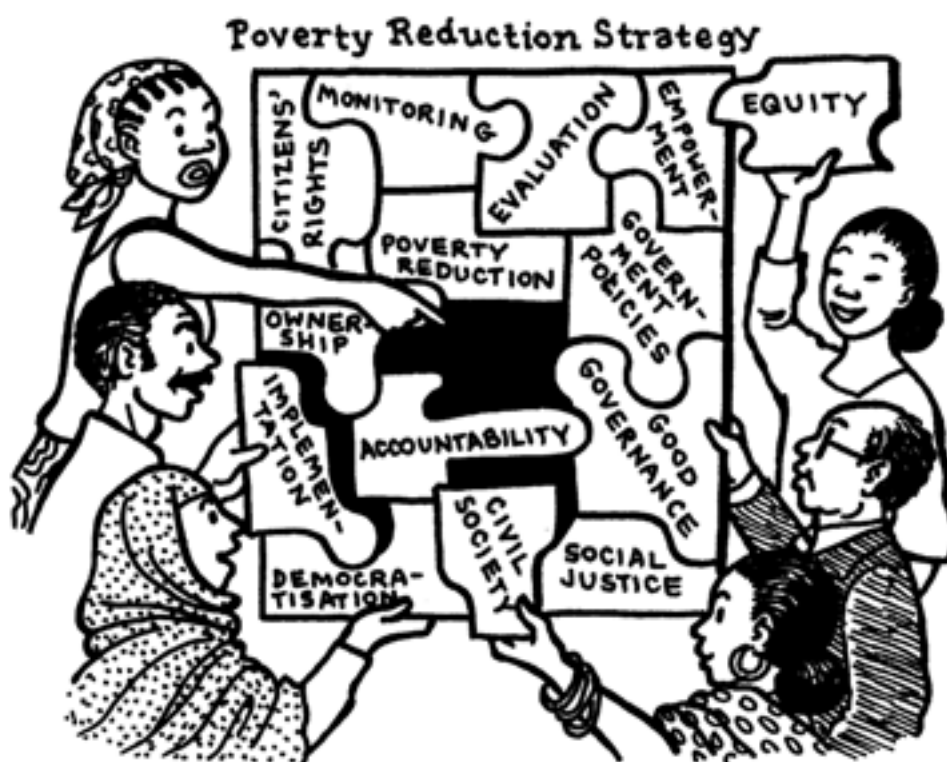


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participatory learning and action

## Civil society and poverty reduction



April 2005

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International  
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# participatory learning and action

*Participatory Learning and Action*, (formerly *PLA Notes* and *RRA Notes*), is published three times a year in April, August, and December. Established in 1988 by the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme (SARLs) of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), *Participatory Learning and Action* enables practitioners of participatory methodologies from around the world to share their field experiences, conceptual reflections, and methodological innovations. The series is informal and seeks to publish frank accounts, address issues of practical and immediate value, encourage innovation, and act as a 'voice from the field'.

We are grateful to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for their financial support. Thanks also to the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) for their additional support for this special issue. The views expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the funding organisations. We welcome members of the Participation Group at IDS onto our Editorial Advisory Board.

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Tel: +44 20 7388 2117

Fax: +44 20 7388 2826

Email: [sustag@iied.org](mailto:sustag@iied.org)

Website: [www.iied.org](http://www.iied.org)

## Participatory development

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is an umbrella term for a wide range of similar approaches and methodologies, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA),

Participatory Learning Methods (PALM), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Farming Systems Research (FSR), Méthode Active de Recherche et de Planification Participative (MARPP), and many others. The common theme to all these approaches is the full **participation** of people in the processes of **learning** about their needs and opportunities, and in the **action** required to address them.

Participatory approaches offer a creative way of investigating issues of concern to poor people, and planning, implementing, and evaluating development activities. They challenge prevailing biases and preconceptions about people's knowledge.

The methods used range from visualisation, to interviewing and group work. The common theme is the promotion of interactive learning, shared knowledge, and flexible, yet structured analysis. These methods have proven valuable for understanding local perceptions of the functional value of resources, processes of agricultural intervention, and social and institutional relations. Participatory approaches can also bring together different disciplines, such as agriculture, health, and community development, to enable an integrated vision of livelihoods and well-being. They offer opportunities for mobilising local people for joint action.

In recent years, there has been a number of shifts in the scope and focus of participation:

- emphasis on sub-national, national and international decision-making, not just local decision-making;
- move from projects to policy processes and institutionalisation;
- greater recognition of issues of difference and power; and,
- emphasis on assessing the quality and understanding the impact of participation, rather than simply promoting participation.

Recent issues of *Participatory Learning and Action* have reflected, and will continue to reflect, these developments and shifts. We particularly recognise the importance of analysing and overcoming power differentials which work to exclude the already poor and marginalised.

# participatory learning and action

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Photo: Nicole Kenton



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Photo: Nicole Kenton

Atieno Ndomo presents  
her paper at the  
authors' writeshop,  
Nairobi, July 2004

Welcome to issue 51 of *Participatory Learning and Action* on civil society participation in the implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategy (PRS) processes. It consists of ten theme articles from eight countries – Bolivia, Bulgaria, Ghana, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia.

The guest-editors of this special issue are **Alexandra Hughes** and **Nicholas Atampugre**.

**Alexandra Hughes** is a Canadian, currently working as a consultant in Mozambique in the area of civil society participation in policy processes, rights based approaches to development, and most recently, HIV/AIDS. Prior to that she was a researcher with the Participation Group and the Development Research Centre on Citizenship, Participation and Accountability at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). In 2002 she facilitated a learning exchange of experiences in Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes between three civil society members of the Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) – *Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participacion* (GNTP) in Bolivia, *Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya* (PAMFORK) and the *Community Development Resource Network* (CDRN) in Uganda – and other government stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>

**Dr Nicholas Atampugre** is a Ghanaian with twelve years of experience in development, research and communication with DFID, NGOs and as a consultant. He is an

Nicole Kenton with guest-editors Alexandra Hughes and Nicholas Atampugre



experienced PLA practitioner with competence in a broad range of participatory methodologies and he developed, in association with the IDS Participation Group, the PLA for Advocacy initiative in Nigeria. Prior to becoming a consultant, he worked for DFID-Nigeria as Social Development Adviser and was responsible for developing the Strategic Programme of Engagement with Civil Society (SPECS), monitoring the implementation of the DFID Nigeria strategy for poverty monitoring with key advisers, facilitating broad-based participation in the ongoing PRSP process, and collaborating with key donors and partners on support to the Nigerian PRSP process, as well as managing the PRSP fund and overseeing its implementation. He also assisted with the development of a DFID Nigeria strategy of the Country Assistance Plan in relation to the consultation and communication process, as well as civil society input. In addition, he maintained an overview of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) developments in Nigeria and identified areas for DFID engagement.

We are grateful to our two guest-editors for their time and commitment to this special issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*, and to all the authors for sharing their experiences.

## The process

At a meeting of RCPLA members, the network invited proposals for a series of writeshops, which would both capture the rich experiences of PLA practitioners, which often go undocumented, and help build practitioners' capacity to write for publication. This issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* is the outcome of a joint initiative of the RCPLA, the Participation Group (PG) at IDS and IIED, focusing on experiences of critical engagement of civil society actors in PRS processes. It is considered a natural follow-up to previous learning exchanges in this area between some of the RCPLA members.

Special thanks go to **Angela Milligan** of IIED and **Sammy Musyoki** of IDS for initiating this process.

Once the guest-editors had identified potential contributors, abstracts were submitted, followed

<sup>1</sup> Lessons learnt on civil society engagement in PRSP processes in Bolivia, Kenya And Uganda: A report emerging from the Bolivian-East African Sharing And Learning Exchange, July 2002. ([www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/networks/prsp-exch-rep.pdf](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/networks/prsp-exch-rep.pdf))



Some of the participants at the authors' writeshop, Nairobi, July 2004. Back row from left to right: Richard Sseywakiryanga, Mohamud Faroole, Sammy Musyoki, Nicholas Atampugre, Hudson Shiverenje. Front row from left to right: Harriet Yeboah, Alexandra Hughes, Moses Isooba, Jas Vaghadia, Jordi Beneria Surkin, Nicole Kenton



by first drafts of papers, which were reviewed by the *Participatory Learning and Action* editorial board. The contributors focused on the following issues:

- From a critical perspective, what is or has been your or your organisation's experience in engaging in the effective or not-so-effective implementing, monitoring and evaluating of PRS processes?
- In what cases have you been successful in opening up spaces for poor peoples' participation through these processes? What factors made this success possible?
- In what cases have you not been successful in opening up spaces for poor peoples' participation through these processes? What were the contextual and institutional challenges you faced in these cases, and how could they have been better dealt with?

With support from the RCPLA, IDS and IIED held a writeshop for contributors in Nairobi from 12 to 16

July 2004, hosted by PAMFORK. This was followed by a RCPLA Steering Committee meeting, as some participants were also members of the RCPLA. This meant that the RCPLA coordinators, Tom Thomas and Catherine Kannam, and the Asia coordinator, Jayatissa Samaranayake, were able to attend part of the workshop.

Participants at the PLA 51 writeshop were: **Alexandra Hughes** and **Nicholas Atampugre** as guest-editors, **Nicole Kenton** from IIED as editor, **Samuel Musyoki** and **Jas Vaghadia** from IDS as resource persons, **Eliud Wakwabubi** as local coordinator, and the following authors: **Mohamud Faroole**, **Moses Isooba**, **Atieno Ndomo**, **Hudson Shiverenje**, **Richard Sseywakiryanga**, **Jordi Beneria Surkin** and **Harriet Yeboah**. We would also like to thank those authors who were unable to be present at the writeshop, but whose papers were discussed and are included in this issue: **Anna**

**Athanassova**, **Besinati Mpepo**, **Venkatesh Seshamani** and **Hoang Xuan Thanh**. We would also like to thank **Siapha Kamara** who co-wrote a paper with **Harriet Yeboah**, but was not able to attend the writeshop, and **Gerald Twijukye** from CDRN Uganda for providing valuable input into Moses Isooba's paper. In addition we would like to thank **Reiner Forster** from the Participation and Civic Engagement Team at the World Bank, **Ana Quirós** from Nicaragua and **Lydia Richardson** (with experience in Moldova) for their involvement in the earlier stages of the process.

Each paper was allocated a discussant who presented and commented on the paper at the writeshop, giving all participants an opportunity to comment. Authors then were given time and space to finalise their papers, with support from the resource team. The writeshop was a capacity-building exercise in itself, having the following objectives:

- to share the rich experiences of practitioners' engagement in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation process of PRSs through presentations and discussions of the articles;
- to finalise the articles and to mutually help build capacity to communicate these experiences to international audiences; and
- to help build capacity to more effectively and strategically engage (or not) in PRSs.

At the end of the writeshop, there was a plenary session where common themes, experiences and lessons were drawn out. These were fed into the overview piece for the issue.

PAMFORK also helped arrange a PRSP Forum of the National Council

of NGOs to coincide with the PLA authors' writeshop.<sup>2</sup> This was held at the Nairobi Safari Club on Thursday 15th July 2004, where participants presented two papers. Tom Thomas also gave a short presentation on the role of the RCPLA in disseminating information on the PRSP.

In addition to the guest-editors, contributors and the co-ordinator of PAMFORK, **Eliud Wakwabubi**, I would like to thank **Ben Musyoki** of Kilimanjaro Ventures in Nairobi for welcoming us all to Kenya and arranging international travel and in-country transport, IDS for co-funding the writeshop, with special thanks to **Sammy Musyoki** and **Jas Vaghadia**, who helped facilitate the writeshop, and DFID for their additional support to this issue through the RCPLA.

We hope that readers will learn how the authors, through their own experiences, have engaged critically and how in the future they might want to engage (or not engage) more strategically and effectively in PRSPs and their processes, so that we can better understand the potentials and limitations of **scaling up and institutionalising participatory approaches**, and the potentials and limitations of **participatory policy-making processes**. As ever, we welcome your feedback and your own experiences.

### General section

In this issue, we have five general articles. The first one looks at participatory three-dimensional modeling. In Vietnam, changes in agricultural production policy have altered the ways in which villagers manage livestock, farming and natural resources. **Jean-Christophe**

**Castella, Tran Trong Hieu and Yann K Eguienta** describe their experiences of facilitating a collective learning process. They describe how graphic models can be used to develop a common spatial language; as a mediation tool; as a basis for facilitating discussions; and to help create village farming scenarios around seasonal land use. The article discusses how these tools can be extremely useful for developing sustainable collective management strategies for natural resources.

Articles 14 and 16, from India and Bangladesh, focus on developing and scaling-up healthcare programmes using participatory approaches. Both articles emphasise the importance of capacity-building with healthcare service providers, local authorities and civil society. Interestingly, both programmes have used appreciative enquiry to develop plans to provide more effective healthcare using existing resources.

**Dipankar Datta, Michelle Kouletio and Taifur Rahman** describe how Concern has been working with municipalities in Bangladesh to develop more sustainable urban healthcare systems. Through a partnership process of capacity-building with civil society organisations, health staff, traditional healers and government officials, Concern's Child Survival Programme (CSP) has enabled these groups to work more effectively together, to make more efficient use of existing healthcare resources and to ensure community ownership of the process. The CSP partnership now has plans to scale-up its healthcare programme, to reach over one million residents in seven additional municipalities.

**Amita Jain, Rajiv S. Saxena and Subir K. Pradhan** describe how the

Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in India has been scaling up the use of participatory approaches, in a pilot health and nutrition programme. Whereas previous efforts focused on providing healthcare by distributing supplementary nutrition to poor families, the ICDS programme instead focuses on using more effective participatory communications with the communities involved to develop health action plans. In addition, ICDS worked with local healthcare service providers to build their capacity to institutionalise participatory approaches in their day-to-day work with residents.

Articles 15 and 17 look at people-oriented approaches to planning and decision-making used by communities in coastal regions of Bangladesh. The first looks at tidal river management and solutions for improving conditions on water-logged char land; and the second looks at farming innovations developed by char-dwellers. Water-logging destroys homes, prevents crops from being planted and contributes to environmental pollution and poor health. Article 15 focuses in particular on using actor-oriented tools to analyse pro-poor interventions in chilli and livestock innovation systems in the char lands of Bangladesh. Here, **Harriet Matsaert, Zahir Ahmed, Noushin Islam and Faruque Hussain** discuss first the actor-oriented approach as one that relies on 'strong flows of information and useful partnership coalitions between key actors over time'. They describe the tools that were used, and their experiences of working with char-dwellers to improve the benefits of their natural resource-based enterprises through

<sup>2</sup> For more information visit [www.ngocouncil.org](http://www.ngocouncil.org)

better access to information, services and market opportunities.

**Ashraf-Ul-Alam Tutu's** article describes how a local people's initiative in Khulna and Jessore districts was successful in solving land water-logging problems and for improving overall river management. In addition, they used an effective advocacy campaign to improve the design and implementation of future tidal management policies by using people-oriented approaches to policy and planning.

### Tips for trainers

When talking about participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) of poverty reduction strategies, many practitioners grapple with the idea of what kind of indicators to use. Here, the Social Enterprise Development

(SEND) Foundation of West Africa shares some of the indicators that it has developed with civil society partners, to assess the performance of the Government of Ghana in the use of Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) funds.

### Regular features

You will find the latest update on the *Communications for Change Initiative* on the **RCPLA Network** pages, as well as news from IDS on its new webspace, and from IIED on the appointment of the new Chair of its Board of Trustees and on the exciting *Farmer Exchange for Mutual Learning* workshop.

### Next issue

The next issue, *Participatory Learning and Action* 52, will be a special issue,

guest-edited and coordinated by the Participation Group at IDS, on using participatory methods for rights-based work. The guest-editors have had a fantastic response to their call for papers and look forward to sharing some of the participatory tools and techniques that practitioners have used to explore, assess, plan, implement or evaluate rights-related work with different groups, and some of the experiences of people who have actually been using these methods themselves.

### Contribute to *Participatory Learning and Action*!

Please continue to send feedback, general articles, tips for trainers, book reviews and details of workshops and events!

**Nicole Kenton**

### Erratum

#### *Participatory Learning and Action* 50

Our apologies for errors in the Editorial in the last issue. John Thompson was Director of the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme at IIED from 1997 to 2003. Jules Pretty was Director of the Sustainable Agriculture Programme from 1988 to 1996 and was instrumental in the early years of *RRA Notes*, together with Gordon Conway, who founded the Programme. Michel Pimbert took over as Director of the Programme in 2003.



# acronyms

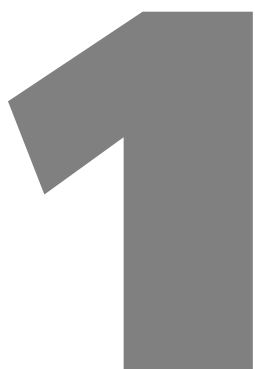
## and terms used in this issue

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFRODAD	African Forum & Network on Debt and Development
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
BSIF	Bulgarian Social Investment Fund
CBNRM	Community-based natural resource management
CAP	Community Action Plan
CBO	Community-based organisation
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CDRN	Community Development Resource Network (Uganda)
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CPRGS	Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (Vietnam)
CRN	Country Re-engagement Note
CS	Civil society
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSPR	Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (Zambia)
CV	<i>Comites de Vigilancia</i> (Bolivia)
DA	District Assembly
DHMC	District HIPC Monitoring Committee
DTIS	Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies
EBRP	<i>Estrategia Boliviana de Reducción de Pobreza</i> (Bolivia)
EFA	Education for all
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
ERS	Economic Recovery Strategy
ERSP	Economic Recovery Strategy Paper
ESAF	Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility
GFGEW	GPRS Focus Group Educational Workshops
GHW	Ghana HIPC Watch
GIS	Geographic Information System
GNTP	<i>Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participacion</i> (Bolivia)
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GRO	Grassroots organisation
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
IDS	Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFI	International Financial Institution
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
KANU	Kenya African National Union
LDN	<i>Ley del Dialogo Nacional</i> (Bolivia)
LICUS	Low income countries under stress
LPP	Law of Popular Participation (Bolivia)
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (Uganda)

MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition (Kenya)
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRM	National Resistance Movement (Uganda)
PAF	Poverty Action Fund (Uganda)
PAMFORK	Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya
PAR	Participatory action research
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan (Uganda)
PEM	Public Expenditure Management
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PMA	Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture
PM&E	Participatory monitoring and evaluation
PMES	Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy or System
PMU	Poverty Monitoring Unit
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSC	Poverty Reduction Support Credit
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSR	Public service reform
PTF	Poverty Task Force
PWG	Poverty Working Group
RCPLA	Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action
SACB	Somali Aid Coordination Body
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SCSO	Somali civil society organisation
SEND Foundation	Social Enterprise Development Foundation of West Africa
SIA	Social impact assessment
SOE	State-owned enterprise (Vietnam)
SPECS	Strategic Programme of Engagement with Civil Society
SWG	Sector working group
TRM	Tidal River Management (Bangladesh)
UDN	Uganda Debt Network
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project
VLSS	Vietnam Living Standard Survey
WB	World Bank
WDR	World Development Report

# theme section

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND POVERTY REDUCTION



# A critical look at civil societies' poverty reduction monitoring and evaluation experiences

by ALEXANDRA HUGHES and NICHOLAS ATAMPUGRE

## Introduction

This special issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* aims to capture the experiences of southern civil society organisations (CSOs) that are engaging in the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of poverty reduction strategy (PRS) processes.

In this publication, PRSPs refer specifically to documents prepared in-country as three-year 'national development strategies', upon which lending for low income countries and debt relief for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) is conditional (See Ndomo for a more detailed description of PRSPs). By Poverty Reduction Strategies, or PRSs, we include these, but also refer to a broader range of processes that generally aim to reduce poverty. Although such strategies are not necessarily linked to international financial assistance, it seems that most PRSs are introduced and driven by external development actors. This is the case for both Bulgaria and Somalia. We therefore focus on CSOs engagement in pro-poor policy formulation whether or not these are borne of, or lead to a World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) fostered PRSP.

In many countries CSO engagement in this particular stage of these strategies are just beginning. It is perhaps for this reason that although there has been much reflection on engagement by CSOs in the formulation of PRSs, there has been much less written about how they are being monitored and implemented. With respect to monitoring and evaluation, it is not clear how CSOs are working towards the articulation and realisation of poor people's rights and the

accountability of governments and other powerful actors towards them.

Authors for this issue came together at a workshop on 12th–16th July 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya to discuss the contributions and to share their experiences in PRS processes.<sup>1</sup> At the gathering, a number of general issues shared by all authors were identified. These are briefly elaborated in the first section of this overview article, and include:

- the diverse nature of participating CSOs;
- the conditional nature of PRSs;
- the quality and degree of participation of CSOs; and
- the existing power dynamics that challenge effective monitoring of poverty reduction funds, and thus the implementation of poverty reduction policies.

## (Who decides) who is civil society?

'Civil Society' means different things in different places. Civil societies and the organisations that work to represent them, CSOs, are (re)born and evolve according to a complex series of variables in different country and regional settings. CSO experiences of engaging with PRSs suggest a wide diversity with respect to capacities, nature, roles of, and relationships between civil society actors and governments. This diversity is not reflected by the assumptions made by the international

<sup>1</sup> This opportunity for learning exchange built upon the two previous learning exchanges that examined experiences in scaling up participation in the design of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). These exchanges were facilitated by the Participation Group (PG) at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and involved Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) members travelling to Kenya and Uganda in March 2002 and to Bolivia in March 2003.

**Writeshop participants break into a small discussion group. From left to right: Harriet Yeboah, Mohamud Faroole, Richard Ssewakiryanga**



finance institutions (IFIs) and multilateral organisations, and which define PRS terms and conditions of practice.

Civil society experiences engaging in PRS processes suggest that in introducing the principal of and inviting civil society participation, IFIs have given little thought to the following questions:

- What is the working relationship (if indeed there is one) between government and civil society?
- What are CSOs' respective comparative advantages and capacities (or lack thereof) in this arena?
- Which CSOs are most effective at influencing and working with government in the context of poverty reduction?
- Who best represents the poor, and will work most effectively to empower them?

These questions might be worth considering more seriously. They raise critical doubts around these more powerful actors' authentic commitment to civil society's effective participation in PRSs. They also raise doubts about the criteria on which participating organisations are respected and legitimated by those who hold the purse strings. There are several factors to consider when inviting or supporting CSOs to participate in PRSs:

- explicitly taking into consideration the nature of CSOs' relationships with government;
- their respective comparative advantages and capacities;
- their potential influence; and
- their relationships of accountability to those they aspire to represent.

Understanding these factors can work towards the design of a more coordinated and strategic CSO alliance working towards poverty reduction. Seeing their participation in PRSs as a CSO capacity-building process and an empowering process for the poor might have longer-term benefits in the area of citizenship building, governance and democratisation, as well.

#### **Box 1: Poverty Reduction Strategies: a part for the poor?**

...[p]articipation can happen at various stages in the Poverty Reduction Strategy process, and to various degrees. It can range from simple information sharing, through to more extensive consultation and joint decision-making, and to situations where the relevant stakeholders take on responsibility for monitoring the process, and evaluating its success.

Source: *Poverty Reduction Strategies: a part for the poor?* IDS Policy Briefing, Issue 13, April 2000.

#### **Conditional hope?**

All authors involved in this publication were conscious of the externally driven nature of PRSs – albeit in different degrees and with different interpretations. As Ndomo points out, PRSP conditionalities are pinned to lending for low-income countries and to debt relief for HIPC. The conditionalities and mechanisms for countries that do not fit into these categories vary and are less clear.

In Bulgaria, for instance, the government sees its fight against poverty as 'a priority area of intervention in the context of [European Union] EU accession' (Atanassova). Policy makers have adjusted the country's legislative and policy frameworks accordingly, promoting EU's anti-poverty objectives in their National Anti-Poverty Strategy and Plan of Action. EU accession will guarantee the country's access to more anti-poverty funds. The degree to which the adoption of EU objectives and priorities might be seen as a condition around which EU accession and increased support remains a matter of interpretation. So do predictions around its long-term consequences for Bulgarian citizens. The cases in this issue highlight different degrees of conditionalities, and diverse ways they have been interpreted.

Here, it is important to note that conditions and conditionalities manifest themselves in different forms and with different consequences. Although conditionalities set by IFIs reflect the power these agencies have over national governments, it is a particular set of these that have encouraged national governments to give priority (at least rhetorically) to poverty reduction and to cede space to CSOs in national policy formulation. It is important to distinguish between a condition that sets out a macro-economic policy that may have a dire impact on the poor, for instance, from one that supports and promotes the participation of CSOs in policy processes. Both are conditionalities, but the conditions themselves are very different as is the importance placed on these by lending agents.

In fact authors agreed that it is the potential these dialogues and negotiations have to shift deep-rooted politi-



cal and governance structures that continues to give many civil society actors the energy to continue their efforts. That said, the differences between rhetoric and reality when it comes to PRSs are many, and the sense that there is a lot of talk about something that is not changing continues to prevail among civil society actors involved in this publication process.

### (Who decides) what is participation?

A useful framework that allows for a range of views on participation to be accommodated for is provided by Rifkin and Pridmore (2001)'s continuum. In it information sharing – professionals giving information to lay people – lies at one end, and empowerment – providing communities and experience to allow community people to be actively involved in the decision-making – sits at the other.

Information sharing – consultation – collaboration – empowerment

The authors' experiences suggest that 'participation' has a range of shades in practice and is an iterative process. Nonetheless, the authors often experienced frustration as a result of contested understandings of what participation should be. The tension between civil society and government around the degree of participation, and its actual influence on policy and practice prevails. On the one hand, the authors felt that CSOs should work towards participatory collaboration with poor citizens and empowerment of the poor through participatory processes. Meanwhile governments prided themselves on inviting participation that involved information sharing and selective consultation. Moreover, in many cases, CSOs interpreted their own influence as minimal. Despite the degree of participation, their views had limited impact on final policy documents, budget allocations and loan negotiations. Ndomo summarises limitations to meaningful participation in PRS processes in her contribution.

### Turning rhetoric and policy into practice: challenges of participatory monitoring and evaluation

All authors in this issue consider that the challenge to effectively participate and influence poverty reduction through these policies increases in the post-policy formulation period when real power and resources become involved. It seems that challenges facing such actors in the **formulation** of policy are multiplied when they attempt to ensure that promises made on paper are **kept**.

Whose reality actually counts when it comes to monitor-

ing resource allocation and implementation of poverty reduction initiatives remains a critical question. The practice of monitoring and evaluating PRSs explicitly challenges CSOs to provide evidence that will substantiate their claims and demands of accountability from government actors and donor organisations towards the citizens they aim to represent. This highlights the potential value of existing legal frameworks and the importance of citizens' rights to information and resources promised by governments. In so doing, CSO monitoring and evaluation efforts can serve to directly challenge existing power dynamics and accountability relationships within governance structures.

### Emerging issues from country experiences

This special edition of *Participatory Learning and Action* is made up of ten articles written by authors working in or with CSOs in Bolivia, Bulgaria, Ghana, Kenya, Somalia, Vietnam, Uganda and Zambia. Nine of these articles draw upon experiences of direct engagement in PRS processes, and examine the successes and challenges they have faced along the way. Compiled, these pieces aim to be critical but constructive, and hope to convey their experiences in a way that is useful to readers and that contributes to a broader learning on how to engage (or not) more strategically and effectively in policy processes in the future.

Only nine of the world's 34 PRSP experiences are captured (and from limited organisational and/or individual perspectives) in this issue. To complement this narrow geographical scope, Ndomo's article 'PRSP rhetoric: sugar-coated structural adjustment reality?' draws upon secondary literature to look at a broader range of country experiences. Her study clearly demonstrates that although there are some gains made in the area of effective civil society engagement in PRSPs, many inherent contradictions exist between the principles and the practices underlying these processes. Many of Ndomo's general observations are reiterated and elaborated upon in the other articles in this issue.

This section outlines the principal observations that came out of authors' experiences and have been grouped under the following thematic areas:

- country politics;
- politics of knowledge; and
- capacity-building (skills, partnerships and networks).

### Country politics

Political contexts affect PRS processes, as well as the nature and role of civil society and the role of external actors in the processes, including international non-governmental organ-

**Mohamud Farooole  
and Hudson  
Shiverenje discuss  
their papers in  
Nairobi**



isations (INGOs), donors, and lending institutions.

Shiverenje points out how in Kenya, the transition in government meant a transformation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper into an Economic Recovery Strategy Paper (ERSP). A consolidation of the PRSP and the new government's successful campaign manifesto, the ERSP built upon its own image as well as the good image its predecessors had in building up through the consultative PRSP process. Meanwhile, its focus on economic recovery, enhanced governance, increased employment and poverty reduction was a response to the country's stagnating economy and unfavourable international image. Nonetheless while fragile relationships between Kenya's former government and the international community stagnated the implementation of the PRS, contributing partially to their loss in the 2002 elections, the new government's decision to 'revamp' the PRSP into an ERSP has been interpreted as a 'demonstration of a lack of accountability and political arrogance on the part of government...to wake up one morning and shift the focus of the strategy without adequate consultation with all those involved'. This, and the new strategies' lack of principle emphasis on poverty reduction are again threatening civil society and government relations.

Farooole's contribution to this volume points out how Somalia's lack of central government and 'non accrual' status with the IFIs mean that not only can it not qualify for a PRSP, but that in the absence of a Somali state, international actors have been developing and implementing poverty reduction and development strategies without local CSO involvement. This is despite a rhetoric that claims 'inclusive participation' and 'Somali ownership of the processes'. Farooole's article suggests that international lending institutions and development actors are not supporting the potential that 'a greater role for non-governmental forms of association in political and social life that go beyond the all-encompassing clan

system' might hold for Somalia's development.

In Vietnam and Bulgaria, historically rooted politics have resulted in embryonic civil societies, and CSOs participating in the PRSPs, and highlight the challenges associated with these. In Vietnam, as a consequence of its centrally-planned economy, the concept of 'civil society' is not yet formalised. Thanh notes that, during Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs), 'facilitators are often faced with the "we don't know" answer from the local participants' as a consequence of them not being comfortable talking about 'sensitive issues'. This may partially be attributed to a sense of dependence on government, and perhaps a lack of sense of 'separateness' from – or fear to offend or speak badly of – the state, its ruling party and its institutions.

According to Athanassova, Bulgaria's socialist past has meant that the public counts on government resources and mechanisms to solve poverty-associated problems. Although NGOs are working effectively to deliver services and care to poor and vulnerable groups and are improving their capacity to manage poverty issues at the community level, they lack the structures and mechanisms to work at the policy level. Their efforts at the advocacy level are not consistent or consolidated, and consequently, their results are neither long lasting nor large in scale. This is also true with respect to their capacity to carry out quality social research and poverty assessments. There is a lack of consistent effort to convert research results into anti-poor advocacy actions.

### **Knowledge politics and coordination: Who is defining poverty? Challenges facing qualitative and experiential understandings of poverty**

Understandings and definitions of poverty are contested. This issue is raised by Ndomo's question: who defines poverty? Her study suggests that the more influential poverty analyses are quantitative, with an over-emphasis on income figures, and fail to explore reasons why poverty exists or persists. A number of experiences in this issue reinforce this observation and emphasise the importance of qualitative poverty assessments in their efforts.

Ssewakiryanga's article points out a lack of coherence between the World Bank-led Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) monitoring initiative, and the Uganda government-led Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (PMES) that involves a number of government and non-government actors, and that has been under discussion since 2000. He notes the lack of systematic procedures of inclusion of CSOs in the development of the Bank's PRSC indicators, suggesting an inconsistency in their involvement in the monitoring

Writeshop participants discuss over a tea break in Nairobi. From left to right: Harriet Yeboah, Atieno Ndomo, Hudson Shiverenje, Jordi Beneria Surkin, Mohamud Faroole, Richard Ssewakiryanga, Moses Isooba



and evaluation of Uganda's PRSP, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). He also points out that without proper harmonisation of these processes and their indicators, different understandings of the same poverty situations may emerge.

In Vietnam, qualitative findings emerging from Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs)

*...helped deepen awareness of poor people's lives amongst government staff engaged in the process, and increased awareness of the process and principles of qualitative research.* (Thanh, this issue).

Their findings were combined with the Vietnam Living Standard Survey, resulting in strong and effective triangulation of data (ibid). The author goes on to highlight the value added through local NGO's strong existing networks and experience working in participatory methodologies with the poor.

Zambia's Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) network chose to monitor PRSP **outcomes** (e.g. access to and usage of service facilities) and **impacts** (e.g. poverty reduction, improvements of living standard indicators) to complement government monitoring systems that focus on **input** (e.g. public expenditure management) and **output** (physical quantities, e.g. schools, health centres). This decision was

made on the basis that outcomes and impacts are best measured using qualitative data and specific project evaluation and that, in turn civil society is better situated and equipped to collect qualitative data, illuminating case studies, and to evaluate specific projects (Mpepo and Seshamani). In their work, CSPR also distinguishes between expenditure tracking and participatory poverty monitoring. They consider the latter to play a role in 'bring[ing] on board the poor in monitoring programmes that are supposed to improve their lives'. **Experiential** knowledge is considered to complement **expert** knowledge, and improve policy judgements.

In Ghana, based on the Ghanaian PRSP (GPRS) and in consultation with district assemblies and district-based NGOs that had previously undergone a CSO-led education and awareness building process, three indicators were defined to guide the GPRS' participatory monitoring and evaluation: **good governance, accountability and equity**. Findings based on these indicators are illuminating, and begin to address some possible reasons behind failed attempts at poverty reduction. For instance, although the infrastructure projects are allocated according to geographic equity criteria, whether the poor have access to quality services (given, among other factors, the weak quality of staff and services proved in the

education and health facilities) remains questionable (Kamara and Yeboah, this issue).

### Empowering citizens

Effective use of quantitative and qualitative indicators, and the merging of findings is important, and appears to be on CSOs' agenda. How to develop these indicators in such a way that empowers poor citizens remains challenging, however.

Bulgaria's Social Investment Fund carried out 'beneficiary assessments', a 'good practice' example from which poverty monitoring and evaluation systems can draw upon. These assessments involved gathering the opinions of beneficiaries from specific interventions that were subsequently fed into improving the interventions. Atanassova highlights the value of this experience and the need to integrate it into Bulgaria's broader monitoring and evaluation system. Questions around how to scale such a process up while ensuring citizens empowerment remain unanswered, however.

In Bolivia, the Law of Popular Participation established *Comites de Vigilancia* or Vigilance Committees as mechanisms made up of **civil society** representatives endowed with the legal authority to veto municipal budgets and promote accountability at the local level. However, in order to be effective these committees need to be able to analyse budgets and poverty indicators, as well as access and digest this information (see following section on capacity-building).

In Uganda, another civil society-run monitoring mechanism that has attempted to empower citizens to demand transparency and accountability from their leaders is facing certain problems. Poverty Action Fund (PAF) Monitoring Committees work at the sub-county level where they monitor and evaluate service delivery of government programmes and how HIPC funds are used. Although meant to include poor citizens, they are generally constituted by the more educated citizens who are often involved with local politics.<sup>2</sup> In his article, Isooba observes that this 'enmeshment' can often lead to a conflict of interest in community-run monitoring and evaluation work. This point is reinforced by Faroole's experience with Diakonia's Somalia office, where a report based on participatory work was rejected as its findings did not support clan-based relationships and interests.

Uganda's UPPAP experience led to a debate on Community Action Plans (CAPs) – small-scale NGO-funded initiatives to be implemented directly in response to PPA local findings. The decision was taken that the second round of PPAs would

**Mohamud Faroole, Richard Ssewakiryanga and Harriet Yeboah break into a small discussion group**



not include CAPs in Uganda. Does this imply that PPAs are better dedicated to solely influencing macro-policy rather than micro-programming or community empowerment?

### Contesting approaches and understandings on HOW to reduce poverty

These experiences and observations reiterate challenges facing CSOs to effectively use participation in an empowering way. They also point to struggles around understandings and approaches to effectively reduce poverty.

Ndomo notes that in addition to a quantitative approach to poverty reduction, public consultation on macro-economic policy remains limited. Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) and Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) programmes often focus on the importance of unilateral trade liberalisation and privatisation of utilities, while ignoring structural roots of poverty such as land and credit access. The way the World Bank and IMF use country-monitoring mechanisms and related lending facilities that determine loans (i.e., Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (CPIAs), PRGF, PRSC) in relation to PRSPs, determines the relevance of the PRSP, and related CSO efforts to influence it.

Ndomo sees policy and process conditionality as effective tools that ensure poor countries' compliance towards lending agencies and to censor themselves in dialogue with them. She asserts that 'the idea of conditionality is actually contradictory to the principle of ownership, and underscores the mistrust and power that IFIs hold over borrower countries'. It is difficult to disagree with this observation – can a borrower negotiate on equal footing with a lender, especially when conditions for loans breach the boundaries of poverty reduction policies?

At another level it is important to ask what exactly debt relief (that is conditional on PRSPs) means for the real debt volume and thus expenditures of a poor country, and its citi-

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that in Uganda, those on PAF Monitoring Committees are often also elected officials, because nearly everyone at the local level in Uganda who is educated and active in civil society also holds office.



**Writeshop participants discuss over a tea break in Nairobi. From left to right: Jas Vaghadia, Nicholas Atampugre, Atieno Ndomo, Alexandra Hughes, Sammy Musyoki**



zens? Certain CSOs contest this conditional relationship between the PRSP and borrowed funds. In Zambia, CSPR openly opposes the government's treatment of the PRSP as a tool of resource allocation and views 'the PRSP as an opportunity to begin redressing the plight of four fifths of its people that live in poverty... Civil society also does not think of HIPC funds as a solution to the country's debt crisis... Hence civil society organisations have been continuing their Jubilee Campaign for the total cancellation of Zambia's debt. They have also repeatedly called for a de-linkage between the PRSP and HIPC' (Mpepo and Seshamani). This is an issue that has increasingly been gaining more attention and support by important development actors.

Ssewakiryanga points out that actually 'putting your money where your mouth is' can lead to another set of problems. In the case of Uganda, government spending on poverty reduction has increased from 17% to 32%, as government earmarked HIPC savings and donor commitments against additional spending on the Poverty Action Fund budget lines. However, the additional donor commitments that accompany these funds led to growing debt

volume. How can poor countries find innovative ways of spending more in poverty reduction areas without expanding the debt volume?

Here it is vital to point out that PRSPs might mean more debt. Despite debt relief being conditional on PRSPs, these strategies trigger new loans that are to be directed towards poverty reduction. The strength of the PRSP and its implementation determines the degree to which new credits will be targeted constructively. In many countries, weakly targeted PRSPs mean future debt and little poverty reduction. Again, the value of effective monitoring and evaluation on the part of autonomous and impartial development actors is key. It is equally important to examine and understand the differences between pre-PRSP and PRSP loans. How has the burden of servicing the debt changed vis-à-vis lending terms and conditions such as interest rates, for instance? It is also vital to understand the advantages and constraints that now exist under the HIPC initiative for HIPC countries. And perhaps more importantly, what alternatives are there to ensure a more sustainable form of financial support for poor countries? Many recent publications are beginning to explore this perverse dynamic



resulting from the conditional nature of PRS and the lack of negotiation space in the areas of macro-economics, including trade. See ActionAid (2004), Brock K. and R. McGee (2004) and Wood, A. (2004).

### **Tracking budgets and realising rights to information**

At times, a discrepancy exists between PRS papers and the budgets they should be aligned to. Budget tracking in Zambia uncovered that the release of PRSP funds had little to do with poverty reduction and actually went to the Cabinet Office, State House, Office of the President, and Office of the Vice President. Departments and ministries such as that of Energy and Water Development, Health, and Agriculture received less than their approved allocations (Mpepo and Seshamani). This discovery raises serious questions of government priorities and how these are reflected in the allocation of resources and the spending of new credits which, as aforementioned are creating future debts.

Many authors witnessed or experienced challenges accessing information that would allow for effective monitoring and evaluation. For instance, despite significant advances, HIPC Watch in Ghana (Kamara and Yeboah) reports having to make eight to ten visits to certain sector ministries before information was released. This they partially blame on mistrust of CSOs by the government. Zambia also reports 'a lack of prompt and adequate relay of information to civil society from government on PRSP expenditures' (Mpepo and Seshamani).

### **Shifting accountability relationships**

It is through exercising their right to information that CSOs can ensure a shift in relationships and directions of accountability. The need to alter accountability relationships is highlighted by Isooba who considers that the decision to exclude priorities identified that fall outside sectoral guidelines from the final PRSP document, as a consequence of conflicting top-down planning systems, represented through PEAP and PAF funding conditions, versus bottom-up planning rhetoric. Accountability goes upward, towards funding agents such as donors, and not towards poor citizens who leaders claim to represent and work for.

Compiled conditionality and the upward direction of accountability impacts on the nature of civil society-government partner-based working arrangements. These continue to be a challenge from both CSO and government perspectives. In Uganda, Isooba perceives many CSO-government 'partnerships' as subcontracting arrangements with local governments that can potentially put local NGOs in compro-

ming situations. This can potentially result in a weakened 'willingness and ability to hold the government accountable and to effectively participate in monitoring and evaluation of PRS processes' as local CSOs begin to interact with local governments as a source of funding, and begin to consider the constituents they represent less.

To be at this end of the participation and partnership continuum seems quite a luxury when compared to the more extreme case of Somalia. There, speaking out against those who hold the purse strings – as Faroole does in his contribution – is actually considered a dangerous act that may threaten future funding. This reflects absolute dependency on those who ultimately and exclusively define development and poverty reduction policy there – the international financing community.

### **Capacity-building**

Some sections of civil society view their involvement in policy processes as merely tokenistic. In response to this, in many countries CSOs have focused their energies on building capacity that will ensure more effective monitoring and evaluation skills. This includes increasing knowledge and understanding of PRSPs, building capacity to access information and to strengthen advocacy skills. These efforts are complemented by significant progress made in building partnerships and strengthening networks, both between government and civil society, and among them. Capacity-building for and by CSOs was considered key to ensuring effective engagement in the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of PRSPs by all authors.

In their article, Kamara and Yeboah describe how Ghana's Social Enterprise Development Foundation of West Africa (SEND Foundation)'s focus on capacity-building aims to increase CSOs' knowledge and understanding of the country's PRSP, and develop their participatory monitoring and evaluation skills. Education workshops focused on the underlying principles of Ghana's Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), including the principle of participation of the poor, and macro-economic concepts that underpin the strategy. Following this process, a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation manual was developed in consultation with local NGOs, district assemblies and donor organisations. A training workshop on how to use the manual was organised for local NGOs and a number of instruments were developed to support and sustain advocacy activities as well.

Zambian CSOs have been effective in using their monitoring findings in their advocacy work through press state-

ments, stakeholder round table meetings, television documentaries and radio programmes. It is now launching an advocacy campaign to create and strengthen mechanisms aimed at protecting resources in the budget meant for poverty reduction. This is in order to 'prevent the government from shifting resources from poverty reduction budget lines to non-priority programmes, as has been the case during the current PRSP implementation cycle' (Mpepo and Seshamani).

In Bolivia, the National Working Group for Participation (GNTP) has gone far in its work to build capacity and understanding in the area of participation. Their post-graduate diploma programme on participation and social change has taught the value of the poor's participation in policy processes and built students' (and their affiliated organisations') capacity to promote pro-poor participatory processes. It is important to note that some students have gone on to hold leadership positions, bridging the government-civil society divide around the understanding(s) of what participation is. GNTP's work in Valle Grande's Municipal Development Plan (PDM) also involved work with the municipal government towards more transparency and accountability (Surkin). In so doing, it has also contributed to the strengthening of partnerships and networks.

GNTP has also worked with other civil society actors and international agencies to increase CSOs' capacity to:

- advocate for participation in policy;
- generate a unified advocacy and lobbying platform; and
- carry out participatory monitoring and evaluation of their country's PRSP.

They have specifically responded to weak *Comites de Vigilancia* (CVs) capacity to monitor and evaluate the PRSP at municipal levels, and carried out training workshops responding to this vacuum.

Isooba's article mentions donors' support and encouragement to take on policy advocacy support to CSOs, leading to more effective participation in their Ugandan PRSP review process. Indeed, it would seem that donors' interest in building this capacity for more effective civil society engagement in PRSPs provides an opportunity for many CSOs, particularly with respect to learning from local-level participatory monitoring and evaluation experiences and scaling these up in the context of PRSPs.

### **Bridging the gaps: building partnerships and strengthening networks**

While working to strengthen their ability to monitor, evaluate and advocate, CSOs are also working with govern-

ments in an effort to improve their working partnerships. Zambia's CSPPR, for instance, responded to a lack of information flow from central to decentralised government bodies, through the creation of three pilot workshops that brought CSOs and government officials together, in an effort to partner a new approach that would ensure access to information. It is now 'holding sensitisation seminars on the budget, PRSP and other critical issues for Members of Parliament and top civil servants in order to encourage them to engage more proactively in development discussions and programmes' (Mpepo and Seshamani).

In Ghana, the emphasis on 'education and awareness building has helped to overcome the fear among pro-poor civil society organisations that their active participation in policy advocacy work would result in political confrontation' (Kamara and Yeboah). Concerted efforts to invite and involve top government officials in their educational workshops – in such a way that they engage with and respond to participants – appears to have been particularly successful. One Senior Planning Officer involved is quoted as having said: 'participating in the workshops has given me access to people at the grassroots that NDPC [National Department for Planning Commission] could never have reached; it is an effective mechanism for disseminating and getting objective feedback on the GPRS [Ghanaian Poverty Reduction Strategy]...'

It is important to note that Bolivia's aforementioned diploma programme resulted from lessons that came out of a previous learning exchange between southern CSOs – again reiterating the importance of learning networks and communities. Ssewakiryanga also points to the importance of learning from other country experiences, outlining how Uganda's PPA was informed by a Tanzanian PPA experience.

In fact, one principal lesson learnt from Tanzania was the importance of implementing a PPA using a 'partnership model'. The Ugandan PPA Process, or UPPAP, therefore placed an INGO, Oxfam UK, within the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. As the coordinating agency, Oxfam UK had a twin reporting arrangement both to government and to CSOs. It worked with selected local and international CSOs, who contributed staff with skills in participatory research to conduct fieldwork and write up the PPA reports. Although the arrangement led to a number of concerns, it also yielded positive results for both civil society and government. Ssewakiryanga notes that through the UPPAP 'for the first time in the history of Uganda, there was system-

**Box 2: A CSO 'to do' list**

- Step back, reflect, strategise. Ask yourselves: Where do our strengths and weaknesses lie? What are the existing M&E mechanisms? How can we contribute to a better understanding of poverty and poverty reduction?
- Use qualitative and experience-based data.
- Be analytically rigorous.
- Build up your own capacities and the capacities of allies.
- Work towards building citizenship and creating a sense of government accountability.
- Empower citizens you work with.
- Share experiences with other CSOs; learn from one another and form alliances.

atic feedback to government on how it was delivering social services and what people felt about government institutions'. For many technocrats who were 'used to getting feedback from their own government machinery', this was a 'humbling experience'.

### Reflections: looking around, looking inside and moving forward

Many southern CSOs have been active in their PRS monitoring and evaluation efforts. Despite concern around the dominance of quantitative measures on poverty, experiences from Bolivian, Ghanaian, Ugandan, Vietnamese, and Zambian CSOs demonstrate effective gathering and use of qualitative data (at different scales, and through different means and mechanisms) that has drawn upon their networks and access to more experience-based understandings of poverty. In certain cases, concerted efforts are even being made to empower citizens through the generation of qualitative poverty data. These steps forward can only be sustained and its influence ensured, if they are carried out with methodological and analytical rigour. Furthermore, its presentation to governments and the wider public is key in ensuring the legitimacy of these CSOs. This is where the value of effective partnership building and advocacy skills comes in.

Relationships between poor country governments and autonomous civil societies (or donors and civil society, as is conveyed in the Somalia article) vary, but in almost all cases the quality of the relationship can be strengthened. In order to improve their legitimacy while ensuring their independence and more equal terms of interaction, CSOs require significant capacity-building. Most authors' organisations are beginning to direct (or at least consider directing) their efforts to capacity-building of monitoring and evaluation skills. Many are beginning to place explicit

focus in the area of advocacy. Many have also come to recognise the importance of strengthening partnerships with allies in the government (or with donors and INGOs, as is the case of Somalia). Awareness raising, education and 'sensitisation' seminars with government officials, including Members of Parliament in Bolivia, Ghana and Zambia have yielded positive results.

Partnerships and networks need not be limited by borders, however. Perhaps the most important key lesson that came out of the workshop is the value of reflecting and sharing for southern organisations engaging in the monitoring and evaluation of PRSs (and indeed any other development policies). Specifically, the space created by the workshop provided an opportunity for participants to step back and (re-)identify the country politics and fundamental power dynamics that define the limitations and opportunities in which they work.

The conditionality underpinning most PRSs combined with the way in which lending institutions and governments introduce and treat the concepts of civil society and participation are full of assumptions and challenges that can lead to perverse dynamics. The impact that PRSP conditionality and HIPC country dependence on IFIs has on PRS processes and on civil society influence merits significant attention. Southern CSOs are encouraged to carry out analyses of IFI-related policy processes and decision-making mechanisms with this focus; this might lead to interesting findings, including the identification of entry points and limitations of their involvement in **real and sustainable** poverty reducing action.

On a more optimistic note, the space (albeit limited) that IFIs have provided CSOs with to monitor and evaluate PRSs has been exploited such that it is introducing a push towards shifting relationships of accountability between citizens and governments, and to a lesser degree, between citizens and IFIs. CSOs are (perhaps unknowingly) building citizenships; encouraging the realisation of citizens' rights to information, to participation, and to resources. Empowering citizens and introducing the concept of civil responsibility among government officials and agencies may seem like a small step. However it is a step that can reverberate in a plethora of policy and development arenas in the future. Coupled with (if indeed it can be separated from) the importance that is being placed on good governance and democratisation in the world of development, it is indeed a small and initial step in the long struggle towards social justice and, as such, towards poverty reduction. For this southern CSOs must be congratulated.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Alexandra Hughes  
Av. Julius Nyerere 277, 2° andar  
Maputo, Mozambique.  
Tel: +258 1 493233  
Email: Alexandra.Hughes@tvcabo.co.mz

Nicholas Atampugre  
CaRoRa Consult  
PO Box CT 2041  
Cantonments – Accra, Ghana.  
Email: 113217.136@compuserve.com

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# PRSP rhetoric: sugar-coated structural adjustment reality?

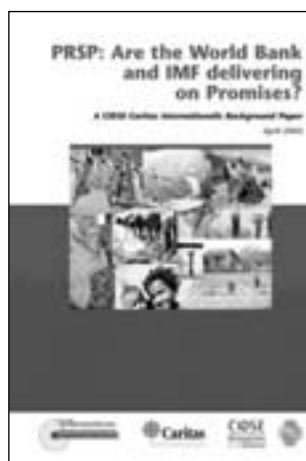
by ATIENO NDOMO

## Introduction

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach was initiated in 1999 by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. PRSPs were to be the operational basis for their concessional lending to low income countries and for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. PRSPs are prepared by governments through 'participatory' processes involving national stakeholders and external development partners, including the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). According to the World Bank, PRSPs describe the macro-economic, structural and social policies and programmes that a country will pursue to promote broad based growth and reduce poverty. At the time of writing, 34 countries are implementing PRSPs.

Five principles are stated to underlie the PRSP approach:

- country ownership through broad based participation of civil society;
- results should be focused on outcomes that are beneficial to the poor;
- long term perspective on poverty reduction;
- recognition of the multidimensional nature of poverty; and
- partnerships should be orientated to ensure the involvement of governments, domestic stakeholders and external donors.



In April 2004, an analysis based on the experiences of 19 countries noted slow progress in PRSP implementation.<sup>1</sup> It observed modest improvements in pro-poor policy formulation and a marginal increase in openness to civil society participation in policy-making.

The IMF's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) review of PRSPs in 2004 conceded shortcomings in the initiative's design, pointing out

'actual achievements fall considerably short of potential'.<sup>2</sup> Calling for greater country policy ownership, the report notes that PRSP processes are not well embedded within national processes and that 'participatory processes were typically not designed to strengthen existing domestic institutional processes for policy formulation and accountability'. The

<sup>1</sup> This analysis was carried out by TroCaire, the Irish Catholic agency for World Development, Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE), an international network of Catholic development organisations in Europe and North America, and Caritas Internationalis (CIDSE-Caritas Internationalis Background Paper, April 2004).

<sup>2</sup> The IEO provides objective and independent evaluation on issues related to the IMF. The Office operates independently of IMF management and at arm's length from the IMF's Executive Board.



review acknowledges tension between conditionality and the principle of country ownership and that 'rushed preparation of documents to meet IFI deadlines was cited as a problem in Cambodia, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Tanzania'.

The World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department (OED) July 2004 report conceded that while the PRSP initiative is an improvement on the Policy Framework Papers of the 90s it is 'yet to fulfil its full potential' and changes are suggested to 'reduce/eliminate uniform requirements and encourage PRSPs to explore a wider range of policy options'.<sup>3</sup>

This article will analyse the PRSP experience by looking at four of the five principles outlined above to assess the formulation, monitoring and implementation of the PRS processes and contents on the part of civil society. The analysis is primarily based on a review of secondary literature.<sup>4</sup>

## Country ownership through broad-based participation of civil society

### Influencing PRSPs through participation?

The limitations to meaningful participation in both the processes and in being able to exert an influence over the content of PRSPs have been well documented (see Stewart and Wang, 2003; AFRODAD, 2003).

From the CIDSE-Caritas analysis, it emerged that in the worst of cases, participation is undertaken under donor pressure, is ad hoc and disjointed. Ethiopia and Niger are cited as examples of this. Honduras' experience suggests a lack of genuine dialogue where civil society views were ignored. In Ethiopia there was little policy debate, and its government is also seen to have conducted 'participation' under donor pressure.

Another limitation to meaningful participation by a majority of the population in many countries is the production of documents in English and in a technical language. This has been cited as problematic in Bolivia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Niger. It is also considered a barrier to effective and influential participation in the Ugandan and Kenyan experiences. See contributions in this issue.

Thirdly, groups deemed critical of government are often excluded from PRS consultations, for example, trade unions in Malawi, and women's groups and parliamentarians across most countries (CIDSE-Caritas, 2004). This is true despite the

<sup>3</sup> The OED is an independent unit within the World Bank. It reports directly to the Bank's Board of Executive Directors. The goals of OED's evaluations are to draw lessons from Bank experience, and to provide an objective basis for assessing the results of the Bank's work.

<sup>4</sup> The analysis will draw a great deal from the author's work experience with the Bretton Woods Project, a UK-based NGO network critical of the World Bank and IMF policies.

### Box 1: The case of Uganda

Rowden and Nyamugasira 2002, give the example of Uganda where in spite of multistakeholder discussions very little change was noted in key policy areas and in fact, the conditionality in the Bank's loans to Uganda did not match the conclusions of the PRSP discussions. Also, although greater levels of participation have been observed in Uganda and the government is seen to have taken concrete steps to engage civil society in the formulation of the Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), many CSOs there have continued to express concern over a consultation period too short to allow for effective engagement (Rowden and Nyamugasira 2002).

Similarly, according to AFRODAD (2003), in Rwanda and other francophone West and Central African countries, very short notice was given for civil society responses to documents and their participation in consultations.

fact that the World Bank's PRSP Sourcebook (2002) lists stakeholder groups as national- and regional-level governments and civil society groups such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations, trade unions, academic institutions, parliament, private sector actors, professional associations, and donors.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of some recognition of the limitation of excluding these groups, the World Bank and IMF have made very little progress in addressing this gap. Arguably, this may be deliberate given that broad participation would complicate the negotiation process and undermine the imposition of policy conditionality. They consider the IFIs to be invoking their articles of association to claim sole obligation to negotiate and sign loan agreements with executive branches of governments. This would appear to contradict democratic principles, which affirm parliamentary oversight over policy choices.

Stewart and Wang (2003) note that governments generally tend to be remote and ill disposed to engage in participatory dialogue with civil society. Other limitations to meaningful participation include:

- a lack of transparency about PRSP processes;
- selective and inadequate provision of information;
- closing off macro-economic issues for discussion; and
- poor communication channels.

Together, these experiences suggest that PRSP processes typically amount to consultation, information exchange and selective engagement with only certain civil society groups. Final documents rarely reflect the inputs of those consulted. Participation is rarely anchored in institutional frameworks and hence governments do not feel obliged to facilitate quality participation.

A limited capacity for civil society engagement owing to

<sup>5</sup> [www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/sourctoc.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/sourctoc.htm)

**Box 2: Conditionality in Tanzania**

According to AFRODAD (2002) only 25 of the 30 conditions in Tanzania's HIPC matrix were drawn from the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) agreement and only five derived from the PRSP. This raises questions around the actual relevance of the PRSP as a policy document and civil societies' struggles to influence it. Source: AFRODAD (2002)

poor coordination; resource and technical constraints; self censorship by groups bowing to government and IFI pressures; and the co-option of groups are also important factors. Other articles in this issue also point to related challenges that CSOs face in their engagement in PRSP processes.

**PRSPs and CPIAs: what really matters?**

The World Bank's concessional lending to low-income countries is administered through the Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC). PRSCs are conditional on countries designing PRSPs. PRSC disbursements are also contingent upon implementation of prior actions and a demonstrated reform track record. This includes an improved policy environment as judged by the Bank through Country Policy and Institutional Assessments, or CPIAs.

Consisting of 20 criteria across four clusters, the CPIAs assess institutional and policy performance in each country. A high CPIA score typically means that that country has complied with IFI orthodox economic policies. These assessments are closed to public scrutiny. So if the CPIA exerts more influence in defining country policy than the PRSP, it may undermine country ownership of policy choices. CPIA scores confirm the Bank's 'one size fits all' approach to borrowing governments and according to Wood (2004) countries with high CPIA scores are eligible for more assistance, whereas governments who do not conform mostly receive policy advice and limited (if any) financial assistance. CPIAs are therefore considered critical in determining policy choices and outcomes and ultimately levels of funding.

**Conditional country ownership?**

Finally, and perhaps most importantly is the fact that the idea of conditionality is actually contradictory to the principle of ownership. It underscores the mistrust and power that IFIs hold over borrower countries. In their April 2004 report, CARITAS and CIDSE contend that conditionality may be the single most crucial factor setting the PRSP up for failure.

One of the IMF conditions includes 'prior actions'. These are specific reforms governments have to undertake to receive financing. According to Collingwood (2003), 'prior

**Box 3: A staff monitoring programme: Zambia's experience**

Zambia went 'off track' with the IMF's Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) programme over the IMF's insistence on a certain level of fiscal deficit. This was one of the HIPC 'triggers' the country had to comply with. A country is considered 'on track' on an IMF programme as long as it implements predefined policy conditions under the IMF's tutelage. In the Zambian case, the country was put on a staff monitoring programme for not complying.

It took a lot of advocacy work for Zambia to gain IFI concessions, including a statement made by Stephen Lewes, special United Nations envoy on HIV/AIDs. Lewes pointed out the IFI's insensitivity to Zambia's HIV/AIDs pandemic. This finally led to the resumption of the PRGF programme. Yet Zambia still has yet to qualify for HIPC funds. Source: AFRODAD (2003)

actions constituted half of all the conditions in agreements with Rwanda, the Central African Republic and Ethiopia'. Quantitative performance criteria relate to conditions on the macro economy such as acceptable levels of budget deficit. Added to these are structural performance criteria and indicators. As will be seen in the next section, few of these items have been open to dialogue and negotiation with civil society actors.

AFRODAD (2003) note the lack of influence over macro economic policy in the case of Zambia. Although the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) (Mpepo and Seshamani, this issue) notes effective civil society collaboration with government, they also recognise the constraining political and economic trade-offs their government faces in dealings with the IFIs (see Box 3).

So although it appears that PRSP processes can redefine the terms of engagement between governments and civil society by opening up spaces for policy dialogue, this is not guaranteed given the constraints elaborated above. An emphasis on 'ownership' may redefine 'process conditionality' through increased policy dialogue. But it is evident that conditionality underpins how PRS are monitored and evaluated (through performance benchmarks, for instance). Here, a key tension and conflict of interest remains between the World Bank and IMF's active role in offering policy advice at the design stages of PRSPs and still retaining the final role of endorsing the PRSP.

**Are results focusing on outcomes that are beneficial to the poor?****Budgeting for poverty reduction: are we putting our money where our mouth is?**

Studies suggest that PRSP priorities for poverty reduction

rarely find their way into national budgets (Africa Budget project, 2002; Rowden and Nyamugasira, 2002). This means a lack of implementation and hence negative outcomes for the poor.

In Rwanda, budgets do not reflect PRSP priorities. Higher-level education, specialist healthcare and expenditure on the police dwarf expenditure on primary education and healthcare. Money reaches the affluent population rather than the very poor. In Zambia and Malawi budgetary allocations have not matched poverty reducing priorities outlined in the PRSPs. In Ethiopia, policy-making is marked by the government's refusal to adopt alternative policies or engage in policy dialogue with civil society. Consequently, concerns over agricultural policy and land access were not adopted in the PRSP in spite of their importance to poverty reduction (CIDSE-Caritas, 2004).

### Who defines effective poverty reduction?

Whereas PRSP processes affirm a poverty focus, they fall short of entrenching the principle in practice. Firstly, policy formulation is constrained and defined by IFI conditionality. Poverty Reduction Support Credits (PRSC) and PRGF programmes often contain structural adjustment conditionalities which conflict with poverty reducing objectives. Structural adjustment conditionalities include policies for unilateral trade liberalisation and privatising utilities. In a recent report, ActionAid (2004) notes that in Ghana and Uganda, the privatisation of utilities has been imposed, even though there is no evidence that this increases access and accountability for poor people.

Secondly, the structural causes of poverty are rarely dealt with. There is no serious examination of access to land and credit, or of women's participation in the economy. AFRODAD (2003) argues that the IFIs' focus on market-driven policies avoids any analysis of power relations. For instance, in Nicaragua measures set out in the PRSP sit within a neo-liberal framework that promotes economic growth, structural reforms, liberalisation and privatisation. This framework pays little attention to structural issues around inequitable access to land, income and resources (CIDSE-Caritas, 2004).

Thirdly, aid flows are unpredictable in countries that go on/off track. Delays in decisions about allocating HIPC debt relief mean that countries that are aid dependent suffer. And they spend less on poverty reduction. So the IMF's approach has implications that constrain a long-term poverty reduction perspective. The IMF functions as a gatekeeper for poor countries to access multilateral, bilateral and commercial financing. And access to World Bank loans, HIPC debt relief, and Paris Club debt restructuring depends on whether or not



Cartoon: Brett Woods Project

a government complies with IMF programmes.

The potential improvements in budget monitoring and evaluation through the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) are limited by their donor-focused and donor-driven nature. Civil society and other country actors still have limited access to information on budgets, which is also in inaccessible and technical language. Transparency and accountability are narrow and skewed in favour of donors rather than citizens and their representatives in parliament.

Poor poverty data and weak monitoring systems limit the effective evaluation of outcomes. For instance, in Uganda, there is a disconnection between the PRSC policy matrix and the PEAP indicators. **Quantitative** data dominates, leading to the 'sanitisation' and 'depoliticisation' of **qualitative** indicators. The selective use of Participatory Poverty Assessment findings means that the Bank and government's poverty agendas are legitimised. The benefits of allocating expenditure for identified PRSP priority areas were undermined by increased spending on defence (CIDSE-Caritas, 2004). Gariyo (2000) and Rowden and Nyamugasira (2002) point out that in 1998/1999 defence spending constituted 26% of total budget expenditure as compared to 20% on education and 7% on health.

Effective monitoring and evaluation of the PRS process would require a flexible system capable of engaging and drawing on citizen feedback on outcomes. The budget perhaps remains the single most important mechanism to gauge commitment to implementing PRS priorities. Although the constraints outlined above have meant slow progress, the challenge to CSOs is how to expand and utilise the opportunities presented by the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) budgeting framework (a step towards outcome oriented budgeting). Innovative approaches could include exploring alternatives to accessing information and collaboration with structures such as parliaments for better accountability. See the experience of the CSPR in Zambia in this issue.

### Recognising poverty's multidimensional nature?

#### Who defines poverty?

PRSPs seem to be guided by a uniform approach to poverty

analysis and an over emphasis on income measures. Yet they seem to ignore power disparities and issues of empowerment. Figures on poverty incidence fail to offer explanations as to why poverty persists.

Most poverty analysis is 'narrow and too monetary based' (CIDSE-Caritas, 2004). Poverty analysis within PRSPs typically falls short of discussing gender dimensions, differences between transient and chronic poverty, regional disparities and the experiences of excluded minority groups. Wilks and Lefrancois (2002) and CIDSE-Caritas (2004) cite Bolivia where commentators argue that equity concerns were not addressed in the government's assessment of poverty. Whitehead (2003) found a clear lack of gendered poverty analysis in PRSPs in Malawi, Bolivia, Yemen and Tanzania. Gender equity, the environment and the rights of ethnic and other vulnerable groups are not adequately dealt with either.

The Bank's country analysis and assessments remain influential, through the production of poverty statistics, economic analysis, and public expenditure reviews. Predominantly quantitative in nature, they form the basis for what is considered 'objective and rational' decision-making and are a major source of baseline data for PRSPs.

For instance, World Bank trade studies have been cited as based on misleading indicators of trade policy, which are selected to systematically bias results in favour of trade liberalisation and growth. Yet it is these Bank studies – the Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies (DTIS) – that are to be integrated within PRSPs.

In spite of IMF promises, similarities in policy proposals within PRSPs suggest limited debate on the macro economic framework. According to a 2001 Fund fact sheet, discussions on the macro-economic framework were to be opened up for public consultation.<sup>6</sup> In reality, the IMF has reserved to itself the right to prescribe growth and inflation targets, fiscal and monetary policy and structural policies for growth. Policy and process conditionality are effective tools for ensuring compliance and self-censorship by borrower low-income countries. This would explain the disparity between PRSP proposals emerging from consultations (typically termed as 'wish lists' by the Bank and the IMF) and the actual policy proposals contained within loan agreements and funded programmes.

While the Bank is open to dialogue on social policy it is reluctant to do so on macro economic policy. In Honduras, civil society organisations were consulted on one pillar of the PRSP dealing with governance, transparency and public

**"Effective monitoring and evaluation of the PRS process would require a flexible system capable of engaging and drawing on citizen feedback on outcomes. The budget perhaps remains the single most important mechanism to gauge commitment to implementing PRS priorities"**

sector efficiency. However the section on growth, investment and competition was closed to their input.

In spite of the references to poverty's multidimensional nature, income poverty retains a dominant focus even with the use of Participatory Poverty Assessments. A disconnect is also noted between the policy areas identified in the PRSP and the indicators used to assess performance. Indicators tend to be too generic and aggregated. Although the costs of collecting, monitoring and evaluating data remain prohibitive, CSOs involvement in M&E could emphasise qualitative assessments.

### The opportunities

While the analysis above points to a general failure of the PRSPs to live up to the principles they espouse; some opportunities and potential for improvement can be noted. In Uganda and Zambia, the PRSP process is seen to have legitimised civil society's role as partner in dialogue with government. Uganda and Bolivia have formal frameworks for participation with a legal obligation on the government to facilitate civil society participation in policy processes. Recent legislation in Uganda has also created the possibility for greater involvement of parliament in the budgetary process. Vocal lobbying in Malawi conceded some space for CSO participation in policy debates. These included opportunities for civil society to make presentations to influence the budget process and monitor government implementation of the PRSP. Civil society in Malawi is seeking leverage through partnership with parliament, although still at very formative stages and vulnerable to political interference by government. In Rwanda there was significant engagement by civil society around the diagnosis of poverty.

Greater civil society scrutiny of the budgetary process has been noted. This creates the potential for scaling up accountability and transparency, improving public expenditure management and responsiveness to the social sector. It would seem that given their outreach and interaction with

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2001/042601b.htm>



citizens, CSOs have the potential capacity to effectively track the link between policies, financing and performance. The annual PRSP progress report (a requirement by the boards of the IMF and the World Bank) offers an opportunity to CSOs to conduct such audits.

### Conclusion

PRSPs can be credited for marginal improvements in poverty orientation and opening up policy debates. But the level of participation remains limited and not anchored in formal processes and frameworks that can assure country ownership and accountability. Participation is observed to be largely ad hoc, and consultative rather than deep and meaningful. Participation that is rules- and rights-based, inclusive and legitimate remains a challenge. PRSPs would need to be anchored in national budgetary and parliamentary processes for greater accountability.

PRS monitoring and implementation is constrained by limitations of data, weak and non-institutionalised M&E systems, capacity limitations and the tendency to view M&E more as a 'technical' rather than 'political' process.

Country PRSP processes are defined by power dynamics,

which restrict and narrow debates on policy choices. The World Bank's control over knowledge filters through most PRSPs. IFI dominance of the policy discourse is a key constraint to broad participation and policy alternatives that are country and locale specific. The IFIs use their lending function to impose policy conditions, driving countries to self-censorship. Major policy directions within PRSPs are remarkably similar to those pursued under the structural adjustment frameworks of the 80s and 90s. This suggests that countries' perception of what is acceptable to donors and the IFIs takes precedence over their own policy priorities.

The continued use of conditionality by IFIs undermines country ownership and the definition of alternative policy choices in PRS processes. Consequently PRSP priorities remain disconnected from actual policy implementation as reflected in most national budgets. This is a challenge to pro-poor outcomes.

The positive gains made appear fragile and uneven across countries. The Bank and Fund are largely failing to meet commitments under the PRSP principles. In July 2004, the World Bank released its own evaluation of the PRS process where it conceded much of the previously documented criticisms.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See the World Bank's OED Evaluation Report, July 2004.

### CONTACT DETAILS

Atieno Ndomo (Ms.)  
PO Box 5734-00200  
Nairobi, Kenya.  
Tel: 254- 723 351 345 or 254- 733 912930  
Email: atienondomo@yahoo.co.uk

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms Atieno Ndomo is a Kenyan citizen, currently working as Policy and Advocacy officer with the Bretton Woods project in London analysing World Bank and IMF policy issues and preparing accessible articles and briefings; and in collaboration with a range of NGOs to push for reforms to the World Bank and IMF.

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# What happened to the PRSP in Kenya? The role of politics

by HUDSON SHIVERENJE

## Introduction

Politics play a major role in the creation and persistence of poverty in Kenya. It requires high-level political will, commitment and action to reduce the current rate of 57% of Kenyans living below the poverty line. This article situates experiences on implementing poverty reduction strategies within the Kenyan socio-political context. It highlights various forces at play and underscores the challenges and opportunities involved. Finally, the article makes recommendations on institutionalising participation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national poverty reduction strategies.

## Background

Preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in Kenya was not linked to conditions of enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) debt relief. Instead it was a condition for access to new concessional lending from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Kenya's interim PRSP was endorsed in November 2000 and the process of preparing a full PRSP begun thereafter. The consultation process in preparation of the full PRSP in 2001 was positive in a number of ways. Notably, it opened space for civil society actors and communities to engage with the

government in pro-poor policy change. However, the very basis for preparing the PRSP was not made clear to civil society to enable them to monitor and evaluate its implementation effectively.

Events and uncertainty in the entire PRSP process illustrate the political intricacies that are involved in poverty reduction strategies.

In 1997, the IMF



suspended its loan disbursement agreed under the 1996 Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) because of insufficient progress in the area of governance in Kenya. IMF/World Bank lending restarted under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), which was agreed in August 2000. However this did not last due to differences between the government and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) regarding high-level corruption. The result was suspen-

## **"Despite the interest of civil society in Kenya to participate in the process of monitoring PRSP implementation, it is difficult to match it with practical realities on the ground"**

sion of IMF lending in December 2000. The prospects of the PRSP opening the closed taps remained uncertain in a number of ways, even after its completion.

Firstly, the document existed but was not taken to the IMF/World Bank for endorsement due to serious doubts about the whole national economic and political reforms in the country. Hence willingness to resume lending in 2002 was pegged more on the outcome of the general elections in 2002 rather than the poverty strategy itself. It was also not feasible to implement the strategy in a politically charged electioneering atmosphere. It was ironical that the truth was concealed from Kenyans by their own government for political reasons, who in turn could not monitor progress.

The Kenya African National Union (KANU) government under the leadership of President Moi was perceived to be inept and corrupt, thereby deliberately frustrating efforts to enhance good governance and promote sound economic management. KANU was subsequently removed from power by the ruling National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in the December 2002 elections. NARC was elected on a reform platform that included pledges to eradicate corruption, revive an ailing economy and execute programmes to restore WB/IMF support. By early 2003, the IMF had indicated a willingness to resume lending as soon as actions that led to the suspension of previous programmes were fulfilled. These actions were core to NARC's pre-election pledges and included a strong political commitment to good governance, sound economic management and zero-tolerance to corruption. Other donors also indicated their willingness to support the new government which was perceived to embrace the reform agenda. Therefore updating the PRSP became a priority of the NARC government, as it would indicate that the government was on the right track. But for purposes of political expediency, the new government had to be seen to come up with something different even if only in terminology to signify a break with the past. Hence the development of the *Economic Recovery Strategy Paper* (ERSP), as the new poverty reduction blueprint. This came soon after elections when civil society was still mesmerised by the new political dispensa-

tion and had even become more or less part of the government. In this position it was difficult for them to read the political undertones in the scheme and blow the whistle as required of a watchdog.

### **Why ERSP?**

The NARC government inherited both challenges and opportunities from the previous regime. Opportunities included an entrenched consultative culture coming out of the PRSP process and an impressive pre-election manifesto that had been used to garner an overwhelming majority in the 2002 general election. Challenges, on the other hand, included a stagnated economy with the resultant incidence of chronic poverty, declining social and economic infrastructure and an unfavourable international image. Against all these was an empowered citizenry that demanded accountability and transparency in management of public affairs by a popularly elected government. The ruling coalition was therefore faced with the daunting task of reconciling the two within the purview of volatile transition politics. The government therefore undertook to consolidate the PRSP and NARC manifesto into the *Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation*, commonly known as the *Economic Recovery Strategy Paper* (ERSP). The aim of the strategy is to enhance governance, accelerate economic recovery, reduce poverty and increase employment.

### **The gains**

Development partners are important to Kenya's development and Bretton Woods Institutions are considered world opinion-setters. It was therefore necessary to reach an agreement with them in order to attract foreign direct investments. Also, many bilateral donors require a country to have a programme with the IMF before they can extend certain types of financial support, such as budget support. Consequent to reaching an agreement with the IMF, the Kenyan government has also successfully negotiated bilateral assistance for various projects and programmes covering wide sectors of the economy. All these can be attributed to the political good will the new government continues to receive from the international community. Without effective monitoring and evaluation, this can easily camouflage many other ills by democratic governments, especially where citizen oversight structures are not institutionalised, as is the case in Kenya.

Secondly, as stated before, NARC assumed leadership when relations between Kenya and development partners were at their worst. Following extensive consultations, the government reached an agreement with the IMF on a Poverty

PRSP	ERSP
Is donor-inspired and therefore not fully owned by the government. Is produced from wider consultations and hence a high sense of ownership by locals.	Is government-inspired.
Is fully conscious of poverty dimensions in Kenya.	Is expert-produced and therefore lacks a great sense of ownership by the public
Has produced experiential non-traditional insights into poverty that were not there before.	Does not appreciate the poverty breadth in the country.
Adopts a holistic approach to poverty reduction.	Is devoid of social capital and does not appreciate the poverty situation in this country.
Is too wide and hence lacks targets.	Hinges the poverty agenda on economic growth and is private sector-oriented.
Is revolutionary.	Has specific targets for poverty reduction.
Focuses on equity and social justice.	Maintains the status quo.
	Focuses on economic growth.

Source: Wamuyu Gatheru, 'The ERS as a Poverty Reduction Strategy: what are the facts, where are the opportunities? A civil society perspective.' Paper presented at the NGO Council Forum on PRSP at Nairobi Safari Club, Nairobi, Kenya on 15th July 2004

Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) in November 2003. This paved the way for the restoration of healthy relations with other donors. Building on the PRGF, the government held a successful Consultative Group (CG) meeting with development partners in Nairobi in November 2003. This was significant in that it was the first in over a decade, it took place within the first year of the NARC government in power, was attended by various Kenyan stakeholders and more importantly, the meeting generated pledges amounting to about US\$ 4.5 billion over a three-year term. In a radical departure from the past, the meeting took place in the country. The support was an affirmation of political reforms that were being undertaken by the government in a new political dispensation. NARC sought to gain political mileage out of the ERSP rather than implement the PRSP, in which case credit would go to the former ruling party KANU, which was now in the official opposition.

The above notwithstanding, there have emerged ideological differences between the PRSP and the ERSP, with far-reaching implications for poverty reduction in Kenya. These ideological differences were highlighted during the Open Forum on PRSP organised by the National Council of NGOs in Kenya (NGOs Council). The Forum brought together different civil society and government actors on PRSP who discussed the progress towards implementation and monitoring of PRSP,

out of which these ideological differences emerged. The table above gives a summary of this divergence.

During this Open Forum on PRSP, there was general agreement for CSO actors to monitor implementation of the PRSP in the context of specific sectors and/or thematic groups, such as gender, governance, HIV/AIDS, pastoralism, natural resource utilisation and management etc., based on the strengths and programmatic interest of each actor. The monitoring is to be done in relation to budgetary allocations and impact of the same on target groups.

Despite the interest of civil society in Kenya to participate in the process of monitoring PRSP implementation, it is difficult to match it with practical realities on the ground. This is because of lack of a systematic forum that brings them together to share the findings, develop a systematic framework and implement new lessons. In addition to this, financial support of the CSO monitoring framework is weak. Where it exists, it is not recognised. This means that monitoring of PRSP implementation in Kenya is disorganised or disjointed since there are no lead organisations with adequate financial resources to advance this goal. Among the CSOs, there are no financial commitments or budgets set aside to be used for monitoring PRSP implementation. The government does not provide any financial support to CSOs to participate in the process of monitoring PRSP implemen-

**“For the PRSP to be effective, however, more than a voice in policy-making is required. It needs mechanisms that link policy implementation and outcomes to decisions and sanctions”**

tation. Information that can also be used for monitoring PRSP implementation is either hidden or inaccessible in government offices. Lack of participation in monitoring the implementation of PRSP excludes the poor, since it is only being done by the technocrats. This also means that it is difficult to measure the actual impact on the ground and thereby completely closes the spaces of participation that had been opened earlier.

**Government monitoring and evaluation initiatives**

Kenya has a huge portfolio of uncompleted projects with a completion rate of less than 20%. This can be attributed to the lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems and political patronage, among other factors. In a bid to address this gap, a number of efforts were put in place to institutionalise the monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction strategies. These include:

- Establishment of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) department in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development. In addition a poverty analysis unit has been set up at the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). The two institutions are responsible for the coordination of a system-wide national M&E plan that is in the final stage of development. Establishment of departments in line ministries and special units is a political decision and citizens do not have a say in this.
- Formulation of a national system-wide and structured M&E plan to be implemented by all stakeholders is in progress. To realise this, the government has set up a steering committee to work out and advise on ways to roll out the plan. The challenge however remains to decentralise M&E to the local level at different tiers by various actors such as civil society, the private sector and communities. This cannot happen without the necessary political will.
- Undertaking poverty mapping showing pockets of poverty countrywide and subsequent realignment of strategy based on the poverty maps. This is important in facilitating isolation of core issues. It allows focus on what is relevant and gives priority to specific regions. However, political

considerations rather than poverty reduction take priority when it comes to resource allocation.

- The Public Expenditure Review (PER) provides the government with an internal mechanism to reveal both successes and weaknesses and to take action to improve the situation. The government initiated ministerial annual public expenditure reviews to enable it to identify gaps between budget policy objectives and execution. The knowledge gained will facilitate the shifting of resources to priority areas within and between ministries and sectors. An inherent weakness in the PER, however, is that it allows the government to investigate itself. This amounts to subjective evidence and subsequent judgment. An alternative on the other hand is for civil society to run its own parallel PER. However, this may not yield sufficient information for civil society due to bureaucratic red tape and hence the need to institutionalise a consultative and information sharing culture in the public sector to accelerate the monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction. It has now emerged that if the poor are to enjoy the right to participate in poverty reduction strategies, they must know the relevant facts, i.e. the right to information. In a way the PER will remain a window-dressing exercise as long as Kenya does not provide for the development of adequate laws, policies, institutions, administrative procedures and practices, and mechanisms that guarantee citizens the right to access information on public expenditure vis à vis poverty reduction. The draft constitution legislating the right to information for citizens has been stalled due to power sharing differences between partners in the ruling coalition.

Although well intended, the above government-led initiatives are yet to yield the desired results. Poverty is on the increase but it is business as usual in the public sector. Whereas presentations by government officials paint a rosy picture, the reality on the ground remains grim. All this is in the bid to strike an intricate balance between effective poverty monitoring and political correctness. Weaknesses notwithstanding, there is a need for citizen oversight systems to counter political propaganda concerning the poverty reduction agenda.

**Civil society monitoring and evaluation of ERSPs**

The shift from PRSP to ERSP came as a surprise to most Kenyans, especially civil society. Massive investments had gone into the consultative process of the PRSP by all stakeholders, who were eagerly waiting for returns. It was therefore a demonstration of lack of accountability and political arrogance on the part of the government to wake up one

morning and shift the focus of the strategy without adequate consultation with all those involved. The ERSP was a political decision that the new administration expected the rest of the country to swallow hook, line and sinker. Although civil society tried to get involved by reviving the structures used in preparing the PRSP, the focus of the ERSP was economic growth and wealth creation, and not directly poverty reduction. Therefore developing effective monitoring systems within this context would more or less be like the proverbial 'putting new wine into old wine skins'. Many people were also sceptical of joining the ERSP bandwagon, having not seen the outcome of the PRSP and not even being aware of where the process was. A good number of civil society actors felt that to make progress, the ERSP needed to take into account at least two recommendations. Firstly there should be regular in-built feedback and information-sharing mechanisms to those involved on the progress made. Secondly was the need to cushion the process from political interference regardless of the political system in power. This would, for instance, entail security of tenure for technocrats in key line ministries spearheading the poverty reduction agenda.

Another challenge for civil society with respect to the ERSP was that the NARC government prepared the strategy during its hey-day period when it was the darling of most donors. It therefore did not make much difference whether civil society participated or not.

## Conclusion

The PRSP in Kenya has not been a sufficiently effective mechanism for the realisation of its objective of transforming the lives of the poor. This is because Kenya lacked a reasonable level of economic and political stability, wider government commitment and institutional capacity required to undertake the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction effectively. The government did not put in place the necessary legislative, administrative, financial and institutional mechanisms required to realise the desired objectives. For the PRSP to be effective, however, more than a voice in policy-making is required. It needs mechanisms that link policy implementation and outcomes to decisions and sanctions – and this is where politics come to play as shown in this Kenyan case. In Kenya, it is political dynamics and interests that determine decisions and actions (or lack of actions). This underlines the need for stronger governance and accountability systems and cultures. This might work best if built upon a strategic combination of civil society action and foreign donor support that is aimed at creating citizen monitoring structures. Without these, the apparent lack of government political will might continue to disallow the effective and unbiased monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction – whether it be under the auspices of a PRSP or ERSP.

### CONTACT DETAILS

Hudson Shiverenje  
Programme Officer  
Danish Association for International  
Cooperation in Kenya (MS Kenya)  
Rhapta Road, Westlands  
PO Box 30717- 00100  
Nairobi, Kenya.  
Tel: +254 20 4451323/4451324  
Fax: +254 20 4445900  
Email: shiverenje@yahoo.com or  
Hudson@mkenya.or.ke

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## 4

# Bringing the poor into advocacy: a look at Ghana HIPC Watch

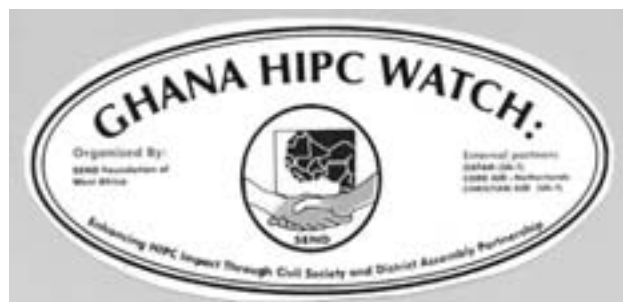
by SIAPHA KAMARA with HARRIET YEBOAH

## Introduction

An important challenge confronting the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) is how to engage pro-poor and grassroots-based civil society organisations (CSOs) in facilitating the genuine participation and effective ownership by the poor of socio-economic development in their local communities. This article shares the experience of the Social Enterprise Development Foundation of West Africa (SEND Foundation) in building the capacity of civil society groups and local government officials in resource-poor northern Ghana to engage meaningfully with the GPRS. The focus of capacity building has been two-fold: increasing knowledge and understanding of the GPRS within civil society; and developing participatory monitoring and evaluation skills.

## Objectives

- Build awareness of civil society organisations on the GPRS. This is part of a process of mobilising them to actively participate in and contribute towards policy-making on poverty reduction strategies and programmes.
- Establish and strengthen the participatory monitoring capacity of 25 development NGOs and faith-based organisations so that they can collaborate with SEND to carry out participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) of the



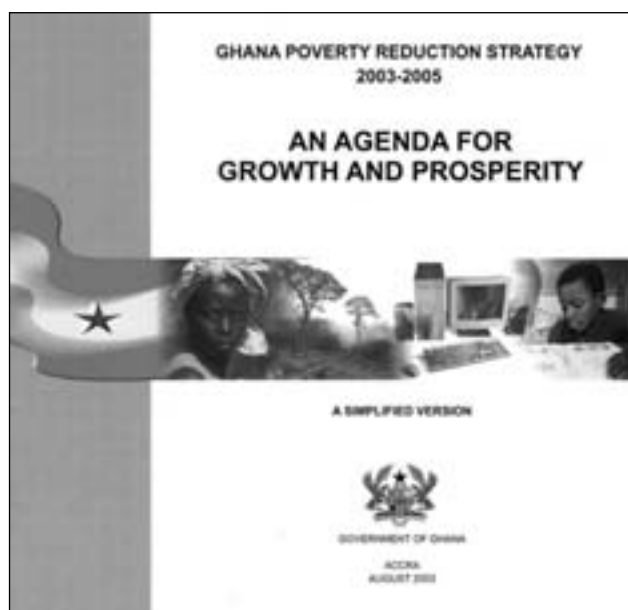
impact of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) debt relief initiative on the poor in 25 districts in northern Ghana.<sup>1</sup>

- Strengthen District Assemblies (DAs) and CSOs partnership in the implementation of the GPRS in 25 districts in northern Ghana.

## GPRS education and awareness building framework

The GPRS educational process started in 2001 with a concept paper prepared by SEND Foundation. The paper proposed the establishment of a project to monitor and evaluate the impact of the country joining the HIPC debt relief initiative

<sup>1</sup> The World Bank and IMF's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative was launched in 1996. At that time, it was a radical departure from previous approaches to 'debt relief' for the poorest countries. The most important aspect of HIPC is that for the first time in their 50-year history, the debts of the World Bank and the IMF ('preferred creditors' to whom debts have always to be repaid first) were included for write-off under the scheme.



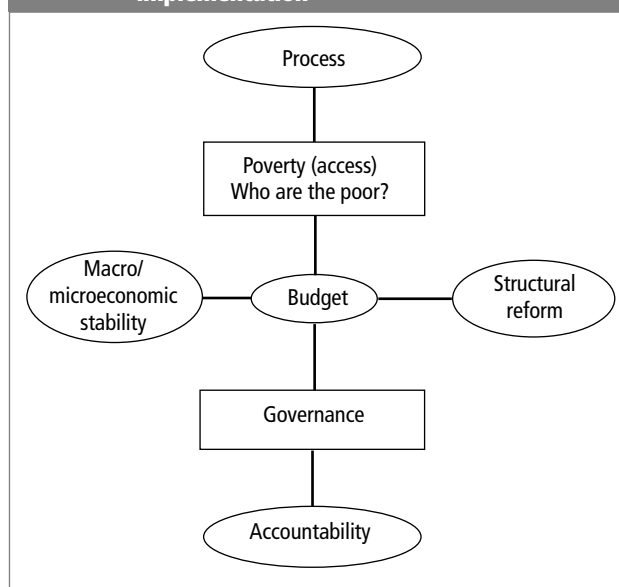
**The GPRS – a simplified version. This is a simplified form, prepared by the NDPC, of the comprehensive document, which maps out the government of Ghana's strategy for promoting growth and reducing poverty. This, together with the two-page version also available, aims to ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the decisions the government has made.**

on the poor in Ghana. This paper targeted mainly district-based development NGOs, faith-based organisations, women's groups, youth groups, farmers and people with disabilities in northern Ghana. Thirty CSOs discussed the paper. They confirmed their interest in partnering with SEND Foundation to develop and implement the Ghana HIPC Watch (GHW) but expressed reservations about the political implications; i.e. whether the government could tolerate any critical questioning of national policies and programmes. The majority of them indicated that they were unfamiliar with most government policies and had very limited skills and experience in policy dialogue with state functionaries.

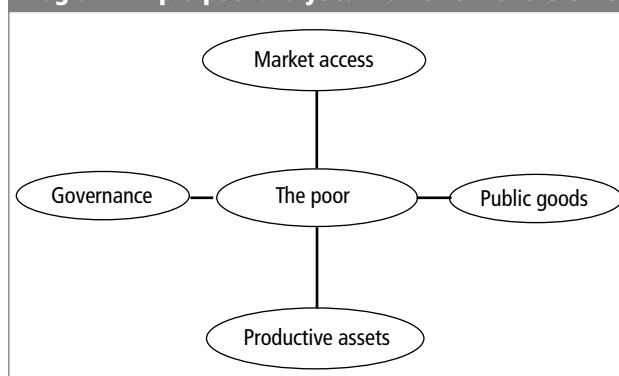
Guided by the above insights, SEND developed a GPRS Education and Awareness-Building Framework and organised workshops whose main purpose was to facilitate civil society's understanding and engagement with the GPRS. The workshop involved the Ghana National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), pro-poor civil society organisations (i.e. workshop participants) and SEND Foundation.<sup>2</sup>

The diagrams below summarise the contents of the presentations at the workshops.

**Diagram 1: GPRS framework for designing and implementation<sup>3</sup>**



**Diagram 2: A pro-poor analytical framework of the GPRS**



The first diagram highlights the underlying principles of the GPRS, for example, participation of the poor in planning and implementation, mainstreaming of good governance, and accountability and poverty reduction among small-scale food crop farmers, women, youth, and people with disability. Concepts such as inflation, privatisation, budget deficit, devaluation, trade liberalisation and balance of payments that underpin the macro-economic strategy of the GPRS are also discussed.

Diagram two is used to establish whether the GPRS is an

<sup>2</sup> The NDPC is the state institution responsible for the development, dissemination, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the GPRS.

<sup>3</sup> SEND is grateful to Charles Abugre, Executive Director of the Social Development Centre (ISODEC) who facilitated the first GPRS educational and awareness-building workshop, which developed this diagram.

**“The participatory monitoring and evaluation framework is informed by a number of core principles. These principles, among others, emphasise information gathering through interacting and engaging with diverging interest groups in an open atmosphere”**

effective policy instrument for poverty reduction. It analyses whether the poor have access to good governance (i.e. participation in decision-making, an effective parliament system, effective rule of laws and independent electioneering system), public goods (education, water, healthcare systems, and roads), productive assets (affordable credit, fertile farmland, communications, irrigation) and market access (good price, storage and processing facilities).

A self-assessment by Ghana HIPC Watch of more than 30 GPRS educational workshops revealed very low participation of women, youth and disabled people in all workshops. To address this situation, GHW initiated GPRS Focused Group Educational Workshops (FGFEW) for women and people with disability.

These GHW-GPRS workshops were important. More than 95% of the participants (245 CSOs and 25 DAs) had access to information and were able to contribute to the GPRS for the first time. Nearly all the workshop resolutions emphasised the need for GHW to follow up and sustain the educational process by providing them with policy documents and training on advocacy. A senior Planning Officer of the NDPC, describing how a GHW-GPRS educational workshop had impacted on NDPC, had this to say:

*...participating in the workshops has given me access to people at the grassroots that NDPC could never have reached; it is an effective mechanism for disseminating and getting objective feedback on the GPRS... we need to strengthen the collaboration between the GHW and NDPC...*

**The participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) framework**

The GPRS educational process described earlier set the stage for work to start on the implementation of the second objective of the project, i.e. PM&E of HIPC-funded programmes. The participatory monitoring and evaluation framework is informed by a number of core principles. These principles, among others, emphasise information gathering through

**Box 1: GPRS education and awareness-building workshops**

During all educational workshops a top government official is invited to open the workshop. There is then a presentation of the GPRS by NDPC and a presentation by the regional planning officer focusing on the regional development priorities. SEND Foundation also makes a presentation on the pro-poor analytical perspective of the GPRS. This presentation is aimed at equipping participants with critical understanding and analytical skills to interrogate the GPRS with a focus on whether or not it is truly poverty reduction-friendly. The presentations are discussed in plenary, with participants sharing their insights on the GPRS and seeking clarifications from the government officials. Participants then discuss in-depth thematic areas (such as education, health, agriculture) in small groups and present their findings in plenary, out of which pressing issues are identified and presented to the public as a press statement.

interacting and engaging with diverging interest groups in an open atmosphere. The resultant key findings and recommendations will be ploughed back into policy-making and the implementation process through lobbying, publications and workshops. Guided by these principles, a GHW-PM&E manual was developed in consultation with focal NGOs, District Assemblies and donor agencies.

**Key actors involved in GHW-PM&E**

A training workshop on how to use the manual was then organised for the 25 district-based focal NGOs, who were identified and approved by the District Assemblies. CSOs that volunteered to be district focal NGOs were accepted only if they had development programmes in the district and a good working relationship with the district assembly. That is to say that the NGOs are known and their activities are not shrouded in secrecy. At a GPRS educational workshop planned and conducted by the district focal NGO, 15 of the participants were elected to constitute the District HIPC Monitoring Committee (DHMC) and were officially inaugurated by either the District Chief Executive or the Coordinating Director. The DHMC is made up of women, youth, farmers, people with disabilities, faith-based organisations, development NGOs, and representatives of the district assembly.

**Four operational stages in the GHW-PM&E Framework**

The first key operational stage is information and data collection and analysis, where the DHMC uses the monitoring manual to conduct interviews and focus group meetings, particularly with relevant officials of the district and community, opinion leaders and beneficiaries. They also review project documents. Secondly, the DHMC discusses and analyses information gathered in order to agree on key findings

Launch of one of the communication tools for information dissemination  
'The HIPC Watch Update'



Photo: SEND Foundation

and generate appropriate policy recommendations.

The second stage information sharing with the District Assembly is aimed at promoting discussions within the District Assembly on the findings and recommendations of the DHMCs. Efforts are made to disseminate the findings and recommendations to the wider public of the district, using means such as a district HIPC Notice Board, churches, mosques, radio and others.

The Quarterly Review Meeting is the third operational stage. At this stage the 25 DHMCs, represented by their focal NGO, share, analyse and synthesise the findings and policy recommendations. They also identify and agree on advocacy issues. National lobbying and advocacy is the fourth stage. Its purpose is to use the findings and recommendations to engage policy-making institutions, processes and events and key players, such as ministers and parliamentarians. Various instruments have been developed to support and sustain the advocacy activities. They include Ghana HIPC Update Newspaper, a lobbying team, posters, stickers, t-shirts, workshop reports and the SEND website.<sup>4,5</sup>

### The three monitoring and evaluation indicators

Based on the GPRS and in consultation with the focal NGOs

**"Based on the GPRS and in consultation with the focal NGOs and District Assemblies, it was agreed that participatory monitoring and evaluation be guided by three key broad indicators: good governance, accountability and equity"**

and District Assemblies, it was agreed that participatory monitoring and evaluation be guided by three key broad indicators: **good governance, accountability and equity**. The initial stages of information gathering proved difficult. But after a joint training session for focal NGOs, DHMC and government officials, the trend changed. The table opposite highlights the key indicators and monitoring findings.

As a result of inadequate information flow from the central government and sector ministries to the District Assemblies, and from the District Assemblies to the communities, participation in planning, implementation and monitoring is rather low. Beneficiaries thus have a very low sense of ownership for the projects, which in the long run affects the maintenance of such projects.

Accountability is a problem area. Though rules and regulations regarding the opening of accounts and signatories to it have been adhered to, the multiple or parallel sources of fund transfers to the district make accountability very difficult. For instance, a particular district could receive funds from the Ministry of Women and Children **and** the Senior Minister's office as micro-credit for women's groups. Most districts are also not able to track funds that are transferred from their district to another, as in the case of the Tamale municipality, where funds were transferred to Kumasi. Thus transparency and openness of the entire system is compromised.

Geographical equity has been adhered to. However, one wonders whether the heavy emphasis on infrastructure addresses the needs of the poor. Facilities will be closer to the poor but as to whether they have the means to access them is another problem. Little attention is paid to agriculture from which the majority of the poor earn their livelihood. The situation is worsened by the inadequate personnel who will provide services to the poor in the various facilities, such as education and health.

### Lessons learnt

The process of monitoring and evaluating HIPC-funded projects has been an exciting and rewarding experience, but not

<sup>4</sup> The Ghana HIPC Update is published each quarter to disseminate the main findings and recommendations of FNGOs discussed and agreed on at the Quarterly Review Meeting.

<sup>5</sup> [www.sendfoundation.org](http://www.sendfoundation.org)

Copies of HIPC Watch Update, newsletter of the SEND Foundation



Table 1:

Key indicators	Key monitoring and evaluation findings
<p><b>Good governance</b> focuses on assessing the quality of people's participation in developing and implementing HIPC-funded projects. This is assessed by the nature and quality of interactions between district assembly officials and project beneficiaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely low participation of project beneficiary communities in decision-making.</li> <li>• Very little consultation by district officials with project beneficiary communities during the identification and implementation of HIPC projects.</li> <li>• Consultations between the DA leadership and National Ministries during planning and execution of HIPC-funded projects have been extremely weak.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accountability</b> has three broad dimensions: governance, financial and expenditure accountability. Governance assesses the extent to which officials of the District Assembly responsible for HIPC-funded projects are open and transparent with citizens, in particular the beneficiaries. On financial accountability, the focus is on compliance with rules, procedures and regulations in the use and management of HIPC funds. Expenditure accountability emphasises feedback to the citizens on how HIPC funds are spent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bank of Ghana opened accounts for the DA without consulting them; some districts had their accounts located outside their region and very far away.</li> <li>• Funds are transferred into accounts without information about what they are intended for.</li> <li>• The DA are directed to transfer funds from HIPC accounts into different accounts without proper explanation.</li> <li>• Weak contract management capacity at the district. In some instances the contractors are imposed on them by National Ministries.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Equity</b> has four dimensions: spatial, social, occupational and gender. Spatial equity focuses on geographical distribution. Social equity focuses on different groups such as women, youth, people living with Aids, ethnic minorities, physically challenged and low-income salaried workers. Occupational groups refer to, for example, farmers, fisher folks and petty traders. The gender dimension of equity assesses the extent to which HIPC-funded projects are sensitive to the different needs, roles and responsibilities of women and men, boys and girls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The allocations of projects have taken into account the ethnic mix of the district. In northern Ghana this is definitely contributing to building harmony and reconciliation among the various ethnic groups.</li> <li>• School, water and health infrastructure are the main projects; there are very few agricultural projects devoted to small-scale food crops farmers.</li> <li>• Most projects do not take into account the special needs of people with disability. School buildings for instance do not have special places for wheelchairs and so far no DHMC has reported a project that is devoted solely to people with disability, for example the rehabilitation of schools for the blind and dumb.</li> <li>• Women's needs are reduced to micro-credit. Issues of unequal opportunities for boys and girls to education, reproductive rights and quality healthcare services and political power are not catered for.</li> </ul>



**Members of the focal NGO and District HIPC Monitoring Committee at a participatory monitoring and evaluation training workshop**



Photo: SEND Foundation

**A new school built with HIPC funds in the Wa District of the Upper West Region of Ghana**



Photo: SEND Foundation

THEME SECTION

without problems. GHW have over the past two years built strong structures for engaging policy makers on national issues. More importantly, the CSOs are seeing the need to demand accountability from government officials at the district level and are also drawing their attention to issues that need immediate attention. The establishment of the DHMCs and their training in PM&E has developed capacity and a framework for effective engagement of district-based development actors.

Increasingly, the perception of GHW as a faultfinding mission is being erased. The mainstreaming of government officials' participation at national, regional and district levels in GHW activities has helped to overcome suspicion within government bureaucracy and among politicians of GHW. It is helping to build alliances with District Assemblies against the Accra-based top-down approach of planning and implementing HIPC-funded programmes.

The emphasis on GRPS education and awareness-building has helped to overcome the fear among pro-poor civil society organisations that their active participation in policy advocacy work would result in political confrontation. It has also inspired confidence in and is mobilising them to engage with the GPRS, especially at the district level.

A wealth of information generated from the PM&E process makes it imperative to involve the media in order to give the right reportage on findings to influence decisions at both the local and national level.

### Challenges

The above notwithstanding, access to information, especially at the national level, has not been forthcoming with some sector ministries. As many as between eight to ten visits are made before information is sometimes released. In one of the

ministries where information was being sought, several letters had to be submitted because every letter seemed to 'get lost on its journey to the sector Minister's office'. Others were frank in saying that the information being sought is not classified but they are not obliged to release it. Invariably it affects the timely usage of information and sets back monitoring.

GHW faces the challenge of making government ministries more willing to provide information and data on HIPC funds disbursed to them by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. It also must work to ensure that GHW's findings and recommendations are taken seriously by government and used to improve poverty reduction strategies, policies, programmes and projects. More so GHW must effectively inform, engage and influence the work of parliament with its findings and recommendations.

Further interaction is necessary to overcome the mistrust of CSOs by state actors, the reason behind government officials' and bureaucrats' reluctance to give information about projects. CSOs, especially those involved in policy work that is critical of the government, are viewed as part of the political opposition. State actors are not used to critical questioning of their actions and therefore perceive those who do so as being opposed to them. Consequently GHW will strengthen the negotiating and dialoguing skills of CSOs to enable them to engage effectively with actors. CSOs are not used to partnering with the state sector, especially when developing policies. However, pressure is brought to bear on the sustainability of the District HIPC Monitoring Committees; membership is voluntary but there is pressure for financial incentive, which will make the scheme very costly to maintain.

GHW will also use the different media effectively to communicate and disseminate the findings and recommendations to the general public.

**Group brainstorming on good governance at the participatory monitoring and evaluation training workshop**



**Photo: SEND Foundation**

### Conclusion

Based on these challenges, GHW advocacy activities have focused on promoting the participation of District Assemblies in decision-making at the national level. At the district level, project beneficiaries' involvement in project identification and implementation systems, particularly in monitoring and evaluation, has been identified as an important issue. On accountability, the focus is on promoting the decentralisation of HIPC accounts and making them district-based so as to reduce transaction costs as well as to make them easily accessible to administrators, contractors and project beneficiaries. Regarding equity, the targeting of disabled people with specific interventions, for example rehabilitation of training institutions and addressing the needs of women in a holistic manner, are two important themes. For instance, micro-credit provision must be accompanied by funding for organisational development for women, and reproductive rights education and training, especially for young girls. In resource-poor northern Ghana,

HIPC funds should be devoted to supporting the education of girls up to the completion of secondary school.

Ghana HIPC Watch is a pilot project, which since inception has promised to be an effective mechanism through which grassroots development-based CSOs can engage efficiently in policy monitoring and evaluation to enhance the impact of policies on the poor in society. Through effective capacity-building for CSOs and district level government officials, a very strong partnership has evolved. This has enhanced the gathering and sharing of information. It has also increased citizens' interest in governance at the district level. More people are calling for the extension of monitoring to other sectors of the economy such as the district assembly and the parliament common fund. Though faced with human and financial resource constraints, GHW will focus on deepening the partnership it has built, find a means of strengthening weaker partnerships, and build new ones to ensure a responsible citizenry that participates in and contributes to the development of the country.

### CONTACT DETAILS

Siapha Kamara and Harriet Yeboah  
Social Enterprise Development Foundation of  
West Africa  
G11, Regimanuel Estates, Nungua Barrier  
Sakumono, Accra, Ghana.  
Email: send@africaonline.com.gh

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Siapha Kamara is the Chief Executive Officer for SEND Foundation of West Africa. He is a social development activist with more than 25 years of experience in international development, particularly in the West African sub-region.

Harriet Yeboah works with SEND Foundation as Policy Advocacy Officer responsible for Ghana HIPC Watch Southern Ghana. She organises training and education for civil society organisations on the Ghana poverty reduction strategy papers.

# Setting the scene: the Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan

by MOSES ISOOBA and RICHARD SSEWAKIRYANGA

## Introduction

The need for developing a poverty eradication plan in Uganda grew out of the political discontent voiced by rural Ugandans during the 1996 presidential election. Communities that interacted with the politicians reminded those who were canvassing for re-election votes that, although there was relative peace and security in the country following the turbulent civil war of 1980 to 1986, people could 'not eat peace'. They needed tangible improvements in their livelihoods. The economic growth that was being celebrated nationally was not visible in all communities around the country. There was a need for an alternative approach that could bring about improvements in poor people's livelihoods.

When the 1996 electioneering ended, the incumbent president, President Museveni, who had been re-elected, gathered his policy makers and donors and took them to the rural communities in the Luwero Triangle (a region where the 1986 guerrilla war had started and thousands had been killed) for a 'poverty tour'. Following this poverty tour, subsequent technical meetings with donors and policy makers were held to debate the intricacies of dealing with what had been seen in the region. The resultant document from these discussions and consultations was Uganda's first Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP).

**"The link between these two processes therefore is that UPPAP provided the evidence, while the CSO PEAP Revision Task Force provided the space for CSO engagement in the PEAP/PSRP process. Reflecting on the role of these two processes in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of PRSPs is an insightful process"**

The PEAP is a broad Government of Uganda national development strategy that has recently undergone its second revision. It has a target to reduce absolute poverty to less than 10% by the year 2017. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – the architects of the PRS processes – have also endorsed the PEAP as Uganda's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which enabled the country to be the first beneficiary of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries' (HIPC's) debt relief initiative. Thus, in Uganda, poverty reduction strategies are designed within

PLA 51 writeshop participants break into small discussion groups. From left to right: Harriet Yeboah, Jordi Beneria Surkin, Moses Isooba and Richard Ssewakiryanga



the framework of the PEAP.

The PEAP was designed in 1997 and is revised every three years. The revision process involves the **participation** of government, donors, civil society, the private sector and the poor themselves to **incorporate** their perspectives. Furthermore, these stakeholders are also **invited** by government to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of PEAP implementation.

### The mechanisms

The Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (UPPAP) is an initiative of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), civil society organisations (CSOs) and district local governments. Its overall aim is to bring the voices and perspectives of poor people into policy formulation, planning and implementation by central and local governments. OXFAM GB in Uganda was the implementing agency until the end of 2002. A first

participatory poverty assessment (PPA1) was carried out in 1998-99 in 36 research sites in nine districts. Its findings were used to inform policy-making. A second PPA (PPA2) was implemented in 2002 in 60 villages in 12 districts with the aim of deepening the understanding of poverty and poverty trends gained in the first PPA and investigate people's experiences with selected government policies.

### The PEAP Revision Civil Society Task Force

In the first revision of the PEAP, local CSOs worked together with international CSOs and formed a CSO taskforce that was housed in the Uganda Debt Network (UDN).<sup>1</sup> The CSO PEAP Revision Task Force was borne out of a meeting between CSOs and representatives of the IMF and the World Bank who had come to Uganda as part of the PRSP mission. In this meeting CSOs sought to understand what

<sup>1</sup> For more information visit [www.udn.or.ug](http://www.udn.or.ug)



the PRSP was, how they could engage, and who could engage. At the end of the deliberations it was agreed that CSOs should have their own parallel consultations for the PEAP process. A Civil Society PEAP Revision Task Force of about ten non-governmental organisations (NGOs) was launched and they coordinated the inputs of CSOs in the PEAP. The product of these consultations constituted a number of workshop reports detailing the CSO input into the PEAP revision.

In the second revision process of 2003, there was no independent CSO task force. The CSOs organised under the aegis of the NGO Forum and they worked with several sector-working groups and also conducted a number of consultations countrywide. They produced a 130-page document that brought together all issues that the CSOs wanted to raise on the PEAP revision process.<sup>2</sup> The document was submitted to the PEAP Secretariat in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED).

The above two processes link to each other because the UPPAP partnership was formulated as a unique process involving government, CSOs, local governments and the poor themselves in the generation of poverty information from the perspectives of the poor. The CSO PEAP Revision Task Force, on the other hand, is a mechanism of engaging with the PEAP/PRSP policy process through the use of data from processes like UPPAP and other independent CSO consultative processes. The link between these two processes therefore is that UPPAP provided the **evidence**, while the CSO PEAP Revision Task Force provided the **space** for CSO engagement in the PEAP/PRSP process. Reflecting on the role of these two processes in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of PRSPs is an insightful process especially for countries that are implementing the PRSP process.

### Poverty trends in Uganda

Poverty levels appear to be dropping in Uganda. Current statistics put absolute poverty at 38%.<sup>3</sup> This current poverty level suggests an oscillation in the poverty trends: 1992: 56%; 1994: 52.2%; 1997: 44%; 2000: 34%; and 2002: 38%.<sup>4</sup> However, evidence from studies under the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process which consulted directly with the poor in

**"...a critical look at certain dynamics inherent to the PEAP process, and assumptions behind what are appropriate ways of implementing and monitoring the PEAP, suggest that much work needs to be done to ensure effective participation and influence of the poor and civil society"**

96 communities in 21 districts in the years 1998 and 2003, indicates that no obvious patterns are discernible in perceptions of poverty trends among the poor, as local communities identified both improving and worsening dimensions of livelihood, possibly indicating changes in the nature of poverty over the years. Some communities reported declining poverty trends overall, others a mixed picture, while some reported increasing poverty. However, key messages that come across from these consultations are the following:

- Access to social services, particularly education, water and health, has dramatically improved during the past decade although quality of service remains an issue.
- The productive sectors (crop, livestock and fish farming) are believed to be faring badly, particularly crop farming, and this has affected households' levels of income. This is due to poor production and yields, poor prices, lack of incentives to expand production due to lack of markets, and environmental concerns.
- People who have been subject to shocks such as displacement and insurgency generally feel poorer, as they have lost household members, property and social support.

Nonetheless, a critical look at certain dynamics inherent to the PEAP process, and assumptions behind what are appropriate ways of implementing and monitoring the PEAP, suggest that much work needs to be done to ensure effective participation and influence of the poor and civil society.

The following two theme articles examine these two selected mechanisms in the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of the PEAP process. The first comes from a civil society perspective and looks at a PEAP revision task force; the second looks at the work of the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (UPPAP) from a government perspective.

2 CSO PEAP Revision Steering Committee (2003) 'In search of consensus on a new development path: a synthesis of civil society views into the 2003 PEAP Revision Process.' CSO PEAP Revision Steering Committee/Liaison Office, Uganda National NGO Forum, Kampala.

3 Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (2003) 'Uganda's progress in attaining PEAP target in the context of the Millennium Development Goals.' Paper presented at the Donor Consultative Group (CG) Meeting, May, Kampala.

4 *ibid*.



#### CONTACT DETAILS

Moses Isooba  
 Programme Coordinator  
 Civil Society and Poverty Reduction  
 Programme  
 Community Development Resource Network  
 (CDRN)  
 PO Box 3791, Kampala, Uganda.  
 Tel: +256 41 534497  
 Fax: +256 41 542995  
 Email: mosesisooba@cdrn.co.ug  
 Website: www.cdrn.co.ug

Richard Ssewakiryanga  
 Team Leader  
 Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment  
 Process  
 Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic  
 Development  
 PO Box 8147, Kampala, Uganda.  
 Tel: +256 41 236205/234700  
 Fax: +256 41 232015  
 Email: Richard.Ssewakiryanga@finance.go.ug  
 Website: www.uppap.or.ug

# Civil society participation in Uganda's PRS process: opportunities and dilemmas

by MOSES ISOOBA

## Introduction

This paper briefly examines how the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) process started in Uganda, and then focuses on how civil society (CS) has participated in its revision processes, and in its monitoring, evaluation and implementation. It examines the challenges of civil society organisation (CSO) involvement and provides some suggestions for more meaningful participation that can bring about change in the policy and implementation arena of Uganda.

## Civil society participation in the PEAP formulation and revision process

CSOs in Uganda had minor involvement in the development of the original PEAP, but were active in its revision. To enhance country ownership of the process, and for Uganda to have an acceptable Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), the involvement of CSOs was required. In 1998, a few CSOs were invited by the government to participate in Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) under the Uganda Participatory Poverty Process (UPPAP), a mechanism to collect poor people's views on poverty to inform policy formulation and design (see Ssewakiryanga, this issue).

Civil society involvement stemmed from an early PPA conducted by the Community Development Resource Network

(CDRN) in 1995–6 and funded by three international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in Uganda (NOVIB, ActionAid and OXFAM).<sup>1</sup> This entailed research in seven districts, with a number of local NGOs as 'partner organisations', its agenda included both the gathering of 'first generation PPA' information, as well as an attempt to feed this data into existing policy.<sup>2</sup> 'First generation PPA' was carried out by the World Bank and was quantitative in nature and was essentially to shape the Country Assistance Strategies.

The 1997 PEAP was formulated through a consultative process that included donors, civil society and the private sector. A number of factors made CS's engagement in this process particularly challenging. For instance, in 1997 the CSO sector was small and a majority of NGOs were engaged in service delivery, supplementing the government's efforts to improve the quality of life of the poor. Few organisations had the interest, exposure and expertise to engage with the government on policy issues. Despite this scenario, the government, under donor pressure, brought CSOs on board to discuss policy issues. The CSOs saw this move as recognition by the government for the work that they were doing and they went ahead and participated in the meetings and workshops, albeit with minimal contributions. Despite these minimal contribu-

<sup>1</sup> Community Development Resource Network (CDRN) is a local non-profit-making organisation with a mission to promote civil society's efforts to reduce poverty among women, men and children in Uganda through organisational and institutional strengthening. CDRN is a member of Uganda Debt Network (UDN).

<sup>2</sup> See Norton, 2001.

**“Due to donor aid influence and conditionalities, participation is becoming central. It is also becoming increasingly fashionable for CSOs to describe the approach to their work as participatory. The scenario that has emerged especially between CSOs and government is best described as the politics of participation”**

tions, their engagement was described as ‘participation’.

In 2000, the first PEAP was revised. This revision was also described as consultative. CSOs instituted a CSO task force to coordinate their participation in the revision process. This task force was comprised of ten members including national and international NGOs, research and academic institutions. The task force undertook consultations with the wider civil society by holding 12 regional meetings. The country was divided into zones, which enabled 42 (75%) districts and 644 (405 men and 239 women) to participate in regional meetings. They prepared media insertions, leaflets, television and radio programmes describing the PEAP revision process and its contents.

The objectives of the regional consultations included:

- to ensure that a large section of civil society and in particular, the majority poor, were involved in the review and analysis of policies to develop an effective poverty eradication strategy;
- to ensure that the grassroots were mobilised and sensitised on the PEAP; and
- to establish a mechanism for dialogue between policy planners, civil society and other stakeholders to ensure ownership of such plans.

Consultative meetings between NGOs, donors and government were carried out regarding CSO inputs into the PEAP revision. The task force was then invited to the national steering committee meetings where they actively participated in leading discussions on three out of the four PEAP goals. The task force was also invited to be a member of the poverty-monitoring network in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED). This exercise demonstrated the feasibility of a CSO-government partnership on poverty reduction efforts. This was the beginning of a relatively meaningful participation in the PRSP process.

This was then followed by the 2003 PEAP revision where CSOs had their own consultations that were organised in the

form of Sector Working Groups (SWGs). There were at least 14 SWGs with each comprising five CSOs working around areas specific to that SWG. The SWGs included: the macro-economic framework, education, health, water, natural resources, social development, accountability, local government, agriculture, transport (works and communication), justice (law and order), security (peace-building and conflict resolution), and an enabling framework for private sector and HIV/AIDS. Each SWG compiled a report of what they felt needed to be included in the revised PEAP. Overall, a CSO report detailing what they desired to be included in the PEAP was handed over to the drafting team based at the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development for inclusion into a revised PEAP.

In the 1997 formulation process, the consultative process led by government was limited to meetings and workshops. However, between 1997 and 2000, many CSOs were being encouraged and supported by donors to take on policy advocacy. Practically, this prescribed function of engaging in policy advocacy meant that CSOs had to recruit new staff with skills or have an in-house expatriate providing such support in this area. This development was also accompanied by an attendant growth of the NGO sector between 1997–2000. This shift generated more CSO interest in lobbying and policy advocacy, and thus led to more effective participation in the review process.

Nonetheless, CSOs continued to face challenges in their engagement. CSOs would review policy documents and make comments, but there was little effort to follow up on how their recommendations and views were being incorporated. This limited follow-up was essentially due to a lack of focus on the part of many CSOs. The majority of CSOs did not know what it takes to sustain an advocacy initiative. At other times, deliberate denial of access to information by the government complicated the follow-up. Inaccessibility of information is either by a government official telling you outright that the information required is classified or that s/he needs to seek authority from ‘above’.

CSOs also perceived that the government’s PEAP drafting team hired a consultant to compile the policy document. At the time of dissemination of the first draft (March 2004), two chapters (on Public Expenditure and Monitoring and Evaluation) were missing. This was also perceived by CSOs as yet another attempt by government to exclude their input on these two important aspects of the revised PEAP. It is important to note that this was refuted by government officials who do not consider the consultant to have written the entire document. This discrepancy points to the issue of communication between the government and the CSOs in this ‘partnership’.

As noted earlier, prior to the advent of the PRSP, many Ugandan CSOs were involved in service delivery, supplementing government efforts to reduce poverty. Today a sizeable number of CSOs are still engaged in service delivery. CSO service delivery strategies are designed according to, and guided by the PEAP framework. These strategies are meant to enable them in one way or the other to realise PEAP targets.

Increasingly, the mechanism of subcontracting NGOs to undertake service delivery by the local government compromises their willingness and ability to hold the government accountable and to effectively participate in the monitoring and evaluation of PRS processes. This also has the negative effect that the NGOs start to account to the local governments who are the source of funds and not to the constituencies that they represent.

### **Politics of participation in the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of Uganda's PRS process**

Before the PEAP process in Uganda, participation of various stakeholders in shaping policy decisions was very limited. Due to donor aid influence and conditionalities, participation is becoming central. It is also becoming increasingly fashionable for CSOs to describe the approach to their work as participatory. The scenario that has emerged especially between CSOs and government is best described as the **politics of participation**.

The Ugandan government always invites CSOs to take part in policy development and implementation. At both central and local government levels, policy spaces have been created for consultations and CSO participation in the implementation process. CSOs have participated in these spaces, but they invariably attend merely to listen to what government has to say. CSOs are called to these meetings at short notice and supplied with voluminous documents with complicated language to review. At the local level, the medium of communication in the meetings is English and yet many local CSO representatives are not able to express themselves clearly in that language. When they express themselves clearly in their local language, they are often not taken seriously. The end result of this phenomenon is that one goes to these invited spaces mainly to listen.

### **Poverty Action Fund Monitoring Committees**

In approximately 17 districts, there are Poverty Action Fund (PAF) Monitoring Committees that are engaged in the monitoring and evaluating the government's service delivery and the utilisation of HIPC funds. The Uganda Debt Network (UDN), a local NGO involved in the Jubilee Campaign for debt relief, has been at the forefront of the setting-up of these PAF Monitoring Committees and training them in participatory monitoring

**"At the local level, the medium of communication in the meetings is English and yet many local CSO representatives are not able to express themselves clearly in that language. When they express themselves clearly in their local language, they are often not taken seriously"**

methodologies. The PAF committees work closely with the Poverty Monitoring Unit (PMU) of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED).

The PAF Monitoring Committees are at the level of the sub-county. They hold post-monitoring dialogues with the sub-county officials and other members of the public. The post-monitoring dialogues are intended to exchange views on the issues raised in the reports. These are synthesised and then included in a report to be presented at the district dialogue. These dialogues are a manifestation of a continued effort to empower grassroots people to demand for transparency and accountability among their leaders.

The main challenge facing the PAF monitoring committees is that they are mostly constituted by those who know how to read and write and therefore exclude the real poor in the communities who often times are illiterate. Also as one goes down from the district to the grassroots, one encounters increasing 'enmeshment' between the local council officials (the local councils form the lowest local government structure) and civil society. Local council officials are sometimes chairpersons of the community-based organisations (CBOs) that are engaged in developing community-based monitoring and evaluation systems. The 'enmeshment' can often create a conflict of interest during the monitoring and evaluation.

### **Challenges facing CSO advocacy influence**

Some CSOs are participating in the monitoring of PEAP implementation both at national and local government level. However, information provided to government implementers seems not to influence any policy change. At the end of the PPA II and arising out of discontent with the 'UPPAP' partnership, NGOs involved in the UPPAP process organised a meeting of UPPAP researchers to highlight key issues that they uncovered, but which probably could not be included in the National Synthesis report.

Information collected and passed on to policy makers is usually shelved without being used. There have been some

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cases reported where locally agreed priorities were not selected for planning apparently because they did not fit sectoral visions of poverty-related issues. Exclusion of prioritisations which fall outside sectoral guidelines suggests a wider problem; that of a conflict between a top-down system, represented through mechanisms like the PEAP priority areas and the conditions of PAF funding, and the much discussed 'bottom-up' planning system. There is also a question of accountability. In Uganda, public accountability is an upward issue – towards the direction of where money is coming from. Local government officials account to the central government, the providers of funds. They see no reason to account to the local people because they do not have the 'power' – the money that they can give. This perception is also evident within the central government officials. They are quick to account to donors who give money to government, but not to the citizens.

Every now and then, in the name of participation, the government invites specific CSOs (these are usually based in the capital) to attend the consultation processes. They happily attend government meetings and workshops, dance to the tune of the government and even speak the same language as them. For this, the government is rated highly by donors as promoting participation in decision-making. But one wonders, what is the meaning of participation? Is it being invited for consultation without any ability to influence decisions taken? A few CSOs

have gone with an agenda of influencing decision-making but their views are never reflected in the implementation process. Yet some CSOs are increasingly occupying these 'invited spaces' – mainly to be seen as advancing their minimal agenda of influencing what is going on.

Another challenge encountered by civil society is their fragmented, fragile and ephemeral nature. This nature weakens them in their attempt to engage with a monolithic and well-resourced (with donor support) government. It is also worth noting that civil society in Uganda is quite young and many CSOs were formed after 1986 when the current regime came into power.

### Recommendations and conclusion

Looking at the participation of civil society in the PRS process in Uganda, many loopholes have been discovered and many lessons learnt. It is evident that this 'participation' is inadequate and cannot be described as eventually leading to empowerment of the participants.

If participation is to be meaningful, it is important that the various stakeholders can access information that will enable them to make informed decisions and input into the policy-making arena. Closely related to this is the fact that it is important that there is good communication among the various stakeholders to avoid development of different perceptions on any one issue.

Meetings especially at the sub-county and district level should be conducted in a language fully understood by all participants to allow for full participation of all the stakeholders present in the invited space. The issue of language is particularly important if the poor are to be involved in the work of the PAF Committees.

For purposes of keeping their identity and autonomy, it is important that NGOs cautiously review the emerging subcontractual relationship with the local government. This will allow CSOs to be accountable to their constituencies and in turn be able to hold the government to account downwards.

Finally, participation needs to be seen as beyond merely consultation or sharing information, but as a continuous process in all policy decisions, leading to eventual empowerment of communities and individuals.

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Moses Isooba, Programme Coordinator, Civil Society and Poverty Reduction Programme  
Community Development Resource Network (CDRN)

PO Box 3791, Kampala, Uganda.  
Tel: +256 41 534497, Fax: +256 41 542995  
Email: mosesisooba@cdrn.co.ug  
Website: www.cdrn.co.ug

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# Experiences of Uganda's PPA in implementing and monitoring poverty reduction

by **RICHARD SSEWAKIRYANGA**

## The first Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP)

Although the first PEAP set out in broad terms the major constraints to poverty eradication in Uganda, its major criticism was that the process of its development only consulted policy makers, researchers, academicians and urban-based civil society organisations. The 1998 revision process of the PEAP was therefore designed to include a wider spectrum of stakeholders. This process gave rise to an initiative for the inclusion of poor people's voices and perspectives in the PEAP consultations. In this paper, I focus on some of the lessons learnt in the implementation of the PEAP/PRSP by using examples drawn from the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (UPPAP). Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of PRSPs are taken as iterative processes rather than linear processes. Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) contribute to these processes by providing policy knowledge to all stages of PRSP process. I conclude this article with some areas that require critical reflection, especially for countries that are implementing PRSP processes.

## The birth of UPPAP

UPPAP was borne out of the need to include poor people's voices and perspectives in the PEAP but it was not clear how the poor would participate in the policy process. Hence the first large-scale 'second generation' PPA was designed.

## Learning from Tanzania

Early enough in the design of the PPA it was realised that although the conviction to include the poor was there, there were no in-country examples of PPAs with a qualitative policy focus.<sup>2</sup> In the Eastern Africa region at the time, one example which identified where lessons could be learnt was the Tanzanian PPA conducted in Shinyanga. A select group of Ugandan policy makers, donors and researchers visited Tanzania to learn from this PPA. Two lessons emerged from this visit and the Ugandan PPA was designed so as to avoid the Shinyanga PPA shortcomings and build on its strong points.

What then were the lessons from the Shinyanga PPA that informed the Uganda PPA? The first lesson that emerged was that the PPA in Shinyanga, although methodologically robust, was located outside policy-making institutions. The use of its results in the implementation of Tanzania's poverty reduction

<sup>1</sup> First generation PPAs were mostly quantitative exercises of poverty assessment. They were conducted mostly by the World Bank to inform the development of Country Assistance Strategies. The second generation PPAs on the other hand usually include participatory research and processes of feeding back the findings in policy processes. They also seek to maximise national ownership of the PPA.

<sup>2</sup> For example the only study at the time (1997) that had any semblance of a participatory poverty assessment was one carried out by the Community Development Resource Network (CDRN). It had many interesting findings but it was limited in its scope.

**Box 1: How the PPA worked**

The first PPA in Uganda was conducted in 36 communities in 9 districts in Uganda. It used participatory methodologies like community meetings, well-being ranking, social maps, seasonal calendars, and in-depth interviews with key informants among others. These were used to elicit findings on issues elaborated in the PPA research agenda, which included:

- understanding local concepts of poverty;
- vulnerability and well-being;
- perceptions on causes of poverty;
- changes in livelihoods;
- people's coping strategies; and
- people's views on the quality and relevance of government services.

The PPA also covered people's opinions on local governance and accountability. The PPA was carried out by a core team of researchers drawn from partner institutions and local government officials in each district. Researchers were given a three-week training course in participatory research methods, report writing, and policy awareness as well as the development of community action plans. The researchers spent about ten days in each of the communities, using various participatory methodologies to generate information on poverty. The research was conducted in three cycles over a seven-month period. Workshops were held after each cycle to promote learning among all researchers.

In the second PPA the same model was used with a few variations. The PPA covered 12 districts and 60 villages. Each research team worked in one district throughout the research process. Community Action Plans (CAPs) were not included in the PPA design and there was a focus on deepening the understanding of poverty and poverty trends and investigating people's experiences with government policies. In each of these processes, site, district and a national report were developed. For each PPA a video was produced, recording key moments in the PPA process as well as policy makers responding to issues arising from the PPA.

agenda at the time was very minimal. In Uganda this weakness was countered by locating the Uganda PPA within an institution that was responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy in Uganda – the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED).

The second lesson learnt was that it was important to implement the PPA using a 'partnership model'. The model adopted was one where selected local and international CSOs contributed staff with skills in participatory research to conduct fieldwork and also to write the PPA reports. The main coordinating institution – in this case OXFAM GB in Uganda – had an office at the MoFPED. The administrative management of the PPA had a twin reporting arrangement both in government – to the Director of Economic Affairs – and to CSOs, through the Country Representative of OXFAM

GB in Uganda.<sup>3</sup> In the section that follows I reflect on the role of PPAs in the PEAP/PRSP process and highlight some of the challenges that emerged in the process.

### Reflection on the role of PPAs in the context of PEAP/PRSP monitoring and implementation

#### Systematic feedback from the poor to government

Arguably, Uganda's PPA did open up spaces for poor people's engagement in the implementation and monitoring of poverty eradication initiatives. For this first time in the history of Uganda, there was systematic feedback to government on how it was delivering social services and what people felt about government institutions. This was a humbling experience, especially for the government technocrats who were used to getting feedback through their own government machinery. For example, a famous quotation used in many places on corruption was from an old woman that referred to the technocrats as 'maggots that fed all the time and had bulging stomachs'. Although issues like poor health or lack of water were known as major causes of poverty, the severity of these problems (especially from the perspectives of the poor) was not appreciated.

#### Influencing government policies

Many technocrats in different line ministries used the PPA findings to argue out their sector positions. For example, the Director General of Health usually quoted the PPA finding that health was cited as the number one cause of poverty in many communities as a way of asking for more funding for the health sector. In the writing of the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) a lot of the information from the PPA was used to inform the focus of the plan. As such because of the PPA finding on poverty as multidimensional, the PMA focused on removing all constraints to agricultural productivity and livelihoods, which gave rise to the development of a non-sectoral conditional grant for local governments.

#### CSOs closer to the policy table

For CSOs, the PPA brought them closer to the policy table. It provided a forum where information generated through close collaboration between CSOs and government was used to influence the poverty agenda of the country directly.

<sup>3</sup> Although this arrangement was desirable and theoretically innovative it led to a number of management complexities. For example UPPAP had to follow management procedures (especially financial accounting and staff management) of both government and OXFAM GB. This was always a strain on the Project Manager's time and since there was no experience to learn from, many decisions had to depend on the ingenuity of UPPAP staff.

A number of CSOs had carried out poverty studies and to some extent had documented many issues similar to those raised in the PPA consultations. However, what the new initiative added was closer collaboration with government institutions and direct linkages with the policy process.

Although these elements are very significant positive steps in the PPA process, there are many more areas where further critical thinking is needed. In the sections that follow I critically reflect on some challenges that emerged from the UPPAP partnership, especially in relation to the implementation and monitoring of the PEAP/PRSP in Uganda.

### Challenges that emerged in the UPPAP process

#### Community Action Plans (CAPs) versus pro-poor budgets

One of the key implementation dilemmas faced during the PPA process was the question: at what stage should stakeholders respond to concerns raised by the poor? Should the implementation of interventions to address poverty issues wait for the government mechanisms to respond? Or should there be some modest implementation immediately after the collection of information so that the PPA is not an extractive but empowering process? Different stakeholders in the PPA process had different perspectives on this issue. Some of the CSOs were interested in implementing small interventions in communities where the PPA had been conducted as a way of giving back to the community. For some CSOs, the community interventions were tokens of appreciation. For other stakeholders they were interested in community interventions as a way of illustrating that when problems were identified, solutions were also not always very far and different stakeholders could contribute to these processes, especially the communities themselves.

These debates led to the development of CAPs in the first PPA because of the conviction by some partners in the PPA process that the PPA should not be an extractive type of research. The CAPs were developed at the end of the participatory research exercises in each community. Community members developed an action plan for a key problem and identified key actors in the community who would be instrumental in tackling the problem(s) identified by the community. Small amounts of about \$2,000 were allocated for each community as a token contribution by the PPA research partnership. Communities were supposed to use this money to finance parts of the CAP and also fundraise from other stakeholders in the community who had resources.

In some communities, CAPs were submitted to local governments. For example, one community got drainage

**"...although the conviction to include the poor was there, there were no in-country examples of PPAs with a qualitative policy focus. In the Eastern Africa region at the time, one example identified where lessons could be learnt was the Tanzanian PPA conducted in Shinyanga"**

pipes for its community roads from the local government to deal with the problem of a poor road. In other communities local leaders, such as politicians, contributed some money. For example, in one community a local leader contributed to the revolving fund that was started to deal with the problem of lack of access to credit for women. In one island community with no school, an international NGO funded the building of classroom blocks in the community and the local government allocated teachers.

However, differences in perception on the role of CAPs occurred when actors started questioning: how sustainable are the CAPs? Is the implementation of CAPs showing favouritism for those communities that participated in the PPA? Does this reduce the role of the PPA to an NGO-type instrument that focuses on micro issues of poverty reduction rather than on policy influence? In the second PPA, the CAPs were not included.

The challenge that is still outstanding is, that if up-scaling community participation in the implementation of poverty reduction initiatives is going to mean trade-offs like this, can PPAs deliver the twin mandate of policy influence and community empowerment? In the second PPA, the argument made was that instead of CAPs, the PPA should focus on influencing district- and national-level budgets so that they can address priority poverty issues identified by the communities. But one still wonders if pro-poor budgets can lead to community empowerment or if micro level actions like the CAPs are more advantageous. It therefore remains a challenge in our poverty eradication work to put in place a framework that can enhance empowerment as we implement, monitor and evaluate poverty eradication initiatives.

#### Government-CSOs partnerships versus subcontracting

It is always argued that participation enhances ownership of poverty eradication processes. In the Ugandan case the

**"Arguably, Uganda's PPA did open up spaces for poor people's engagement in the implementation and monitoring of poverty eradication initiatives. For this first time in the history of Uganda, there was systematic feedback to government on how it was delivering social services and what people felt about government institutions. This was a humbling experience"**

participation of CSOs in the implementation of the PPA was supposed to be one of the ways of increasing ownership of the PEAP implementation and monitoring processes. Since CSOs were the ones leading the PPA research process, this would increase their ownership of the results from the PPA process and ultimately the poverty eradication processes. However, throughout the process some CSOs felt that although they were participating in the PPA, they were not equal partners. They were implementing a process in which government was 'subcontracting them'. The example quoted was that when the CSOs seconded staff to participate in the PPA, they got completely submerged in the PPA activities with very little space left for the CSOs to reflect on the process or even influence the direction of events. Most actors recognised that the PPA was feeding into government processes and therefore was driven by government budgeting and planning cycles rather than partnership aspirations.

Here the outstanding issue is that although CSO participation in poverty eradication policy processes is a development mantra echoed in many of the post-Structural Adjustment documents, the ways in which CSO participation unfolds might sometimes tilt the power dynamics to favour more powerful actors like government. Sometimes CSOs may desire to have their own independent ways of engaging with the PRSP implementation and monitoring. But the PEAP/PRSP process is built around inclusion of various stakeholders. The challenge that remains therefore is how different actors can come together to influence a poverty eradication policy process in an egalitarian way, which stays true to CSO aspirations and government mandates in a situation where each actor has a different perception of what participation actually means.

#### Legitimising government processes and the poverty agenda

The PPA in Uganda helped to legitimise government poverty eradication policy processes to donors, CSOs and local communities. This was through the contribution of the first PPA to the adoption of Uganda's PEAP as the country's PRSP because the revision process of the PEAP was very much in line with the World Bank guidelines set for the development of PRSPs. In fact, as the former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance once told the BBC World Service in October 2000, the World Bank should have paid Uganda royalties for copying the PEAP process and using it as the PRSP process. The question that remains outstanding is: to what extent is the adoption of the PEAP as the PRSP a legitimisation of the power of government over other actors within Uganda's poverty eradication processes? Participation of over 96 communities in close to half of the districts of Uganda (21 out of 56 districts) in the PPA is a very big achievement for the government. The CSOs who believe in participation (with the complaint of subcontracting notwithstanding) have got very little manoeuvring space in the face of this powerful discourse. But what are the inherent threats of this power to the continuation of independent monitoring and implementation of poverty initiatives by CSOs?

It is not yet clear how this challenge will be combated especially because the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are happy with the current PEAP/PRSP process outcomes. In the end the CSO positions are becoming more compromised since they are only expressed within a much more powerful discourse of participation in the PRSP processes. Although some CSOs have voiced their concerns, the spaces for exiting such powerful processes are very limited if not non-existent especially when accompanied with the reality that CSO funding to monitor the PEAP/PRSP is dependent on their participation in the PEAP process.

#### Financing poverty issues

One of the critical areas for the successful implementation of the PEAP/PRSP is financing priority problems raised by the poor in the PPA process. The government of Uganda boasts of having contained public spending within an overall framework to restore budget discipline and macroeconomic stability through cash budgeting and by categorising government spending into priority programme areas and non-priority areas. The priority areas included the areas that are covered under the Poverty Action Fund. Statistics show that between 1997–98 and 2000–01, the share of government spending on poverty reduction increased from 17% of the budget to 32%. Key to this success was that government earmarked

HIPC savings and donor commitments against additional spending on Poverty Action Fund budget lines. The Poverty Action Fund now includes all major poverty sensitive expenditures identified within the PEAP, with its expenditures fully integrated in the budget. However the danger that emanates from the additional donor commitments that accompany PAF funds is that Uganda's debt volume is also growing with more donor funds expanding the debt volume of the country. The challenge therefore is to find innovative ways of spending more in poverty reduction areas without expanding the debt volume of the country, which seems to be the trend in many countries implementing the HIPC initiative.

### The Poverty Monitoring Strategy

An informal Poverty Monitoring Network has been meeting since 2000. It is comprised of ministries, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Makerere University, NGOs and donors. Building on this, the government formulated a Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (PMES). The PMES was the product of a national effort, and represents an overarching plan for monitoring and evaluation within the context of government's PEAP. The PMES identified a set of 33 priority indicators for implementation of the PEAP, for which a systematic effort was made to establish a baseline and target.<sup>4</sup> The PMES also addressed institutional responsibilities for tracking and reviewing poverty status. Moreover, the PMES sought to draw the linkage between poverty indicators on the one hand and the planning and operations of ministries and their service delivery chain on the other. Further more, every two years, the government prepares the Poverty Status Report, outlining progress in reducing poverty and forming the basis for revision of the PEAP. In addition, annual PRSP Progress Reports are produced, on the basis of the government's *Back-ground to the Budget* document.

After the 2003 PEAP revision, efforts are being made to update the PMES list of indicators that will be used to monitor the revised PEAP. The rest of the indicators for monitoring different elements of poverty will be at a sectoral level. Each sector will develop a list of indicators that it will monitor. However as this process unfolds there is the attendant World Bank-led process of monitoring the Poverty Reduction Strategy Credit, which includes a policy matrix that also has a number of indicators that inform the World Bank disbursement of the PRSC. Although there is supposed to be harmony in both the PRSC and PEAP indicators (with the PRSC indicators being subsets of the PEAP indicators) the

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process of harmonisation is still a very inconclusive one and yet the process of PRSC disbursement is on-going.

This lack of coherency in monitoring systems is a point of concern. How CSOs participate in the development of the PRSC indicators is a point of speculation because of the lack of systematic procedures to include CSOs, and yet the CSOs are supposed to be part of the monitoring and evaluation of the PEAP process. This is a challenge that will have to be followed through especially because having many monitoring instruments may also create many different versions of the same poverty situation.

### Conclusion

More critical reflection needs to be undertaken on the role of PPAs in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of PEAP/PRSP processes.

The PPA process was very instrumental in bringing about new ways of working between civil society, government and other actors. But the success of this partnership depends on each actor's understanding of the role of the partnership. Government feels they have opened up spaces for participation through the partnership process. The CSOs feel they are subcontractors rather than equal partners. Reconciling these differences would be important.

Through the PPA process, CSOs got a chance to come closer to the policy table. However, it is not clear how this close interaction in PEAP/PRSP policy spaces has influenced CSOs' effective engagement in policy processes.

Although the poor people participated in the generation of information in the PPA process, mechanisms for sustained engagement of the poor and CSO actors in the process are still very poor. Designing ways in which different actors stay engaged in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the PEAP/PRSP process is important.

Empowerment of poor people in the implementation

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed elaboration of these indicators see MoFPED, 2000a and 2000b.



of PRSP processes is still a contested arena. In Uganda, the PPA has two empowerment strategies: through both the development of micro projects (CAPs); and through influencing national and local government budgets to make them pro-poor. However, it is not clear which of the two processes is a more effective one. It is therefore important for all practitioners to ask if empowerment of the poor is still a central objective of PRSP processes and how it can be attained.

In Uganda, financing the PEAP/PRSP has been through the creation of the Poverty Action Fund, which is part of the national budget. But the creation of this fund has

attracted more donor funds, which has led to a growth in the debt volume for the country. HIPC funds were meant to reduce the debt volumes through debt forgiveness. This raises the question of whether the HIPC is actually achieving its goals or not.

Finally, the monitoring and evaluation of PRSP exists in a situation where there are other monitoring mechanisms which are also used as triggers for funding PRSP priorities. To enhance coordination and to allow for more inclusion of actors, it is vital that the different monitoring frameworks for the PEAP/PRSP monitoring are well aligned and their roles understood by all actors.

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Richard Ssewakiryanga  
Team Leader  
Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment  
Process (UPPAP)  
Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic  
Development  
PO Box 8147, Kampala, Uganda.  
Tel: +256 41 236205/234700  
Fax: +256 41 232015  
E.mail: Richard.Ssewakiryanga@finance.go.ug  
Website: www.uppap.or.ug

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# Bottom-up planning? Participatory implementation, monitoring and evaluation of PRS processes in Bolivia

by JORDI BENERIA SURKIN

## Introduction

In February and October 2003, Bolivia experienced extensive social unrest by workers, peasants and other sectors of civil society (CS). In a country widely touted for its processes of decentralisation and participatory governance, the existence of such radical and extensive social upheaval might appear quite surprising.

There are multiple reasons that explain Bolivia's current predicament. The Bolivian PRSP or *Estrategia Boliviana de Reduccion de la Pobreza* (EBRP) enacted in 2000 was intended as a means to overcome existing conditions of poverty nationwide. However, it has done little to actually reduce poverty, accounting in part for rising levels of social discontent since 2000. Currently the EBRP is in a type of limbo and there is supposed to be a new national dialogue to reformulate it.<sup>1</sup> As a result of legal requirements, all levels of government civil society organisations (CSOs) have sought to have an active role in EBRP implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E).<sup>2</sup> However, overall, their participa-

tion in these processes has been limited and ineffective for a number of reasons including:

- 1) a legal framework that has created too many overlapping spaces of participation;
- 2) a lack of organisational capacity and funding;
- 3) inadequate access to information;
- 4) lack of quantitative and qualitative indicators for M&E; and
- 5) networks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) do not have a unified advocacy platform and lack sufficient levels of coordination (Surkin *et al.*, 2003).

Before proceeding, it is important to briefly touch on Bolivia's complex and overlapping M&E structure of the EBRP. Within the national government, UDAPE (the Unit for Analysis of Social and Economic Policies) is in charge of M&E. The *Ley del Dialogo Nacional* (LDN-National Dialogue Law, enacted in July 2001) created new space for CS participation in EBRP M&E. In particular, it set up national (MNCS) and departmental (MDCS) mechanisms of social control. Both the MNCS and MDCS are largely made up of representatives from CSOs, and they are responsible for the M&E of EBRP implementation. The LDN also underscored that *Comites de Vigilancia*<sup>3</sup> (CVs-Oversight Committees) have the right to watch over and control all the fiscal resources administered

<sup>1</sup> For an explanation and analysis see McGee *et al.*, 2002 and Surkin *et al.*, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> In the South there is much debate about whom or what constitutes civil society, and there are no definitive conclusions so far. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to bear in mind that in Bolivia NGOs are generally not thought of as CSOs, because many have no direct ties to grassroots organisations and social movements.

<sup>3</sup> *Comites de vigilancia* are made up of CS representatives and were set the Law of Popular Participation (LPP), which decentralised Bolivia's government. The LPP also gave CVs legal power to veto municipal budgets and promote accountability (see Behrendt *et al.*, 2002; Beneria Surkin, 2003; Kohl, 2000).

**"GNTP and its members worked hard to advocate for the inclusion of participation by Civil Society in these processes. These efforts were also met by a high level of receptiveness on the part of the departmental government and its planning personnel"**

by the municipal government including Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) II funds. These multiple and overlapping mechanisms have often produced tensions within CS and made effective participatory M&E more difficult.

In this context, this paper analyses the role civil society has played in EBRP monitoring and implementation, focusing on how the *Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participación* (GNTP) has worked with government, NGOs and other civil society organizations in an effort to generate conditions for greater people's participation in these processes.<sup>4</sup> It draws specifically on one case of successful people's participation in EBRP monitoring and evaluation in Vallegrande. It concludes by analysing lessons learnt from the Bolivian experience.

**Positive steps forward: GNTP's efforts to promote people's participation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of EBRP processes**

GNTP has taken a number of actions which have, among other things, sought to overcome existing bottlenecks and create better conditions for people's participation in EBRP processes.<sup>5</sup> In particular, this section examines GNTP's role in promoting the inclusion of participatory processes in the adjustment of the Department of Santa Cruz' Economic and Social Development Plan (DSEDP), as well as how it has utilised formal and non-formal training to build a stronger network and learning community.

**Participation in the adjustment of the Department of Santa Cruz' Social and Economic Development Plan**

In January 2004, GNTP was invited by the planning department of the Prefecture of Santa Cruz to develop a proposal

for the adjustment and review of the existing DSEDP. In consultation with the Prefecture's planning department and its members, GNTP developed a proposal that will include wide scale participation by CS. It is expected that this process would be the first time that a DSEDP involves participation by CS in Bolivia. Given that the DSEDP is a mechanism that enables the departmental government to implement national policies such as the EBRP and articulate these policies with those of lower levels (for example municipalities) of government, this process clearly has implications in terms of improving people's participation in EBRP processes.

Another fundamental aspect of this process will be a heavy emphasis on dissemination of information on public policies such as the EBRP. Such an effort to provide CS with clear and didactic information on these policies would be, in many respects, a first in Bolivia, at least on such a wide scale. One of the central reasons for including these measures in the process of adjusting the DSEDP is that an increased access to such information will improve the capacity of CSOs to effectively participate in the monitoring and evaluation of public policies such as the EBRP. Without such information it is very difficult for CS to monitor whether EBRP policies are effectively, transparently and efficiently implemented inside the Department of Santa Cruz.

This innovative approach to developing the DSEDP was made possible by a combination of factors. On the one hand GNTP and its members worked hard to advocate for the inclusion of participation by CS in these processes. These efforts were also met by a high level of receptiveness on the part of the departmental government and its planning personnel. As a result, GNTP expects that the process of developing a new DSEDP will open up new spaces for people's participation in EBRP implementation and monitoring.

Why Santa Cruz's departmental government has been open to participatory processes is not totally clear, but preliminary evidence points to some possible explanations. Since November 2003, Santa Cruz's Prefect has been Carlos Hugo Molina, an intellectual not tied to political parties and who was one of the authors of Bolivia's Law of Popular Participation (LPP). In contrast to previous ones, this Prefect has more of a vested interest in promoting participation and has shown a willingness to make the departmental government more efficient and inclusive. Another possible explanation is that GNTP had already worked on a participatory DSEDP in the Department of Tarija. The head of the planning department in Tarija communicated with the head in Santa Cruz and helped to convince her that the participatory DSEDP in Tarija

<sup>4</sup> GNTP (National Working Group for Participation) is a Bolivian network and learning community of NGOs and professionals specialised in participatory methods, equity and justice. Currently, GNTP has members in five of Bolivia's nine Departments and is one of a number of national networks and platforms promoting participation in EBRP processes.

<sup>5</sup> For an analysis and in depth discussion of the processes of people's participation in the Bolivian EBRP, see McGee *et al.*, 2002, and World Bank, 2002.

led by GNTF had been a very valuable and useful process. In addition to these, there may be other perhaps less enlightened reasons for the receptiveness to participatory processes but so far they are not apparent or clear.

### Strengthening networks and learning communities: capacity building through formal and non-formal training

One of the keys to improving conditions for poor people's participation in EBRP processes is to strengthen networks and learning communities that work on such issues. In fact, GNTF is so convinced of this that it has implemented formal and non-formal training programmes in an effort to move in this direction. These programmes have in many cases focused specifically on issues tied to CS participation in EBRP implementation and M&E. Even in cases when these trainings have not been so clearly linked to EBRP processes, evidence shows that they have served to strengthen GNTF members and other organisations, many of which are involved in working with CS to monitor EBRP implementation.

Between August 2003 and April 2004, GNTF implemented a post-graduate diploma programme in participation and social change.<sup>6</sup> Participants in this program included GNTF members, CSOs, NGOs representatives, and representatives of municipal and departmental governments. A preliminary evaluation of this formal training process shows that in a number of important ways, it has succeeded to improving conditions for greater and more effective people's participation in EBRP processes. On the one hand, a number of students pointed to the topic of defining policies with the poor, which focused on EBRP experiences, as one of the most useful and important in the programme. This suggests that learning about poor people's participation in these processes made a significant impact on participants in the programme and, as a result this programme has helped to increase the capacity of participants and their organisations to promote these types of participatory processes.

In Tarija, this diploma programme has also contributed, in other ways, to fostering better conditions for participation in defining public policies. It turns out that one of the participants in Tarija is now the general manager of the Prefecture. The diploma helped him to value and understand the significance of participatory processes. As a result, from his position within the regional government, he has been working with GNTF, other NGOs, and CS to bring about a greater role for CS in departmental public policies, including those tied

Grassroots participants at the PDM workshop in Vallegrande, May 2003



Photo: Jordi Beneria Surkin

to EBRP implementation.

In addition to formal training, GNTF has implemented non-formal trainings. Here I focus on two examples of such trainings which have perhaps the most direct ties to EBRP issues: a) advocacy training, and b) a workshop on the EBRP and HIPC II resources for CVs in the Department of Santa Cruz.

In May 2004, along with SNV (a Dutch development agency), GNTF provided its members with an advocacy training workshop. This workshop had two main objectives:

- to increase the capacity of members to advocate greater people's participation in defining public policies; and
- to generate a unified advocacy and lobbying platform.

It is expected that such steps will, among others things, contribute to increasing capacity to promote effective participation in EBRP processes.

In October 2003, GNTF and several international cooperation agencies supported a workshop intended to increase the capacity of CVs to participate in M&E of EBRP implementation by municipal governments. This workshop sought to provide participants with information on the EBRP and analyse how municipalities in the Department of Santa Cruz had been spending HIPC II resources, which are supposed to be utilised to implement the EBRP. As noted above, this is the type of information that CS organisations such as CVs have often lacked. As a result, GNTF thinks that this workshop helped to increase the capacity of CVs to engage in M&E of EBRPs at the municipal level.

### An analysis of successful people's participation in EBRP monitoring and evaluation

This section turns to GNTF's work with participatory planning

<sup>6</sup> This programme was co-financed by the DED (German Technical Service) and Nur University in Santa Cruz provided the formal academic accreditation.

Grassroots participants at the PDM workshop in Vallegrande, May 2003



Photo: Jordi Beneria Surkin



Photo: Jordi Beneria Surkin

in the municipality of Vallegrande in the Department of Santa Cruz and focuses on how this has helped to open the door for CS to participate in EBRP M&E in this municipality. The second part of this section focuses on key factors that enable CS to participate in the public domain.

### Participatory municipal planning in the municipality of Vallegrande

During 2003, GNTTP worked on developing the *Plan de Desarrollo Municipal* (PDM-Municipal Development Plan) of the municipality of Vallegrande, located in the mesothermic valleys of the Department of Santa Cruz.<sup>7</sup> As part of this process, it promoted widespread participation by CS through the use of participatory theatre, participatory rural appraisals and other techniques. These techniques and methods were so successful that throughout the process more than one hundred CSOs, grassroots organisations (GROs) and other organisations participated (GNTTP, 2004).

Here I can only briefly focus on some important and positive impacts of this process. For one, widespread participation led to CS feeling that the PDM was really its plan, one that reflected its needs and demands. It also helped to strengthen and empower CS, which is now working with the mayor to make the municipal government more efficient and effective. As a result of participatory planning processes supported by GNTTP, CS is now very active in monitoring the expenditures, policies, actions and impacts of the municipal government, including those directly linked

to EBRP implementation.

As part of the PDM process, GNTTP also worked with the municipal government to generate more transparency and accountability. For example, in coordination with the municipal government, GNTTP disseminated a brief document on PDM to CS. This document also discussed all the fiscal resources received by municipal government including HIPC II funds and how they would be invested. Another step taken was to display the municipal budget in front of its offices while technical personnel from the municipality explained the budget to passers-by. This later step was the result of learning GNTTP had obtained during a South-South exchange visit by Ugandan and Kenyans to Bolivia. While these steps were not per se a part of the PDM process, GNTTP advocated them because it believed, as has been the case, they would serve to provide CS with access to important information that would help to increase its ability to monitor policies and actions of the municipal government, including the implementation of EBRP policies.

### Key enabling factors

The Vallegrande experience, PRS processes in other countries (for example Uganda and Kenya) and other cases of participatory governance have shown that there are a number of key factors which account for the ability of CS to participate (Hughes, 2002; McGee *et al.*, 2002; Surkin *et al.*, 2003; World Bank, 2002). Government needs to be open to participatory process, if not the task is much more difficult. NGOs that work with CSOs need to have a real commitment to participatory processes. In many cases, NGOs promote such processes, but the level of quality

<sup>7</sup> The LPP requires that every municipality have a PDM, which is a five-year plan that guides municipal development policies (See Rengel, 2004).

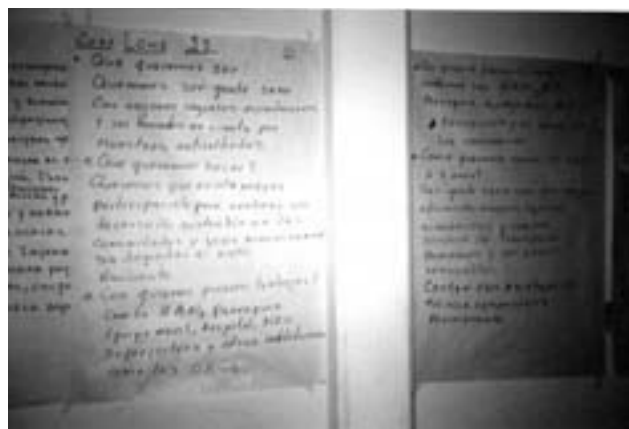


Photo: Jordi Beneria Surkin

**Photo: Jordi Beneria Surkin**



There are also several factors more directly tied to CSOs themselves. It is quite clear that if they lack organisational capacity, it is very difficult for them to be effective participants in EBRPs processes. For example, for CVs, MNCS and MDCS to be able to monitor EBRP implementation, they need to have the capacity to analyse budgets and M&E indicators, as well as process and digest this information. These are capacities that CVs, MNCS, MDCS and many CSOs in Bolivia do not have. Even in cases when they do have these capacities, they are of little use if they do not have access



## Conclusions: Lessons learnt from the Bolivian experience

GNTP's experiences point out that the bottlenecks for people's participation can, in part, be overcome by strengthening networks and learning communities through formal and non-formal training programmes<sup>8</sup>. These programmes have, among other things, increased the capacity of GNTP members, CSOs and others to bring about greater people's participation in EBRP processes. Efforts to advocate for the inclusion of information dissemination processes in the adjustment of Santa Cruz's DSEDP have helped to ensure that the citizens are informed on the EBRP, Millennium Development Goals and other national policies. They have also contributed to increasing the capacity of CS to participate in M&E of EBRP processes and other public policies.

<sup>8</sup> The idea for these learning plans came from documentation prepared by the Participation Group at IDS for its masters programme on Participation, Development and Social Change.

grande case highlights key factors that enable people's participation in EBRPs processes. These include government openness to participatory processes, access to information (for example the efforts that were made to disseminate information on the municipal budget), organisational capacity within CS, NGOs' commitment to participatory

processes, and the existence of learning communities. In addition, GNTP's work in Vallegrande is clear evidence of how important it is to strengthen learning communities through South-South exchanges. Finally, it is important to note that to date it is not clear what impacts GNTP's actions will actually have on poverty.

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Jordi Beneria Surkin  
*Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participación* (GNTP)  
 (National Working Group for Participation)  
 Calle Padre Musani #40, Santa Cruz, Bolivia.  
 Tel/fax: +591 3 337 607  
 Email: jbeneria@cotas.com.bo  
 Website: www.gntparticipa.org

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jordi Beneria Surkin has a PhD in international development planning from the Department of Urban Planning at the University of California-Los Angeles. Since 2001, he has worked for the *Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participación* (GNTP or National Working Group for Participation in English), a Bolivian network and learning community of NGOs and professionals specialised in participatory methods, equity and justice. In May, 2003, he was hired by GNTP to be assistant coordinator of a South-South exchange between Bolivia, Kenya and Uganda on EBRP implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Currently, he is leading GNTP's efforts to deepen participatory governance in Bolivia. Several members of the GNTP, such as Fernando Dick and Jorge Velasquez, made valuable contributions to this paper.

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# Zambia's PRSP process: from exclusion to inclusion, confrontation to cooperation?

by BESINATI P. MPEPO and VENKATESH SESHAMANI

## A new beginning

Since Zambia's independence in 1964, and until recently, the majority of Zambians had virtually no say in deciding the course of their development destiny. Be it in the centralised planning and control paradigms based on founder President Kenneth Kaunda's philosophy of humanism, or the subsequent IMF-World Bank directed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), Zambians remained passive spectators of the development programmes that were unfolding before them.<sup>1</sup> There was often little freedom even to comment critically on the programmes for fear of reprisals by the state.

Great expectations were generated when the Zambian government, under the directive of the multilateral financial institutions, invited civil society to participate in the formulation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Civil society hitherto had been operating as a group of disparate NGOs with a feeble voice in national decision-making. Except for sporadic nominal consultations, it was largely excluded from the decision-making process. Civil society, therefore,

saw an unprecedented opportunity to make its voice heard and influence government thinking.

In October 2000, civil society in Zambia galvanised itself by forming the NGO network, Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR), in order to enable it to interact more meaningfully with the government and provide systematic and compelling inputs into the PRSP formulation process.

The CSPR succeeded in having a significant say in shaping the final PRSP document of the government that was brought out in mid-2002. Government also provided subsequent opportunities to civil society to participate in the donor Consultative Group (CG) meeting in 2002 and in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) process in 2003. This heightened expectations that, from then on, through the CSPR, civil society would be able to make national decision-making truly democratic. Civil society hoped to achieve enhanced democratisation through continued participation in the processes of implementing, monitoring and evaluating not only the PRSP, but also other related development processes. These would include, for example:

- ensuring the release of approved PRSP allocations and their use for their intended purposes;
- monitoring Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) programmes and their use of funds; and

<sup>1</sup> Humanism states that man is at the centre of all development. The basic test of all development activities is man's ability to improve his condition. Therefore, humanism seeks to address the challenges posed by: **poverty** and its offshoots such as hunger, disease, ignorance and the exploitation of man by man; and **capitalism** and its offshoots such as neo-colonialism, racism, Zionism and apartheid.

- deciding on the contracting of new loans by the government.

With these developments, the PRSP in Zambia has undoubtedly succeeded in creating a new healthy process of interaction between civil society and the government. This process has improved the prospects for building consensus between civil society and the government on national poverty reduction goals and strategies. What was originally feared to be a game of one-upmanship between the government and civil society turned out to be a process of learning and mature appreciation of each others' views.

The above, however, is not to suggest that the relationship between government and civil society is now totally satisfactory. Mutual suspicions continue to abound. There are differences in the perceptions of the government and civil society on some basic issues relating to the PRSP. Furthermore, some major problems still remain in the post-PRSP formulation period, not only in terms of government-civil society interaction, but also in several other respects. These include: inadequate information flows; inadequate involvement of stakeholders; inadequate commitment of funds to the PRSP programme; and consequently, inadequate credibility of the programme itself.

### Seeking fulfilment of expectations

Civil society has continued to seek innovative ways to ensure that the momentum generated by the advent of the PRSP continues. It aims to compel the government to give the highest priority to poverty reduction.

The CSPR in particular has grown in strength and magnitude since its birth. What began as a loose network of a dozen NGOs is now a well-integrated and highly visible network of more than three-dozen organisations (see Box 1). Through its Steering Committee and its three Task Forces on Capacity Building, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Information Dissemination and Advocacy, the CSPR has been undertaking a number of measures to complement – and even compensate for – the government's efforts and to make the PRSP process more interactive, participatory and effective.

Through the CSPR, civil society in Zambia would like to ensure that:

- there is no misallocation or misuse by government of resources meant for poverty reduction;
- the PRSP actually achieves what it sets out to do;
- the right beneficiaries benefit from the implementation of the PRSP so that the prevailing inequities between the poor and the not-poor are reduced and eventually eliminated;
- there are sustained levels of government commitment to poverty reduction.

#### Box 1: The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) network

When the CSPR began, it was a loose network of about a dozen NGOs based only in Lusaka. Today, the number has grown enormously, with branches and focal points also in four of the poorest provinces. The CSPR has plans to extend its presence to two more provinces by the end of 2005 and eventually be operating throughout the country. The Steering Committee of the CSPR has 26 organisations. If non-Steering Committee organisations are also included, the membership could be placed at approximately 90 organisations. The CSPR is currently hosted by the lead civil society organisation (CSO), the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR). But plans are on for the transfer of the network to be hosted by an independent institution constituted by representatives of the network members. Visit [www.cspr.org.zm](http://www.cspr.org.zm) for more details.

### Conflict of perceptions between the government and civil society on PRSP issues

The interaction between government and civil society ushered in by the PRSP is a wholesome process. But it is important to point out that there are some fundamental differences in government and civil society perceptions that exist with regard to PRSP implementation. We present two such differences below.

#### Ability versus willingness

The government has attributed the low levels of resource disbursements for PRSP during the first two years of implementation to the shortage of resources. In particular, pledged funds from the donors have not been forthcoming. This has led to significant shortfalls. The government's ability to disburse the approved PRSP allocations was thus constrained.

Civil society recognises the problem created by the non-release of donor funds. But it is of the view that government could still be doing a lot more if it were more seriously committed and willing to spend on PRSPs. A draft report on Budget Tracking commissioned by the CSPR presented some revealing expenditure patterns for 2002 and 2003. On the one hand, the actual release of funds to departments/ministries that would have little to do with poverty reduction (e.g. Cabinet Office, State House, Office of the President, Office of the Vice President) significantly exceeded approved allocations. On the other hand, departments/ministries that have a more direct bearing on poverty reduction (e.g. Energy and Water Development, Health, Agriculture) received less than their approved allocations. Indeed, such variations between programmed and actual expenditures have occurred not only in the past two years, but over many more years. This is the reason why one of the mottos

of Zambia's civil society has been for a long time, that Zambia's main problem is not primarily one of **resource shortage** but of **right priorities**. CSPR aims to use this information to pressure the government to be more committed to the poverty battle.

### Resource mobilisation versus poverty reduction

It now seems that for the government, PRSP implementation is a conditionality to be fulfilled for the country to reach the HIPC Completion Point and obtain debt relief and additional resources. That is to say, the PRSP is principally a tool of resource mobilisation. The government, therefore, has been highly concerned that the country did not reach the HIPC Completion Point by the scheduled date, the end December 2003 (due to non-fulfilment of some critical triggers). It is now eager that this should be achieved before the end of 2004.

Civil society does not approve of such a stance. It would rather look upon the PRSP as an opportunity to begin redressing the plight of four fifths of its people that live in poverty. Civil society also does not think of HIPC funds as a solution to the country's debt crisis. It does not think that Zambia can achieve debt sustainability even after reaching the Completion Point. Hence civil society organisations have been continuing their Jubilee Campaign for the total cancellation of Zambia's debt. They have also repeatedly called for a delinkage between the PRSP and HIPC. This has meant civil society has had to invest in research and lobbying the government, Members of Parliament, the international community etc. as has been done by Jubilee Zambia on HIPC and by CSPR on PRSP.

### Civil society's commitment to progressive poverty reduction and eventual eradication

The CSPR (as a collective network) and several of its main affiliated organisations (as individual organisations) have taken the lead to engage in a number of mutually reinforcing activities.<sup>2</sup> Some of these are:

#### Poverty Monitoring

Although the government has its monitoring system, civil society has also developed its own monitoring framework to monitor the implementation of the PRSP. The idea is to be

**"the PRSP in Zambia has undoubtedly succeeded in creating a new healthy process of interaction between civil society and the government. This process has improved the prospects for building consensus between civil society and the government on national poverty reduction goals and strategies"**

part of the government monitoring system while at the same time keeping an independent voice through some independent data collection and analysis.

Civil society uses two approaches for its monitoring work – expenditure tracking and participatory poverty monitoring. Expenditure tracking involves a **macro** analysis of the government's budgetary allocations, as well as actual disbursements. This determines the extent of its prioritisation of poverty reduction. Participatory poverty monitoring involves a **micro** approach. This aims to assess the benefits accruing to the poor. It looks at the trends in the livelihoods of poor households over time due to PRSP interventions. The participatory poverty monitoring approach is particularly important due to its ability to involve the poor in monitoring programmes that are supposed to improve their lives. Realistically, the poor are the right people to say whether the PRSP is bringing about any tangible benefits for them. Civil society has seen itself as a key stakeholder to bring the poor on board the monitoring process, as its members tend to work with the grassroots on a regular basis.<sup>3</sup>

#### Research and data gathering

The CSPR and its member organisations commission poverty related research to generate critical information to guide civil society PRSP monitoring. The research also aims to analyse policies that may have a direct bearing on the implementation of the PRSP.

Civil society has considered that while the Government's monitoring system is likely to concentrate at the level of

<sup>2</sup> A small illustrative sample of such organisations would be the Catholic Commission for Justice Development and Peace; National Association for Peasants and Small Scale Farmers of Zambia; Zambia Civic Education Association; Zambia Alliance of Women; Programme Against Malnutrition; Economics Association of Zambia; Zambia Land Alliance; Zambia Council for Social Development; and the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection.

<sup>3</sup> Knowledge is of two types: **expert** knowledge acquired through third party data collection and analysis, and **experiential** knowledge acquired through personal experience. In the context of knowledge regarding poverty and poverty reduction strategies, the civil service and the government may have a lot of expert knowledge but not enough experiential knowledge. Civil society organisations and grassroots communities, on the other hand, have more experiential knowledge than expert knowledge. Better policy judgements can result through the pooling of both types of knowledge.



**“civil society is better equipped than government to collect qualitative data and illuminating case studies and to evaluate specific projects. This can be attributed to the nature of civil society work that is in a number of cases close to the people affected by and living in high levels of poverty”**

**input** (e.g. public expenditure management) and **output** (physical quantities, e.g. schools, health centres) monitoring, civil society could help monitor **outcomes** (e.g. access to and usage of service facilities) and **impacts** (e.g. poverty reduction, improvement in living standard indicators). The latter type of monitoring would require not only quantitative but qualitative data. In a sense, civil society is better equipped than government to collect qualitative data and illuminating case studies and to evaluate specific projects. This can be attributed to the nature of civil society work that is in a number of cases close to the people affected by and living in high levels of poverty.

#### Information dissemination and training

As noted earlier, there is little information on the PRSP flowing down to the decentralised structures of government. As a result, lower-level government structures find it difficult to follow closely their role as it links to the implementation of the PRSP. This has also frustrated civil society at the local levels in its attempts to engage with local level government on PRSP issues. Hence, in 2003, the CSPR in collaboration with the North South PRSP programme hosted three pilot workshops to bring both civil society and government officials together. This was to see how they could partner on a new approach. The workshops were held in three districts (Petuake, Katete and Chipata) of the Eastern province in Zambia.

As an aside, it may be mentioned that it becomes a challenge to monitor the same locations for PRSP implementation in order to give feedback to intended beneficiaries on what the PRSP programme is supposed to be doing for them. Most poor communities have been over researched and have reached a level of consultation fatigue. Now the poor expect the monitors to ‘take to them’ rather than ‘take from them’. CSPR is committed to providing feedback to communities in terms of what has been put aside for their areas for poverty

reduction through the PRSP. It is perceived that providing this information can lead to local-level lobby and advocacy activities to ensure that what has been directed to particular communities actually benefits the people in the community.

#### Advocacy

Civil society uses the results of its monitoring work for advocacy through press statements, stakeholder round table meetings, television documentaries and radio programmes. It has also been holding sensitisation seminars on the budget, PRSP and other critical issues for Members of Parliament and top civil servants to enthuse them to engage more proactively in development discussions and programmes.

Civil society has also been engaging in direct consultations with key institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to provide a direct feedback to these institutions on its views. In order to ensure that such consultations do not degenerate into meaningless routine exercises, civil society has begun pressing for its own agenda for such consultative meetings. A recent example of this was the meeting proposed between civil society and the visiting IMF team in late April 2004. This was to discuss Zambia's socio-economic conditions. Civil society responded to the invitation by saying that the proposed subject for discussion was redundant since the IMF was already aware of civil society's views on the same from an earlier meeting held in November 2003. Civil society, therefore, agreed to meet with the IMF team only if the team was prepared to share with it the ongoing discussions on the contents of the next Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) and what consequences they would have for Zambia's socio-economic situation.

In 2004, CSPR launched an advocacy campaign to create and strengthen mechanisms aimed at protecting resources meant for poverty reduction in the budget. The idea was to have a mechanism in place that could prevent the government from shifting resources from poverty reduction budget lines to non-priority programmes, as has been the case during the current PRSP implementation cycle.

#### Roadblocks

In doing its PRSP-related work, CSPR has encountered the following problems and disappointments:

- A lack of prompt and adequate relay of information to civil society from the government, notably on PRSP expenditures.
- A distinct gap between the promise and the performance of the PRSP in terms of resource allocation and actual disbursements.

- The government has failed to bring on board the marginalised in society, especially the poor, who are the principal targets of the PRSP. The PRSP reflects only the indirect views of the poor through their representatives from civil society and community organisations that have been participating in the PRSP consultative process. Consequently not many poor people are likely to know about the PRSP.
- Lack of participation in the PRSP so far by one critical stakeholder, namely, Members of Parliament (MPs).
- The glaring risk that the focus of the PRSP may be lost in implementation. The PRSP is no longer the core development document. It is now embedded within a larger National Development Plan that is the main focus of attention. Moreover, the primary tool for effecting PRSP expenditures – the annual budget – does not adequately reflect the significance of the poverty reducing plans contained in the PRSP.
- Signs of the government's waning willingness to involve civil society in the PRSP process beyond document formulation. An example of this is the suspension of the HIPC Monitoring and Tracking team (in which the civil society was represented) especially after the release of the findings of the team in late 2003. The key findings of the team, in sum, were that the implementation of the HIPC projects left much to be desired since there were misapplications and abuses of HIPC funds.
- From a conceptual point of view, there is now a fear that Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) policies may permeate the national agenda under the guise of the PRSP ('old wine in old bottle with a new label!') since the latter too needs the 'seal of approval' by the IMF and the World Bank.

## Conclusion

Despite the existing roadblocks, the government-civil society interaction and the consultative process in Zambia represent one of the best-practice cases in sub-Saharan Africa. There

has been a considerable amount of learning on both sides over the past four years. As a result, while mutual suspicions may not have been eliminated, there is now a greater sense of appreciation between the two parties of each other's views and perspectives.

Civil society united during the process of the PRSP through the CSPR network and has proved effective in getting the voice of civil society heard in the final PRSP. CSPR's work has continued in monitoring the implementation of the PRSP, in conducting pro-poor lobby and advocacy, and in capacity-building. Civil society in Zambia today understands better the constraining political and economic trade-offs that the government has to deal with.<sup>4</sup> It is able to identify the different issues which may require it to unite efforts with the government or alternatively to challenge the government. The government too has become aware of the intellectual and professional capacity within civil society that it has hitherto failed to tap into adequately.

Civil society in Zambia stoutly maintains that the PRSP should not be taken just as a tool to solicit funds and debt relief from the international community, but as a true tool for fighting the poverty situation in which 80% of the Zambian population lives today. The role for civil society is crucial in attempting to influence the concept and contents of the PRSPs in a way that could actually bring about some tangible benefits for the poor.

So far, the results of the monitoring indicate that the first phase of Zambia's PRSP that ended in 2004 has not achieved satisfying results for the Zambian people. Promises made have remained unfulfilled. However, some scholars contend that this should be expected in first round processes and therefore urge stakeholders to be more expectant of results from the second phase of the PRSP scheduled to begin in 2005.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, in 2003, on the one hand, the government had to award a significant pay rise to civil servants in view of the rising cost of living; on the other hand, it had to fulfill the HIPC trigger of ensuring that wages did not exceed 8% of the GDP.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Besinati Phiri Mpepo (Ms)  
Coordinator  
Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR)  
Lusaka, Zambia.  
Telephone: +260 1 290154  
Fax: +260 1 293489  
Email: cspr@zamnet.zm  
Website: www.cspr.org.zm

Prof. Venkatesh Seshamani  
Economics Department  
The University of Zambia  
Lusaka, Zambia.  
Email: sesh@zamnet.zm

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# 10

## Fighting poverty in Bulgaria demands strategic thinking and planning

by ANNA ATHANASSOVA

Strategic planning is a key element in tackling poverty. It combines a vision of poverty alleviation with resource allocation, thus ensuring long-lasting results. Strategic planning is a process that always requires good understanding of the nature of poverty, involvement of many actors, participatory elaboration of policy documents, high-level commitment and support, efficient implementation mechanisms and, last but not least, well-developed monitoring mechanisms.

In Bulgaria, the anti-poverty strategic planning started recently, but right from the beginning it has been associated with a number of actions that have led to a complex approach to poverty. These include poverty surveys, adoption of strategic documents, consultations with various stakeholders and construction of a monitoring and evaluation system. The foundation of this process was laid down a few years ago when the World Bank (WB) carried out a number of poverty assessment surveys.

### What are the characteristics of poverty in Bulgaria?

Bulgaria is a former socialist country located in Eastern Europe that has come a long way from a totalitarian regime and a centrally planned economy to a democracy and free market economy.<sup>1</sup> The transition has been associated with



serious social problems related to the fact that the 'cradle-to-grave' social security and social safety systems are no longer in place. Even though many people have benefited from the reforms, the average living standards have declined and poverty and unemployment have increased. For the first

<sup>1</sup> For general information on Bulgaria visit [www.government.bg/English](http://www.government.bg/English)

time, Bulgarians have to deal with income uncertainty and other types of social risks on their own.

Poverty in the country is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that affects various groups of the population. It is persistent and with high rates among socially vulnerable groups, such as the long-term unemployed, rural residents, large households and ethnic minorities. Poverty and unemployment are strongly correlated. The long-term unemployed are easily exposed to the danger of becoming poor and socially marginalised. Poor people have few chances of finding employment and getting reintegrated into the labour market.

The dramatic deterioration of the living standards of the population during the winter crisis of 1996–1997 entailed a poverty upsurge, which according to the WB estimates, reached an unprecedented level of 36% of the population being poor at that time. Poverty has declined in the period following the crisis, but it remains at a rate double than that of 1995. The World Bank Poverty Assessment calculated a poverty rate of 12.8% for the year 2001. The social inequality measured by the Gini index declined from 31% in 1997 to 29.5% in 2001, but it is still higher than the 1995 level of 27.1%.<sup>23</sup> In the period 2001–2003, poverty has fallen by 2%. But pockets of poverty still exist, particularly in the rural areas.

The most important factor contributing to the rise of poverty was the sharp decline in real income that led to a contraction of household consumption. During the decade from 1990 to 2000, the erosion of all income in real terms was extremely large. The average household income declined over 60%, the public sector wage fell by nearly 55%, and the average pension by 64%.

Women are more vulnerable than men in Bulgarian society. They were greatly affected by the transition process from a centrally planned to a market economy, and they take on a higher share of transition costs. Women's vulnerability increases while access to opportunities and choices remains limited. Economic recession, the closure of businesses, and financial restrictions have had negative effects on women's jobs and their participation in the labour market. Women's employment opportunities have been further aggravated by

**"A national debate was launched that provoked the participation of different stakeholders. Working groups were set up, composed of representatives of various line ministries, trade unions, employers, academia and the non-governmental sector"**

discriminatory practices against women, a phenomenon more noticeable in the private sector. The average salary shows a substantial contrast between men and women. For example, for the period 1996–1998, the average salary of men was higher than that of women. In 1996, the salary level of women represented 68.9% that of men, while in 1998 it reached 72.8%.

The combination of these two factors – lower levels of employment and less income – has led to increased poverty among women. Compared to men, women in Bulgarian society are much poorer. Poverty among women is particularly common in female-headed households and among minority groups where general adversity and gender-specific factors combine to produce long-term poverty.

### **The Anti-Poverty Strategy and Plan of Action as strategic planning tools**

The government of Bulgaria perceives the fight against poverty as an important task and a priority area of intervention in the context of the forthcoming EU accession. The policy makers have adjusted the legislative and policy frameworks accordingly. Additional funding has been allocated for anti-poverty measures and programmes. The aim is to promote people's active search for jobs, to motivate job generation by employers and to provide support to those in need. A set of documents has been adopted that targets different aspects of poverty, including the Anti-Poverty Strategy (2003–2006), that also includes a plan of action and an evaluation strategy.

### **The Bulgarian Anti-Poverty Strategy adopts the EU goals for poverty alleviation**

In 2003, the government developed the first Anti-Poverty Strategy. In early 2004, a one-year National Anti-Poverty Plan of Action was adopted that earmarked US\$ 1.2 billion for interventions against poverty and social marginalisation. The

<sup>2</sup> The Gini index is the Gini coefficient expressed in percentage form, and is equal to the Gini coefficient multiplied by 100. The Gini coefficient is a measure of inequality developed by the Italian statistician Corrado Gini and is usually used to measure income inequality, but can be used to measure any form of uneven distribution. The Gini coefficient is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds with perfect equality (where everyone has the same income) and 1 corresponds with perfect inequality (where one person has all the income, and everyone else has zero income).

<sup>3</sup> Source: *Bulgaria: A Changing Poverty Profile*. Poverty Assessment, World Bank, 2002

**“The system has to become an integral part of the planning process at national level and should facilitate the tracking of policies aimed at fighting poverty. It should have a capacity to provide regular feedback on the status and changes in the poverty situation”**

Anti-Poverty Strategy and the 2004 Anti-Poverty Plan of Action are strategic policy tools that aim to pave the way towards reducing poverty and inequality, and to fostering social integration of the poor and vulnerable. They consolidate efforts and resources of the Bulgarian society and support the process of Bulgaria's accession to EU by promoting EU anti-poverty objectives. In the year 2000 at the meeting in Nice of the European Council, the EU member states adopted a set of anti-poverty priority goals. These goals include facilitated access to employment, resources and services, social isolation prevention, support to the poor and vulnerable, and the mobilisation of institutions to fight poverty and social marginalisation.

Within the context of Bulgaria's preparation for full membership of the EU, the country has supported the Nice decisions by adopting the above-mentioned EU anti-poverty priority goals as national strategic objectives for the period 2003–2006. The Bulgarian government's Anti-Poverty Strategy aims to reduce poverty and social isolation through employment promotion and growth of jobs in the private sector, improved social services delivery and a more effective social protection system.

The strategy also demonstrates a gender sensitive approach by promoting equal opportunity policies. It makes provisions for the establishment of a set of indicators that reflect equal treatment of men and women. The strategy's gender approach has been further developed and specified in the 2004 Anti-Poverty Plan of Action. The plan includes gender-specific activities related to job creation and poverty reduction. Gender has been mainstreamed in measures such as vocational training, private entrepreneurship, social services to lone mothers, and childcare. Hundreds of women are expected to be trained and retrained and to become reintegrated into the labour market. This will reduce the level of long-term women's unemployment thus contributing to better lives for poor and socially disadvantaged women.

The Anti-Poverty Plan of Action has been a government-led exercise

The 2004 Anti-Poverty Plan of Action is an operational tool for the implementation of the Bulgarian Anti-Poverty Strategy. It is the first time that the country has developed such a policy tool. This tool will be further improved as concept and structure, and as an important coordination and implementation mechanism. The Plan will be complemented by the development of regional anti-poverty plans, thus securing coherency in the anti-poverty approach.

The drawing up of the 2004 Anti-Poverty Plan was predominantly a government effort. The Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy was mandated to carry out the entire planning process. A national debate was launched that provoked the participation of different stakeholders. Working groups were set up, composed of representatives of various line ministries, trade unions, employers, academia and the non-governmental sector. They were aimed at discussing specific aspects of poverty such as increase in income, employment promotion, improving education and health services, special treatment of persons with disabilities, etc. A series of meetings were organised on how to better address the issues of poverty. The civil society organisations presented their positions, which were later incorporated into the plan as much as possible. NGO representatives, though, defended different opinions on how best to approach poverty in the country. This made the national debate interesting and was a valuable contribution to the drafting of the plan. An institution called the National Tripartite Council later on approved the plan. The National Tripartite Council consists of representatives of the main trade unions, employers associations and the Bulgarian government. As a result, a policy document was developed and adopted by the Council of Ministers that reflected the opinions of the variety of stakeholders and a consensus on specific poverty reduction goals.

The 2004 Anti-Poverty Plan of Action identified the following four development objectives:

- employment promotion and increase in income;
- better access to resources, rights, goods and services;
- preventing the risk of social isolation;
- social support for vulnerable groups, families and individuals; and
- the mobilisation of institutions.

The development objectives were broken down into a number of immediate objectives. These immediate objectives have been further disaggregated into specific activities, programmes and projects, which are properly funded, either from the state budget or from external donors' resources. The



plan includes activities to be implemented by the government, the social partners, NGOs, academic institutions and the private sector. There is a clear division of responsibilities and clear allocation of funds for each specific activity. The non-governmental sector is involved in a variety of actions which target mainly services to poor and vulnerable people and employment promotion. In this respect, the plan represents an endeavour to unite the main stakeholders in the process of poverty reduction and to coordinate their targeted interventions.

The national debate on poverty, which accompanied the elaboration of the 2004 National Anti-Poverty Plan, helped to:

- better understand the concept of poverty in Bulgaria;
- identify the long-term and short-term objectives in the fight against poverty and social isolation;
- define the specific roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders; and
- augment and better target the available resources.

The consolidation of national efforts and the development of a set of targeted interventions against poverty are regarded as an advantage of the government-led strategic planning.

### **Poverty monitoring supports the anti-poverty strategic planning**

The anti-poverty strategic planning covers different areas such as job creation, health and education, social assistance, social security, etc. It is a complex process that can lead to a variety of outputs and outcomes and concerns a large part of the population. Strategic planning always requires that a sound poverty monitoring and evaluation system be in place.

The government of Bulgaria is currently working on the development and establishment of an integrated Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMES). The development of such a system was included as a target in the 2004 Anti-Poverty Plan of Action. One part of it – a dataset with key poverty indicators at national and regional level – is already in place. The rest of the system that includes poverty analysis, regional dimensions of poverty, anti-poverty programmes, reporting mechanisms, etc., is still under construction. The system has to become an integral part of the planning process at national level and should facilitate the tracking of policies aimed at fighting poverty. It should have a capacity to provide regular feedback on the status and changes in the poverty situation. It should show the multidimensional nature of poverty as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of poverty policies.

### **Poverty monitoring as a participatory process and why NGOs in Bulgaria are not yet prepared to collaborate effectively**

Poverty monitoring should be a participatory process. All stakeholders should be involved in data gathering, processing and the development of strategic options. In Bulgaria, this process starts with the establishment of a PMES, to be managed centrally by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Other stakeholders include other ministries and government agencies, social partners, the media, NGOs, research institutions, etc. They collaborate with the central government by providing inputs to the consolidated monitoring system. The advantages of such an approach include:

- regular data collection and data processing;
- systematic reporting on specific issues;
- easy access to information sources;
- mobilisation of the entire government machinery;
- availability of resources; and
- the potential for establishing a good coordination mechanism that includes various stakeholders of the anti-poverty process.

In Bulgaria, civil society has not as yet established well-functioning structures or mechanisms that are capable of efficiently addressing the needs of the poor and vulnerable at policy level and therefore the non-governmental organisations are not in a position to play a key role in changing policies and monitoring poverty.

The population still depends on government resources and mechanisms for solving poverty-associated problems. It is a general public perception that the state should take care of all cases of vulnerability and marginalisation. This attitude is a heritage of the past, when the socialist state was in charge of social protection and social care of the entire population. The situation though has started changing with the growing number of NGOs and the increased capacity of the civil society sector to manage poverty issues at community level. International donors, both multilateral and bilateral, have supported the development of civil society structures capable of working with the poor and vulnerable. Nevertheless, at this stage of development of Bulgarian society, the government is perceived to be the most capable actor in reducing poverty and social exclusion.

NGOs are predominantly involved in charity work and/or in delivering services to the poor and vulnerable. The non-governmental sector provides care to persons with disabilities, children at risk, the elderly – both at the national and local level. There is a huge need to support vulnerable Bulgarian people. Their number is growing. This is due to the

## **"Additional efforts are required to promote networking among NGOs, to give them an international exposure and make them cooperate actively on substantive policy issues"**

disruption of previous centrally-managed systems for the provision of specialised care and the inability of the current health, education and social assistance systems to meet adequately the needs of the poor and marginalised. So far, NGOs dealing with socially disadvantaged people have received financial resources and substantive support mainly from the international community. The EU Phare programme has made a substantial contribution to this effort as a EU pre-accession programme.<sup>4</sup> Grant schemes have been launched to support local NGOs in their work with the poor and vulnerable. The government of Bulgaria has also recognised the need to have strong partners in social services delivery. In 2003, it adopted a legislative framework conducive to the growth and development of NGOs as domestic service providers.

NGOs involved in service delivery rarely intervene at policy level, so the voices of the poor and vulnerable remain largely silent. There are a few cases where NGOs attract public attention on discriminatory practices towards the disabled and the lack of public care for the poor and vulnerable, etc. There are also interventions before legislative bodies to make legislation more responsive to the needs of those who are socially disadvantaged. Quite often, the NGOs are not consistent and consolidated enough and therefore their efforts have not yet produced long-lasting and large-scale impacts.

A number of NGOs have already developed capacities for social research and poverty assessments. They carry out periodic surveys on the living conditions and observation of the rights of the poor and vulnerable. The results are widely disseminated and debates are held on specific social issues. However, the NGOs' approach towards poverty analysis and monitoring in Bulgaria though is not as coherent and comprehensive as it should be. There is also a lack of consistent efforts to convert the research results into anti-poverty advocacy actions.

<sup>4</sup> Phare (*Pologne, Hongrie Assistance à la Reconstruction Economique*) is one the EU programmes especially designed for pre-accession countries to support human resource development. Other EU programmes include ISPA (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession) and SAPARD (Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development).

A few years ago, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) financed the establishment of an Anti-Poverty Information Centre in Sofia. The centre is a non-governmental organisation that aims to support the regular monitoring of poverty trends, to network among NGOs, and to facilitate the contacts with central government and international donors. It has become a member of the European Anti-Poverty Network and actively promotes EU poverty reduction policies. The centre is among the few NGOs that have established a policy dialogue with the central government on poverty issues and promotes targeted policy interventions in the field of poverty.

In general, the NGOs' anti-poverty advocacy capacity is still weak. The sector has not yet been successful in becoming a reliable partner to the government in the field of poverty monitoring and the development of anti-poverty policies and strategies. Additional efforts are required to promote networking among NGOs, to give them an international exposure and make them cooperate actively on substantive policy issues.

### **What should the poverty monitoring and evaluation system look like?**

The PMES should ideally contain the following main elements:

- key performance indicators that reflect existing social policies;
- a dataset with poverty indicators;
- a package of important policy documents;
- regional dimensions of poverty; and
- reporting mechanisms.

In order to become an effective and efficient tool for decision makers, the PMES should regularly collect and maintain a dataset of the main indicators on poverty and results of policies that have been implemented. The Multi-topic Households Survey that was carried out between October and November 2003 has already provided an input to the system's main indicators and data. The survey was nationally representative and was based on a World Bank methodology on measuring the living standards of the population. The National Statistical Institute, in coordination with the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, collected all the data required. The survey collected nationally representative standards of living data. These data serve as a basis for a poverty analysis that is carried out by a group of national experts and covers the following four areas of major concern to the decision makers:

- poverty definitions and measurement;

- identification of poverty profiles;
- poverty mapping; and
- development of country-specific anti-poverty policies and strategies.

There are also other sources of information such as the regular households' surveys carried out by the National Statistical Institute, sociological surveys and social assessments carried out in relation to the implementation of specific actions, programmes and/or projects, regular statistics of the national agencies on employment and social assistance, etc. All these sources will provide regular inputs to the system and are expected to guarantee coherency and reliability of the information in the long run. Media publications and NGO reports could also be used as poverty monitoring tools.

In order to be well structured and comprehensive, the PMES should include indicators that are commonly used to describe poverty, such as:

- absolute and relative lines of poverty;
- poverty rate;
- poverty gap and severity; and
- poverty map.

A poverty map is a key element of any PMES and it shows the poverty distribution among cities and villages. The regional levels of poverty based on income or consumption aggregates are widely used to determine specific policies and serve as a starting point when evaluating the impact of targeted interventions at the local level.

In addition, the PMES should have strategic as well as planning indicators that track policies effects from a long- and short-term perspective. These indicators should derive from all strategic documents that are related to poverty. In the case of Bulgaria, these are the strategies and plans of action that concern employment promotion, basic services such as health and education, housing, and specific needs of vulnerable groups. The government of Bulgaria has adopted specific policies and strategies that target, for example, people with disabilities, children at risk, and homeless people. The PMES should interlink all these policy documents and track their impact through a selected set of indicators.

Finally, yet importantly, it should also record information on the stakeholders' contributions to the implementation of the planned actions. To achieve the above, a reporting procedure has been established on all activities included in the National Anti-Poverty Plan of Action. The information that comes from government agencies, the non-governmental sector, academia, media, private activities and internationally funded projects, is regularly gathered again at government

**"The planning process has to be made fully participatory and to reflect as much as possible the opinions and the vision of the poor and vulnerable in Bulgaria. For that reason NGOs and CSOs have to be supported further, trained to think strategically and to participate efficiently in the planning process"**

level, at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. A special department has been established that collects and analyses the reports prepared in relation to the implementation of specific activities. This department is in charge of poverty monitoring and preparation of the final report on the implementation of the 2004 Anti-Poverty Plan of Action.

There is one issue to which a PMES should pay special attention. This is how to include the poor and vulnerable in the monitoring process. The main beneficiaries of the anti-poverty policies are usually excluded from the assessment of the policies impact. NGOs and the official statistics often indirectly represent their opinions. A need appears for closer collaboration between the government and non-governmental sectors to provide opportunities for the poor to speak and for their voices to be heard. One solution to this problem could be the beneficiaries' assessments, which have to be carried out on a regular basis.

Beneficiaries' assessments are a special type of qualitative and quantitative sociological research. They gather the opinion of those who directly benefit from a specific intervention. Beneficiaries' assessments represent one of the most direct and efficient ways to enable the poor and vulnerable to speak. This method of research has been applied successfully to the Bulgarian Social Investment Fund (BSIF).

The BSIF started in 1998 as donor-funded project and later on developed into a government-run agency. Currently, it provides support to poor and vulnerable communities through a number of micro-projects. These micro-projects target the rehabilitation of local social and economic infrastructure and the building of social capital. They concern large parts of the population since the BSIF covers the entire country.

The beneficiaries' assessments were carried out several times and helped to make the BSIF interventions more responsive to the needs of poor communities. Adjustments

have been introduced in the BSIF overall strategy so now the micro-projects are more demand-driven and more participatory.

### Conclusions

Bulgaria still has a limited experience in the fight against poverty compared to other countries. It is a fact that the anti-poverty strategic planning is a relatively new process and it will be further developed and strengthened. Obviously, there will be a need to better utilise the increasing capacity and resources of the non-governmental sector that deals with poverty issues. The planning process has to be made fully participatory and to reflect as much as possible the opinions and the vision of the poor and vulnerable in Bulgaria. For that reason NGOs and CSOs have to be supported further, trained to think strategically and to participate efficiently in the planning process. They also have to learn how to translate the voices of the poor into measures and programmes that secure poverty alleviation and improved living standards.

It is a fact also that a fully-fledged monitoring and evaluation system is not yet in place. But what has been achieved

so far demonstrates that the country has advanced in developing a right approach towards poverty monitoring that combines data collection and processing, poverty analysis, policy documents, as well as reporting mechanisms.

The Bulgarian economy is currently in a process of recovery and the GDP is increasing, which allows a greater proportion of national resources to be directed towards poverty alleviation. Bulgaria's accession to the EU is also expected to foster poverty reduction by attracting additional EU funds to create jobs, strengthen service delivery, and improve infrastructure and social reintegration of vulnerable groups of the population.

Bulgaria has to raise the living standards of the population in order to fully benefit from the EU accession. The country should respond as quickly as possible to the challenges Bulgarian society faces with regard to poverty and should address the poverty issues in a timely, effective and efficient manner. Firstly, it is important that the strategic planning is continued. This will ensure sustainability of results. Secondly, regional planning should be developed, and thirdly, regular monitoring and analysis of poverty has to be carried out.

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Anna Athanassova, President of the Board,  
Social Dialogue Foundation, 20, Banishora,  
appt.36, 1233, Sofia, Bulgaria.  
Tel: +359 887 48 98 08  
Email: anna\_athanassova@yahoo.com

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ms Anna Athanassova is a graduate of the University of National and World Economy in Sofia and has a more than ten years of experience in design and implementation of poverty alleviation projects. She is a former UNDP staff member. Currently, she manages the Social

Dialogue Foundation, a Bulgarian NGO with expertise in social research, development and capacity building. She has been involved in a number of studies on poverty in Bulgaria and is working as an advisor to the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on anti-poverty policy issues.

# PRS processes, participation and statelessness: exploring some dilemmas in Somalia

by **MOHAMED SAID MOHAMUD FAROOLE**

## Introduction

Somalia is a collapsed state, has no central government and has 'non accrual' status with the World Bank (WB) and other international creditors (i.e. the International Monetary Fund – IMF).<sup>1</sup> Thus lending is not permitted. For this reason, Somalia does not qualify for a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

However, in the absence of a Somali State, the international community, including the World Bank, has been developing and implementing various poverty reduction and development strategies for Somalia. The World Bank has been collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN agencies in efforts to re-engage a stateless Somalia. Currently the WB is in the process of developing an Interim PRSP (I-PRSP) for Somalia. However, despite the rhetoric of Somalia's international development assistance partners, and claims of inclusive participation and the Somali people's ownership of the processes, this article argues that reality is far from these claims and reveals a



degree of hypocrisy among the international development partners.

In this article, I will highlight the Somalia case by critically discussing the participatory nature of – what I call – 'internationally owned' Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) for

<sup>1</sup> Putting a country in 'non-accrual status' is a standard World Bank policy when payment on loans and credits is overdue by more than six months. When a country is in 'non-accrual status,' all new loans and disbursements of existing loans are suspended. This means that all overdue payments must be cleared before there can be any new loans or credits, or resumption of disbursements on loans and credits already approved.



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Somalia. I will critically analyse participation processes in Somalia's PRSs, focusing on the experiences of Somali Civil Society Organisations (SCSOs), by looking at the implementation phase based on individual field experiences. I will present empirical evidence revealing how the practice of some international agencies and fora are invariably part of a system that collectively forms **the major barrier** to SCSOs' participation in PRS processes. I will summarise the key pros and cons for SCSOs' participation in these processes; and conclude by suggesting decisive intervention by the donors (WB etc.) and departure from the current international behaviours, attitudes and practices in regard to SCSOs' participation.

Needless to say, this article is a calculated individual risk taken for the love of democracy and devotion to a rights-based approach to development. It is also an attempt to initiate, out of frustration, a positive change to Somali's present and past PRS processes and participation trends. Foremost, it is a dedication to the 'never-told daily experiences' of the unsung national heroines and heroes among the SCSOs volunteers with whom I work. While they struggle with unparalleled attempts towards reducing their 'country's man-made poverty', both internal and external elements take their toll.<sup>2</sup> Fear of international agencies' repercussions is the greatest of the many context-specific constraints denying the vulnerable SCSOs opportunities to share their rich experiences with wide international audiences. I hope this effort does not make their fears a reality and be to their detriment.

### Background

In 1991, the Somalia civil war broke out and ever since the country has been in a state of anarchy and chaos – this is the current *status quo*. The government collapsed and a humanitarian tragedy of unprecedented scale unfolded. However, since October 2002, a Somali Peace and Reconciliation Conference has been taking place in Kenya. After thirteen failed attempts, the latest developments of this conference represent the best hope yet for the rebirth of the Somali nationhood.

The impact of 'state collapse' in Somalia has been massive and profound, involving a huge loss of life, massive internal displacement, migration and flight abroad, the collapse of political institutions, the destruction of social and economic

<sup>2</sup> I believe poverty in Somalia is not due to lack of, or failure of good governance. Rather, its causes can be practically described as internally maintained, partially by the Somalis' inability to get tribal power struggles off and out of their development processes, political conceptualism and general social reasoning; and partially externally perpetuated by the international communities' persistent lack of will to intervene for the sake of humanity.

infrastructures, and environmental damage. In Somalia, civil war has led to a questioning of the single country sovereignty and challenged the homogeneity of Somali society and culture. One of the most devastating outcomes is the severe 'national brain drain'. Nearly 40-60% of the urban population (approximately 15% of the total Somali population) fled the country. As a result, Somalis constitute the largest African diaspora community in many parts of Europe, North America and Australasia. This has resulted in severe human capacity shortages across all sectors throughout the nation.

On the other hand, one of the favourable political outcomes of the civil war in Somalia has been a greater role for non-governmental forms of association in political and social life. These have spread beyond the all-encompassing clan system. Throughout Somalia, CSOs provide an important platform – independent of political factions – for raising social concerns. Members of the diaspora are investing in a booming private economy sector and are the largest development and economic contributors by transferring billions of dollars to the country through overseas remittances. It seems today, like the nation itself, Somalia's CSOs are in a period of complex political, economical and social transition.

However, in Somalia's recent history, in the realms of development and poverty reduction, the lack of central government and the lack of capable local governance, have resulted in a shift of governance responsibility to donor organisations such as the European Commission (EC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and various United Nations institutions. These organisations are dominating the country's decision-making processes.

Due to a lack of capable, moderate and organised Somali Civil Society Organisations, legitimacy is given to UN agencies and INGO dominance in the implementation of the country's poverty reduction programmes. In the absence of a legal framework and proper country ownership, less concern is given to participatory processes and tools utilised. In general, SCSOs' international relationship is strongest with international NGOs (INGOs), and weakest with UN and donor agencies. In particular, relationships and understanding of donor perspectives are limited. The result is a context that enables international domination, decreased accountability, susceptibility to power abuses and misuses, and widespread lack of transparency.

### Poverty reduction strategies in Somalia

Multiple, incoherent and internationally-driven poverty reduction and development strategies have existed in Somalia since its stateless period. The following are the two most recent

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and important strategies:

- European Commission Strategy: Special Aid to Somalia – SAS (2002-2007).<sup>3</sup>
- World Bank/UNDP joint strategy: Country Re-engagement Note – CRN (2003-2006).<sup>4</sup>

However, from my experience, SCSOs have not been consulted nor given the opportunity to be involved in macro-level participation in these poverty reduction strategies. The justification of this argument lies in my experience with the Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB), where participation policies and frameworks for the current PRs were set and processes were practiced as claimed by both the EC and WB-developed PRs.

### PRs and the SACB mechanism

The Addis Ababa Declaration of 1 December 1993 led to the creation of the Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB).<sup>5</sup> Its aim was to facilitate donors to develop a common approach among themselves for the prioritisation and allocation of

<sup>3</sup> EC member states clearly state that only the Somali people themselves have the right and also the duty to decide on the future of Somalia. They elaborate the point by stressing that donor countries should stay in the background, providing assistance only.

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank recognises Somalia as at the extreme of the Low-Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS). Thus it has selected Somalia as one of four African Countries where the LICUS approach is piloted. The strategy is the articulation of a joint operational strategy by the World Bank and UNDP. The premise is that states like Somalia should not be neglected and that other forms of assistance besides PRSP may be possible (UNDP/World Bank, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> The Addis Ababa Declaration of 1 December 1993 is the final document of the Fourth Coordination Meeting on Humanitarian Assistance for Somalia organised by UNOSOM (United Nations Operation in Somalia).

**Box 1: Paragraph 14 of the Addis Ababa Declaration****The Somali people**

Participants recognised that the reconstruction and rehabilitation effort in Somalia must be founded on the basic principle of Somali ownership of the process. They agreed that ownership means not only that the Somali people are fully involved in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process, but that they must also bear responsibility for ensuring that the environment is conducive for reconstruction and development.

resources available for Somalia in the absence of a central government (SACB, 2004). The Declaration envisaged a broad participation in SACB, consisting of donors, UN agencies and programmes, and NGOs as well as multilateral and regional institutions and local organisations. In this Declaration, SACB international members recognised that poverty reduction efforts in Somalia must be founded on the basic principles of Somali ownership of the process (see Box 1). They agreed that ownership means that the Somali people are fully involved in the poverty reduction processes.

**CSOs and participation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of PRSs**

In contrast to what was agreed to in the Addis Ababa Declaration, SACB membership has become an exclusive international club. Very few SCSO members have access to SACB. Some SACB Sectoral Committees even lack SCSO representation. For instance, the 2003 membership list of the Somali Health Sector Committee of SACB (SHSC) comprised 22 international agencies with no Somali agency representation at all (see [www.sacb.info](http://www.sacb.info)).

**Key challenges to CSOs participation**

A lack of will, acceptability, support and transparency on the part of the international community.

For instance, I account below an experience that I had with the SACB mechanism based in Nairobi, Kenya (see Box 2). SACB should be 'the participation forum for Somalia' where all the consultation and participation processes for PRSs and processes of Somalia should occur.

**Lack of CSOs' capacity**

A severe lack of institutional capacity and resources (i.e., organisational, human, financial, and technical resources and networking capacity) impedes CSOs from competitively carrying out implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities

**Box 2: Lack of international will, support and transparency: the case of SACB HSC**

In March 2004, nearly two months after my organisation's (Kaalo) application for membership of the Somali Health Sector Committee (SHSC) of SACB, I travelled to Nairobi, Kenya, to attend a members' meeting to approve a national Global Fund proposal after an invitation from SHSC as a member.

When I attempted to cast my vote among a dozen of the member agencies, where I was the only non-foreign agency representative, I was denied the vote. I was told that there was no record of my organisation's membership.

I showed the invitation letter as evidence that I was a registered and an invited member of SHSC. Eventually I was allowed to vote as a member, being the 11th member of SHSC in attendance at that meeting.

The next day, I sent SHSC a copy my organisation's original application to consolidate my membership. However, instead of a confirmation, I received a letter from the SACB secretariat advising me that I was not a member in SHSC despite my organisation's application. It stated 'before you qualify for full membership status with voting rights you need to come to the Sectoral Committee's meetings consistently for a period of six months as an observer.'

Albeit, voting in the last meeting should have sealed my membership registration; the above secretariat advice was also contrary of SACB policies and procedures delineated in the handbook. I realised I was permitted to vote in the meeting just to satisfy the quorum requirements (50 percent +1) of the 22-members SHSC voting system. The meeting needed 11 members for legal vote casting, I was representing the 11th organisation and thus legitimised the vote that day for SHSC!

This action of SACB seemed to be a deliberate act of exclusion. My organisation incurred significant costs to attend this meeting, but had no means of protesting, lacking the framework, resources and confidence to contend SACB's decision.

(such as writing proposals, demystifying budgets). A lack of resource capacity commonly constrains the sustainable engagement of national NGOs in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of PRSs.

The presence of internal clan-based conflicts of interest and political hegemonies

The following is just a one-off recent example that shows how internal regional and political hegemonies hinder equitable participation and further complicate the accountability and transparency of the current PRS participation processes – denying the equitable and inclusive participation of SCSOs nationwide (see Box 3).

**Box 3: Internal clan-based hegemonies: the Case of Diakonia Sweden<sup>6</sup>**

Since the late 1990s, when Diakonia started to recruit national Country Directors, the first for an INGO in Somalia, its programmes have become distanced from the organisation's humanitarian principles and from locals, to some extent, by a lack of transparency, neutrality and inclusiveness.

Clan-based organisational staffing processes as well as projects' approval and participation in implementation, monitoring and evaluation are based on regional preferences favouring the community and the sub-clan of the Country Director's region of origin and have become institutionalised within the Diakonia Country Office in Garowe, Puntland.

In 2003, a comprehensive participatory review and planning for a long-term institutional development initiative for Puntland Community College (PCC)<sup>7</sup> was conducted by the United States International University (USIU).<sup>8</sup> This was carried out with the financial assistance of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (as part of a capacity-building programme for national institutes, and in support of a UNDP/WB CRN initiative).

The programme utilised best practice participatory processes to open up spaces for Puntland community's participation in the higher education sector. The USIU consultancy report proposed that PCC was viable to be promoted to university status, by virtue of its comparative advantages, becoming the Puntland State University (PSU) in the process.

The report that I was involved in also recommended that PCC should have its curriculum expanded and imparted with new community priority skills and capacity development courses, including Livestock and Health Sciences courses that the Bank/UNDP wanted to support financially through a joint strategy – CRN (03-06).

The Diakonia Country Director, along with senior national programme officers, rejected the study findings, proposals and recommendations to the sheer disbelief of all the stakeholders. This I consider to have been due to an unveiled regional and clan-based interest that they shared. They illegitimately refused that PCC be promoted to university level and removed the Livestock and Health Sciences courses from the new revised curriculum.

The Director and Senior National Officers of Diakonia all have clan origins and relatives from another region – Mudug in Galkacio.

The Galkacio group that planned to establish the PSU was motivated by the release of WB/UNDP's strategy in mid-2003. It was encouraged by its own advantage over PCC (i.e., powerful connections with Diakonia – PCC's funding partner; and the government). Instead of Garowe, in Nugal region (where PCC is located), they wanted, antagonistically, PSU to be established in Galkacio and the new courses to be saved for it. This had the potential advantage of securing the financial support of the WB's CRN for the Livestock and Health Science Courses in Galkacio PSU. Galkacio is yet to have a tertiary institute and conducive political and developmental environment that could fairly compete with Garowe PCC. However, Diakonia national officers convinced their Diakonia colleagues that PCC had no capacity to run as a University and provide these courses. There was a 'conspiracy' to transfer the opportunity to a 'would be' future university in Galkacio. Despite being aware of this, PCC management succumbed to the direct financial threats from these national officers in the name of Diakonia and had to short-change the institutional survival interest instead of protesting against Diakonia officially.

The new PSU foundations were laid by the President of Puntland State in Galkacio in July 2004, at the expense of a truly successful five-year old institute in Garowe (PCC).

**Lack of participation framework and strategies**

To sum up, PRs in Somalia have no functional framework and are all internationally-driven. They are developed outside the country, primarily by non-Somalis, written in a foreign language (English) and are characterised by a lack of participatory planning and appropriate information strategies. A lack of information dissemination strategies denies the availability of these strategies to CSOs, let alone the poor.

**Key opportunities**

Despite the experiences described above, it is important to note that not all interactions with international partners are negative. The SCSOs' experiences with other programmes and organisations (i.e., CARE Somalia, and NOVIB-Somalia) have, to some extent, promising empowerment potential for SCSOs' participation in PRs. UNDP's current focus on civic participation within their governance programme (2004–06), along with its joint country re-engagement initiative with the WB also entail unprecedented opportunities for change and for establishing a participation framework and space for re-instating country ownership of the processes. However, the biggest opportunity would be a new central government with wider international support.

The lack of central government is perceived, ironically, as an opportunity that potentially increases participation. It gives CSOs a strategic position to bridge the gap and serve the

<sup>6</sup> Diakonia Sweden is one of the most important INGOs contributing to the poverty reduction and development efforts in Puntland State of Somalia over the past ten years. It is engaged mainly in the education and governance sectors. Its major donor is Sida.

<sup>7</sup> A successful institute founded and managed by KAALO NGO in Garowe, Puntland with funding support from Diakonia/Sida.

<sup>8</sup> The USIU study utilised an exhaustive participatory approach and methodologies that engaged the government, civil society, PCC management, staff, students plus the international partners – a holistic participatory approach that reached all the stakeholders.



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poor, reducing institutional clumsiness and bureaucracy, as well as all the negatives associated with a typical sub-Saharan African country. The absence of central government has also led to increased decentralisation throughout the country. This has the potential to facilitate increased participation for all the stakeholders.

Widely available Internet access and mobile satellite telecommunications must be seen as a technological opportunity that should be capitalised on. A powerful private sector along with historically and culturally important SCS that are experiencing huge modernisation with the back up of the wealth and talent of the diaspora must be seen as a potential for the institutionalisation of wider participation in PRS processes.

## Conclusion

When you are a Somali and have long witnessed the international aid community bringing medicines to cure chilblains, and electrically-heated blankets, along with slimming soups and diet drinks to your starving community – it is not hard to see the lack of international partners' will to provide spaces for people's participation in an 'internationally-owned' PRS in Somalia.

My experience in SHSC, in particular, shows that SACB is a system depriving Somali ownership of the processes, and is working towards the deinstitutionalisation of participatory processes in stark contrast to its founding principles – a practice gravely consistent with the earlier international humanitarian experiences in Somalia. The case of PCC/PSU experience with Diakonia national staff is an example of INGOs failing to ensure equity, neutrality and transparency, and, with ignorance, failing to avoid being manipulated by a group of people against the interest of the majority and inclusive participation. It is a common example of INGOs directly becoming fuel for the clan-based Somali crisis – the root cause of this nation's misery.

However, the WB's country re-engagement initiative should be a welcome development along with the progress of the Nairobi Peace Conference. It is therefore crucial for the WB to realise that the biggest hurdle is the failure of the SACB to ensure wider consultation and participation for Somalis. The existing SACB is a misnomer. It is not designed for the interest of SCSO participation. It needs urgent departure from its current 'so-called' participatory processes practices or nationalisation. In short, Somalia provides a unique international case study, demanding re-thinking, on the issues of PRS processes, participation, country ownership and the role of the international community.

### CONTACT DETAILS

Mohamed Said Mohamud Faroole  
HIV/AIDS Programme Officer &  
Head of Health Department  
KAALO Relief & Development NGO  
PO Box 4355-00200  
Nairobi, Kenya.  
HQ: Garowe, Capital of Puntland State,  
Somalia.  
Email: ms.faroole@kaalo.org  
Website: www.kaalo.org

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# Participatory poverty research and policy influencing in PRSP processes: the Vietnam case

by **HOANG XUAN THANH**

## Background

Vietnam has undergone a period of rapid change since the mid-1980s. The *doi moi* reform period marked a significant shift away from a centralised command system towards a greater reliance on market forces and a more liberalised policy framework to stimulate economic activity.<sup>1</sup> The Vietnam Communist Party – the only institutionalised political party in the country – led the reform and tried to reach consensus by mobilising all social and economic players, including national research and development centres and associations (may be termed ‘local non-governmental organisations’ (NGOs) in the Vietnam context), as well as international donors and international NGOs (INGOs).

The result was major improvements in living standards for a significant majority of Vietnamese people. Based on an internationally comparable expenditure poverty line, 29% of the population was poor in Vietnam in 2002, compared to 37% in 1998 and 58% in 1993. Key human development indicators, ranging from education enrolment to infant mortality, also improved significantly. However, major concerns remain about the quality and sustainability of future

pro-poor growth and the efficacy and accountability of public spending for poverty reduction and social welfare. The pattern of poverty across regions is very uneven and inequalities are rising. A ‘hard core’ of poor people, especially in remote areas with concentrations of ethnic minorities, is emerging with specific constraints like landlessness, unemployment, vulnerability to natural calamities and market shocks, and social exclusion.

## Process

Since the early 1990s, small scale Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) at district or community level have been used in Vietnam by INGOs and some donors to guide their own programming. The World Bank’s initiative in 1999 of a world-wide consultation campaign for its 2000 World Development Report (WDR) created a valuable opportunity to undertake four much larger-scale, provincial PPAs. Later on, village consultations in six provinces were organised to provide the feedback of the poor to the early draft of the PRSP (termed the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS) in Vietnam). In 2003, the PPAs were scaled up to 12 provinces throughout the country to provide the feedback of poor people in the implementation of the CPRGS. Some pilot supports for a provincial ‘roll-out’ of CPRGS are underway, and participatory policy consultation is one key step in the initiatives at provincial level.

The participatory qualitative studies helped deepen aware-

<sup>1</sup> *Doi moi* translates as ‘renovation’. In 1986 a new set of leaders, following China’s example, put aside the old dogmas and embraced the free market.

**Box 1: CPRGS's policies and possible PPA's influence**

The Vietnam CPRGS (the first in Asia) was approved by the Prime Minister in May 2002. It was preceded by an I-PRSP in 2001 and a series of consultations across the country in 2002. It talks about three broad groups of comprehensive policy actions for both economic growth and poverty reduction:

- completing the transition to a market economy, fostering competition and levelling the playing field between private enterprises and state-owned enterprises (SOEs);
- building of modern governance, covering such areas as public financial management, public administration reform, and legal reform; and
- keeping development socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable in all areas affecting the poor, such as agriculture and rural development, health, education and infrastructure.

Because poverty analyses are grounded on a household perspective, the PPAs often focus on providing feedback on the 'inclusive development' policies rather than the other 'structural' ones.

ness of poor people's lives amongst government staff engaged in the process, and increased awareness of the process and principles of qualitative research. The findings on poor people's living conditions were not new ideas, but their importance means that they should be emphasised in policy formulation. In fact, the earlier draft CPRGS and its annual implementation report and poverty reduction strategies/plans in the pilot provinces, took into account many recommendations from the participatory qualitative studies and consultation. Though it is never easy to attribute the policy changes to the research findings, it was observed that the key influences are:<sup>2</sup>

- **High direct costs of basic social services.** All PPAs and consultations, from the biggest cities to the most remote villages, reinforce the message of the poor's inability to afford education and healthcare services. In response, the government then initiated programmes of education for all (EFA) and a national healthcare fund for the poor.
- **Social exclusion of urban migrants.** The earlier draft CPRGS does not mention the status of urban migrants in accessing urban services. The PPA findings influence directly and indirectly (by providing the Urban Forum working group with evidence to make an influential submission to the government) the contents of the final CPRGS to include a statement of inclusive service delivery in urban areas.
- **Local participation in infrastructure development.** The government intends to use infrastructure development as a means of improving market access and generating

employment for the most difficult communities. However the PPAs and consultations reveal that without more participation in the whole cycle of the projects, the poor are unlikely to get desired benefits. The final CPRGS then included several specific commitments to change this situation. A governmental decree on monitoring local people on any investment projects in their communities was promulgated, for instance.

- **Transparency and accountability.** The local participants in PPAs and consultations suggest sharper identification of the poor for targeted programmes, better communication about policies and programmes/projects, and practical ways to implement the grassroots democracy regulations. The final CPRGS had separate sections to deal with these issues. Later on, the grassroots democracy decree was revised to introduce more transparent and accountable mechanisms at local level.

**Critical factors**

There are several critical factors that some consider to have contributed to the process of linking participatory research and policy-making in Vietnam.

- **Working in partnership.** The Poverty Task Force (PTF) – set up in 1999 – is the main mechanism for government-donor-NGO interaction on strategic planning for poverty reduction. Through the PTF, the donors and NGOs were actively engaged in funding and organising the PPAs and community consultations. The PTF facilitated the discussion about participatory research with key government officials from designing the core policy questions to disseminating and digesting the recommendations. Without the backing of the PTF, there is a risk that the participatory research could have been seen as marginal and 'un-scientific' activities.
- **Good timing in the whole policy process.** The recent participatory research was embedded in national policy-making processes. The PPAs were fully part of the workplan anticipated by the PTF. The findings were timely in influencing the policy content of the PRSP papers and the annual implementation reports. In fact, the PPAs would be less useful if they only served as the 'post-PRSP' monitoring and evaluation (M&E) where the government might still rely much on its statistical data and internal reporting mechanisms.
- **Common research framework.** The participating agencies and core researchers spent many hours together working through a common research framework. A concrete statement of issues and questions was valuable in building a shared understanding of what the research was seeking to achieve, and making the task of aggregating findings

<sup>2</sup> Key references for this paper are Shanks and Turk, 2003 and the Vietnam Development Report 2004, as well as the author's direct experiences of leading the PPAs and community consultations in Lao Cai and Tra Vinh provinces in Vietnam.

easier. The consensus on a research framework also helped to focus on hot topics (e.g. pressing policy questions in public services access at local levels) on which that the government is seeking answers.

- **High quality fieldwork.** The participatory assessments were facilitated by local researchers and institutes with strong networks. Many facilitators had a previous history in implementing the PPAs in the same or similar contexts. The mobilisation of local government counterparts (from provincial, district and community agencies) also helped bring insights into the findings. Specifically, this local expertise was very important in PPAs that required a good attitude and a high degree of flexibility in working with poor people in poor areas.
- **Combining qualitative and quantitative analysis.** The findings from participatory research are combined with data from the Vietnam Living Standard Survey (VLSS) to produce poverty and policy papers. This combination can overcome the inherent limitations of either qualitative or quantitative methodologies (i.e. unrepresentative vs. causal-blind). The crosschecking in fact saw no major differences between the two kinds of findings. Some policy issues that emerged from qualitative research would not emerge from the quantitative analysis of VLSS alone, e.g. the social exclusion of poor urban migrants or the inadequate participation of the poor in rural projects.
- **Using the findings to influence through different channels.** The traditional channel is through publishing the reports, and quickly disseminating them to the main audience – the CPRGS steering committees and relevant ministries. There were other attempts to broaden the way in which the findings were used. Some examples are:
  - working with PPA provinces (e.g. Lao Cai, Tra Vinh) in rolling out the CPRGS, so that the findings were introduced, validated and integrated into the provincial planning process;
  - presenting and disseminating the findings at various national, regional or thematic workshops so they could be referred to in the subsequent discussions among the workshop participants;
  - assigning PPA core researchers directly working with drafting team of CPRGS annual implementation report to ensure that the key findings were integrated in the report; and
  - introducing the methodologies and findings to national and local research institutes to raise their awareness, interests and capacities of undertaking participatory researches in the near future.

#### Box 2: Using PPA findings to influence the pilot CPRGS roll-out in Lao Cai province

In July 2003, the PPA was undertaken in the northern mountainous province Lao Cai where 70% of the population are ethnic minorities. The PPA team comprised six national researchers from Hanoi and 20 provincial officers. Because this PPA was carried out in exactly the same communities as the last PPA in 1999, the team was able to explore deeply the changes and the causes of changes over a four-year span.

After the PPA, Oxfam GB and DFID VN collaborated to pilot a CPRGS roll-out exercise in Lao Cai. The PPA team leader and other facilitators worked closely with provincial agencies to ensure that the core PPA findings could be integrated into the province's poverty reduction policies. In late 2003, a workshop 'Lao Cai: attacking poverty' was held, where the provincial poverty reduction papers and the PPA findings were presented. Representatives from all researched districts and communes attended the workshop and discussed the findings.

The key lessons from the above process are:

- The capacity of the national researchers and provincial officers in linking PPA with analysis of national policies must be enhanced, so that the local realities can better influence the policy actions.
- The PPA findings may appear in the policy writings, but still hardly influence the actual resource allocation for poverty reduction. Here the whole budgeting process should be reformed.
- The provincial authorities welcome the support in pro-poor planning, but would better appreciate it together with other 'visible' assistance from the donors and INGOs. So, it is difficult to avoid some biases in the process.

#### Challenges and ways forward

The PPAs may well illustrate the poverty profile and factors, however they often give a weak and fragmented picture of the governance issues. In the focus group discussions about the implementation of grassroots democracy decrees or of public administration reform, the facilitators are often faced with the 'we don't know' answer from the local participants. The underlying causes are that local participants are still not 'familiar' with talking about such sensitive issues, and the facilitators from outside often find it difficult to pose answerable questions in order to link the specific micro realities with the macro governance policies.

The INGOs can commit financial and human resources to undertake PPAs and other participatory work related to the agenda agreed with the government agencies and PTF. Participating in the PTF, the INGOs have better opportunities than through other channels to influence the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the CPRGS. The INGOs have a limited representation on the PTF, as only four to five big and active INGOs are rotated as PTF members with the coordination role of the NGO Resource Centre. In response to the

## "The participatory poverty assessments can effectively bring the voices of the poor into the planning and implementation of policies affecting their lives"

considerable interest that was shown in the preparation of the CPRGS, a Poverty Working Group (PWG) was established in 2000 to keep a wider group of donors and INGOs informed about the activities and outputs of the PTF. However, the roles and agenda of the PTF and PWG are not so clear in the future when the CPRGS will be integrated into the formal socio-economic planning process of the government.

The local NGOs still have a limited role in the PRSP process. They often work 'to call', i.e. as subcontractors for international donors and INGOs in carrying out the PPAs and community consultations. The one-off consultancy nature of the local NGOs in PRSP process makes it difficult for them to proactively link the policy process with continuous M&E at local levels. Due to human and financial constraints, almost no local NGOs could initiate participatory research or produce their own monitoring reports on the macro-economic policy issues. The government agencies or the PTF often invite them to participate in policy dialogues (through attending workshops, delivering presentations or providing feedback on draft papers), but without well-prepared arguments and in-depth comments, their independent contributions can hardly be influential.<sup>3</sup> The increased capacity of the local NGOs and the enabled institutional settings for their policy-related work are both critical in the future.

The PPAs and consultations are largely extractive research exercises. At the moment, most of the researched sites have been benefiting from community development programmes

of the donors and INGOs for many years. So, hearing the voices of the poor also benefits the donors and INGOs themselves in improving their programmes there. One suggested way forward is to establish a network of 'check-points' at local levels to periodically monitor the poverty reduction policies. The PPAs in 2003 already tried a methodology of selecting the research sites from the VHLSS-surveyed communities so that the qualitative and quantitative findings could better interact with each other.

The CPRGS paper already clearly stipulated that participatory assessments are one component of monitoring the implementation of CPRGS at local levels.<sup>4</sup> The pilot rolling-out of CPRGS in some provinces have been placing PPAs and community consultations within the official planning process. However, the authorities' ownership of the participatory process is still weak. It is noted that besides the 2003 PPAs and pilot roll-out exercises, there are almost no other remarkable and systematic means of monitoring the CPRGS at local levels in a participatory manner. Such PPAs and consultations with the poor were led by the international donors/INGOs, and conducted by the city-based local NGOs and researchers. Though the provincial agencies provide human resources to support such work and they appreciate the findings very much, they still hardly originate or finance such work themselves. In other words, the demand for participatory research in government agencies is still reactive. There are also concerns that the PPAs may divert attention away from the need for more mainstream mechanisms for state-citizen interaction.

The participatory poverty assessments can effectively bring the voices of the poor into the planning and implementation of policies affecting their lives. Hopefully, the above critical challenges of institutionalising participatory methods in evidence-based and pro-poor planning and policy work at all levels will be gradually overcome in the future.

<sup>3</sup> There is one regulation that all draft policies affecting certain groups must be consulted with the relevant associations before submission to the government.

<sup>4</sup> The other core/more important components of CPRGS's M&E are statistical data including the government-led multi-purpose VHLSS survey, and internal reporting within government agencies.

### CONTACT DETAILS

Hoang Xuan Thanh  
Ageless Consultants  
49 Le Van Huu, Hanoi, Vietnam.  
Tel: +84 4 9434478  
Fax: +84 4 9434479  
Email: thanhhx@fpt.vn

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# general section



## 13

# Participatory landscape analysis for community-based livestock management in Vietnam

by JEAN-CHRISTOPHE CASTELLA, TRAN TRONG HIEU and YANN K EGUIENTA

## Introduction

In Vietnam, privatisation of the economy, land redistribution and the political reforms of the late 1980s profoundly changed local institutions and the social relations among households with respect to agricultural production. The *doi moi* (renovation) policy dramatically boosted agricultural production across the country. It also changed the way natural resources were managed and brought questions about the sustainability of current practices to the forefront, especially in the fragile upland ecosystems. The Mountain Agrarian Systems Programme started in 1998 with the main objectives of improving:

- agricultural productivity;
- natural resources management; and
- the living standards of highlands ethnic minority groups.<sup>1</sup>

This action research project is made of two components:

- the diagnosis of land use changes and problem prioritisation with local stakeholders; and
- the intervention through design and the testing, in part-

nership with farmers and extension services, of technical and organisational innovations.<sup>2</sup>

The programme aims to understand factors related to designing sustainable cropping systems, and to develop new tools to facilitate decision-making processes for rural development and natural resource management (Castella *et al.*, 2004).

Livestock free-grazing appeared when former collective livestock was distributed to individual households. Today, roaming buffaloes and cattle continue to be an obstacle to agricultural intensification in both upland and lowland areas. Land use and livestock management systems are interdependent, and neither can be properly analysed without regard for the other. It is important that all partners in the development process understand this. Conflicts between households with different farming and livestock management practices are becoming more and more frequent. We identified the spatial organisation of forage resources and farmers' livestock feeding practices as important dimensions of sustainability (Eguienta *et al.*, 2002). It is thus necessary to understand spatial organisation at the village/watershed scale

<sup>1</sup> The Mountain Agrarian Systems Programme is a joint research project between the Vietnam Agricultural Science Institute (VASI, Vietnam), Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD, France), Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD, France), and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI, Philippines).

<sup>2</sup> For further information see the project website at: [www.knowledgebank.irri.org/sam/home\\_en.html](http://www.knowledgebank.irri.org/sam/home_en.html)

**Figure 1a: First stage in 3-dimensional modelling: constructing the relief model made of sheets of cardboard cut along contour lines**

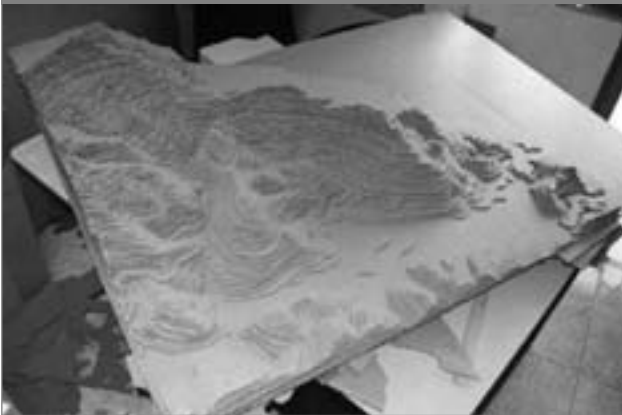


Photo: YK Eguienta

**Figure 1b: Second stage in 3-dimensional modelling: documenting the blank relief model with local stakeholders**



Photo: YK Eguienta

**Box 1: Process and criteria for selecting participants to the participatory landscape analysis in Phieng Lieng village**

Thirty people were selected to document the 3D model according to the following criteria: age, gender, place of residence, kinship, ethnicity, wealth, and crop-livestock management strategies based on the typology of farming systems by Eguienta *et al.* (2002). The question of unequal communication skills was solved by creating small working groups of people who were more knowledgeable on the particular topic of each session. In addition, all villagers holding important positions in the local government and mass organisations, those involved in project activities as well as informal opinion leaders were interviewed. Key informants were identified through discussions and interviews with the local government, extension workers and project field staff. Ten participants were then selected to help design the graphic model. They were selected according to their knowledge of different areas in the village, either because their house was located there or because they cropped some plots, tended animals or collected forest products in these particular sites. They were asked to draw their village. School children aged eight to 12 were also asked to draw their village as homework. The drawings revealed a marked influence of people-specific knowledge on their perception of the village landscape. For example, children who usually tend the buffalo herd represented large pasture areas as compared to adults who rarely go to the most remote areas in the village.

as well as spatial dynamics in both the short-term (less than one year) and long-term (historical changes). However, this understanding is not sufficient for actions to succeed. To go beyond a diagnostic study and its usual 'list of recommendations', we need to understand the underlying social organisation of the community, as well as its historical evolution and response to policy and institutional changes. Changes in the spatial management of livestock systems require trans-

formations in social organisation. In this paper, we present a method to facilitate such a collective learning process. A case study implemented in Phieng Lieng village (Ngoc Phai commune, Bac Kan province) demonstrates an effective mechanism for fruitful dialogue between an interdisciplinary team of scientists and local stakeholders with respect to livestock systems and spatial management of natural resources.

**Method: combining local and scientific knowledge in a common graphic language**

**Capturing local knowledge into a Geographic Information System (GIS)**

We used a three-dimensional relief model as a mediating tool between the team of researchers and villagers (Rambaldi *et al.*, 2000). We re-scaled the topographic map from 1:10,000 to 1:3000 as a reference for a stand-alone relief model. Layer by layer, a blank model was cut from sheets of cardboard and then assembled on a transportable frame (Figure 1a). The relief model allowed a participatory approach to the mapping of village resources and landscape features.

A preliminary analysis of stakeholders led to the selection of 30 participants according to the criteria presented in Box 1. We began to fill in the blank relief model by locating and naming the main features of the landscape: rivers, mountain peaks, road, tracks, etc. Participants identified other relevant village landmarks (e.g. wooden fences, natural barriers). The next meetings tackled land cover, land use, land tenure and historical changes. Participants used coloured yarns to delineate the main types of land use, and identified their houses with pushpins (Figure 1b). We eventually agreed

**Figure 1c: Third stage in 3-dimensional modelling: capturing local knowledge on spatial management of natural resources**



Photo: YK Eguienta

on what information we would show (land use and land cover classes, land tenure classes, etc.) and how we would present it on the model (e.g. coloured surfaces, lines, points). This was an essential stage, as it ensured that the information shown on the model would be meaningful to participants, researchers and villagers alike. After this consensus was reached, the individual features were painted on the model according to the agreed coding system (Figure 1c).

After each thematic session, a Plexiglas sheet attached to an aluminium frame was overlaid on the relief model, and the theme's relevant points, lines and polygons were projected onto a geo-referenced grid (Figure 1d). Information about land cover, land use and land tenure systems at different historical periods could then be transferred from the 3D model to geo-referenced paper maps, and then digitised and incorporated into a village-scale Geographic Information System (GIS).

The same relief model was later used to support discussions during interviews with individual households. The first three farmers were selected to represent the three main types of farming systems that had been identified in an earlier exhaustive household survey (76 households, Eguienta *et al.*, 2002). In addition to traditional questions about household economics, working calendars and how activities were shared between men and women, we asked farmers to locate on the 3D model the activities that had been discussed. The main spatial features of individual resource management and agricultural production practices were captured on the relief map and transferred into the GIS. For validation, five more farmers were interviewed with the support of a sketch map to represent their individual practices. The whole process of

**Figure 1d: Fourth stage in 3-dimensional modelling: transferring the spatial information by projection on a grid plastic sheet**



Photo: YK Eguienta

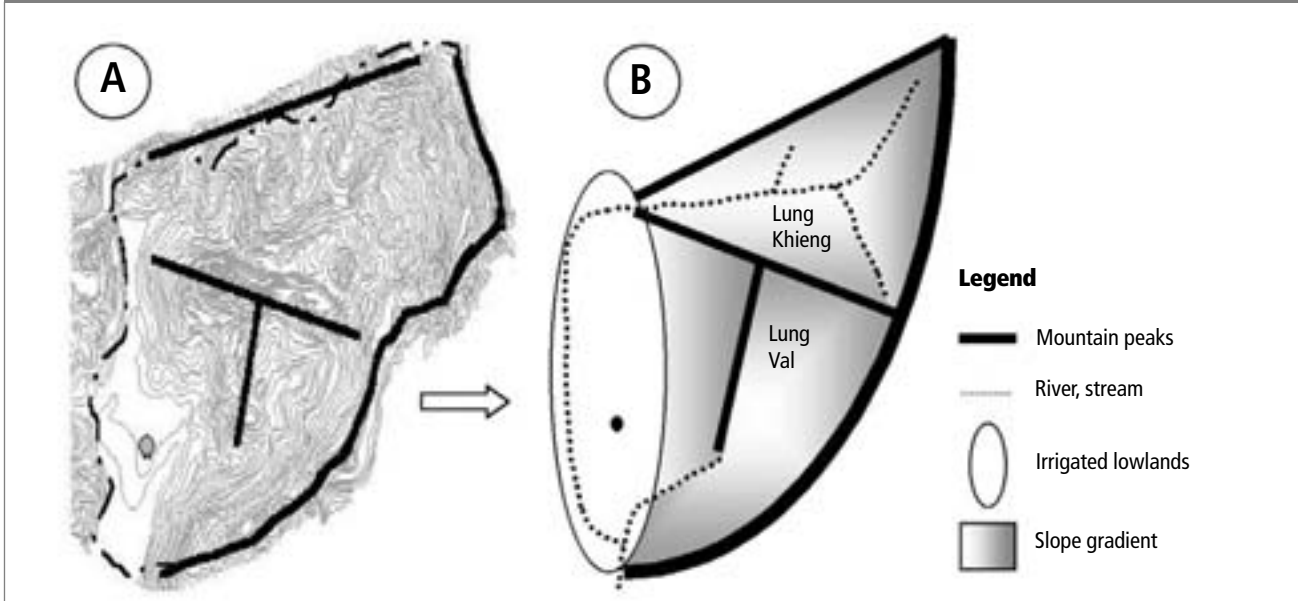
documenting the 3D model, data gathering about farmers' spatial management of natural resources, and transfer into the village GIS, was spread over one month.

### Graphic models as discussion tools

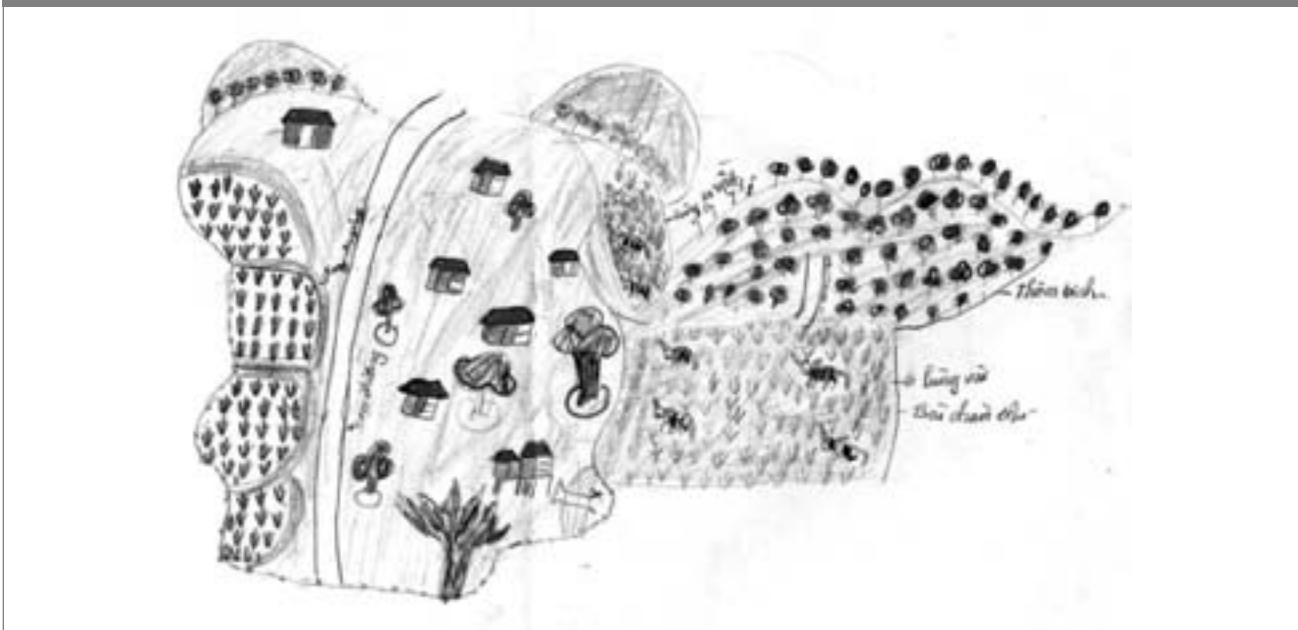
The map development process gave the participants a better integrated vision of their environment, and the village now had an attractive landscape model and some new maps, but little else to show for the effort. The geographic representation had been necessary for diagnostic purposes and analysis of a possible scenario, but was not a satisfactory medium for researchers to present the results of their analysis to the local community. Yet the maps were still too abstract for use as discussion tools. On the other hand, the 3D model was too close to reality to discuss collective scenarios without triggering individual reactions from people who either lived there or had resources at stake. Our conventional geographic representations could display neither dynamic scenarios nor the movement of livestock nor management practices. We clearly needed a more abstract model before we could begin to present concrete scenarios. So we resumed the process of developing a common spatial language with the help of the village community.

We divided the village into a number of compartments based on land use and major geographic features. We represented the rice fields at the lowest part of the village with a large yellow oval on the graphic model. We represented the mountain chains surrounding the village with solid lines, splitting the uplands into two clear watersheds (Lung Khieng and Lung Vai areas), each with one stream at its base. One upland zone was close to the village residential area and devoted to

**Figure 2: From a conventional topographic map (A) to a spatial graphic framework (B)**



**Figure 3: Example of village drawing by school children and local participants (Drawing by Luong Thi Uyen)**

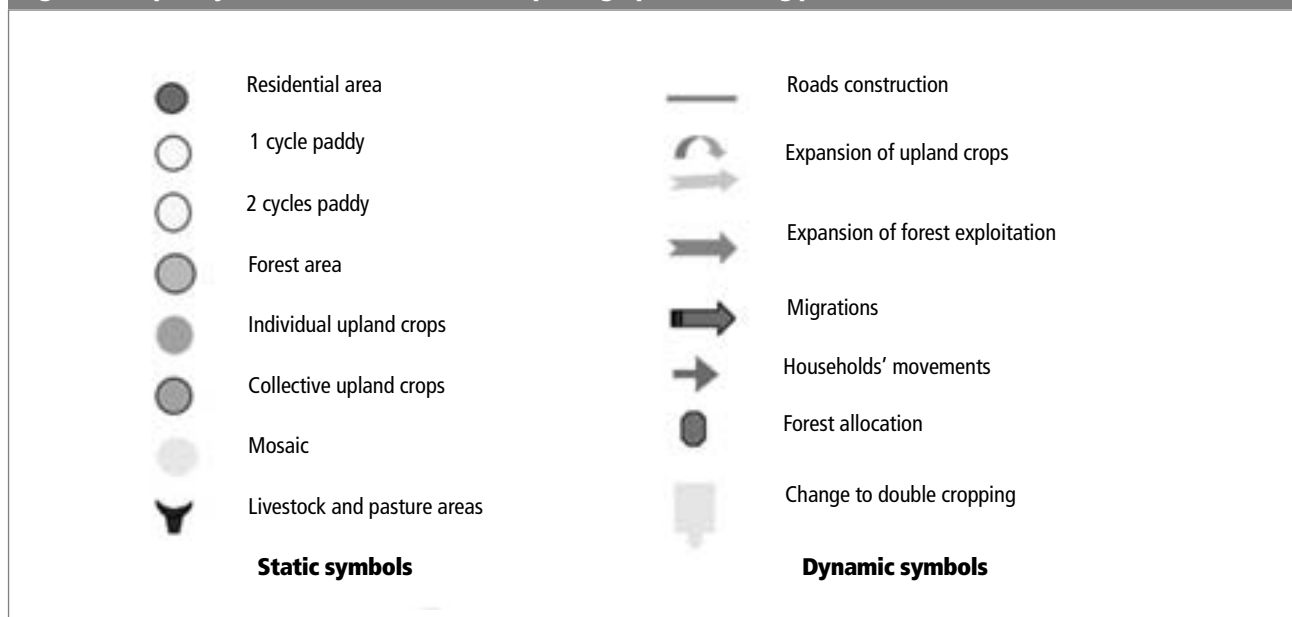


short rotation intensive cropping systems, while the other more remote area was further up the mountain in a forested area (Figure 2).

We represented the village's spatial organisation and dynamics with a set of graphic codes. Once the graphic

framework was designed, these elementary shapes would become the alphabet of the common language we were developing. We needed shapes that would be meaningful to anybody who would need to communicate in the graphic language, so we asked villagers and schoolchildren to draw

Figure 4: Graphic symbols used in the hands-on spatial graphic modelling process



their village (Figure 3). The drawings validated our graphic representation of the village and identified the ways that locals represented the main land use systems, livestock and other components of the landscape. With the help of local people and researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds (i.e. geography, agronomy, sociology), we developed the symbolic language shown in Figure 4.

Finally, during a one-day meeting held in October 2001, we presented our spatial representations, graphic codes, and scenarios to a panel of 16 villagers selected according to the criteria in Box 1 and representing the main groups of local stakeholders (i.e. farmers, local authorities, Women's Union, etc.). These were all understood by the participants, validating both the participatory learning process and its resulting graphic outputs. Participants agreed that the graphic representations:

- really did capture the geography of their village and its history;
- were meaningful and relevant for decision-making; and
- could be useful for collective action.

### Results: from individual to collective livestock management

Examination of official land use plans in the light of actual land use revealed that some individual households were cultivating in common upland and even protected areas. In the

upper part of the watershed where natural barriers do not exist, competing land uses had developed. Strong fences and/or trenches to prevent damage by animals had made the actual livestock grazing area smaller than it appeared on the land-use planning maps. The poor quality of over-grazed pastures encouraged buffaloes and cattle to roam in protected forest areas and they had also become a source of conflict with the neighbouring village (Eguienta *et al.*, 2002).

A closer look at the individual management of natural resources over time revealed three main strategies according to households' resource endowments (i.e. land, labour and capital):

- **Type A** farms rely mainly on the lowlands for agriculture and on the upper part of the watershed for timber and livestock activities;
- **Type B** farms rely on all tiers of the watershed (i.e. rice in the lowlands, upland crops near the village, and livestock in the more remote areas); and,
- **Type C** farms rely mainly on the upper part of the watershed for upland crops, livestock, and gathering forest products.

Their different strategies explain the different livestock management practices. They also show that there is no simple solution to the village's crop-livestock integration problems (Eguienta *et al.*, 2002). Any sustainable solution will have to rely on a consensus between these three types of



**Table 1: Distribution of main income-generating activities according to gender (♂, ♀), time of year, and location (numbers from one to five from Figure 5) and livestock management calendar.**

Months		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Paddy fields		♂♂ (I)		♂ (I)		♂♂ (I)		♂ (I)		♂♂ (I)			
Upland crops				♂ (II, IV)		♂♂ (II, IV)				♂♂ (II, IV)			
Bamboo stems								♂♂ (III, IV)					
Bamboo shoots		♂ (III, IV)											
Fuel wood				♂ (V)				♂ (V)				♂♂ (III, V)	
Timber wood				♂ (III, V)				♂ (III, V)				♂ (III, V)	
Non-Timber FP												♂ (III, IV)	
Off-farm				♂				♂				♂♂	
Livestock	Draft power	Ploughing (I)		Wood collect (III)		Ploughing (I)		No work or wood (III, IV)		No work (IV)		Wood collect (III)	
	Management	Tended (I)		Roaming or tended (I, IV)		Tended (I)		Roaming (IV)		Tended (I, IV)		Tended or Roaming (I, IV)	
	Fodder	Straw, tree leaves, grass (I, IV)		Grass, tree leaves (IV)		Straw, tree leaves, grass (I, IV)		Grass, tree leaves (IV)		Grass, tree leaves (I, IV)		Straw, tree leaves, grass (I, IV)	

households and is what makes the development of a common spatial language so important in reaching an agreement on a collective crop-livestock development plan.

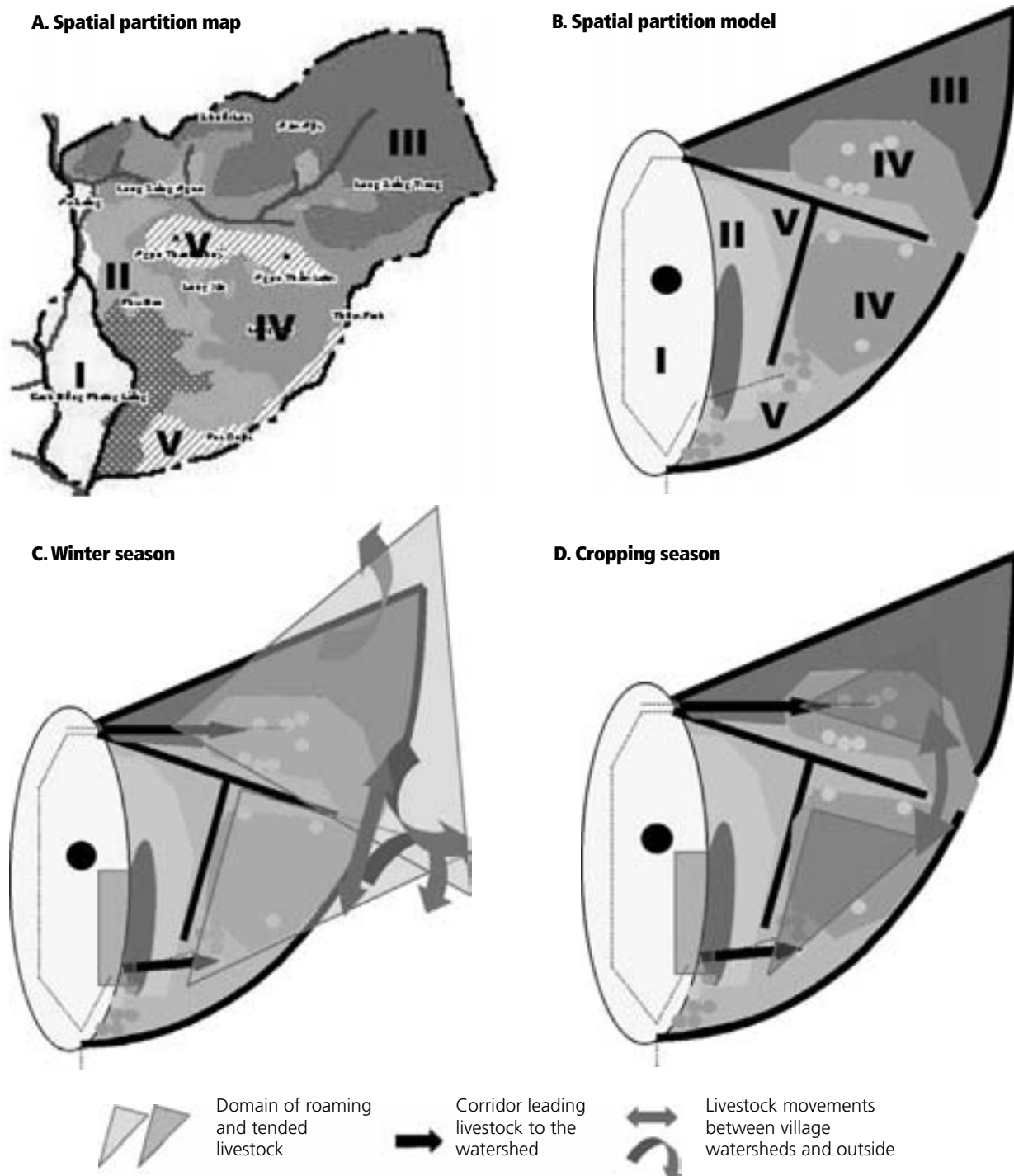
Our survey showed that the time dimensions of farmers' practices were as important as the spatial dimensions (Rambaldi *et al.*, 2000), as seasonal variations are apparent in the location of different activities. In collaboration with the farmers, we identified a set of homogeneous periods in terms of activities and natural resource management rules (Table 1). We then located each activity on the landscape model. The resulting spatial division of the village is given in Figure 5. A clear distinction appears between two periods. The absence of crops during the winter season allows animals to roam more freely, but the winter nevertheless remains a very critical period for animals because of the shortage of natural grass. Most gathering of forest products also takes place in winter, with the exception of bamboo products. The crop season can be divided into four sequences corresponding to the first and second part of each of the two crop cycles, in both lowlands and uplands. Livestock are kept close to the village for land preparation during the first part of each season and are then used to move wood from the forest located in the higher parts of the watershed. There is thus a strong seasonal division of household activities related to crops, livestock and gathering forest products.

We developed new maps and models to facilitate discussions on seasonal changes in spatial organisation (Figure 5) and used them to represent individual household practices and assess their compatibility with other households' practices or with collective village rules. The division of the landscape according to locally practiced resource management rules is shown in Figures 5a and 5b. Researchers and villagers jointly designed scenarios representing current crop-livestock interactions (Figures 5c and 5d).

### Discussion and conclusion

The graphic models have been used as a mediation tool for discussions about spatial conflicts between crop intensification and livestock development. Participants were very receptive to the approach and the collective learning experience is ongoing, as we are continuing to design scenarios for the development of a sustainable crop-livestock-forest system in Bac Kan Province. The next step has been to use this model to support discussions with local stakeholders about the introduction of technical and organisational innovations regarding livestock feeding systems. Once the main constraints at the village scale had been identified, especially concerning forage resources for buffaloes and cattle, farmers were able to simulate on paper the adoption of different innovations (e.g. alternative cropping systems under cover crop, urea treatment of rice and maize straw, regulations on roaming animals, down-

Figure 5: Spatial division of the village according to natural resource management practices (A, B) and the movement of buffaloes during the winter season (C) and the cropping season (D).



sizing of the village herd). They then received project support in order to reproduce, in their own plots, the results of their simulation. In the long run, it would be possible to transform the simulations of technical interventions by individual farmer into role-plays involving several participants (Castella *et al.*, 2004). This would mean going from an individual model of adoption of innovation to the collective management of resources at the scale of the village community.

The method presented here is intended to complement other participatory approaches. A major step towards problem solving is to formulate development questions from both scientists' and local stakeholders' viewpoints in a language understood by all partners, despite the inherent complexity of

problems involved in productivity versus sustainability. Used as a participatory diagnostic tool, the spatial graphic models were tremendously useful, as the sustainability of an agro-ecological system can often be seen as a problem of compatibility between the household and village levels. The experiments conducted in Phieng Lieng and other action research sites in Bac Kan have shown that local people are extremely interested in receiving support for the individual decisions they need to make. The role of the researcher as facilitator is to find a context where individual behaviour will be compatible with the common good. It will then become possible to use the mediation tools developed to create sustainable collective management of natural resources.

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Jean-Christophe Castella, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), BP 64501, 34394 Montpellier Cedex 5, France.  
Email: j.castella@ird.fr

Tran Trong Hieu, Mountain Agrarian Systems Programme, Vietnam Agricultural Science Institute (VASI), Thanh Tri, Hanoi, Vietnam.  
Email: sam-r@fpt.vn

Yann K. Eguienta, Centre National d'Etudes Agronomiques des Régions Chaudes (CNEARC), 1101 Av. Agropolis, BP 5098, 34033 Montpellier Cedex 1, France.  
Email: yk\_eguienta@yahoo.fr

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## 14

# Developing urban health systems in Bangladesh

by DIPANKAR DATTA, MICHELLE KOULETIO and TAIFUR RAHMAN

## Introduction

Since 1998, a promising partnership for health has been forming in Saidpur and Parbatipur municipalities in Northern Bangladesh. Under a Child Survival Programme (CSP), a tripartite partnership has developed between Concern, two municipal authorities, and 24 ward health committees (WHC). The CSP's goal is to reduce maternal and child mortality and morbidity, and increase child survival by developing a sustainable municipal health service.

The programme aims to strengthen municipalities' capac-

ity to deliver quality maternal and child health interventions, which can be sustained using the existing resources of the municipality. These health interventions include providing immunisation, vitamin A supplements, maternal and newborn care, the integrated management of childhood illnesses, and promoting community health. Both the municipality and local community were involved in developing the service, which now reaches over 200,000 residents with improved health practices and services. Local stakeholders retained control of priorities, strategies and plans, which enabled high levels of their participation.

## Programme partners

### The municipal authority

The municipal authority's health department is the key programme actor. The municipal authority is composed of the cabinet, which consists of elected public representatives, and a secretary employed by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MOLGRD). An elected chairman heads the cabinet.

The health department is supposed to be headed by a medical officer teamed with a supervisor and health workers. In reality, this head position is usually vacant because of the

Photo: Dipankar Datta



**Claudia Liebler and Scott Fisher facilitate an A1 training session**

**A1 dream phase and dream statement for a sustainable municipal health system**

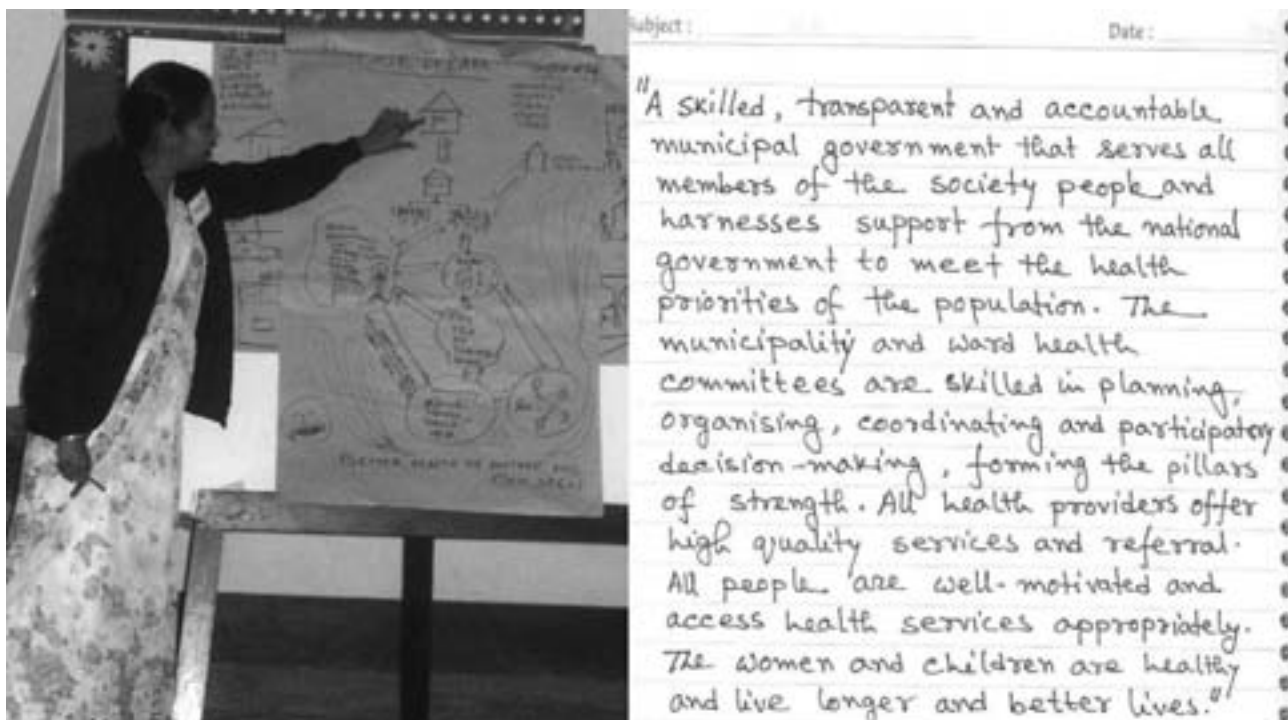


Photo: Leo Ryan

difficulty in attracting medical doctors due to limited career advancement. In the absence of a medical officer, the secretary is in charge. The CSP programme targets the supervisor and health workers as they are directly involved with the day-to-day maternal and child-related health services.

### **Ward health committees**

The ward is the smallest represented unit of the municipality population. Each municipality is required by law to have a ward health committee (WHC), according to a government circular dated 28 November 1995, although such committees are almost non-existent in practice. The WHC should include the ward commissioner, ward secretary, a community health volunteer, representatives from NGOs, representatives from private service providers (e.g., rural medical practitioners, traditional birth attendants), ward municipality health staff, sub district-level health staff working in the ward, and key community workers and leaders, e.g. religious leaders, teachers, social workers, and leaders of community-based organisations. The WHCs are mandated to coordinate health and family planning activities for their residents; to ensure health education sessions in schools and satellite clinics; and to take necessary steps for treatment or hospital referral by collecting funds locally.

### **Mobilising the partners**

Concern launched the programme in Mymensingh and Saidpur municipalities, where it had been providing primary healthcare services in slum clinics since 1972. It was hoped that Concern's good reputation would help to build relationships with the municipalities and in turn facilitate a shift to system building and coordination.

### **The broken partnership**

The CSP partnership with Mymensingh municipality started in August 1998. But following elections in February 1999, the Mymensingh municipality cabinet changed. The new cabinet argued that the proposed CSP programme strategy could not benefit the municipality unless some logistical support was provided, which included seven ambulances, salaries for municipal health staff and 21 health centres. Providing this logistical support was out of CSP's scope. The partnership was broken and Concern had to withdraw the CSP from Mymensingh.

### **Learning from failure**

After this Concern went through a self-assessment process. The analysis revealed that Concern was accustomed to negotiating with powerful donors, or weak counterparts. Concern



Leo Ryan facilitates a session to orient Concern staff about sustainability



Photo: Michelle Kouletio

*Explanation of the images: Like the parent and baby, it is difficult for Concern to determine what the future will hold for municipal health. Sustainability framework assesses the situation by looking at key indicators of the community, institutional and health dimensions to get an indication whether he/she is growing towards the desired state.*

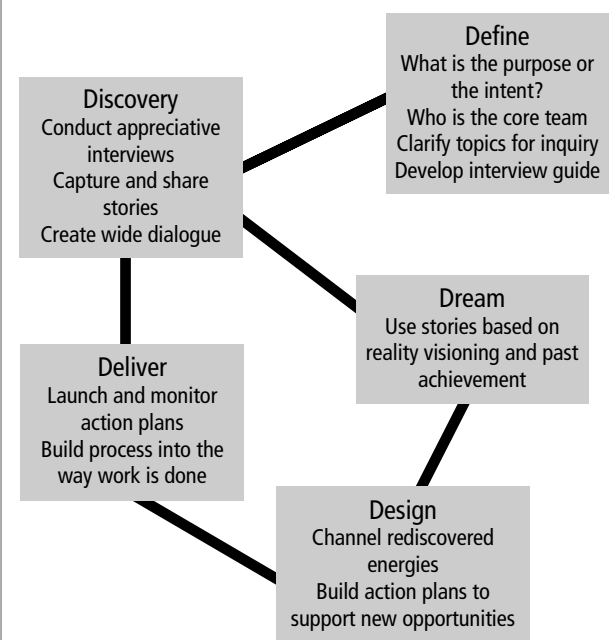
did not have the skills to negotiate with powerful partners who saw things very differently to them. In addition, the CSP staff members were unclear about the capacity-building approach. So Concern undertook an intensive orientation with staff at programme and country office level on every detail of the CSP mission. This was followed by intensive staff training to build facilitation skills.

### Partnership building

Starting dialogue with the Saidpur municipality was also very challenging. Health had never been one of their main priorities. Public representatives preferred to gain votes by working on more tangible issues. As a result, the benefits of an intangible programme like the CSP were difficult for them to grasp. Nevertheless, Concern staff managed to overcome these constraints by:

- gradually building a good rapport with cabinet members and health staff;
- clarifying the municipality's role according to national policy;
- clarifying the CSP strategies and approach, and fostering acceptance and recognition;
- organising workshops where cabinet members, ministry resources staff and other institutions could discuss the role of the municipality as a primary healthcare service provider; and,
- conducting a number of participatory baseline health

Chart 1: 4D cycles of A1



assessments involving municipal health staff, sub district-level health staff, community health volunteers and CSP staff.

This was very effective in making the municipal staff aware of their roles and responsibilities in terms of health service delivery and CSP goal and strategy.

This process of partner orientation and mobilisation was time-consuming. But it was invaluable for developing mutual understanding, trust and clarity on mutual roles and responsibilities for implementing the CSP. This encouraged commissioners to form a Ward Health Committee (WHC) in their respective wards.

Ensuring the effective participation of socially excluded groups in WHCs was always a key challenge for CSP and for Concern. However, because of the membership criteria set by the government, Concern found that socially excluded people could only participate in WHCs as leaders of community organisations. So the CSP conducted a number of focus group discussions with the community and local NGOs to identify which community organisations represented socially excluded people in Saidpur and Parbatipur. They identified three main groups: sweepers (untouchable class), non-Bengalis (politically marginalised), and extremely poor Bengali families (socio-economically marginalised). CSP staff also identified a few community-based groups organised by

**The community assesses the impact of the programme**



Photo: Dipankar Datta

NGOs, which had representatives from extremely poor families, mainly vulnerable women. Based on this information, CSP wanted to try and ensure the participation of the leaders of these groups in the new WHCs.

Each ward held a public meeting in an open field. Both the CSP staff and ward commissioners jointly facilitated the meetings. Ward commissioners invited key community workers and leaders (already members of the WHC) and leaders of socially excluded groups. However, these leaders did not have a strong voice in the meeting at that time. For many it was the first public meeting they had ever attended. So Concern helped to ensure that the ward commissioners discussed the importance of representing these groups in the WHCs. This motivated the community to also select representatives from them. The total membership of the WHC ranges from 19-25 people.

This participatory process attracted the attention of the neighbouring Parbatipur municipality. Cabinet members there expressed their interest in working in partnership with the CSP. In contrast to Saidpur, they started negotiations with Concern to launch their own CSP. Following a series of discussions, Concern shifted the programme from Mymensingh to Parbatipur.

### Capacity assessment of partners

After developing the partnership it was necessary to conduct a Health Institution Capacity Assessment (HICAP) to understand the strengths and weaknesses of both municipalities and to develop a capacity-building plan. The issue was very sensitive. We considered a number of factors when choosing the right technique.

- The assessment process should in itself be empowering for the municipalities.
- The process should include a wide range of stakeholders, including municipality cabinet members and health staff.

Community members were not directly involved in the organisational capacity assessment, as usually only members of the organisation participate.

- The process should be sensitive to the culture of local government organisations, such as showing respect for leaders, working within a bureaucracy, etc. Most capacity assessment tools often analyse organisational weaknesses and then suggest ways to strengthen the organisation. Usually, these processes highlight bureaucracy, corruption, accountability, etc. as the key weaknesses. To keep a positive focus, we decided to conduct the capacity assessment based on organisational strengths.
- The process should suit municipality cabinet members' level of awareness about capacity-building. Their activities are usually centred on gaining votes. Capacity assessments and capacity-building approaches have no direct visible outcomes. We wanted to introduce a process that first examined organisational **strengths** for which cabinet members could feel proud, and **then** focus the process on how capacity-building could make the organisation more effective.

We chose a process called Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999). We organised two separate capacity assessment workshops with two municipalities, attended by municipality cabinet members and health staff.

### Using Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

AI is an approach that selectively seeks to locate, highlight and illuminate the dynamic forces within an organisation. We used an AI change process called the 4D Model: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Deliver.

- The discovery phase identified what gave the organisation life. We conducted appreciative interviews with municipality cabinet members and health staff, emphasising positive experiences and stories of excellence. For many, it was the first time they had been invited to think like this.
- The dream phase encouraged participants to visualise what a positive future might look like. Small groups formed to pull the elements of their visions together into a picture. The dream phase was both practical (grounded in the municipality's history) and generative (as it sought to expand the organisational potential).
- The design phase looked into designing a process by determining specific short- and long-term targets towards achieving the dream. Here we identified capacity areas, and analysed the existing capacity by using a visual scale (see Chart 2) and developed a capacity-building action plan to achieve the targets.
- The delivery phase covered the launching and monitoring

Concern staff review  
programme activities



Photo: Rezaul Helali

of capacity-building action plans. We developed indicators for each capacity area to monitor the capacity development.

Through AI, we identified six capacity areas for both municipalities:

- monitoring and evaluation;
- coordination;
- leadership;
- human resources development;
- participation; and
- resource mobilisation.

The CSP staff also conducted training in participatory approaches, such as an awareness-building workshop on participatory learning and action and participatory management. The CSP helped to build the partners' capacity by:

- training municipality cabinet members and health staff;
- providing on-the-job support for health staff;
- strengthening the health monitoring system;
- training service providers;
- collaborating and networking; and,
- conducting learning visits.

### Designing the programme

The programme plan was developed based on the findings and recommendations of the earlier baseline researches. A series of planning workshops were conducted both in Saidpur and Parbatipur, attended by the municipality cabinet and health staff, representatives from the WHCs, sub district-level health staff, CSP staff, and representatives from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. A group process was facilitated to develop the action plan, ensuring that it reflected concerns and recommendations.

Making sure that the socially excluded groups participated in these workshops was very important. CSP staff advised the ward commissioners to have a WHC meeting to

### Box 1: Sustainability Framework

The Child Survival Technical Support Unit (CSTS) of ORC Macro collaborated with the CORE Group, a membership organisation of over 35 non-governmental organisations managing USAID Child Survival and Health Grants. They initiated a process of developing a common framework for assessing the sustainability of these grants. Through a thorough literature review and key informant interviews, the study revealed that there is no 'magic bullet' or single set of steps to achieve sustainability. However, there are a few key areas that improve the probability of succeeding. The three dimensions of the sustainability framework are: primary health goals, organisational and capacity viability, and community and social ecological systems (Sarriot, 2002).

The health goal is to contribute to the reduction of maternal and child mortality and morbidity by (a) improving protection of child health through immunisations and environmental sanitation, (b) improving safe motherhood and newborn care, and (c) improving feeding and care practices for young children.

The community goal uses WHCs as the main vehicle for strengthening the capacity and competency of the municipality population for sustainable health. The programme goal is that 80% of the WHCs are functional, as per their roles and responsibilities.

The institutional capacity goal is to strengthen the municipality health departments' management, technical skills, and community approach so that it can effectively coordinate and promote health services in the municipality.

select the workshop participants. At the meeting, the ward commissioners acknowledged that they had limited knowledge about the health-related problems of children and mothers from socially excluded groups. So, in order to develop an effective programme plan, the members of the WHCs selected a diverse group of representatives, including socially excluded groups, private service providers, and key community workers.

The programme plan was designed not to introduce any techniques/procedures beyond the capacity of the primary stakeholders. For example, it created a Health Management Information System which relied on existing municipal forms, other service providers' forms and sub district-level health records. This system collates the major achievements reached jointly by the municipalities and their service providers. It also provides a common ground for better collaboration and sharing of information among them.

A mid-term assessment and sustainability review helped the CSP team to counter-check the overall programme effectiveness and the likelihood of achieving lasting impact. It helped to refocus efforts on key areas of the WHCs' capacity definitions and building, the coordination of health service providers and the effectiveness of the behaviour change interventions (see Box 1).

## Achievements

### Changes in the community

All health outcome targets have been surpassed over the past four years. For example, the institutional deliveries increased from 25% in 1999/2000 and nearly doubled in 2003. The immunisation coverage exceeded 75% since 2001. Similarly, the use of antenatal services and seeking appropriate care for sick children escalated.

WHCs have now been established in every ward. A number of them are ready to function independently. WHCs are organising community-level health promotion events. WHCs and the municipality are actively working to improve environmental sanitation, including latrine use and hand washing. The WHC has now become a successful focal point for community mobilisation.

Community health volunteers, most of whom are students, play an important role in raising awareness in the community about health services. They view volunteering as a positive step towards gaining a future career. But the sustainability of the WHCs does not solely depend on volunteers. It also relies on the leadership and political willingness of the ward commissioners and the active involvement of other WHC members. Ward commissioners respond to social pressure from within the community to take a proactive role in leading an effective WHC.

The CSP also understood the importance of the roles played by the traditional birth attendants (TBA), rural medical practitioners, and the other private practitioners (e.g. homeopathic doctors). The CSP developed an innovative approach to the development of their capacity. This involved training to improve their knowledge and technical expertise, developing an effective referral linkage with local health institutions, and establishing a sustainable support network using the WHC. Women with obstetric complications and newborns are now given timely referrals for care. TBAs are also reinforcing the importance of antenatal and postpartum care (during pregnancy and after birth) during home visits. The TBAs benefited from the training, which also improved their reputations as healers and their social standing. The CSP involved local community leaders, *imams* of the mosques, and teachers with its activities through the WHCs, who worked very closely with the other WHC members. Highly mobilised and motivated, they directly contributed to fundraising through house-to-house appeals to cover health service costs for the very poor. If necessary, they also met with hospital administration staff to negotiate reduced bills for such families.

**Bilikis, the second wife of an absent husband, and her baby survived because of social support from the WHC**

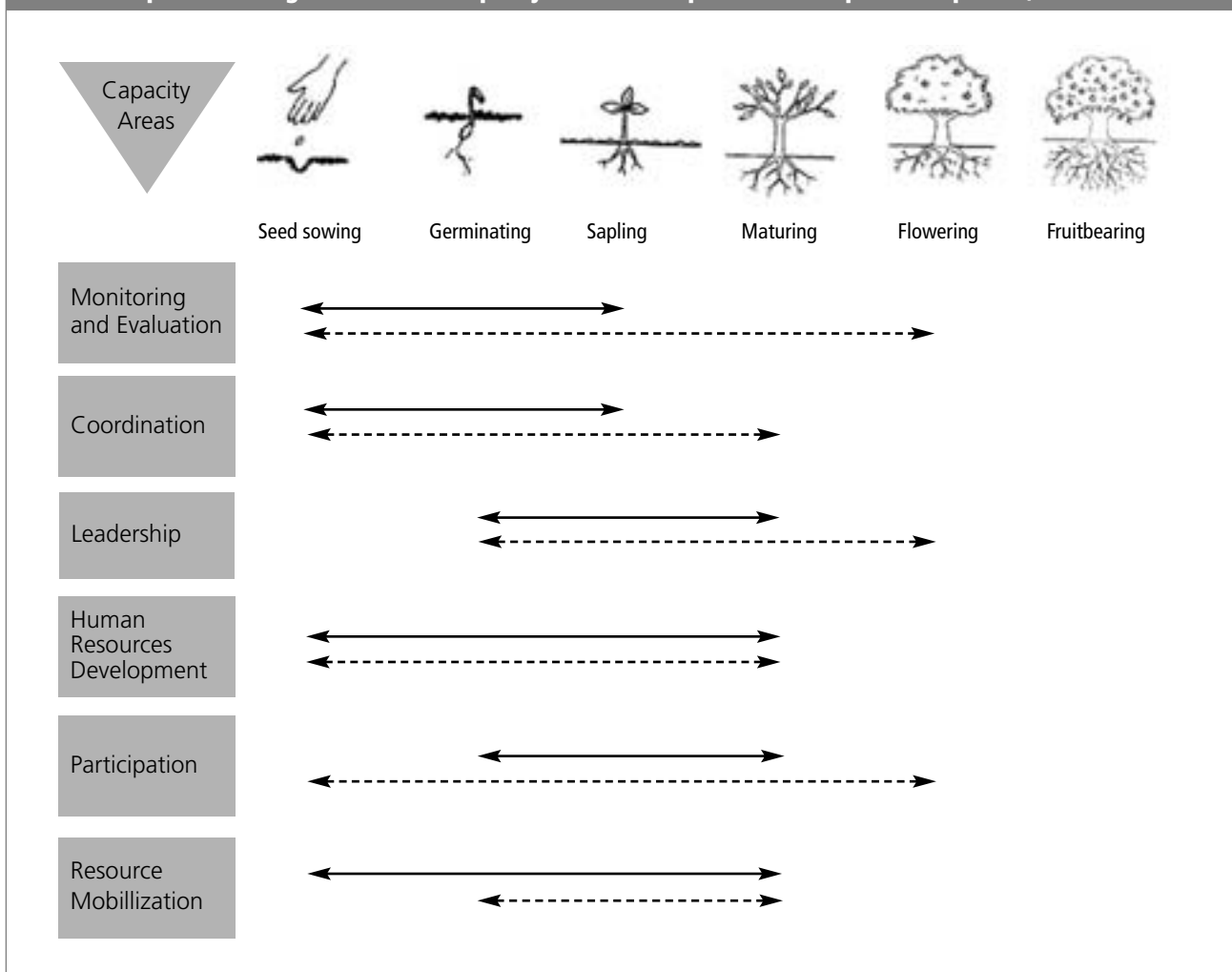


Photo: Michelle Kouletio

### Changes in the municipality

Health is now one of the most regular and prioritised agenda items for the cabinet members. This is evident from their efforts to increase budgetary allocations for health. In Parbatipur, the annual figure has gone from Taka 15,000 (US\$250) for 2000-2001 to Taka 120,000 (US\$2,000) in 2004-2005. Cabinet members are actively promoting events such as National Immunisation Days. Ward commissioners are leading their respective WHCs. Increased health staff capacity means more effective healthcare provision. Society's attitude towards the municipality health department and staff has become much more positive. The attitude of the health staff towards their services has also changed dramatically as a result of increased social acceptance.

Strengthening the Municipality Essential Services Package Coordinating Committees (MESPPCC) is one of the priority

**Chart 2: Comparative change in six defined capacity areas for Saidpur and Parbatipur municipalities, 2000 and 2004**

**Key:** Arrow length indicates the growth in capacity areas. The top line represents Saidpur and the bottom line represents Parbatipur.

areas that emerged as tensions developed between an increased community demand for health services and access to quality care. Although MESPCC exists on paper as a government-sanctioned body, there are very few functioning examples. However, with municipality leadership and some external facilitation, the MESPCCs now work towards developing a mutual understanding of the health situation, trust, resource mobilisation, data analysis, and joint priority-setting among private, NGO, government, and informal health service providers. They help focus the provision of quality health services based on the expressed needs of the WHCs and Health Department.

### Changes within Concern

Other new development partnerships have been initiated following the CSP example. Capacity-building and effective stakeholder participation are now central to all of the programmes. Programme strategies and results are being shared at the national level and Concern is applying learning from the field to advocate for policy changes both at local and national levels.

### Future challenges

All through its journey, the CSP has faced a number of challenges. Future challenges also remain:



Children from  
Saidpur



Photo: Michelle Kouletio

- Since the municipality cabinet consists of democratically elected representatives, there is always the possibility that the cabinet may change, and no longer be willing to endorse CSP activities.
- In a recent circular, the government asked ward commissioners **not** to participate in MESPCC meetings. This circular was the outcome of the World Health Organization's GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunization) project. The project advocated that including ward commissioners in the MESPCC increased the size of the committee, which they saw as an obstacle to decision-making processes. Concern is trying to get an access to GAVI to understand the implications of this and has already initiated an advocacy programme with the government to withdraw this circular. Concern believes that the participation of the ward commissioners **increases** the effectiveness of the decision-making process. The best example is

that in the last few years, the government opened/relocated many vaccination camps within the sweepers' colonies, non-Bengali camps, and remote areas on National Immunisation Days **because** of the strong voice of the ward commissioners in MESPCC.

- Except for the medical officer and the supervisor, the other health department members of staff are considered 'casual labour'. This makes running the programme difficult, as from their perspective, their ownership is, and is likely to remain, abstract, until they achieve tenured staff status. Once thought of as being minimally qualified and ineffective, with CSP training, they have become effective team members. Until recently, neither municipality had a medical officer. Yet even without a medical officer it is possible to develop a sustainable urban health system. However, without acknowledging the contribution of the health department staff, it will become unsustainable. Concern is

## **"The prospects for sustainability are promising. Health promotion continues. High levels of local ownership and capacity based on local resource availability have been established"**

now conducting a local-level advocacy programme, and the initial outcomes are positive. The municipal authorities recently increased the monthly salaries of these master roll employees from Taka 700 (US\$11.67)/month to Taka 900 (US\$15)/month.

- The WHCs have been raising funds to support the poorest mothers. However, any fund mismanagement will endanger the WHCs. Concern has already initiated account management training and is assisting WHCs in opening bank accounts, which will be operated jointly by the ward commissioner and the secretary. Concern is also working closely with WHCs to develop a guideline for spending money from this fund.

### **Lessons learnt**

Concern has gained valuable lessons both from the programme and the organisational perspectives.

### **Lessons from capacity-building**

Capacity-building requires specialised skills in facilitating, negotiating and communicating in participatory and appreciative ways. These skills are different to those needed to implement programmes directly. Concern undertook the CSP while it was shifting from direct implementation to partnership.

Despite promising changes in the capacity areas of the municipalities, Concern inputs were weakened by high turnover of key staff throughout the programme life. Strong technical leaders were promoted to positions which limited their time and scope for guiding the team on the ground. It was difficult to recruit and retain qualified team leaders due to the distance of these sites from the capital city and the nature of qualifications required. These issues resulted in local team leadership gaps for extended periods of time, limiting the overall achievement.

### **Community and resource mobilisation**

Concern has realised that if the community is properly mobilised, and if the messages can be communicated prop-

erly to them, they can make anything possible. The effective involvement of several segments of the community in the CSP was helped by various strategies:

- organising meetings (e.g. mothers' gathering, husbands' gathering);
- observing national and international days;
- through folk songs and slide shows;
- arranging competitions (e.g. best father competition); and
- awards (e.g. volunteers' performance reward).

Concern never provided any direct financial inputs either to the municipality authorities or to the community. Our efforts were confined to capacity building inputs. Instead of providing resources, Concern has tried to assist municipalities to identify under-utilised local and national resources that they can have access to.

### **Reaching more people**

This was the first Concern Bangladesh programme to show that partnerships with local government are a very effective way of reaching more people. When Concern was directly providing health services in slum clinics it was only reaching 85,000 people in five different urban areas. Through this partnership CSP now reaches over 200,000 people in the two municipalities, and is preparing to scale-up to seven more municipalities with a total population of over one million. More important is that the latter approach costs much less, is more sustainable and helps to ensure the community's ownership.

### **Protection of the very poor**

One of the most promising transformations was the increased awareness and support of local leaders to the needs of the very poor and voiceless members of society. They gained a strong understanding of the realities of limited healthcare access among the most vulnerable. Understanding obstacles to reaching hospitals during pregnancy emergencies triggered most of the WHCs to develop special funds and social support mechanisms to reduce these barriers.

### **Partnership with local government is possible**

Partnership with any political institution, especially with local government, is challenging. Local governments do not have sufficient resources. They expect resource endowments from any partnership. They need to be convinced about the benefits of conducting capacity-building over immediate tangible supports, which can often cause conflict between the approaches of programmes like the CSP and the expectations of the partners. However, from the experiences so far,

it has been evident that these partnerships can be successful, provided that the right strategies are used.

### Differences in success between municipalities

Different levels of success were detected between the two municipalities. Parbatipur is smaller and has a more cohesive population. Participation in the programme was demand-driven, and there was strong and consistent municipal leadership. Saidpur also made good progress. However, despite his willingness to participate, the leader's time was limited because of his competing responsibilities as a national leader. Saidpur municipality's larger population is much less cohesive with a more diverse ethnic and social composition. Chart 2 shows these differences very clearly in terms of growth in defined capacity areas, which were assessed in 2000 and 2004 based on a set of self-developed indicators.

### Final remark: prospects for sustainability

The prospects for sustainability are promising. Health promotion continues. High levels of local ownership and capacity based on local resource availability have been established. The government uses local structures to facilitate the programme's coordination and participation. National recognition for these achievements and effectiveness has stimulated linkages for ongoing technical support. And several other municipalities have initiated similar processes and strategies by learning directly from Saidpur and Parbatipur.

Over the next five years, the pioneers for municipal health

will serve as a Learning Centre, sharing and teaching others, and reinforcing pride and leadership.

Yes despite this, how much does the CSP depend on volunteerism? Sceptics argue that once Concern withdraws, the structure developed in the CSP will slowly disintegrate and it is only a matter of time before the municipality will be back to *status quo ante*. Only time will tell, but there are aspects of the CSP urban health model and its community involvement that offer hope. Young volunteers are effective and dropout is not an issue when there is a community support system. With a high level of community enthusiasm and involvement, students, both women and men, are eager to volunteer and devote up to eight hours a week helping their neighbours on maternal and child health issues. The fact that there are additional youth who work along side and assist the volunteers is even more remarkable. These 'interns' are the Community Health Volunteers-in-waiting who will step into the volunteers' slot if the volunteer gets a paying job, gets married or moves with their family to another location. The volunteers are a positive example of how youth can contribute and use their skills, energy and commitment. In addition, there exists two-way accountability between the community and municipality cabinet members that will go a long way to ensuring that municipal and ward activities continue. Cabinet members cannot ignore the social pressure from the electoral community, which will ultimately force them to take a proactive role in leading an effective WHC.

### CONTACT DETAILS

Dipankar Datta  
Partnership and Capacity Building Adviser,  
Policy Development and Evaluation Directorate,  
Concern Worldwide, 52-55 Lower  
Camden Street, Dublin 2, Republic of Ireland.  
Email: dipankar2kbd@yahoo.com

Michelle Kouletio  
Child Survival and Health Adviser, Concern  
Worldwide Inc., US, 104 East 40th Street,  
Room 903, New York, NY 10016, USA.

Taifur Rahman  
Coordinator, Publication & Documentation,  
Organisational Development Unit, Concern  
Bangladesh, House 58, 1st Lane Kalabagan,  
Dhaka 1205, Bangladesh.

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## 15

# Using actor-oriented tools to analyse innovation systems in Bangladesh

by HARRIET MATSAERT, ZAHIR AHMED, NOUSHIN ISLAM and FARUQE HUSSAIN

## Introduction

These guidelines are based on our experiences of using an actor-oriented approach to identify pro-poor interventions in chilli and livestock innovation systems in the char lands (river islands) of Bangladesh. For more information see our research project report and companion paper (Matsaert *et al.*, 2004 a and b).

In the first section we discuss what we mean by an actor-oriented approach. The second section describes the tools we have been developing and in the final section we discuss our experiences in Bangladesh and some of the issues this has raised.

## What do we mean by an actor-oriented approach?

Innovation systems are made up of a range of actors involved in generating and using new knowledge, technologies, management practices, marketing processes and institutional relationships.

The actor-oriented approach is based on the premise that a healthy and effective 'innovation system' is one where there are strong flows of information and useful partnership coalitions between key actors over time. This view has been strongly supported by studies of innovation processes (see for example Douthwaite, 2002, on Enabling Innovations).

**"The importance of partnership in development interventions is widely accepted by those working in development. However, it is our experience that, in practice, the issue of how to build strong links and partnerships is often neglected"**

The importance of partnership in development interventions is widely accepted by those working in development. However, it is our experience that, in practice, the issue of **how** to build strong links and partnerships is often neglected. One reason is the lack of tools to allow development actors to analyse actor links and to plan, monitor and evaluate interventions which relate specifically to this aspect of their work.

Here, the actor-oriented approach focuses on identifying the key actors in a system, mapping the links and information flows between them, and looking at how these inhibit or support pro-poor innovations. The actor-oriented tools described below have been designed specifically to assist development actors to integrate linkage and partnership

issues more fully into their work.

These tools are drawn from a wide range of sources. These include social anthropological and social network research techniques (see Long and Long, 1992; Lewis, 1998), stakeholder analysis (see Grimble and Wellard, 1997), agricultural information knowledge systems (see Roling and Jiggins, 1997) and process monitoring and documentation (see Mosse *et al.*, 1998). However, the tools are not commonly found in the analysis and planning of interventions in natural resource-based innovation systems.<sup>1</sup>

Actor-oriented tools complement other planning, monitoring and evaluation tools. They focus on the structure of social relationships between the key actors involved in a development scenario. We have found them useful for:

- **analysis** of a given institution (e.g. an organisation or enterprise, project or sector) in terms of strong and weak linkages between its 'actors';
- **planning**: visual presentation of critical links which should be supported or developed to meet the overall development goals e.g. poverty reduction, inclusion of marginal groups.
- **monitoring and evaluation**: visualising how interventions have impacted on critical linkages over time.

The tools that we have used and that are described in detail in this paper are outlined in Table 1.

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Brief description</b>	<b>Objective</b>
<b>Actor timeline</b>	Similar to a PRA timeline, but focuses on key actors and innovations.	To understand the dynamics of an innovation system and identify key actors.
<b>Actor linkage maps</b>	Arrows used to plot links between key actors.	To identify key actors.
<b>Actor linkage matrices</b>	Links between key actors plotted onto an Excel matrix.	To visualise the links between key actors.
<b>Determinants diagram</b>	Group exercise focusing on understanding particular links.	To summarise and analyse findings. For planning, monitoring and evaluating change.
		Used for in-depth analysis of an actor linkage e.g. issues of control and trust between actors.

<sup>1</sup> For examples of use by others in NR innovation systems see Ramirez, 1997 *Understanding Farmers Communication Networks* (IIED, Gatekeeper series) [www.iied.org/sarl/gatekeepers/gk\\_abs/abs61\\_70.html#66](http://www.iied.org/sarl/gatekeepers/gk_abs/abs61_70.html#66) and other related work which can be found on [www.isglink.org](http://www.isglink.org).

#### **Box 1: How to create an actor timeline**

Timelines can be generated through a review of literature, individual interviews (particularly with people with a long association with the innovation system) and group discussions. Usually a combination of all these will get you the fullest information.

Group discussions with knowledgeable people in the sector are useful to analyse and discuss the implications of the timeline e.g. trends and new directions.

For the group discussion, use a flip chart or blackboard.

- Start with the earliest recorded memory in this innovation system (e.g. in Figure 1, the introduction of chilli to the Indian subcontinent).
- Now mark key innovations since that time.
- On the timeline these can be linked to key events in local or national history e.g. independence, the year of the big flood, etc.
- For each innovation marked on the line, note actors who created or helped the spread of this innovation. These are the key actors.
- Discuss implications: how has this innovation system changed? Where is it heading now? Who have been the key actors in the past and present?
- The timeline can be plotted vertically as shown in Figure 1, or horizontally (see example in Biggs and Matsuert, 2004.)

We should stress here that we are not advocating a 'blue-print approach' to actor-oriented analysis. Rather we would like to share some tools that we have found useful. We have used them in combination with a range of other research methods: PRA, quantitative surveys, focus group discussions. The type of tool to use and way to use it should be adjusted depending on the context of the analysis and aims of the users.

These tools can be used to analyse large amounts of data collected through a research activity. But equally, they can be useful to guide group discussions based on group members' existing knowledge of an innovation system (see discussion of long-term versus short-term approaches in the final section which looks at our experience of using these tools in Bangladesh).

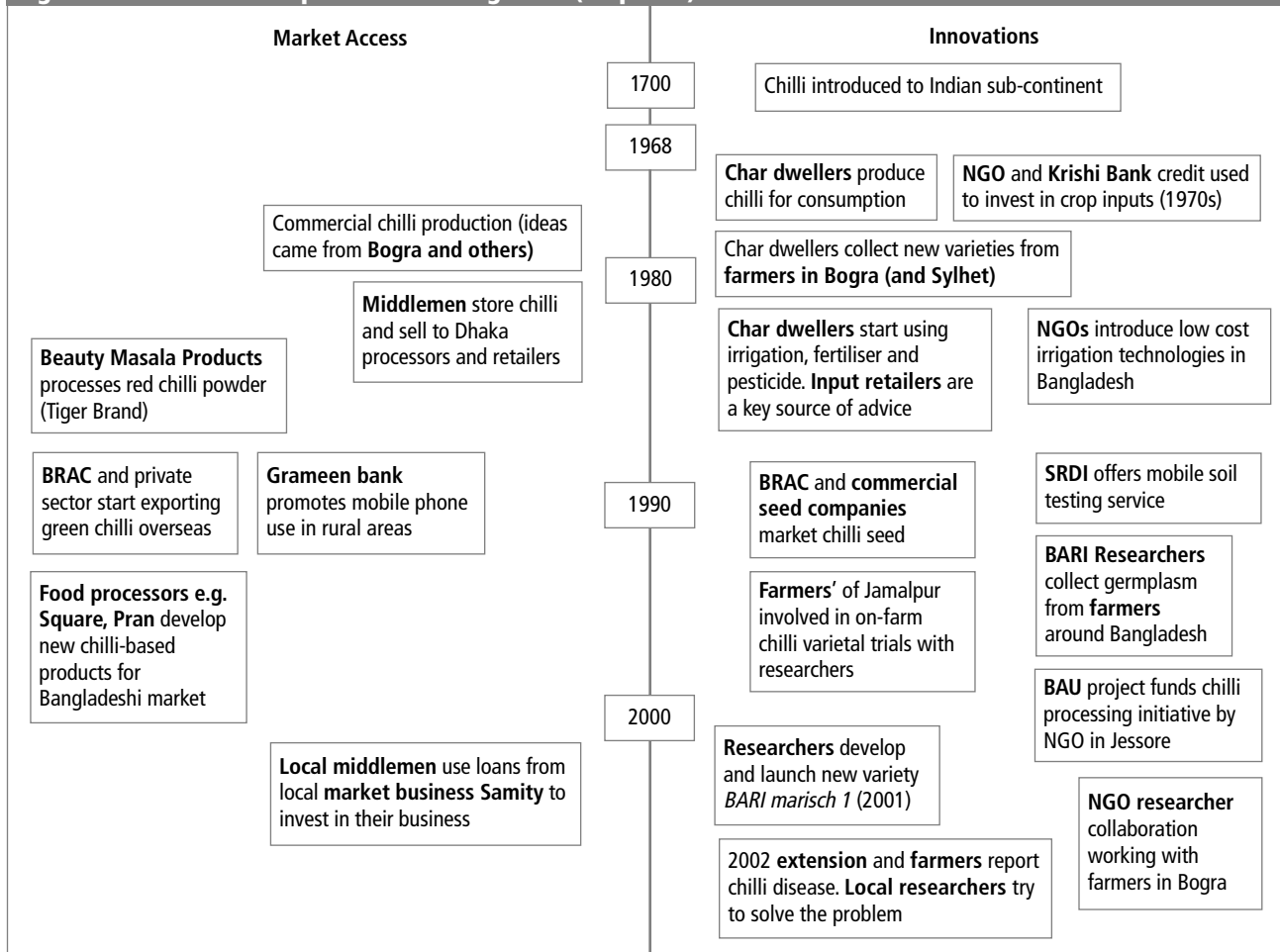
## **Tools**

### **Actor timeline (Figure 1)**

This maps the history of an innovation system. It looks specifically at significant changes and at the roles of key actors over time. Developing a timeline is a useful starting point for an



Figure 1: Timeline for chilli production in Bangladesh (simplified)



actor-oriented analysis. The timeline helps to identify who the key actors are, and what their role is and has been. It also gives a feeling for the dynamics of an innovation system and where it is currently heading (see Box 1).

### Actor linkage maps (see Box 2)

This exercise builds on the timeline in helping to identify key actors, and goes further in analysing the links between them. 'Ego-based' maps can be developed with individual actors to look at who they link with. 'Innovation system' maps are used to combine and synthesise 'ego-based' linkage maps, allowing the overall network of links between key actors to be visualised.

Maps can be developed by a group to summarise their knowledge of a key actor or innovation system. In other circumstances maps might be used to summarise the find-

ings of more quantitative data based on interviews or to monitor key actors in case studies.

Maps can be used on a wide range of scales. For example, you could use a map to look at information flows within an organisation, or to look at links in a regional or national innovation system. One user noted that using a (ego-based) map is a good tool to carry out a 'health check' of your organisation's linkages.

A different map would be used for a past situation, a current situation and a future scenario situation. Remember the maps of the past and present should reflect actual situations and therefore might look very different from official organisational charts. If you are planning to bring a new actor into the situation, then you add this actor to the map, with planned linkage arrows.

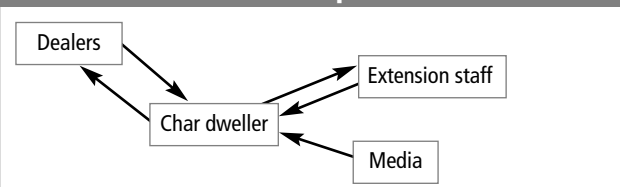
**Box 2: How to create a linkage map**

As with the timeline, maps can be drawn up by one actor or in a group.

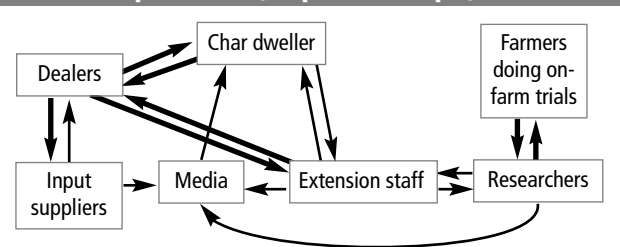
**1. Ego-based map**

- Put the name of the actor in the centre of the page
- Ask the actor who they link with for different aspects of their enterprise
- Use arrows to show direction of flow of information or services
- Use thick or thin arrows to indicate the importance of the link

**Figure 2: Ego-based linkage map: Char dweller links for access to information on chilli production**



**Figure 3: Actor linkage map: information flows in char-based chilli production (simplified example)**

**Actor linkage matrix (see Figures 4 and 5)**

The matrix complements the map. It basically plots the same information as an 'innovation system' map but has the advantage of:

- allowing analysis of more complex systems with many actors (maps get very messy);
- ensuring all possible links between actors are considered, but then allowing you to focus on critical linkages; and,
- allowing links to be given a value (strong ones and weak ones).

**How to create a linkage matrix**

- Use a spreadsheet programme e.g. Excel.
- Plot key actors on vertical and horizontal axis.
- Each cell in the matrix represents the flow of information from the actor on the vertical axis to the actor on the horizontal. For example, cell 1D represents the flow of information from char dwellers to extension staff (in the map this is shown as an arrow). Row 1 represents all the information flowing from char dwellers to others. Column A

**Figure 4: Actor linkage matrix information flows in char-based chilli production (simplified example)**

Actors	A Char dwellers	B Farmers doing on-farm trials	C Researchers	D Extension staff	E Media	F Input suppliers	G Dealers
1 Char dwellers				✓			✓✓ ✓✓
2 Farmers doing on-farm trials			✓✓				
3 Researchers		✓✓		✓✓	✓		
4 Extension staff	✓				✓✓		✓✓
5 Media	✓				✓		
6 Input suppliers					✓✓		
7 Dealers	✓✓✓			✓✓		✓	

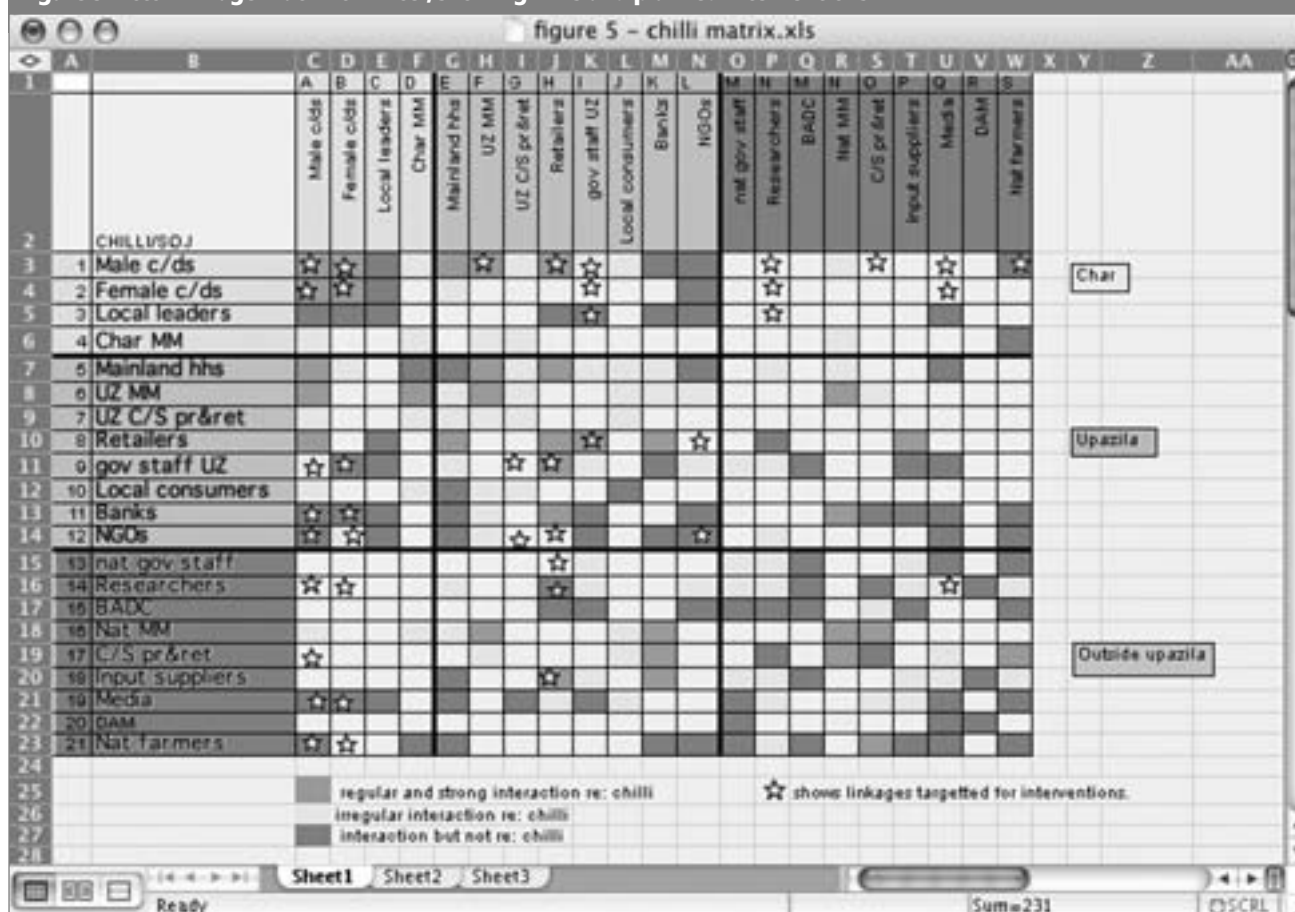
shows all the information coming from other actors to char dwellers.

- Use symbols or shading to show information flowing from one actor to another. Once you have agreed on the code, fill in for each actor linkage.
- Each cell in the matrix can be linked to a piece of text describing the linkage and explaining the ranking given.
- As with the actor linkage maps, a separate matrix can be used to represent past, present and possible future situations.
- For planning and monitoring purposes, symbols can be used to indicate linkages which are targeted for interventions or which have been impacted by a particular activity. See Figure 4, for a matrix showing an analysis of current links and targeted intervention areas. In this case the interventions were divided into those which have built on existing links, those which created new links, and those which aimed to change the nature of existing links (e.g. changing power relations).

**Variations on the basic matrix**

Complex matrix data can be visually represented on maps using the UCINET network analysis software, available free

Figure 5: Actor linkage matrix on Excel, showing links and planned interventions



on the Internet.<sup>2</sup>

For day-to-day office use, a **matrix board** can be used to show existing linkages and areas for interventions. This is a matrix drawn onto a board, with hooks in each square on which counters can be hung to represent the strength of a linkage. Coloured counters can be used to indicate targeted areas for intervention.

### Determinants diagram

This is intended as a group discussion tool to analyse the nature of a particular linkage. The tool encourages the group to explore the strengths and weaknesses of a particular linkage or relationship and to identify ways to build on strengths or overcome problems.

This tool is useful in analysing the quality of a linkage. Maps and matrices, as we have used them, only show the relative strength of relationships and don't give an indication of issues of control, transparency, relative satisfaction with links etc.

The determinants diagram leads from analysis of a particular situation to the development of action plans. For this reason it is most usefully used with key actors who would be involved in any future implementation of suggested actions.

### Our experience of using actor-oriented tools in Bangladesh

This research was hosted by Development Wheel (DEW), a small NGO working in the chars (river islands) in the Jamuna River in Bangladesh. Though fertile, the chars are extremely unstable and the river can wash them away as quickly as it builds them up. People here are amongst the poorest and

<sup>2</sup> Borgatti, S.P., M.G. Everett and L.C. Freeman (1999). UCINET 5.0 Version 1.00 Natick. Analytic Technologies.

**Box 3: How to create a determinants diagram**

- Identify linkages on your matrix that look particularly important or significant (perhaps because they are very strong or particularly strategic e.g. linking national and local actors). It is not necessary, and would be too time consuming to look at every link in a matrix. The group must decide which links to focus on, using agreed criteria, and based on their particular goals or interests. Occasionally we have combined a group of links (e.g. links between char dwellers and a range of national market actors) for discussion.
- Work with groups of actors to look more closely at this link (could be a mixed or single actor group, depending on how well you think the group dynamic will work).
- Write the linkage in the centre of a flip chart. Ask the group to start by discussing the strengths, examples of successful linking, good experiences etc. Mark these in the area above the link (see Figure 5).
- Now discuss any problems experienced with this link. Mark these in the area below the link. For each problem, try to get to the root cause, before going on to discuss the next.
- For each root cause, look for potential solutions. Try to encourage the group to make these active solutions (not things other people should do for them).
- For each strength, look at how this could be built on to further improve this linkage.
- The final result will be a list of ideas for action. Obviously some 'areas for intervention' (what to do) will be more possible to implement than others. The exercise helps open up a discussion about the feasibility of different actions within the current social and political context.

most vulnerable in Bangladesh. Due to their impermanent nature and separation from the mainland, infrastructure is limited and char people don't tend to have access to mainstream service providers and markets.

Our team worked together with DEW to look at ways to help char dwellers improve the benefits of their natural resource-based enterprises.<sup>3</sup> We wanted to look at how we could support char dwellers in getting better access to information, services and market opportunities.

The actor-oriented approach seemed particularly suitable for this type of analysis. We wanted to know who, in the absence of mainstream services, were the key actors involved in supporting char-based innovation systems. How, if at all, did these actors link with the formal system? Were there ways in which we could support this process?

<sup>3</sup> The partnership was made up of DEW staff, anthropologists from Jahangirnagar University, a business advisory NGO, and a freelance agro-anthropologist

**Box 4: An example of an important non-formal actor in beef production**

Our study found that char dwellers particularly need veterinary support in the post-flood winter months when there are many cattle diseases. While the government vets do not have the resources to visit the chars often, we found that at this critical time a group of traditional healers, known as *goyal* arrive at the chars. These healers have been coming here for many, many years (parents and grandparents carried out the same profession) and have very good relations with char dwellers. Their familiarity means they can communicate and help female household members who are often left alone in charge of animals. This is very important, as it is not culturally appropriate for women to meet with unknown men such as the government vets. After staying on the chars for a few months, the *goyals* return to their home area: one or two villages in Jessore. As they are gathered together here for much of the year it would be easy for service providers to meet with them and provide them with training or equipment to improve the quality of their work.

Using the actor-oriented tools described, over a 12-month period, helped us to:

- map indigenous service and marketing networks and identify some important actors and links which DEW were not previously aware of, and which they now plan to work with (see Box 4);
- through using the tools with key actors, we began to develop a shared vision and to build partnerships for action; and,
- set up a baseline understanding of key linkages, strengths and weaknesses which we can use to continue planning and monitoring changes in the char-based innovation systems.

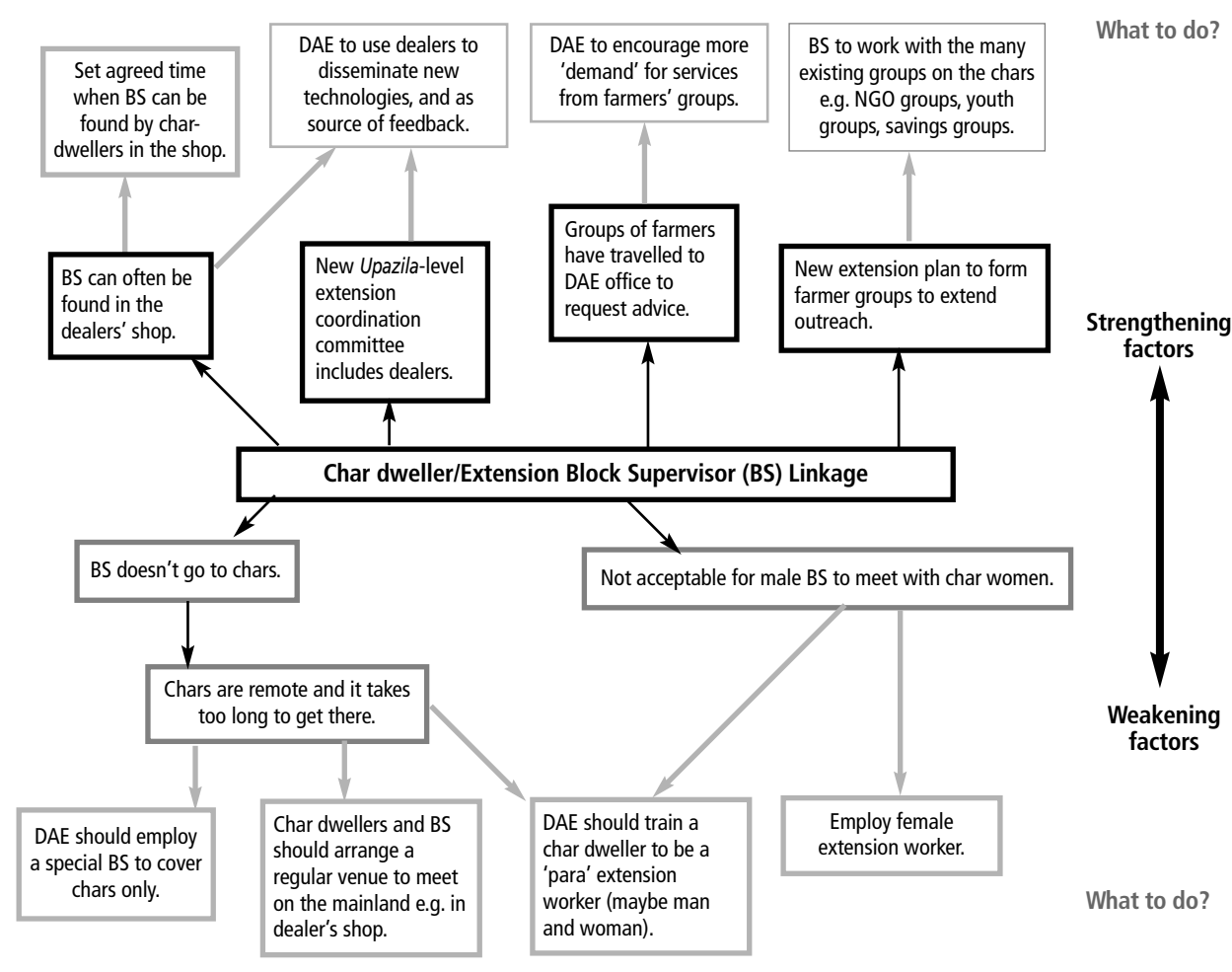
The research process we used consisted of a number of discrete phases: char-based and national surveys, case study monitoring, and focus group work. Through all of these we have tried to maintain an actor-oriented theme. The tools have been used in a PRA-type situation, in individual interviews and group discussions and the approach guided the design of our quantitative household survey.

We have found the actor-oriented tools useful, enlightening and productive in the analysis of innovation systems. As we reviewed the methodology, particular strengths observed by the team were:

- The actor-oriented approach is holistic, linking the local, district and national level actors. Other anthropological tools often fail to do this.
- The actor-oriented approach is pro-poor as actor groups can be disaggregated to focus on different resource levels, gender etc.
- The approach encourages us to recognise and build on

**Figure 6: Determinants diagram (simplified)**

Exploring the link between extension and char dwellers (currently weak)



indigenous systems.

- The tools make issues around actor links visible, for example highlighting gaps and showing innovative links.
- As well as being used to map an existing innovation system, we found the tools useful for evaluating individual events (who was linked to whom) and for planning interventions.
- The combination of individual case study monitoring and focus group discussions was useful. Individual discussions gave us rich detail and allowed us to discuss sensitive information and to get in depth information. Focus group discussions were useful for cross-checking, consensus building and for developing ideas for interventions.
- Participation of actors was very good, particularly in group

settings. People enjoyed using the actor-oriented tools. They generated much animated discussion.

### PRA, household interviews, case study monitoring, focus group discussions: which method is best for actor-oriented analysis?

We found that the combination of research styles was very effective. Our initial PRA exercise raised actors' awareness of our work and definitely helped build a good working relationship between the coalition team members. However, in the Bangladeshi rural context we found the PRA had some limitations. At the end of the exercise we did not feel we had adequately met our aims of understanding livelihoods and



**Male char dwellers meet with other key actors (researchers, extension workers, private sector buyers) to help build new linkages**



Photo: Shah Abdus Salam

building support for the study. This was due to the problem of getting large and representative group meetings. Men tended to be absent at work during the day, and women felt constrained from attending a meeting in a public space or in another household's compound. As a result there was a tendency for meetings to be dominated by one household. This made us unsure of the representativeness of our findings, and made it hard to understand and categorise different household and livelihood types.

In order to get a better understanding of household livelihoods we followed up the PRA with a quantitative household survey. We visited each household in the two study areas. The survey helped us to get a better feeling for the differences between households and to ensure that the case study monitoring stage included a range of household types.

For detailed information and to build an understanding of innovation processes, individual case studies were extremely valuable. Building on these, focus group discussions helped us to confirm the relevance of findings, to build consensus on key issues and to take analysis forward into action planning.

In a shorter exercise, actor identification, case studies and focus group work are probably the most critical exercises to get a good picture of actor links in an innovation system.

### **Subsector mapping and actor linkage maps: similarities and differences**

In this study we used both subsector mapping and actor-oriented maps. Our research team members from BASC (Business Advisory Services Centre) frequently use subsector maps when carrying out business analysis. They found that the actor-oriented map gives a different perspective in analysing innovation systems for a number of reasons. See table below.

Our BASC team members felt that the actor linkage matrix was complementary to the subsector maps, with both having a role to play in project planning. Actor-

**Table 2**

<b>Subsector map</b>	<b>Actor linkage map</b>
Looks at movement of goods in the market chain.	Looks at flows of information and goods. Not only what happens to the product, but how producers get access to information.
Focuses on economic interactions.	Looks at social and political as well as economic interactions.
Seeks to identify weak points in the existing market chain and ways to support these.	Seeks to identify alternatives to the traditional or mainstream linkages.  Looks for potential to enhance systems through developing new links.

**Social mapping exercise with villagers in Nolshunda char**



Photo: Shah Abdus Salam

**An insignificant looking building houses a key actor in the innovation system: inputs retailer and source of advice on new technologies**



Photo: Shah Abdus Salam

oriented analysis seems to be more suited to situations where there are a wide range of actors, with complementary skills or products, and where there is potential for new innovations to come from building links between these.

### Long-term versus short-term analysis

In this research project we spent 12 months monitoring the links of our case study actors. This gave us the advantage of being able to identify key events and locations which bring actors together over the agricultural year. A second advantage of a long-term analysis phase was that it gave us time to develop relationships and build coalitions with our key actors to take us into the action planning stage.

On the negative side, we had some problems keeping some of our actors interested in what we were doing over a 12-month period. Some, particularly on the private sector side would have liked to have seen us move into action soon.

Most development actors do not have the luxury of a 12 or 18-month project preparation stage. We believe that the actor-oriented tools and approach followed here could be carried out over a shorter time period, using one-off interviews or case studies and group discussions rather than longitudinal case study monitoring. This would be particularly the case if good relationships with key actors are already established or by including representatives of key actor groups in the core research team.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Following the completion of this research project, some members of the research team will be involved in implementing a shorter-term study of a business innovation system. This study is being carried out as a pilot for Katalyst, a Bangladesh business development programme

### Political issues around presenting actor linkage information

One problem we encountered in our work concerned the political nature of the information revealed by our study. In some cases our findings on links contradicted the 'officially accepted' understanding of how things work. For example, our finding that DAE block supervisors are rarely seen on the char contradicted DAE's image as the ministry that reaches every corner of the country.

Presenting information that contradicts an organisation's self image, particularly when, as in this case, it was presented by a small NGO to a large powerful organisation, is very problematic. Our findings were met with hostility and disbelief.

We soon realised that there was a contradiction within our own project aims of:

- critically analysing the current institutional environment; and,
- building partnerships to improve it.

As the research project progressed we moved away from 'critical, and judgemental' analysis that might alienate our research and coalition members, turning instead to a more 'appreciative enquiry' approach (see Magruder *et al.*, 2001). This does not mean we ignore weak links or pretend they don't exist. However, rather than focusing on them we look instead for positive links and ways forward. For example, looking at the char dweller/DAE relationship we found cases of farmers actively seeking out the block supervisor or even visiting the DAE *upazila* office and receiving the advice and services they required. Building

**Creating actor linkages through our work:  
community facilitators, NGO members,  
anthropologists and agricultural  
researchers working together**



Photo: Shah Abdus Salam

GENERAL SECTION

on this, and exploring how to develop this (still rare) linkage initiative is more constructive than dwelling on the fact that a low paid government employee, such as a block supervisor, is (and probably will always be) reluctant to make the long and tiresome journey to the chars.

Another change we have made is to move away from a 'quantitative valuation of links', which can also give an impression of judgement. Instead we use a colour-coded system showing the relative strengths of links.

We believe that changing the manner in which we approach our analysis does not lessen its effectiveness. In fact it is a more realistic and constructive way of ensuring that our analysis results in changes in the behaviour of key actors, and moves from the theoretical to the practical.

### **Maps and matrices: how useful are they in visualising and analysing actor links?**

In our research work we found maps to be most useful for group discussions, plotting out links together with actors and for presenting findings back to them. However, maps can soon get very complex and web-like. It is easy to miss particular links. For systematic analysis, for ensuring all links are considered, and for planning, monitoring and evaluating the impact on particular links, we found the actor linkage matrix a more useful tool.

We have experimented with the use of an actor linkage

board, as an alternative to the Excel spreadsheet.<sup>5</sup> This makes the matrix more accessible for group use. But we still find that a group prefers to revert to maps and finds these easier to work with. A matrix board might be useful as an office tool, to be used regularly with a small team to monitor progress in managing links.<sup>6</sup>

During the research period we were introduced to the UCINET software.<sup>7</sup> This can be used to translate matrices into maps. The maps can then easily be manipulated to show, for example, only the strongest links, or links for one actor. We've found them an extremely useful complementary tool to the matrix.

One shortcoming we have found with the map and matrix is the difficulty in representing the 'quality' of a linkage. In our current use, maps and matrices show relative strength of links but cannot express issues such as the balance of power and control in a relationship (though separate arrows and cells do represent the direction of information flow). To actually analyse the quality of a link we found the determinants diagram group discussion exercise very effective. Currently, this analysis is summarised in a text

<sup>5</sup> This is a matrix drawn onto a board, with hooks in each square on which counters can be hung to represent the strength of a linkage.

<sup>6</sup> DEW plan to use matrix boards in their field office to monitor progress in developing proposed interventions.

<sup>7</sup> Borgatti, SP, MG Everett and LC Freeman, (1999.) UCINET 5.0 Version 1.00 Natick. Analytic Technologies.

description of key links. It would be interesting to explore ways of visually representing this.

## Conclusion

We have written up our experiences of using this approach because we have found using these tools exciting and productive. Many of our development partners in Bangladesh and elsewhere have asked us to provide them with some guidelines to help them try out the tools themselves. We believe that these tools provide an important complement to other planning, monitoring and evaluation tools. They help us to focus on the 'who' and 'how' of our work, when there can be a tendency to get stuck in the 'what', 'where' and 'when' issues. Importantly the approach also encourages us to recognise and build on existing systems rather than imposing new structures.

We have used actor-oriented tools as part of an in depth, one-year study. However, we believe that they can be useful in shorter-term scenarios. Since completing this

study, team members have used the tools in a three-month analysis of a furniture innovation 'cluster' in Dhaka and on an even shorter, one-week review of personnel issues in a Bangladeshi port.

If you haven't used this approach before, we hope this paper will stimulate you try it out in your own situation. For those who are already using an actor-oriented approach, we hope this will make a useful contribution to the ongoing dialogue.

## Please contact us

We hope you find this review of actor-oriented tools and shared experiences of using the approach useful. If you have any feedback please contact us. We would also be interested in hearing your experiences of using this approach.

For more information on the use of actor-oriented tools in our work, please visit our website [www.development-wheel.org](http://www.development-wheel.org) or email Development Wheel at [dewhc@bdonline.org](mailto:dewhc@bdonline.org)

## CONTACT DETAILS

Harriet Matsaert, FCO (Dhaka), King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH, UK.  
Email: [matsaert@citech-bd.com](mailto:matsaert@citech-bd.com)

Dr. Zahir Ahmed, Chairperson, Department of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh.  
Email: [zahmed69@hotmail.com](mailto:zahmed69@hotmail.com)

Noushin Islam, Dhaka, Bangladesh.  
Email: [noushin\\_islam@yahoo.com](mailto:noushin_islam@yahoo.com)

Md. Faruque Hussain, Dhaka, Bangladesh.  
Email: [farukjuniv@hotmail.com](mailto:farukjuniv@hotmail.com)

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# Scaling up the use of PLA in a pilot health and nutrition programme, India

by AMITA JAIN, RAJIV S. SAXENA and SUBIR K. PRADHAN

## Introduction

The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) is the world's largest government programme of its kind and an 'initiative unparalleled in the history of India'.<sup>1</sup> The ICDS converges various sectoral services into a holistic women and child development scheme. It aims to improve the nutrition and health of children below six years and of pregnant women, nursing mothers and adolescent girls. The programme gives preference to areas predominantly inhabited by the most vulnerable and the poorest of the poor, where there are no provisions for healthcare. The programme offers services such as pre-school education, supplementary nutrition, growth monitoring, immunisation and health check ups, health and nutrition education, and referral.

The ICDS works with communities consisting predominantly of:

- families of landless labourers;
- families of marginal farmers (having less than 1 hectare land);
- families of scheduled castes/tribes (underprivileged class of people due to prevailing caste system in society); and

**"In spite of efforts for holistic children's development, one of the major constraints and bottlenecks experienced during the implementation of the ICDS programme, is the poor level of community participation"**

- families living below the poverty line.

The whole state is covered under the ICDS programme, with one *Anganwadi* centre (AWC) per 1,000 people, but a selection of 101 direct beneficiaries is based on the above criteria. These beneficiaries receive supplementary nutrition, growth monitoring and pre-school education from the AWCs. However, preference is given to the most needy, poorest of poor and vulnerable.

In ICDS, *Anganwadi* centres are established in the villages. They are run by *Anganwadi* workers (AWWs) and *Anganwadi* helpers (AWH). The workers and helpers are drawn from the community and both are paid an honorarium as a token of the services rendered by them. They are not regular government employees. The centres are courtyard play

<sup>1</sup> Published document: Ministry of Human Resource Development (1995) 'Integrated Child Development Services of Department of Women and Child Development.' Government of India: New Delhi.



**Box 1: Cause and effect tree: causing action**

In Gadia village, Ramnagar block in the Barabanki District, the majority of the population are from *dalit* castes households. *Dalit* castes are identified and defined by the Indian Constitution as disadvantaged groups of people. Most of the children were malnourished due to poverty. Their parents used to work as farm labourers, leaving small children at home, in the care of female relatives (usually sisters). The village AWW sought to encourage the parents of these children to come to the AWC, to get the children weighed so that their growth could be monitored, and for counselling for treatment and immunisation. But they resisted because of their belief, *humare bacche ko nazar lag jayegi* – that their child would be exposed to the evil eye of others (i.e. non-family members) if the child was brought in front of them. Other AWWs were also facing a similar situation in their villages. Although parents knew that weighing and immunisation etc. was necessary, they were not able to overcome their fear/misapprehension of the effects.

The AWWs facilitated meetings with these parents, to discuss and analyse malnutrition using a **cause and effect tree** tool. The groups made a tree on the floor showing roots, stem and branches etc. Roots were defined as causes and the branches as the effects of malnutrition. Ultimately, the whole group agreed that if they took proper care before and after birth, children would be safer and they would also be saving their money on treatment. The women in this group immediately came forward to weigh their children for growth monitoring and also showed willingness for immunisation.

centres and are the focal point for delivering services at community level. The workers conduct surveys to identify the beneficiaries and provide various services to them.

The World Bank has given a loan to the government of India for the ICDS project. However, the government has made this money available to the state government of Uttar Pradesh as grants for running the programme in 33 districts. In the remaining 27 districts, the state government uses its own resources to run the ICDS programme.

**The problem**

In spite of efforts towards the holistic development of children, one of the major constraints and bottlenecks experienced during the implementation of the ICDS programme is the poor level of community participation. Another constraint is the supply-driven mindset of the grassroots functionaries (AWWs) and their supervisors. The focus has remained on distributing supplementary nutrition, rather than using effective communication to seek positive behavioural changes to child bearing and rearing practices with the targeted communities. Communication for behavioural change is a complicated process of human actions, reactions and integration. It involves looking at situations from the viewpoint of other

**Box 2: The changing trends tool: for initiating discussion and analysis**

In Bargadia village, AWW helped the community to analyse social practices followed by their grandparents, parents and now, using a PLA tool called 'changing trends'. Women identified trends such as marriageable ages, pre- and post-care for mothers, feeding newborn babies and other feeding habits, diseases, crops, agricultural practices, occupations, pet animals etc. and how these trends had changed. They then discussed the benefits of and problems caused by these changes and drew up an action plan to overcome the present situation. Accordingly four women decided to convince their husbands not to marry off their adolescent daughters. Five mothers immediately requested that the AWW vaccinate their babies during their next visit. As explained in Box 1, the process showed that vaccinations could benefit their children and prevent the high cost of treatment.

people and understanding what they are looking for. It means understanding obstacles to change and presenting relevant and practical options and telling people what the effects will be of the choices they make. People tend to change when they understand the nature of change and view it as beneficial, so that they can make informed and conscious choices to include it in their list of priorities. Unless their circumstances are taken into account, no effort for change will be successful.

Facilitating qualitative change in the mindsets of functionaries towards role reversal and enabling them to acquire participatory skills would be the first priority in overcoming the above constraints. As the ICDS Programme in Uttar Pradesh employs more than 100,000 grassroots and supervisory functionaries, it is a big challenge to build up the capacities of these functionaries for the application PLA in their day-to-day work. The situation calls for developing appropriate in-house capacity-building mechanisms, with initial help from a specialist agency, to establish demand-responsive services.

**Piloting the experiment for scaling up**

In 1992, the article 'Participatory rural appraisal: potential applications in family planning, health and nutrition programmes' by Richard Heaver advocated the potential use of PRA in ICDS and Family Welfare programmes in India.<sup>2</sup> Yet no headway was made in any state in India in this direction.

In line with above mentioned article, ICDS in Uttar Pradesh, in partnership with the Centre for Symbiosis of Technology, Environment and Management (STEM) decided to experiment with the use of participatory methodologies for

<sup>2</sup> In: *RRA Notes 16: Applications for health* (1992), pp.13–21, IIED: London

**Box 3: Selecting beneficiaries**

In Tirlokpur village, while villagers were making a village map of their homes on the ground and showing the houses where pregnant and lactating mothers, children aged 0-3 and 3-6 years of age, and immunised children lived, a few women belonging to very poor households came and sat at a distance nearby. They were quietly looking at the map being drawn. When they were asked to recognise their house, they told us that their houses would not be there, as they did not possess a Below Poverty Line card (BPL) in spite of being the poorest of poor. AWWs confirmed that the selected ICDS beneficiary families had BPL cards. So it was decided to enable the community to select beneficiaries on the basis of wealth ranking done by them. After facilitating the community to select beneficiaries by using wealth ranking, the AWWs realised how faulty their perceptions were – and the limitations of using BPL cards as a means of identifying beneficiaries.

community mobilisation and information education and communication (IEC) interventions. The pilot was held in Barabanki district, falling under ICDS-III. The strategy for scaling up the use of PLA in the remaining 31 districts under the ICDS-III Programme would be drawn and implemented based on experiences and lessons learnt from this pilot study.

The following objectives were set:

- Role reversal: a positive change in the mindsets of the AWWs and supervisors. Changing from a supply-driven mindset and from being in 'directive' mode to a more responsive mindset and being in 'enabler' mode.
- AWWs and supervisors should be able to facilitate with the community to identify the target population, non-users of services and high-risk individuals to select the beneficiaries.
- AWWs and supervisors should acquire participatory skills to organise nutrition and health education sessions for women in such a way that women can articulate their own situations, analyse their own problems, find opportunities and make decisions to overcome these situations.
- An appropriate in-house capacity-building framework should be developed in which minimum help from an outside resource agency is required.

**The process****Phase one**

A seven-day training of trainers' session was carried out with the identified supervisor, the Child Development Programme Officer (CDPO) of Ramnagar block, and trainers of a district-level training institution involved in organising induction and refresher training courses for AWWs of ICDS. It was decided to also include some AWWs in the training so that regular

**Box 4: A new dimension**

Whilst using a daily routine activity tool with the women of Beria village to arrange meeting times for Mahila Mandal, many men were observing this exercise very keenly.<sup>3</sup> They demanded that their daily routine activity should also be worked out to ascertain whether women worked more or men. When the men's daily routine activity was also assessed, it was found that the women worked more hours. Not accepting this result, the men tried to increase the work hours of men and reduce work hours of women. But after repeated efforts they could not reduce women's work time by any more than 1.5 hours. They still could not increase their own work hours, which were still lower than the women's. The whole discussion took on a new dimension and the men started saying that as women worked more than men did, they needed to eat more nutritious food and have more rest. Ultimately it helped to:

- change the men's belief that women do less work;
- show the women that they work more than men; and
- enable the field workers to understand that working only with women does not produce any result unless their husbands are also included in the process.

feedback about the relevance and utility of various participatory tools and techniques in performing their role was continuously available during the training. The training started with a participatory job analysis, using a tool called 'card sorting', so that competencies required by these functionaries could be identified and practised with the community.

The next step involved a thorough analysis of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and the effect that attitude and behaviour have on interpersonal relations. It analysed the outcome of various efforts undertaken by individuals, groups or society through various exercises. The participants appreciated the importance that attitude and behaviour had in the context of their role in ICDS. Next followed some intensive sessions involving in-house and field practice of various relevant PLA tools and techniques. These included mapping, cause and effect trees, changing trends, daily routine, scoring and matrix ranking. Then participants shared their experiences and reflections. One SARAR tool called the Snakes and Ladders Game was adapted to examine nutrition. It was also demonstrated as a possible means of joyful learning so that participants could identify and use local games and plays for dissemination.<sup>4</sup> During practice in the villages, various local games were identified and adapted

<sup>3</sup> Mahila Mandal: a women's group.

<sup>4</sup> Self-Esteem, Associative Strength, Responsibility, Action Planning, and Resources. SARAR is a participatory approach to training that builds on local knowledge and strengthens local ability to assess, prioritise, plan, create, organise, and evaluate. The concept was first developed through field-based training in Indonesia, India, and the Philippines in the early 1970s.

**Box 5: Appreciative Planning and Action (APA)**

APA is a participatory technique for motivating the community to action. It involves four stages:

- Discovery
- Dreaming
- Designing
- Delivery

In the discovery stage, the community identifies immediate problems, which can be solved in the shortest time using available resources. In the dreaming stage, the community is helped to visualise the benefits if the problem is solved. Once the community has visualised the dream, they plan for immediate action in the designing stage. Action is initiated immediately in the delivery stage.

In Baheriakhurd village, while conducting APA, the community identified two major health problems:

- GHENGA (a goitre caused by a deficiency of iodine);<sup>5</sup> and
- a mental disorder prevalent in many children and adults.

As an immediate community action plan, the majority of households in the village donated available salt (solid crystals) and procured iodised salt. They decided not to use non-iodised salt in future.

according to dissemination topics like immunisation, nutrition, and care for mothers and newborn babies after delivery etc. During the last day, participants were asked to make presentations and relate their learning about concepts and the philosophy of participation. They also made action plans for conducting a seven-day action-oriented training on participatory methodologies for AWWs.

**Phase two**

A seven-day training was held in the Ram Nagar Block. Four supervisors (already trained in phase one) trained all 21 AWWs from the Tirlokpur sector. During the first day, exercises enabled participants to appreciate that PLA requires not only the technical understanding of tools but also the capacity to listen, to stay in the background, to be critically self-aware, to facilitate women's participation in discussions, and to learn to be taught rather than to teach.

The next step was to divide the participants into five groups. The groups mapped all the AWCs in the Tirlokpur sector to identify the five AWCs which were most convenient to group together in respect of the distance from their own village.<sup>6</sup> Each group was led by one of the supervisors and took up the responsibility of practising PLA tools at selected AWCs during the whole training programme.

<sup>5</sup> Goitre is a non-specific term describing the enlargement of the thyroid gland

<sup>6</sup> An ICDS sector is a cluster of about 20 villages; a block is a cluster of 4-6 sectors and a district is a cluster of 20-26 blocks. The Child Development Programme Officer (CDPO) is in charge of blocks, and the District Programme Officer (DPO) is in charge of districts.

During the next two days these groups practised using relevant PLA tools in the selected AWC villages. On the fourth day, the groups got together and presented their experiences, showing:

- objectives;
- methodologies followed;
- any difficulties faced (to demonstrate problems related with Dos and Don'ts of PLA facilitation, such as arranging sessions to suit the convenience of the community; assigning roles to group members like gatekeeping, recording, facilitating and triangulation etc.);
- outputs;
- personal lessons learnt (individually); and
- where else these tools can be applied.

During the next two days they conducted more field exercises and made further presentations to share their learning.

Finally, the Tirlokpur supervisor and AWWs prepared an action plan for conducting PLA training in the remaining AWCs so that they would have the opportunity to practice, learn together and internalise participatory concepts, philosophy, tools and techniques. Similarly, the remaining three supervisors prepared an action plan to initiate the same training interventions in their own respective blocks.

**Reflections**

Some reflections expressed by AWWs, supervisors and trainers are given below.

- We learnt how community participation can be facilitated. ICDS is already in the process of revising AWW induction and refresher-training modules based on the learning of the pilot experiment. The World Bank has also concurred with the strategy of scaling up the use of PLA, proposed after this pilot experiment. Accordingly, the state's ICDS authorities have initiated the scaling up process.
- The community can identify and select beneficiaries without any difficulties. This should demonstrate that ICDS does not show partiality or favour some families over others.
- We learnt how to work and communicate with communities.
- We learnt how we ourselves and the community can learn together in a joyful manner through local games.
- Instead of directly telling a community what they need to do to improve nutrition and health, we can enable them to analyse and reach their own conclusions, resulting in better realisation.
- We learnt how to help illiterate women to express, analyse

and learn by using locally available materials like flowers, leaves, stones, colours etc.

- By using village mapping, there is less possibility of malnourished children being left out.
- Experiential learning has no substitute.

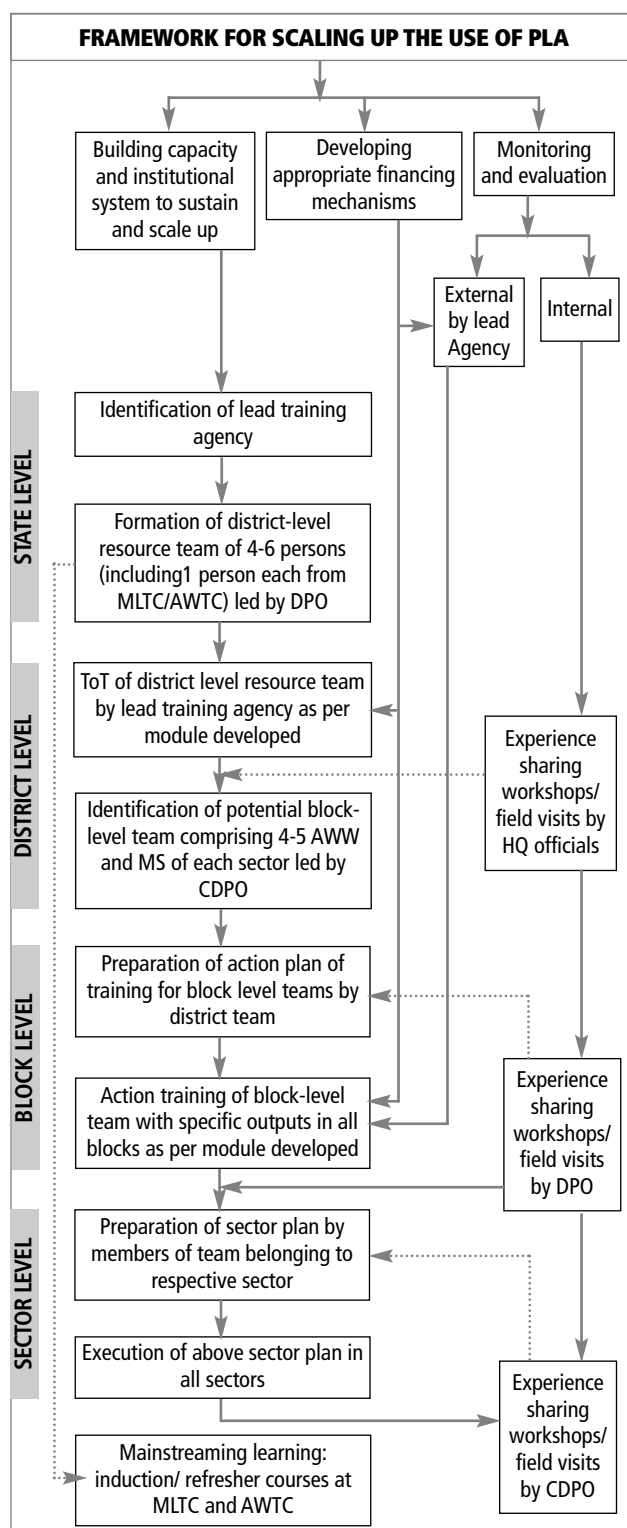
Regarding professional/experiential learning, there were several interesting points relating to changing professional mindsets.

- Self-analysis through written individual exercises enables participants to realise the change required in their way of thinking and behaviour.
- Storytelling is the most effective way of helping people to internalise in the same depth and frequency which is otherwise very difficult.
- The focus of changing mindsets and attitudes needs to start in participant's personal lives (other than work environment) as it helps them to relate and realise consequences and benefits of positive or negative attitudes in a better way.
- Many people think that they are unlucky in life but the exercise of enumerating good and bad incidents has helped 90% of participants to conclude that their perceptions about themselves were wrong.

### Following up the pilot exercise

After the pilot exercise, regular follow-ups by ICDS officials through personal interaction and meetings at sector and block-level resulted in the growing use of participatory methodologies by field workers. It was further decided to use half of sector/block-level meeting time to share experiences or by making presentations of participatory tools/techniques used by AWWs and supervisors so that the learning process continues. Sharing and presentation sessions were found to work as catalysts for competition and to create enabling environments. ICDS had identified one model AWC in each sector based on certain performance indicators. The lessons shared during such sessions were:

- The use of PLA helped AWWs to change their mindsets, so that they saw the community as a partner instead of a recipient.
- It is easy to create demand for services by following this approach.
- Conducting nutrition and health education sessions for women has become easier. Earlier they used to face difficulties in lecturing whereas now they work with women to analyse situations and to find solutions.
- Because women have limited opportunities to express themselves in public, the process helps them to articulate



using their traditional skills of drawing on the ground. Hence the approach is more women-friendly.

- The AWWs' confidence in dealing with communities has increased.

### Framework for scaling up

Based on experience and lessons learnt during the pilot experiment, a framework was developed for scaling up the use participatory methodologies in the remaining districts of Uttar Pradesh, under the ICDS-III Programme. This was accepted by the ICDS authorities.

### Outcome

- International NGO partners like CARE International, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are also hoping to initiate similar interventions for ICDS functionaries in remaining districts.
- ICDS-III has decided to use participatory methodologies even for conducting free expression for quality improvement (FREQL) workshops at sector, block, district, and state level so that an enabling environment is created to have better results.

- ICDS has started developing process-monitoring indicators (very unusual in a government programme in Uttar Pradesh).

### Conclusions

For the process of scaling up following the pilot experiment, the following problems, challenges and implications were identified:

- the need to shift the focus from supplementary nutrition distribution to positive behavioural changes;
- the need to bring functionaries to an enabling mode from a directive mode;
- the importance of developing in-house mechanisms and capacity to train 50,000 AWWs and supervisory staff;
- the importance of changing the mindsets and attitudes of government functionaries about the appropriate facilitation, learning and application of PLA (i.e. involving people in decision-making, accessing people's views, listening to others, and sharing ideas etc.);
- keeping these mechanism working even after the transfer of senior ICDS officials; and
- identifying and selecting an agency to facilitate the scaling up process following government procedures.

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Dr. Amita Jain, Director (IEC), ICDS, UP, India.  
Email: amitaicds@rediffmail.com

RS Saxena, Regional Director  
Email: r\_s\_saxena@hotmail.com

SK Pradhan, Senior Consultant  
Email: subirpra@yahoo.com

Centre for Symbiosis of Technology, Environment and Management (STEM), A-967/7, Indira Nagar, Lucknow, 226016, UP, India.

#### NOTES

In the scaling up framework, a middle-level training centre (MLTC) is for induction/refresher training of supervisors while an Anganwadi training centre (AWTC) is for AWWs. HQ stands for the state headquarters of ICDS.

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# River management in Bangladesh: a people's initiative to solve water-logging

by ASHRAF-UL-ALAM TUTU

## Introduction

During the last few years, newspapers have been publishing daily reports about the suffering caused by water-logging in the south-west coastal region of Bangladesh. Environmental disasters such as water-logging, the silting-up of rivers and salinity have become common occurrences in our region and are causing unimaginable suffering for the people.

In the backdrop of the government's failure to solve this crisis, the people had taken up alternative drainage concepts on their own. For example, in the case of Dakatia *beel*, the mass involvement of local people to solve the water-logging problem has been internationally acclaimed.<sup>1</sup>

The people were pressing hard for the formulation of an environmentally friendly project to mitigate the water-logging problem. But the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) failed to propose any project which would take

proper account of the existing eco-system. The latest project aimed to mitigate water-logging is the Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP). At the very start in 1993–94, local people expressed their doubts about the effectiveness of the project. The people apprehended that the project, if implemented, would worsen the situation. So they kept demanding a review of the KJDRP.

This relentless advocacy ultimately convinced the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to critically review the KJDRP and, on the basis of the people's demand, they agreed, albeit partially, to go for an eco-technological solution to the water-logging problem: the Tidal River Management (TRM) concept. This resulted in some alteration of the drainage plans, in the context of specific ecological characteristics of the south-west coastal region. This report contains a brief account of the phenomenon of water-logging, its causes and effects, of the government projects in the zone, and the people's movement to solve the problem.

## Background

### An introduction to the area

The study area is in south-west Bangladesh in the greater Khulna and Jessore districts, excluding parts of Sundarban. The total area is about 8,000 sq. km.

The region's climate is salt-laden air throughout the year, especially when winds blow from the sea, getting more and

<sup>1</sup> A *beel* is a natural depression. Bangladesh being a deltaic country, all the land in the plains have been formed by sediments carried down by the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna river systems. Depressions are formed by numerous causes, some of which are explained below:

- Subsidence of topsoil caused by creation of a vacuum below by decomposition of organic substances mixed with silt.
- Subsidence caused by tectonic movement.
- Non-destructive floods deposit sediments close to the riverbank. Such repeated deposits raise the level of land close to the riverbank. But the land between two rivers remains low-lying. Such a low-lying land is also known as a *beel*.

**"From their own experience and observation, people identified the polders as the main cause for water-logging and began to present their reasoned arguments for breaching or cutting away polders to allow tidal flows for solving the problem"**

more humid and salty to the south. The four distinctive seasonal weather patterns are: dry winter season, pre-monsoon season, monsoon season and post-monsoon season. The dry winter season from December to February has infrequent rains, and river water becomes saline. The pre-monsoon and post-monsoon seasons are transitional periods, covering the months of March to May and October to November. During these two periods, cyclonic storms rise from the Bay of Bengal. The cyclones during the post-monsoon period are usually more destructive.

The maximum and minimum temperatures usually range from 29°C to 4°C and 5°C to 15°C. Average annual rainfall during the period 1965 to 1990 was about 1750mm. The relative humidity ranges from 64–75% in the dry season and 75–87% in the wet season.

The area is mainly drained by a number of north-south flowing rivers. From east to west, important rivers are the Gorai-Madhumati-Baleswar, the Bhairab-Pusur, the Bhadra-Gengrail, the Hari-Teka-Mukteswari, Sibsa, the Kabadak-Betna system and the Jamuna-Ichamati-Kalindi rivers. Most of the rivers are tidal in nature. East-west rivers interconnect the north-south rivers. Flows of these east-west rivers are very important for the complete circulation of tide all over the tidal flat. In the rainy season, water becomes fresh to slightly salty and in the dry season, it becomes salty. Most of the river waters carry appreciable amounts of suspended sediments.

The inland rivers represent the remaining channels of the old spill or regional rivers, which have lost their connection to the mother river, the Ganges. The Kumar, Nabaganga, Kabadak, Bhairab are good examples of such inland rivers. The inland and regional rivers run into tidal rivers or estuaries mentioned above. In the greater Khulna area, the coastal rivers or estuaries are saline because of low freshwater discharges, especially in the dry season. The river flow regimes are driven by high, variable sediment loads. The rivers of this region show a continuous process of silting gradually from the NW towards the SE direction.

**A silted-up river is dredged**



**Photo: CDP**

### **Physical characteristics of the area**

Important physical characteristics are: peat basins, tidal food plain and the Ganges floodplain. The subject of this article is limited to the tidal floodplain.

The tidal floodplain is bounded in the north by the Ganges floodplain and in the south by the Sundarban mangrove tidal forest. The tidal floodplain is strongly influenced by tide, salinity and rainfall. This plain is also criss-crossed by numerous tidal creeks or channels and has high drainage density. The average tide difference is about two metres. Most of the areas are between one to three metres above mean sea level and have a southward regional slope.

The water and the soil are saline but in the rainy season salinity becomes low. Fresh water flows from the upstream regions and the tides normally control the salinity of this region. The major portion of the floodplain is low-lying, barely one metre above mean sea level and below high tide level. Homesteads, roads, vegetable gardens and orchards were developed on areas artificially raised by digging ponds and ditches.

### **Historical background: water-logging and river management**

Daily tides used to inundate the lowlands twice a day. The Sundarban mangrove forest drops an average of 3.5 million tons of waste per year. This is carried by the tides throughout the floodplain. This waste and the stubble of the previous season's rice crop decompose in the water and produce nutritious organic food for all forms of aquatic life. When deposited on the land along with the heavy loads of silt carried by the tides, it also enriches the soil, and the silt compensates for the normal subsidence of the loose delta soil.

Since the 17th century, the *Zamindars* (landlords) used to

**Flooded crop field due to water-logging**



Photo: CDP

build low earthen dykes around the tidal flats to prevent tidal intrusion and wooden sluices to drain off surplus rainwater.<sup>2</sup> Their tenants then cultivated indigenous varieties of flood-tolerant and saline-tolerant rice, and reaped bumper harvests. After the harvest, the dykes and sluices were dismantled, and the people grazed cattle and fished in the tidal floodplains.

Thus, the environment, eco-system and bio-system that evolved in the coastal area were in balance. The problem of crop failure still existed, as dykes were not sufficiently high and strong. Opening the sluice gates was not enough and the gates were weak. These were temporary structures and needed repair every year.

After abolition of the *Zamindari* system, the maintenance of these structures became disrupted. As a result, the land-water management problems became serious and crop failure occurred frequently. In 1959, to solve this problem, a big programme of construction and maintenance of permanent polders was undertaken by the then government. In the Khulna and part of the Jessore districts, 39 polders (1,014,100 acres) were constructed (Aftabuzzaman, 1990).<sup>3</sup> The main objectives were to protect the arable lands from tidal inundation and flooding, and to increase crop production.

In 1984, *Dakatia beel*, a part of one polder became water-logged for the first time, due to rapid siltation of the Solmari, Hamkura and Hari rivers. Later this problem spread to even more polders. Moreover, lands outside the polders in the greater Jessore district went under water. This problem is gradually creeping to the northern part as well as in the southern part of the embankment area.

### Effects of water-logging

Only an insignificant area of land is cultivable in the dry season. Water-logging destroyed houses, disrupted communication and the rhythm of daily life, killed off fruit trees and reduced the number of domestic animals. Because of water-logging, the fuel crisis became acute. The collection of wood fuel and drinking water became increasingly difficult; human waste was thrown into water in the absence of dry land and farmers turned into fishers as agricultural lands were submerged. Many migrated to other areas as life became difficult to support. The pollution caused by the stagnant waters created epidemics of water-borne diseases. Schools closed and children were deprived of education. Hundreds of thousands lost their occupations and became destitute.

### The people's initiative to address the issue

Fifteen years after the construction of the coastal embankments, water-logging began to emerge in the polders upstream in this region. The people of the water-logged area petitioned the authority to solve the problem. As the authority paid no heed to their grievances, people themselves took the initiative to organise and mobilise the community, and devise plans for solving the problem. From their own experience and observation, people identified the polders as the main cause of water-logging and began to present their reasoned arguments for breaching or cutting away polders to allow tidal flows. Their logic was that if tidal flows can be made free, the navigability of the rivers will be restored, the enclosed lands will be free from water-logging, alluvium will accumulate inside the polders, and as a result the level of land will rise. The first manifestation of this logic was seen in September 1990, when the polder of *Dakatia beel* was breached in four places. This concept is called the Tidal River Management (TRM) system.

### The consequences of the people's action and the value of popular wisdom

Through one of the four cuts made in the embankment, *Dakatia beel* was again connected with the river Hamkura. Through regular tidal actions and the accumulation of alluvium, the land formation process resumed. Within two years from 1990–1992, 2,500 acres of *char* (newly risen) land emerged. We saw rice being cultivated in the *char* lands in October 1992. Popular wisdom was reflected in the fact that the resumption of tidal action restored the balance that was lost when the supply of alluvium was cut off from the polder by the embankment.

The experience has proved that if people take initiatives to

<sup>2</sup> Dyke: an embankment of earth and rock or a drainage ditch built to prevent floods.

<sup>3</sup> Polder: an area of low-lying land, that has been reclaimed from a body of water and is protected by dykes.

face their problems, they can expose the faults of any large engineering work that concerns their lives and livelihood.

### Social impacts of the Dakatia *beel* movement

The success in draining out water of Dakatia *beel* encouraged people in adjacent water-logged areas. They organised themselves and formed committees at different levels and took initiatives to turn their water-logged land into agricultural land again. Madhukhalir *beel* and Patra *beel* are examples of such collective efforts. However, these efforts could not achieve the desired results at every stage because of a lack of proper organisational structure and planning.

However, the people's initiatives and innovative ideas drew the attention of the policy makers and donor agencies. They began taking people's involvement in solving the problem of water-logging quite seriously.

In the meantime, the Bhabadaha area (Jessore zone) started to experience widespread water-logging. The people of the area organised themselves and removed the accumulated silt from the exit of the Bhabadaha sluice gates every year, and opened a narrow drainage channel. Each year, they retrieved more land for agricultural production.

### Tidal River Management (TRM): lesson learnt from people

The people developed the Tidal River Management concept (TRM) to mitigate the water-logging problem of this region.

The main purpose was to get suspended sediment deposits gradually under a controlled system, going from tidal channels up to the mean high tide level in the water-logged areas. This planned system means that deposits will be made in a certain site by a specific tidal channel. Later on, deposit sites may be shifted to other sites according to the topography of the area. Breaches may be shifted to ensure uniform silting within a basin. Depending upon the position of the water-logged areas, different methods of TRM may be adopted for different types of basins.

### Practical examples of TRM

After the breaching of the embankment of Dakatia *beel*, the Hamkura river became a strongly flowing river 300 feet wide and 30 feet deep at the new highway bridge on the Khulna-Chuknagar Road.

The people there learnt from the Dakatia *beel* experience and tried the TRM concept on Bharter *beel*, Golner *beel*, Bahadurpur *beel*, Magurkhali *beel*. The experiments proved successful.

Over-flooded river due to drainage congestion



Photo: CDP

### Bhaina *beel*

On 29 October 1997, the people breached the right embankment along the Hari River a short distance above the Sholgati to allow free access of tides to Bhaina *beel*. Interviews with local people, and a field visit in August 1999, showed that the average width of the Hari River downstream of the cut had increased by three times more than it had before the cut. The depth of the Hari River near Sholgati Bazar is about 35 feet. Upstream of the cut there is no silt in the water and water from the upstream *beels* drain out easily and they became partly free of water-logging.

TRM is still a conceptual idea developed by non-governmental organisations, later supported by the Environmental and Geographic Information Service (EGIS) and formulated by the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation (SMEC)<sup>4</sup>, but still it has some practical lessons based on the experience gained from Dakatia *beel*, Bhaina *beel* and other small *beels*.

### Government projects to solve water-logging

When the affected people had rejected the Coastal Embankment Rehabilitation Project (CERP) and its successor CERP-2, the BWDB came up with the ADB-funded US\$ 62 million Khulna Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP).

### Khulna-Jessore Drainage Rehabilitation Project (KJDRP)

With an initial estimated expenditure of US\$62 million, it was the largest project of its kind taken up so far. The declared aim of the six-year project was to 'solve the water-logging problem to increase agricultural production and alleviate poverty of the area through farm-based employment generation.'

The project implementation authority hopes that if the

<sup>4</sup> SMEC is a sister concern of SMEC Pty Ltd. of Australia, and has been engaged in development activities in Bangladesh for several years.

Local affected people reviewing KJDRP drainage plan



Photo: CDP

project is implemented in time, about 100,600 hectares of land in 68 unions under eight *thanas* will become free from water-logging.<sup>5</sup> As a result, about 800,000 people would benefit from a poverty-free and healthy life.

But the plans had to be revised in the face of people's resistance and advocacy of NGOs. Later on a new drainage plan was taken up on the basis of the study by EGIS.

### Advocacy of the NGOs

When the BWDB presented the plan for KJDRP, NGOs under the initiative of Uttaran opposed the proposals and demanded guaranteed people's participation in all stages of the project – from designing projects to their implementation – and that drainage plans should be ecologically sound. The Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), the national coordinating body of NGOs, and the Coalition of Environment NGOs (CEN) performed leading roles in the campaign. Widespread media campaign and a TV film broadcast over Bangladesh Television helped the advocacy to a great extent. The ADB suspended the implementation of the project in the face of continuous efforts of NGOs and the people's movement, to be taken up later subject to environmental and social impact studies (EIA & SIA), and scrutiny of their findings.

### Asian Development Bank's later position

An ADB mission visited Dhaka from 29 August – 1 September 1999 to discuss with the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) the latest stage of implementation of the KJDRP.

Based on the feedback of the project beneficiaries and suggestions received from the stakeholders, the ADB studied

**“As a result of the people's movement and the NGO's advocacy programme, the KJDRP has been compelled not only to review the proposed drainage project, but also has agreed on the Tidal River Management concept, at least partly’**

the TRM option in greater detail in terms of both technical feasibility and environmental and social impacts. They found that the **‘TRM approach is technically feasible and attractive from social and environmental points of view’**. So the ADB decided to reformulate the project, taking into account the views of stakeholders. The government and BWDB have accepted the TRM option (according to their understanding).

The BWDB decided to develop one temporary tidal basin (Kedaria *beel*) in the north-western part of the project area, while managing, improving and closing the existing basin in Bhaina *beel* (which is reaching the end of its useful life). The BWDB also decided to drop the Kashimpur and Tiabunia regulators from the project.

The NGOs and people's organisations continued to advocate for the adoption of the TRM concept for the whole project area. But the BWDB limited the TRM to the small Kedaria *beel*.

Though according to the original schedule, the KJDRP should have been completed by the end of 1999, due to various delays, the project finally came to a close on 31 December 2002, with the TRM concept implemented only in an infinitesimally small area in Kedaria *beel*. **However, the BWDB now admits that the TRM is the best strategy for mitigating water-logging.**

Now the focal point of the advocacy is to organise the people in favour of the Tidal Basin concept and to ensure the participation of the people in the decision-making process at all stages.

### Lessons learnt: people break the barriers

A number of lessons can be learnt from the progress of this advocacy.

- Mere economic considerations (e.g. enhanced production of high yielding varieties of rice) should not encourage policy makers to adopt structural development projects, totally ignoring long-term environmental consequences.
- In the highly sensitive and fragile environment of the south-west coastal region of Bangladesh, where the lives and

<sup>5</sup> Phultala, Metro, Batiaghata and Dumuria *thanas* of Khulna district, and Sadar, Abhoynagar, Keshabpur and Monirampur *thanas* of Jessore district.



livelihoods of the vast majority of the people depend to a large extent on the sustainability of the ecology, traditional wisdom and experience of the people must never be ignored. Policy makers should not be misguided by the so-called 'highly-educated experts'. In matters of problem identification, design and implementation, full play must be given to decentralisation of the society, economy and polity in order to avoid the pitfalls that have already fallen on the region.

- Previously the government had undertaken the Coastal Embankment Project without taking into consideration its environmental impacts. As a result, a whole range of economic disasters such as water-logging and silting of rivers has enveloped the region. In turn, it brought about sufferings of unprecedented magnitude to the people. But the concerned authorities have tried to find solutions to those problems based on the same rigid perspectives and have failed time and again.
- On the other hand, the people, on the basis of their traditional wisdom and practical experience, have devised effective eco-technological strategies to successfully deal with the situation.
- In any rural scenario, and especially in such a highly sensitive region as this, there is a strong linkage between the state of the environment and development. Short-term economic returns cannot compensate for a damaged environment. The people of the region have been contending with the forces of nature for generations, and they know best what is good for them. So due respect may be paid to their views and perceptions.
- The NGOs, if they are to serve the people and implement development activities, must be environmentally knowledgeable. People's development cannot be achieved by ignoring environmental issues and implementing development projects in a copycat manner. Such a perspective will be like filling water into a leaky bucket.
- The principal lesson learnt from the experience of this advocacy campaign is that NGOs working in the region must develop empathy with the people and adopt the perspective of the people as their own; only then will it be possible to alter the points of view of high level policy makers.

### Still a long way to travel

The abstract of this report reflects the fact that the time has not come to say the last word about the final development of the NGO's advocacy for a sustainable drainage plan of KJDRP. Though some victory has been achieved, the reality is that the KJDRP is apparently 'convinced' of the TRM concept,

A water-logged village



Photo: CDP

but no full-scale investigation and data collection work has been done on the physical, environmental and other aspects of the coastal region. In the meantime, the KJDRP has completed its designated project period of six years with the other, objectionable, components still intact.

KJDRP authorities themselves have admitted that their previous proposed 'drainage plans' are not based on adequate investigation. That only raises doubts about the effectiveness of the drainage plans. The drainage programmes that have so far been implemented on an emergency basis have failed to attain their desired goal on the one hand, and created new water-logging and river silting problems on the other. The programmes have also failed to gain people's confidence. People have themselves taken a number of measures to solve the problem of water-logging, and have registered their angry protests against many components of KJDRP's drainage plans that have failed to bring the environmental features into consideration. These plans have only replicated the rigid methodology of the earlier coastal embankment plans, especially their attitudinal aspects. Environmentally conscious local NGOs are conducting their advocacy programme based on this issue. This is such an innovative concept that it has no equal in Bangladesh. The advocacy programme has been started from the lowest grassroots level.

As a result of the people's movement and the NGO's advocacy programme, the KJDRP has been compelled not only to review the proposed drainage project, but also has agreed on the Tidal River Management concept, at least partly. Because of wrong decisions, many obstacles have been created in the process of implementing the programme. The people of Dakatia *beel* are continuing their movement to stop the construction of regulators on the Sholmari river and to restore tidal flow in the region, but in vain.

It is imperative to properly realise the uniqueness of the

Photo: CDP



A non-functioning regulator

coastal environment and to identify the areas where investigation and research activities can be taken up.

The region has been subjected to different kinds of environmental imbalance and natural disasters ever since the implementation of 'development' projects that are clearly at odds with the region's environmental characteristics, and are ecologically unsound.

No holistic attempt at investigation and research has been made to ascertain the negative impacts of river silting, water-logging, salinity and other disasters on the life of the people – especially women and children – and on their economic and family lives, on education, health, and hygiene. Yet, this is a task that cannot be neglected.

We must therefore take a correct approach towards the development of the coastal region. Isolated mechanical and technological approaches that have no consideration for the environment will necessarily fail to address the uniqueness and the problems of the coastal region. Only an eco-technological approach may bring about real development of the region.

The authority, entrusted by the people as policy makers and governors of the country, must be adaptable to the advocacy campaign. They should develop the concept that 'ordinary people have the democratic right to say something about technical projects that may profoundly affect their lives and livelihoods.'

People's voices should be honoured. But the reality is different and painful. The NGO's advocacy campaign has not only been ignored, but it has been misinterpreted. It has been subjected to harassment and humiliation.

Based on our discussion so far, we may draw two important conclusions:

- the widespread application of the objective, technological knowledge of the West has not been fruitful in all cases; and
- development processes must ensure the involvement of the people.

Local people have been trying to take part in decision-making processes. Foreign experts come and go but they have no stake in the environment in which they apply their knowledge and skills. But the local people do. They have to stay there and survive. Any change in the environment profoundly affects local communities and the lives of the people. Therefore, if local communities have to achieve desired progress, they have to have more power in taking decisions. Abstract facts, data, and debates on different issues should be made simple, so that people can easily understand these issues, and realise their own roles in the development of their region, as well as the consequences that might follow, and what they should do in such eventualities.

All the organisations and agencies connected with the different stages of the development process have the responsibility of promoting such a people-oriented approach and the ongoing advocacy campaign reflects this.

#### CONTACT DETAILS

Ashraf-Ul-Alam Tutu  
Coordinator  
Coastal Development Partnership (CDP)  
55/2 Islampur Road,  
Khulna, 9100  
Bangladesh.  
Tel: + 88 041 810 573  
Email: cdp@cdpbd.org  
Website: www.cdpbd.org

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# Tips for trainers

## Developing indicators for monitoring poverty reduction strategies

by SEND Foundation of West Africa

When talking about participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) of poverty reduction strategies, many practitioners grapple with the idea of what kind of indicators to use. The Social Enterprise Development (SEND) Foundation of West Africa has developed some indicators. They use these to assess the performance of the Government of Ghana in the use of Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) funds. The PM&E initiative has been dubbed the *Ghana HIPC Watch*. It works through District HIPC Monitoring Committees, which are made up of community and civil society representatives.

SEND, Ghana HIPC Watch and the District HIPC Monitoring Committees held workshops to deliberate on the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005, and what it set out to do. They developed three broad domains or areas of indicators. These are:

- good governance;
- accountability; and
- equity.

The broad objective of the PM&E has been to carry out quarterly performance assessments on the use of HIPC funds by the Government of Ghana. The PM&E uses the three indicators listed

above. Here we present key questions used to guide the assessment in the domains of good governance and accountability.

### Good governance

- Who makes decisions about which 'poverty focused' project will be supported with HIPC funds?
- Who approves the HIPC budget?
- Who submits proposals for the HIPC budget?
- Who are consulted before the HIPC budget is finalised and submitted for approval?
- What form of consultation, if any, with community-based organisations, unit committees, takes place before the HIPC budget is finalised?
- How does the district assembly give information about HIPC funds to the public?
- What kind of information about the HIPC fund, do the district political and administrative officers normally give out to people?
- How often is such information given to the public?
- Do district officers ask for feedback or the opinion of the people on the information that is given out?
- Do the people in the district comment on or give their opinion on the information they get from

the district officers?

- Are people's opinions or views concerned with HIPC funds and/or HIPC funded projects?
- Do the people (either individuals or groups) often come forward for information about HIPC funds or HIPC funded projects for the district?
- How often do they come for such information?

### Accountability

- When were HIPC funds paid to the District Assembly?
- How much was paid?
- How did the district know about the payment of this money?
- When did the appropriate district officers know that HIPC funds had been paid to the District Assembly?
- Were the members of the District Assembly informed about the payment? When were they informed?
- Was the presiding member informed about this payment? When were they informed?
- Did the public in the district know about this payment? When were they informed?
- Has a HIPC drawing account been opened by your district? When was it opened?
- At what bank is the HIPC drawing account?
- Who are the signatories for the

**A bore-hole  
provided for a  
community  
with HIPC  
funds**

HIPC drawing account?

- How much did the District Assembly receive this reporting quarter from the HIPC fund?
- How much was not spent or used?
- Where is the money that was not spent or used?

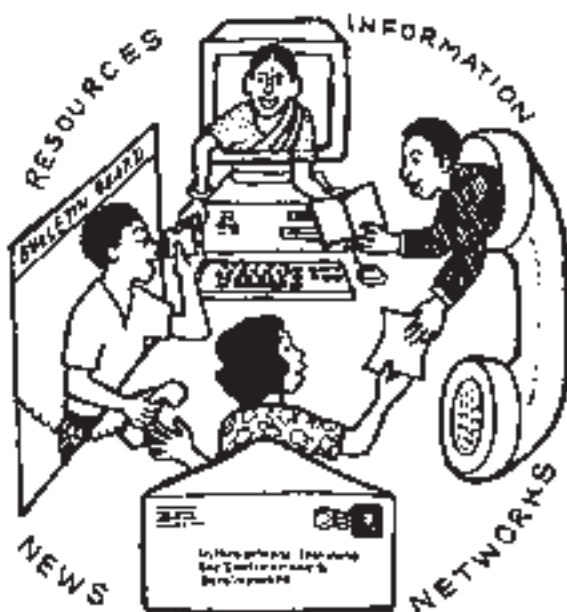
You can read more about the Ghanaian PM&E process and the District HIPC Monitoring Committees on pages 32-38, in Siapha Kamara and Harriet Yeboah's article 'Bringing the poor into advocacy: a look at Ghana HIPC Watch'.

■ Source: Ghana HIPC Watch, SEND Foundation of West Africa. 'Performance Assessment of Government of Ghana Utilisation of HIPC Relief Fund in Northern Ghana.' October 2004



Photo: SEND Foundation

# in touch



Welcome to the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*. Through these pages we hope to create a more participatory resource for the *Participatory Learning and Action* audience, to put you, as a reader, in touch with other readers. We want this section to be a key source of up-to-date information on training, publications, and networks. Your help is vital in keeping us all in touch about:

- **Networks.** Do you have links with recognised local, national or international networks for practitioners of participatory learning? If so, what does this network provide – training? newsletters? resource material/library? a forum for sharing experiences? Please tell us about the network and provide contact details for other readers.
- **Training.** Do you know of any forthcoming training events or courses in participatory methodologies? Are you a trainer yourself? Are you aware of any key

training materials that you would like to share with other trainers?

- **Publications.** Do you know of any key publications on participatory methodologies and their use? Have you (or has your organisation) produced any books, reports, or videos that you would like other readers to know about?
- **Electronic information.** Do you know of any electronic conferences or pages on the Internet which exchange or provide information on participatory methodologies?
- **Other information.** Perhaps you have ideas about other types of information that would be useful for this section. If so, please let us know.

Please send your responses to:  
*Participatory Learning and Action*,  
IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London  
WC1H 0DD, UK.

Fax: +44 20 7388 2826;

Email: [pla.notes@iied.org](mailto:pla.notes@iied.org)

*Participatory Learning and Action* is published in April, August, and December. Please submit material two months before the publication date.

## Book reviews



**Participation:  
From Tyranny to  
Transformation?  
Exploring new  
approaches to  
participation in  
development**

● Editors: Samuel  
Hickey & Giles Mohan.  
Zed Books, UK, 2004

ISBN Hardback: 1 84277 460 3;

Paperback: 1 84277 461 1

This book is a stimulating re-evaluation of participatory approaches to development and is the follow-up to Zed Book's earlier title, *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Recently, it has become fashionable to dismiss participation as more rhetoric than substance, and subject to manipulation by those intent on pursuing their own agendas under the guise of community consent. This book seeks to rebut this simplistic conclusion. It describes and analyses new experiments in participation from a wide range of situations that show how, far from being a redundant and depoliticising concept, participation can be linked to genuinely transformative processes and outcomes – provided that a political and not a technocratic approach is taken. It examines the recent convergence between participatory development and participatory governance, and the role of all the main actors – the state, civil society and donor agencies. It takes contemporary advances in development theory into account and proposes theoretical as well as practical ways forward.

■ Available from Zed Books, 7 Cynthia



Street, London N1 9JF, UK. Tel: +44 20 7837 4014; Fax: +44 20 7833 3960; Website: [www.zedbooks.co.uk](http://www.zedbooks.co.uk)

### Research on the Current State of PRS Monitoring Systems IDS Discussion Paper 382

● Henry Lucas, David Evans and Katherine Pasteur with Robert Lloyd, 2005

This report reviews recent literature on the monitoring of Poverty Reduction Strategies. It discusses four challenging issues: institutional arrangements; the role of non-government organisations; implementation and intermediate output monitoring; and using results.

Among its findings is the acknowledgement of severe capacity constraints in most PRS countries. There is a particular need for expertise in data management, communications and marketing. The report highlights the difficulties encountered in building cooperation between ministries and agencies responsible for producing data. It looks at the role of civil society in government monitoring systems and the capacity, information access and influence required for it to perform this role. It also highlights the problematic nature of the chains of causality between policies and outcomes.

■ Available from: Communications Unit, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK; Tel: +44 1273 678269; Fax: +44 1273 621202; Email: [publications@ids.ac.uk](mailto:publications@ids.ac.uk) Website: [www.ids.ac.uk/ids.bookshop](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids.bookshop). Downloadable: [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/dp/dp382.pdf](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/dp/dp382.pdf)

### Rethinking Participation: questions for civil society about the limits of participation in PRSPs

● ActionAid USA/ActionAid Uganda Discussion Paper, April 2004, Washington, DC

This ActionAid USA/ActionAid Uganda discussion paper would be of interest to civil society organisations (CSOs) that participate in public consultations for Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). While acknowledging the benefits of CSO engagement in public PRSP consultations, the paper raises important questions for CSOs about the limitations and constraints of the consultations that have been documented over the four years of experience.

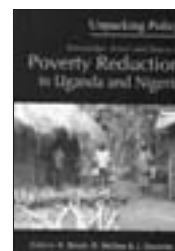
Part 1 of this discussion paper reviews the donor-driven nature of the PRSP process and explores the dynamic in which international creditors and donors essentially narrow the national policy-making space available in borrowing countries. Part 2 of this paper documents the track record of how CSOs have been precluded from publicly debating the current structural adjustment policies in the public consultations for PRSPs. Part 3 raises critical questions for consideration by national and international CSOs that continue to participate in the PRSP process. If the structural adjustment policies and possible alternatives can not be discussed or debated in government-led PRSP consultations, then CSOs should consider whether participation in other CSO-led public arenas might be a more useful strategy for advocating alternative development policies and mobilising domestic political support for them. The Annex offers a detailed list of 'forbidden debates' on key national economic policies that have so far been restricted from the agendas of government-led PRSP consultations. These are key development policy questions, which CSOs may find

useful for public discussions and debates.

■ Available to download: [www.actionaidusa.org/pdf/rethinking\\_participation\\_april04.pdf](http://www.actionaidusa.org/pdf/rethinking_participation_april04.pdf)

Hard copies are also available on request.

Contact Rick Rowden, ActionAid USA, 1112 16th Street, NW, Suite 540, Washington DC 20036, USA. Tel: +1 202 835 1240; Fax: +1 202 835 1244; Email: [rick.rowden@actionaid.org](mailto:rick.rowden@actionaid.org); website: [www.actionaidusa.org](http://www.actionaidusa.org)



### Unpacking Policy: knowledge, actors and spaces in poverty reduction in Uganda and Nigeria

● Editors: K. Brock, R. McGee and J. Gaventa

Fountain Publishers Ltd, Uganda, 2004  
ISBN: 9970 02 428 0

This book examines the processes by which poverty reduction policies are made and implemented. It assesses the scope these policies provide for positive change in the lives of poor people. The contributors, a team of researchers based in the UK, Uganda and Nigeria, base their approach on three interconnected themes.

- **Knowledge:** the information on which policies are based. Who provides it, how is it used?
  - **Actors:** the people involved in policy-making and implementation and the recipients of these policies. Where does power lie? How can the poor be empowered?
  - **Spaces:** the opportunities available to actors at all levels and the constraints imposed on them by politics, culture and history. Who occupies the spaces and why? How can the poor gain access to them?
- These three aspects of policy-

making are investigated at all levels, from central and local government, to civil society organisations, NGOs and the communities of the poor themselves. Although based on specific evidence from Uganda and Nigeria, the book's findings and conclusions have a much wider application and will be of interest to all those involved in poverty reduction.

■ Available from: Fountain Publishers Ltd, PO Box 488, Kampala, Uganda. Email: fountain@starcom.co.ug; Website: www.fountainpublishers.co.ug  
UK distributor: African Books Collective Ltd, Unit 13, Kings Meadow, Ferry Hinksey Road, Oxford, OX2 0DP, UK. Tel: +44 1865 726686; Fax: +44 1865 793298; Website: www.africanbookscollective.com



**Fighting Poverty in Africa: are PRSPs making a difference?**

● Edited by David Booth, ODI Publications, UK, 2003  
ISBN 0 85003 688 7

PRSPs have achieved a useful mainstreaming of anti-poverty efforts in national policy processes in Africa. Having a PRSP, based on a credible national policy process, has been made a condition for access to debt relief and other international assistance. Will this, as intended, result in greater commitment to poverty-reduction efforts on the part of national institutions and leaders? What evidence is there of a genuinely new approach to the fight against poverty?

This publication draws on the experience from seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa. These case studies reveal differences as well as

commonalities. Whether or not vicious circles of patrimonial politics, state weakness and ineffectual aid can be replaced with virtuous ones, based on greater national ownership of anti-poverty effort, is still uncertain. PRSPs add value to technocratic reforms in public management, by opening up new spaces for policy dialogue. But reforms remain vital, especially in regard to the budget. The hypothesis that PRSP processes can promote changes leading to more effective poverty reduction needs refinement, but remain plausible on balance.

■ Available from ODI Publications, Overseas Development Institute, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JD, UK. Tel: +44 20 7922 0300; Fax: +44 20 7922 0399; Email: publications@odi.org.uk; Website: www.odi.org.uk



**Liberalisation, gender and livelihoods: the Mozambique cashew nut case**  
**Summary report**

● Nazneen Kanji, Carin Vijfhuizen, Luis Artur, Carla

Braga.  
IIED, London, UK, March 2004

Cashew makes an important contribution to rural livelihoods in Mozambique. It is a source of nutrition, income and employment. It offers particular value to women, who are active in producing, processing and marketing cashew throughout the country. Once one of the world's biggest producers of raw cashew and exporters of processed kernels, Mozambique is now a small world player.

Drawing on fieldwork, which took place in 2002 and 2004, this summary report explores how improvements in four main areas (cultivation, processing, marketing and trade) could enhance cashew's role in reducing poverty, improving food security and promoting gender equality in Mozambique.

The summary report is in both English and Portuguese. In addition to the summary report, there are also three working papers in English.

■ Available from Earthprint Ltd, Orders Department, PO Box 119, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 4TP, UK. Tel: + 44 1438 748111; Fax: +44 1438 748844; Email: orders@earthprint.co.uk; Website: www.earthprint.com. Also available online at www.iied.org/sarl/research/projects/t3proj01.html



**ICT for Development: empowerment or exploitation? Learning from the Reflect ICTs project**

● Hannah Beardon with Fred

Munyampeta, Subrat Rout and Grace Maiso Williams. ActionAid Reflect, London, UK, 2004

Can information and communications technology (ICTs) enable people to actively challenge and change the power structures, which keep them poor and marginalised? If so, what are the conditions for this to happen? This report is based on the experiences of an ongoing participatory Reflect ICT4D (information and communications technology for development) project. It explores findings from pilot studies in India, Burundi and Uganda. It looks at information and communication for

empowerment, and the value of information. It explores who controls access to information, and whether simply **having** access to information is enough.

The report presents lessons learnt and recommendations and includes Reflect ICT resource sheets, such as what makes information useful, how to identify information gaps, and documenting local knowledge. It also has technology resource sheets, which look at different forms of ICTs and how groups can match these to their own information needs and priorities.

■ Available from: ActionAid, Hamlyn House, Macdonald Road, Archway, London, UK. Tel: +44 20 7561 7561; Fax: +44 20 7263 7599; Website: [www.reflect-action.org](http://www.reflect-action.org)



**People, policy, participation: making watershed management work in India**

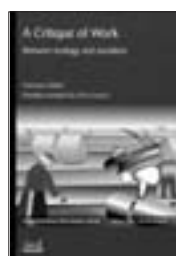
● Farhad Vania and Bansuri Taneja  
Institutionalising

Participation Series, IIED, 2004  
ISBN: 1 84369 539 1

This publication examines the evolution of policy-making in natural resource management and the emphasis on community control over planning, implementation and management of projects in the specific context of watersheds. It traces the major trends in policy over a decade and the incorporation of a participatory approach that was expected to help improve the state of natural resources as well as contribute towards poverty alleviation. However, as the report indicates, a well-drafted policy alone is sometimes not enough to achieve a complex set of objectives

on the ground. Organisation cultures need to be considered and reoriented, appropriate capacities need to be built, and funding needs to be sustained in order to make a meaningful difference. More importantly, local people have to be directly involved, trusted and enabled, their knowledge appreciated and their skills used.

Based on a case study of five districts in the state of Andhra Pradesh, and drawing on the wider experience of a number of government agencies, NGOs, researchers and donors, the report adds to the growing understanding of the importance of inclusive, democratic, transparent and people-centred policy-making.



**A critique of work: between ecology and socialism**

● Françoise Gollain  
Institutionalising Participation Series, IIED, 2004  
ISBN 1 84369 527 7

This critical essay identifies important structural changes needed for the institutionalisation of democratic participation and sustainable development. Participation in civic affairs and decision-making largely depends on transformations that allow people to reclaim control over time, space and resources. There is a need for economic arrangements that offer enough material security and time for citizens to exercise their right to participate in shaping policies for the public good and for ecological sustainability. People need to be empowered to think about what type of policies they want and to engage in deliberative form of democratic

decision-making. From this perspective the author puts forward a number of suggestions for the provision of material security and liberated time that might be valid for different regions of the globe.

This book was originally published in French in 2000. This English version has been an opportunity for the author to update it so as to reflect on the shifts that have occurred in the French debates over the future of work and in the wider social-political context.

■ Both titles available from Earthprint Ltd, Orders Department, PO Box 119, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 4TP, UK. Tel: + 441438 748111; Fax: +44 1438 748844; Email: [orders@earthprint.co.uk](mailto:orders@earthprint.co.uk); Website: [www.earthprint.com](http://www.earthprint.com).

These and other publications in the Institutionalising Participation series are also available in PDF format on the IIED website [www.iied.org/sarl/pubs/institutpart.html](http://www.iied.org/sarl/pubs/institutpart.html)



**Sharing Power: Learning by doing in co-management of natural resources throughout the world**

● Grazia Borrini-

Feyerabend, Michel Pimbert, M. Taghi Farvar, Ashish Kothari and Yves Renard  
IIED and IUCN/CEESP, 2004  
ISBN: 1 84369 444 1

Negotiated agreements on the roles, rights, and responsibilities of different actors in a common enterprise are at the heart of decentralised governance. This book is the result of the authors' efforts to bring together accounts and reflections on a variety of partnerships for managing natural resources in different social and ecological contexts. At the heart of what is

understood to be 'co-management' is the process of collective understanding and action by which communities and other social actors manage natural resources together, drawing from everyone's unique strength, vantage points and capacities.

The book is constructed in four parts. Part 1 looks at the historical context of natural resource management, at both traditional and 'modern' societies, as well as complex combinations of the old and new devised by communities as a response to current challenges. There is a discussion of issues of actors, entitlements and equity in natural resource management and a brief panorama of contemporary forms of co-management in different places and cultures. Part II analyses in some detail the components of co-management: the **process**, **institutions**, and **social context** that make it possible. Part III covers the form and functioning of co-management plans, agreements and organisations, with examples and discussion about what makes them effective and sustainable. Part IV is concerned with policy processes, contents, and instruments.

Whilst the book focuses on natural resource management (forests, wetlands, rangelands, biodiversity, water, drylands) and livelihoods, much of this publication is about governance (local, national and international). As such, the book should be of interest to a broad set of individuals and organisations working on public and private sector policy and practice.

■ Available from Earthprint Ltd., Orders Department, PO Box 119, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 4TP, UK. Tel: + 44 1438 748111; Fax: +44 1438 748844; Email: [orders@earthprint.co.uk](mailto:orders@earthprint.co.uk); Website: [www.earthprint.com](http://www.earthprint.com)

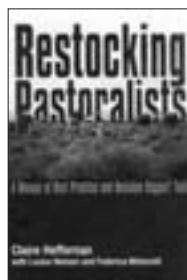
### Strategies for Hope: what can I do? THE HIV/AIDS ministry and messages of Gideon Byamugisha

● Strategies For Hope Trust, 2004  
Gideon Byamugisha

A 49-minute long video divided into 14 short sections on topics such as coping with stigma, why be tested for HIV, and challenges for the church. A 48-page facilitator's guide is also available to enable organisations and groups to explore in greater depth issues raised in the video. The video and guide are designed for use by church organisations and NGOs and community-based organisations involved in HIV and AIDS activities.

Gideon Byamugisha is an ordained minister in the Anglican Church and Canon of St Paul's Cathedral, Namirembe Diocese, Uganda. He works for World Vision International as Church and Faith based partnerships advisor on HIV/AIDS. In the video, Canon Gideon shares the lessons he has learnt from his journey with HIV and calls for more relevant and accurate HIV prevention messages.

■ Available from: Strategies For Hope Trust, 93 Divinity Road, Oxford, Oxon OX4 1LN, UK. Tel: +44 1865 723078; Fax: +44 1865 436069 Email: [sfh@stratshope.org](mailto:sfh@stratshope.org) Website: [www.stratshope.org](http://www.stratshope.org)



### Restocking Pastoralists: a manual of best practice and decision support tools

● Claire Heffernan  
with Louise Nelson  
and Federica Misturelli

ITDG Publishing, UK  
ISBN: 1 85339 589 7; paperback  
£12.95/US\$23.95

A complete guide to successful restocking of pastoralists, and based on analysis of 85 restocking projects and 700 households. Restocking can be an effective means of poverty alleviation, which enables poor households to be incorporated back into the social and economic fabric of pastoralism. Nevertheless, at present the sustainability of projects is low.

*Restocking Pastoralists* responds to the previous failures of restocking projects by promoting a new client-driven approach. As such, it offers a holistic overview of the factors influencing the success of restocking as a means of relief, rehabilitation or development. A review of best practices in project design and implementation is also described. Equally, easily applied decision support tools have been created to assist practitioners in each stage of the restocking cycle ranging from community and client selection to monitoring and evaluation.

As well as its practical application, the book provides a comprehensive background to key concepts and literature. Use of the manual will enable practitioners and policy makers to improve the poverty alleviation outcomes of restocking projects and programmes.

■ Available from: ITDG Publishing, Bourton Hall, Bourton-on-Dunsmore, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV23 9QZ, UK. Tel: +44 1926 634501, Fax: +44 1926 634502; Email: [orders@itpubs.org.uk](mailto:orders@itpubs.org.uk); Website: [www.itdgpublishing.org.uk/](http://www.itdgpublishing.org.uk/)

### Alliances Against Poverty: DFID's experience in Peru 2000–2005

● UK Department for International  
Development

Addressing the underlying causes of inequality and exclusion requires



donors to engage with political processes. Alliances involving state and society must be strengthened and donors must play an active role in them. This report from the Department of International Development (DFID) reviews the application of rights-based approaches through the concept of active citizenship in a middle-income country context, drawing on the Peruvian experience. For the first time it tackles questions of legitimacy, potential and accountability of donor engagement from a donor's perspective.

This book is for anyone interested in poverty reduction in a context characterised by inequality and exclusion. DFID has focused on the political dynamics of poverty in Peru in order to address the underlying causes of inequality and exclusion. This has meant engaging with political processes, supporting new spaces for dialogue and participation, and working with and building alliances between state, society and the international community.

There are many thought-provoking issues and lessons here for DFID and the international community, in Peru and beyond. In particular this book reflects on lessons around:

- addressing poor people as citizens, with rights and responsibilities, as a key means of tackling inequality and exclusion;
- working systemically with both the state and wider society, to achieve more inclusive development;
- investing in alliances between those individuals and institutions that are committed to pro-poor reform; and
- acting openly, transparently and accountably, in tackling this more political agenda.

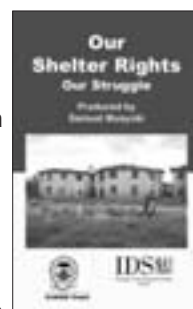
The book concludes by considering the lessons learnt for a donor in engaging in these very political processes.

■ Available from: DFID, 1 Palace Street, London SW1E 5HE, UK or DFID, Abercrombie House, Eaglesham Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 8EA, UK. Tel: 0845 300 4100; Tel (from outside the UK): +44 1355 84 3132; Email: enquiry@dfid.gov.uk; Website: www.dfid.gov.uk  
Also available in PDF format online: www.grc-exchange.org/docs/ds53.pdf

#### **Our Shelter Rights, Our Struggle (video/CD-ROM)**

● Institute of Development Studies and ILISHE Trust

Despite a thriving economy, the tranquil city of Mombasa in Kenya suffers from a chronic shortage of decent social housing. This 22-minute short documentary video



tells the story of how tenants from Mizizma, Tudor and Changamwe estates in Mombasa formed a joint shelter committee to demand better housing services from their local council. The video has been co-produced by the Institute of Development Studies and the ILISHE Trust, a non-governmental organisation based in Mombasa.

■ Available on video in both PAL and NTSC formats, and also on CD-ROM. Languages: English and Kiswahili versions. Please contact IDS for more information. Available from: Alwan Communications, PO Box 51841 00200, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel: +254 20 2730633; Fax: +254 20 2730632; Email: algo@africaonline.co.ke or from: Communications Unit, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK; Tel: +44 1273 678269; Fax: +44 1273 621202; Email: publications@ids.ac.uk Website: www.ids.ac.uk/ids.bookshop

## **Events and training**

### **International training on poverty reduction and civil society participation**

**4th – 13th May 2005**

**Institute of Development Policy and Management, Belgium/Institute of Development Policy and Management**

This six-week course examines poverty reduction and civil society participation. The Institute of Development Policy and Management of the University of Antwerp (Belgium) will be holding its second International Training Programme on Poverty Reduction and Civil Society Participation from the 4th – 13th May 2005. The programme is sponsored by the Belgian government and targets senior staff from civil society organisations in countries where a

Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) has been produced. Government officials from these countries and staff from international NGOs and other donor organisations may ALSO apply. Candidates must be professionally involved in the topic of the training. Up to 15 participants from the South will receive a full scholarship that includes all travel and living allowances during the six weeks training.

■ For more information, visit



[www.ua.ac.be/main.asp?c=\\*IOBPRSP](http://www.ua.ac.be/main.asp?c=*IOBPRSP) or contact: VLIR Secretariat for Development Cooperation, Bolwerksquare 1A, B-1050 Brussel, Belgium. Tel: +32 2 289 05 58; Fax: +32 2 514 72 77; Email: [scholarships@vlir.be](mailto:scholarships@vlir.be)

**Environmental consensus and conflict resolution workshops**  
**25th – 27th October 2005**  
**School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh, UK**

**Registration deadline:**  
**3rd October 2005**

**Course fee: £395.**

**Discounted rate £295**

**(limited number volunteers only). Fee excludes accommodation and meals.**

**Assistance in finding accommodation can be provided.**

This workshop provides a foundation in consensus-building. Public participation and mediation have previously been perceived as separate specialised disciplines. This course demonstrates how the skills of both disciplines can be combined to enable stakeholders to participate effectively in community planning or conflict resolution. It advocates a strategic approach to selecting the appropriate techniques to get effective participation.

At the end of the workshop participants should be able to analyse their own case studies and similar situations they may encounter in the future, using conflict resolution theory; apply consensus-building techniques to achieve effective participation in decision-making; contribute to the prevention or resolution of conflict while being an interested party; be aware of the principles used by neutral third parties in designing strategies to prevent or resolve conflicts and relate these



strategies to formal processes of decision-making; and recognise when outside expertise may be required to design a consultation exercise or to initiate mediation.

The training course is designed for decision makers actively involved in environmental or other public policy matters or with managing conflicts concerning natural resources.

**Participatory appraisal workshop**  
**5th – 9th September 2005**  
**School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh, UK**

**Course fee: £500. Discounted rate £335 (limited number volunteers only). Fee excludes accommodation and meals. Assistance in finding accommodation can be provided.**

The term Participatory Appraisal (PA) describes a growing family of approaches and methods which enable local people to appraise and share their knowledge of life and local conditions, in order that they can analyse, plan, and act on these ideas. During the PA process, information comes from the local people, is shared between them and owned by them. Participatory Appraisal has been used in natural resource management, programmes for the poor, health and food security in rural and urban situations.

This intensive five-day workshop will concentrate on the practical application of PA, with three days spent on practical exercises and other methods for learning about PA. The remaining two days will include placements in Edinburgh and the surrounding area, and will provide an opportunity for a practical application of the approach. Placements will vary in their duration, location and host-group composition. The placements will include evening work; this is

necessary to accommodate host-group schedules. Examples of placements that have taken place on previous courses include community forestry projects, access to open spaces and paths, and health issues.

If the dates do not suit you, in-house workshops can be offered, tailored to meet the needs of individual organisations.

■ For more information about these two courses, please contact: Vikki Hilton, School of GeoSciences, University of Edinburgh, Darwin Building, Mayfield Road, Edinburgh EH9 3JU, UK. Tel: +44 131 650 6439; Fax: +44 131 662 0478; Email: [vikki.hilton@ed.ac.uk](mailto:vikki.hilton@ed.ac.uk); Website: [www.geos.ed.ac.uk/postgraduate/short/](http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/postgraduate/short/)

**Dealing with data from participatory studies: Bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative methods**

**5th – 16th September 2005**

**The International and Rural Development Department (formerly AERDD) and the Statistical Services Centre, University of Reading, UK.**

This workshop for PRA/PLA practitioners aims to help participants achieve an optimal combination of PRA tools and statistical principles for dealing with qualitative and quantitative information collected in participatory studies. The workshop will include sampling, designing tools for information management, data handling, and analysis techniques that are relevant for social mapping, trend analysis, ranking and scoring and seasonal calendars. Participants are encouraged to bring along datasets and analysis issues that concern them directly. Data analysis work will be based largely on MS Excel. Each participant will receive, free of charge, a copy of the add-in macros developed by the Statistical Services

Centre for data analysis. Participants do not need to have prior statistical knowledge to attend this workshop. However, basic computing skills will be needed.

■ For further information contact: Mrs. Lorna Turner, Statistical Services Centre, The University of Reading, Harry Pitt Building, Whiteknights Road, PO Box 240, Reading RG6 6FN, UK. Tel: +44 118 378 8025; Fax: +44 118 975 3169; Email: L.E.Turner@reading.ac.uk; Website: www.reading.ac.uk/ssc

#### *Courses available from Global Learning Partners*

Global Learning Partners (www.globalearning.com) teaches a participatory approach to learning design and facilitation called Dialogue Education. Dialogue Education is based on the work of Dr. Jane Vella, an academic and practitioner of adult education. Jane's contribution has been to synthesise the insights of theorists like Paulo Freire, Malcolm Knowles, Benjamin Bloom and Kurt Lewin into a set of principles and practices that have been applied in training, capacity building and public education settings around the world.

#### **Learning to listen, learning to teach: an introduction to Dialogue Education**

**Global Learning Partners, Canada  
Ottawa: 10th – 13th May 2005  
Toronto: 11th – 14th October 2005**

This course provides a foundation in the basics of curriculum design and facilitation using the dialogue education approach, with an emphasis on learning styles, group dynamics, and setting verifiable learning objectives. It includes two opportunities for the participants to co-design and co-teach two 40-minute practice teaching sessions and

receive feedback. Please see [www.globalearning.com/LtL.htm](http://www.globalearning.com/LtL.htm) for more details and for workshop locations and other dates available in the USA.

■ Please contact: Christina de Jong, Communications Director, Tel: +1416 516 5325; Fax: +1416 516 0579; Email: Cdejong@globalearning.com

#### **Participating to create a different world: shaping our own future 14th – 17th August 2005 Third International Participatory Development (PD) Forum, hosted at University of Ottawa, Canada Workshop fees:**

**Entire conference (4 days): CDN\$450**

**Participants from developing countries: CDN\$375**

**Full-time students: CDN\$250**

**Daily rate (any day of your choice):  
CDN \$150**

**There is a discount for places  
booked before 15th June 2005**

The third PD Forum aims to assess the present impetus and the future potential of participatory development practices in the achievement of Millennium Development Goals and in overcoming development challenges. This conference is for people to share their experiences and ideas, and to advocate for human-focused sustainable development. The conference aims to assess and reflect on actions taken since the last conference, examine how critiques voiced there have been addressed in practice, and develop future actions to promote and sustain participatory development.

The conference will feature popular theatre, keynote panels, capacity-building workshops, group discussions and debates, and include an open space technology process

that will facilitate the sharing of ideas, knowledge and experience on participatory practices. Participants will be given the option to attend the entire conference or any day of their choice at a daily rate.

The conference hopes to bring together a wide variety of participants including: community leaders and activists from women's organisations; indigenous people's organisations; labour and workers' movements; participatory development practitioners; academics and researchers; popular educators; students and youth; and decision- and policy makers including donors and government officials at all levels.

■ For details please contact: The Participatory Development Forum, 1404 Scott Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4M8, Canada. Tel: +1 613 792-1006; Fax: +1 613 792-1206; Email: pdforum@pdforum.org; Website: www.pdforum.org

#### *Mosaic.net international workshops* **Participatory development concepts, tools and application in PLA/PRA methods: planning, needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation**

**11th – 16th July 2005  
Ottawa, Canada**

This workshop focuses on core participatory concepts, tools and their application. This is an intensive six-day workshop set in the community to maximise learning, group interaction and networking. Topics include: the origins of participatory development; learning and application of PRA/PLA tools; the application of participation to project design, monitoring and evaluation; developing effective facilitation skills; building action plans; and team-building. Two-day community assignments proposed by community-based organisations in the

Ottawa region will allow participants to apply tools learnt in the workshop to real-life situations. This is also a great opportunity to network with other practitioners, NGOs, donors, and action researchers from all over the world.

**Results-based Management,  
Appreciative Inquiry and Open  
Space Technology**  
**Mosaic.net International**  
**Ottawa, Canada**  
**July 18-22, 2005**

This new workshop introduces participants to Results-based Management, Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space Technology. Demonstrate the effectiveness of your programmes with Results-based Management. Master what is meant by results, develop programme/organisational plans, which are results-based and design performance monitoring systems based on indicators and participatory methods. You will learn how to apply gender analysis to your work. You will also expand your repertoire of tools to also learn about Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space and how they can be applied to your organisation, programme and/or project. These approaches are increasingly being used around the world to tap into new ways to do our work in ways that are more results-oriented, more appreciative and less problem-focused and more self-organised vs top down.

**Participatory monitoring and  
evaluation**  
**Mosaic.net International**  
**Ottawa, Canada**  
**25th – 30th July 2005**

Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) involves a different approach to project monitoring and

evaluation by involving local people, project stakeholders, and development agencies deciding together about how to measure results and what actions should follow once this information has been collected and analysed. This intensive six-day experiential workshop is practically focused with daily excursions into the community and a three-day community assignment. Topics covered at the workshop include origins of PM&E; skills and attributes of a PM&E facilitator; learning PM&E tools; designing a monitoring and evaluation framework and actions plan; and much more.

All workshops organised by Mosaic are sensitive to issues of gender, ethnicity, race, class and sexuality and how these can influence outcomes and how we see the world if they are absent from our assumptions, direct participation, our analysis and conclusions.

If you are unable to attend the workshop, please contact Mosaic to custom design a workshop to suit the specific needs of your organisation.

■ For further information, please contact: Francoise Coupal, Mosaic.net International, Inc., 705 Roosevelt Avenue, Ottawa, Canada K2A 2A8. Tel: +(613) 728 1439; Fax: +(613) 728 1154 or visit: [www.mosaic-net-intl.ca](http://www.mosaic-net-intl.ca) or email: [wkshop05@mosaic-net-intl.ca](mailto:wkshop05@mosaic-net-intl.ca) to request a brochure.

*Courses from ICA:UK*  
**Group facilitation methods**  
**ICA:UK**

**Cambridge: 18th – 19th May 2005**  
**Manchester: 28th – 29th June 2005**  
**Exeter: 7th – 8th July 2005**  
**Course fee: £385 – £195**

A structured introduction to the basic ToP Focused Conversation and Consensus Workshop methods, a system of practical methods that will

enable you, as a facilitator, to:

- actively involve all members of a group in decision-making;
- maximise individuals' commitment and engagement;
- build a team spirit that lasts;
- achieve consensus;
- articulate a shared vision; and
- make plans that really happen.

**Group facilitation skills**  
**ICA:UK**

**Birmingham: 26th April 2005**  
**Manchester: 30th June 2005**  
**Course fee: £195 – £105**

Facilitating participatory processes goes beyond being able to design events and knowing which methods to use. There is a whole range of skills that a facilitator needs to bring into play both before, during and after the event itself in order to ensure that the process and the methods employed are effective:

- share actual experiences and challenges;
- explore ways of addressing these in future;
- reach a deeper understanding of what it means to facilitate; and
- experience the ToP Focused Conversation and Consensus Workshop methods.

■ Other courses and in-house service are also available. For more information, contact: Humey Saeed, ICA:UK, PO Box 171, Manchester, M15 5BE, UK. Tel: +44 161 232 8444; Email: [admin@ica-uk.org.uk](mailto:admin@ica-uk.org.uk); Website: [www.ica-uk.org.uk](http://www.ica-uk.org.uk) or [top@ica-uk.org.uk](mailto:top@ica-uk.org.uk)

*Courses from the International  
Institute for Rural Reconstruction  
(IIRR)*

**Rural development management  
(participatory approaches to  
development management)**  
**2nd – 20th May 2005**  
**Course fee: US\$2,500**

This course is designed for senior and mid-level development managers and covers development issues, managing sustainable and people-centred development programmes, and managing development organisations. It addresses the challenges of participation in programme and project planning, implementation and evaluation. Participants are introduced to real-life experiences in rural development. The course is built around observations of community-level development efforts in the Philippines.

### **Managing learning in development organisations**

**8th – 19th August 2005**

**Course fee: US\$2,250**

This course aims to address the purposive quest for learning within organisations that requires a mental set of seeing learning as an 'integral part of any development organisation's plan for sustainable development' (Korten and Klaus). This two-week course is designed based on careful needs assessment carried out among select leaders and managers representing government

and non-government organisations. Leaders, managers, trainers, development practitioners, donors, consulting organisations and Masters students will find this course valuable.

This course is intended to increase the learner's ability to create shared organisational development vision for collective learning, institute appropriate systems structures and facilitative leadership functions supportive of shared and collective learning within the organisation. The course will be based on the concept of 'experiential learning', the bridging of theory and practice. Participants are encouraged to reflect upon their own experiences with the inputs provided during the course using a framework for critical analysis and learning.

### **Participatory action research for community-based natural resources management**

**IIRR with the International Development Research Center (IDRC), Canada and the Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC), Thailand**

**Dates to be announced later**

### **Course fee: US\$2,630**

This course is geared specifically for decision makers working on community-based natural resource management (CBNRM). Participants will have the opportunity to reflect upon and share experiences in CBNRM, explore principles of participatory action research (PAR), and experiment with a range of tools for examining multiple perspectives relevant to CBNRM with stakeholders in the field.

Participants critically analyse the PAR approach in relation to CBNRM and document their insights to add to the on-going discourse on PAR for CBNRM. Emphasis will be placed on providing a stimulating environment for sharing of ideas among participants, facilitators, and other resource people.

■ For registration or to get an application form, please contact: Education and Training, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Yen Center, Km 39, Silang, Cavite 4118, Philippines. Tel: +(63) 02 886-4385/86/87 or +(63 46) 414 2417; Local tel: 521; Fax: +(63 46) 414 2420; Email: [education&training@iirr.org](mailto:education&training@iirr.org); Website: [www.iirr.org](http://www.iirr.org)



# e-participation

## **Bretton Woods Project: Critical voices on the World Bank and IMF**

[www.brettonwoodsproject.org](http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org)

Created as an independent initiative by a group of British non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as a critical information-sharing resource, the Bretton Woods Project monitors projects, policy reforms and the overall management of Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund, or IMF) with a special emphasis on environmental and social concerns.

This easy-to-use website is an information portal, providing details on forthcoming events, a newswire, related news articles and a bi-monthly digest, the Bretton Woods Update. There are back issues in PDF format online, reports and briefings (including on Poverty Reduction Strategies and related issues) and news and reports devoted to different regions. The events section is particularly useful for people and organisations that wish to keep track of important international Bretton Woods and other development agency meetings, conferences and seminars.

## **Community Development Resource Network (CDRN)**

[www.cdrn.or.ug](http://www.cdrn.or.ug)

The CDRN Network is an independent non-governmental organisation that is dedicated to providing services to smaller, local NGOs in Uganda. Established in 1994 by a group of Uganda-based development professionals, CDRN seeks to promote meaningful, democratic and accountable civil society participation in development. Activities include providing training and capacity-building, advocacy work, and through research, influencing policy and

practice. The website includes CDRN's Newsletter, lists of publications (although not available in PDF format at the moment) and information about CDRN's activities, research and events.

## **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Poverty Reduction**

[www.undp.org/poverty/](http://www.undp.org/poverty/)

The UNDP website's pages on poverty reduction include many online articles, briefings and notes. The site includes online information and resources covering topics such as gender and poverty, civil society and participation, aid coordination and pro-poor policies. There are also many online publications, including Policy Discussion Papers and practice notes, for example about gender equality, and poverty reduction and human rights. The site also includes links to the newly developed UNDP International Poverty Centre, containing up-to-date information on country progress for each of the eight Millennium Development goals as adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. A useful although large website which is relatively easy to navigate.

## **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: poverty reduction pages**

[www.oecd.org/dac](http://www.oecd.org/dac)

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is the principal body through which the OECD deals with issues related to cooperation with developing countries. These web pages contain information and resources relating to the OECD's work on poverty reduction. On the left-hand side of the home page are links to information, online resources,

news and events for different topics, covering areas such as aid effectiveness and donor practice, governance and capacity development, and information and communication technology. There is also a link to the new POVNET (DAC Poverty Network) website <http://webdomino1.oecd.org/COMNET/DCD/PovNet.nsf>. POVNET mostly contains information about past and forthcoming events, including notes on each meeting, as well as dedicated information about activities taking place around the agriculture, infrastructure and private sector task groups.

Whilst both websites contain a large amount of useful information and resources, they are large and sometimes difficult/confusing to navigate, and it can take some time and effort to find what you are looking for.

## **Eurodad: European Network on Debt and Development**

[www.eurodad.org](http://www.eurodad.org)

Eurodad is a network of 48 development non-governmental organisations from 15 European countries working for national economic and international financing policies that achieve poverty eradication and the empowerment of the poor. Eurodad's work on Poverty Reduction Policies focuses on International Financial Institutions' (IFI) strategies, currently the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) approach, as an alternative to Structural Adjustment.

These website pages include regular reports on poverty reduction policies; regular monthly email bulletins on poverty reduction policies; and weekly debt and finance updates. The links along the left hand



side of the web pages lead to Eurodad's work areas and also themes such as structural adjustment, human rights, private sector development and also Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) updates. For each section, there are links to related articles and news listed in the right hand column. Each article is briefly summarised and has links to a full PDF at the bottom of the page. This website has a clear and simple format and is easy to use. You can find summaries of Eurodad's work on Poverty Reduction Policies here:

[www.eurodad.org/workareas/default.aspx?id=74](http://www.eurodad.org/workareas/default.aspx?id=74)

#### **Eldis Poverty pages: PRSP watching**

[www.eldis.org/poverty/prsp.htm](http://www.eldis.org/poverty/prsp.htm)

The Eldis gateway to development information website hosts a section on poverty-related information and organisations, including a section dedicated to articles, latest research and news relating to poverty reduction strategies. In addition, it also has links to key websites, discussion forums and news websites. Articles range from assessing the PRSP approach to poverty reduction, the role of gender, and poverty profiles to participatory monitoring of PRS and pro-poor expenditure.

#### **Social Enterprise Development Foundation of West Africa (SEND)**

[www.sendfoundation.org](http://www.sendfoundation.org)

The SEND Foundation aims to promote livelihood security of resource-poor communities in West Africa through micro-finance, organisational development, participatory methods, gender training and reproductive health and HIV/AIDs education. Here you can find information about SEND's projects and programmes,

such as the Ghana HIPC project; information about services offered, such as participatory training, monitoring and evaluation; news articles related to SEND's work; and assessment reports. There is also a section dedicated to news about the Ghana HIPC Watch project. This is particularly useful for anyone following the progress of this project. The website is clearly laid out and simple to use.

#### **GDN/BLDS Document Delivery Service**

[www.gdnet.org/online\\_services/journals/gdn\\_journal\\_services/document\\_delivery/](http://www.gdnet.org/online_services/journals/gdn_journal_services/document_delivery/)

The Global Development Network (GDN) and the British Library of Development Studies (BLDS) now offer a new Document Delivery Service. The service will provide research institutes in the South with access to Europe's largest research collection on economic and social change in developing countries. It has over 1000 journals, 4000 serials and over 80,000 monographs concerned specifically with development. A particular strength of the BLDS collection is its extensive coverage of Southern publications, particularly from Africa and South and East Asia. The collection represents a unique source of primary information, including grey literature, much of which is not digitally available.

Aimed at knowledge professionals within research institutes, it allows them to search the BLDS online catalogue and request a photocopy of any article or document chapter to be mailed to them at no cost. Only GDN Organisation Contacts are eligible for free document delivery so please ensure that you are registered as your organisation's GDN contact before registering for the document service.

#### **Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) Zambia**

[www.cspr.org.zm/](http://www.cspr.org.zm/)

CSPR is a Civil Society network that came together in October 2000 and had the main objective of ensuring that civil society from different backgrounds and in diverse locations effectively participates in the formulation of Zambia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). This website includes a round up of latest news articles and press releases and reports from CSPR's work, such as capacity-building, training needs assessments and participatory poverty monitoring, information and advocacy, and monitoring and evaluation. Most reports are available in PDF or Word format. The site also includes information about regional groups, and local and international networks and contacts. There are also PDF versions of CSPR's Poverty Eradication newsletter. A useful and easy to navigate website.

#### **World Bank online participation and civic engagement pages**

[www.worldbank.org/participation/](http://www.worldbank.org/participation/)

This website is definitely a useful resource but must be browsed with care. Within the first few clicks, most of the resources listed appear to come from development banks or bilaterals. There is very little drawing upon actual/real civil society experiences. Whilst it can be very difficult to find quality publications that draw on such experiences because there are few, looking at this site should be complemented by searches on other international NGO sites (e.g. Eurodad, Trócaire).

In so far as providing practical steps forward for CSOs trying to engage strategically in PRSP processes, the site is not particularly

useful (i.e. in the toolkits and manual section, the two more attractive manuals listed under the 'civic engagement' subtitle are inaccessible, the others are World Bank documents). That is not to say that there are not other good resources online here – for example, from the Institute for Development Studies – but they can be difficult to find.

The site is a good place to find basic background information and to understand where the World Bank and the other more powerful 'discourers' are at vis-à-vis participation and civic engagement in the PRS processes, and with a bit of searching some (but by no means sufficient!) 'how to' recommendations could be found.

*Thanks to Alexandra Hughes for this review.*

#### Trócaire

[www.trocaire.org/policyandadvocacy/policyandadvocacyhome.htm](http://www.trocaire.org/policyandadvocacy/policyandadvocacyhome.htm)

Trócaire is the official overseas development agency of the Catholic

Church in Ireland. In the policy and advocacy section of their website, you can find many articles and reports relating to HIPC debt relief and PRSP strategies, overseas aid and trade. Each document is summarised with a link to a full-text PDF document.

#### Learning and teaching for transformation

[www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/](http://www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/)

Learning and Teaching for Transformation is a network hosted by the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), which aims to enhance the capacity of education institutions to develop and deliver effective programmes that contribute to a wider transformation of individuals, institutions and society. The initiative has focused mainly on the context of institutions of higher learning, although the ideas that have emerged have wider implications across the whole education system.

The network supports dialogue, participation, collaboration and community development across and within all levels of the education system. It advocates forms of learning that are grounded in the principles and practices of participatory development and action research, and seeks to encourage these through the sharing and generation of both theory and practice.

The website includes:

- recent developments, discussions and issues, with an interactive noticeboard for news and events;
- global e-dialogue about teaching, learning, institutions, power, curriculum and change;
- resources and cross-cutting thematic summaries;
- case studies and pictures from partner organisations.

To find out more, click on 'topic guides' and follow the 'learning' links. There is lots of recommended reading for each section free to read online.

# RCPLA Network

In this section, we aim to update readers on activities of the **Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action Network (RCPLA) Network** ([www.rcpla.org](http://www.rcpla.org)) and its members. RCPLA is a diverse, international network of 17 national-level organisations which brings together development practitioners from around the globe. It was formally established in 1997 to promote the use of participatory approaches to development. The network is dedicated to capturing and disseminating development perspectives from the South. For more information please contact the RCPLA Network Steering Group:

**RCPLA Coordination:** Tom Thomas (Network Coordinator), Director, Institute for Participatory Practices (Praxis), S-75 South Extension, Part II, New Delhi, India 110 049. Tel/Fax: +91 11 5164 2348 to 51; Email: [tomt@praxisindia.org](mailto:tomt@praxisindia.org) or [catherinek@praxisindia.org](mailto:catherinek@praxisindia.org)

Janet Boston, Director of Communications, Institute for Environment & Development (IIED), 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK. Tel: +44 20 7388 2117; Email: [janet.boston@iied.org](mailto:janet.boston@iied.org); Website: [www.iied.org](http://www.iied.org)

**Asian Region:** Jayatissa Samaranayake, Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID), 591 Havelock Road, Colombo 06, Sri Lanka. Tel: +94 1 555521; Tel/Fax: +94 1 587361; Email: [ipidc@panlanka.net](mailto:ipidc@panlanka.net)

**West Africa Region:** Awa Faly Ba, IIED Programme Sahel, Point E, Rue 6 X A, B.P. 5579, Dakar, Sénégal. Tel: +221 824 4417; Fax: +221 824 4413; Email: [awafba@sentoo.sn](mailto:awafba@sentoo.sn)

**European Region:** Jane Stevens, Participation Group, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. Tel: + 44 1273 678690; Fax: + 44 1273 21202; Email: [participation@ids.ac.uk](mailto:participation@ids.ac.uk); Participation group website: [www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip](http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip)

**Latin American Region:** Jordi Surkin Beneria, Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participacion, Calle Padre Musani #40, Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Tel/fax: +591 3 337 607; Email: [jbeneria@cotas.com.bo](mailto:jbeneria@cotas.com.bo); Website: [www.gntparticipa.org](http://www.gntparticipa.org)

**North Africa & Middle East Region:** Ali Mokhtar, Center for Development Services (CDS), 4 Ahmed Pasha Street, Citibank Building, Garden City, Cairo, Egypt. Tel: +20 2 795 7558; Fax: +20 2 794 7278; Email: [cds.lrc@neareast.org](mailto:cds.lrc@neareast.org); Website: [www.neareast.org/explore/cds/index.htm](http://www.neareast.org/explore/cds/index.htm)

**Southern and Eastern Africa Region:** Eliud Wakwabubi, Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK), Jabavu Road, PCEA Jitegemea Flats, Flat No. D3, P.O. Box 2645, KNH Post Office, Nairobi, Kenya. Tel/Fax: +254 2 716609; Email: [pamfork@nbnet.co.ke](mailto:pamfork@nbnet.co.ke)

## News from the RCPLA coordinator

RCPLA is still sponsoring a few writeshops for its members. The latest was in Bolivia, which focused on 'Experiences with Promoting People's Participation in Local Governance in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Brazil.' A number of Latin American practitioners were brought together and shared their experiences in local governance and shared some lessons learnt from these experiences.

In March, we held an event for the *Communication for Change* initiative. This was an India-level consultation exploring the 'Democratisation of the Media' with a number of different prominent people in the field of media and

communication. This India-level consultation will help us establish the theoretical context of democratising global media spaces and lead into our international workshop for *Communication for Change* that will be held in mid-May. Look out for more information on this in the next issue.

## News from the Institute for Development Studies

The Institute for Development Studies (IDS) are pleased to announce the launch of their new webspace, *Learning and Teaching for Transformation*.

*Learning and Teaching for Transformation* is a network hosted by the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies

(IDS). It aims to enhance the capacity of education institutions to develop and deliver effective programmes that contribute to a wider transformation of individuals, institutions and society. The initiative has focused mainly on the context of institutions of higher learning, although the ideas that have emerged have wider implications across the whole education system.

The network supports dialogue, participation, collaboration and community development across and within all levels of the education system. It advocates forms of learning that are grounded in the principles and practices of participatory development and action research, and seeks to encourage these through the sharing and generation of both theory and practice.

The webspace draws together all the elements on the LTT initiative so far, some of which were published in *PLA Notes 48: Learning and teaching participation* (December 2003). The LTT website includes:

- recent developments, discussions and issues, with an interactive notice board for news and events;
- global e-dialogue about teaching, learning, institutions, power, curriculum and change;
- resources and cross-cutting thematic summaries; and
- case studies and pictures from partner organisations.

To view, visit [www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/](http://www.pnet.ids.ac.uk/) then click on the 'topic guides' and follow the 'learning' links. For more information, you can also email: [LTT@ids.ac.uk](mailto:LTT@ids.ac.uk)

### News from IIED

#### IIED welcomes Mary Robinson as Chair of its Board of Trustees

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was appointed the new Chair of IIED's Board of Trustees in January 2005. Mary Robinson follows Jan Pronk, who resigned as Chair following his appointment by Secretary General Kofi Annan as UN Special Envoy to Sudan.

In her seven years as President of Ireland, Mary Robinson received international recognition for her work bridging partnerships with

#### Small farmers from Andhra Pradesh at the workshop



developing countries and highlighting the needs of the disadvantaged.

From 1997-2002, she served as a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. She is currently director of the Ethical Globalization Initiative (EGI), a new project to integrate concepts of human rights, gender sensitivity and enhanced accountability into efforts to address global challenges and governance shortcomings. Visit [www.eginitiative.org](http://www.eginitiative.org) for more information on the EGI.

#### The Farmer Exchange for Mutual Learning workshop

This international learning workshop took place in a rural setting in Medak District (Andhra Pradesh, India) from 14th-28th February 2005 and was attended by Michel Pimbert from IIED. Small farmers from Indonesia and India, nomadic pastoralists from Iran and indigenous peoples from Peru were centre stage in this international event, with outside professionals playing support and facilitating roles. This was a timely and exciting opportunity for all

#### Nomadic pastoralists from Iran at the workshop



present to share experiences and lessons learnt from the participatory action research which partners in India (DDS), Peru (ANDES), Iran (CENESTA) and Indonesia (FIELD) have been doing with IIED on 'Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity & Livelihoods.' (see [www.diversefoodsystems.org](http://www.diversefoodsystems.org)). A very rich and exciting menu of verbal presentations, songs, video films, power point presentations, and exhibits/displays were used by participants to communicate what is emerging from this collaborative project in Peru, India, Iran and Indonesia. Holistic and experiential learning in a convivial atmosphere! A joyful expression of our shared humanity and a search for unity in diversity.

This was all about peoples' voice, knowledge, priorities and struggles to sustain diverse local ecologies, culture and food systems – on their own terms. The soon to be published proceedings of this *Farmer Exchange for Mutual Learning* event will be reviewed in a future issue of *Participatory Learning and Action*.



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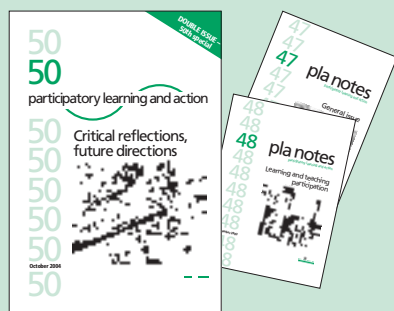
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### Types of material accepted

- **Articles:** max. 2500 words plus illustrations – see below for guidelines.
- **Feedback:** letters to the editor, or longer pieces (max. 1500 words) which respond in more detail to articles.
- **Tips for trainers:** training exercises, tips on running workshops, reflections on behaviour and attitudes in training, etc., max. 1000 words.
- **In Touch:** short pieces on forthcoming workshops and events, publications, and online resources.

We welcome accounts of recent experiences in the field (or in workshops) and current thinking around participation, and particularly encourage contributions from practitioners in the South. Articles should be co-authored by all those engaged in the research, project, or programme.

In an era in which participatory approaches have often been viewed as a panacea to development problems or where acquiring funds for projects has depended on the use of such methodologies, it is vital to pay attention to the quality of the methods and process of participation. Whilst we will continue to publish experiences of innovation in the field, we would like to emphasise the need to analyse the limitations as well as the successes of participation. *Participatory Learning and Action* is still a series whose focus is methodological, but it is important to give more importance to issues of power in the process and to the impact of participation, asking ourselves who sets the agenda for participatory practice. It is only with critical analysis that we can further develop our thinking around participatory learning and action.

We particularly favour articles which contain one or more of the following elements:

- an **innovative** angle to the concepts of participatory approaches or their application;
- **critical reflections** on the lessons learnt from the author's experiences;
- an attempt to develop **new methods**, or innovative adaptations of existing ones;
- consideration of **the processes** involved in participatory approaches;
- an assessment of the **impacts** of a participatory process;

- potentials and limitations of **scaling up and institutionalising participatory approaches**; and,
- potentials and limitations of **participatory policy-making processes**.

### Language and style

Please try to keep contributions clear and accessible. Sentences should be short and simple. Avoid jargon, theoretical terminology, and overly academic language. Explain any specialist terms that you do use and spell out acronyms in full.

### Abstracts

Please include a brief abstract with your article (circa. 150-200 words).

### References

If references are mentioned, please include details. *Participatory Learning and Action* is intended to be informal, rather than academic, so references should be kept to a minimum.

### Photographs and drawings

These should have captions and the name(s) of the author(s)/photographer clearly written on the back. If you are sending electronic files, please make sure that the photos/drawings are scanned at a high enough resolution for print (300 dpi) and include a short caption and credit(s).

### Format

We accept handwritten articles but please write legibly. Typed articles should be double-spaced. Please keep formatting as simple as possible. Avoid embedded codes (e.g. footnotes/endnotes, page justification, page numbering).

### Submitting your contribution

Contributions can be sent on paper, by email, or on disk. We use Word 6 for Windows, but can read most other word processing packages. If you are sending a disk, please include a hard copy of the article as well. Contributions should be sent to: **The Editor, *Participatory Learning and Action*, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1 0DD, UK.** Fax: +44 20 7388 2826  
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### Resource Centres for Participatory Learning and Action (RCPLA) Network

Since June 2002, the IIED Resource Centre for Participatory Learning and Action has now relocated to the Institute of Develop-

ment Studies, UK. Practical information and support on participation in development is also available from the various members of the RCPLA Network.

This initiative is a global network of resource centres for participatory learning and action, which brings together 15 organisations from Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe. The RCPLA Network is committed to information sharing and networking on participatory approaches.

Each member is itself at the centre of a regional or national network. Members share information about activities in their respective countries, such as training programmes, workshops and key events, as well as providing PLA information focused on the particular fields in which they operate.

As part of the devolution process, Tom Thomas, of Praxis, India has been appointed as network coordinator by the RCPLA steering committee. More information, including regular updates on RCPLA activities, can be found in the In Touch section of *Participatory Learning and Action*, or by visiting [www.rcpla.org](http://www.rcpla.org), or contacting:

Praxis, Delhi Office, C-75 South Extension, Part II, New Delhi, 110 049, India. Tel/fax: +91 11 5164 2348-51; Email: [tom@praxisindia.org](mailto:tom@praxisindia.org) or [catherinek@praxisindia.org](mailto:catherinek@praxisindia.org)

### Participation at IDS

Participatory approaches and methodologies are also a focus for the Participation Group at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK. This group of researchers and practitioners are involved in sharing knowledge, in strengthening capacity to support quality participatory approaches, and in deepening understanding of participatory methods, principles, and ethics. It focuses on South-South sharing, exchange visits, information exchange, action research projects, writing, and training. Services include a Participation Resource Centre (open weekdays) with an online database detailing materials held. The Group also produces a newsletter and operates an email distribution list.

For further information please contact: Jane Stevens, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK.  
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