

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF FIVE AFRICAN COUNTRIES
WITH COMPLETED PRSP**

**(BURKINA FASO, MAURITANIA,
MOZAMBIQUE, UGANDA
& TANZANIA)**

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Abbreviations

AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

CSO

Civil Society Organization

FDI

Foreign Direct Investment

HIPC

Heavily Indebted Poor Countries

HIV

Humane Immune Virus

IMF

International Monetary Fund

IPRSP

Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

MDG

Millennium Development Goals

MPs

Members of Parliament

NePAD

New Partnership for Africa's Development

NGOs

Non-Governmental Organisations

NPES

National Poverty Eradication Strategy

NRDs

National Reference Documents

PARPA

Piano de Accao para Reducao da Pobreza Absoluta

PRSP

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

PEAP

Poverty Eradication Action Plan

SAPs

Structural adjustment Programs

WB

World Bank

WTO

World Trade Organisation

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FOREWORD

If poverty reduction strategies are to genuinely address the various dimensions of poverty - including insecurity, vulnerability, gender inequalities and access to opportunities, work, assets, and welfare – genuine and effective participation of civil society in key decision-making processes will need to be institutionalised. This is because the process of tackling poverty should be owned, driven and directed by poor people themselves, through their governments.

AFRODAD commissioned five studies into the participation of civil society in the processes leading to the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs) in Uganda, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Mauritania and Mozambique. These are the only African countries that had completed PRSPs at the end of 2001. The World Bank and IMF insisted on *civil society participation* in the PRSP process as a condition for endorsing the national poverty reduction strategy and subsequently releasing debt relief funds. The African Governments seem to have adjusted their national Poverty Reduction Strategies so they could be acceptable to the World Bank and the IMF so as to secure the required Debt Relief from the currently unsustainable Debt burden which undermines and violates African people's Economic, social, civic and cultural Rights. These, amongst other issues, beg the question of how genuine, legitimate, and empowering the process of participation and ownership was in these countries. In Uganda, for example, although civil society participation in the PRSP process was a necessary and meaningful process, it was not sufficient to guarantee effective policy change that would secure better living standards of the people.

We encourage civil society to continue to demand the right to participate in national poverty reduction strategies and ensure that their input makes a difference in the lives of people. We equally encourage governments to empower civil society and set up institutional structures that will provide them with legitimate space for genuine participation.

Opa Kapijimpanga

AFRODAD Coordinator.

1.0. Introduction, Major observations and Policy Imperatives

As a result of the failure of the HIPC Initiative and increasing pressure from the global south for debt cancellation for the third world countries, the World Bank and the IMF introduced the enhanced HIPC (eHIPC) Initiative following the Cologne G7 Summit in June 1999. The new Initiative was aimed at making debt relief faster, broader and deeper and linked to poverty reduction. Within this context, the so-called heavily indebted poor countries could become eligible for debt relief on the completion and acceptance of their Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The relief would take the combined form of debt cancellation and debt rescheduling on bilateral debt and debt refinancing of multilateral debt through the HIPC Funds established for the purpose.

The World Bank asserted that the aim of PRSPs was "to strengthen country ownership of poverty reduction strategies and to broaden representation of civil society – particularly the poor themselves – in the design of such strategies; to improve co-ordination among development partners; and to focus on the analytical, advisory, and financial resources of the international community on achieving results in reducing poverty".

As at December 2001, eight countries globally had completed their PRSPs. Of these, five are in Africa; partly reflecting the fact that the majority of the HIPCs are found in this region. These are Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda, which are of interest to this paper.

AFRODAD commissioned research in the five African countries that had completed their PRSPs. The main focus of the research was on civil society participation in the process. However, in view of the fact that there

was a lingering feeling among African civil society that African Governments were in any case already undertaking Poverty reduction strategies it was necessary to understand the extent to which these national processes had links with the World Bank and IMF led Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers. The questions in our minds were:

- to what extent were the national poverty reduction strategies and processes leading to addressing poverty reduction in the various countries.
- Why were the national processes not acceptable to the World Bank and the IMF as a basis for providing Debt relief and directing resources to already identified areas
- Was the conditionality of civil society participation going to provide additionality to the national processes in terms of the final national planning products?
- What were the particular differences between the national processes and the PRSP that was acceptable to the Bank and the Fund?
- To what extent were the PRSPs consistent with the national processes and documents, the millennium goals and other development frameworks that purported to serve poverty reduction. Was there any additionality of PRSPs as a framework?
- What was to be the specific aspects of PRSPs that the Bank and the Fund would be satisfied with and what was the difference between this and the usual Structural Adjustment programmes (SAPs) that Africa had faced since the 1980s and has become an increasingly unacceptable imposition?

There were more questions than this and we did not even get answers to those questions. However, in the following paragraphs and the rest of this document we indicate what the research found out in the five countries.

There were already various plans and Poverty Reduction Strategies in the surveyed countries at the time of embarking on PRSPs: the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) in Uganda, National Poverty Eradication Strategy (NPES) in Tanzania, the Plano de Acção para Redução da Pobreza Absoluta (PARPA) in Mozambique, a series of National Reference Documents (NRDs) encompassing social, economic and other national issues in Mauritania, 'Cadre Strategique da Lutte Contra la Pauvrete (Poverty Reduction Strategy) in Burkina Faso and also other poverty action plans supported by IMF/World Bank such as the global Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The PRSPs built on the national processes. All the national processes were converted into SAP documents to meet World Bank and IMF acceptance. Civil society input was registered but did not provide the necessary paradigm shift to make the PRSP nationally owned. Among other things the fundamentals of liberalization, including the standard (IMF/World Bank) privatization of social services were the least denominator in all the PRSPs.

The PRSP process has very little potential of transforming the partnership between African countries and their donor partners and between its citizenry. The *conversion* of the content and process of national initiatives, such as the NPES, PARPA, PEAP and other development processes into the externally imposed PRSPs, undermined local ownership. In each case, the national processes had been the basis of the country's PRSP, but underwent shifting of focus and approaches to meet the World Bank/IMF requirements. This relationship between pre-existing national poverty reduction initiatives and the PRSP determines who really dictates the development process. Over-reliance on existing plans also raises questions about the *extent of ownership of the development strategies by stakeholders outside the State*. Ownership of the development strategies

by stakeholders outside the government will depend on the extent of the stakeholder participation and the degree to which the final plans reflect their concerns and suggestions. Essentially, for the PRSP process to be useful, it should transform and help improve the relationship between the African state and its citizens and then between the African nations and their development partners. Even casual reading of the experiences in the five countries would suggest that the PRSP process undermined the potential for transformation towards a development paradigm.

Civil society participation, as an IMF/World Bank condition jeopardises the natural democratic relationship that a government and its citizens must have. In this light, this paper concludes that the fact that CSO participation in the PRSP in the five countries was imposed, the reason for it being cosmetic. At the global level, this reflects well-entrenched power relations rather than anything that could be called 'participatory'.

It is also clear that the PRSPs will neither reduce poverty nor provide genuine debt relief. The extent to which governments view PRSPs only as necessary steps to qualify for debt relief to a large extent determines the seriousness with which they draft the documents and even involve civil society. There is a danger that by making PRSPs a conditionality for debt relief, some countries have ended up focusing on the debt relief rather than poverty reduction. In a way, by adopting the World Bank and IMF paradigm, there is a trade off between debt relief and poverty reduction. It is for this reason that NGOs and even the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (through the Rapporteurs on Debt) have since 2000 proposed a de-link between PRSPs and Debt relief. As in the past, Debt relief has been nothing more than a tool of imposing a development paradigm and domination of Debtor countries by the rich Creditor countries and their allies. It is hardly expected that there would be

a major paradigm shift in the way the Creditor countries propose to tackle poverty, especially given that the programme still falls under the purview of the same institutions – the World Bank and the IMF.

The following are **three useful policy observations**:

- § The PRSP is offering an opportunity to redefine the role of government, a step that is in tandem with IMF/World Bank policy principles that are aimed at limiting government involvement in areas where they have a comparative advantage (i.e., the provision of public goods). This still remains a big challenge to African governments and African people who believe that the state has a specific and social role to safeguard the access of all people to basic services such as education, health and sanitation which privatization undermines.
- § Given the urgency of **Debt cancellation** for the poor countries of world, and the fact that PRSP would not deliver genuine debt relief, there is urgent need to explore other sustainable mechanisms such as the **call for the establishment of a fair and transparent arbitration (FTA)** mechanism on debt which would redress the structural problems currently prevailing in the global governance system. This would de-link Debt from genuine poverty reduction given that the current link distorts attempts to solve both the Debt crisis and the poverty problem.
- § The least that the international financial institutions might do to demonstrate their commitment to the principle of civil society participation is to pay for increasing the capacity of civil society to fully participate by using resources released by Debt cancellation.

Equally, given that the governance issue is central to long term poverty reduction, resources released from Debt cancellation should be directed at enhancing governance in Africa through the NEPAD process.

1.1. BACKGROUND

From the early 1980s, the pressure was on almost all African countries to adopt International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank prescribed Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) as a way of addressing their development problems. Although much of this pressure was coming from the Bretton Woods institutions, national governments were also pushed in this direction by their bilateral donors who made SAPs conditional to development Aid.

SAP based orientantions began to orient the economies towards the liberalised market. There have been casualties of this process at a number of levels due to the tendency of markets to strengthen the strong and further weaken the already weak economies. Within African countries, liberalisation has led to de-industrialisation, individual citizens have had reduced access to social services, small producers have lost access to markets because of the removal of state commodity marketing boards, and governments have been constrained both in terms of their overall political direction and their ability to determine particular sectoral policies. Globally, African countries have faced a global marketplace in which they are by far the weakest players. On the whole, they do not have the productive capacity (eroded under SAPs) to make a meaningful dent on the world market partly because they have failed to influence the prices of what they produce. Neither do these countries have the influence nor power (generally perceived as negotiating capacity) required to deal with the institutions of the marketplace, particularly the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Many African governments have stated that they were 'wrong' or 'naive' to

adopt Structural Adjustment Policies in the first place and the World Bank and IMF, themselves, have conceded that the SAP model did not work for Africa¹. Structural Adjustment has led to a crisis in African countries characterised by increasingly divided societies, marginalisation of large sections of the population, civil and political unrest and, most dangerously, an unsustainable debt burden with the consequent loss of leverage on the part the African countries.

In an attempt to solve both the unsustainable debt burden and the poverty problem, the dominant forces in the international arena defined the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs) Papers to which African countries could access Debt relief. We argue broadly that the PRSPs are no different from SAPs and that therefore they cannot really be poverty reduction strategies.

1.2. Conceptual Framework of the PRSP

According to the World Bank and the Fund,

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) describe a country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated external financing needs. PRSPs are prepared by governments through a participatory process involving civil society and development partners, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The PRSP was to become the basis for lending programmes by the IMF and the World Bank and for HIPC debt relief, replacing the Policy

Framework Paper (PFP), which was supposed to be a joint IMF-World Bank document outlining a country's policies and reform proposals (World Bank, 2001). The PRSP document provides the IMF and World Bank with a new platform for jointly assessing a country's loan proposals, the emphasis being on how to improve the impact of IMF and WB lending in the context of poverty reduction. The six pillars or principles of the PRSP are that:

- it must be developed in a participatory way; i.e. there must be maximum consultation of all stakeholders including civil society. It must be nationally owned/country-driven as opposed to being donor-driven;
- it must lay out a policy framework and agenda for directly tackling poverty; i.e. *poverty diagnosis must be* thorough – governments should understand the nature, magnitude and causes of poverty;
- it must be a comprehensive framework of poverty reduction i.e. there must be *coherence* between poverty goals and the macroeconomic framework (poverty targets must be established first and then macroeconomic targets set in line with these goals;
- ⑥ it must be a partnership between government, civic society and development partners (donors) - *governance* issues must be thoroughly addressed; and
- it must be a long term intervention in support of poverty alleviation.

1.3. Scope of the PRSP

The (PRSP) is assessed jointly by the Bank and IMF in terms of the following scope:

- i. Its objectives;
- ii. Policy content in relation to coherence and sustainability;
- iii. Extent to which governments understand the nature and magnitude of the problem of poverty confronting them (how well poverty-diagnosis has been done);
- iv. Extent to which civil society has been consulted and provided input into the PRSP formulation process and its final content, and
- v. Extent to which governance issues are addressed.

The PRSP document has a positive spin-off for the two Bretton Woods Institutions in not only providing common criteria for assessing suitability for lending, but grounds for harmonisation of IMF and World Bank policies and requirements.

2.0. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Mozambique's government poverty policies and strategies since the late 1980s have been expressed in the Plano de Acção para Redução da Pobreza Absoluta (PARPA), Tanzania had adopted a National Poverty Eradication Strategy (NPES) in 1997, Uganda had a Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), Burkina Faso had established its priorities under 'Cadre Strategique da Lutte Contra la Pauvrete, and Mauritania had a series of National Reference Documents (NRDs) encompassing social, economic and other national issues.

Despite the emphasis on civil society participation, the PRSP is a government led process. Hence, the first step for the five countries was to set up, within existing government structures, steering or coordinating committees. In Mauritania, this took the form of an Inter-ministerial Committee for the Fight Against Poverty, chaired by the Prime Minister and a Planning Committee, under the Minister of Economic Affairs and Development, responsible for the follow up of the PRSP process. In Tanzania, a committee was formed to steer the process comprising twelve Ministers and the Governor of the Reserve Bank. Uganda and Mozambique began PRSP preparations in the context of government led initiatives that were already in progress.

2.1. Burkina Faso Process

All members of government in Burkina Faso were already well aware of the importance of focusing every strategy on the reduction of poverty. In order to begin the PRSP process, an interministerial committee was formed involving research and planning experts. This committee prepared a draft PRSP. This draft was first presented to:

1. The two chambers of Parliament (as the representatives of the people) and to the governmental Economic and Social Council;
2. Development partners in two meetings, the first of which was also open to MPs;
3. Civil society in two workshops, held in regional centres, at which they had an opportunity to discuss the draft with the Drafting Committee.

Members of the Drafting Committee attended all the meetings and workshops to ensure that the contributions made were incorporated into the final draft of the PRSP.

2.2. Mauritania Process

The National Reference Documents (NRDs) are broad in scope though and not necessarily based on extensive research. The PRSP is perceived as having taken over the role of the NRDs, on the basis of an analysis of the poverty situation in Mauritania that had never been undertaken before.

Unusually, the PRSP in Mauritania was launched with an awareness campaign, thus opening the process up to stakeholders who might not have known about it otherwise and enabling them to take a proactive role in ensuring they were involved.

Like the case for Mozambique, an Interministerial Committee led the PRSP process in Mauritania. It was coordinated by the Minister of Economic Affairs and Development and the Human Rights Commission, with support, at the technical level, from technical representatives of government ministries and twelve Technical Theme Groups. The Theme Groups included civil society and donor representation. In addition, a Donor Committee was set up.

The PRSP then went through the following process:

- Four inter-regional seminars (encompassing the thirteen districts in the country) which involved elected representatives of NGOs and other civil society organisations as well as other development partners;
- A meeting between members of the General Assembly, MPs, Mayors, NGOs, trade unions, development partners and individuals recognised for their involvement in poverty alleviation;
- A further series of inter-regional seminars; and

- Submission to Parliament for approval.

Mauritania has also undertaken the first evaluation of its PRSP, which became the subject of further inter-regional seminars.

2.3. Mozambique Process

Delivered in 1999, the PARPA was a plan of action developed out of a national household survey of living conditions (1996/7) and a poverty assessment (1999). It also drew on a number of earlier projects and initiatives, namely the Social Dimensions of Adjustment project (1989), the Office for the Support of Vulnerable Population Groups (1990), the Economic and Social Rehabilitation Programme and Poverty Alleviation Strategy (1990) and the Strategy for Poverty Reduction in Mozambique (1995).

The process of developing PARPA was a partially participatory one, with sectoral consultations being held. These reached community level to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the nature of the particular sector, so that the policies of the education and health sectors were based more soundly on user community input than those in more technical or nationally oriented sectors, such as public works.

PARPA's completion coincided with the introduction of the PRSP initiative and, hence, Mozambique's PARPA was accepted by the World Bank as the country's Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP). A major concern was to retain coherence with existing policy instruments such as the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy and the HIV/AIDS Strategy Plan. Mozambique's PRSP process, therefore, was grounded in the substantial research and poverty assessment that had formed the basis of PARPA,

as well as the experience gained from the implementation of a number of poverty reduction strategies throughout the 1990s.

However, the move from an IPRSP, which equated to the national poverty reduction initiative, to Mozambique's final PRSP called for a further process of revision and consultation. The consultations involved representatives of civil society, international partners and provincial government. As their point of departure in the analysis, provincial poverty profiles, human development profiles and the original PARPA document were used. The results of these consultations were collated and discussed at a national seminar whose outcome fed into the development of provincial plans of action. Discussions also began at this stage on the monitoring and evaluation aspects of the programme. A Technical Consultation Unit was formed within the Ministry of Planning and Finance to conduct and report on the final round of consultations. These were narrower in scale, taking place among 'invited partners' and aimed at harmonising the PARPA/PRSP vision, priorities and targets. They also covered social and economic policy implications, flow of information, issues of governance and the legal framework for the initiative.

2.4. Tanzania Process

For Tanzania, a poverty eradication policy was already in place while the PRSP represented a medium term strategy (2001-4) for the implementation of the policy. The NPES is one of the many documents developed under Tanzania's development Vision 2025, along with the Tanzania Assistance Strategy, the National External Debt Strategy, and the Public Health and Expenditure Review. The NPES is the document that focuses on poverty eradication. It was adopted in 1997 and has been the subject of annual and multi-year public expenditure reviews

The overall process of preparing the PRSP in Tanzania was coordinated by the Vice President's office. As well as the Steering Committee, a Technical Committee was formed, comprising officials from the Vice President's and Prime Minister's offices, the Planning Commission, the Bank of Tanzania, and the Ministries of Finance, Education, Health, Works, Community Development, Local Government, Agriculture, Water, Energy and Minerals, and Youth Development. It was coordinated by the Ministry of Finance and was given the specific task of preparing both the interim and final PRSP documents and organising national and zonal workshops.

Having prepared an IPRSP, the Technical Committee presented it at a consultative technical meeting to government, donor and civil society representatives.

Once the IPRSP was approved by Cabinet, work began on the drafting of the final PRSP with a series of zonal workshops aimed at soliciting views from grassroots stakeholders. Within each of the seven specified zones, every district was represented by four villagers, one District Councillor, one Town Councillor and one District Executive Director. Civil society representation was through five NGO representatives in each zone. An

outside expert was used by the Technical Committee to assist in preparing a reference document, which outlined workshop objectives, discussion guidelines and methodology. Some participatory methodologies, such as disaggregating discussion groups by gender, were used in the zonal workshops.

The reports of the zonal workshops were returned to the Technical Committee, which drew on them in the formulation of the initial draft of the PRSP. Other background papers, such as the Vision 2025, the Tanzania Assistance Strategy, the NPES (1997), the National External Debt Strategy and the Public Expenditure Review, as well as a number of sector specific studies, were used as background to the PRSP. The draft then went through the following process:

- 1 A consultative meeting with the donor community, including a joint IMF/World Bank mission;
- 2 Briefing of and consultation with MPs;
- 3 A national workshop of 25 participants including Permanent Secretaries, Regional Commissioners, representatives of multilateral and bilateral donors, private sector representatives, media and representatives of NGOs; and
- 4 A retreat workshop for Regional Administrative Secretaries (who would be responsible for implementation).

At the end of this process, the final draft of the PRSP was presented to and approved by Cabinet.

2.5. Uganda Process

The PEAP is a government framework for poverty eradication, developed in 1997 after two years of consultations with civil society organisations, among other stakeholders. CSOs lobbied successfully to be included in the Drafting Committee of the PEAP. They gathered inputs from their constituents, analysed it and presented their analysis to the Technical Committee of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development that was responsible for developing the PEAP. The involvement of civil society in the formulation of the PEAP appears to have been a determining factor in the World Bank decision to accept this document as Uganda's PRSP. However, as in the case of Mozambique, some further consultation work was required to turn the PEAP document into a fully-fledged PRSP, although this work had already been envisaged as a necessary update of the PEAP.

What distinguishes the formulation of Uganda's PRSP from the PEAP is the very short time frame in which it took place. This was a result of external pressure arising from the international perception that the HIPC initiative was not working and that few countries had benefited from it. Uganda, therefore, was needed as a showpiece by donors and had to get its PRSP finished within a period of less than six months. The task was led by a Technical Committee within the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development; a government initiated Steering Committee comprising senior government officials, donor representatives, research institutions and civil society organisations, and a Civil Society Task Force. The process included:

- A consultative workshop attended by all stakeholders and discussion groups formed within the context of this workshop;

A special workshop to introduce the PEAP/PRSP process to MPs;
A series of consultation workshops with local government officials, run in parallel with consultations with grassroots groups that were run by civil society organisations; and
Consultative Group meetings held in the capital.

was supplemented by research input from the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, The Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) and the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR). Government also hired an international consultant to synthesise the information and issues and incorporate them into the PEAP/PRSP document.

3.0. DEFINITION OF PRSPS IN PRACTICE

From the experience of the five countries, the PRSP basically means a document that identifies priorities for government. In Burkina Faso, the PRSP is a “document that sets priorities” (Burkina Faso PRSP Document, section 1.3). It is a document that does not seek to replace sectoral strategies that already exist but provides a framework for aligning these with government priorities. It is also:

- a development Strategy that will focus on enhancing the impact of public policies and on the need to increase purchasing power of the disadvantaged population and create an environment more conducive to their social development;
- a new development paradigm that addresses sustainability in the face of external shocks and one that is fuelled by a broader economic base (includes rather than crowds out the poor who are the majority of the population); and
- a new focus on equity.

Its purpose is to influence the sectoral objectives of each line ministry and the choice of monitoring indicators for the programmes and action plans to be financed. The PRSP ensures that poverty reduction is the focus of development strategies and thus monitoring indicators are developed to measure the impact of these in relation to poverty (i.e., poverty-centred monitoring and evaluation).

In Uganda, the PRSP is the country’s Poverty Eradication Action Plan. It is a national planning framework to guide detailed medium term sector plans, district plans, and the budget process.

In Mozambique, the PRSP is the country's Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA). The document explains the strategic vision for reducing poverty that will guide the preparation of the country's annual and medium-term budgets, programmes and policies. The PRSP, which is based on Government plans, is a rolling and dynamic programming instrument that will incorporate new elements arising from changes in society and the economy. The key objective – the reduction of absolute poverty - will not be altered, but the tools, policies and targets may change as the country's knowledge of the different variables improves.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COUNTRY PRSPS – SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

3.1.SIMILARITIES

Although the five PRSPs were drawn up independently of each other, they bear resemblance to each other in terms of the priority areas set for poverty reduction.

3.2.1. Converting PRS into PRSP

In each case, the national processes became the basis of the country's PRSP, shifting focus and changing methodologies to meet the World Bank/IMF requirements. The relationship between pre-existing national poverty reduction initiatives and the PRSP process is crucial in determining who really owns the development process in each of the countries and whether the PRSP is meant for poverty reduction or debt relief.

All the five PRSPs are conditionality for accessing debt relief under the HIPC initiative. Burkina Faso's PRSP, like many others, acknowledge that the PRSP documents were prepared in the context of the enhanced HIPC initiative. While the process was participatory, qualifying for *debt cancellation* should have been a key objective in itself in all the country PRSPs. Without the endorsement of the IMF and World Bank, governments are unlikely to qualify for debt relief and unlikely to get bilateral funding too. Thus, it is questionable to what extent a programme can be truly government or nationally owned. It is more appropriate to say that the process is government led.

Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), with modifications to

suit the specifications of the World Bank and the IMF, now serves as its PRSP. The PEAP was drafted through participatory processes involving civil society and the poor themselves. Several other policy initiatives informed the debate on Uganda's PRSP. These include the Vision 2025, which described the country's broad national aspirations, and the first Poverty Eradication Action Plan of 1997, which now forms the basis for the PRSP.

Although it has been argued that the major input that was required to make Uganda's PEAP compatible with other PRSPs was civil society participation and the time frame factor, the issue goes much deeper into the ideology informing the document, without conforming to which the document would have been rejected by the Bank and the IMF. If the PEAP had been accepted without much change, then one can only assume that it complied with the requirements of the IMF and the World Bank. It had to be modified; again raising the question of the extent to which the programme could be truly government or nationally owned.

While the vision 2025 in Tanzania and Uganda had both been drawn up in a consultative process with civil society, they lacked precise details of how the countries were to achieve the vision, leaving this to other planning processes. The Poverty Eradication Strategies in both countries had civil society input, which was however not broad enough as compared to the participation in the process of drafting the PRSPs. Thus at one level, the PRSP processes deepened the CSO participation or involvement. In spite of this however, it remains unclear if such participation improved the national process and content or just justified the participation aspect of the final PRSP.

Tanzania viewed its PRSP essentially as "an integral part of ongoing

macroeconomic and structural reforms". In essence, Tanzania's PRSP, like many others, form part of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The government of Tanzania has only chosen to "accelerate selected reforms likely to have a major impact on poverty reduction". In his budget speech for the year 2000/01, Tanzania's then Finance Minister, Daniel Yona, explained to parliament that Tanzania expected debt relief of about US\$2 billion from the World Bank, IMF and the Paris Club. He however warned the house that there were conditions to the relief: "Firstly we must continue implementing sound macroeconomic policies, and good governance. Second, we must prepare a PRSP with participation of civil society. Third, while preparing the PRSP, we are required to complete certain activities..."

The Minister's remarks give the lie to the internal ownership of the PRSP process and also calls into question Tanzania's commitment to poverty reduction. From his speech, it is clear that the government is trying to follow the instructions given by the donors and that its main concern is to secure the debt relief. However the government realised that it could only qualify for relief by fulfilling the conditions laid down by the donors. Consultation with civil society then *becomes just another condition* that has to be fulfilled rather than a necessary step in the drawing up of a comprehensive, home grown poverty reduction strategy. From the minister's remarks one can safely say that the government would be willing to work with anyone prepared to help it meet the conditions laid out as quickly as possible (and the Bank and the IMF are always willing to assist). This has strong implications for the content and ownership of the programmes in all the three countries.

Whilst national poverty reduction strategies have been an essential building block for PRSPs, the PRSP document is significantly different from past

poverty reduction strategies (PRS). PRS are mechanisms for reducing poverty, drawn and implemented by the national governments while the PRSP is a policy document that aligns sectoral policies with government central objective of poverty reduction. It has become the focal point of government planning at both central and sectoral level.

Uganda's well developed poverty reduction action plan (PEAP) has been adopted as the country's PRSP on the basis of its emphasis on four essential points:

- i. increasing the ability of the poor to raise their incomes;
- ii. providing a framework for economic growth and transformation so as to accommodate the poor in economic activity and growth;
- iii. increasing the quality of life of the poor; and
- iv. ensuring good governance and security such that gains in poverty reduction can be sustained in the long term.

The PEAP has been comprehensive and has benefited from the experience and progress made since its inception in 1997. The formulation process benefited from participatory research (ensuring consultation and ownership), a thorough grasp of poverty issues (Poverty Status Report) and the realignment of the budget to ensure a sustainable pro-poverty strategy. In adopting the PEAP as the PRSP document, revisions were necessary. The preparation of the revised PEAP document was a highly participatory process and remains iterative. This participatory approach, based on a Participatory Action Plan and effective feedback mechanisms to ensure that all stakeholders (government, donors, local government, civil society and parliamentarians) contribute to the process has been essential for building partnerships, a pillar of PRSPs. Statistical surveys,

which form the basis of such type of planning, were reinforced with more participatory poverty assessment methods in order to bring in the voice of the poor.

Mozambique's PARPA has also been adopted as the country's PRSP. Mozambique's PARPA has been adopted on the basis of comprehensiveness and its long-term development perspective. Poverty reduction is to be achieved through a coherent growth with equity strategy. Attention is equally placed on economic development as it is on distributing the gains of growth to the poor. The poor are recognised as an important economic power base and hence adequate priority is placed on agriculture from where the majority of these derive their livelihood. The similarity between the PRSP and PARPA is in the common emphasis on education and health as a means of not only achieving social protection but investment in improving the human resources from this segment of the population.

The Mozambique PRSP clearly specifies that poverty reduction, a goal that has remained elusive since independence in 1970s, is the key objective and will remain such in the medium term – only the tools and means of achieving this will change. The PRSP for Burkina Faso stresses equity – that is, making sure that the poor benefit from growth. Uganda's PRSP is more specific about its objective of reducing absolute poverty (by reducing headcount of income poverty to 10%).

Both Mozambique and Burkina Faso refer to the empowerment of the poor as a strategic objective. The PRSPs seek to build the capacity of the poor so that they can participate in growth and benefit there from through increased incomes. The countries realise that the poor are an important segment of the countries' national human resource and as such should be harnessed and improved to have broad-based economic growth.

3.2.2. PRSP for Social Sector Development

The implicit expectation of the World Bank and IMF in relation to policy content is that PRSPs will not challenge programme content (i.e., the reform agenda of the two institutions). The PRSPs are not expected to lead to radically different programmes being formulated, but that increased attention will be paid to social sectors and participation promoted by the PRSP process. It will simply give civic society a better understanding of why "IMF-style" reforms are necessary and thus ownership of them. It is not surprising therefore that both Burkina Faso and Uganda maintain that economic growth and the opening of the economy, as a means of achieving it, remain important elements of a pragmatic strategy for poverty alleviation.

A key feature of the policy direction pursued in the five PRSPs is the prioritisation of social services, agriculture and rural infrastructure as a means of attacking poverty at the root. All countries realise that most of the poor people are in rural areas. Improving social services, agriculture and rural infrastructure are the pillars of poverty alleviation.

The new focus on social sectors is contained in all five PRSPs. Education and health are to receive greater attention in contrast with classical IMF/World Bank policies that have sought to shift resources from non-productive social services to more productive economic activities. However, they are all advocating for targeted forms of support to these sectors but the question to be answered is whether the perceived benefits of targeting can offset the associated costs and pressures from the financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. Strong social sector support is envisaged in health, education and water development and the goal is to improve the quality of life of the poor would have to articulate the

liberalisation of social services which is part of Aid and Trade conditionalities as shown in the case of Ghana.

In all countries, the PRSP is advocating for increasing support to agriculture. In Uganda, the PRSP is advocating for the modernisation of agriculture and rural infrastructure development (feeder roads), designed to offer employment opportunities for the rural poor. The use of labour intensive methods of road construction and rehabilitation is also being proposed.

There is also renewed emphasis on promoting other sectors of the economy such as energy, the goal being to increase access of the poor to energy sources. An emerging policy thrust is noticeable in the promotion of small to medium scale enterprises (SMEs) and provision of special incentives to women. In Uganda, a critical element of the strategy for economic growth is the removal of constraints on private sector competitiveness, which lead to increased investment opportunities, growth and trickle down benefits.

For Burkina Faso, the PRSP seeks to transform agriculture in a manner that improves the security of agricultural incomes – that is, reduces vulnerability of agricultural incomes to external shocks.

In Mozambique, the principal objective of agricultural and rural development is to increase income-generating opportunities, especially for the family sector. Specific interventions consist of actions to develop technologies, human capital and infrastructure. Improvement of the road network will permit better access to markets, and will facilitate communication and mobility, especially for those in rural areas and depend on agriculture.

3.2.3. Market Liberalisation

In the PRSPs of all the five countries, nowhere in their drive for export-led growth is the issue of increased access to markets in the developed countries and better terms of trade for their products raised as an issue. Rather the deteriorating terms of trade for primary products like coffee are taken as a given situation that should be factored into planning, while the protectionism of northern countries to exports of interest to developing countries is not even mentioned. On the other hand, studies have shown that Africa's loss from terms of trade alone is higher than the total aid it is receiving from developed countries. Perhaps focusing on this issue alone would benefit the region more in the long term than the debt forgiveness under HIPC.

In looking at agricultural development, the Burkina Faso PRSP focuses first on agricultural exports as "the main engine of growth over the medium term". Although it is crucial to prioritise agricultural exports, given Burkina Faso's level of poverty and the findings of studies carried out in the country showing that poverty is concentrated among food crop farmers. Thus, urging the government to pay even greater attention to the improvement of the lives of food farmers to ensure food security is absurd, to say the least.

The focus on agricultural exports or even cash crops should be gender sensitive. Studies have shown that women benefit least from diversification into cash crops, both at the household level and within national economies. An emphasis on food security, on the other hand, has more positive spin-offs for poor households in terms of improved nutritional levels and even reduced workloads for women. However, none of the five PRSPs takes a gender perspective of the issue.

The five country PRSPs review that in the agriculture sector, the government will “continue to disengage itself from production and marketing activities” and leave these activities to the private sector. This is a hackneyed approach that is both untrue, in relation to the developed countries themselves and a recipe for poverty in developing countries. Leaving marketing functions to the private sector assumes that the markets are efficient and that they will be able to provide the services the people need at affordable prices and pay them fair prices for their produce, which would help reduce poverty.

But the reality on the ground as explained in this study is different. The section of the document dealing with the determinants of poverty explains the marketing problems Burkina Faso faces: “Fluctuations in prices – which can double between harvest time and lean food supply periods and even from one region to another – prove just how imperfect the markets are. Low prices at harvest time, which then rise during the growing season severely, penalise poor farmers and aggravate poverty. The poor are often forced to sell their food crops at harvest time to meet urgent needs, only to find it necessary to repurchase the same items six to nine months later in order to compensate for their food deficit”.

Another market-related problem is that there is no link between the productive western part of Burkina Faso and the Sahel, where agricultural productivity is low. The document explains that the price variations are due to high transaction costs, because markets are “buyers” markets with the result that prices received by producers differ considerably from those paid by consumers.

Given such market conditions, the government has a responsibility to

intervene to correct the price distortions and the exploitation of peasant farmers by merchants who take advantage of the people's poverty to buy their produce at low prices at harvest time and sell at exorbitant prices during lean times. The poor infrastructure, in particular roads, discourages competition among buyers, which works to the disadvantage of the poor.

Also the lack of a pan-territorial price for the agricultural commodities in the liberalised market means that not only do the farmers get lower prices for their produce, but they pay more when they want to repurchase the same grains a few months later. Government intervention in the sector would ensure that there is a smaller difference in the price paid to the farmers and the price at which they repurchase their grain during the lean period.

The PRSP document admits that there is no efficient link between the productive western parts of the country and the drier Sahel areas where productivity is low. This problem is directly linked to poor transport infrastructure (and perhaps long distances) and will not be corrected by the government taking a back seat and leaving everything to the market. If marketing of essential food is left to the private sector people in the Sahel will continue pay punitive prices that take based on the higher expenses and risks the traders confront in delivering food to the areas. Until the transport network is good and the costs of transporting the goods is reduced, the need for the government to intervene in the markets to ensure food security and access to cheaper food for the poor will remain.

The PRSP also argues that Burkina Faso faces higher factor costs compared to other countries in the region. The factors in question include transportation, telecommunications, water and energy. The government attributes high costs to "Monopoly-based market structures and the tax

system” and says this can be corrected through privatisation and trade liberalisation. But apart from road transport and telecommunications (private haulers as against railways and cellular phones), it will be difficult to create competition among private investors in the provision of water and energy. Because of the infrastructure requirements, consumers linked to one energy or water supplier cannot switch overnight to a more competitive one. Privatisation will therefore mean giving private companies, which have no social obligations to the people, the monopoly. While services by private providers might be more efficient, they are likely to be more expensive and therefore not affordable to the poor.

3.2.4. Growth with Equity

Closely linked to redistribution is the issue of equity. The PEAP tried to address this in the distribution of resources to the different regions by using a formula where 85 percent of the resources are allocated according to the size of the district population and 15 percent according to the geographical area. However it has been found that while poverty levels in the rest of the country fell between 1997 and 2000, they increased in the poorer Northern Region from 60 to 66 percent. This clearly showed the need to distribute resources using a more poverty equitable and sensitive formula. Under a proposed formula the poverty status of a district would be given a 20 percent weighting while the weights for geographical area and population size would be reduced.

In all five countries, the private sector is seen as the engine of growth, which should be nurtured. Burkina Faso's PRSP, for instance, says “the government has adopted a strategy to make the private sector the engine of growth”. To this end, it will implement major structural reforms “to more fully open up the economy to the outside”. Among the measures it will

introduce will be “implementing of a more incentive-oriented tax policy aimed at sharpening the country’s competitive advantage by reducing the tax burden on economic operators in the formal economy”.

It is a well-known fact that in most African countries, the tax base is very narrow because of the predominance of the informal sector, which operates outside the tax system. Governments therefore require all the tax resources they can muster to finance development. Unless if the level of taxation was very high, the reduction of taxes on companies in the formal sector is therefore not likely to serve the purpose of poverty reduction. Experience with tax incentives, particularly for foreign manufacturing companies, is that they often relocate to a new tax haven at the end of their tax holiday. In the meantime, they would have been subsidised by the local poor and denied the government revenues, which would otherwise have been used to reduce poverty. Rather than focus on tax incentives, governments should improve infrastructure and the services provided to private enterprises.

Also when the private sector is allowed to operate essential services (or public goods) such as water and energy there will be need to establish a regulatory framework run by an efficient, transparent and technically competent authority to ensure that the companies do not take advantage of their monopoly position to exploit the people. But given the capacity constraints faced by many African governments, it might be difficult to establish such bodies or even to design the policies and regulations.

The decision to privatise essential services such as energy and water should therefore be considered carefully, especially where poverty reduction is considered a priority and in countries where the majority of the people are already failing to pay or have no access to the services.

For instance, privatisation of the telecommunications sector may result in the neglect of the rural areas where the lower demand is considered uneconomical resulting in higher unit costs. In energy, it would also work against rural electrification programmes, which in most cases are designed to stimulate development in the neglected rural areas rather than make profit for the service providers.

3.2.5 Access to land

The PEAP acknowledges that there are deficiencies in the process of land tenure in Uganda and that the institutions of inheritance and ownership currently discriminate against some groups, in particular women who in parts of the country have no right to own land. The PEAP suggests the enactment of a land law to protect the land rights of vulnerable groups, including widows, divorced women and orphans as well as to provide them with free legal advice in land disputes.

Given the importance of access to land in poverty reduction, the government should move quickly to put in place mechanisms to ensure greater access for disadvantaged groups. According to the 2002 Government Progress Report however, land conflicts remain high in Uganda with 52 percent of the communities in parts of the country reporting land conflicts. Resolving them is however difficult as the Land Registry is perceived by the public as "the most corrupt institution in the justice system". This does not augur well for enhancing equity in land distribution. In comparison, the Companies Registry, which registers new companies and provides them information, is considered to be providing "accurate, professional and speedy service". This clearly shows a bias towards the private sector and failure to prioritise actions that have a strong impact the majority poor.

3.2.6. Effectiveness and Sustainability

In all the five country PRSPs, there is an outline, among other things, of how resources saved from debt relief will be spent. The issue of effectiveness is exhaustively covered in the five countries. The general thrust is to identify the most direct way of tackling poverty, redefining the role of the state, and increasing the involvement of NGOs and civic society where they have a comparative advantage in delivering the Strategy. In some cases, the PRSP provides for capacity building to strengthen capacities of implementing agencies. The PRSPs are based on a thorough poverty diagnosis and are specifically designed to cater for the needs of different categories of the poor. The general emphasis is on tackling rural poverty through rural development and direct interventions to improve the quality of rural life. This characteristic makes these strategies relevant to the needs of the intended beneficiaries.

Apart from the issue of effectiveness, the issue of sustainability is another extensively covered. Most of the discussion of sustainability issues relates to the promotion of the sustainable use of natural resources by the poor, e.g., land and water. In the case of Burkina Faso's PRSP, the focus is on reducing pressure that demographic growth and poverty place on natural resources. These natural resources often constitute the main assets of the poor. Natural resource management is meant to promote the sustainability of development actions. The poverty alleviation strategy is based on the search for a balance between the needs of the population and sustainable management of available resources.

3.2.7. Governance

In addition to requiring a coherent policy strategy for poverty reduction, the World Bank and IMF Boards are also concerned with the extent to which governments have consulted with civil society and how governance issues will be addressed within the PRSPs. All countries reviewed have placed considerable attention to the issue of governance. Burkina Faso pledges to promote good governance to release resources usually diverted by corruption. Mozambique acknowledges that good governance is a fundamental condition for success of the poverty reduction strategy. The country's PRSP stresses that the quality of state institutions is very important for the provision of public services benefiting the poor. Uganda's PRSP notes that political insecurity is among the most pressing needs of the poor. Hence, the resolution of conflicts, democratisation, decentralisation and increasing people's control over their own lives and the policies and services, which affect them, are priority actions for Uganda.

Accountability and transparency, the key language of donors, is strongly enforced in the five PRSPs. However, the question remains whether these have been a result of a good consultative process or merely statements to *fulfil implicit aid conditionality*.

An analysis of the PRSP process in three countries² (Mozambique, Uganda and Tanzania) cites corruption in Mozambique as a possible reason that the PRSP might fail. Government corruption is also given as the reason for delays in disbursement of donor funds in Uganda under the 'basket' system requested by CSOs. The latter case suggests that civil society in Uganda does not perceive corruption to be such a threat to their welfare as those from outside do. In the final analysis it is a government's accountability to its own people that is of primary importance.

With the exception of Uganda, which does enjoy a no-party democracy, both Mauritania and Burkina Faso focus on their multi-party democracies, regularity and fairness of elections as signs of good governance. While this is a great achievement, there is need to broaden the concept of democracy beyond regular elections. In consultations with civil society at grassroots level, Ugandan raised concern at their lack of access to the justice system as a major issue. There is therefore a need to broaden governance to include the access of the poor to justice, especially on issues affecting their access to assets such as land.

3.2.8. Priority Areas of Intervention

The table below itemises the priority areas for action identified in each of the five countries.

Table. 1.0

| Mauritania | Mozambique | Uganda | Tanzania | Burkina Faso |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Primary education | Primary education | Primary education | Primary education | Primary education |
| Health care | Health | Health | Health | Health |
| Water and Sanitation | Water and Sanitation | Water and Sanitation | Water and Sanitation | Water and Sanitation |
| Macroeconomic stability | Macroeconomic stability | Macroeconomic stability | Macroeconomic stability | Macroeconomic stability |
| Essential Health package | Minimum Health package | Minimum Health package | Essential Health package | Health Care package |
| - | Rural roads | Rural roads | Rural roads | Rural roads |
| Good governance and security | Good governance and security | Good governance and security | Good governance | Good governance |
| Combating corruption | - | Combating corruption | Combating corruption | Combating corruption |
| Judiciary reform | Judiciary reform | Judiciary reform | Judiciary reform | Judiciary reform |
| Privatisation | Privatisation | Privatisation | Privatisation | Privatisation |
| Reduce regional disparities | Reduce regional disparities | Reduce regional disparities | Reduce regional disparities | Reduce regional disparities |
| Environmental protection | Environmental protection | Environmental protection | Environmental protection | Environmental protection |
| HIV/AIDS | HIV/AIDS | HIV/AIDS | HIV/AIDS | HIV/AIDS |
| | | | Awareness Programmes | |

Looking at the priorities identified above, one is left wondering how the five countries came up with such identical interventions for poverty reduction in independent consultations within their own countries. There can be no

doubt that with a few exceptions such as privatisation, most of the interventions can actually reduce poverty. But then the uniformity of the interventions raises the old problem that is always raised in relation to SAPs that they are not designed to answer the specific needs of countries but rather as a blanket solution for poverty reduction.

For instance, all the five PRSPs focused on improving primary school enrolment as well as the quality of the education at that level. In the five countries analysed, the total focus on primary education would have been appropriate for Burkina Faso where enrolments are low. In countries such as Tanzania and Uganda with higher primary school enrolment, one would have expected the focus to perhaps be more on the relevance of tertiary education to the job market although some attention could still have been paid to primary education.

The World Bank has in the past argued against focusing on post-primary education, largely because of the perceived higher returns from primary education, so it is not surprising that the five documents do not go beyond this. As Craig and Porter state: "A flick through PRSPs from starkly different countries reveals great universality in vocabulary, process, form, content and even prescription. This research, therefore, joins others in the critical recognition of a globalised one-size-fits-all orientation of PRSPs and related programmes."

In the five PRSPs, policies that have been of concern in relation to SAPs, such as user charges are still in evidence although the introduction of free primary education in some of the PRSPs offers some relief. In health, there is still the argument that it is better to pay for a service than not to have one at all. But a critical look at most national governments' budgets shows that there are resources being spent in other sectors that could be

gainfully used to provide cheaper health services without leaving the poor with the option of either paying or not getting services.

Given this perception of the five PRSPs, it is hardly to be expected that there would be a major paradigm shift in the way these countries proposed to tackle poverty, especially given that the programme still falls under the purview of the same institutions – the World Bank and the IMF. Apart from the new focus on social service, rural development and water and sanitation, there is therefore very little that is new in the PRSPs of the five countries that is not standard IMF and World Bank prescriptions.

3.3. DIVERGENCES

Burkina Faso's document explicitly concedes that the PRSP strategy seeks to reconcile the requirements of structural reform and economic recovery with the objective of increasing the income of the poor and transferring more resources to the poorest members of society. The emphasis is on promoting equity-based growth. Burkina Faso will also aim to benefit from the regional integration process underway in the West African Economic and Monetary Union. It is envisaged that swift implementation of an ambitious programme of complementary structural reforms is required to overcome problems of this landlocked country and achieve growth rates permitting a significant alleviation of the incidence of poverty. In the case of Uganda, trade openness has been instrumental to the achievement of high growth rates. Mozambique is silent about its reform policies, concentrating more on social policy.

In the case of Uganda, sustainable resource is promoted by encouraging communal initiatives to protect common property resources.

The PRSP for Burkina Faso and Mozambique raise the important issue of complementary programmes that would continue parallel to the PRSP initiatives. However, whilst it is clear that the PRSPs will seek to utilise resources from growth and debt relief, in the case of Burkina Faso, the country looks forward to the funding of complementary programmes through additional donor resources. This raises a major question about sustainability of these interventions. In reality, it could be the furtherance of donor dependency

3.3.1 The Role of the State

The PRSP is offering an opportunity to redefine the role of government, a step that is in tandem with IMF/World Bank policy principles that are aimed at limiting government involvement to in areas where the state has a comparative advantage (i.e., the provision of public goods). In Burkina Faso, redefinition of the role of the State is a key guiding principle of the PRSP. In Uganda this policy direction is reflected in the budget whereby resource allocation to administration has been reduced to allow re-allocation towards direct poverty reduction. Uganda's PRSP states that the re-allocation towards direct poverty reduction has been achieved by focusing on the poverty impact of spending within as well as between sectors. Mozambique's PRSP is less explicit on the changing role of the State but alludes to the need for the State to be more effective in delivering on the options taken and programmes, plans and commitments adopted.

For instance, on economic growth and poverty, the Uganda PEAP says: "Poverty eradication will depend on economic growth. Although redistribution would reduce poverty, it would not by any means eliminate it. While poverty has many dimensions beyond low incomes, it cannot be removed without raising incomes". The PEAP acknowledges that Uganda

is an *unequal* society and says to prevent increased inequality and *maximise* growth, the participation of the poor in economic policy processes is essential.

But it will be difficult for the poor to participate in the economy if the growth is neutral and there are no redistributive policies. The poor cannot participate in the economy because they lack resources, including land, access to credit, and education or are unemployed. By brushing aside redistribution, the document fails to deal with a fundamental problem confronting the poor, which is how they can participate in the economy. Advocating neutral growth is therefore not likely to reduce poverty. In its April 2002 PRSP Progress Report, the government admits that despite rapid economic growth since the launch of the PEAP, poverty continues to increase in some parts of the country.

According to the report: "Some indication of widening of income disparities after 1997 underscores the critical need for direct action to help poor people raise their incomes". The document acknowledges the need for redistribution and says: "Government can reach its poverty target of 10% by 2017 provided the economy grows by 7% per year and that some redistribution takes place. Uganda's economic growth has fallen short of this target in the last 2-3 years. This has increased the relative importance of redistribution if the 2017 poverty target is to be achieved." This underscores the critical importance of pro-poor growth, rather than neutral growth and for redistribution as critical strategies for poverty eradication. But it is commonly known that the Bretton Woods institutions do not support redistributive policies.

3.3.2. Squeezing Labour

To increase overall productivity, the Burkina PRSP also proposes to “lower the unit labour cost by adjusting the minimum wage and reducing the welfare costs borne by formal sector enterprises”. As a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, Burkina Faso has a fixed exchange rate and cannot adjust the nominal exchange rate to cushion the impact of terms of trade shocks. This means that it will therefore concentrate on exercising control over factors that determine long-term competitiveness, such as labour. In other words, because it cannot devalue its currency to keep prices down, the government will suppress wages to achieve the same results. The suppression of wages and the reduction of welfare costs will have a negative impact on the welfare of workers and on poverty reduction without guaranteeing any major foreign investment

The Burkina Faso government says it will also open up its economy to the external sector. But this could be counter productive if this involves liberalising the domestic market to imports as the country would be flooded with imports to the detriment of its own infant industries. Even the agricultural sector could suffer if it allows in agricultural imports from regions with highly subsidised agriculture such as the European Union. For instance, EU subsidised beef dumped in West Africa posed a serious threat to the viability of the cattle industry as local farmers failed to compete with the cheaper imported beef. Further opening up the economy is therefore not likely to produce positive results for the economy. But again this is a prescription of the IMF, World Bank and of late the World Trade Organisation.

On the other hand, the Mauritania PRSP places less emphasis on the informal sector of the economy and public sector investment than previous

documents have done, concentrating instead on the (formal) private sector as the engine of economic growth.

3.3.3. HIV/AIDS

Given the high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the five countries, it is gratifying to note that Uganda and Burkina Faso pay significant attention to interventions to fight and mitigate the impact of the epidemic. On the other hand, it is worrying that Tanzania's response is limited to HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. Both Uganda and Burkina Faso propose multi-sectoral strategies to combat HIV/AIDS. Tanzania would do well to pay more attention to the epidemic when it revises its PRSP, as AIDS is worsening the poverty crisis in many African countries.

However, although they pay more attention to HIV/AIDS, both the Ugandan and the Burkina Faso PRSPs ignore its gender impacts. The home-based care programmes introduced in many countries are placing a heavy burden of care on women. This not only affects their own health, but their income earning capacity and in the case of girl care-givers can deny them education.

3.3.4. National Ownership

In practical terms, ownership means that the government is responsible for writing or designing the PRSP and for commissioning and organizing technical and donor input into it. Ownership is also extended to stakeholders in the economy by consultation of civic society and others. There is always tension, however, between developing nationally owned strategies and receiving endorsement from the IMF and the World Bank. This tension implies that governments would opt to write programmes they know would be accepted by the Board of the Fund and the IMF even if they conflict with priorities identified through the consultative processes.

The five PRSPs under review give mixed evidence on the issue of ownership. Firstly, they show ownership by the past country development plans since they are by and large derived from already existing country poverty alleviation action plans. For instance, the PRSP for Mozambique is based on prior government plans, including the Lines of Action for the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (1999), the PARPA 2000-2004 (Interim PRSP), and the Government Programme 200-2004, as well as sectoral and inter-sectoral plans, policies and strategies developed by organs of the State.

However, over reliance on existing plans raises questions about the *extent of ownership by stakeholders outside the State*. Ownership by stakeholders outside the government (e.g civil society organisations, business community and others) will depend on the extent of the consultation process governments undertook to prepare the existing plans, which form the basis of the present PRSP. Uganda already had well developed Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which guided the formulation of government poverty reduction policy since its inception in

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3.3.3. HIV/AIDS

Given the high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the five countries, it is gratifying to note that Uganda and Burkina Faso pay significant attention to interventions to fight and mitigate the impact of the epidemic. On the other hand, it is worrying that Tanzania's response is limited to HIV/AIDS awareness programmes. Both Uganda and Burkina Faso propose multi-sectoral strategies to combat HIV/AIDS. Tanzania would do well to pay more attention to the epidemic when it revises its PRSP, as AIDS is worsening the poverty crisis in many African countries.

However, although they pay more attention to HIV/AIDS, both the Ugandan and the Burkina Faso PRSPs ignore its gender impacts. The home-based care programmes introduced in many countries are placing a heavy burden of care on women. This not only affects their own health, but their income earning capacity and in the case of girl care-givers can deny them education.

3.3.4. National Ownership

In practical terms, ownership means that the government is responsible for writing or designing the PRSP and for commissioning and organizing technical and donor input into it. Ownership is also extended to stakeholders in the economy by consultation of civic society and others. There is always tension, however, between developing nationally owned strategies and receiving endorsement from the IMF and the World Bank. This tension implies that governments would opt to write programmes they know would be accepted by the Board of the Fund and the IMF even if they conflict with priorities identified through the consultative processes.

The five PRSPs under review give mixed evidence on the issue of ownership. Firstly, they show ownership by the past country development plans since they are by and large derived from already existing country poverty alleviation action plans. For instance, the PRSP for Mozambique is based on prior government plans, including the Lines of Action for the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (1999), the PARPA 2000-2004 (Interim PRSP), and the Government Programme 200-2004, as well as sectoral and inter-sectoral plans, policies and strategies developed by organs of the State.

However, over reliance on existing plans raises questions about the *extent of ownership by stakeholders outside the State*. Ownership by stakeholders outside the government (e.g civil society organisations, business community and others) will depend on the extent of the consultation process governments undertook to prepare the existing plans, which form the basis of the present PRSP. Uganda already had well developed Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which guided the formulation of government poverty reduction policy since its inception in

1997, when the PRSPs preparation process was launched. The country's first PRSP therefore extensively relied on the existing plan and further consultation during the PRSP was largely to cross check and update the plan. True ownership therefore would have to be assessed by looking at the extent of participation of civil society and others in the first and final stage of the process.

Uganda, on the other hand, does not link its PRSP with the structural adjustment programme or with the HIPC, but rather views it as "*national* Comprehensive Planning Framework and a strategy to improve the welfare of Ugandans and eradicate poverty.

The extent to which governments view PRSPs only as necessary steps to qualify for debt relief to a large extent determines the seriousness with which they draft the documents and even involve civil society. There is a danger that by making PRSPs conditionality for debt relief, some countries end up focusing on the debt relief rather than poverty reduction.

4.0. THE LINK BETWEEN PRSPS AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

4.1. PRSPs and NEPAD

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is an Africa-wide initiative crafted by several of the continent's presidents, including Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Wade of Senegal to tackle Africa's development crisis. NEPAD seeks to marshal international investment, trade, debt relief and aid totaling US\$64 billion a year to lift Africa out of its current economic quagmire.

Both the NEPAD and PRSPs share similar neo-liberal ideological underpinnings, which put a strong emphasis on macroeconomic stability as a prerequisite for economic growth. While macroeconomic stability is no doubt necessary for sustained economic growth, under structural adjustment programmes this has been achieved at great cost to human development. To reduce budget deficits, governments have been forced to cut down on social expenditures, including on health and education. They have also removed subsidies on essential services and on agriculture and have had to privatise loss-making parastatals, even where these provided services that the private sector could not provide. Macroeconomic stability in World Bank/IMF discourse imposes a heavy penalty on the poor who find themselves having to pay more for services at a time when they can ill afford to do so in the face of declining incomes.

Like the PRSPs, NEPAD's main attraction for participating countries is the prospects of increased aid and like the PRSPs this will come with its own conditionalities. But because the programme is 'perceived' as

homegrown it will be difficult for African countries to point fingers at developed countries and the multilateral institutions in the event of its failure.

NEPAD and the PRSPs strive to accelerate the integration of Africa (NEPAD) and of individual countries (PRSPs), into the global economy. Again, while there can be no doubt about the need for Africa to be integrated with the rest of the world, it is the highly unequal terms under which it is being integrated that has raised critical questions about the benefits of such integration. Through the exploitation of its natural resources by developed countries on increasingly unfavourable terms of trade, Africa has been integrated into the global economy for longer and more deeply than many developed countries.

Structural adjustment programmes being implemented by African countries have also resulted in the rapid integration of the continent, under the trade and market liberalisation policies that come with the SAPs. However, the integration has not benefited the continent and is not likely to under NEPAD or the PRSPs as both do only questions the inequity of global trading regimes under bilateral or WTO arrangements but fails to find sustainable solutions the current unfair terms of trade.

Both NEPAD and the PRSPs lay heavy emphasis on privatisation, not just of loss making state enterprises but also of essential services such as energy, telecommunications and water. In both Burkina Faso and Tanzania, privatisation of energy, water reticulation and telecommunications is well under way. The privatisation of such public goods raises the moral question of how the poor will access these services when they cannot pay for them in the absence of legislation that protects their right of access to these basic needs.

The success of both the PRSPs and NEPAD hinges on high economic growth, in the region of 7% per annum. But judging from past experience this figure is way too high and unrealistic, which means that the expected positive benefits may not materialise if the growth rates cannot be achieved. The success of the two initiatives is also on the assumption that the countries will be able to attract huge inflows of aid, debt relief and foreign direct investment. But to date, the amount of debt relief under HIPC has been disturbingly low and in most cases has left countries still with unsustainably high debt obligations.

On the other hand, despite the emergence of democracies in Africa (which NEPAD stresses to be a critical pre-requisite for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the continent has not been able to attract substantial foreign investment. Instead, investment has tended to flow to countries with neither democracy nor peace and security. This is particularly true of Angola, which because of its abundant oil reserves and diamonds has been able to attract more FDI than other more democratic and peaceful states in Africa. The high expectations in both the PRSPs and NEPAD of FDI inflows as the basis for increased economic growth may therefore be unrealistic.

PRSP and NEPAD look to the external sector as their major source of funding at the expense of local efforts for domestic human and capital mobilisation.

Although both the PRSP and NEPAD emphasises civil society participation in the process, the PRSP process relatively provides an opportunity for civil society involved in the process (a component which is missing in NEPAD).

The success of both the PRSP and NEPAD in eradicating poverty is far fetched for as long as the policy distortions inherent in them remain and the lack of genuine participation in the decision making processes by the citizenry intensify.

4.2. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set minimum targets of what developing countries, in partnership with developed countries, should aim achieve to alleviate poverty globally by 2015. The goals include the following:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - Halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day
 - Halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
 - Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, girls and boys alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
 - Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005 and to all levels of education, not later than 2015
4. Reduce child mortality
 - Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
5. Improve maternal health
 - Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 - Have halted, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS
 - Have halted by 2015, and begun to reverse, the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
 - Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
 - Halve by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
 - By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.
8. Develop a global partnership for Development

The goals of the PRSPs in the five countries are in conformity with the Millennium Development Goals, in particular through their priority focus on primary education and health as well as on environmental sustainability. But issues such as environmental sustainability are a factor of poverty levels. The higher the poverty the bigger the threat to the environment as people seek to make a living by exploiting the resources at their disposal with little regard for sustainability. So to environmental sustainability will only be guaranteed to extent that the PRSPs will be successful in reducing poverty by creating conditions that allow for sustainable use of the resources.

Looking at these goals, it is easy to realise the extent to which they influenced the drafting of PRSPs. The priorities identified by all the countries on PRSPs are in line with the MDGs. The PRSPs in the three countries focus on primary education, water and sanitation, improved health care as well as HIV/AIDS. However, while the rhetoric of the PRSPs is about

achieving these goals, the policy framework being promoted is not likely to help in their achievement. Thus for instance, the privatisation of water and sanitation is likely to deny access to these services to slum dwellers, who for the most part share common facilities subsidised by the state and who cannot afford to pay market prices.

Equally, the promotion of export led growth under SAPs as well as under PRSPs, where focus has often been on agricultural exports, has resulted in environmental degradation as farmers convert marginal lands for agricultural purposes. This has often been necessitated by the low prices they receive for their crops on the global markets that has forced them to increase the area under crops. Environmental sustainability, called for under the MDGs, is therefore difficult to achieve given the hostile global market for Africa's primary agricultural products.

But perhaps even more important, the achievement of the MDGs and of the targets for poverty reduction set under PRSPs, also require greater and more active state involvement, particularly given the levels of poverty prevailing on the continent where a greater proportion of the population cannot meet the costs of essential services. It is now accepted that economic growth does not necessarily lead to poverty reduction unless if governments put in policies to achieve greater equity and redistribution. But by their heavy reliance on markets, PRSPs are more likely to worsen poverty and inequality and make it more difficult to achieve the MDGs.

NEPAD's architects and its sponsors (western governments and the multilateral financial institutions) view the initiative as a major breakthrough in achieving the 8th MDG – the development of a global partnership for development. From its inception, NEPAD's focus has been on building a partnership with developed countries and their financial institutions (at the

expense of building a partnership with its own citizens). Unfortunately, because of the unequal power relations between the two camps, African governments have had to compromise and come up with a document that is acceptable to their sponsors and which does not question the status quo. Like the PRSPs, NEPAD's heavy reliance on foreign funding meant that it could not challenge the inequitable global trading environment, the unsustainable foreign debt levels despite the HIPC, the debilitating protectionism of northern countries and the primacy of FDI as Africa's solution to poverty.

4.3. Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF):

The PRSP is also a mechanism for operationalising the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF). The CDF is a World Bank tool for organising donor, civil society and private sector input into a "coherent" development programme. It has been piloted in 13 countries. The CDF is mirrored by the United Nations' Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which also being used in some countries.

These frameworks apply to countries borrowing from the multilateral institutions. Also, the emphasis on sustainable strategies for poverty alleviation emanate from the outcome of the Rio+5 follow-up summit to the 1992 Earth Summit wherein committed themselves to producing National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD) by 2002.

All these (the CDF, UNDAF and NSSD) are nested frameworks. The NSSD is the overarching framework within which sit the CDF and UNDAF, whilst the PRSP is a mechanism for operationalising the CDF and UNDAF.

5.0. CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN THE PRSP PROCESS Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda.

This section reviews CSO participation in the PRSP process in the five countries with completed PRSP. It shows clearly how participation among CSO varied tremendously across the countries and brings to the fore the different types and forms of participation inherent in the process thereby concluding that what many ordinary people might view as participation might not be true participation in the real sense.

5.1. Participation

As noted above, participation determines ownership of processes by people within a nation. It is dependent not just on the willingness of states to allow space for civil society voices but also on the amount of information to which they have access on a continuous basis. *Participation* can be distinguished from other concepts such as 'involvement', 'incorporation' or 'consultation' and it may also entail, to a large extent, taking part in decision-making processes and being part of the decisions taken.

The PRSP process in the five countries indicates different levels and forms of participation. In Uganda, civil society was involved and consulted at every stage and, was complemented by a parallel civil society process set up by (mainly international) NGOs. Ugandans were assured that their participation had been meaningful when they saw most of their inputs and recommendations incorporated into the final PEAP/PRSP report. Tanzanians on the other hand see themselves as having been *incorporated* in the PRSP process. They moved from the NPES structure, believed to have "strong government ownership and leadership" to the PRSP structure, characterised by "foreign influence as the most significant factor"

and government creation of its own civil society to consult with. There was inadequate participation of civil society in the PRSP process and there is no suggestion that CSOs expect to be involved in the implementation or, monitoring and evaluation stages.

However, the quality of participation is usually enhanced by other contributions besides those of local NGOs and CSOs. Parliament as an organ of the state, made up of elected representatives of the people should play a critical role. However, when Uganda's Civil Society Task Force organised a workshop to introduce members of the Ugandan Parliament to the PEAP/PRSP process, less than twenty of the 276 Members of Parliament attended. On a more positive note, the Uganda report notes the incorporation of findings from local research institutions into the PEAP/PRSP, stating that, "Such inputs widened the scope and definition of poverty and broadened the ownership of the PEAP."

Just as poverty reduction strategies are ongoing, so participation needs also to be ensured into the future. The extent to which this occurs, however, is likely to be a function of the level and quality of participation in the planning stages. Thus, in Uganda, where there was quite some satisfaction with the amount of civil society's participation in the formulation of the PRSP, Government has also made a commitment to make known all relevant information about public policies, budgetary policies and public expenditure. The Uganda Debt Network has already become involved in monitoring the Poverty Action Fund, a government mechanism for mobilisation of the savings from debt relief in priority areas for poverty alleviation.

While the Mauritanian process took place much more firmly under government structures, there was some level of civil society involvement at some stage and more recently in the follow up processes. Mauritania

is the only country that mentions launching its PRSP process with awareness campaign i.e. a downward flow of information to civil society to facilitate its involvement. Aside from this, Uganda is the only other country that mentions use of the media. Its Civil Society Task Force organised a media campaign around radio and television phone-in programmes in which government officials were invited to respond to queries from the public and to explain the PRSP process. Use of a phone-in format allows for flow of information and issues both ways within a single programme. The Task Force also used the print media to publicise the process and invite contributions from the public.

In Mozambique, civil society tended to be sidelined both ways in that the space for civil society engagement was not very clear. However, they made good use of both traditional publicity materials, such as printed information packages, and a website. However, the report also identifies challenges in information dissemination, one of which is the need to use local languages.

Beyond the flow of information between policy makers and civil society, McCarthy, in his assessment of the Mozambican PRSP process recommends information sharing between CSOs as a means of collective strengthening. The Tanzanian study lists the following four types of civil society organisations:

- 1 Service delivery organisations;
- 2 Policy analysis, advocacy and lobbying organisations;
- 3 Research organisations; and
- 4 Legal aid and human rights organisations.

Of these four, the last three were involved on some level in the production and dissemination of information. Civil society, therefore, has valuable

experience to share in this regard.

5.2. Accountability

In a PRSP context, accountability means:

- ensuring that the process of drawing up the PRSP explicitly reflects the needs and priorities of the poor;
- establishing realistic mechanisms so that people can hold government and service providers answerable for the delivery of policies and goods, and for the spending of public funds;
- involving citizens directly in monitoring how PRSP strategies are being implemented, and whether anti-poverty commitments are being fulfilled.³

As mentioned earlier, the involvement of civil society in monitoring the PRSP process tends to be similar to their level of involvement in the original planning stages. Uganda civil society, as compared to the other four countries, had the greatest opportunities and capacities for participation. They also seem to be most satisfied that they would be involved in the monitoring stages of the PRSP and other macroeconomic policy processes.

In Tanzania, a lack of accountability on the part of the donors, and sponsors of the PRSP has been identified, arising from the incapacity and lack of opportunity for civil society in that country to be involved. Where "donors have...gone ahead to take care of their own interests in their lending mechanisms, it is suggested that the PRSP becomes a "dormant paper", as noted by a Tanzanian participant to a Validation Meeting on PRSP held

in Harare Zimbabwe, 2002.

The level of involvement of civil society in the formulation of PRSPs seems to be a function of:

- The experience and preparedness of local NGOs, CSOs and individual members of civil society; and
- The willingness of governments to consult and take civil society views into account.

5.3. Civil Society Preparedness and Key issues addressed

Civil society groups in Burkina Faso recognise the efforts of Government in getting the PRSP process together. The process was conducted in three stages, being information dissemination and sensitisation exercises, regional workshops, and national workshops.

The experience of Burkina Faso detailed the participation of all groups (civil society, local and central administration, development partners, political parties, private sector) in the process towards the formulation of the country's PRSP and the level of their input. It was noted that CSOs in Burkina Faso were not very strong but some put themselves out to take part in the PRSP process. Within the overall figures for civil society participation, women's representation in the workshops was generally low, with only one out of seventeen civil society representatives in the Ouagadougou workshop being female. However, in one of the regional workshops, although only three or four women were officially invited from civil society, seven turned up and stayed to ensure that their voices were heard. In fact the quota for civil society participation in most of the

workshops and meetings was exceeded.

Though there was some level of satisfaction with the actual presence of civil society representatives, further analysis of the level of input of various participants noted that only a few participants usually dominated formal and informal contributions to the meetings.

Civil society participation could have been strengthened by better quality representation. As noted, the government chose which sections of civil society it wanted to deal with. Sometimes, those invited were not the most knowledgeable on the subjects being discussed. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the workshops each concentrated on particular themes.

For Tanzania, CSOs had some experience in policy formulation, having participated in the processes towards the Tanzania Assistance Strategy Paper, Vision 2025 and the National Poverty Eradication Strategy. Therefore, the question is not whether CSOs were involved in the PRSP process but whether their involvement had any measurable significance in terms of inputs towards influencing the process and content of these policy documents.

However, the participation of civil society in the PRSP process generally was typical of their participation in most government led processes i.e. they were not officially kept in the picture and, therefore, had to initiate their own parallel processes. This they did, under the leadership of the Tanzania Coalition for Debt and Development (TCDD), developing a position paper on both the process and contents of the PRSP as well as continuing to lobby Government to open up to civil society perspectives. They succeeded in creating an opportunity for them to present this

document within the context of the government process at a later date.

In terms of the issues addressed, some discussions were on poverty citing the linkages between the different manifestations of poverty. The 'poor' in Tanzania were described as being any or all of the following: illiterate; with inadequate safe water supply; experiencing poor health services; belonging to the high mortality rate group; experiencing malnutrition; experiencing environmental degradation; unemployed; belonging to the low income bracket; and/or homeless. This situation of poverty in Tanzania is pervasive and deep rooted.

Somewhat, the notion of poverty based on an appreciation of cultural diversity, suggesting that this would introduce similarly diverse interpretations of poverty and approaches to dealing with it, would be more appropriate than the "uni-modal" way of thinking (as generally exemplified by the Bretton Woods Institutions).

Other issues discussed in the Zonal workshops included: access to basic education, marketing systems for agricultural produce, unavailability of inputs and implements, inadequate extension services, access to basic health care, poor condition of rural roads and, access to safe water and sanitation.

In Uganda, the government took a decision to involve civil society in the PRSP process following unyielding pressure from CSOs. They were able to apply this pressure on the basis of past experience in previous processes dating back to 1996, during time of the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI) and the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS), as well as government sponsored national initiatives. Their proactive approach had earned them the right to participate in the annual

Consultative Group meetings held in Uganda. They were thus well prepared to take the opportunity for participation in the PRSP.

They also participated both within the government framework for formulation of the PRSP and, where they felt it necessary, outside this process as well. Participation in the formal process was through a government initiated Civil Society Task Force, composed of international and national NGOs operating in Uganda, with the Uganda Debt Network becoming the lead Agency for civil society participation. The Task Force became engaged in the reformulation of the PEAP into the PRSP. This Task Force also formed part of the Steering Committee that drove the whole process.

Specific activities of the Task Force were:

- Running consultations with grassroots groups as a complementary initiative to a series of workshops with local government officials run by Government;
- A media campaign to disseminate information on the PRSP process and collect views from a wide cross section of society; and
- Consultations with special interest groups, such as those involved in conflict resolution and environmental issues, and other CSOs, such as the National Union of Trade Unions.

Further civil society initiatives took place outside the activities of the Task Force and drew in contributions from over 200 other NGOs and community based organisations. During consultations, civil society groups brought forward issues of unemployment, which might otherwise have been considered a low priority. They viewed employment creation as a priority

concern along with mechanisms for civil society participation in monitoring of the PRSP programme. These issues were presented to the Technical (drafting) Committee, which incorporated them into the PEAP/PRSP, and also including the whole section on participation and monitoring which was also written by civil society.

The consultation process towards the formulation of the PRSP in Mozambique used participatory methodologies, thus attempting to draw out the views of civil society. However, a distinction was made between the 'private sector' and other 'civil society' groups, noting that the private sector, rather than civil society, dominated the later rounds of consultations due to the fact that they were better organised and had initiated their own series of meetings with the Ministry of Planning and Finance. Grupo Moçambicano da Dívida, the Mozambique Debt Group, a Debt Coalition, which has been active around issues of debt relief/cancellation, also took the initiative to organise two meetings but the most of these meetings were held too late for the output to be considered in the PRSP document.

In terms of issues addressed, the Mozambican PRSP process included construction of a matrix of factors of poverty which allowed planners to begin prioritising the many issues and working towards solutions. In terms of responses, the civil society in Mozambique focused on sectoral issues. For instance, Agriculture, outlining the many faceted response that would be appropriate in that sector which would include access to credit, a policy for joint local development by local and national partners, warehouses for food and commercial products, an agro- industrial policy, compensation funds and a legal framework for new partnerships between family and commercial enterprises.

As noted earlier, the issues raised were put into a matrix in order to establish priorities. Priority issues were found to be investment in national human

resources, employment and self employment, access to credit, infrastructure and basic services, promotion of agro industry, protection of national industries, governance and the fight against corruption, bureaucracy, and decentralisation.

The NGO sector in Mauritania is small and relatively underdeveloped. However, there is a national network of NGOs, which was able to consolidate civil society strength and capacities and became the main facilitator of civil society participation in Mauritania's PRSP process. The major issues of concern to civil society were support to the informal sector and commodity pricing.

Given the complexity of the processes and poverty situation in all the five countries, it is suggested that monitoring of poverty alleviation strategies needs to be based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches, with qualitative studies involving government research and study groups, academic institutions and other civil society organisations.

5.4. Government Attitude towards Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

In Burkina Faso, there were frequent complaints from civil society representatives that they were unable to participate effectively because they were not advised of meetings or did not receive the appropriate terms of reference in time. This led to a fairly low number of formal (written) contributions from civil society. A representative of an opposition political party made the same complaint. Lack of translation facilities at the meetings also limited civil society participation.

While civil society in Mauritania is said to have been involved in policy processes in the past, the process under PRSP was more open and CSOs felt that their involvement had been more real than has been the case previously and that it had been at every stage from early preparations through to the evaluation. However, the Government of Mauritania has recently put in place an institutional device to monitor development partners, civil society and donors.

McCarthy's assessment of the PRSP process in Mozambique points to a lacklustre attitude on the part of the Mozambican government, noting that the recovery from "a generation or more of paternalistic socialism" has not been completed and this has kept civil society in a state of "infancy". He further suggests that the government "conducted the consultation process as a requirement for debt relief rather than as an end in itself". The consultations, anyway, were very limited in their geographical scope and Government was unwilling to hold meetings in areas under opposition party control. Another study⁴ suggests problems with even deciding on a consultation process that would satisfy PRSP requirements or gathering the energy to go back through the (inconsistent) process it had already

conducted in the formulation of PARPA.

Civil society argues that they should have been given the opportunity to fill these gaps. The picture created from data collected mainly around Maputo, and only in Portuguese, is distorted and could actually exacerbate existing problems. Enhanced participation of CSOs would have had the potential to draw in regional and rural perspectives.

Since the completion of the PARPA/PRSP there have been some attempts to improve the quality of future consultations, *viz.*

- NGOs, under the Mozambique Debt group held a two day seminar that brought together 75 participants from NGOs, Parliament, Government, the international financial institutions, the Central Bank of Mozambique and the press; and
- Government has put forward its consultation initiatives for 2002 and worked on a model for future consultations to ensure appropriation of public policy by civil society. Both the civil society and government initiatives reflect the fact that the PARPA/PRSP in Mozambique is regarded as a "rolling plan" and it is expected that there will be continuous consultations, revision and updating.

In another development, the PRSP institutional framework for participation takes the sector approach, a matter, which civil society and the private sector had highly criticised as a major impediment to their participation. This framework allows for participation through government line ministries in which there is no clear mechanisms for taking on board civil society recommendations.

In Tanzania, many of the civil society actors feel “cheated” by both the government and the donors, especially the World Bank. The official PRSP process in Tanzania was entirely Government led with only cosmetic attempts to involve civil society and induce them to approve drafts prepared in advance by the Technical Committee. Even the Zonal Workshops, which were purportedly aimed at soliciting views from the grassroots, involved only 804 participants across the whole country and some of these were government employees (District Executive Directors). Though women make up the majority of the poor, only 22 percent of all participants were female. Following the Zonal Workshops, a draft PRSP was prepared but this was not brought back to civil society, even for ‘rubber stamping’.

This is seen to be fairly typical of government-civil society relations in Tanzania but the fact that the World Bank, being aware of inadequacies in the process used, went ahead and accepted Tanzania's PRSP, is the cause of civil society's frustration with donors.

The civil society in Uganda noted that government's commitment to the consultations in that country was an essential factor. Government facilitated a consultation process in which civil society was meaningfully involved; provided CSOs with necessary information, including the draft PEAP/PRSP, ensured that a substantial amount of the output of the consultation process was included in the final document; and made CSOs full members of the National Task Force so that they were able to attend all meetings. This approach is identified as a very important milestone in changing government-civil society relationships in Africa.

5.5. CSO Constraints

Capacity

By definition, the countries undertaking PRSPs are both heavily indebted and poor. It is, therefore, inevitable that they will be severely constrained in their capacity to carry out a comprehensive, participatory consultation exercise with all the requirements in terms of personnel/expertise, transport, communications, documentation and so on that this entails. Although civil society, if called on to do so, can add on to government efforts, it is also true that (at least national) CSOs and NGOs in a poor country are unlikely to be very well resourced either.

The civil society in Mauritania called for investment around the PRSP process itself as a means of carrying out not only the consultation process but also the poverty reduction efforts that are supposed to follow. Mauritania is a country that finds itself in an unstable economic situation with markets for its two leading products, iron and fish, threatened and concedes that it will need substantial financial and capacity building assistance to simultaneously meet the objectives of economic growth and poverty reduction.

In Mozambique, a number of civil society organisational factors hampered their making a meaningful input. These included a lack of documentation, particularly documents translated into local languages, and infrastructural factors such as Mozambique's poor communications and poor road network.

CSOs in Uganda acknowledge that they had their own capacity constraints including insufficient staff, at either national or local level, qualified to engage

donors and policy makers in dialogue on macroeconomic policy issues. However, they felt that they had much to gain by taking the opportunity offered to participate in the PRSP.

Tanzanian CSOs feel that they had the capacity to play a similar role in their country's PRSP but were not given the opportunity. The Tanzania study finds that "the final PRSP document does not demonstrate the civil society perspective and inputs in any meaningful way". Thus, the Tanzanian government missed what may have been its best chance to add value to its own efforts to meet the requirements of the PRSP (although the whole process is undermined by the fact that the World Bank accepted the strategy as presented anyway).

Time

Debt relief is, of course, a very attractive prospect to a country that is heavily indebted and trying to overcome problems of poverty. From the five countries under study, Mauritania stands to have its debt reduced by 50 percent and Tanzania by 54 percent (over twenty years). The desire to get the PRSP completed so that debt relief can be applied inevitably creates time pressures that are likely to undermine the quality of the process itself. As noted in the countries, the PRSPs were developed in conditions marked by financial, infrastructural and other capacity constraints anyway. The imposition of, sometimes-severe time constraints on this situation can only make matters worse.

In every case, the pressure was on for the PRSP to be completed as quickly as possible although in the case of Mauritania, a long delay between their being accorded HIPC status and the launching of the PRSP process derailed the process.

Participatory approaches are, by their very nature, long winded as well as expensive. In Burkina Faso, it was found that the prevailing situation did not allow for a truly participatory approach and there was insufficient time to reconcile the findings from civil society consultations with those from other sources.

Time constraints in Mozambique meant that many potentially valuable inputs did not make it into the PRSP. By the time that civil society groups came to the realisation that the consultation process was not going to be adequate and began organising their own parallel series of meetings, it was already too late. The first of the two civil society meetings did feed into the PRSP but those who were only able to attend the second meeting, after the PRSP had already been finalised, did not have an input. This included academics working on gender and land tenure issues. It is evident that the consultations in Mozambique were not enough and broad enough.

Tanzania spent ten months on the preparation of its PRSP. Although this might not be a long time, the problem is the fact that of this period, only two days were devoted to consultations that had any civil society participation on grounds that emerging democracies tend to have weak civil societies that are unable to offer effective support to policy processes. However, one could as easily argue the opposite, that the weakness of civil society is the rationale for allowing more time for such processes to be completed meaningfully.

Of the five countries, Uganda came under the most pressure to complete its PRSP urgently. As in the other countries, there was great internal urgency to qualify for debt relief but this was compounded by external pressure from donors who needed a successful example of a country benefiting

from the enhanced HIPC initiative to show off at the spring meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions in 2000. As a result, the PEAP process, in which civil society had been meaningfully involved, became constricted into a six month PRSP process from which they found themselves, to some extent, squeezed out. The few meetings that took place between the IMF/World Bank missions and CSOs were almost like verification meetings to find out the level of civil society participation and the quality of inputs. The subtext to this is that, had CSOs indicated that their level of participation had not been satisfactory, they would have jeopardised their country's qualification for much needed debt relief.

6.0. BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT

- Mauritania launched its PRSP process with an awareness campaign so that civil society were aware that the PRSP existed, knew what it was all about and was, therefore, prepared to participate in its formulation.
- Ugandan CSOs organised a campaign using print and electronic media to enhance the two-way flow of information around the PRSP.
- Both Mauritania and Uganda tried to ensure the involvement of Parliament. This was not very successful in the case of Uganda but, in Mauritania, it was found to reinforce both the PRSP and other policy, which it needed to be coherent with.
- Uganda also involved local research institutions, thus recognising and strengthening the multi layered nature of civil society and enriching the PRSP through contributions from all levels.
- Civil society organisations in Tanzania, Mozambique and Uganda set up parallel consultation processes to those being conducted by their governments. It should be noted that the success of these processes depended so much on the amount of (at least moral) support they received from government.
- The Ugandan government considered civil society as a serious stakeholder in the PRSP and deliberately encouraged its participation. It backed up this belief by facilitating CSO participation through the inclusion of the Civil Society Task Force in the Steering Committee for the PRSP process. In addition, it ensured that CSOs had access

to necessary documentation and information.

- Some civil society inputs were wholly incorporated into the PRSP in Uganda, thus strengthening the strategy itself and satisfying members of civil society that they did own the document.

Mozambique and Uganda built into their PRSPs, and their nationally conceived strategies, mechanisms for continuing civil society involvement in revision and, evaluation and monitoring of the strategies.

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