significant value added in all countries is partly due to the limitations inherent in attempting to assess this by means of an early and brief desk review, as detailed in section 1. Under the heading of *Recommendations*, we lay out proposals as to how these limitations can be overcome with future work. The other reasons why we stress the potential rather than the actuality of value added relate closely to the conclusions of the SPA-commissioned PRSP Institutionalisation Study in

respect of participation (*see* Annex 4). We therefore set out our conclusions along the same lines as that study, elaborating on them.⁵³

4.1 Modest, but only modest, expectations have been satisfied on the depth and quality of participatory processes

Some expectations were built on a realistic appraisal of prior country experience with participatory approaches to policy processes, on realistic assessments of country capacity, and on recognition of the time and resource constraints under which governments and civil society were working. These have been fulfilled and in some cases surpassed, occasionally as a surprise, coming very late in the formulation process and more in terms of evidence of commitment to future improvements than in actual practice (Mozambique).

They were, however, low expectations. For the full potential of civil society participation to be realised, considerably higher intensity and better quality will be needed. This means, at the most minimal level, that the flaws in consultation practices need to be addressed. But also needed are practices that go beyond mere consultation to genuine engagement of civil society in making decisions about which overall policy orientations are more favourable to the poor and which policy actions and resource commitments should be prioritised in pursuit of these. Interpretations and practices need to shift in the direction of the more transformative understanding of participation with which many civil society actors, and some others, entered the PRSP process. One way in which this looks likely to happen in some countries is by civil society claiming for itself, and being assigned by governments, a strong role in monitoring. In this area, there is more scope for CSOs to set their own goals and design their own approaches than in the formulation stage. There is also the fact that civil society has had more time and resources at their disposal for planning their approaches to monitoring than most had to prepare themselves for engaging in PRSP design.

A basic pre-requisite for higher-intensity participation is that governments relinquish some control over the process, but also demonstrate a more responsive attitude to civil society participants. In the PRSP formulation stage, many CSOs have had to make a choice between taking up government invitations to participate in spaces created from the top down, wherein there is at least an implicit government commitment (by no means always fulfilled) to using civil society's inputs; or creating spaces of their own in which they have more freedom to act, but less guarantee of their outputs being taken up by governments. CSO confidence and commitment to engage energetically in either space, but more especially the latter kind, is contingent on government responsiveness. While this has been low in many cases to date, there are reasons to believe that it can be increased in future. Greater government responsiveness will also reduce the degree to which CSOs, which are normally ambivalent or frankly hostile to IFIs, are dependent on them to obtain access to their national governments.

⁵³ Since our focus in this desk review has been civil society participation, on parliamentary involvement, we do not have anything to add to the previous study's findings.

Quality does, of course, remain loosely defined and in our view it is better that it remains that way, at least in respect of international benchmarking. If standards and benchmarks are considered useful in working towards better quality, then this desk review confirms the position that such benchmarks are only useful if developed at the country level and that their negotiation becomes an integral part of multi-stakeholder and participatory PRSP processes. It may prove futile, and damaging to nascent collaborative relationships, for civil society to rigidly hold governments to benchmarks in which governments have played no part in developing and over which they feel no ownership or commitment.

4.2 Significant second-round effects from participation in poverty reduction strategy paper formulation can be expected

We would firmly endorse the conclusion of the PRSP Institutionalisation Study, that the many kinds of impact detected in this first round of PRSP formulation have left both civil society and, to a lesser extent, governments much better equipped to engage with each other fruitfully, in future rounds. There are exceptions however. Ghana stands out as such in our review, as it did in the Institutionalisation Study. But in all other countries covered in our profiles, plus several others about which we have less information, there was, as a very minimum, the beginning of a relationship between civil society and government. There was also an awareness by governments that participation might not only satisfy donors and IFIs, but might enhance country processes and lead to some benefits as well as costs.

Before elaborating on possible second-round effects, however, we emphasise that in several countries, PRSP processes are still in the early stages of the first round. There is much to be done to ensure that participatory processes deliver their full potential in the implementation and monitoring of first-round PRSPs. In this regard, the vagueness that appears to prevail in most countries around the notion of participatory PRSP monitoring particularly needs to be addressed, and soon.

For the hoped-for effects to be realised in post-formulation stages and in second-round PRSPs, donors and international civil society will need to continue supporting their partners in PRSP countries. Civil society's needs in terms of capacity-building, advisory inputs and funding are relatively clearly defined already in many countries. It seems that governments have been slower in identifying where they need support. This could be because of reticence in admitting their lack of experience, reluctance to channel finite donor support away from other areas where it is acutely needed, or simply because they have had too many other problems to contend with.

Before donor efforts to enhance governments' capacity for engaging with CSOs can have an impact, donors will need to work to create demand in these quarters. However, this will need to be done with sensitivity to avoid undermining governments' sense of ownership of PRSP processes, which remains weak in some cases. One avenue which could be further exploited in this respect is that of exposing governments to successful participatory experience in other countries, which might help overcome the sense, still strong among some governments, that civil society is to be engaged with only to appease the demands of donors.

Notwithstanding the comments made earlier about ways in which quality and intensity of participation could be increased in future, unrealistic expectations will need to be revised downwards if morale and commitment to participation are to be preserved or enhanced. Important sectors of civil society in some countries are quite definitely disillusioned and close to withdrawing from PRSPs altogether. While some dissent among CSOs as to the best response to PRSPs is healthy and will contribute to the maturing process we observe in civil society across Africa, it would be better that those withdrawing do so out of ideological rejection of the PRSP model, than out of frustration that their efforts are having no impact or are failing to meet expectations.

The prospect that civil society participation will actually result in country poverty reduction strategies that diverge from the favoured policy orientations of the IFIs remains very distant. In this respect, the most we can expect in the next few years is that CSOs' capacity to analyse and make policy proposals will increase to the point where they can assess continuities and changes in their countries' policies and can conduct rigorous impact analyses with which to challenge governments and IFIs in cases where they allege that policies threaten to harm the poor.

4.3 Recommendations

Following up this desk review with in-country research would help to clarify many areas that remain unclear, as well as lending credibility to the preliminary findings presented in this report.

The question of how far and to what effect poor people themselves have been able to engage, or not, with PRSP processes can only be answered through in-country research, including primary research with poor communities or, where available, secondary research, based on the experience of national NGOs, international NGO programmes or national research institutions.

Similarly, the question of how civil society participation is affecting poverty discourse, and in particular of whether previously marginal issues of ethnicity, inequality or other forms of exclusion are making their way onto the poverty agenda, could be better explored by means of qualitative in-country research, which taps the experience and insights of the poverty 'policy community' and informed observers.

Additional issues, not mentioned in the Terms of Reference for this desk review, emerge as critical, to explore in further research: capacity needs, participatory practices within civil society, conflict, and expectations.

Given that substantial efforts will be needed to gain the full benefit of participatory processes in monitoring first-round PRSPs, and improving practice in the second round, in-country research could help to clarify what the capacity needs are. These will be easier to identify now that all countries have started their processes and encountered challenges, than they were at the outset.

An assessment of how participatory the main CSO umbrellas that have engaged with government in the PRSP are themselves, would be a useful basis for future donor efforts to support civil society to both participate and to address its own mechanisms of representation. This would have the eventual effect of

enhancing the credibility of participation and reversing growing, and at this stage in some cases, well-founded scepticism about CSOs' links to poor constituencies.

As noted above, in identifying 'good practice' it is easy to overlook the fact that conflict is inherent in most attempts to make decisions in a participatory way. Given the generally low intensity of civil society participation in most PRSP formulation processes, overt conflict was probably avoidable in most; but conflicts of interest must have occurred. Exploring in further research the conflicts that arose and how they were resolved, or not, would greatly improve the understanding of how participatory processes work in practice and what their social, economic and political implications are.

Finally, a more in-depth exploration through primary research of the various actors' expectations of civil society participation in PRSP processes, and how these have evolved since the inception of the PRSP framework, could help donors, IFIs, civil society and governments to formulate more realistic expectations and so develop more effective strategies for meeting them.

Annex 1 Terms of Reference

Desk-based synthesis of participation in poverty reduction strategy papers in sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

- 1 The inclusion of participation as a key element in the new policy framework around PRSPs marks a significant departure from past practice for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and for many national governments. However, there has been little systematic analysis of how the principle of participation has been operationalised, and the implications of good and bad practice in participation for the development of effective national poverty reduction strategies.
- 2 To date, work on participatory processes linked to PRSPs has consisted mainly of reports on individual participation processes, with a focus on building capacity among government and civil society stakeholders. Syntheses of experiences across different countries have been rare, or limited in scope. The most ambitious recent study by IDS is more than 1 year old. Since then, more countries in sub-Saharan Africa have progressed in the formulation of I-PRSPs, and there is a richer and broader experience of participation/consultation processes to consider.

Objective

- 3 This project will comprise a desk-based synthesis of experiences in participation around the formulation of PRSPs in sub-Saharan Africa, with the immediate objective of updating existing knowledge and drawing out relevant policy issues for use in wider forums (such as the Strategic Partnership with Africa), and for feeding into the World Bank's annual PRSP Review, now under preparation. The project will also feed into the development of a Terms of Reference for a longer-term, multi-country study of participation processes.
- 4 More specifically, the project will aim to:
 - update our knowledge of practise/experience around the participation of civil society in the development of national poverty reduction strategies, including a synthesis of good practice;
 - provide an initial assessment of perceptions of how the poor have experienced and understood PRSPs, and whether PRSPs have changed the relationship of the poor to policy-making processes and their influence on policy content, and
 - provide an initial assessment as to whether and how the inclusion of participation as a key element in the new framework of PRSPs had led to substantive changes in national government and IFI/donor behaviour in relation to policy-making processes and poverty reduction programmes.

Scope of work

- 5 Drawing on a collation of existing studies/knowledge and information about participation in PRS processes, the project will aim to isolate the following kinds of cross-cutting questions from existing experiences in Africa to date:
- How has consultation/participation influenced the policy content of PRSs?
 - How has consultation/participation influenced policy-making processes in the country, both formal and informal?
 - What effect has consultation had on the political space for public policy dialogue?
 - How has the consultation process affected the national discourse on poverty?
 - Has the consultation process generated new, transformative processes by stimulating debate on issues such as inequality or ethnicity?
 - What possibilities for institutionalising consultation/participation have arisen, including around macroeconomic and structural reform programmes, public expenditure management and budget processes, service delivery, and poverty monitoring?
 - How has the principle of participation been understood and supported by donors/IFIs?
 - How has the principle and practise of participation influenced the nature of donor/government dialogue around PRSPs, PRGFs (Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility), PRSCs (Poverty Reduction Support Credit)?
- 6 The study will bring together, collate and synthesise commissioned studies from specific countries, anecdotal information, and communications from DFID country programmes. Limited travel to Africa is also envisaged as opportunities arise to participate in forums/meetings that will substantially contribute to the information base of the project. In the course of synthesis work, the contracted agency/researchers will also look for opportunities to identify countries that are interested in participating in a second phase of work beyond this project, comprising a multi-country case study. The audience for the project will be DFID country programme staff, World Bank staff, members of the SPA, and national stakeholders engaged in PRS processes. The main output of the project will be a report to DFID.

Time-frame, inputs, outputs and management

- 7 The main project output (Synthesis Report, *see later*) should be completed no later than mid-October 2001, in order to contribute information to the World Bank's PRSP Review process (coordinated by PREM), and the upcoming meeting of the SPA Technical Group. The other output (draft Terms of Reference and identification of countries, *see later*) should be completed by mid-November 2001.
- 8 Inputs are expected to be 30 person days from a senior researcher and 50 days from a research assistant. Two person days are also added for experts to review and comment on a draft of the main

report/findings. Travel will include the cost of five return trips Brighton–London, and two return trips to Africa, plus 15 days subsistence.

- 9 The project will produce two outputs:
 - Synthesis report of not more than 25 pages, including an executive summary and findings.
 - Draft Terms of Reference and identification of countries for inclusion in a follow-up phase of work, comprising a longer-term, multi-country study.
- 10 The project will be contracted to a UK-based research institution (IDS) with substantial knowledge of participatory processes. It will be coordinated within DFID by the APED (Africa Policy & Economics Department) Social Development Adviser.

Annex 2 Country profiles

Bolivia

Summary

At first glance, Bolivia's PRSP process appears to have been a huge step forward when compared with its I-PRSP process. Some consider it an exemplary case in which Government and donors' co-ordinated effort made possible effective, articulate, broad-based and relatively representative participation of civil society (CS). Donor and INGO funding, guidance, and capacity-building support to CS made possible a CS-organised process, built on existing decentralisation mechanisms. This consisted of departmental consultations and a National Forum (NF) to which Government was not invited, and from which CS developed a joint contribution to the National Dialogue, led by Government. Concern existed over how much Government would 'listen' to CS, but NF conclusions were in fact incorporated into the final PRSP. The process thus went beyond CS capacity-building and networking, possibly strengthening weak or embryonic institutions that have the potential to construct a more participatory democracy. In addition, a new legal institution was established in the process, the Dialogue Law. The PRS process had the beneficial effect of forcing CS to reflect on issues of its own representativity.

Background

In February 2000, IFIs (in Bolivia, the Inter-American Development Bank as well as the World Bank (WB) and IMF) agreed on Bolivia's eligibility for additional HIPC assistance, once a poverty reduction strategy (PRS) was approved. A National Dialogue (ND) was held to feed into the PRSP. In June 2001, Bolivia's PRS was presented to the IFIs for approval. The ND is legally supported by the Dialogue Law that was passed by Congress in July 2001.

Perhaps partially due to a legacy of CS mistrust of Government, and the latter's foot-dragging regarding the National Dialogue,⁵⁴ CS organised independently a parallel consultation process, *Foro Nacional Jubileo 2000* (the 'National Forum' or NF), focusing on how debt relief funds should be spent and what the PRSP should look like (McCollim 2000).

Principle and practice of participation

In the late 1980s and 1990s Bolivia has attracted the attention of the Washington institutions as a model of inclusive and participatory frameworks for development. It is one of the pilot countries for the Comprehensive Development Framework. As such, it was seen as a strong candidate for the formulation of a 'nationally owned' and high quality PRSP. Donors saw a broad-based ownership of the process in Bolivia. Moreover, poor people's participation had become considered an essential element in the design

and monitoring of successful poverty reduction strategies (Eyben 2001) and a poverty assessment exercise had been done there for the Voices of the Poor component of the World Development Report 2000/1.

The first ND, co-ordinated by the Vice-President's office with UNDP involvement, was seen as a means of involving CS in the design of the Poverty Action Plan (PAP). The PAP formed the basis of the I-PRSP. Both of these were ill-received by CS, who felt that their involvement was token, allowed only through donor pressure. Donors worked diligently to support more effective CS participation in the actual PRSP formulation process. They allocated grants of US\$300,000 among eight organisations⁵⁵ to support the national Forum (NF). The (NF) was a Jubilee 2000 initiative set up by the Catholic Church to consult on the development of the PRSP. It was co-sponsored by some 20 CSOs and involved many more, including the largest labour union (principally miners); private entrepreneurs' union, union of rural workers, university, women, environmental and human rights groups.⁵⁶ Nine department-level consultations (February–April 2000) and a three-day National Forum (April 2000) were held. The department-level fora were divided into eight thematic round-tables (macroeconomics and structural adjustment, employment and income, land and productivity, rural health, urban health, rural and urban education). Each round-table elected delegates to attend the NF. The NF's findings were presented at the ND in July 2000.

A range of positions exist on the principle and practice of participation in Bolivia. Diverse opinions existed at different levels of Government with respect to allowing broad-based CS participation in the ND, 'seeing them as having no apparent legitimacy in terms of representing poor people's views' (Eyben 2001: 12). CS pressure, a conveniently timed social uprising, and the donor community decision to establish a specific fund to encourage CS participation eventually forced the Government of Bolivia (GoB) to accept CS participation in the ND. The GoB seems to have seen the PRSP more as a tool to secure debt relief, rather than as an overarching framework for all public policies and expenditures. It therefore tended to restrict ND discussions to the transparent and equitable use of funds made available from debt relief (*ibid.*). Similarly, understandings of a participatory dialogue seem to vary. A Minister commented that he saw the ND as a space where he could listen to CS interests and concerns, not necessarily share information with them (*ibid.*). Donor pressure for the use of participatory tools at more local levels in the process were overruled by the ND secretariat.

A total of 1,706 representatives from 806 organisations participated in the departmental consultation process. In the NF, 93 departmental delegates with 230 representatives from 73 organisations and 63 observers, 20 of which were international, participated (McCollim 2000: 3). Government officials were not invited to the Forum's deliberations, only to the closing plenary, where their attendance was low. Quantity

⁵⁴ Young reformers and older 'dinosaurs' in GoB disagreed on whether the National Dialogue should take place at all. The first struggled to 'keep alive the flame of decentralisation' while the latter feared that the first ND had already 'opened up a Pandora's box in which all aggrieved interest groups now felt at liberty to challenge the State and weaken democratic institutions' (Eyben 2001: 6–7).

⁵⁵ Two of the larger and more active CSOs here are the Episcopal Conference, and the Comité Nacional de Enlace Consulta de la Sociedad Civil (an association of urban and rural small producers).

⁵⁶ It is to these groups and their member organisations, and local-based networks that we refer to when we use the term civil society (CS) in this country profile.

of participants is of course not the same as quality of the process, but these numbers indicate inclusiveness and broad coverage through the consultation process.

Interestingly, the ND process was designed by bilateral actors from donor projects trained in strengthening local government (*ibid.*). It was conceived so as to strengthen local capacity and local ownership of the impressive consultation process. As NGO sources observed, the assumption here was that local government reflected interests of the poor. In a political culture riddled with clientelism, this is a highly questionable assumption.

What value has participation added in terms of:

Impact on PRSP process?

Although the civil society process was parallel to the Government-led one, its outputs were fed into the official process, thus opening it up and ensuring that views from the most vulnerable sectors were heard at that level. One significant contribution was the NF's conclusion emphasis on the need for an autonomous and legally-binding mechanism to oversee expenditure of funds. This was to be equipped with a technical team, and to participate in the drawing-up, follow-up, evaluation and reformulation of the PRSP, as well as to carry out social auditing functions.

INGOs' efforts to support CS participation had some impact on the process. Oxfam GB worked to inform CSOs about the process and enable them to influence it, as well as broadening their knowledge and building capacity for policy analysis. After the NF Jubilee 2000 organised an international letter writing campaign calling partner organisations and their respective members to demand from the Bolivian president that NF findings be considered in the ND, and be incorporated into the PRSP.

From the ND arose the Dialogue Law, 'a legal instrument which will regulate, among other things, the way that funds from the debt relief will be distributed among the municipalities and the way in which these funds should be used for social investment' (Delgado 2001). We have not been able to ascertain whether its introduction is related to the NF's recommendation for a legally binding agency responsible for overseeing expenditure of funds.

Impact on PRS content?

An NGO source reports a statement by an IMF representative in Bolivia that the NF's conclusions should influence the ND but only in terms of shaping allocations of Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) funds, and that macroeconomic targets were not open to discussion. INGOs with Bolivian links are contesting of this IMF position by lobbying IFI boards in Washington (Delgado 2001). Oxfam complains that the causes of poverty were not discussed in the PRSP despite civil society inputs (*ibid.*).

Although not directly touching upon macroeconomic conditionalities, concrete proposals offered by CS at both the NF and carried into the ND point to a need to address broad political and economic structures. The land round-table, for example, called for wealthy countries to open their markets to small country producers and for emphasis on self-reliance as opposed to food aid. The employment and income

round-table concluded that both GoB and private industry should share responsibility in this area, in contrast to traditional state-dependent attitudes prevalent in Bolivia. Also included was a recognition of the informal sector as a major potential engine for economic growth and the key role of local government in enhancing economic activity of small producers and in social sector provision.

Consultations generally concurred on the need to prioritise indigenous peoples, children, youth, the disabled, the elderly and migrants (rural and urban) in the PRS. Again, although we do know that NF conclusions were integrated into the ND, we lack information on how far these recommendations were taken on board in the final PRSP. Cross-cutting issues, such as gender were presented discretely, rather than treated as cross-cutting themes, in the strategy (Delgado 2001). No proposals exist for specific measures to reduce gender inequality or to address the historical, structural disadvantages suffered by women (*ibid.*) Nonetheless, some groups were highly successful in taking forward their own agendas such as the *Comité Nacional de Enlace Consulta de la Sociedad Civil*, which pushed for a livelihoods as well as social services role for municipalities in the PRS.

Overall it seems that despite the strong focus on the use of debt relief funds, there was scope in the process to advocate a more integrated model of social and economic development that would tackle the deep-rooted problems of Bolivia's society, polity and economy. This advocacy was partially successful, helped along by INGOs' and bilaterals' support. The PRS is considered of a high standard, and was written by nationals.

Impact on Government-donor dialogue?

Donors played a critical, albeit behind-the-scenes role in Bolivia's PRSP process. They seem to have convinced government to some extent of the need for a broadly-based consultation process. A donor source describes Government as seeing donors as naïve agents in certain CS actors' agendas of political destabilisation and as such, as overstepping their legitimate function as donors. How this will affect government–donor dialogue in the future remains to be seen.

Impact on poverty discourse?

CS pressed for an integrated model of social and economic development that would include tackling the deep-seated problems of Bolivia's political economy. The final PRSP is said to reflect a new integrated approach to poverty reduction, with emphasis (although little policy prescription) on a need to tackle economic and social exclusion (Eyben 2001: 5). The discourse around poverty in Bolivia would therefore seem to have been broadened.

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

Besides providing a space in which CS could mobilise, donor support strengthened CS organisational capacity and contributed to the building and strengthening of CS coalitions. There now exists a strong and articulate demand in Bolivia for greater transparency over the use of HIPC funds, which may have broader consequences for fiscal transparency. Mechanisms and initiatives for monitoring social spending

are being strengthened, thus challenging corruption and increasing accountability. Oxfam GB is working towards strengthening existing local monitoring organisations (*Comites de Vigilancia*, or Social Watch Committees) at the municipal level, where decisions on HIPC funds are taken. It is also strengthening organisations working on resource allocation and budget transparency (Delgado 2001).

A further long-term impact of the participatory PRS process has been the election of indigenous and peasant men and women as Presidents of Municipal Boards, Presidents of Social Watch Committees, and future mayors, all positions with responsibilities of implementation, control and monitoring of funds (*ibid.*). This is a huge step for a country plagued with racial prejudice and seems to support Eyben's assertion that the PRSP process did contribute to a shift in the balance of power towards poor people as well as the establishment of poverty criteria for distribution of public resources for HIPC and social investment funds (2001).

The PRSP process has led some donors and CS to assess own experiences. An INGO source observed that CS has recognised the need for more resources, both human and financial, to carry out effective international lobbying efforts and to extend beyond NGO and CSO networks to reach Government circles. Calls have arisen for an evaluation of the Church's dominant role in the NF initiative, and for new actions and alliances to be developed. CS also seems to recognise a need for constant monitoring of state and IFI actions, something that might be attained through an allied effort with a more politically oriented advocacy process (*ibid.*). These CS reflections suggest both a long-term vision and maturity on the part of Bolivian CS, or their INGO counterparts.⁵⁷ It also strengthened mutual recognition between the state and CS, and the right for the latter to hold the former accountable. A further outcome of the PRS process, which is likely to be sustained, is a co-ordinated multi-level CS effort to hold discussions among the various CS organisations (Delgado 2001).

Generating examples of good participatory practice?

The National Forum, and its preceding departmental consultation process, are important examples of strong frameworks for participation, as are the Decentralisation and Popular participation legislation, including the unique Dialogue Law. These hold potential for effective participation to be built within them. (On the other hand, there is a risk that the density of top-down frameworks and measures for promoting participation in Bolivia stifles the development of bottom-up processes, which suggests that these frameworks should not be promoted uncritically as best practice examples, without analysis of their impact on the political space for spontaneous, bottom-up initiatives to take place outside of them.)

⁵⁷ It is difficult to assess to what degree our INGO source's views reflect that of national NGOs or CSOs.

Ghana

Summary

Ghana's PRSP process seems to be riddled with contradictions. It is difficult to ascertain the degree of effective CS participation in the process, let alone the value it has added. Although apparently government-driven, certain sources have communicated an overly active behind-the-scenes role of IFIs in the process. Government remains wary of CSOs and has handpicked those invited to participate. Donors seem to be playing a mediating role, acting partially on behalf of uninvited CSOs.

Background

Ghana's I-PRSP was submitted to the Bank and Fund in mid-2000. After national elections in December of that year, and under the new administration of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the time-frame for Ghana's poverty reduction strategy, or GPRS, was extended from February to October 2001. It is now presented as the centre-piece of government planning and co-ordination.⁵⁸ Under the aegis of the Ministry of Planning, Regional Economic Co-operation and Integration, a special Task Force within the National Development Planning Council (NDPC) is responsible for preparation of the GPRS. Seven-member core teams (CTs) focusing on five areas (macro-economy, gainful employment/production, human resource development, basic services, and vulnerability and exclusion) have been established to produce frameworks and action programmes to be incorporated into the GPRS. CTs are chaired by ministry officials, and membership is made up of government, CSO and donor representatives. The Task Force has divided the process into three phases: situation analysis, preparation of strategic policy framework, and development of programmes based on this framework. CTs are responsible for community-level consultations based on focus group discussions and regional consultation workshops (to be carried out by core teams). A detailed timetable also provides for a number of national-level harmonisation workshops with NGOs, CSOs, donor representatives, and sectoral ministries to synthesise CT findings, as well as a National Economic Dialogue, scheduled for May 2001.

The principle and practice of participation

In principle, 'stakeholder participation was to be secured by a mixture of information dissemination, collaboration, co-ordination, and consultation', at both national and local levels. 'Community consultations were to be on the basis of focus group discussions, where representatives included groups previously identified as having benefited least from past reduction in poverty levels' (Killick 2001). The practice of participation does not seem to coincide with this vision.

The I-PRSP is described by a CS source as an 'innocuous policy statement written by our MoF and the World Bank' in a closed and rushed way. Although the PRSP is considered to have been taken

⁵⁸ We lack information on the connection between this and the decision of the new administration to apply for HIPC funds. The previous administration was not doing so.

forward independently by Government, its 'ownership' is considered to be narrowly-based. Furthermore, the NDPC responsible for the GPRS process has been described as an under-resourced *ad hoc* council working outside of the civil service, and with uncertain political and formal status (Killick 2001: 23). This has meant poor communication with mainstream government, leading to weak integration with line ministries and other important implementing agents, as well as a lack of integration with other policy sector reform programmes, and uncertainty regarding how GPRS policies will be translated into the budget (*ibid.*; anonymous donor source).

Selection of core team members was not transparent and, some consider, was done in an arbitrary and non-representative way, leaving the process largely in the hands of government officials. CT findings have also been criticised for being too 'Accra-centric' with insufficient engagement with farming communities (anonymous donor source).

In Ghana there was no independent CS-led initiative. As a consequence of the recent change in government, there was scant involvement of Parliament or District Assemblies. Public awareness of the GPRS process has been low and misconceptions widespread. Two events (on which we have little information) helped raise its profile: a radio debate and the National Economic Dialogue. We have found no evidence that NDPC is making an effort to increase public knowledge of the GPRS.

What value has participation added, in terms of:

Impact on PRSP process?

The growing use of radio as a forum for policy discussion and the harnessing of this medium to the PRS debate has made possible some awareness-raising about the GPRS among the general public. The National Economic Dialogue in May 2001 drew in public participation. However, its effectiveness was doubtful as its size (over 200 participants) defied meaningful debate and in the end, decisions came from those who managed the process. The issue of information disparity was as problematic here as in other fora. CS has little access to key analytical and planning documents. One recommendation has been the establishment of an independent body located within CS with the capacity to provide reliable economic poverty related data (Godfrey and Sheehy 2001). This has not yet been addressed.

Impact on PRSP content?

Community consultation did not feed into the analyses and recommendations of core teams. This has been attributed to the fact that consultation reports were not made available to them, highlighting again the issue of information disparity and secrecy among certain actors. How district level assessments contributed to the GPRS is also unclear. Existing information gathered through non-PRSP-driven PPAs and Social Assessments were not synthesised and incorporated into the paper either.

Ghanaian CS expresses concern that little attention has been paid to restrictive macro-economic adjustment conditionalities, which are seen to undermine many poverty reduction initiatives. In the case of the I-PRSP, government commitments seem to have effectively reversed commitments made to

Ghanaians just months prior to the presidential elections. An anonymous donor source reported the IMF as saying that macro-economic strategies were not up for discussion. The same source saw insufficient attention being paid to restructuring trade relations and reducing debt and donor dependence. It was also observed that the macroeconomic group was dominated by 'men from thriving business'. The Government of Ghana's (GoG) dependent position with respect to external funding is highlighted as particularly problematic here.

Nonetheless, the governance CT's work seems hopeful. Its overall purpose is to 'ensure efficient and decentralised management of public affairs; and to empower people to participate in, and influence the process of wealth creation and poverty reduction' (Killick 2001: 20). It is pushing for issues of corruption and accountability to be addressed. We cannot say how far this relates to CS participation in the process, nor how Government will respond to the group's recommendations.

Impact on government-donor dialogue?

The relationship between GoG's former administration and donors was problematic. Killick (2001) conjectures that this explains donors' adoption of a 'wait and see' attitude with respect to the GPRS. If the process is considered 'credible', it could improve the relationship between government and donors in Ghana. A lack of participation however, might revert the relationship to one of 'business as usual'. Donors have given consideration to how to help deepen participation in the process. They are fairly critical of the process; one source sees it as having allowed government and IFIs to exclude CS from discussions around macroeconomic issues; essentially a negotiation between GoG and the IFIs, dictated by the latter's priorities and criteria (anonymous donor source). Civil society participation seems not to have strengthened the government's hand in negotiations with donors; but rather, given GoG's continued wariness about CS, donors seem to be taking on a strong mediating role between the GoG and CSOs. Some CSOs are perceived as 'government-linked', others are seen by the GoG as mouthpieces for the opposition (Godfrey and Sheehy 2001: 17).

Impact on poverty discourse?

Wealth creation and private sector development seem to be closer to the government's heart than poverty-reduction. This, and the strong focus on growth through prioritising macro-economic issues, seem to limit the possibility for a broadening poverty discourse in Ghana. Neither gender issues nor their relationship with poverty in Ghana have been thoroughly assessed. Similarly, deprivation related to ethnicity or age, or even non-material aspects of poverty do not seem to have been considered in the GPRS. This is likely linked to the fact that the concept of poverty adopted in the strategy was not closely informed by findings from the earlier PPA (anonymous donor source).

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

The development of a stronger working relationship between donors and CS in the PRS process may be sustained, with positive implications for other policy processes. The PRSP process was welcomed by many CS groups and is seen as a further step in asserting the rights of citizens and civil society to be consulted and the superiority of broad-based consensual approaches (Killick 2001: 3). Potentially relevant here is CS's establishment of a watchdog that will overlook the work of the NPP president's new public expenditure monitoring unit (Ahadzie pers. comm. 2001). According to an anonymous donor source, the role the latter will have remains unclear.

Other issues

Various pre-conditions shaped the PRSP process in Ghana. These include the recent change in administration during the preparation of the GPRS, and the existence of several ongoing donor-driven policy initiatives. Although many of the IFI-defined policy initiatives have contributed to an increase in CS participation,⁵⁹ their existence makes it difficult for us to separate out from their impacts the value of participation in the GPRS process specifically.

The newly elected New Patriotic Party (NPP) raised the GPRS's status, perhaps driven by their decision to apply for HIPC funds, something their predecessors had decided against. Whatever the change in status, though, the authors, and therefore possibly the final document, are unchanged. Broad contextual changes have occurred with the new more 'liberal' administration: a relatively free press and electronic media are emerging, and a more vibrant CS. But a donor source observes that opportunities for participation have actually diminished since the change of government (*see* Principle and practice of Participation). Ahadzie (pers. comm. 2001) suggests that this may be because Government is in its early stages of consolidating power in the country.

Kenya

Summary

Kenya is one of the few countries to date to have produced a full PRSP. Recent history in Kenya is dominated by a lack of focus on poverty reduction and poor governance: non-transparency, lack of accountability and corruption. In the light of this, the PRSP framework's emphasis on participation and related principles has seen civil society, NGO and the private sector join forces in support of fundamental reform of the development agenda and the Government sector (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). However, a rushed consultation process, and only limited impact on the MTEF (Medium Term Expenditure Framework) has left CS sceptical of Government commitment to implement the policies CS has advocated for the PRSP. That said, new policy dialogue spaces have opened up between government and CS, and CS has been

⁵⁹ Illustrative of this is CS's mobilising around the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI). Here, a nation-wide, cross-cutting coalition was established in the form of a Civil Society Council (CIVISOC).

mobilised to develop its capacity in policy formulation and advocacy. Kenya provides noteworthy examples of how civil society participation helped make the PRSP gender-aware and cognisant of significant minority group issues (e.g. of pastoralists) which might otherwise have been excluded. The PRSP process has generally helped to broker broad-based participation around the issues of good governance and poverty reduction.

Background

Begun in 1999, the Kenyan PRSP is at the centre of the country's 15-year vision outlined in the National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP). The participatory and poverty-focused PRSP approach marks a major departure from failed past interventions (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). The I-PRSP was prepared in July 2000 with the final PRSP completed in April 2001. A Civil Society Desk was established within the Treasury to co-ordinate seven thematic groups. A member of the Kenya NGO Council was seconded to work with the Ministry of Finance, the co-ordinating Ministry, on outreach to civil society, for a period of 7–8 months while the process lasted (Houghton pers. comm. 2001).

Principle and practice of participation

For the donor community, participation as embodied in the PRSP process, was seen as an essential element in bringing together donors, CS and the private sector to support fundamental reform in Kenyan governance to increase accountability and transparency and reduce corruption (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). Donors appeared united in this aim. However, the principle and practice of participation has a long history in Kenya in the CS sector. This has led to the popularisation of participatory methods and flourishing of people claiming to be 'participation experts'. The PRSP led to a high demand from donors for CS practitioners in participation and in the rush, quality may have been compromised for quantity, especially with regards to the primacy of participatory behaviours and attitudes over methodology (Scott-Villiers pers. comm. 2001). The implication here is that many donors supported activities during the PPA which, on closer inspection, would be deemed to be consultation rather than participation (*ibid.*).

How the Government of Kenya (GoK) saw participation is less clear. The I-PRSP was informed by a 3-day CS stakeholder dialogue even though CS participation is not a condition for I-PRSPS. At that stage, CS successfully lobbied for gender to be properly addressed in the full PRSP (Shiverenje n.d.). Whether this was purely a result of CS pressure or whether it also had to do with the Bank having just developed a new gender strategy is unclear. Inevitably, given the poor track record of the GoK in the area of participation, accountability and transparency, there was considerable scepticism by CS as to the government's commitment to the principle and practice of participation from the outset: 'some felt that it was only a dictate of donors and therefore was only being carried out because government wanted renewal of loans from WB and IMF' (Mueni 2001; Scott-Villiers pers. comm. 2001). That said, academics, donors, private sector, some NGOs and Government itself have noted a 'greater openness of government to the views of stakeholders' than had previously been seen (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). The short time-frame allowed for consultations was deemed necessary by many parties, to try to ensure that irreversible reforms towards

good governance (ultimately conducive and complementary to participatory principles) were implemented before the 2002 elections (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). Others felt that this short time-frame meant consultations were too rushed for meaningful participation by CS and shows a lack of GoK willingness to engage in partnership with CS (Mueni 2001; Hanmer *et al.* 2000; Kisopia 2001).

Broad-based consultations including CS representatives took place at the national level through a three-day seminar on the I-PRSP and a Poverty Forum on the PRSP in Nairobi. District consultative forums and a PPA were carried out in communities of 25 of 71 Districts. Various CSOs organised their own grassroots consultations, for example the Pastoralist Strategy Group (PSG) and Centre for Gender and Development (*see later*).

What value has participation added in terms of:

Impact on PRSP process?

Commenting on the 2nd Draft of the I-PRSP, the NGO Working Group set out seven recommendations for the PRSP consultative and Participatory Process. These included a route map for participation, benchmarks for minimum standards of public participation in the PRSP and MTEF, greater information disclosure to media and CS and parliamentary debate of the PRSP (NGO Working Group 2000). Some of these were achieved through intensive lobbying. The GoK agreed to the formation of seven thematic groups to articulate specific issues. These groups were charged with responsibility of ensuring that the issues of these groups were articulated and incorporated into the PRSP (Kisopia 2001).

The short time-frame of the PRSP process was raised as a potential constraint to donors early on (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). Even where CS was successful in influencing the PRSP (e.g. Shiverenje n.d.) it appears time constraints were only overcome because CS, being well-connected to government structures, had previously-prepared policy positions and a strong capacity to work under pressure. CSOs had a prominent role in the PPA and District consultation process, with CSOs put in charge of the PPA in five Districts and Oxfam made custodian of the PPA funds. CSOs also organised their own meetings with CBOs both for consultation, information dissemination and advising how CBOs could participate in local government consultations (Mueni 2001).

Impact on PRS content?

There are concerns by donors and GoK representatives that I-PRSP content was dominated by donors and government (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). CS claims the same about the full PRSP, noting that during national consultation workshops some CSOs felt that the government was reticent to consider issues which were not already mentioned in the I-PRSP and that ‘even after some painful processes’ the CS input would simply be filed away (Mueni 2001).

The seven CS thematic groups covered Pastoralists, Gender, Youth, HIV/AIDS, Finance, Media and Disability. In the final document the government accepted water, Health, Rural Access, Education and Extension services (Livestock and agriculture) ‘as Core Priority areas and the budgets for these areas were

ring-fenced to ensure the identified problems are addressed as fully as possible' (Kisopia 2001). The Pastoralist Strategy Group's efforts (*see later*) secured greater prominence than ever before for pastoralist issues on the development agenda and a higher budget than other social groups for education bursaries targeting girls (Kisopia 2001). Perhaps the greatest impact of CS participation on the content has been the success of the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development in engendering the PRSP.

Impact on Government-donor dialogue?

The WB, UNDP and DFID assisted the GoK in preparing a participatory process of PRSP formulation (UNDP 2001). 'The Kenya PRGF had the dubious distinction of having the toughest conditionalities ever imposed by the IMF board' (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). The press claimed that far from encouraging greater ownership, the PRSP thus represented a virtual relinquishment of national sovereignty. It is yet uncertain how serious GoK's commitment is to tackling corruption and increasing accountability and transparency, but there appears to be some recognition by some within Government that conditionalities such as broad-based participation are required if reform is to occur (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). Likewise it remains to be seen whether GoK is committed to the principle and practice of participation beyond the PRSP, or is appeasing donors. GoK may learn from the PRSP experience that CS can strengthen its bargaining power with donors on certain issues, for example gender, which might lead it to recognise that CS does in fact have something to offer in policy-making.

Impact on poverty discourse?

The multi-dimensional view of poverty already existed in Kenya and the PPAs have helped to highlight specific issues in the PRSP such as natural resource management, land and access to productive assets, and perhaps most notably the mainstreaming of gender. Issues regarding specific vulnerable groups or previously unrecognised issues have also made it onto the national agenda for the first time, for example women and domestic violence (Mueni 2001), or the specific poverty problems faced by pastoralists.

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

From the outset donors asked 'whether or not the PRSP process will be able to hold together the coalition of reformers through to the implementation stage and produce irreversible reforms in Kenyan government practices from which the poor can benefit' (Hanmer *et al.* 2000). Early indications are of limited progress in this regard. The Poverty Forum was the first serious attempt by GoK to engage in CS dialogue (Marcus n.d.). One point of view is that the PRSP process has resulted in higher levels of engagement between government and civil society than was previously the case (DFID 2000): the CS Desk has been institutionalised within the Treasury, 'a great achievement given the attitude Government has on CS in general' (Kisopia 2001); and similarly the Pastoralist Strategy Group is placed in the Office of the Prime Minister. However, scepticism exists over whether these moves were political expedients and whether in fact 'the PRSP is not really changing anything, rather enforcing the status quo' (Scott-Villiers pers. comm. 2001). CS does at least now have access to the regional budget allocation

mechanisms, including the criteria by which budgets to regions are determined. This is regarded as ‘a giant leap, as these used to be secret and a major cause of corruption, and of subsequent distrust by CSs (Scott-Villiers pers. comm. 2001).

Generating examples of good participatory practice?

Despite the extreme marginalisation in which pastoralists live, the I-PRSP made little mention of pastoralism. Pastoralists therefore established a ‘Pastoralist Strategy Group’ (PSG) to ensure this was reversed in the PRSP and, in the longer term, to monitor the implementation of the PRSP through CSOs. The PSG includes representatives from pastoralist CSOs, INGOs, UNICEF and Office of the President/Arid Lands Resource Management Project. Its engagement with the PRS process included consultation and lobbying, and liaison with a ‘think tank’ at the centre to receive and disseminate information. Consultations took place at community level employing PRA, and results were fed to District and Provincial levels. Press and media were lobbied; concerns were represented at the National Secretariat and among Parliamentary groups and PRSP sector committees. Technical assistance was provided by national and international advisors. The PSG lobbied for the inclusion of a minimum agenda as a separate chapter of the PRSP. The final PRSP does address pastoralist concerns over land and access to productive assets, natural resource management and extension services for livestock (Scott-Villiers pers. comm. 2001), and higher-than-average funding for education bursaries in pastoralist areas (Kisopia 2001). ‘The PSG was perhaps too successful and they ended up being given a workspace within the Office of the President with which to lobby from inside government. But in fact, they are rather trapped now, as their institutional location means they are ill-positioned to be too vocal’ (Scott-Villiers pers. comm. 2001). During the PSG programme, support came from an unlikely quarter: the white ranchers of Kenya on whose land many pastoralists depend for their livelihoods. ‘One can be cynical and say that this is a strategic move by the white ranchers who have half an eye on the current events in Zimbabwe; but nevertheless, a new dialogue space has been opened up between the two’ (Scott-Villiers pers. comm. 2001).

The ‘engendering’ of the Kenya I-PRSP and subsequent PRSP, appears entirely a result of CS initiative. In spite of a short consultation period, the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD) (the national umbrella organisation for women’s CSOs) managed to ensure that gender mainstreaming, Affirmative Action and Targeting of Vulnerable Groups (women, children and the disabled) emerged as the top themes of the national stakeholders workshop (Shiverenje n.d.). ‘This is quite a significant shift from past events where gender comes in...as an afterthought’ (*ibid.*). Included in this has been the approval of the National Gender Policy which ‘has remained a mirage since 1985’ (*ibid.*). This has brought gender to the fore in national public debate but, more concretely, appears to have influenced budget allocation. The clearest example of this again comes from CCGD; Shiverenje (n.d.: 26) summarises the process:

After broad consultation with CBOs and CSOs the Centre developed a concept paper on gender and poverty reduction that was used to lobby government officials and other stakeholders to take gender on board in the IPSRP and the subsequent implementation of in the MTEF. Various collaborations, networking, information sharing, consultations, lobbying and advocacy activities were carried out to ensure the women's agenda found its way into the policy document followed by allocation of resources for implementation. Notable was the involvement of women leaders and organisations at both national [I-PRSP National Stakeholders Workshop] and community levels [40 CSOs consulted] in the consultative process on I-PRSP and MTEF.

The 2000/2001 budget has been analysed and the findings indicate substantial re-directing of resources towards areas where women stand to benefit and activities designed to mainstream gender equity (Shiverenje n.d.).

Lesotho

Summary

The Government of Lesotho (GoL) anticipates two favourable outcomes from participation in the PRS process. First, more efficient spending of the capital budget through intended outcomes being better linked to perceived needs and an increased sense of ownership; and secondly, increased legitimacy for the government through the focus on accountability to, and dialogue with, civil society. However, the GoL also queries why civil society participation is being pushed so strongly by members of the donor community when a democratically elected government is in place. Overall, new forms of dialogue between government and some CSOs have been initiated. It is too soon to reliably assess the quality of CS's participation in the process so far, though early indications suggest that both currently lack the capacity to have a fully active and influential hand in shaping it. In the light of this, the Ministry of Development Planning, has submitted a proposal to donors to address this through capacity-building for joint CS/GoL participation at every stage of the PRS process. It therefore promises much, both in terms of the extent to which CS could influence the PRS and, in the long duration, in policy processes more broadly.

Background

The PRSP process began while GoL was already struggling to orient itself towards various other national strategic development initiatives progressing in near isolation from each other (UNDP 2001). The initial reaction of Government was exasperation at yet another overarching strategy. However, this has changed as various strategies have been harmonised with the PRS. Vision 2020 is seen as the overarching statement of objectives, and the PRS as the tool to achieve it (UNDP 2001; Phororo 2001).

The GoL prepared its I-PRSP in December 2000. The final PRSP is due to be completed in June 2002. Currently, preparation for the broad-based participation throughout the PRSP process is underway. A Technical Working Group (TWG) was set up under the oversight of the Deputy Prime Minister (who is

also the Minister of Finance and Development Planning) and the Poverty Council (made up of the principle secretaries of various line ministries and the governor of the central bank). The TWG consisted of members of line ministries, the Bureau of Statistics, the private sector, two CSO representatives from the Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN), the National University of Lesotho and the donor community. At the end of 2000, CS set up the Civil Society Poverty Reduction Forum (CSPRF) who have, since then, been an active partner in the implementation of the TWG's work (TWG 2001).

Principle and practice of participation

There is a history of participatory practice in Lesotho, but the stress on broad-based participation in the PRSP process has brought new impetus to the principle and practice of participation, with more focus on practice as opposed to rhetoric (Levine pers. comm. 2001). As with many other countries, understandings of participation varied between government, donors and CS.

At the beginning of the PRS process, the GoL displayed an incomplete understanding of the principles and practice of participation, considering it an instrument to strengthen its legitimacy and to improve programme design. It saw CS's role as rubber-stamping GoL policies and perfunctorily conducting the PPA. Increasing government transparency and accountability in the budgeting process were not specific objectives to be addressed. According to GoL, this is not because of a lack of will towards increasing accountability and transparency, rather because they simply lack the capacity and wish to 'get their own house in order' before opening up transparently to CS (Levine pers. comm. 2001).

Parliament was not included in I-PRSP consultations but came in relatively late in the process, with a senate meeting held in July 2001 (TWG 2001). In the run-up to national elections,⁶⁰ and with the public PPA consultations beginning, the main opposition party has pledged its own support for the PRSP in its election campaign, resulting in a highly politicised process.

Within Government itself, there is no unanimity on the value that participation could add, nor on what constitutes good participation. The Minister for Finance and Development Planning has actively supported CS participation, while the Principle Secretaries did not appear to be pursuing it with the same vigour (UNDP 2001a). However, in the final I-PRSP the GoL acknowledges that in the past 'the government was not able to make a dent on poverty...and...top-down development and implementation of policies, without adequate community participation, may have been an important reason for failure' (IMF/IDA 2001). Following this, an evaluation of the I-PSRP process (UNDP 2001a) and the formulation of the CSPRF, GoL has now committed itself to seeing CS as a joint partner in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the PRSP: 'Overall the PRSP needs to strengthen the capacity of all partners in the process to listen, analyse, produce policies, monitor and adjust' (TWG 2001).

'The UNDP, Bank, EU and bilateral donors have indicated their willingness to support GoL in its efforts to conduct a wide-ranging consultative process' (TWG 2001). With no resident Bank mission, IFIs

⁶⁰ Imminent at the time of writing.

requested UNDP take the lead in assisting the participatory aspects of the PRSP. The IFIs' Joint Staff Assessment (JSA) recognises that the short time-scale could limit the quality of the participatory process and recommends that GoL seek relevant technical assistance in enabling community monitoring of the impact of government policies on poverty – something they suggested could be funded by the Bank (IMF/IDA 2001). In reference to the TWG's proposal to design the first PRSP draft alone, it also cautioned Government that 'it should avoid confronting stakeholders with a predefined policy strategy which could adversely affect the consultative process and undermine ownership'.

UNDP and other donors aim to support the setting up of a transparent monitoring and evaluation system for the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). At the same time as supporting CS, UNDP is anxious that participation should be seen as an approach for government to design and implement effective poverty reduction programmes, not as something which undermines the authority of an existing democratically elected government (Levine pers. comm. 2001).

Bilaterals have played an active role. DFID, for instance, helped initiate poverty dialogue between CS and GoL for the I-PRSP (Save the Children Fund UK 2001; Christian Aid 2001) and has also supported the costs of the CSPRF (TWG 2001). DFID supported a seminar for both GoL and CS in which other countries further along in the PRSP process shared their experiences. Other donors have also supported aspects of the consultation process.

Nonetheless, resistance to CS involvement prevails and a confidential government source commented that the drive by donors for increased participation 'would have made sense if the Lesotho people were living in a dictatorship rather than under a democratically elected government'. CS has countered such assertions, keen to be as active and influential as possible in shaping the PRSP.

What value has participation added in terms of:

Impact on PRSP process?

The initial extent of CS participation in the PRS process did not bode well, but this has evolved into an apparent grasping of participatory practice by GoL. Although I-PRSPs are not bound to be formulated through a participatory process, they do often contain policy statements which a broad selection of stakeholders would eagerly have a hand in. However, '[d]ue to IMF and IDA imposed time constraints consultation for the I-PRSP was limited to line ministries and Lethotho's development partners resident in the capital' (IMF/IDA 2001). This was lamented by CS (Save the Children Fund UK 2001). Other CS representatives bemoaned that the Bank did not define participation at the outset, claiming this left CS in a weak position to negotiate for increased participation (Motsamai pers. comm. 2001). The JSA of the Lesotho I-PRSP (IMF/IDA 2001) addresses this, suggesting that poverty diagnostics, monitoring and evaluation should all be carried out in a participatory way. For the I-PRSP the TWG itself was largely made up of economists and had only two CS representatives. A major oversight noted by the UNDP evaluation was the exclusion of the Ministries of Environment, Gender and Youth Affairs and Labour and Employment. Putting these two together, the TWG lacked significant expertise and awareness in

social issues and the channel for CS to voice concerns was slim. Given the centrality of these two ministries to poverty reduction the evaluation suggested that the TWG integrate these changes as soon as was feasible (UNDP 2001a). It also suggested that the number of CS representatives be increased from two to four. The UNDP assessment of the PRSP process outlined in the I-PRSP proposed that ‘the procedures were designed to conduct the broad based participation *after* the PRSP draft was already prepared instead of before’ (UNDP 2001a). This was reflected by initially poor attendance of CS at meetings because of a perceived lack of relevance to them (*ibid.*). When the I-PRSP was being written, the LCN pushed for the inclusion of a chapter on the participatory process to be adopted in producing the full PRSP. The approach they proposed comprised three steps: sensitisation of the TWG by the LCN to the need for CS participation; consultation with communities; and thematic workshops at which the TWG would hold dialogues with CS (Motsamai pers. comm. 2001).

CS lobbying of GoL, backed by the UNDP evaluation led to significant revisions in the participatory process with TWG recognising that all actors (including CS) require capacity-building for the consultations including line ministries, lead ministry and planning (TWG 2001). At both central and local levels of government, a culture of evidence-based policy-making was lacking, leading to a poor awareness of why CS should participate so fully (*ibid.*). A sub-committee on Participation was subsequently established in February 2001. CS and GoL recognised that they currently lacked sufficient capacity in working in a participatory manner. For CS this meant a lack of capacity in advocacy, policy analysis and economic literacy skills. Although an umbrella body, LCN was not felt by all CSOs to represent them (Levine pers. comm. 2001). The CSPRF was thus initiated as a new vehicle to address CS participation in the PRSP, a move that has improved co-operation with Government and enhanced civil society’s status and role in the process.

There is now GoL recognition that ‘At the core of the PRSP methodology is the consultation process’ (*ibid.*). To date, this has included mapping exercises by joint CS/GoL teams to liaise with District commissioners, Village Development Councils, and CS structures to introduce the PRSP and plan the district and local consultations. Additionally, TWG, CSO’s, and GoL officials directly participating in the PPA were trained in PRA. This was facilitated by a team made up of NGO, Ministry of Local Government and a resource person from the Uganda PRSP. This has been organised by the Ministry for Local Government on behalf of TWG and CSPRF. The consultative and participatory process entails a five-month countrywide PPA process followed by District and national workshops. CSO and local government capacity in participatory principles and practice (including PRA) will be built up in this process. Media sensitisation and publicity materials are proposed, and a popular version of the PRSP for the average citizen is planned. Occasional papers on poverty will also be published to stimulate broad debate (*ibid.*). Consultations organised to date have been considered ‘empowering’ by some CSOs (Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) 2001). As yet there is interest, but no clear plans, for the effective involvement of communities in the actual delivery and monitoring of PRSP results throughout the three-year duration (TWG 2001).

The PPA is currently being undertaken in the immediate run up to national elections. Some are concerned that the arrival of CSO research teams in government vehicles is bound to arouse suspicion in communities that this is part of the electoral campaign gimmick, or that people will be guarded about what they say (Levine pers. comm. 2001; IMF/IDA 2001). The opposition has bought into the PRSP process, thus making it highly political; something that donors perhaps do not fully appreciate (Motsamai pers. comm. 2001). The PRSP has yet to be produced, so it is too early to assess what impact these CS concerns and the current political climate will have on it.

‘CS is planning a programme to continue its support for the creation of poverty reduction strategies and programmes, and contribute to national policy formulation’ (TWG 2001). Its specific objectives are ‘to strengthen the capacity of CS to contribute to the development of poverty reduction policy in general, and in the PRSP in particular; and would include training, capacity and building and policy work within CS.’ (*ibid.*). The budget for this has been jointly submitted with the GoL’s own capacity-building proposal. This suggests a sea-change in GoL, from seeing CS as an instrument for implementing GoL policy as at the beginning of the I-PRSP, to a useful partner in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Impact on PRS content?

No draft of the PRSP has yet been produced. Although the I-PRSP did involve (limited) consultation, some NGOs are concerned that the I-PRSP focused on economic growth to the neglect of pro-poor strategies (Save the Children Fund UK 2001). The LCN echoed this expressing concern that the I-PRSP concentrated too much on economic growth and not enough on issues of inequality of rights or development of the social sector (*ibid.*). Again with regards to the I-PRSP, some sections of civil society are dismayed, for example Save the Children Fund UK suggest that given 49 per cent of the population is made up of children, there is a distinct lack of focus on them (Save the Children Fund UK 2001). To what extent the consultation process will have a significant impact on the content of the final PRSP, will depend upon the degree to which TWG and the GoL (at central and district levels) have accepted the principle and practice of participation promoted during the preceding sensitisation workshops, and implemented these during consultations.

Impact on Government-donor dialogue?

The PRS process has led to closer links developing between CS and donors (Levine pers. comm. 2001). The CSPRF has developed its own draft budget plan for carrying out the implementation of the PRSP over the three-year period, in partnership with the GoL. This budget is included in the overall indicative budget proposed by TWG⁶¹ (TWG 2001). This GoL and CS collaboration will undoubtedly put added

⁶¹ The GoL and CS are working together on building their capacity to formulate and implement the PRSP and jointly submitting proposals to donors. This will have undoubtedly strengthened the hand of the GoL in negotiations with donors.

pressure on donors to work together on the PRS towards supporting measurable poverty reduction outcomes.

Impact on poverty discourse?

'In accepting the PRSP process as a national priority, the [TWG] saw poverty and its reduction in a new perspective that meaningfully related to their respective professional duties' (UNDP 2001a). Within the TWG, the mix of CS, donor and GoL representatives has led to new positive attitudes to poverty that are being cultivated through learning-by-doing processes (*ibid.*). For example, it was noted that with CS representation on the TWG, '[r]epresentatives from the MoF and the Central Bank began to appreciate dry budget and monetary figures in more human terms' (*ibid.*).

That said, there are still some noted shortcomings in the I-PRSP, which seem to restrict the poverty discourse to a rather conventional realm. For example, there is still a superficial treatment of the geographical distribution of poverty (i.e. statements that the rural poor are worst off) and too little on social factors (confidential source). Additionally, a CS source notes that the I-PRSP concentrates too much on economic growth and not enough on issues of inequality of rights, or the development of the social sector (*ibid.*). This may be a reflection that the GoL has tended to see poverty reduction as a technical issue with a technical solution instead of focusing on policies which address the multi-dimensional nature of poverty (Levine pers. comm. 2001).

In the process of formulation of the PRSP in which the TWG has, at least, noted the need to fill out certain information gaps for long term poverty monitoring, including regional and gender distribution of poverty, and factors contributing to poverty. The poverty monitoring approach 'recognises the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, which requires a variety of measures...[including] vulnerability and exclusion' (TWG 2001). Much of the impetus for this view of poverty came from a previous UNDP supported PPA conducted by CS, which highlighted non-income poverty, vulnerability and livelihood strategies for the poor (*ibid.*). To what extent the current PPAs will broaden and deepen this view of poverty remains to be seen.

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

Participation is expected to build a constituency for explicitly addressing the needs of the poor (Levine pers. comm. 2001). It has also led to the forging of new relationships between government and donors and the first interactions between government and CS. A Basotho civil servant who attended a national consultation workshop commented: 'This is amazing! I have never seen civil servants and civil society organisations interact like this before' (*ibid.*). The coherence of other strategies with PRSP towards Vision 2020 is part of the GoL's desire to provide greater clarity and public understanding of government planning in general (TWG 2001).

The PRSP has galvanised CS to work not only on policy issues regarding the PRSP, but also poverty reduction in general (*ibid.*). At present, both donors and government see CS as relatively weak, with a history of focusing on service delivery and not advocacy. As the TWG recognises, it will take considerable

capacity-building for CS to effectively contribute to the policy debate (TWG 2001). Some CSOs have requested support from INGO partners in building research, advocacy, economic literacy and Monitoring and Evaluation (MandE) capacity (Transformation Resource Centre 2001; Christian Council of Lesotho 2001). CS is also keen to improve on its capacity to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the PRSP. Through the TWG, GoL has made significant commitments itself to preparing for active CS participation in policy processes. These have included the integration of line ministry projects with Communities Action Plans, capacity-building in budget advocacy and management, and Social Exclusion training. CS participation in the monitoring GoL policy processes more broadly will undoubtedly increase accountability and transparency of government in Lesotho. The current possibility of the TWG being institutionalised as the co-ordinator of all national development strategies would allow for CS to have a permanent active and influential voice in policy-making.

A critical independent voice has yet to fully flourish in Lesotho but, pending capacity-building of CS, we can assume that the second PRS, and governance in general, will be more participatory. As one confidential source notes, the WB is unrealistic in its expectation that countries can instantly internalise and own the process.

Generating examples of good participatory practice?

In the face of balancing conflicting obligations between their parent institutions and the PRSP the TWG found that retreats proved effective in interacting intensively with each other over PRSP issues. Retreats were chosen above remunerative incentives (UNDP 2001).

Malawi

Summary

The government's 'consultative' approach to participation in its PRSP formulation process appears to have been made more meaningful by the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN)'s active involvement in the process and, equally importantly, the network's open dialogue with the Bank and the Fund. MEJN has made good use of the 'invited' space provided by the IFIs' in-country missions and of international NGO support. Substantive contributions include success in extending the process by 6 months, involving CS in thematic working groups, successful campaigns for public PRSP adverts, and integrating PRSP findings into the budget. Furthermore, mechanisms are being developed that may have long-term implications both in terms of establishing and strengthening both international and national CS/NGO networks and mechanisms for budget expenditure monitoring. There is little doubt that the PRSP has contributed to capacity building for CS, and in so doing has had a positive impact on broader policy processes.

Background

PRSP formulation process is being organised by a three-tiered government committee structure headed by the Cabinet Committee chaired by the Ministry of Finance (MoF). Under this is the Inter-Ministerial Committee headed by Principle Secretary for Economic Affairs at the MoF. Day-to-day organisation of the process and drafting is carried out by the Technical Committee (TC), made up currently of members of the MoF, the National Economic Council (NEC) and the Reserve Bank.

Civil Society in Malawi has mobilised in response to the PRSP. MEJN emerged from a Jubilee 2000 meeting organised in November 2000 by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.⁶² It is a self-appointed taskforce made up of representatives from Church, Academia, NGOs, Trade Unions, Students, Professional Associations, and the Media and also has strong, working relations with international NGOs (i.e. OXFAM and Christian Aid). MEJN holds among its key tasks the involvement of CS in the PRSP process, the co-ordinating of CS involvement in the budget cycle and of increasing the economic literacy of CS and of Malawis as a whole (MEJN 2001b).

The I-PRSP was approved by the Bank and the Fund in December 2000. With IFI support the MEJN's lobbying got the PRSP finalisation date postponed from April to September 2001. District consultations were carried out over a 2-week period in March and thematic Working Groups (WGs) have met throughout the process. A PRSP 'Findings to Date' document was produced and was meant to be fed into the budget in July. At the time of writing, a small group of MoF staff and two CS representatives were involved in drafting the final paper.

The principle and practice of participation

Many involved with the preparation of the draft I-PRSP stated that 'the original understanding of the purpose of the I-PRSP was that it was simply a requirement for reaching the HIPC decision point' (Jenkins and Tsoka 2000: 7). There was neither strong awareness of PRSP as a concept among CSOs during the I-PRSP process, nor a structured process of consultation outside of government (*ibid.*).⁶³ Government officials considered the PRSP schedule outlined in the I-PRSP optimistic; those who saw it as realistic 'indicated that this was because the government was not interested in serious consultation, which would require additional time investment [and those] who supported a more inclusive consultation process believed that the participatory processes outlined in the Bank/Fund Sourcebooks and Technical Notes were highly unlikely ever to be used' (*ibid.*).

⁶² We do not know to what degree the MEJN task force is representative of Malawi's CS. Although the level of Church and Union involvement in the process is outstanding, there still exists the criticism that CS involvement remains capital-centric. MEJN and the term 'civil society' will be used synonymously throughout this country profile.

⁶³ Here it is interesting to note that the Finance Minister did open up an I-PRSP Consultative Group meeting in March 2000. CSOs were invited and welcomed the chance to be involved. At this time, the report was distributed to officials and donor agencies and, although some did reach some elite-level CSOs, the document was not presented as a draft. Consequently while CS waited for the full PRSP to get underway over the summer, work quietly continued on the draft.

CS has actively engaged in the PRSP process, pushing back the boundaries of the government's understanding of participation as 'consultation'. However, the Government of Malawi (GoM) has not been open to their involvement and it has been up to CS to insert itself into the process, as well as to demonstrate that CS has added value to it (Lawson pers. comm. 2001). In contrast, MEJN's involvement has been welcomed by the IFIs (MEJN 2001c). IMF's Deputy Director Chief Southern Africa Division is cited as having said 'It's not a question of being consulted; it's a question of participating'; a statement interpreted by MEJN as 'very encouraging...showing a real commitment to genuine and meaningful participation by the IMF' (MEJN 2001c). In their support for CS involvement in the process, IFIs are seen as allies by means of whom which the principle and practice of participation can be enhanced.

The nature of District Consultations illustrates the need for this. They have been critiqued on a number of fronts. First, little notice was given to participants and therefore, CSOs lacked time for preparation and consultation (with their broader bases). Secondly, very few women, NGO or Church representatives were made aware of the Consultation process, raising issues of representation. Thirdly, the Consultations consisted of a presentation made by MoF, NEC, and Reserve Bank economists, plus half-day feedback sessions at each site. As such, it is a process with the hallmarks of information-dissemination and consultation rather than participation or joint decision-making or collaborative agenda-setting. Nonetheless, MEJN did urge regional CSOs to participate in these consultations 'if only to make the point that the district consultation process...is simply a rubber stamp...' (MEJN 2001d).

MEJN outlines clearly its definition of meaningful participation (MEJN 2001c). In working towards realising this definition, Malawi's CS is contributing towards an improved principle and practice of participation in the country's PRSP process and beyond it.

What value has participation added, in terms of:

Impact on PRSP process?

Extensive lobbying by MEJN led to the extension of the PRSP formulation process. The taskforce was also successful in its push for CS participation in the thematic WGs; both MEJN-nominated CSOs and GoM-nominated CSOs joined the WGs. The government also decided to adopt the MEJN recommendation to produce a 'PRSP-Findings to Date' document. This document would list key findings, as based on Poverty Priority Expenditures (PPEs), designed according to extensive consultation and discussion in respective sectors (Lawson n.d.), and was to be incorporated into the budget and announced during the budget speech. Also, as suggested by MEJN, public PRSP adverts are appearing, thus increasing transparency and awareness of the process among the public. Finally, after considerable lobbying, in August GoM agreed that MEJN representatives sit on the Donor/Government Economic Affairs Group and the PRSP Technical Committee.

Impact on PRS content?

CS participation in thematic working groups has highlighted the need for cross-cutting themes to transcend all policy sectors. Themes such as HIV/AIDS or gender may be integrated throughout the document as their respective working groups organise to liaise with one another.⁶⁴ Participation of CS also has the potential of broadening the content in terms of introducing problems that, without their presence may not have been mentioned. For instance, WaterAid's guiding principles and recommendations for the working group which covers water and sanitation issues (Infrastructure Group) include aims such as depoliticising development, reducing a dependency culture as well as corruption and fraud. Unfortunately, although there exists an extensive knowledge collected through the 'Voices of the Poor' initiative, its findings have not been translated into policy through the PRSP (Lawson pers. comm. 2001). Concern regarding the relationship between other completion point conditions and the PRSP was raised (i.e. implementation of the programme activities under the IMF PRGF such as privatisation or liberalisation, to some extent pre-empt the content of the PRSP). Although this was expressed in this document as an issue to be raised by CS to the IFIs, no reference is made in subsequent MEJN documents to which we have access. This begs the question as to whether IFI support for certain changes that do not challenge the status quo are expedited while more radical and controversial suggestions are not. The fact that the macro-economic stability thematic group has minimal civil society involvement but strong Bank and Fund presence and had not even met at the time of his report is interpreted by Lawson (n.d.) as a lack of open discussion around such issues.

Impact on Government-donor dialogue?

Jenkins and Tsoka (2000) observe that, at least during the formulation of the I-PRSP, government officials saw the initiative as one driven by the IFIs from its outset. Moreover, GoM complained of 'mixed signals'. Discussions around how the PRSP would relate to an action plan to be determined by Malawi authorities were carried out by the same staff as, and simultaneously with, talks related to the imposition of conditionalities (PRGF, HIPCII and the Bank's Adjustment Operation Loan) (*ibid.*). Bilateral donors and UN agencies have also been critical of the I-PRSP process, though Jenkins and Tsoka (2000) point out that their criticisms may be born of a feeling that the Bank's influence was excessive. In its defence, the World Bank says that it needs to take control of the process due to time constraints imposed by the HIPC process.⁶⁵ Otherwise, there is little that explicitly documents the way in which participation in the actual PRSP formulation process has had direct impact on government-donor dialogue in Malawi. The

⁶⁴ It is difficult to ascertain to what degree the inclusion of these themes in the paper is a consequence of CS participation. That they coincide closely with OXFAM-Malawi's programme objectives does suggest that it may, at least in part, be a consequence of it.

⁶⁵ These authors also question the Bank's excuse, highlighting the fact that even under its influence, and with limited consultation, the I-PRSP process extended itself over a year.

information available suggests that government responses to CS may be largely a consequence of IFIs' support to CS participation in the process.

Impact on poverty discourse?

The establishment of MEJN, its independent research on the PRSP process, and its attempt to engage more actors in the process demonstrates a broadening and diversification of the group of actors considered by GoM to be valid interlocutors on policy issues. Its endeavours will also undoubtedly lead to a more multidimensional understanding of poverty, especially through its efforts to ensure that themes such as HIV/AIDS and gender be placed on the agenda transversally. This is illustrative of a move towards a more pluralist discourse in which there is space for the orthodox concept of poverty to be widened.

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

New dynamics between CS and donors, as well as CS and government appear to have emerged out of the PRSP. Despite some persistent misgivings one CSO considers that the PRSP process has 'led to the beginning of a more positive and constructive relationship being established between Civil Society and Government' (Lawson n.d.: 2). The establishment and mandates of MEJN are particularly significant here, insofar as they reflect CS's decision, after deliberation, to exploit an 'invited' space for policy influence. Also, MEJN has dialogued with IFIs while also drawing upon existing international support networks (i.e., Eurodad, Jubilee 2000, Bretton Woods Project), as was the case with their extension campaign. The MEJN has also drawn upon other countries' PRSP success stories in their recommendations. Their promotion of the PPE initiative, for example, was taken from the Uganda's success with establishing a virtual fund for key expenditures; and the campaign to extend the PRS process, from Zambia's similar extension campaign (MEJN 2001b). CS sees participation as 'an effective condition to ensure that progress is being made; [that] strict conditions are necessary [without which] it is easy for the politicians not to take their responsibilities seriously' (Dambula 2001). Moreover, it allows CSOs to hold government more accountable, using PRSPs as a monitoring tool.

In addition to establishing key links with other international NGOs (MEJN 2001d), MEJN's work seems to be strengthening Malawi's national CS network. According to Oxfam GB (Lawson pers. comm. 2001) they have been successful in involving organisations such as churches and unions in the policy dialogue 'to an extent never seen before'. The Christian Service Committee (Mhango 2001) provided evidence of the potential this may have in strengthening Malawi's CS: among other plans, this organisation intends to build capacity at the grassroots level with the aim of enabling communities to implement their own reduction programmes. Another example of positive CS outcome is MEJN's budget-monitoring activities, something with the potential of improving government accountability and transparency in the area of government expenditures. In praising the government's positive efforts, the taskforce's reference to 'interim measures' and 'building blocks' is evidence of long-term thinking. (MEJN 2001a; 2001b).

Public policy spaces, which are not time-bound nor constrained by the terms of an ‘invitation’ issued by government, seem to be opening up through the PRSP formulation process. It is important to note however that what Malawi lacks is the capacity or political will to implement ideas and that, in following Dambula’s (2001) advice ‘[e]mpowerment is key, no need [exists] to create more implementing bodies’.

Generating examples of good participatory practice?

Some strong examples of good participatory practices in Malawi include the involvement of CS in thematic working groups, and the use of advertisements. MEJN is a good example of networking at national and international levels. It was heavily stimulated by the advent of the PRSP but appears to be outlasting it and extending beyond it.

Mozambique

Summary

Starting conditions were not favourable for a good quality participatory process and the process itself, which were definitely consultation rather than participation, left much to be improved on in subsequent rounds. Consultation by government was limited, and civil society lacked the capacity and experience to set up its own process to compensate for limitations of the official process. Thus, civil society had little impact. This calls into question the degree of broad-based commitment to the PRSP, and the appropriateness of its content from the perspective of poor people, regardless of the perspective of private sector organisations, which do seem to have achieved some influence. One lasting positive outcome is the establishment of relationships between some CSOs and some government officials. Another is the analysis of weaknesses of this consultative process in the PRSP document itself and the statement of commitment there to improving the Government of Mozambique’s (GoM) capacity to consult with civil society in the future. Yet another is the support that bilateral donors not previously close to the GoM are now offering to support it in these endeavours.

Background

Mozambique published and disseminated its I-PRSP in April 2000. This was its ‘Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty 2000–4’ (PARPA in its Portuguese acronym) which it had begun to develop before the PRSP framework was introduced. The full PRSP (PARPA 2001–2005) was finalised in March 2001 and endorsed by the Boards in August 2001. The Ministry of Planning and Finance led the PARPA/PRSP process and its Macro-economic Programming Unit was the main contact point with CS. CS’s inputs were largely channelled through the Mozambique Debt Group, a loose and large network of mainly national and Maputo-based NGOs with a small secretariat. It must be borne in mind that the development of the PARPA/PRSP was taking place in a post-conflict context where the GoM’s overriding concern was with maintaining political stability and promoting reconciliation and national unity. Such a context ‘limits the degree to which a purely rationalistic-technocratic approach to planning is

feasible in Mozambique' (Falck *et al.* 2001). Given the strong political opposition that the GoM still faces in the north and centre of the country, it is hardly surprising that Government appears to prefer a slow and gradual approach towards increased openness, pluralism and decentralisation in governance and policy issues.

The principle and practice of participation

Studies of the Mozambican PRSP process (Falck and Landfald 2000; Falck *et al.* 2001; McGee and Taimo 2001) reveal that there is a particular Mozambican understanding of 'participation' which does not quite match that enshrined in the PRSP model. The GoM considers there to be a long tradition of consultations on national and sectoral policy priorities in the country (Republic of Mozambique 2001: 92) but, as a relatively centralist government, understands participation in terms of information dissemination and consultation on prepared drafts rather than any more far-reaching involvement by non-government actors (IMF and IDA 2001; McGee and Taimo 2001).

The GoM initially demonstrated questionable commitment to the entire PRSP process, including its requirement of CS participation, since it had already advanced considerably on producing its own national poverty reduction plan and resented what it regarded as a directive to start afresh (Falck and Landfald 2000). A CS document observes in May 2000: 'Government contends that it has already consulted on the PARPA with District governments and in rural areas and another process of civil society consultation is not required' (Cuinica and Siddharth 2000: 4); according to some government sources, 'the IFIs and other donors exercise undue pressure on the government to consult more than is needed or useful' (Falck and Landfald 2000: 12). Low parliamentary involvement in the PARPA is taken by some to indicate low overall GoM commitment and by others as a product of the ambiguity with which the PRSP was treated by the GoM for much of its duration (*ibid.*; Falck *et al.* 2001). In Cuinica and Siddharth's (CSO) view (2000: 1) 'although there isn't opposition to involving civil society in the formulation of these policies, the government has not made a concerted effort to involve [us]. Part of this attitude may stem from resentment about the imposition of yet another initiative. Like many civil society groups, the Mozambican government seems to view the PRSP as yet another conditionality that has been imposed [...]'.

Engaging in extensive consultation or participatory processes of course carries heavy opportunity costs for an ill-equipped government. The GoM lacked personnel with suitable expertise for facilitating a national-scale participatory exercise. Also, Mozambican CS and the public at large suffer from 'participation fatigue' and scepticism about the value of participating, having been repeatedly disillusioned under the previous socialist regime by consultations, meetings and promises that never produced tangible outcomes (Falck and Landfald 2000).

In practice, the whole PRSP process was undoubtedly compromised by time pressure, self-imposed by GoM, keen to access debt relief, rather than by the IFIs who were conscious that a rushed process would compromise quality. As detailed in the PARPA/PRSP document (Republic of Mozambique 2001, section V) the consultation process (it is not called participatory) included sectoral consultations on earlier versions of the PARPA for key sectors; consultations and dissemination at central and provincial level of

provincial poverty profiles and the I-PRSP; general and theme-specific meetings with civil society at later stages of full PRSP formulation, and the establishment of mechanisms for long-term consultations. Most consultation activities got crammed into the last few months of the process.

The sectoral consultations conducted in priority sectors in preparation of the PARPA 2000-4 (I-PRSP) are held by the GoM to be the keystone of its consultation process, yet the mechanisms used are not spelt out. The GoM notes that ‘most sectors do not have a standardised and permanent model of consultation’ (Republic of Mozambique 2001: 92). Recognising that consultative practices in PARPA/PRSP formulation left much to be desired, the PARPA document notes the need for greater clarity in future on how the State and civil society should be represented in consultative processes, how the agenda for consultation should be developed, and the frequency and format of meetings. Outputs and capacity formed in the course of a PPA conducted in Mozambique in 1994–6 were hardly used until very late in the process; reference to ‘participatory qualitative surveys’ (Republic of Mozambique 2001: 103) implies conceptual vagueness about the specific contributions that participatory research could make; and hints of building PRSP implementation onto ongoing participatory district planning processes are also vague. Many CSOs, including several important private sector actors, were dissatisfied with the degree of consultation and suspected the GoM of listening for the purpose of appeasing the IFIs, without any intention of incorporating the opinions of those considered (Falck and Landfald 2000: 14).

Many CSOs do not share the GoM’s view that their attendance of sectoral consultation meetings in 1999 and early 2000 constituted participation in the PRSP. While it is clear that a range of provincial and central government officials attended the consultation meetings it is not always clear how many CS actors did. A seminar held by the GoM in June 2000 to disseminate the draft PRSP and get feedback was the first time many NGO participants heard of it (McGee and Taimo 2001). Information has been severely restricted throughout, even to the GoM’s main CS interlocutors in Maputo, possibly due to poor organisation rather than reluctance: ‘reportedly a large number of copies of the I-PRSP are in storage waiting to be distributed to stakeholders’ (Falck and Landfald 2000: 14). Provincial CS’s awareness of the PARPA is very low, and no popular version has been produced, nor translations of key messages into local languages. Donors also complain of poor information flow. The Mozambique Debt Group, considering that the GoM was not informing or consulting widely enough especially outside Maputo, ran its own awareness raising process, with limited success.

Altogether, under time pressure, with the little in-country experience of participatory processes, and scepticism on both Government and CSO sides, the conditions were not favourable for a good quality participatory process.

What value has participation added, in terms of:

Impact on the PRS process?

The limited nature of participation (or more accurately, consultation) precludes a strong impact on the process. Possibly the need for the GoM to demonstrate a stronger commitment and consult further did

slow up the process especially in its later stages (early 2001). The GoM's rather unsatisfactory attempts to engage with CS in the formulation stage has led to a recognition that CS can still play an important role in monitoring implementation and outcomes, and to encouraging gestures in this regard; but the form this might take remains unclear. GoM notes that CS involvement in monitoring would enhance the credibility of the PARPA/PRSP and of the consultation process as a whole (IMF and IDA 2001).

Impact on PRS content?

Likewise, the limited scope of the consultative process precluded CS participation from influencing the PRSP's content significantly. On the positive side, the PARPA/PRSP is the first GoM document to recognise the need to address corruption, an issue raised by the public in consultation meetings. Consultations seem to have confirmed that the I-PRSP (PARPA 2000–4) had identified the right priorities, but added as priorities governance and corruption, and poor policy implementation and delivery, and unethical behaviour by public servants (IMF and IDA 2001: 2, 6). GoM in the PARPA/PRSP states its intention to incorporate into future iterations of the strategy findings from the Participatory Rural Appraisals carried out hurriedly in early 2001 in seven provinces; these have already been drawn on for the poverty analysis section of the existing PARPA/PRSP to describe the multiple dimensions and regional variations in poverty. The PARPA/PRSP's stress on 'mega-projects', to the relative neglect of direct poverty-reducing growth measures (as noted by the IMF and IDS 2001: 4) suggests that private sector organisations had a strong influence on content.

There are also negative indications: a CS commentary cites an occasion early in the PRSP process, when at a public meeting CS asked how Mozambique's Poverty Reduction Growth Facility would differ in substance from its earlier Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, and got no answer because a World Bank representative judged this 'an unfair question, as IFIs were already moving in the right direction' (Cuinica and Siddharth 2000). The same document states: 'Early evidence suggests that although the PRSP has increased openness and the level of exchange between IFIs and governments with civil society, the content of the policies is essentially the same [...]. In Mozambique [the presentation of alternative policy proposals by NGOs] will be especially difficult for several reasons: the size and diversity of the country, the dearth of information and civil society's lack of experience with this type of analysis'. Falck and Landfald (2000) and Falck *et al.* (2001) note little change in PRSP content *vis-à-vis* previous policy documents and little impact by the Mozambique Debt Group on policy content. The fact that the PARPA/PRSP is not well imbued with a gender perspective (IMF and IDS 2001; Republic of Mozambique 2001) suggests that women's rights organisations were not heard even if they did get consulted.

Several reasons are identified for the apparently low impact of CS on PRSP content: the PARPA/PRSP is so broad that in infrequent consultation meetings it was hard to go into depth on any one issue. Most Mozambican NGOs and religious bodies, being operational rather than advocacy-focused, are not well-equipped to engage with policies and many have little interest in doing so, at least at the macro-level (some do engage in provincial planning processes). At a more general level, it seems evidence-

based planning is not well-advanced in Mozambique, let alone participation-based planning: Falck and Landfald (2000) note that although female education is stressed in Mozambique's last Poverty Assessment as vital for poverty reduction, it is barely mentioned in the PARPA 2000–4/I-PRSP.

Impact on Government-donor dialogue?

The low level of participation attained precludes a significant impact. It should be noted, though, that 'there are no great divergences between government and donor views on appropriate poverty reduction strategies', meaning that, unlike some other countries, the GoM did not need or want CS participation to give it a stronger negotiating position or a wider range of policy alternatives to put forward in its dialogues with the donors and creditors. (This raises the question of the incentives the GoM had for carrying out a far-reaching consultative process). Some bilateral donors' vocal support for participatory processes provided a platform that brought them closer to government, who previously associated closely with the IFIs and relatively little with most bilaterals (e.g. DFID which used a consultancy as a starting point for this, see McGee and Taimo 2001). The GoM's good relationship with the IFIs continued throughout the process despite the initial resentments of the PRSP mentioned above (Falck *et al.* 2001).

Impact on poverty discourse?

Cross-cutting poverty issues such as HIV/AIDS, vulnerability and gender discrimination are poorly covered in the PARPA/PRSP (IMF and IDS 2001). Experience elsewhere with PPAs suggests that these issues would have arisen strongly had a participatory approach informed the poverty diagnosis more substantially. The concept of poverty dominant in the I-PRSP is of consumption shortfall. The PARPA/PRSP retains this strongly, although it contains more discussion of multi-dimensionality, mentioning non-consumption indicators of wellbeing and qualitative perceptions of poverty and promising that future iterations will use alternative concepts of poverty more centrally (Falck *et al.* 2001).

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

The range of factors on both government and CS sides, which are noted earlier as impediments to a meaningful participatory process also limit the likelihood of a sustained transformation in the nature of policy processes in Mozambique as a result of the PRSP experience. Some note that although very imperfect, the consultative process has been a promising start for 'a new and strengthened government approach to consultations' (Falck *et al.* 2001), with stakeholder involvement broadening at all levels and all stages of poverty reduction policy processes (Falck and Landfald 2000). This diversification of the poverty 'policy community' can be expected to increase pressure on government to deliver on its poverty reduction commitments. Moreover, the GoM signals that efforts are under way to make consultative processes more systematic and permanent (Republic of Mozambique 2001: 92), and has taken some steps in this regard. Government openness has increased somewhat since a CSO document stated in 2000 that 'although government is not closed, it does not have a political understanding of the role of civil society at

the global level in advocacy for debt relief and pro-poor policies *vis-à-vis* the international financial institutions' (Cuinica and Siddharth 2000: 5).

Less positively, after the consultation process was over 'it was felt among some stakeholders that its main purpose was not to let people participate but to satisfy donor requirements for consultations [...The Mozambique Debt Group] claims that it was used by the government to legitimise the consultation process' (Falck *et al.* 2001: 35). Heavy donor dependency does increase the chance that GoM's actions are donor-driven. Although this could lead to a stronger focus on poverty reduction given donors' current emphasis on this, it could also mean that the GoM is acting less in response to its own electorate than to outside pressures.

Involvement has left civil society a little more able to participate in such processes in future should the opportunity arise. Cuinica and Siddharth (2000) and LINK (2001) mention the beneficial effects of meeting and exchanging experiences with Central American advocacy NGOs at a meeting organised by the Mozambique Debt Group in an attempt to prepare CS for the PRSP process. However, there are still great capacity gaps, which would need to be filled before CS could participate in such a way as to achieve a significant impact (LINK 2001; McGee and Taimo 2001).

Other issues

The holding of consultations, as one element of the several that IFIs were insisting on, shows that donors and CS have been listened to in the PRSP process, but the very low involvement of Parliament suggests that these actors have been listened to more than the elected political representatives. Falck *et al.* (2001) point out that a strengthening of government/donor relationships and government/CS relationships at the expense of closer relationships between elected government representatives and their constituencies is surely not what donors hoped to achieve.

Rwanda

Summary

Participation has been strongly promoted in the Rwandan PRSP process. With international technical assistance, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) has sought to incorporate grassroots participation at every stage, with CSOs⁶⁶ assigned a role mainly in implementation and monitoring. The PRSP process included a Participatory Poverty Assessment at diagnostic stage. A Policy Relevance Test was carried out for clarifying and improving sectoral policies and assessing the relevance of new ones and monitoring their implementation. Simultaneously, indigenous concepts of participation, such as *Ubudebe*, will be incorporated into the process with the aim of empowering poor people to become active partners in implementing the national Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and parallel decentralisation process. This

⁶⁶ In this profile, 'CSO' refers to any indigenous civil society organisation, including trade unions, churches, local NGOs, etc. 'NGO' refers to development and relief organisations.

approach arose from the recent traumatic history of Rwanda and the idea that poverty reduction and reconciliation are inextricably linked and best tackled, especially the latter, with a participatory approach at the grassroots level. To what degree these new approaches will be accepted by, and beneficial to, the general population, remains to be seen. Nonetheless, there are pioneering participatory practices underway in the Rwandan PRSP process which merit close attention as they could offer lessons relevant to other contexts, particularly post-conflict countries.

Background

The PRS process began in Rwanda in 1999 with the final draft of the I-PRSP produced in November 2000. The first draft of the PRSP was published in October 2001. The PRS is co-ordinated by a National PRSP steering committee led by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN 2000). Its stated role is to co-ordinate consultations and the development of policies 'to identify the genuine priorities of the whole population of Rwanda' (*ibid.*). This unit has a steering committee with two CS representatives and technical committee, which includes a Participation Task Force. The Technical Committee's mandate is to 'lead and assume on behalf of the GoR and CSOs, the definition, the implementation, the MandE of PRS and programs in line with the GoR [commitment] to working for greater participation and transparency in government and society' (*ibid.*).

Principle and practice of participation

Despite the mainly instrumentalist role of CSOs in formulation, at the community level participation has been actively encouraged through the employment of the PPA, PRT and *ubudehe* approaches (Christiansen pers. comm. n.d.). The GoR has committed itself to a radically participatory PRS process recognising that 'Poor people and communities know exactly the problems they face ...the best information about their situation and what changes would have a real impact on their lives' (MINALOC 2001).

Sources report that the Bank and Fund in-country have not been very actively involved in the participatory process to date, and that their understanding of the principles, practice, attitudes and behaviour of participation is still under development. The fact that the Bank has continued to provide sectoral support to line ministries, despite the new directions for donor support implied in the PRS framework and the government's efforts to follow these, has caused some confusion. In deference to the principle of the country's PRS setting the overall framework for donor intervention, the WB Board has postponed approval of the first CAS until it is fully aligned with the PRSP.

Multilateral donors such as DFID, EC (European Commission), Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) and others have actively supported participation and ownership in the PRSP process (Christiansen pers. comm. 2001). For example, DFID has supported technical assistance for the design of the PPA, the engendering of the PRSP and the design of other participatory processes (Zuckerman 2001; Howe, pers. comm. 2001).

The I-PRSP process defined central and prefecture level government priorities. Broad CSO contribution to this analysis process was not evident (Christian Aid 2001). The draft PRSP was produced

with consultation at the commune, sector and, most influentially at the cellule (community) level through a 5-month Participatory Poverty Assessment and a Policy Relevance Test (PRT), facilitated in communities by CSOs.⁶⁷ This was followed by prefecture level consultations, but in CSOs' view, these were more information dissemination exercises (Christiansen pers. comm. n.d.). Running parallel to and beyond the PRS is the *ubudebe* participatory governance approach, which links the national priorities of poverty reduction and reconciliation through decentralisation. The analysis of the policies presented in the PRSP will be undertaken with the participation of academic institutions, ministries, local government and CS at a national consultation workshop.

What value has participation added in terms of:

Impact on PRSP process?

The need for broad consultation is particularly acute in a country that is emerging from a period of acute conflict. Consultation can sometimes slow decision-making down, but it is essential in order to win consensus.

(MINECOFIN 2001a)

While community participation in the PRSP process to date has been fairly strong, local NGOs have generally had a limited input (Christian Aid 2001). This is in part because there is no effective national umbrella body for local NGOs at present. International NGOs have their own co-ordination body and were theoretically better placed to formulate a cohesive strategy towards the PRSP. However, both international and local NGOs are still largely operationally focused on rehabilitation and the provision of services and generally lack advocacy, policy and economic literacy skills. They were therefore perceived by the government to lack the capacity to engage and make a significant impact on influencing the PRSP process and only a few INGOs were invited to national and provincial consultations (Christiansen pers. comm. n.d.; Christian Aid 2001). However, both local and international NGOs were actively engaged in facilitating the PPA process within the cellules.

DFID funded a technical advisor from Action Aid India, an NGO renowned for its participatory practice, to design the participatory bottom-up approach of the Rwandan PRS. This INGO advisor appears to have made an invaluable contribution to the overarching participatory theme of the Rwanda PRSP through the PPA, PRT and *Ubudebe* approaches (Howe pers. comm. 2001). Although this individual does not of course represent Rwandan CS, the Participation Action Plan suggests the advisor did draw heavily upon the indigenous experience of participation and on the lessons learnt by NGOs in Rwanda to date.

Neither the I-PRSP nor the PRSP draft were published into Kinyarwanda in time for broad-based stakeholder comment (Christian Aid 2001), despite original intentions to have a widespread media

⁶⁷ See below for details.

campaign through newspapers, radio and a popular soap opera. The *Ubudehe* approach will be publicised nationally through the radio (MINALOC 2001). A popular version of the final PRSP is presently being mooted by the government (Christiansen pers. comm. n.d.). PRS monitoring by the same communities will be carried out once per year through the same PPA methodology.

Impact on PRSP content?

The National Poverty Assessment⁶⁸ was used at District level to develop poverty profiles of well-being and poverty, community problem ranking, service delivery assessment, gender roles and land issues.

The main text of the draft PRSP contains a table of priorities as ranked by cellules participating in the PPA. The top 16 of these priorities are all addressed to some degree in the actions the government pledges to undertake during the implementation of the PRSP. It is unclear whether this table is a result of the PPA or the PRT. In the PRT ministries set the agenda and cellules appraised and ranked them (the methodology did not allow them to add new and unforeseen policy priorities). The PPA was less pre-determined, with cellules defining their own priority problems. Nevertheless, these cellule priorities in the PRSP covered a full range of issues and are both sectoral (e.g. agriculture, health and education) and thematic (e.g. security and governance). They include some very specific ones (the need for candles and fuel for oil lamps). These priorities feed straight into the budget prioritisation and protection mechanism (Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, MTEF) (Christiansen pers. comm. n.d.). In contrast to most PRSPs, the section on macro-economic policies is located at the very end of the paper, which perhaps indicates CS's sense of priorities.

We have no conclusive evidence that CSOs made a direct impact on the content of the draft PRSP. However, a DFID consultant hired to engender the PRSP did carry out consultations with CSO representatives on the issue of gender (Zuckerman 2001). The PRSP zero draft (MINECOFIN 2001a) explicitly identifies gender as a cross-cutting issue, making specific reference to the needs of widows and female headed households and committing itself to mainstreaming the national gender policy across ministries. We can only speculate as to how far the consultant's inputs were instrumental in achieving this.

Impact on Government-donor dialogue?

The Rwandan PRSP is being implemented at a time when the scars of recent history are still fresh. Organised civil society is weak, distrust prevails within communities and many international donors and INGOs are still focused on post-emergency rehabilitation projects (MINECOFIN 2001b; Christiansen pers. comm. n.d.). The GoR recognises that the PRS process offered a comprehensive vehicle for Rwanda to move towards economic and social development and reconciliation. The World Bank in-country is still coming to terms with the implications of the PRS for its ways of working, as noted above.

Since the main architect of the PRS process was a representative of civil society supported by DFID, one can assume that the relationship between the government and this particular donor is close and

valued. Although the *Ubudebe* approach has yet to be implemented nationally, the pilot in Butare province suggests that it offers potential for fostering local-level decision-making and participation. DFID Rwanda expects it to generate for external and internal stakeholders better understanding and knowledge that they can apply in support of decision-making and public choice processes in Rwanda.

The zero-draft of the PRSP recognises that NGOs will have important roles to play in implementing the PRSP. These include intervening where they have a comparative advantage over the state in dealing with specific vulnerable groups; contributing to public debate by advocacy and research on particular issues and monitoring the outcomes of government policies (MINECOFIN 2001a). This stated commitment by Government is leading donors such as DFID, SEDA and the EC to shift their orientation from supporting civil society in relief and rehabilitation work towards more support for longer term development within the PRSP context (Howe pers. comm. 2001). Additionally all bilateral donors have committed themselves to either writing their own strategies for Rwanda within the framework of the PRSP or support sections of it outright (anonymous source).

It can be confidently asserted that GoR commitment to institutionalising a bottom-up policy-making process will be matched by sympathetic donor support to such processes. Thus, combined with a participatory budget monitoring system, the negotiating hand of the government with donors looks likely to be strengthened.

Impact on poverty discourse?

The GoR recognises ‘poverty as a complex, dynamic, multi-dimensional phenomenon’ (MINALOC 2001), an approach which seems to go deeper than rhetoric (Christiansen pers. comm. n.d.). Statisticians have been trained in the analysis of qualitative data from the NPA (*ibid.*). ‘A central aim of the GoR’s [PRS] policy is physical and financial re-capitalisation, but within an approach that also aims to rebuild the social and human capital so tragically destroyed’.

The language of a multi-dimensional view of poverty is used throughout the draft PRSP. The NPA included many themes, which reinforce this understanding of poverty, including a concerted attempt to engender the PRSP, issues of vulnerability, definitions of wellbeing and poverty and the (rare) recognition of time poverty (MINECOFIN 2001b; MINECOFIN 2001a). The *ubudebe* approach encourages communities to take a similarly holistic view of poverty.

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

The participation requirement of the PRSP framework has fallen on fertile ground in the Rwandan government. Reconciliation and poverty reduction are urgently required and an institutionalised bottom-up participatory PRS process appears to the government to be the best way to achieve them: ‘national reconciliation is fundamental and can best be achieved through devolving power to the local level so that communities work together in solving the problems they face’ (GoR 2001). The Rwandan PRSP therefore

⁶⁸ Part of the PPA, together with the PRT and Butare Pilot, formerly referred to in Rwanda as the CPA:

runs in parallel with *ubudehe*, part of the decentralisation process aimed to facilitate reconciliation and poverty reduction. This process is also intended to harbour greater transparency in the policy-making and budget allocation process.

There is muted concern from some stakeholders that the concept of *ubudehe* unless monitored carefully, could come to be used in a top-down way, which would limit meaningful participation by the rural poor.

Generating examples of good participatory practice?

Participatory Policy Relevance Tests aim to check and increase the relevance of proposed policies and policy priorities using insights of people who are affected by them or implementing them. An independent body prepared short summaries of current policies and those contained within the I-PRSP, which were checked and agreed by the appropriate ministries. They were then appraised through questionnaires and ranking by affected stakeholders at the prefecture, commune and cellule level, as well as a representative group from 25 communes. The appraisals were then collated in quantitative form, and the intention was to feed them directly into the writing of the PRSP, forming the basis for budget negotiations (MINALOC 2001; Christiansen pers. comm. n.d.). The approach proved hard to implement, especially with capacity constraints. It will therefore be replaced with a simpler approach using Citizens' Report Cards, which capture users' feedback on public services and policies. The PRT exercise, despite falling short of expectations, has built some new capacity among researchers, who will be re-engaged to work with the Citizens' Report Cards.

Ubudehe captures 'the traditional Rwandan practice and cultural value of working together to solve problems...the objective of *ubudehe* is to revive and foster collective action at the community level. It is designed to work with and reinforce the on-going political and financial decentralisation process and to provide a direct infusion of financial capital into the rural economy, aimed at overcoming one of the main obstacles to pro-poor economic growth' (MINALOC 2001). A total of 9,000 cellules in Rwanda will be trained to use participatory methods to come up with an analysis of priorities they wish to address.⁶⁹ Local government, District, Provincial and National government then work towards producing information packs to help refine the community plans. The community development committee refines the plan and presents it back to the community for relevancy testing. Each cellule is then assigned US\$1000 per annum towards the community project of their choice. The plan is made public for monitoring by the government and community. Additionally, cellule representatives selected by the community will be trained so that they are confident to advocate at the district and provincial levels. The *Ubudehe* approach has been published for public debate (MINALOC 2001).

'Consultative Poverty Assessment'.

⁶⁹ Despite concern that some groups may be further marginalised within communities (e.g. women) the government is calculating that this will be compensated for by reconciliation through joint community action. The pilot in Butare suggests this is possible and that done well, may even increase community awareness of the diversity of needs (MINALOC 2001).

Other issues

This PRSP's participatory approach arose from the GoR recognition of the inextricable link between reconciliation and poverty reduction if sustainable development is to occur. With conflict affecting so many African countries, the Rwandan PRS represents a welcome set of new approaches to reconciliation and poverty reduction. These remain tentative and fragile as yet, but have the potential to generate lessons for use elsewhere and as such merit close monitoring.

Tanzania

Summary

Tanzania had some prior history of policy consultations. For the PRSP, two parallel participatory processes occurred. The government-led one consisted of a series of zonal and national consultations, plus the incorporation of selected civil society figures into key drafting and monitoring committees. The civil society one consisted of the formulation of an alternative strategy and lobbying for the integration of this with the draft produced by the Government of Tanzania (GoT). In the view of many CS actors and even some GoT actors, neither process had significant impact on the PRSP. Although the PRSP experience has greatly strengthened CS's capacity to engage in participatory policy processes, there is some doubt that GoT has undergone a similar increase in capacity or become more willing to open up its processes to CS involvement.

Background

Tanzania produced an I-PRSP in March 2000 and had a full PRSP endorsed in December 2000. The PRSP process is led by a Committee of Ministers and the Governor of the Bank of Tanzania (Tanzanian Authorities 2000). This committee was also the main GoT point of contact for the Civil Society PRSP Steering Committee, which along with five sectoral committees composed of sector-specialist CSOs was the structure whereby CS engaged in the process. GoT invited CS to participate, without specifying means, by letter in December 1999. Tanzanian Social and Economic Trust (TASOET), Tanzania Coalition on Debt and Development (TCDD) and Oxfam Tanzania have been key CS players, organising the first CS round table meeting in January 2000, at which the CS structure was developed. Most of the 40 CSOs involved were Tanzanian-based. Donor support was secured by the CS Steering Committee. From the information available to us, we could not discern how far 'civil society' in Tanzania embraced any organisations other than NGOs, e.g. religious associations or private sector organisations.

The principle and practice of participation

The principle of participation had already been embraced by the GoT before the introduction of the PRSP, as evinced by the incorporation of a consultative process into the formulation of the Tanzania Assistance Strategy (Evans and Nglawea 2000). In GoT's view, promoting participation enhances the legitimacy and acceptability of a policy process (KK Consulting Associates 2001). However,

intra-governmental participation is said to have been restricted to senior officials, and to have failed to generate a deep and broad understanding of the principle of participation even in government (*ibid.*), suggesting that the principle was understood narrowly. NGOs are sceptical about why the IFIs and the GoT have embraced participation, claiming that even a participatory process is only ‘business as usual’ if its product has to be endorsed by Washington (Evans and Nglawe 2000), and that the consultations were actually a validation process (Mbilinyi 2001).

In practice, a range of opportunities were provided for CS to participate (Evans *et al.* 2000). Yet even senior officials recognise that ‘the timetable had precluded a sufficiently broad participatory process’ (Evans *et al.* 2000: 6), and in CS documents and commentaries criticisms of the process abound. All the common defects are cited: poor information provision, rushed timetable, government vagueness over process and objectives, and superficial consultation rather than opportunities for meaningful participation or collaboration by CS (Eurodad 2000; Evans *et al.* 2000; TCDD 2000; Mbilinyi 2001). The seven zonal workshops were held all on the same day, precluding adequate preparations or meaningful interaction. At national level, the process was considered more authentic, but even at that level was riddled with procedural flaws (Eurodad 2000). The selection of CS representatives is severely questioned by NGO commentators, the selection criteria not having been made transparent (TCDD 2000). Government sources (Evans *et al.* 2000: 8) and the PRS document itself state that the poor at village level could have been better represented at the formulation stage and will need to be improved later (KK Consulting Associates 2001). The GoT’s failure to disseminate the finished PRSP beyond the capital has fuelled CS scepticism as to the degree of government commitment to implement it (Evans *et al.* 2000). The composition of Poverty Monitoring Working Groups (for monitoring implementation) has also attracted accusations of exclusivity and lack of mechanisms for responsiveness or accountability. Some note that the GoT is not solely responsible for the flawed process, citing weaknesses in co-ordination among key CSOs as well (Evans *et al.* 2000).

The problem-ridden process effectively led CSOs to establish a parallel process of analysing poverty, drafting sector strategies and presenting them to the GoT drafting team. Their inputs were formulated through a transparent, consultative process involving sector-specialists as well as generalists; and resulted in a well-structured document, giving a detailed and coherent analysis of the nature of poverty in Tanzania, clear policy prescriptions, and a strong bid for sustained participatory approaches in the policy context. The document also identified lessons that CS has learnt already about how to do better next time.

What value has participation added, in terms of:

Impact on PRS process?

CSOs adopted the strategy of setting up on their own, as noted previously, presumably after making a negative assessment of their chances of influencing the PRS by only working through the GoT-led consultation process.

CS's endeavours within the constraints of this 'parallel' process have been recognised to create potential for later stages of the PRSP process to be more participatory. Evans *et al.* (2000) note that the GoT now faces the challenge of building on participatory practice to date, by establishing more systematic mechanisms for participation in implementation, especially in monitoring. The Bank and IMF Joint Staff Assessment considered that PRS consultations in the formulation stage had provided beginnings which could be developed further, into the later stages of the PRS and beyond it into sustainable and institutionalised forms of public accountability.

Impact on PRS content?

GoT officials claim that the PRSP as a whole shows very little change in policy content with respect to previous policies, suggesting that public consultations have achieved no shifts in content (Evans *et al.* 2000). CS complains that its participation was restricted to 'safe' areas of policy and not permitted in economic decision-making ('Not all issues were open for CS to discuss', Mbilinyi 2001). Others complained of the lack of any feedback to CS on its submissions, which suggest that its inputs were not taken seriously. Gender and environmental issues are said to have been poorly addressed in the PRSP, and policy measures such as user-fees to have passed unchallenged, because of the government's failure to elicit and take sufficient heed of people's priorities and opinions of policies at the grassroots (Tanzania Gender Networking Project 2001). 'On the whole the PRSP document does not demonstrate any gender perspectives and civil society inputs in a meaningful way' (*ibid.*): CS inputs are said to have been heard out at the national workshop and then to have vanished, not appearing in the final version, leaving CS actors feeling 'cheated'. The fact that after the completion of the PRSP CS groups are still pressing the GoT to take a harder line rejecting user fees in its negotiations with the IFIs (*ibid.*) is further evidence that such pressure groups did not see their views reflected in the paper itself.

Impact on Government-donor dialogue?

IFI and donor behaviour towards government are seen by GoT officials to have been changing for some time, as indicated by the participatory PER process in 2000 and then the PRS process (Evans *et al.* 2000: 10). The GoT welcomes this. While expectations of changes in donor behaviour are high, some doubt their feasibility and certain NGOs are convinced that the IFIs' new focus on ownership and promotion of participation are only cosmetic (Evans *et al.* 2000: 11).

Despite these negative attitudes, however, CSOs have thrown themselves into the PRS; but our information suggests that their efforts have not been allowed to make sufficient impact on the PRS process or contents to actually affect the GoT's negotiating position *vis-à-vis* donors.

Impact on poverty discourse?

The concept of poverty put forward eloquently by CS in its submission document (TCDD 2000) is firmly multidimensional and sees poverty as rooted in unequal power relations. The I-PRSP does not show such

a multi-dimensional or rich understanding of poverty (Tanzanian Authorities 2000),⁷⁰ but plans for poverty monitoring, which were developed in the course of PRSP formulation, with CS inputs, do set out proposals for participatory poverty assessments, recognising that poverty may have many dimensions which are not all amenable to quantification or capture through standard data-gathering techniques. This implies that future iterations of the PRSP are likely to be imbued with a far richer understanding than the current one, going well beyond mere consumption shortfall.

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

The PRSP process is widely regarded to have provided a basis for much more productive interaction between the GoT and CS in future, with less suspicion of the latter by the former. While the participatory process is seen as very imperfect, it has created potential for future initiatives to work better (Eurodad 2000; Evans *et al.* 2000). CS itself recognises that it is better prepared now than at the outset for such processes, and is occupying the spaces that the PRS has opened to demand of government the institutionalisation of pluralist, participatory and deliberative policy processes (FEMACT 2001).

There are also signs on the government side that nothing has changed. The GoT continues to be unwilling to accept criticism from CS, which will impede the further development of meaningful dialogue (Evans *et al.* 2000). The Consultative Group meeting in Dar es Salaam in September 2001 has been conceived and prepared by the GoT as just as much a ‘closed-doors’ affair as ever (FEMACT 2001). But CS’s response to this provides an example of the PRS process’s broader impact on policy processes: Cooksey (2001) reports that CS has orchestrated a multi-pronged and strategic response to it, including media coverage which criticises GoT for failing to learn from past mistakes.

Generating examples of good participatory practice?

‘Tanzania without Poverty: A plain-language guide to the PRSP’ (Hakikazi Catalyst and Masoud 2001): an excellent example of the popularising of complex policy messages to inform the public about the PRSP. Supported by DFID and distributed by Coca-Cola throughout the country, it counts itself as one contribution to realising the GoT commitment in the PRSP to ‘seek fuller representation of the poor and other stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the poverty reduction strategy’. It provides actual PRSP targets, explaining and putting them into context; gives an overview of the history of public policy-making in Tanzania to show how the current approach has evolved; and ends with a section on ‘What the Big Words Mean’, where economic and policy terms are unpacked. The guide has been produced in local languages as well as English and Kiswahili.

⁷⁰ Shortage of time prevented us from examining this in the full PRSP.

Uganda

Summary

Uganda undoubtedly presents one of the most comprehensive and country-owned participatory PRS processes to date. A large-scale, lengthy Participatory Poverty Assessment, started earlier, prepared the ground so that both Government and civil society were ready and poised to enter into constructive consultations. Uganda presents several good practice cases. Not all of these will be replicable in other contexts, where the circumstances and attitudes in government, donor agencies and civil society, are less favourable to a participatory process than they were in Uganda.

Background

Uganda had its own Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) in place from 1997 and by late 1999 had showed demonstrable progress in implementing it. Thus no I-PRSP was needed and the full PRSP, finalised in March 2000, is a revised PEAP (PEAP II). The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) leads on the PEAP for the Government of Uganda (GoU), with Sector Working Groups (SWGs), including representatives of line Ministries, contributing to the revision and overseeing implementation and monitoring. MFPED was also responsible for co-ordinating the participatory process, helped by the existence since 1998 of the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) under MFPED auspices, which strengthens the Ministry's interface with civil society. Civil society participation in revising the PEAP was co-ordinated by a Civil Society Task Force (CSO TF), established by CS using independently-acquired donor funding, to complement the SWGs' competences. The CSO TF was led by the Uganda Debt Network (UDN), a vociferous advocacy coalition, with GoU approval. Other members of the TF are national and international development and advocacy NGOs, religious bodies and research institutions.

Principle and practice of participation

Pre-dating the PEAP revision, UPPAP had produced relevant, high-profile findings through a participatory process, and UDN had demonstrated to GoU that collaboration with civil society poverty advocates was feasible and even beneficial. Donors and IFIs in Uganda have understood participation in terms of enhancing understandings of poverty and how policies could benefit the poorest. GoU understood it in similar terms, recognising the value of opening up poverty reduction policy processes to participation (Yates and Okello, forthcoming 2002). The GoU may also recognise political benefits (increased popular legitimacy, broadened support base etc.), compensating for the implications a no-party system has for political participation.

In practice, the participatory process has been higher quality, more sustained, much more country-owned, higher-profile and influential than in any other country, not least because of the favourable pre-conditions which existed and substantial donor support (e.g. DFID, Sida and WB support to UPPAP). UPPAP started in 1998, producing detailed findings in early 2000 when PEAP revision was commencing.

Key policies of PEAP I have clearly been modified in PEAP II to reflect UPPAP findings (Bird and Kakande 2001). Findings fed into PEAP II through UPPAP representatives on key SWGs and UPPAP. Information provision from GoU to the public and CSOs, often via the CSO TF but not exclusively, was relatively abundant and free-flowing.

The CSO TF contributed in two ways. It facilitated regional consultation workshops in eight locations, producing a professional synthesis of findings (UDN 2000b) and feeding these into the MFPED-led drafting process. It also set up sectoral groupings, mirroring the GoU SWGs and each led by one CSO, to gather views from CS actors well-informed about the sector and channel these into the SWGs' deliberations. It is not clear from our information whether any of the TF also had their own internal channels for consultation of their stakeholders or members, besides the broad constituencies of poor people consulted in regions and the CS sector 'experts' consulted by sectoral groupings. Some CSO TF members feel, justifiably, that all they did was consult and feed in views, rather than take a more significant part in decision-making (Vadera pers. comm. 2001). While this is technically true, in contrast to other countries the agenda for consultation had been set through a broadly participatory process in which UPPAP and CS lobbying played a strong part; and the consultations arose from proactive organising and proposals led by CS rather than in response to a GoU invitation.

What value has participation added in terms of:

Impact on PRSP process?

Overall, participation in the form of UPPAP proved to be a vital forerunner to a relatively high-quality, consultative PEAP revision process, and also ensured that the agenda advanced by the GoU to initiate the revision was itself the product of a joint effort with heavy public and NGO input, more broadly owned than was possible for most countries' I-PRSPs or draft PRSPs. The creation of a CSO Task Force enriched the quality and range of debate in the PEAP revision, as acknowledged by the Minister of Finance (Ssendawaula 2000). A large-scale and high-profile media campaign, along with the regional consultation workshops spread information about PEAP II process to the public, CSOs and local government personnel, and the consultations extended the circle of stakeholders beyond Kampala. Through CSO TF's efforts, civil society was well-integrated into the May 2001 Consultative Group meeting.

Impact on PRS content?

The contribution UPPAP made to re-orienting national poverty reduction policies has been recognised by GoU (MFPED 2000: vii). Specifically, Bird and Kakande (pers. comms. 2001) note a new policy focus in PEAP II on water provision, governance and accountability, and the performance of service delivery agents resulting from UPPAP's highlighting of these issues.

Impact on Government-donor dialogue?

The GoU sees itself as having pre-empted in its own national processes the PRS requirements for participation, and goes so far as to claim the IFIs borrowed the PRSP concept from ongoing processes in Uganda in 1999 (Bird pers. comm.; Yates and Okello 2002). Its hand has undoubtedly been strengthened in negotiations with donors and IFIs as a result of its ever-closer links with CSOs, starting with its recognition around 1998 that UDN's debt advocacy could be beneficial rather than detrimental, in gaining the country concessions from the IFIs. There is much evidence that GoU feels itself in a strong negotiating position partly as a result of the progress it has made on civil society participation: claims by some high-level GoU officials that the IFIs borrowed the PRS model from Uganda (Bird pers. comm. 2001; Yates and Okello 2002); President Museveni's very confident interactions with donors at the 2001 Consultative Group meeting, including in response to their criticisms of the absence of full democratic process; and the producing by MFPED of a 'PEAP III' (MFPED 2001) in which GoU sets out its understanding of the poverty reduction partnership which exists between itself and donors, an indication that it feels its own house is in order on this issue.

Impact on poverty discourse?

Poverty in Uganda no longer means consumption shortfall alone; the multi-dimensional concept, including powerlessness, voicelessness, isolation, which emerged from UPPAP has been taken up widely (McGee 2000). Recognition of the diverse poverties of the nine Districts covered by UPPAP in 1998–9 led the GoU to allow Districts more flexibility in their use of conditional funds issues from central Government; and gave a boost to the concept of decentralised, bottom-up planning to better contend with such diversity. UPPAP's finding that 'powerlessness' is one dimension of poverty, led to GoU commitments to increase the provision of information to poor communities on their rights and how to claim entitlements (Bird pers. comm. 2001; Kakande pers. comm. 2001). The actors considered legitimate participants in national poverty discourse have greatly increased in number and diversity, to include NGOs, academics, even informal traders' associations attending Poverty Forum meetings (Okello pers. comm.). The video produced by UPPAP testifies to new awareness among high-level GoU officials of the poor's capacity to contribute to poverty discourse; and also to a new meaning of poverty gaining currency in the MFPED (UPPAP 2000). While poverty language has also changed in the line Ministries, these have been less central in the transformations that have taken place and it is less clear here than in the MFPED that a new discourse is fuelling changes in practice.

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

More broadly, the ongoing dialogue, which had been developing since the mid-1990s between an initially wary GoU and a civil society growing in confidence and advocacy capacity, had by 2000 matured into a constructive and mutually advantageous collaboration, which is improving GoU responsiveness to poor people's needs. The partnership model of UPPAP (including international and Ugandan NGOs, GoU, CSO networks and academics) was an extraordinarily mixed case of collaborative policy research, which

changed attitudes on all sides, seeding further open, pluralistic and deliberative policy processes. The headway since made by some CSO partners of the GoU in advocating on even sensitive issues, like corruption, shows how the GoU's tolerance, and CSOs' confidence to engage in such processes, have grown. The development of the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (2000–01) drew from UPPAP both content and aspects of its process, including dissemination of outputs. UDN's participation in the MFPED committee established to monitor use of debt relief resources (Poverty Action Fund, PAF), a spin-off from UDN's role in PEAP revision, sets a precedent for civil society scrutiny of local and central Government budget execution and strengthens transparency and a culture of accountability to civil society watchdogs protecting the poor's interests.

The GoU's willingness to invite CSOs into policy processes in Uganda is not unrelated to the country's 'no-party' political system, based on the inclusion of all Ugandans by birthright in the ruling National Resistance Movement. In political rhetoric, in many people's understanding, and in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, an active role for civil society in the policy arena is a substitute for party-based political opposition. There are Ugandans and CSOs who, while taking up the opportunity to participate, do not consider it a fair substitute and it is likely that scepticism among such actors will grow as long as the Movement's pro-consultation rhetoric continues without any sign of change in the political model.

Generating examples of good participatory practice?

The Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP), although not without problems, and dependent on heavy external support and unprecedented donor flexibility, is undoubtedly a good model for a PPA (Yates and Okello 2002; Norton *et al.* 2001). The PAF Monitoring Committees established by UDN (UDN 2000a; UDN 2000b) set a good precedent for independent CSO monitoring of use of HIPC funds, although they do not use participatory approach to monitoring (yet?), nor monitor the quality of the participatory bottom-up process through which use of funds should be determined. The National Poverty Forum, set up by UPPAP (2000) and partners, bring together the GoU, donors, academics, NGOs and other CS actors to debate poverty issues arising in UPPAP, some quite controversial, for example the inequitable impacts of taxation. The Poverty Eradication Working Group, set up within the MFPED in response to CS pressure and composed of CS and GoU members, will maintain a focus on poverty reduction throughout the budgetary process by scrutinising sector plans and budgets.

Zambia

Summary

Zambia has only been a multi-party state for ten years and lacks any culture of government-CS consultation or participation. In the light of this, any movement towards a more open dialogue between the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) and Civil Society (CS) should be seen as a significant step. Both GRZ and CS recognise that they both lack capacity to engage in the PRSP in full partnership

with each other. Nevertheless significant strides have been made; most notably in the formulation of an active CSO coalition on poverty reduction, which have strengthened CS representation and therefore country ownership of the PRSP, helping to keep poverty reduction at the centre of the PRSP agenda. To what degree this coalition will hold together to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the PRSP has yet to be seen.

Background

The I-PRSP was produced in July 2000 and the Draft PRSP in September 2001. The PRSP process is managed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. A Technical Secretariat is responsible for day-to-day planning, budgeting and implementation of the consultative process. Civil Society established its own network for engagement with the PRSP: the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR), which produced its own paper as an input into the process (CSPR n.d.). Our information from and about CS's involvement is drawn mainly from CSPR. Zambia has only been a multi-party state for ten years and there is a lack of a culture of CS consultation or participation. 'The NGOs are highly critical of the way in which consultation has been conducted in the past [...] they feel there is a pattern in which NGOs are initially invited to provide input and, where government does not agree with suggestions, they are ignored; [so] the participation itself is used to lend legitimacy to the exercise' (Situmbeko 2000).

The principle and practice of participation

There is not a culture of broad-based stakeholder involvement in policy-making in Zambia. However, an early workshop in the preparation of the I-PRSP led the GRZ to realise that, to engender broad country ownership rather than just government ownership, Parliament should also have a role in endorsement of the PRSP, (Situmbeko 2000). After broad stakeholder consultation, the PRSP participatory process was redesigned to allow for more CS participation (*ibid.*). However, CS was still sceptical that GRZ participation was merely a public relations legitimisation exercise (CSPR 2001). The eight thematic working groups appeared to CS as pre-defined by government and focused more on macro-economic growth and governance issues than on poverty reduction. The planned provincial consultations, in CS's view, did not allow for broad grassroots participation (CSPR 2001). The GRZ set up a PRSP Advisory Unit under the Ministry of Finance for the exchange of ideas and information sharing. However, with the limited information flow due to the Official Secrets Act (Kasutu 2001), CS realised that the unit was of limited usefulness both in terms of providing information and in terms of making independent decisions drawing on CS perceptions (Musamba 2000).

It was as a result of all these factors that CS undertook its own national and grassroots consultation exercises and produced its own thematic priority areas. CS organised itself under the umbrella of the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) and through its own provincial consultation process identified its own priorities for poverty reduction. The CSPR then hired technical expertise to draft a paper, which was submitted to GRZ (SARPN 2001). This was submitted not as a parallel PRSP, but a contribution to the final document to enrich it (CSPR n.d.).

During the consultations, there was much common ground between donors, GRZ and CS on 'soft issues' such as health and education. However, when it came to governance and macroeconomics CS and GRZ views diverged (especially on the relative prioritising of growth and poverty reduction). In the eyes of CS, the GRZ was wary of 'destroying international relations with donors and the IFIs'. Whether this was the real concern of GRZ is unclear, but if it was, then it is indicative of how exactly the PRSP principle of country ownership has been understood by GRZ.

Co-ordination by donors with respect to CS participation was good (Musamba pers. comm. 2001). The IMF took a purely observatory role rather than actively supporting CS participation (*ibid.*) and, in the eyes of CS, was inflexible in incorporating the views of those representing the poor into their own analysis (Musamba 2000). Other donors took a more proactive role with UNDP helping to organise consultation workshops between parliamentarians, CSO and senior government officials (UNDP 2001). The World Bank was active in promoting participation in the process, even sharing pertinent documents which the GRZ would not disseminate to CS (Musamba pers. comm. 2001). CSPR noted that international NGOs and 'donors have encouraged the participation of civil society, with some expressing interest in supporting most of the civil society intentions in the PRSP' (Musamba 2000).

What value has participation added in terms of:

Impact on the PRS process?

From the outset, CS organised itself efficiently and took a proactive role in the PRS process in lobbying for a more conducive environment for meaningful participation (SGTS 2000b; Musamba pers. comm. 2001). The formulation of the first draft of the I-PRSP took place with little consultation, and under time pressure, because the GRZ wanted to have a draft ready for an impending WB and IMF mission. A second draft of the I-PRSP was discussed in a broader stakeholder workshop which included CS. CS critiqued the participatory process proposed in the initial I-PRSP, demanding that representation on the working groups be increased and claiming that the thematic groups of GRZ were not all encompassing (Musamba 2000). Their concerns were only partly addressed, leading them to set up their own thematic groups and grassroots consultations. CS was successful in securing a commitment that participation should not be a one-off process but should continue through implementation and monitoring and evaluation (Situmbeko 2000). CS was only given one day to review the final draft of the PRSP. While inadequate, this was an improvement on the original role assigned to them, in their words to review the paper for typographical errors (Musamba pers. comm. 2001).

Impact on PRSP content?

Historically, the churches have taken a leadership role on the question of poverty reduction issues and promoting a broader view of poverty. Some noted that many CSOs within the CSPR were often unable to make the connection between their own operational issues and the broader issues which influence policy-making (Kasutu 2001). Despite this, CSPR mobilised itself and came up with its own ten thematic

working groups, which approximately matched those of the GRZ but reflect a more holistic understanding of poverty and more disposition to grasp politically sensitive issues.

As previously mentioned, the GRZ and CS could largely agree on 'soft policy areas', such as health and education. However, when it came to issues about governance and macroeconomics their views diverged. CS's main contribution to the PRSP seems to be in trying to centre poor people at the heart of the PRSP. To what extent the CSPR's specific proposals of this nature will be incorporated into the PRSP is still unknown as, despite the initial plan to include CS in the PRSP drafting committee, this was not the case and drafts have not been circulated to date (Kasutu 2001). Some CS representatives are confident that they will have made an impact (Nyirenda 2001).

Impact on government-donor dialogue?

It is unclear to us how much CS participation has influenced the nature of GRZ-donor dialogue and broadened the GRZ's options in its negotiations with donors. During the PRS process, CS often lacked the necessary information to form a cohesive policy strategy. Some CS representatives suggest that closer links between CS, GRZ and the IFIs would have ameliorated this (Kasutu 2001).

Impact on poverty discourse?

The appointment of district administrators (drawn from the ruling party) to head the rural consultations caused concern among CS. It was felt that these political appointees may not take heed of the poor's analysis of their own poverty (SGTS 2000b), especially if these voices were dissenting of current GRZ policies (Bread for the World 2001). CS believes it has a comparative advantage over the government in being closer to the needs and aspirations of the poor (Nyirenda 2001), so has taken the lead on researching pro-poor growth and advocating for a broader view of poverty beyond income/consumption indicators (SGTS 2000b). The extent to which this has had an impact on PRSP is not yet known.

Impact on policy processes more broadly?

As recently as 2000, observers have commented that 'in Zambia, the governing party has poor relations with civil society, is defensive about its poor governance record and repressive towards the independent and human rights sector' (SGTS 2000b). But most now agree that GRZ-CS dialogue is better as a result of the PRSP process. Some comment that government is more open and realises, perhaps for the first time, that rather than being a threat, CS does have something to offer policy processes (Musamba pers. comm. 2001). The PRSP has strengthened CS capacity to influence policy processes with regards to advocacy, economic literacy and 'political speak' (SGTS 2000a, June), it is also recognised that there is some way to go before CS's capacity to play a policy role can really measure up to GRZ's (Musamba pers. comm. 2001). Lessons have been learnt by CS: 'that CSOs have to pool their individual energies and resources under an umbrella body if they are to have maximum impact [...] and that they must be able to reach out to research agencies and sectoral policy specialists who can draft intricate policy proposals in collaboration with the umbrella body' (SARPN 2001). At present, CSPR is hoping that they will continue

to be supported by donors and thus be able to apply their new capacity through the implementation and MandE of the PRSP (Musamba pers. comm. 2001).

Annex 3 Summary of findings on participation in SPA PRSP Institutionalisation Study

Excerpted from Booth D., 2001, 'PRSP Processes in 8 African Countries: Initial Impacts and Potential for Institutionalisation', paper for presentation to WIDER Development Conference on Debt Relief, Helsinki, August, pp 10–11.

Changes resulting from widened participation in policy

Creating [a wider national constituency for poverty reduction] is the job of the process dimension of the PRSP, which is arguably the most important dimension. If PRSPs prove more effective and sustainable than previous poverty-reduction plans, it will be not only because they are better linked into mainstream resource-allocation processes, but also because they are the product of a more inclusive and participatory style of policy-making. So, what are the indications on the feasibility and possible effects of a genuinely participatory approach to PRSP preparation?

In December 2000 [in the report on the Scoping Phase of the study – see ODI 2000] we reported limited findings on the basis of I-PRSP experience and argued for modest expectations on the depth and quality of the participatory processes that would be involved in the preparation of full PRSPs. On the other hand, we suggested there could be significant second-round effects. That is, as a consequence of the PRSP initiative, NGOs and civil society organisations would be prompted to become organised, and develop capacities, for policy dialogue, overcoming previous deficiencies in these respects in time to participate more effectively in subsequent policy debates and PRSP reviews.

Both expectations have been confirmed by the completed Phase 2 country studies. However, there are some partial exceptions on both counts. Even experienced national observers on the process in Kenya regard it as having been, by all relevant standards, wide, deep and strongly 'owned' by the participants, if not by the national political leadership. Stakeholder committees arising from this process are expected to have an ongoing role, a highly encouraging development.

In most of the countries that have reached the same stage in the PRSP process, there are reports of a greater orientation to poverty as a policy issue, and efforts to identify capacity-building needs, among the larger NGOs. An exception seems to be Ghana, where the galvanising of NGOs for policy dialogue occurred to some degree under the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI), but has not entered a new phase with the PRSP. This is consistent with the general finding for Ghana that the PRSP has not appeared a sufficiently weighty matter in the consciousness of the government and the general public to do more than, perhaps, result in a few modest policy shifts. In Ghana, institutional changes appear not to be on the agenda as a result of the PRSP, which is not to say that positive shifts, with potential benefits for the poor, will not occur for other reasons.

The non-involvement of Parliaments

A difficult question that the study team is still grappling with is whether — in the cases where they are definitely occurring — the above kinds of spin-offs from the PRSP design process will come to be regarded as significant transformations in the way countries make policy. They could easily be portrayed negatively just as a new means by which donors ventriloquize their ideas about development. On the other hand, we think it would be premature to discount what is happening in this way, particularly in countries like Kenya that have substantial civil societies and private sectors, independent mass media and a large intelligentsia.

PRSPs have tended not to involve parliaments, as institutions, in a major way, and this too has prompted some debate within the study team. We think there may be some justifications for this, based on the limited powers of parliaments in the Westminster tradition to overturn executive decisions, and on the shortcomings of many of these legislatures as democratic institutions. It should not be a question of principle, mechanically applied, that national ownership implies parliamentary scrutiny at the planning stage, regardless of the quality of the institutions concerned. We nonetheless think that in most cases it would be unwise to allow parliaments to be as uninvolved as they have been until now. A good mix of creativity and realism should be applied to this issue as to others.

Booth (2001: 10-11)

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