

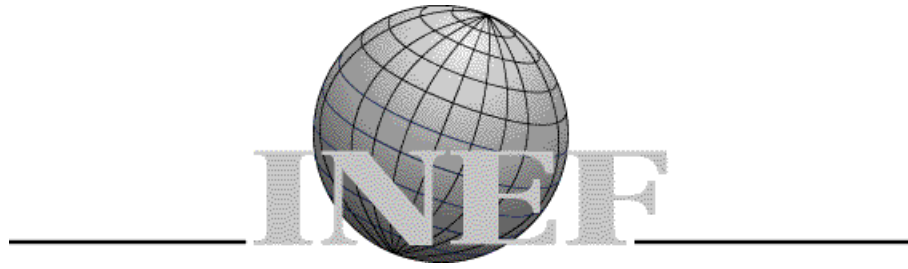
# Stakeholder Participation in Poverty Reduction

*Walter Eberlei*  
(Ed.)

INEF Report  
86/2007



**Institute for Development and Peace**



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# **Stakeholder Participation in Poverty Reduction**

**INEF Report 86/2007**

Institute for Development and Peace  
Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden (INEF)

University of Duisburg-Essen  
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### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

Walter Eberlei (Ed.): Stakeholder Participation in Poverty Reduction. Duisburg: Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen (INEF Report, 86/2007).



### IMPRINT

#### Editor:

Institute for Development and Peace, INEF  
University of Duisburg-Essen

Logo design: Carola Vogel

Layout design: Jeanette Schade, Sascha Werthes

Cover photo: Jochen Hippler

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**ISSN 0941-4967**



## Abstract

Walter Eberlei (Ed.): *Stakeholder Participation in Poverty Reduction*. Duisburg: Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen (INEF Report, 86/2007).

*Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS)* have become the most important policy instrument in more than 60 developing countries around the world. One of the core principles of the approach is *country ownership*, built on broad-based participation of stakeholders inside and outside the governments, including parliaments, civil society organizations, private sector representatives and other stakeholders at national as well as local levels. How this theoretical approach has been realized in practice – especially *beyond* the strategy development – is a matter of debate since its introduction in 1999.

This INEF report is an outcome of a *World Bank* funded research project on “Stakeholder Participation in PRS Implementation”. Based on several background papers of which three are published in this report (written by *Thomas Siebold, Birte Rodenberg, and Walter Eberlei*), the team draws the conclusion that the preconditions for meaningful participation in poverty reduction processes are only partially met. The necessary institutionalization of participation is still in its infancy. A number of constraints impede the involvement of stakeholders in the majority of countries, especially the inclusion of ‘the poor’ themselves.

However, exceptions to the rule demonstrate that effective participation in PRS processes is possible and has been strengthened over the past few years. The analysis of the ongoing processes is used to develop strategic recommendations to strengthen domestic accountability, institutionalization and empowerment and to formulate lessons learned as well as methodological and conceptual insights from the practice of participation in PRS processes.

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# Stakeholder Participation in Poverty Reduction: Introduction and Overview

Walter Eberlei

## 1. Introduction

Systematic societal participation is one of the cornerstones of the *Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)* approach that was launched seven years ago. A lot of research work has been done since then to cover especially the inclusion of stakeholders in the *drafting process* of PRS in – meanwhile – more than 60 countries. The elaboration of Poverty Reduction Strategies (mostly during 2000-2003) has seen a promising amount of stakeholder participation in many PRS countries, even if considerable quality problems have been recognized (e.g. exclusion of marginalized groups, speed and depth, ad hoc nature of participation events, limited capacities of stakeholders, urban bias, macro-economic and structural policies being off-limits). Most countries have since then made a start on implementing their PRSP, although – according to many observers – with participation dwindling instead of being institutionalized. However, the knowledge about participation in the different phases of the PRS cycle *beyond strategy development* is still limited.

Building on earlier work on participation in elaborating PRSPs, the *Participation and Civic Engagement Team* in the World Bank's *Social Development Department* initiated a review of experience with participation in implementation, monitoring and revisions of PRSPs. The *Institute for Development and Peace (INEF, University of*

*Duisburg-Essen)* was commissioned to undertake this review work. The overall objective was to increase current understanding of the status, practice and challenges of participation in PRS implementation (incl. monitoring, evaluation, revisions, policy reforms, institutionalization) and to make conceptual as well as 'good practice' contributions to the current discussion. This INEF report documents some of the results of the World Bank/INEF project on "Stakeholder participation in PRS processes".

In 2005, the World Bank and the IMF organized the second global review of the PRS approach. The subsequent report states that "participation can help enhance the quality of strategies", and the report findings further "point to the supportive role that institutionalized participation can have on strengthening domestic accountability". Therefore, the report advocates "sustaining meaningful participation" (IMF/World Bank 2005: Synthesis, 10). This is not a new demand but had already been discussed shortly after the PRS approach came into being (Brinkerhoff/Goldsmith 2001, Eberlei 2001, 2002a/b). To *institutionalize* participation means to integrate and anchor participation in the political framework and the political processes of a country. Our research premise has been therefore to consider participation meaningful if it is



## 6

rights-based, integrated in structures within the political environment of a given country and if it has empowered and legitimate stakeholders.

Measured by these standards (rights, structures, legitimacy, capacity), our conclusion is that in most cases 'institutionalized participation'

is at best only partially fulfilled. As these four elements are, in our view, essential for 'meaningful participation' they are explained briefly in the following paragraphs and used to summarize the overall findings of the INEF research project.

## 2. Rights

Meaningful, sustainable participation requires a number of fundamental rights and safeguards. Looking at the broader picture, these requirements seem to have been met by PRS countries. Practically all of them offer their citizens the right to participate in political life. Today, freedom of speech and freedom of the press, right of assembly, right of association, etc., are enshrined among other aspects in the constitutions in most of these countries. However, as the INEF background studies confirm, reality leaves much to be desired. In most of the cases, the legal framework for participation of societal stakeholders is only weakly developed, leaving a big gap between fundamental rights in the constitutions and political reality.

Participation in the PRS process is only governed by law in a few exceptional cases. But even then, the

question remains as to whether this right has really been put into practice (see the law on public participation in Bolivia). As a rule, legal provisions are missing, and a lack of transparency as regards the rules of the game is characteristic of most processes; in many countries it remains indistinct which stakeholders should and can assume which task. Thus, participation in PRS processes is at the mercy of the goodwill of governments or, in many cases, depends on the pressure the donors exert – and if this is relaxed, participation declines. The guidelines for the revision of the PRSP in Uganda and Tanzania can be regarded as positive examples of what are at least politically enforceable rules of the PRS process. The Ugandan Budget Act 2001 is a very rare example of a legal framework enhancement for parliaments.

### 3. Structures

Meaningful, sustainable participation requires clearly defined political structures for dialogue between all stakeholders at national and local levels. Necessary structures have to be shaped on a sustainable basis within a defined legal framework.

The PRS approach has definitely had an impact on the dialogues between governments and societal stakeholders. "Relative to their starting points, in most countries the PRS approach has opened space for stakeholders to engage in a national dialogue on economic policy and poverty reduction" (IMF/World Bank 2005: 26). But, again in most countries, participation in the implementation process incl. monitoring has waned (see for an overview on participation in monitoring Eberlei / Siebold 2006). However, countries with established government-civil society dialogue structures witnessed comparatively stable participation after strategy development (with some exceptions). Sometimes these structures were formed out of sectoral working groups that regularly supported the implementation and monitoring of the strategy (Albania, Uganda and - in a much weaker form - Zambia are examples of this). In some countries, e.g. Armenia, Mozambique and Tanzania, public fora organized on a regular basis have assumed this role.

However, structures of this kind have not emerged in many countries. The participation of civil society continued to be correspondingly

vague following the submission of the PRSP (in many cases, only occasionally organized workshops with fluctuating participants remain). In some of the countries, the donors also contributed to this development by creating their own dialogue structures with the government (e.g. in Ghana in the context of budget support) in which significant strategic decisions are taken and to which civil society has no access.

A few positive examples can be mentioned in the monitoring area. The *Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP)* constitutes an exemplary instrument of institutionalized participatory monitoring. UPPAP is designed in such a way as to enable the results to extend into the political decision-making processes. A whole system of monitoring groups with different tasks has been established in Tanzania. Non-governmental stakeholders – civil society, academia, private sector, major faith groups and donors – are represented in the *National Poverty Monitoring Steering Committee* as well as in several working groups. Institutionalized dialogue structures, also in the sector of budgetary control, e.g. *Public Expenditure Reviews*, are implemented on a participatory basis. In addition, a large public forum is now held on an annual basis: the *Poverty Policy Week*, which can definitely be seen as an element of institutionalized dialogue structures.





## 4. Legitimacy

The legitimacy of PRS processes has to be discussed with regard to several aspects. Firstly, legitimacy exists only in those cases in which the democratically elected bodies of a country had the possibility to influence the content of the strategy and are involved in its implementation and oversight. Secondly, civil society organizations do not possess the *formal* democratic legitimation to *determine* the political decisions of governments. CSOs are legitimized by organizing the interests of the poor and powerless people, and by feeding innovative ideas into the public policy debate. CSOs can increase their legitimacy by making sure that they are organized in a representative and inclusive manner, that they are independent of government and other major players, and that they are internally organized in a democratic way. Thirdly, the poor themselves have to be given the chance not only to articulate their perspectives here and there (e.g. via *Participatory Poverty Assessments*) but to be involved in decision-making processes.

The reality in PRS countries shows problems on all three counts. Starting with the last: So far, 'the poor' and especially poor women are heavily underrepresented and even neglected in most PRS processes. There are only a few approaches to involving the "voices of the poor" in PRS policymaking. The above-mentioned Ugandan experience with monitoring by the participatory UP-PAP approach is unique. Furthermore, to improve institutionalization of local level monitoring, societal *Poverty Action Fund Monitoring Committees* were installed by NGOs at district level,

consisting of nine to eleven representatives of NGOs, community-based organizations, women's organizations, and religious organizations. A few other countries have at least worked with a participatory approach to impact monitoring involving the 'grassroots'. However, with these few exceptions hardly any mechanism can be found linking poor people to policymaking on a regular basis.

As far as strengthening the legitimacy of civil society organizations is concerned, non-state actors in a number of countries have teamed up in networks in order to increase their penetrating power vis-à-vis other stakeholders (e.g. in Zambia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Honduras, Cambodia). A strengthened self-awareness of civil-society organizations as political actors and a strengthening of their representativity through networks are certainly two of the new developments that have been encouraged by the PRS processes.

The exclusion of elected bodies, however, is still a significant problem. Although the 2005 PRS review report draws a somewhat optimistic picture ("upward trend in parliamentary involvement in the PRS process", IMF/World Bank 2005: 32), the INEF project team did not find examples of parliamentary involvement that could serve as "good practice". The recently conducted PRS review processes in Burkina Faso, Uganda and Tanzania, for example, did not totally bypass the parliaments (members were usually informed through PRS-related workshops); however, they did not involve the legislative institutions systematically. Capacity constraints,

and in some cases also a limited understanding of parliament's role in political processes, hinder full inclu-

sion. This practice weakens the legitimacy of the PRS process.

## 5. Capacity

Capacity building is often mentioned as a prerequisite for participatory processes. However, these discussions are often restricted to technical capacities (e.g. skills to analyse data or to conduct participatory monitoring), and should be extended to include explicit political capacities. Participation can develop its full effectiveness only if the participants in political processes are able to represent their interests adequately. This requires knowledge of the rules, resources for defining and articulating political positions and experience with political negotiation processes, advocacy skills, access to information, specific knowledge in areas like macro-economics, and others.

Our studies show that few representatives of civil society have sufficient political capabilities; they are often too weak to persuade the established players to recognize their opinions. This is especially true in the field of macro-economic policymaking where participation is not only limited by reluctant major players like

the IMF or the technocrats in the ministries of finance but is also due to a lack of capacity in both the governments and non-governmental stakeholders. Thus, many non-state actors were not able to conduct rigorous analyses on policy or budget documents or propose realistic policy alternatives. Only some larger (mainly internationally based) NGOs, for instance, are able to put forward alternative policy choices; the majority of smaller civil society organizations do not yet have the capacity to turn queries or disagreement into credible and viable policy proposals. Their capacity in dialogue on complex policy issues, such as the macroeconomic framework, the sequencing of structural reforms, and policy trade-offs, was limited. As a rule, non-state actors, especially CSOs, felt more comfortable discussing the 'soft policy' areas such as health and education, of which they had direct knowledge through their service delivery experience, excluding macroeconomic policy.





## 6. Research Papers

In the course of this research work, different analyses were carried out to obtain an overall picture of the status, experience and challenges related to the issue. Two papers prepared the ground for the research team. One was a desk study of participatory processes in the PRS context, based mainly on findings of an on-going research project carried out on behalf of the German NGO Network VENRO (published on the website [www.prsp-watch.de](http://www.prsp-watch.de)). The other was *Thomas Siebold's* comprehensive review of the most important publications on participation in the PRS policy cycle; his article is published as the first contribution in this INEF report. Siebold documents the complex picture emerging from experience gathered in more than 60 PRS countries. On the one hand, a number of observers find “that the participatory approach in PRS adds significant value to development efforts by opening up new political space for domestic civil societies and their representatives”. On the other hand, and especially with regard to the implementation of the strategies, analysts criticize the “serious flaws” of these processes.

Three background papers analyzed and discussed the state of participation in specific phases of the PRS cycle: *Bettina Führmann* (paper published on the INEF website) looked at participation in policy reforms linked to PRS implementation. According to her analysis, participation in policy reforms is largely limited to sector reforms (especially on social issues); some examples can also be found of participation in structural reforms. However, the macroeconomic reforms are still dominated by (central) government with the strong influence of

the World Bank, the IMF and other donors. An open debate on macroeconomic goals and policies is largely excluded from the consultation processes. *Thomas Siebold* and *Walter Eberlei* took an in-depth look at participation in the monitoring of PRS implementation (paper also published on the INEF website). Their report shows, first of all, that many countries with a full PRSP have made efforts to develop and implement some kind of PRS monitoring system. In many cases, governments have invited societal stakeholders to participate in the monitoring exercises in one way or another. A multitude of monitoring methods, techniques and tools have been developed in recent years. Despite these developments, there is plenty of room for improvement. Conceptual weaknesses, capacity constraints, in some cases also a lack of political will to implement transparent accountability systems are among the reasons for inadequate monitoring systems. A lack of structures for participatory monitoring, the absence of legal frameworks, parallel monitoring processes of donors undermining domestic accountability, limited technical capacity of civil society groups – these and other shortcomings are highlighted by the authors. Their overall conclusion: Despite positive developments, there is still some way to institutionalize stakeholder involvement in the political systems and processes of PRS countries. A necessary step to change this would be to understand the PRS process as an eminently political process, a process that is better associated with ‘competition’ rather than with ‘partnership’ of stakeholders in a society. The third background paper



is *Walter Eberlei's* analysis of participation in PRS review processes (see his article in this INEF report). He shows that societal participation was a significant element during the revision process and formulation of a "second-generation PRSP" in all five countries that have by now completed the process. Compared with the preparation phase of the first PRS in these countries, participation has improved in terms of both quantity and quality. However, there are a number of shortcomings, among them: sparse participation by elected bodies, prioritization behind closed doors, a strong donor influence and – most crucial in the authors' view – no inclusion of the poor and very poor strata of society.

Based on these papers (as well as on additional useful input by colleagues, especially *Frank Bliss* and *Reiner Forster*) two final studies were produced. *Birte Rodenberg* formulated *Guidelines for Practitioners*. Lessons learned, methodological and conceptual developments from the practice of participation in PRS processes around the world are summarized in her contribution which is part of this INEF report. She structures her insights around the main stages of the PRS policy cycle. Specific cross-cutting perspectives on empowerment and inclusion – crucial for a broader participation in future – are highlighted separately as well as some actor-specific recommendations.

In a separate paper (to be published by the World Bank), *Walter Eberlei* synthesizes the results of the research projects and draws some conceptual conclusions.<sup>1</sup> Based on the

above outlined findings (especially: institutionalization of participation in its infancy; number of constraints; however, exceptions to the rule demonstrate the potential), Eberlei discusses four core challenges for embedding stakeholder participation in the living political environment of PRS countries:

- The principle of *country ownership* including *domestic accountability* has so far been realized in only a handful of countries. Governments in many PRS countries are still concerned primarily with meeting the conditions imposed by donors and/or are dominated by the interests of the non-poor elite. These are major impediments to meaningful participation.
- A development orientation of 'the state' – including openness for poverty reduction politics and societal participation – cannot be assumed automatically. There is plenty of evidence that politics in a number of the poorest countries is still permeated by 'neopatrimonial' practices.
- The relationship between a society and its political system as well as the role of civil society in this interplay are poorly understood in many PRS processes. Using Habermas' discourse theory, Eberlei advocates a review of the conceptual framework for participation: Civil societies have a crucial role to play, translating the interests of the people into 'communicative power'. But the transformation into 'administrative power' (executed by governments) has to take place in the democratically le-

<sup>1</sup> Walter Eberlei: *Unfolding Communicative Power in Poverty Reduction*. The paper will be published by the World Bank and will also be posted on the INEF website.



gitimized bodies, especially in parliaments.

- 'Powerlessness' is a form of poverty and a major cause of poverty. The distribution of power is therefore a highly relevant topic for poverty reduction debates. The findings underline the urgent need to start 'empowerment initiatives' and to discuss the underlying issues.

The paper concludes with strategic recommendations to strengthen domestic accountability, institutionalized participation and empowerment. They are based on the key assumption that a breakthrough in the fight against poverty needs a coalition of stakeholders in the civil societies and political forces in the legislative bodies of PRS countries, unfolding 'communicative power' to point 'administrative power' in the pro-poor direction.

# Participation in PRS Processes: A Review of the International Debate

*Thomas Siebold*

## 1. Summary

Contributors to the international debate find that the participatory approach in PRS adds significant value to development efforts by opening up new political space for domestic civil societies and their representatives.<sup>1</sup> The new approach potentially democratizes political processes. However, it is seen to have serious flaws, particularly as far as implementation is concerned. Participation, meant to range from information-sharing to control by stakeholders, is confined to consultation in most cases. Selection of participants in the process often lacks representativity; legitimacy is sometimes doubtful. Important stakeholders (e.g. parliaments) are often excluded and above all 'the real poor' play at best a marginal role. Meaningful participation is also hindered by missing institutional frameworks and legal provisions for participation. Further obstacles are limited capacities of CSOs, rigid timetables, non-availability of PRSP drafts in local languages, and an urban-bias of the process. The International Finance Institutions (IFIs) have not yet developed satisfactory minimum standards for participation processes. Thus, influence of civil society and its representatives on program design remains limited; the process largely

excludes the underlying macroeconomic framework. Macroeconomics remain an issue that is at best negotiated between governments and IFIs, but the impression is that most decisions are made in Washington and do not differ much from conventional structural adjustment measures. Experiences with the process have led to skepticism among many civil society representatives and some reckon that the whole exercise is a convenient camouflage for the IFIs to maintain their influence on developing countries. This is one reason why national ownership remains to be desired. In most countries PRS-related participation wanes when PRSP formulation is completed; participation in implementation, monitoring, and evaluation is largely neglected. Recommendations urge that participation should be more encompassing and include the really poor. The process should be institutionalized by the establishment of a permanent framework. Participation should include macroeconomic issues and decisions on them should be relocated to the country. Observers also urge that participation goes beyond program formulation and participants are to be endowed with appropriate tools for monitoring and evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Walter Eberlei, Christina-Maria Kreibich and Arne Wunder for extremely helpful contributions and propositions.



## 2. Introduction

If PRS processes have become the lynchpin to development in low-income countries, this is not least because of its new participatory approach. The IFIs have declared participation one of the six core principles of their new development philosophy. To maximize the effectiveness of anti-poverty strategies during their design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation a participatory process aims to link the donor community with all stakeholders of society.

Not surprisingly the new participatory approach has attracted much discussion in the development community. Academic scholars, research institutes, international organizations, international and national NGOs, the independent evaluation departments of the IFIs, and the IFIs themselves have contributed to this debate with principal considerations and empirical research work. The bulk of publications come from international NGOs. On some issues contributors reach a remarkable degree of consensus, on other issues their conclusions differ more or less. Different appraisals are not only due to different ideological positions but often because of different experiences in different countries.

The following overview resorts mainly to contributions that have been published since 2002. For the debate up to 2002 it refers to the World Bank's "Retrospective Study" published in January 2002 that summarizes the early observations of development and non-governmental agencies (World Bank 2002) and the Paper of Rosemary McGee and Andy Norton (2000) that synthesizes first experiences with participatory approaches. However, country case studies have been included as an exception, rather than as a rule. The overview is structured according to four key questions:

1. What are the overall perspectives on the participative approach in the PRS policy cycle?
2. Stakeholder perspective: Who participates, who doesn't?
3. Process perspective: How has participation been realized in the different PRS phases, especially beyond strategy development?
4. Framework perspective: What are key factors supporting or hindering sustainable policy impact of participation?



### 3. The International Debate: Main Messages

#### Box 1: Overview

##### *Overall perspectives*

1. The participative approach is a significant step forward in the development aid arena
2. The new approach has already had some positive outcomes
3. A dissent: Fundamental critiques doubt that progress is made by the approach

##### *Stakeholder perspectives*

4. The approach intends an anti-poverty effort of all stakeholders—but society works differently
5. Participation embraced a wide range of stakeholders, but important stakeholders were excluded
6. The approach risks by-passing of existing institutions and processes
7. The power asymmetry between IFIs on the one side and governments and CSOs on the other led to self-censorship and anticipatory obedience
8. The IFIs did not really foster the participation process

##### *Process perspectives*

9. Participation is meant to be encompassing but is reduced to consultation
10. Influence of civil society on program design was negligible
11. The macroeconomic framework was widely excluded in the participation process
12. Ownership remains to be desired
13. Participation in implementation and monitoring of PRS has been very weak

##### *Framework perspectives*

14. Minimum standards for meaningful participation are missing
15. An institutional framework for participation was missing in many cases
16. Participation processes have been hindered by a number of constraints, among others: time, capacity, communication, and urban-bias

#### **Overall perspectives**

1. *The participative approach is a significant step forward in the development aid arena.* An overwhelming majority of contributors to the international debate on participation in PRS

processes lauds the new approach for having the potential to open up new fora for domestic public debate. A PRS process might be able to create policy spaces in which more voices can be heard and neglected policy



bottlenecks be exposed to a wider national public.

Thornton and Cox (2005: 25) qualify the approach as “the most participatory policy exercise yet undertaken” and for Cling and others (2003: 2) it “has great potential for strengthening democracy in countries where the people generally have very few means of making themselves heard.” Other observers are more cautious. Referring to experiences in four countries, Piron and Evans (2004: 19) recommend not to overemphasize the politically transformative role of the process because its executive and technocratic aspects prevail. Seshamani (2005) suggests three general views in assessing the novelty of the PRS approach: The first one lauds PRS as “new wine in a new bottle” (Seshamani 2005: 5), seeing a deepened conceptualization of poverty, and a more comprehensive, participatory and long-term approach towards poverty reduction. The second perspective characterizes PRS as “the same old wine but provided with a new bottle”, implying that despite “a number of institutional changes that may produce some positive impact on efficiency in handling programs (...) it is still business as usual” (Seshamani 2005: 9). The third, “most pessimistic view” blames PRS as “the same old wine in the same old bottle”, with only cosmetic and superficial changes to the aid architecture (Seshamani 2005: 9).

2. *The new approach has already had some positive outcomes.* The World Bank’s “Retrospective Study” concluded that the new approach leads to a better understanding and diagnosis of poverty, its multi-dimensional nature, its causes and spatial aspects (World Bank 2002: 13). This assessment is confirmed by the more recent

literature on participation. The PRS consultations not only helped to broaden the government’s understanding of poverty, the process also resulted in an unprecedented engagement of civil society organizations in anti-poverty debates (Thornton and Cox 2005: 10; Driscoll and Evans 2004: 3).

A number of authors observe enlarged capacities both on governments’ side and on the side of civil society (McGee and others 2002: 18): Governments capacity to engage in policy dialogue with non-governmental stakeholders has increased (Grindle 2002: 10f.). “Many officials and politicians have had their first experience of engaging directly with civil society organizations on matters of public policy through a national consultation process as a result of the PRS process” (Driscoll and Evans 2004: 4).

Observers also argue that the PRS process has helped civil society to organize them and to build much-needed legitimacy in difficult political environments. In this development, international NGOs played an important role; with their consultancy they enabled national civil society organizations (CSOs) to increase their capacity for policy analysis, advocacy and networking (Thornton and Cox 2005: 10; Booth 2003a: 27). Thus, in many countries, the PRS process increased the political space for CSOs and contributed to broadening the debate over economic and social policy (UNDP 2003: 27; Currah 2004: 5). In this context, a notable development has been the rise of civil society networks. Not least there has been some improvement in domestic policymaking systems, because the PRSP formulation required improved intra-governmental coordination and ex-



change (Piron and Evans 2004: 34). At the same time, many authors stress that the increase in openness to participation in public policy making remains marginal and that “the positive gains made are fragile and uneven across countries” (Trócaire 2004: 3; see also Wood 2004: 20).

The CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis study on 19 countries found that the sustainability of an open public dialogue on poverty issues depends on the given political culture in the countries. According to the authors, experiences can be divided broadly in three categories: (i) prospects for sustainability are quite good in countries where civil society engagement in public policy was relatively well-developed in the pre-PRSP-era; examples are Uganda and Zambia; (ii) this is less true for countries where the level of civil society organization and the concept of participation is relatively new for governments but has been accepted in principle; examples are Malawi, Rwanda und Honduras; (iii) in the last category are countries where participation and openness were largely imposed by donors, where only little or no change in public debate and decision-making took place; examples are most francophone countries in Africa and Ethiopia (CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 5ff).

3. *A dissent: Fundamental critiques doubt that progress is made by the approach.* In concurrence of the majority of contributors some critics challenge the assumption that PRS processes reinforce democracy and offer opportunities for broadening the public debate on poverty issues. On the contrary, for them they have at least the potential to undermine existing democratic structures (see argument above) and to consolidate the hege-

mony of donor’s interests in the development arena. For Brown (2003: 5) the flaw of the participative approach is already revealed in the World Bank Sourcebook: “What is under discussion here [in the Sourcebook] is a highly manipulated form of public consultation, in which stakeholder participation is achieved through a process of active selection, based upon subjective, and not necessarily openly articulated, standards of legitimacy and representativeness.” And: “Whilst some publics are to be given a voice, this is on a purely discretionary basis, as a condescension not a right. The voice which is granted is neither fundamental nor universal” (Brown 2003: 6). Also for Fraser (2003) participation can be manipulated to achieve the outcomes government and donors want. Requiring participants to accept the ‘rule of the game’ “the process (...) is designed by and for groups able to express their project in the technocratic language of planning and poverty.” Thus he qualifies participation in the framework of PRSPs as “the new tyranny.” For these critics it is not evident for CSOs to engage in the participatory process of PRS; participation that is at best ‘invited consultation’ could lend “a false legitimacy to autocratically made decisions” (Alexander 2004: 12, see also Tan 2005).

### Stakeholder perspectives

4. *The approach intends an anti-poverty effort of all stakeholders—but society works differently.* The fundamental critics raise a point that is also mentioned by other contributors. “Participation is inherently political”, states the World Bank Sourcebook (2002a), “and it requires thinking in terms of interest groups and incentives” (Tikare and others 2002: 257).



Actually, many observers state that PRSPs do not take into account conflicts of interest within society. The PRS process presumes that the interests of all sections of society are to be reconciled (Cling and others 2003: 195). But this is a misbelief; conflicts do not disappear by using participatory methods and the empowerment of marginalized sections of society—this is what the PRSP approach also stands for—is a highly conflictive and political process (Knoke and Morazan 2002: 19). “A national consensus which obscures the fact that there will be losers as well as winners, probably among the poor as well as between the poor and the non-poor, will do the poor no service” (Maxwell 2003: 15). Insofar it does not address conflicts of interest, conclude Cling and others (2003a: 173), “the participatory process concept is ‘utopian’.”

5. *Participation embraced a wide range of stakeholders, but important stakeholders were excluded.* Participation in PRSP formulation tended to be ‘broad’ rather than ‘deep’ as the IFIs noted in their “Progress in Implementation”-Reports (IMF/IDA 2003: 6; IMF/IDA 2003a: 3) confirming the conclusion of the Retrospective Study that summarized the observations of development and non-governmental agencies (World Bank 2002: 9). Although the selection of stakeholders to participate normally was not random or ad hoc, the process lacked transparency and fell short of the Sourcebook’s demands to include poor and vulnerable groups systematically, especially women (Trócaire 2004: 4; Tikare and others 2002: 239). In some countries the selection of CSOs evidently followed political considerations or was made on the basis of clientelism and patronage (Possing 2003: 11f.). Obviously, it was and remains a big challenge to in-

clude ‘the real poor and vulnerable’ in the process. In most cases these constituencies were addressed via proxies: NGOs, CSO networks, and umbrella societies.

CSOs usually develop their own agenda and often their representativity is far from being satisfying. Deficiencies of CSO-representativity are not only a result of limited capacity to do outreach and to consult constituencies in remote areas; it is also often due to the fact that they are dominated by urban professionals with limited contact to ‘the poor’ (McGee and others 2002: 9; Trócaire 2004: 4; DFID 2004: 22). Observers acknowledge that some CSOs tried to consult with their grassroots but add that detailed studies are required to evaluate to what extent their composition and behavior is qualified for representing poor people at local levels (Whitehead 2003: 30; Stewart and Wang 2003: 9). For the record: although PRSPs frequently referred to the poor, it was surrogates for the poor (NGOs of all kinds) who actually participated in the process (Grindle 2002: 10). Oxfam International (2004: 5) deplures “that significant sums have been spent to ensure the participation of many people, but there are often not the right people.” The World Bank’s “Retrospective Study” states somewhat euphemistically: “The real poor have not partaken extensively in the process” (World Bank 2002: 10).

A range of observers point to the fact that the participation exercise favors NGOs who are able and willing to accept the ‘rules of the (participation) game’, whereas groups that lack capacity or are out of favor with the government (e.g. trade unions in Malawi) or foreign NGOs are likely to be excluded. The process tends to

benefit a small group of preferably foreign funded NGOs and to split society (CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 5; Driscoll and Evans 2004: 9). This is why Possing (2003: 12) concludes: "The process has often been more exclusive than inclusive."

The problem of representativity raises questions about the legitimacy of chosen civil society stakeholders in the process (McGee and others 2002: 10; Brown 2003: 5; Sanchez and Cash 2003: 20). In view of the fact that national *parliaments*, as well as the multitude of democratically elected regional and local bodies—institutions normally endowed with legitimacy—have been widely neglected or excluded, these questions become even more pressing. Eberlei and Henn (2003: 9) found that parliaments so far played only marginal roles in the design, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies (see also Stewart and Wang 2003: 15; World Bank 2002: 11; World Bank 2004: 11f.; Wood 2004a: 41; Booth 2003a: 29; Sanchez and Cash 2003: 17; Lucas and others 2004: 19). A specific concern herein is "the lack of budget and financial control on the part of parliament" (Langdon and Draman 2005: 22). This is especially worrying as parliaments, whether national or regional ones have numerous 'competitive advantages' compared to other stakeholders in the PRS process, and would have a variety of credible entry points to make the PRS process more legitimate and accountable. After all, the "Progress in Implementation"-Reports see growing parliamentary involvement in PRS formulation, oversight, and implementation (IMF/IDA 2003: 2; World Bank/IMF 2004: 17), which is backed by more recent observations (Langdon and Draman 2005: 14).

All observers note that key sections of civil society (e.g. religious and community based organizations, rural groups, indigenous people, children, persons with disabilities) and sometimes of the government (e.g. line ministries, local governments or administrations) were missing from the participation process or underrepresented (Stewart and Wang 2003: 15; CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 4; ILO 2002). Some studies deplore that the process "does not involve children and young people taking the lead in decision-making around the advocacy process" (O'Malley 2004: 1; see also Heidel 2004).

In many countries *women organizations* did not participate in the process; in several countries a quota for women's representation did not exist (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 16). Indeed, most PRSPs mentioned gender issues and recognized them as a crosscutting theme, but the hoped 'engendering' of the poverty debate appears not to have happened on a regular basis (exception: Kenya and Rwanda; McGee and others 2002: 17; Zuckerman and Garrett 2003: 8). It is the impression of many observers that mostly lip service has been paid to gender concerns (World Bank 2002: 10; UNDP 2003: 24; Zuckerman and Garrett 2003; Rodenberg 2004).

In countries where a culture of social dialogue existed in pre-PRSP-times, *trade unions* were invited and normally participated in the PRS discussion, but not in program implementation, monitoring or evaluation. Their effective involvement in discussion depended on a structured participatory process (that lacked in most cases) and their (sometimes strained) relationship with governments. In countries with more than one national





trade union, some unions did not partake (Egulu 2004; 2004a). In the majority of cases the *private sector* (which is considered de facto a part of civil society) was actively involved in the drafting process of the PRSP, although in a number of cases (e.g. in Cambodia, Malawi and Vietnam) its role appears to have been limited (Fox 2003: 3). In some cases, the private sector dominated the discussion on privatization. The Independent Evaluation Department of the Fund qualifies business sector involvement in retrospective as “often unsatisfactory” (IMF/IEO 2004: 19) but both IFIs see growing engagement in PRS formulation and monitoring in more recent times, not only of the private sector but also of trade unions (World Bank/IMF 2004: 18; see also IMF/IDA 2003: 6; IMF/IDA 2003a: 3). This view is challenged by a later review of African PRSPs that shows that private sector involvement in implementation and monitoring is waning (Fox 2004: 5).

6. *The approach risks by-passing of existing institutions and processes.* Although the World Bank stresses in its Sourcebook that “building on existing political processes and institutional arrangements is a key factor in successful national consultations” (Tikare and others 2002: 245), this advice does not seem to be adhered to in many cases. Oxfam International (2004: 7) observes PRS processes of having “largely circumvented existing processes of representative democracy”. The by-passing of existing institutions, some observers are concerned, can potentially weaken elected governments and is not necessarily in the interest of the poor over the longer term (Stewart and Wang 2003: 27; Grindle 2002: 23; CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004a: 10f.; Tan 2005: 21–22). “In non-democratic regimes,

however, the situation is different and broadening participation may be particularly beneficial, contributing to the democratisation of decision-making.” (Stewart and Wang 2003: 27)

7. *The power asymmetry between IFIs on the one side and governments and CSOs on the other led to self-censorship and anticipatory obedience.* The urgency to fulfill HIPC-terms and the deeper insight that IFIs would prevail anyway induced many governments to steer the participation process in a direction they were convinced to please the IFIs, several observers report. The CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis-Study (2004: 5) found that consultations were hindered by the presence of government officials (Vietnam) or the awareness that alternative proposals would be rejected by donors (Niger). In some cases (e.g. Honduras) CSOs have the impression that their government engaged in the participatory process only to fulfill donor-requirements and had no real commitment to take their views into account; in other countries (e.g. Zambia) CSOs confirm that governments took the process seriously (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 20). There is not at last the fear of some CSOs of being co-opted by the government and/or the IFIs and being used to legitimize predetermined policy choices they are opposed to (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 21; see also CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 5; Wood 2004a: 39; Akpokavie 2004: 3). This led in some countries to parallel participation processes initiated by civil society.

8. *The IFIs did not really foster the participation process.* Some observers deal with the role the IFIs played so far in the process of formulation, implementation and monitoring of PRS and find that their strong influence runs counter to participative nature of

the new approach. Summarizing the experience of their informants CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis (2004: 25) concludes that “staff [of the IFIs] have not internalised the collaborative nature of participation and they are, in general, not open about their own programs nor are they prepared to enter into a dialogue about them with civil society.” CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis (2004: 19) concedes the IMF to be more open to contact civil society than in the past, but Wood (2004a: 30) states that the Fund “has made no substantive proposals on widening its negotiations to include a broad range of stakeholders, releasing draft documents, establishing better consultation mechanisms, and so on.” A range of observers is convinced that especially the IMF ‘way of doing business’ has not been changed by the new philosophy. According to them, the promise of having ‘more policy options’ is mere theory; “in reality there is little evidence that these options are any more than discussion points before clients fall into line with Fund recommendations” (Currah 2004: 3). This criticism can be specified with regard to the IFI’s treatment of legislatures. While the IFIs seem to be increasingly supportive of parliaments in the PRS process, they do not only continue to exert informal policy advice on country officials, but also continuously override parliamentary decisions (Jones and Hardstaff 2005: 10; ActionAid International 2005: 4).

Some observers also blame other donors and international NGOs for hindering civil society to play a more meaningful role in political processes, a debate which culminated into the call for strengthened “donor accountability” (Eurodad 2004; Piron and Evans 2004: 31). Referring to the Rwandan case where a very authoritarian state is unwilling to let civil

society play a role in the policy debate Renard and Molenaers (2003: 23) criticize that influential donors and international NGOs (Christian Aid, ActionAid) declared themselves satisfied “and in some cases even enthusiastic” with the cosmetic participation exercise. They conclude that “the excited participation rhetoric is in fact not very helpful when donors attempt to ‘strengthen’ civil society or increase its political role in concrete country settings” (Renard and Molenaers 2003: 7). The authors point to the fact that the important role of international NGOs in PRSP processes can pose a threat to the emergence of a vigorous civil society.

### Process perspectives

9. *Participation is meant to be encompassing but is reduced to consultation.* On the much cited ‘ladder of participation’ by McGee and Norton (2000: 17f.), involvement in decisions can vary along a spectrum ranging from (i) information-sharing, (ii) consultation, (iii) joint decision-making to (iv) initiation and control by stakeholders. Most observers insinuate that the most far-reaching participation is desirable. Molenaers and Renard (2002: 5) are more skeptical. Referring to the Bolivian example they conclude: “Participation is not necessarily good for combating poverty. There may be cases where there is too much participation for effectiveness sake.”

Following its Sourcebook—“Participation is the process by which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policymaking, resource allocations, and/or program implementation”—the World Bank’s concept of participation clearly envisages initiation and control (Tikare and others 2002: 237). However, as far as civil society is con-





cerned, almost all observers conclude that participation had been confined to consultation. In most cases the consultation process was limited to the preparation of the PRSP; in a number of cases the process went beyond and was used also in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation course of action (Oxfam International 2004: 1; Bretton Woods Project 2003a: 7; Sanchez and Cash 2003: 18; CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 4).

IFIs and donors, but particularly governments interpreted participation—contrary to the definition cited above—largely as information exchange and consultation. Participants had the right to express opinions and to suggest some priority actions—preferably on social matters, less on macroeconomic topics—but were not guaranteed that their concerns would be incorporated into the decision-making process or the PRSP. Exceptions that prove the rule are countries such as Zambia, Uganda and Cambodia, where the government made provisions for civil society involvement (Trócaire 2004: 4; CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 4; McGee and others 2002: 7; Grindle 2002: 9; Wood 2004: 20). But positive examples do not override the view of many CSOs that the PRS process to date has been little more than a public relations exercise (Wood 2004a: 39). The blatant difference between principles and practice led to disappointment in the CSO community (World Bank 2004: 13). According to Trócaire (2004: 4) the inconsistency threatens to undermine the whole process.

*10. Influence of civil society on program design was negligible.* Observers almost unanimously see only little impact of consultation processes and their outcomes on program documents. “The most glaring problem”,

writes Whitehead (2003: 23) “lies in the follow through from the findings of the local participation exercise to the PRSP document itself.” McGee and others (2002: 8) report: “What is said at consultations is perceived by participants to have disappeared into a ‘black box’ where Ministry of Finance officials (...) write a plan which little reflects their inputs” (see also Curran 2005; Trócaire 2004: 4; Sanchez and Cash 2003: 25; Grindle 2002: 10; World Bank 2004: 13, Stewart and Wang 2003: 17; Dembele 2003). There are nevertheless examples where NGOs have successfully influenced PRSP content, e.g. topics as gender equality or AIDS (Driscoll and Jenks 2004: 12). The civil society coalition in Zambia found close to 80% of its input reflected in the PRSP while proposals of the civil society in Honduras remained unaccounted for (Posing 2003: vii).

In many cases, however, the final documents included civil society demands on a rhetorical basis only while ignoring fundamental proposals for policy changes. Giving the example of Senegal where CSOs and the government had prioritized education but no strategy concerning this matter was to be found in the PRSP, Wood (2004: 22) concludes that in the end, concerns of civil society are not taken into account. Referring to the case of Bolivia, Willems (2003) speaks of “participation without power” and Alexander (2004: 6) quotes a NGO representative saying, “here’s how I conjugate the verb ‘to participate’: I participate, you participate, he/she/it participates, they decide.”

Beyond the apparent lack of intermediate impact however, Curran (2005: 13) sees evidence that stakeholders successfully influenced “policy processes besides the final policies

written in strategies". Sometimes issues require extended research, continuous advocacy and networking, and only materialize later in the PRS cycle. "In short, even where civil society has had no impact on the details of policies or resource allocation, they have contributed to strengthening the accountability channels between governments and citizens" (Curran 2005: 13).

11. *The macroeconomic framework was widely excluded in the participation process.* Almost all contributors deal critically with the relationship between poverty reduction strategies and the underlying macroeconomic framework. Ideally, the participation process enables stakeholders to discuss and to design all relevant policies, including macroeconomic and structural policies. Most observers state that the latter were often, though not universally, excluded from discussions. This was not only due to the capacity constraints of many CSOs but also to governments' practice to limit discussions to the social elements of poverty reduction strategies (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 18; Whitehead 2003: 13; CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 7; Wood 2004a: 37). Partners of ActionAid even reported that they were "barred" from participating in macroeconomic and structural policy discussions (ActionAid USA/ActionAid Uganda 2004: 28). "Major development decision-making occurs in the 'great house'", Alexander (2004: 4) states ironically, "while citizens' groups provide ancillary input from their policy 'sandbox'." Also the "Progress in Implementation"-Report 2004 finds that "there is as yet relatively little evidence of a broad-based and open discussion of macroeconomic policy alternative in PRSPs" (World Bank/IMF 2004: 19).

The impression of many observers and their partners in the countries that civil society influence to alter or to shape the macroeconomic framework underlying PRSs is virtually nil, has led to deep frustration and skepticism (McGee and others 2002: 13). Oxfam International (2004: 9) gives the example of Armenia where civil society fully engaged in technical macroeconomic debates about the PRSP and where in close cooperation with the Ministry of Finance targets for the reduction of inequality as well as for growth were agreed and incorporated in the first draft of the PRSP. When the second draft was published, the young economists of civil society had to learn that the commonly agreed macro framework had been replaced in favor of the figures agreed with the IMF under the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) arrangement.

Observers doubt the assertion of the IMF that PRGFs were based upon PRSPs; their impression is that in many cases the reverse was true. PRSPs were at best starting points for negotiations between governments and IFIs; all crucial details were outlined in the PRGF and Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) documents that are not publicly available during the negotiation process (Eberlei and Siebold 2002: 41–49; Stewart and Wang 2003: 18; Wood 2004a: 41). CSOs are particularly suspicious of secret documents or agreements that could contain undisclosed conditionalities (Booth 2003a: 51). ActionAid mentions the President's Report of the World Bank, the Tranche Release Memoranda and the early drafts of the CAS but particularly the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) (ActionAid USA/ActionAid Uganda 2004: 13). This document, not available to the public and not even to





the government of the borrowing country, had much greater influence on the World Bank's lending decisions than the PRSP because it rates, according to ActionAid, "the extent to which a government has embraced 'neoliberal' policy and institutional reforms (e.g. liberalization, privatization, fiscal austerity)" (ActionAid USA/ActionAid Uganda 2004: 23). The international NGO questions that there is much leeway for input from CSOs in the PRSP consultations. "The rigidity of the CPIA may well undermine any possible flexibility for possibilities within the PRSP" (ActionAid USA/ActionAid Uganda 2004: 19). Stewart and Wang (2003: 27) conclude, "when it comes to macro-policies, it appears that there is no national empowerment through the PRSP process" (see also Alexander 2004: 3; CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004a: 2).

12. *Ownership remains to be desired.* The new participatory approach has not only a right on its own; it is also expected to deliver 'broad national ownership'. In view of the above mentioned perception of CSOs on their role in the process, it is not surprising that progress in this respect remained limited. While the approach generated in many countries relatively strong ownership in a narrow circle of official stakeholders, this did not become true for civil society (IMF/IEO 2004: 75). But even in governments and administrations, ownership was not undivided. UNDP (2003: 25) observes: "Typically, one part of the government has strong ownership of the PRSP at the expense of others." It appears that most PRSPs are at best government-owned. Where they are 'owned' in a broader sense, they coincide with a sort of national project for poverty reduction that existed in the pre-PRSP-era and that is

promoted by political leaders and shared by most groups of society.

In search for reasons for the lack of ownership in many PRSP countries some observers point to the "pronounced power asymmetry between the IFIs and the countries" (World Bank 2002: 9). The IFIs expect countries' authorities and other stakeholders to set targets and to show commitment; at the same time they expect them to follow guidelines and timetables produced in Washington (World Bank 2004: 6). "There are clear tensions between the Bank in its role as both advisor and endorser of a country's PRSP and the national government, which is supposed to have ownership of the strategy" (CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 15). Cling and others (2003a: 158ff) call the principles of ownership and conditionality (executed via the PRGF and the PRSCs) "antithetic", Alexander (2004: 5) terms it an "irresolvable contradiction". For Ear-Dupuy (2004: 27) "the question of ownership and the country-driven nature of the PRSP (...) still remains elusive"; Alexander (2004: 6) calls country ownership in the PRSP process "a mirage". An assessment of whether the PRSC is a vehicle of "Continuity or Change" (Wood 2005: 3) concludes that "the large number of benchmarks ring alarm bells – raising the fear that the World Bank wished to continue to micro manage economies."

The confusion about 'ownership' is perhaps also due to different concepts of its meaning. Wood (2004a: 34) cites the World Bank (with its Adjustment Lending Retrospective: Final Report, 2001: 73) defining ownership as "a concept that denotes a high probability that the policy and institutional changes associated with a lending operation will be adopted



and implemented even if there is internal opposition." This definition, Wood points out, contrasts "dramatically" with the understanding of most civil society organizations. They tend towards a deeper definition that sees 'national ownership' as the result of an inclusive process, "ideally built from the bottom up." Whereas the IFIs try to reach an agreement with the government which is then "sold to the public", for civil society organizations authorship of a program of policy actions should rest with the country, thus "policy being debated and decisions taken at the country level." (Wood 2004a: 34f.; see also McGee and others 2002: 4)

13. *Participation in implementation and monitoring of PRS has been very weak.* In the vast majority of countries participation procedures concentrated on strategy development and PRSP formulation; participation in implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was more or less neglected (World Bank 2002: 16; Cling and others 2003b: 198; Trócaire 2004: 23)—a phenomenon that has been popularly coined as "participation gap" in PRS implementation (e.g. GTZ 2005: 42). Hughes and Atampugre (2005: 12) see challenges for participation increase "in the post-policy formulation phase when real power and resources become involved." This appraisal is perhaps also due to different ideas on what participation in this phase of the PRS process should include: provision of monitoring information, co-sharing the control over an evaluation process or even involvement in the identification and implementation of corrective measures? In any case, PRSP related activities waned (as mentioned above) once the PRSP was written and HIPC- and PRGF-requirements were fulfilled. Referring to 23 countries, Egulu (2004: 4) reports that not a single trade

union participated in program implementation, monitoring or evaluation. Typically M&E was conceived as 'poverty monitoring', as a way of gathering data. Thus participation was confined to a one-way 'information sharing'. Holvoet and Renard (2005: 27) developed M&E scores (1 = weak; 2 = partially satisfactory; 3 = satisfactory) to analyze PRSPs and Annual Progress Reports (APRs). They found for 11 sub-Saharan African countries that parliament participation in M&E scored 1.64, civil society participation 2.00 and donors 1.55. They comment: "Revealingly, the role of parliament is not mentioned in half of the cases. (...) In most countries studied there is a token of civil society participation of M&E, but this role is not institutionalized and remains very much ad-hoc."

In a minority of countries, observers found encouraging examples: In Tanzania and Mozambique, an institutional framework for monitoring was set up (World Bank 2004: 14), in Uganda the Debt Network made path breaking efforts to create committees at the district level to monitor the Poverty Action Fund (PAF) (McGee and others 2002: 22) and the "Progress of Implementation"-Report of the IFIs gives account of "participatory mechanisms, including citizens' report cards and participatory budgeting tools, [that] have been developed to promote the institutionalization of citizen feedback into periodic PRS assessments. Examples include the multi-stakeholder impact monitoring systems in Ethiopia and Kenya; local-level NGO sectoral information networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and a coalition of NGO, academic, research, and media organizations that was formed to track and report on budget implementation in Albania" (World Bank/IMF 2004: 19).



Other observers are more skeptical about success stories. With reference to Ethiopia, Wood (2004: 23) reports that all attempts by civil society to check the implementation of the PRSP were limited by the lack of meaningful indicators, data and information. "Whilst on the paper it is a fully monitored PRSP, in reality there is little that civil society can comment on due to a lack of transparency." Pointing to the example of Senegal, Woods finds that monitoring and evaluation is hampered by the lack of appropriate tools that can be used at the community level. Monitoring and evaluation is largely a government-driven process—this impression also prevails as far as the preparation of the APRs is concerned. Although APRs were expected to be open to all stakeholders in the process, a survey on twelve African countries found that only three governments engaged parliament as well as civil society stakeholders (Uganda, Burkina Faso, Niger), four presented the APR to CSOs (Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique) and four governments presented it to neither group (Driscoll and Evans 2004a: 15). "The APRs are generally seen [by governments] as another onerous donor requirement" (Trócaire 2004: 5).

Exploring reasons for the aforementioned "participation gap" is still at nascent state in the international debate. Chaillods and Hallak (2004: 141–142) see lack of capacity of the actors involved as the key explanation for waning participation during PRS implementation. Furthermore, incoherent linkage between political and financial decentralization has left local stakeholders with new political leverage, but short of the required funds (Chaillods and Hallak 2004: 103).

### Framework perspectives

*14. Minimum standards for meaningful participation are missing.* World Bank guidelines for civil society participation are few and vaguely formulated; IFIs and other donors have not yet developed minimum standards that have to be satisfied before a participation exercise is classified 'acceptable'. This is one reason why some donors laud a participatory process whereas other observers see serious flaws. Eberlei (2002; 2004) has proposed to consider participation meaningful if it is rights-based, integrated in the political environment of a given country and if it has empowered and legitimate stakeholders. In most cases these standards are at best partially fulfilled.

*15. An institutional framework for participation was missing in many cases.* Following the World Bank's Sourcebook, participation should build as much as possible on existing governance and political systems (Tikare and others 2002: 239). However, observers report that reality was different in many countries. Appropriate institutional frameworks lacked, thereby contributing to the failure to facilitate broad based participation processes and the poor quality of participation for those who were able to participate (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 16). Sometimes caused by the urgency to fulfill the HIPC-terms at short notice, "the participation process related to the formulation of the PRSP was conducted as an ad hoc exercise in most cases, not as one that would need to be sustained overtime" (IMF/IEO 2004: 30). But there were also positive examples: Uganda is said to have perhaps the most formal, institutionalized framework for participation (CIDSE/Caritas Internation-

alis 2004: 8

and 25); the World Bank (Tikare and others 2002: 239) reports from Ghana that the PRSP process built on preceding processes and developed mechanisms to institutionalize participation on the macroeconomic-policy level. Experiences elsewhere, observers report, were mixed: While in Vietnam the lack of a clear legal framework for CSOs hindered participation (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 16), in Bolivia a national dialogue law increased the scope for citizen participation. In other countries, participation was approached in a fractured, ad hoc manner (Rwanda) or negotiated with government on an ongoing basis (Malawi, Honduras) (CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 8). It is not surprising that in many countries with no or only weak institutional frameworks for CSO participation and/or legal provisions for civic engagement, the participatory process lost momentum after strategy development and government-CSO relations returned to 'business as usual' (McGee and others 2002: 20).

16. *Participation processes have been hindered by a number of constraints, among others: time, capacity, communication, and urban-bias.* Citing numerous country examples, all observers agree that time frames for consultation were too short and too rigid. The linkage of the PRSP to debt relief via the HIPC completion point led to a hurry and compromised the quality of participation. The problem diminished in more recent processes but did not disappear. Stewart and Wang (2003: 13) mention the Catholic Relief Service which complained of being given only a day's notice before consultation in Bolivia, Honduras and Cameroon. The time allowed for participants to

analyze drafts submitted before commenting on them was inadequate in many cases (McGee and others 2002: 7; Wood 2004: 20; Sanchez and Cash 2003: 18; CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 4; World Bank 2002: 20). The World Bank study (2004: 6) concludes that "the ambitious timetable initially set out by the World Bank and the Fund (...) discouraged experimentation in adapting the PRS process to country circumstances" (see also IMF/IEO 2004: 29).

Observers also agree that many stakeholders lacked the skills, experiences and resources to engage effectively in the participation process. This was particularly true for smaller CSOs. But also larger CSOs suffered from "economic illiteracy" (ActionAid USA/ActionAid Uganda 2004: 13) as far as complex matters such as budgets and macroeconomics were concerned. There was a notorious lack of financial resources and high caliber staff to engage on details of policy options, to do research and elaborate alternative policy scenarios (World Bank 2002: 17; Driscoll and Evans 2004: 9; IMF/IDA 2003a: 3f.; IMF/IEO 2004: 4). In this situation, CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis (2004: 5) report, "some CSOs were vulnerable to being dictated to by funding NGOs, rather than maintaining control over their own agenda." Others were anxious to be used legitimizing pre-determined policies they were opposed to (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 21).

Lack of strategic communication in PRS is seen as another obstruction to effective participation. Mozammel and Odugbemi (2005: 9) argue for the need of "mechanisms (...) for a two-way flow of information and ideas between the government and the citizenry". The most





reported barrier in this context is language. The choice of language—English—limited civil society participation by excluding crucial decision-makers, rural and minority populations and it imposed not at least foreign ways of thinking (Stewart and Wang 2003: 14; World Bank 2002: 10f.). It is noteworthy that the drafts of the PRSP in Nicaragua and Cambodia were first prepared in English and discussed by foreigners (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 16). Egulu (2004: 5) cites a trade union representative of the Central African Republic who in preparing for a seminar had contacted the government for a copy of the PRSP. “The official answer was that such a document did not exist (...) whereas this document can be found (in English) on the IMF’s website.” Trócaire (2004: 4) deploras that most governments made inadequate efforts “to communicate with the broader public in accessible formats”, not only

by using local languages but also by community radio and visual aids. There are, however, also positive examples. McGee and others (2002: 21) cite the booklet “Tanzania without poverty: A plain-language guide to the PRSP”, produced in English and several national languages, as an “excellent example of the popularizing and demystifying of complex policy message to inform the public about the PRSP” (for Yemen see IMF/IDA 2003: 8; for Uganda World Bank 2002: 243).

In many countries, the participation process was an urban- and sometimes even capital-biased exercise, dominated by urban-based CSOs; rural and particularly remote areas were neglected, despite having the highest incidence of poverty there, report observers (Oxfam International 2004: 8; Booth 2003a: 29; Stewart and Wang 2003: 14; DFID 2004: 22).

## 4. The International Debate: Recommendations

Convinced that participatory PRS processes had many flaws so far but also mark a significant improvement over past processes and bear an enormous potential, most contributors to the debate make a range of recommendations to improve the approach and its realization. There is, however, a minority of critics who mark out to CSOs to consider whether it is wise to take part in an exercise that could lend false legitimacy to pre-determined policies they are opposed to (e.g. Alexander 2004: 12; ActionAid USA/ActionAid Uganda 2004: 4). Without being exhaustive, the following presents an overview of

some important recommendations and demands.

### Stakeholder perspectives

- *Decision-making on all PRS-related issues should be in the country—not in Washington.* Participation in PRS should not be confined to social questions; also a debate on macroeconomic questions should be opened up. If PRS participation is to be meaningful, participation processes also have to deal with macroeconomics. It is not only imperative that documents such as drafts of PRGFs and



PRSCs as well as important documents associated with structural adjustment policies are released timely, PRSPs and their policy should no longer be overridden by other agreements between governments and IFIs. Secrecy should have no place in a process that heavily relies on transparency (Oxfam International 2004: 10; Trócaire 2004: 4; Egulu 2004: 12; Ear-Dupuy 2004: 29). "Bank and Fund [should] locate more policy-makers on the ground and for decisions on PRSPs, PRSCs and PRGF programs to be agreed at country level in the context of a multi-stakeholder PRSP forum" (CIDSE 2004: 26).

- *The participatory process should be more encompassing and engage the really poor and vulnerable.* Representativity of stakeholders in the process has to be improved and handpicked selection of government favorites avoided. The integration of parliaments and political parties should be aimed at. Above all, serious attempts are to be made to involve (more) poor people, particularly women. Country specific minimum standards for participation could be helpful and form the basis of an assessment at the end of PRS cycle (Oxfam International 2004: 9f.).

### Process perspectives

- *To enable stakeholders to make meaningful contributions to the process, efforts in capacity building should be intensified.* In order to extend participation beyond PRSP formulation, practical monitoring and evaluation tools should be developed and made

available to the poor, especially on the community level. Informed participation on macro-economic issues is only possible if the 'knowledge gap' between IFIs and governments on one side and CSOs on the other can be filled (Currah 2004: 6; Wood 2004: 24; Sanchez and Cash 2003: 17).

- *Participation should go beyond the elaboration of PRSPs.* The participatory process needs to start with the PRS design, but should be considered equally important when it comes to implementation, when annual reviews are scheduled and reappraisals are to be made. Participation should be more than consultation in the initial stage of program development (Thornton and Cox 2005: 26; Booth 2003a: 23; Ear-Dupuy 2003: 29). As participation needs time to be meaningful the timetable should be generous but clear. Artificial deadlines should be avoided (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 23).

### Framework perspectives

- *Participation should be strengthened by the establishment of a permanent framework.* To become effective and sustainable, a framework for participation has to be set up that takes into account the normal policymaking processes of the country and its electoral cycles (Sanchez and Cash 2003: 23; Oxfam International 2004: 10; CIDSE/CI 2004a: 28). Participation should build on clear legal provisions that define the scope of stakeholder involvement. Governments should clarify the 'rules of the



- game' for the participatory process and how requests for public actions will be handled (IMF/IDA 2003: 43; IMF/IDA 2003a: 12).
- *A development or PRS forum should be set up.* To ensure broad stakeholder involvement and to improve country ownership a forum should be established that comprises government, parliament, civil society, donors and IFIs on an equal footing. This forum should be entitled to make key decisions concerning design, implementation, monitoring and reporting of the PRS process (Trócaire 2004: 4; CIDSE/Caritas Internationalis 2004: 16).
  - In general, *the institutionalization of frameworks for participation should be pushed by the introduction of minimal standards* that include rights and structures for an ongoing cooperative dialogue between legitimated and capacitated stakeholders (Eberlei 2002; 2004).

# Participation in PRS Revision Processes

Walter Eberlei

## 1. Summary

*Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS)* are scheduled to be revised after an implementation period of three to five years. As of now, only five countries, namely Uganda, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Nicaragua, have completed their revision processes and have come up with a second-generation strategy. But numerous countries are scheduled to revise their PRS within the next 24 months. The question arises as to whether the experience in the early country cases offers insights into how societal participation can take place in this phase of the PRS policy cycle. In all five countries with a completed second-generation PRS, societal participation was a significant element during the revision. Compared with the preparation phase of the first PRS in these countries, participation has improved in terms of both quantity and quality. Guidelines for participation (in Uganda and Tanzania) or at least an outline for the process to come (in Burkina Faso, Ghana) have been developed to help structure the

process and provide the various stakeholders with a better information basis about the process and opportunities to participate. A more generous time frame in all five countries, some form of institutionalization of dialogue fora (Uganda, Tanzania, Nicaragua, Ghana), more advance information, decentralized consultation mechanisms (Ghana, Tanzania), a better organized and interlinked civil society and other factors have contributed to an improved environment for participation. Despite these positive developments, a number of shortcomings have to be mentioned, among them: little participation by elected bodies (except Ghana), prioritization behind closed doors (Burkina Faso) or at least in separate processes (Tanzania), a strong donor influence. The most crucial point might be that the inclusion of poor and very poor strata of society will remain a big challenge for some time to come. The paper ends with some proposals for first steps of a participatory PRS revision process.



## 2. Introduction – The Idea and Reality of PRS Revisions

*The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)* process is organized as a policy cycle. The drafting and approval of PRSPs is followed by implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and – after about three to five years – *by a revision process* and the development of a new PRSP, at which point the cycle begins again (IMF/World Bank 2004: 1).

This roll-over principle is one of the innovative elements of the PRS approach. The other one is to integrate *societal participation* as a key element throughout the PRS policy cycle. Both principles are designed to provide the basis for an ongoing societal learning process on poverty issues and poverty reduction efforts. The quality of participatory PRS revisions is, therefore, not only one important step among others in the PRS process of a country, but a crucial test of its overall approach to realizing its poverty reduction efforts.

To organize and to implement a PRS revision process, however, seems to be a difficult undertaking. 22 countries produced their PRSP before the 30th September 2002 (most of them with a maturity of three years). Actually, only five out of this group (Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Nicaragua) have completed

the cycle by now – all five countries published their second generation strategy about five years after the first full PRSP has been finalized. At global level, the PRS revision phase and the development of a “second generation” PRS are scarcely discussed. It is interesting to note that the report on the otherwise quite comprehensive IMF/World Bank 2005 PRS Review (IMF/World Bank 2005) does not mention the revision processes with a single word. Looking at the literature on PRS, the same picture emerges: apart from just one paper that at least mentions the issue and outlines a few general ideas (Driscoll/Evans 2005), no analysis of the topic is available.

The analytical framework for this paper builds on the author’s previous work on institutionalized participation in processes beyond the PRSP and an approach to define minimum standards for a meaningful participation in PRS processes. Four aspects have been identified as crucial to a more facilitating or more inhibiting environment for participation: structures, legal conditions ensuring societal participation, the legitimacy of the organizations/institutions involved, and the ability of actors to engage (see introductory article in this INEF Report).



### 3. Overview: Participatory PRS Revisions so far

Five countries (Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana, Nicaragua) have finalized their PRS review processes so far. The government of *Tanzania* initiated a broad-based review process in late 2003, which led to the new strategy that was launched in 2005. This process has been chosen as a case study and will be described in chapter 4.

#### Uganda

Since the introduction of the PRS approach, Uganda has been at the forefront of the initiative. In fact, Uganda's first *Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP)* was launched as far back as 1997. The first revised PEAP in the year 2000 was quickly accepted by the IMF and the World Bank as the country's full PRSP. This means that Uganda is the only country that has passed through two revision processes already – one in 1999/2000 and one in 2004/2005. In December 1999, the government presented a draft for a revised PEAP. Non-governmental stakeholders were explicitly invited to participate in the discussion process on the formulation of a new PEAP. Numerous actors accepted this offer (see Eberlei 2003; Panos 2002: 33). Both donors and civil society actors involved lauded the 2000 process as being highly participatory.

The submission of the *Poverty Status Report 2003* by the government and a new extensive and participatory-surveyed Poverty Report by UPPAP are regarded as preparatory steps towards a new revision process 2004 (see Ssewakiryanga 2005). A

*PEAP Revision Guide*, describing the process, was compiled. Halfway into 2003, the revision process was launched with a national workshop. Besides consultations within the existing sector working groups, provisions were made for independent civil society consultations as well as consultations at the level of local governments and within the private sector. The members of the sector working groups as well as other actors were represented in four newly-established working groups aligned to the four pillars of the PEAP (sustainable economic growth, good governance, increasing incomes of the poor, improving quality of life of the poor). Hence, civil society was represented in all PEAP revision committees and therefore actively involved. One example that is documented quite well is the so-called *PEAP Gender Team*, formed by representatives of government (several ministries), the civil society and the donor community. The team contributed specific gender analytical work as well as numerous proposals to mainstream gender into the PEAP (Ssewakiryanga 2005: 303 f.).

According to Piron and Norton (2004: 37), the recent review process has been more open and better organized than the prior; even civil society seemed to be better prepared. Strong NGO networks, particularly the *Uganda Debt Network (UDN)* and the *NGO Forum*, strengthen the voice of the emerging civil society in Uganda. While civil society hardly participated in the formulation of the first PEAP, its revision in 2000 granted those networks, international NGOs as well as religious groups and research insti-



tutes a say for the first time (see Eberlei 2003). Since then, the inclusion of civil society actors has been gradually extended. Civil society organizations worked together closely. To coordinate their input into the revision process, civil society organizations formed a *CSO PEAP Revision Steering Committee* with 16 organizations as members, among them the NGO Forum (chair) and UDN.<sup>1</sup> Through local consultations, the CSO committee tried to weave the perspectives of the poor into the process: About 2500 people (among them 47 percent women) attended meetings and workshops organized by the committee in the course of the revision process. The CSO group produced a number of papers on specific topics related to the PEAP as well as a comprehensive document with a number of proposals and demands regarding the four PEAP pillars (CSO PEAP Revision Liason Office 2004). Beside this coordinated participation of CSOs, the trade union's umbrella organization NOTU (see Egulu 2004b) as well as environmental NGOs and other groups were also involved in PEAP consultations.

After the finalization of the review process, the PRSP II (actually the third PEAP generation) was presented to the boards of the IMF and the World Bank in July 2005. IMF and World Bank praised the revised strat-

<sup>1</sup> Other members were a few international NGOs like Oxfam and Care, but mainly Ugandan CSOs or civil society networks like the Forum for Women in Democracy (FO-WODE), Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI), Uganda Society for Disabled Children, Community Development and Resource Network (CDRN), Council for the Economic Empowerment of Women in Africa (CEEWA), Uganda Child Rights NGO Network. It should be noted that women's organizations were well represented in the committee.

egy and the "extensive consultations" on which the new paper was based (IDA/IMF 2005a: 1f.).

### Burkina Faso

While the PRS revision process in Uganda is documented quite well, only limited independent information is available on the process in Burkina Faso. Like Uganda and Tanzania, Burkina Faso presented its first PRSP in the year 2000 and the PRSP II in 2005. There has been a lot of criticism that societal participation during formulation of the first PRSP was conceivably weak. A study on behalf of the IMF concluded, for example, that "the PRSP was drafted by a small group in government with assistance of a few donors (...) Both the Bank and the Fund Boards discussed whether Burkina Faso's PRSP should be considered as an interim rather than a full PRSP on the grounds of limited participation" (Robb/Scott 2001: 28).

In order to improve the participation of stakeholders during the PRS revision process 2003-2004, the government initiated an iterative procedure built upon broad-based consultation. It consisted of stocktaking workshops, meetings with the heads of ministerial departments on the consistency of sectoral policies, information sessions with technical and financial partners, a civil society forum on rereading the PRSP, and a national conference between April 2003 and early 2005. Finally, the revised version of the PRSP was presented to the Economic and Social Council, which is comprised of representatives of public administration, private sector, and civil society (GoBF 2004: 5).

A variety of societal stakeholders participated in all consultations carried out in the PRSP II pro-

cess, namely: women's organizations, research institutes, labor organizations, religious organizations, human rights organizations and those with specific demands, private media, NGOs and development associations (among them the Permanent Secretariat of NGOs, SPONG, the Liaison Office for NGOs and Associations, and the Networks for Communication, Information, and Training of Women in NGOs), youth movements, marginalized persons, farmers' organizations, and cultural and artistic organizations, private-sector representatives under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (GoBF 2003: 71, GoBF 2004: 5). A civil society forum held in Ouagadougou in July 2003 lauded the government for involving them in the revision process, but criticized the "low level of involvement of grassroots communities" and demanded that the government should involve civil society groups not only from time to time but on "a lasting basis" (GoBF 2004: 10).

There is no independent academic research report available that could give more insight into the Burkinian PRS process and its participatory character. A consultancy report on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) concluded that civil society was "appropriately represented" during the consultation process, but criticized that non-state actors were not "capable of making a methodological-instrumental or conceptual contribution to the regional strategy papers or the second PRSP". And even more: "In fact, the weak civil-society organization meant that they could not even agree on any kind of concerted approach before passage of the second PRSP in September

2003. Although in comparison to phase 1 there was far more room for participation by social actors in the revision of the first PRSP and the reworked second PRSP, this opportunity was not seized. The civil-society organizations lacked the required technical capacities; the private sector showed no interest in this process" (GTZ 2004: 5). Although this criticism seems to be a bit shortsighted (it does not, for example, mention the joint civil society statement published in July 2003), it points at the weak state of civil society and private sector actors in Burkina Faso as such.

Despite the obvious fact that government offered space for consultation and that non-state actors were too weak to use this space fully, there is also some civil society criticism stating that the executive defined its priorities behind closed doors (INEF 2005: 18). This is confirmed by the above-mentioned BMZ/GTZ report with regard to the important operationalization process that followed the overall PRS revision in Burkina Faso: "The operational plan PAP (Priority Action Program) was given to the donor community for comment in mid-January. The operational plan was drawn up almost exclusively by the Directorate General for Economy and Planning (DGEP), which is the planning department of the Ministry of Economy and Development; no other ministries except the Ministry of Finance and Budget (MFB) participated. The civil society and the private sector were not even informed about this new implementation document" (GTZ 2004: 6).

In their comments on the new Burkinian PRSP, IMF and World Bank welcomed the "wider involvement of civil society" and "the broader debate on poverty reduction" (IDA/IMF 2005:





2, 7) – but without furnishing any proof or quoting examples.

### Ghana

After three years into implementation, the review process started in September 2004 with the launch of thematic working groups and ended with the presentation of the document in early 2006. CSOs have been invited to participate in the thematic working groups (“Cross-Sectoral Planning Groups”, CSPG). These groups – originally five, later merged to three on the basis of the priorities of the Government, namely *Private Sector Competitiveness*, *Human Resource Development* and *Good Governance* – were composed of state actors (ministries, departments, agencies) and non-state actors (professional bodies, research institutions, NGOs, trade unions, associations of specific interest groups and others), finally development partners. The working groups were chaired by an individual selected by the group and facilitated by a consultant, assisted by a research associate (NDPC 2005: 10). Each CSPG formed a core working group. Terms of reference for the CSPG were formulated by the *National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)*, the government unit being in charge of the PRS process. Additionally, a broad based consultation process was initiated. After the government presented a draft version in 2005, a number of consultative meetings and workshops took place at national level as well as in all ten regions of the country. According to the government, all relevant stakeholders were invited to these public meetings. In the final document, a list of consulted stakeholders as well as a list of consultative activities between September 2004 and November 2005 are mentioned (NDPC 2005: 12-13).

Beside societal stakeholders, NDPC involved also the parliament, especially the *Poverty Reduction Committee* (zero draft been submitted to the Parliament in April 2005, workshop for Parliamentary select committee in June and August 2005; submission of final version in early 2006). Based on the PRS-II, the development of *District Medium-Term Development Plans* have been completed in 2006. A range of consultative meetings and workshops as well as the final approval of these plans by the district assemblies have been organized to ensure a broad-based participatory approach.

While civil society groups were initially quite reluctant to become involved in the process (INEF 2005), a number of organizations attended workshops and meetings or participated in the CSPGs. Representatives of civil society groups who have been involved in the first PRS process already confirmed that the revision process was more inclusive and participatory than the first PRS drafting process. However, a number of critical voices – raised by various representatives of societal groups and the Parliament – point to various shortcomings in the process.<sup>2</sup> Frequently mentioned are: invitations to workshops on very short notice; lack of clear time schedule tabled early enough to get busy people involved; very tight time table, too limited time to prepare substantial input; gap between analysis and conclusions for the policy (e.g. with regard to gender); selected invitations to meetings; parliamentary involvement too late; high influence of consultants paid by government; no clarity about how inputs will impact the document; lack

2 Personal communication; interviews in February/March 2006 in the northern and central region as well as in Accra.

of clear terms of reference for involvement; no grassroots consultation.

### Nicaragua

Nicaragua's PRSP-II has been accepted by the boards of the IMF and the World Bank in 2006. According to an IMF/World Bank assessment, the Nicaraguan process confirms the experience made in the other countries

that the quality and the extent of participation has been improved in the revision process compared with the first PRS generation (see box 1). While the few available independent voices confirm that a number of consultative activities have taken place in the Nicaraguan review process, there is quite some doubt that voices of the poor have been heard and that the consultations offered more than a "signing-off process" (Hayes/Kovach 2006: 3).



#### Box 1: Nicaragua: Participation in Elaborating the PRSP-II

Nicaragua has produced its new National Development Plan 2005-2009 that has been accepted in 2006 by the boards of the IMF and the World Bank as PRSP-II. The Bank/Fund Staff Advisory Note states:

"The PRSP-II emerged from a broad participatory process at the local level with departmental development councils, and consultations at the sectoral level. Consultations for the PRSP-II took place in four stages through a series of seventeen workshops at the departmental level to ensure civil society participation including the private sector and donors. This process incorporated the dissemination in 2003 of the Vision of Nation and the PPND, and in 2004 of the PNDO. The consultation of the PRSP-II culminated at the national level with the discussion of the National Development Plan 2005–2009 in August of 2005 at the National Commission for Economic and Social Planning (CONPES). The authorities have also held bilateral meetings on the strategy laid out in the PRSP-II with the National Assembly's PRSP Commission. The PRSP-II and other relevant material to the PRSP under the revised strategy are posted on the National Development Plan website [www.pnd.gob.ni](http://www.pnd.gob.ni) and at the Office of the President's website [www.presidencia.gob.ni](http://www.presidencia.gob.ni).

The participatory process of elaborating the PRSP-II comprised the production of territorial plans, and the discussion of sectoral priorities and policy matrices. Territorial plans were produced for all 15 departments and two autonomous regions, including actions, goals, targets and budgets, incorporating funding sources whenever possible. At the sectoral level, the government established six fora with donor participation to discuss sectoral priorities and elaborate policy matrices in education, health, social protection, governance, production and competitiveness, and infrastructure.

*(to be continued)*



(continued)

The PRSP-II incorporates demands voiced at the consultation sessions, such as increasing infrastructure investment, emphasizing participation and decentralization in PRSP-II implementation, increasing transparency in monitoring and evaluation, and improving alignment of donor contributions to PRSP-II goals. Discussions covered the four PRSP-II strategic areas and helped establishing the five overarching PRSP-II results for the period 2005–2009.”

Source: IMF/World Bank 2005: Joint Staff Advisory Note on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Washington D.C., December 29, 2.

## 4. Country case: Tanzania

Uganda and Tanzania are the two countries that have organized the most elaborated PRS revision processes to date. As the participatory aspects of the two PRS review processes in Uganda have been analyzed and documented already in more detail<sup>3</sup>, it was decided to choose the specific experience with participation in the PRS revision process of Tanzania in 2004/05 as a case study for this paper.

### A. Participation in the Tanzanian PRS process before the review

Tanzania belongs to the small group of African countries that started the PRS process quite early on, although participation of societal stakeholders in designing the Interim and Full-PRSP (in 2000) was very weak. Whereas the I-PRSP had been written without any civil-society participation, the process was slightly

different regarding the full PRSP. Various civil society actors—most notably at the national level—were involved. International NGOs (such as OXFAM) as well as church-based organizations played the leading role, while at regional workshops smaller NGOs (such as local women and youth networks) were invited to participate (Evans and Ngalwea 2003: 275). Notwithstanding the desired participation of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), the process was dominated by “the so-called international NGOs” (Gould and Ojanen 2003: 8). Facing a critical report by the *Tanzania Coalition for Debt and Development (TCDD)* on the macroeconomic framework of the strategy, the government blocked the leading role of the coalition in zonal workshops. “The subsequent final draft included hardly any input from the civil society” (Whitehead 2003: 29). Furthermore, a systematic effort to assure the participation of employers and trade unions was missing at this stage (Casale 2004: 107).

While hardly any participation in the implementation of the PRS is reported, societal stakeholders played

<sup>3</sup> See for example Eberlei 2003 and Ssewakiryanga 2005 as well as the bibliography included in the VENRO country profile Uganda (<http://www.prsp-watch.de/countries/uganda.php>).



an increasing role in PRS monitoring. Since 2002, the annual *Poverty Policy Week* serves the purpose of an open forum, and thus provides a space for public debate on poverty reduction (Shariff Samji 2005: 62f.). Consequently, civil-society actors (most notably big NGOs) engage in the debate. This dialogue is based on the government's *Poverty and Human Development Report*. Another forum to contribute to PRS monitoring is the participation of civil society in at least one open session of the *Consultative Group Meetings* between government and international donors (e.g. in December 2002; IMF/World Bank 2004). While the first *Annual Progress Report* has been widely criticized for passing the ability to include civil society into its formulation (Evans and Ngalwea 2003: 278), the two follow-ups (2003 and 2004), according to the government, incorporated the societal stance through workshops and the aforementioned *Poverty Policy Weeks*. Since December 2001 the annual *Poverty Monitoring Master Plan* delineates the diverse structure of the Tanzanian PMS and specifically describes the institutional framework for poverty monitoring. It includes the *Poverty Monitoring Steering Committee* with about 30 members representing key stakeholders; among those, civil society representatives such as the *Tanzania Gender Network Programme (TGNP)*, the NGO-network *Tanzania Association of NGOs (TANGO)* and *Save the Children* (international NGO). Besides, various working groups such as the *Dissemination, Sensitization and Advocacy Technical Working Group*, which is not only responsible for disseminating the results of poverty monitoring in Tanzania but also for doing so in a user-friendly format (e.g. releasing comprehensible information in plain language) are part of

the system. Some groups engage in independent participatory poverty monitoring (Hakikazi 2004) or other approaches related to the PRS; the gender-specific budget initiative by women's organizations serves as one example (Mabina and Kiondo 2003: 8; Rusimbi 2003).

Growing societal participation between 2000 and 2004 is one of the characteristics of the Tanzanian PRS process. Another one is the significant role of international donors. According to some observers they are the dominant players. Gould and Ojanen (2003: 7f.) go so far as to label the PRS a sole product of technocrats from both government and the donor community. Their foremost criticism is that donors escape democratic control, but others claim that the donor strategy, too, incorporates consultative elements (Evans and Ngalwea 2003: 276).

#### **B. Process perspective: How has participation been realized during the review?**

After three years of PRS implementation, the country started the process to review and redraft the PRS. It was launched during the *Poverty Policy Week* in October 2003 after the government had already announced its plan to start the review six months earlier.<sup>4</sup> The review process can be divided into three parts:

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<sup>4</sup> The following paragraphs on the Tanzanian PRS review process are based on the analysis of government documents (notably The United Republic of Tanzania 2004, 2005a and 2005b), further information released by government (<http://www.povertymonitoring.go.tz>), and a number of expert interviews with representatives from government, civil society and donors in September 2005.



*First-Round Consultations* took place during the months following the October 2003 event and included broad-based consultations at national, regional and local levels, some of which were led by government, others by civil-society groups. The concept for the various consultative activities was developed by government in cooperation with some key stakeholders at national level and was framed in specifically formulated consultation guidelines, based on clear principles: “The PRS review consultation aims at institutionalizing the participation process. The four standard principles, namely: *rights, structures, legitimacy and capacity*, will be adhered to” (The United Government of Tanzania 2004: 4, see box 2; cf. Eberlei 2002, 2002a). Furthermore, the consultations were informed by a number of publications, e.g. by the results of the *Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) 2002/03*, an output of the *Poverty Monitoring System* (The United Republic of Tanzania 2005b: 20). The outcome of the consultations highlighted a number of issues regarding the poverty status, actual changes during PRS I implementation, remaining challenges (see The United Republic of Tanzania 2005a: 22-34 for an overview) and were “consolidated into the first draft that was sent back to lead-stakeholders for scrutiny and comments” (The United Republic of Tanzania 2005b: 19). Some civil-society representatives expressed a dissenting view on this in personal interviews: From their viewpoint, the new PRSP draft was outlined before the results came in and “some information were picked later from the reports to validate the draft”.

*Second-Round Consultations* started in August 2004 and ended

with a national level consultation meeting on the 30th September 2004. During this round, the draft of the new PRSP was discussed to identify possible gaps, to build consensus and to foster ownership (a summary of the draft had been translated into Swahili, too). About fifty contributions (running to more than 700 pages) by various stakeholders were submitted, including numerous proposals to adjust or change the first draft. While a government document stated that it was a difficult challenge for the PRS drafting team to accommodate the issues raised, it did not elaborate if and how this challenge would be managed (The United Government of Tanzania 2005a: 39). According to a passage in the final document, particularly the special needs of vulnerable groups (e.g. people with disabilities) and governance issues were given more weight by the influence of stakeholders in this consultation round (The United Government of Tanzania 2005b: 20). This was also confirmed by civil-society representatives. Drafting team members came from government and hand-picked academia, but also included two representatives from civil society.

*Third-Round Consultations* took place in the Poverty Policy Weeks in November 2004 at national as well as at regional levels (five days in Dar es Salaam; one or two days in 13 regions). This event was used to present the new strategy and to discuss the way forward (e.g. how to link the PRSP to the budget, how to prioritize the strategy, how to disseminate the document).

**Box 2: Tanzania: Consultation Guidelines**

The PRS review consultation will seek to employ some principles of a human rights approach to poverty reduction strategies. The PRS review consultation aims at institutionalising the participation process. The four standard principles namely rights, structures, legitimacy and capacity will be adhered to.

**Rights:** The current PRS review strives to ensure that the consultation process by all the stakeholders are characterised by freedom of opinion, information, media, association and campaigning. The stakeholders participate fully in the entire PRS cycle and the role of each stakeholder is clearly stipulated.

**Structures:** Leading stakeholders ensure views are collected from the grass root level to the national level. The Government will ensure openness prevails throughout the process in terms of information as regards to PRS cycle. The implementation of PRS will be decentralized and each individual stakeholder will have the role to contribute.

**Legitimacy:** Parliament will fully be involved in the PRS process and will have the role to approve the PRSP. The civil society organisations and other stakeholders have to organise and ensure that they are included in the process.

**Capacity:** The PRS review process will entail capacity building for stakeholders for them to effectively contribute in the PRS cycle.

Source: The United Republic of Tanzania 2004: 4f.; similar in: The United Republic of Tanzania 2005b: 18.

**C. Stakeholder perspective:  
Who participated, and to  
what extent?**

Even critical NGO representatives confirm the broad-based and inclusive approach of the Tanzanian PRS review. Due to the multipronged approach, many voices from local to national levels representing the various groups of the population have been heard. While the government-led consultations concentrated on the stakeholders within government (e.g. the various ministries) as well as the donor community, most voices from sub-national level came in during the first phase through the consultations led by the *Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania (ALAT)* and those led by various civil society groups.

ALAT was chosen by the government to conduct consultations in 168 villages located in 42 districts all over the country. All the ALAT-initiated consultative meetings and workshops included representatives from local government and local assemblies as well as speakers from community-based organizations or local NGOs. More than 18,000 people attended (The United Republic of Tanzania 2005a: 15; no gender-specific differentiation).

A number of civil society organizations or civil society networks active at national level took the lead to organize independent consultations (albeit within the framework of the jointly agreed review guidelines). Among this group are *Hakakazi Cata-*



lyst, NGOs Policy Forum (NPF), Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), and Tanzania Association of NGOs (TANGO) as well as more than 30 other CSOs. Several thousand Tanzanians attended these independent PRS review meetings (usually no gender-specific differentiation; except TGNP-led consultations; it can be assumed that male participants formed the majority). Some of these "lead stakeholders" summarized results of different regional CSO consultations or merged contributions of their member organizations into one paper, e.g. NPF and TANGO.

#### **Hakakazi Consultations in the Northern Region of Tanzania**

Hakakazi Catalyst organized a number of workshops at local and regional level. Around 1800 people participated (see Hakakazi 2004). Most important demands: more funding for social services (e.g. education and water), stronger rights to access land, intensified measures to fight corruption. The central message was formulated as follows: "Good Governance is central to many issues, including for the effective development and improvement of social services such as education, health, water and roads, as well as for the management of lands and natural resources" (Hakakazi 2004: 2).

Private-sector actors were hardly involved in the process (they are not even mentioned in the respective revision papers) while trade unions organized some independent consultations and submitted their own contribution to the PRS review (Egulu 2004b: 16 f.).

Beside the consultative meetings with stakeholders, the government used mass media as well as leaflets with questionnaires to get additional views from the general public: More than 22,000 responses (questionnaires) were received (among them: 36 percent women) and evaluated statistically by the National Bureau of Statistics. This evaluation was, however, questioned by some NGOs who thought that there was no capacity to analyze the responses sufficiently.

The Parliament was hardly involved in the PRS review consultations. Parliamentarians have only been informed through two workshops, but there was no systematic involvement. While some members of parliament are obviously interested in strengthening parliament's role in the PRS process, the Speaker of Parliament did not see any necessity to change anything (personal communication).

#### **D. Conclusions: Strengths and weaknesses of the Tanzanian PRS review**

Several strengths and weaknesses of the Tanzanian PRS review process can be identified:

The government involved societal stakeholders actively in the process by offering funds for their own consultative processes. Civil-society representatives are quite satisfied with the process and its outcome, especially when compared to the first PRS process in 2000. This has strengthened CSO ownership. As one representative of TANGO put it: "We are not invited – we are part of the process!"

The process was broad-based and inclusive. The approach to support non-governmental “lead stakeholders” in organizing independent consultative meetings opened the process for a wide range of organizations, groups and politically involved individuals. Interviewees confirmed without exception that “whoever wanted to participate” was involved. The decentralized fora also offered access to people living in remote areas. This means that the criticized domination of a few international NGOs in the first phase of the PRS process in Tanzania (see Gould/Ojanen 2003) has been replaced by a quite broad involvement of societal stakeholders during the revision process.

The weaknesses associated with consultations for PRSP in 2000 were analyzed upfront to avoid repeating the mistakes, e.g. “participatory structures formed on an ad-hoc basis”, “women, youth, people with disabilities, the elderly, people living with HIV/AIDS, orphans were not adequately represented”, “inadequate analysis of ‘Voice of the poor’ through the zonal workshops” (The United Republic of Tanzania 2004). Even lessons learnt during the review process were openly formulated, e.g. “limited public awareness of PRS”, “short preparation time for facilitators”, “small samples of villages” (The United Republic of Tanzania 2005a: 21). This demonstrates an open attitude towards learning.

One of the mentioned weaknesses of the first round – the insufficient inclusion of gender issues in the PRS – has been taken up since then. Strong advocacy work of the civil society network TGNP pushed government to consider gender issues in the PRS process to be important (e.g.

gender sensitive design of the PPA 2002, including gender issues in the annual progress reports) (Bell 2003: 6, 14 f.).

The government proposed Review Guidelines and negotiated the draft with civil society stakeholders. The final outcome (The United Republic of Tanzania 2004) formed the basis for the process including a clear institutional set-up.

Rights-based approach: “The PRS review consultation will seek to employ some principles of a human rights approach to poverty reduction strategies” (The United Government of Tanzania 2004: 4; further elaborated in the document).

The process was given ample time (the review was announced in May 2003, started in October 2003, and was finalized in November 2004).

Stakeholder-led consultations were funded by government (with funds from UNDP and the World Bank). The downside of this funding would be that it could create some form of dependence, but Tanzanian stakeholders underlined the advantages as they would not have been in a position to organize and to fund broad-based consultations on their own. According to several representatives of non-state actors, they did not see any attempt by the government to influence them through the funding (personal communication).

Government and other stakeholders used various methods to obtain responses from the broad public (flyers with a simple questionnaire, radio, television, website; art and drama, round-table meetings, group discussions, analytical studies...). This variety of communication instruments helped to create more public awareness. Especially the use of radio pro-





grams as well as art and drama is, furthermore, a way to include people with no or limited reading skills. This is helpful to women, for example, as their abilities to read and write are still below average.

The Poverty Policy Week has been established as an institutionalized annual forum on poverty issues and is an important forum for the dialogue between government and stakeholders.

As only a minority of Tanzanians can speak or read English, it was helpful that several papers (e.g. the summary of the PRSP draft) were translated into Swahili and/or published in “plain language”.<sup>5</sup>

Non-governmental stakeholders were not only consulted but also involved in the final drafting of the document. This extends societal participation from consultation to involvement in decision-making, although the prioritization – and therefore: the final decision about what is done and what is not implemented – lies with the Government.

To disseminate the strategy and to organize ongoing feedback, in other words: to institutionalize the dialogue between government and (civil) society, the government launched a PRS communication strategy: “The primary aim is to enlist greater dialogue. This will be achieved through the institutionalization of two-way communication be-

tween government and other stakeholders (...). The strategy will also ensure the availability and access of information on the implementation of the NSGRP at all levels (...)” (The United Government of Tanzania 2005: v).

The overall assessment is positive, despite the fact that not all ideas and proposals were taken on board. Interview partners expressed their dissatisfaction with the governance chapter (e.g.: anti-corruption measures are seen as “lip service” only; some CSOs demanded more devolution of power from national to local authorities; some see too little emphasis on the fight against HIV/AIDS etc.).

One very important weakness – the lack of priorities and the missing link to the budget – was formulated openly as a “critical challenge” for implementation (The United Republic of Tanzania 2005b: 22). This openness might contribute to overcoming the gap. However, some CSO representatives fear that government will make all the important decisions without involving them.

Another weakness is that several processes are running parallel to the PRS process, e.g. the influential *Public Expenditure Review (PER)* process. But this problem has been identified. Government intends to link PER and PRS stronger. Results are not yet clear.

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5 See for example a small booklet explaining the content of the revised Poverty Reduction Strategy: <http://www.tzonline.org/pdf/aplainlanguageguidetotanzaniasnationalstrategy.pdf>; (or in Swahili): <http://www.tzonline.org/pdf/mwongozowalugharahisiwamkakatiwakukuzauchumi.pdf> (access 26.11.06).



## 5. Conclusions

Based on the early experience with PRS reviews in the above-mentioned countries, the following conclusions can be summarized:

### Structures:

*Establishing permanent dialogue structures is definitely an important advantage.* In Uganda and Tanzania, specific dialogue structures have been successfully established and institutionalized. The sector working groups in Uganda, in which non-state stakeholders are represented, played a central role in the review process of 2003/2004; even prior to the second revision they were actively involved in the discussion of the annual budget and its implications for the poverty strategy. In Tanzania, the annual *Poverty Policy Week* and also the PRS/PER groups give another example of a well-established dialogue basis. While Uganda, Tanzania and Ghana serve as good examples, the case of Burkina Faso is much weaker. In Burkina Faso, the dialogue structures between government and non-governmental actors are rather ambiguous, despite having been improved during the PRS process; yet they are far from fully established. The inclusion of societal stakeholders in the monitoring system has a comparatively low ranking; currently, they can participate in sectoral working groups, but access to the decisive government committees is barred.

*Integrating permanent mechanisms of monitoring informs the PRS review.* The *Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP)* constitutes an exemplary instrument of institutionalized participatory moni-

toring. UPPAP is designed in such a way as to enable the results to extend into the political decision-making processes concerned with the poverty reduction strategy of the PEAP. Many observers regard UPPAP as a helpful instrument to incorporate the voices of the poor in the political processes. In Tanzania, the outcome of the *Poverty Monitoring System* was not as broad-based as in Uganda, but it also served as a source of information for review consultations.

### Rights:

*Developing a legal framework for the review process provides confidence.* Government and non-state stakeholders in Uganda as well as in Tanzania were able to agree in advance on guidelines for the PRS review process. In both cases, these guidelines formed a sort of legal framework – not in a juridical, but at least in a political sense.

### Legitimacy:

*Parliaments – the constitutional forum for societal participation – are still not involved in the PRS processes.* The review processes in Burkina Faso, Uganda and Tanzania did not totally by-pass the parliaments (members were usually informed through PRS-related workshops); however, they did not involve the legislatures systematically (in Nicaragua, however, a Parliamentary Committee has discussed the draft). Only in Ghana, the parliament at national level has been involved in discussions (albeit within a tight timetable) and district assemblies have a say regarding the decen-



tralized implementation plans. In all countries, capacity constraints, and also a limited traditional understanding of parliament's role in political processes, hinder a full inclusion. This practice weakens the legitimacy of the PRS process.

*Civil society networks are strengthening the legitimacy of PRS review processes.* In Tanzania and Uganda, the civil society is active through strong civil society networks with a large membership. The same can be found in Zambia, but not in Ghana; the networks in Burkina Faso are also weak.

*The more the poor themselves are involved, the more legitimated are the PRS review processes in the eyes of organized stakeholders.* The PRS review processes in Tanzania and Uganda involved "voices of the poor" systematically (e.g. UPPAP, Tanzania: local consultations, Participatory Poverty Assessments) and also integrated a gender dimension into these bottom-up processes (e.g. by gender-specific evaluation of data, not only household-based indicators).

### **Capacity:**

*Meaningful participation by societal stakeholders needs financial support from donors and/or governments.* Example: In Tanzania, the government and donors funded the independent stakeholder-led consultations. This contributed significantly to a broad-based and inclusive process. Financial support to strengthen especially civil-society participation in revision pro-

cesses was also given in Uganda by DFID, UNDP and others, in Zambia by GTZ and others.

*Including the poor in the PRS reviews requires documents in their language.* Most PRS documents are written and published in English. This is a clear indication that they are still predominantly written for the donor community, not for the indigenous (poor) populations. Using mass media in local languages – especially broadcasting by radio (as done in the Tanzanian PRS review process) – should therefore be given much more attention (and resources). To translate key documents into the main local languages is a "must", although even written papers in the local language do not automatically include women at the same level.

*Including the poor means specific efforts to strengthen local, community-based organizations* – as "many smaller civil society organizations lack the skills, experience and resources to engage effectively in public-policy processes" (Driscoll/Evans 2005: 13). The Tanzanian example shows at least that offered consultation space at local level leads to the participation of these community groups – but with limited lasting effect as long as this space is not institutionalized: "Consultations on poverty being seen as a one occasion exercise instead of being a living process" (United Republic of Tanzania 2005a: 21). Some NGOs demanded therefore the "devolution of power and resources to local levels" (NGO Policy Forum 2004: 5).



## 6. Getting started: Some conclusions for revision processes

Some conclusions with regard to important first steps of a participatory revision process can be drawn from the early experience.

### *Identify the relevant stakeholders.*

A stakeholder analysis gives a clear picture of who has to be included in PRS activities (including specific strengths and comparative advantages of stakeholders as not every stakeholder must or even can be involved in every stage of the process). Learning from the experience of other countries, the analysis gives special attention to often underrepresented stakeholders (e.g. women's groups, community-based organizations or other representatives of poor people) or neglected institutions (especially legislative bodies at national and local level). The stakeholder analysis is not done by the government alone, but is organized in a participatory way (e.g. by including all those stakeholders who are already active in the PRS process in the analytical exercise) and is handled as transparent and inclusive as possible.

### *Define the overall aims and goals.*

Before entering into a PRS revision process, the overall aims and goals of the process are discussed, defined and – in an ideal scenario – agreed upon by all relevant stakeholders (at least by all 'leading' stakeholders, especially cabinet or presidential office, the governmental unit being technically responsible for the PRS process, the relevant parliamentary committees, civil society networks, private sector networks or representative bodies). Aims should be considered

with regards to the policy itself as well as for the process. For example: The overall aim for *the policy outcome* could be the (re-)prioritization of the strategy for the next phase; the aim for *the process* might be ensuring country ownership in a sense of broad support.<sup>6</sup> Defining the overall aim for the process gives a clear picture what 'stakeholder participation' shall mean in the revision process (e.g. consultation, elements of joint decision-making, organizing public opinion building, informing a legislative decision).

*Analyze the starting point.* Governments invite stakeholders to review the experience with the participatory process during the formulation, the implementation and the monitoring of the first PRS. The four dimensions of institutionalized participation guide the analysis. The various stakeholder groups or even individual stakeholders develop their specific assessment of the previous processes and the state of participation. A simple SWOT-analysis helps to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for each of the four dimensions. Supported by an independent facilitator, the various governmental and societal stake-

6 In the authors' understanding, country ownership of poverty reduction strategies materializes when a majority of the population and their representatives (democratically legitimated representatives as well as representatives of societal pressure groups) participate in the development of the strategy, identify with the goals and elements of the strategy, and will participate in its implementation, monitoring and ongoing development (Eberlei 2001: 11).



holders discuss their (certainly) different assessments. This leads to a better understanding of perspectives at least; an ideal outcome would be an agreed common understanding of the experience with PRS so far.

*Define the institutional basis.* The analysis of previous experience with participation is followed by an explicit, multi-stakeholder process of defining the institutional basis for the revision process. *Structures* are created, e.g. joint working groups (on sectoral and cross-sectoral issues, specific priority areas or other aspects); a steering committee including representatives of the various stakeholder groups; institutionalized and clearly defined ways of information. A jointly developed document describes the principles of the process; the roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder including their rights and obligations; the rules and procedures for the process; access to information rights; mechanisms to find solutions in the case of conflicts between governments and stakeholders, a clear outline of the process phases and so forth – in other words: the document describes a sort of a *legal framework* for the revision process.

*Enable the inclusion of stakeholders.* The capacity and/or capacity building needs of all relevant stakeholders are discussed. Specific bottlenecks for the process are identified (e.g. information on time; communi-

cation capacities of so far especially excluded groups), solutions to work on these developed. Training programs to strengthen skills of stakeholders (e.g. analytical skills, communication skills) are initiated. Specific programs to include and empower poor people are developed; this should include the dissemination of information through channels accessible for the poor (e.g. radio in local languages), participatory poverty assessments, local consultation structures and others. Specific programs address the capacity needs of often underrepresented parts of the population (e.g. women).

*Create public space for debate.* The process is transparent from the very beginning. A communication strategy (two-way-communication!) is developed. Media get frequent information as well as specific support (e.g.: specific training workshops for journalists, facilitated by an independent institution). A specific website for the revision process is launched and includes all relevant documents and up-to-date information on how the process unfolds. In an ideal scenario, the website is jointly run by the governmental PRS unit and societal stakeholders (e.g. a leading CSO network). Public events are organized on a frequent basis not only at national, but also at regional levels (see the *Tanzanian Poverty Policy Week*).

# Stakeholder Participation in PRS Processes: Recommendations for Practitioners

*Birte Rodenberg*

## 1. Introduction

The objective of the following part of the project, supported by the German Institute for Development and Peace (INEF), is to identify crucial entry points that can contribute to an enhanced *politically* embedded institutionalization process of PRS participation, whereas it is not intended to replace the chapter on participation in the World Bank's (WB) Source Book (2002a), which still remains the most comprehensive collection of technical instruments on the issue.

Based on the project's background papers, the recommendations for practitioners are structured around the PRS policy cycle (see 2.1 to 2.3). Selected cross-cutting issues are to be discussed in 2.4. Being advisory rather than prescriptive, the major parts of the recommendations address different actors simultaneously, whereas the sub-chapter 2.5 will give an overview of selected stakeholder specific recommendations.

Participatory PRS processes, aiming at full country ownership of their national poverty reduction policies, generally need country-led and tailor-made solutions to their problems. By definition and by its main principles, the PRS approach is not only a technical approach, but involves inherently political questions of participatory governance, of societal democratization and social changes and also of the implementation of human rights. Taking these

dimensions into consideration, fostering participation processes in PRSPs seem to be a rather historical challenge (see Booth 2005). Thus, besides technical and instrumental improvements a more politically and socially embedded procedure is needed.

National ownership and meaningful participation need to be strengthened in order to make poverty reduction sustainable. In turn, both are crucial elements underlying the enhancement of development effectiveness and (social) accountability (IMF/World Bank 2005; Malena et al. 2004), whereas good governance and empowerment, particularly of poor people, are critical factors to the PRS process, aiming at a participatory development. However, it becomes clear that already the prerequisites to the ambitious aims are quite complex and difficult to implement. Considering the wide range of existing governance and political structures in the PRS countries, there are no simple one-off leverages to recommend. Thus, in order to avoid "pitching for the ideal" and according to good practice experiences (see Entwistle et al. 2005), the following recommendations try to contribute to the "missing middle" of the process: the need to specify how well-intentioned policies will deliver promised outcomes and impacts by implementing social development tools.



## 2. Recommendations

Who are the stakeholders? Key stakeholder groups may vary by country and by PRS cycle stage, but should include the poor and the non-poor:

At the national level:

- I. Relevant government line ministries, departments and agencies,
- II. Members of parliaments (or legislative assembly), and
- III. NGOs and CSOs (both advocacy and service-oriented groups)
- IV. Private sector actors, and
- V. Donors/development partners.

At the local level:

- I. Local government and traditional authorities,
- II. Local NGOs and CBOs (both advocacy and service-oriented groups),
- III. CBOs and membership organizations representing PRS target populations (including women, youth).

Despite the intention to include a wide range of stakeholders in the participation process, the analyses have shown that important actors – particularly the poor and parliaments – remain excluded and cannot contribute to it as they potentially could. Thus, an open participatory planning and organizing process is important to include the poor and vulnerable groups.

A country-specific stakeholder analysis is important to a comprehensive, harmonized and clearly struc-

tured participatory PRS process in general and will be particularly helpful for later PRS cycle stages (see 2.2 and 2.3). It is a systematic methodology that uses qualitative data to determine the interests and influence of different groups in relation to a policy reform or/and poverty impact analysis (see World Bank 2003: 49). It can be structured as an overview, classifying the specific tasks and responsibilities to be assumed by each stakeholder group and should include a description of their roles and responsibilities, differentiating between four different features of participation:

- I. Gathering/providing information
- II. Controlling the process, contents and results of a monitoring activity
- III. Identifying shortcomings and reformulating policies, and
- IV. Implementing amendatory actions (Lucas et al. 2004: 17; Eberlei/Siebold 2006: 6f.).

Closely related to the stakeholder analysis is the issue of the stakeholders' representativeness or "legitimacy", which has been recognized in principle by all countries involved in the PRS process. Nevertheless, the question of the legitimacy of non-state actors often comes up in cases of conflicts between governments and non-state actors, or when the latter claim a right to participation concerning sensitive political issues. As has been emphasized widely in analyses on the institutionalized participation (Eberlei 2002; 2002a), more attention needs to be paid particularly to the criterion of the representativity of civil society actors. In order to en-

hance the processes' legitimacy through broad-based and inclusive participation and in order to avoid arbitrary invitation modes, criteria, such as rural/urban parity, gender parity, independency and inclusiveness should be considered by PRS planning and policy departments. But important factors that can raise their legitimacy and should also be considered, come from "within" CSOs:

I. Subject competence, gained through years of active development work (e.g. NGOs operating in socio-political fields and service-delivery, such as health and education);

II. Proof of a broad membership basis (e.g. churches);

III. Networking of civil society organizations (Eberlei/Siebold 2006: 7).

Having learned their lessons from the first PRS policy cycle, the Tanzanian government built on this framework and set up consultation guidelines for the second-round consultations, upfront to the revision process (Eberlei 2007 in this volume). Since this initiative can also serve as a guideline for other countries and for earlier stages of the process, it is reproduced again below.



**Box 1: A Good Practice Example from Tanzania – Consultation Guidelines**

The PRS review consultation will seek to employ some principles of a human rights approach to poverty reduction strategies. The PRS review consultation aims at institutionalising the participation process. The four standard principles namely rights, structures, legitimacy and capacity will be adhered to.

*Rights:* The current PRS review strives to ensure that the consultation process by all the stakeholders are characterised by freedom of opinion, information, media, association and campaigning. The stakeholders participate fully in the entire PRS cycle and the role of each stakeholder is clearly stipulated.

*Structures:* Leading stakeholders ensure views are collected from the grass root level to the national level. The Government will ensure openness prevails throughout the process in terms of information as regards to PRS cycle. The implementation of PRS will be decentralized and each individual stakeholder will have the role to contribute.

*Legitimacy:* Parliament will fully be involved in the PRS process and will have the role to approve the PRSP. The civil society organisations and other stakeholders have to organise and ensure that they are included in the process.

*Capacity:* The PRS review process will entail capacity building for stakeholders for them to effectively contribute in the PRS cycle.

Source: The United Republic of Tanzania 2004: 4f.



## 2.1 Implementation processes

### Box 2: Implementation – Governments' Engagement and Donors' Support (Overview)

#### Macro-economic policymaking

- Facilitating open multi-stakeholder fora for substantive dialogues on macroeconomic framework + policy options
- Supporting capacity building (advocacy + lobbying) for CSO

#### The budget cycle

- Disclosure of information to public + parliament
- Considering results of consultations and analysis

#### PSIA

- Continuing efforts for carrying out PSIAs in a transparent and participatory way.

The implementation process can be understood in two ways: on the one hand, it is the stage of the whole PRS process that is responsible for implementing the agreed investment strategy and policy reforms. On the other hand, it is the perpetuation of the PRS cycle itself, including monitoring and revision. The following part draws mainly on implementation as part of the whole PRS cycle. As has been pinpointed in the background papers (see Bliss 2006 and Führmann 2006), the degree to which civil society actors have been actively involved during the implementation phase varies significantly. Referring to 15 country studies, a sharp decrease in participation has been recognized after the formulation phase, because the implementation of the strategy was left almost exclusively to the government bodies – partly also due to civil society that kept at a distance.

Revisions of one very important element of the PRS-implementation have pointed out that the stakeholder participation is very

weak especially in economic planning and the macro-economic policymaking, where hardly any actors other than the IFIs and selected governmental representatives are involved. But participation of non-economic governmental and civil society actors is weak not only due to a lack of political will by governments. Rather, it is limited due to the nature of sophisticated macroeconomic analyses that are highly technical. However, well-documented good-practice experiences on a district and national level (see World Bank 2002a: 259 ff and for the Tanzanian Gender Budget Initiative see Rusimbi 2003), have shown that the PRS process can also open up new opportunities for wider and – to a certain extent also – meaningful participation in macroeconomic policy making. But these chances might remain limited only to certain stakeholder groups, belonging to the country's educational elite. Their main entry points referred to here, which can be distilled from the background studies, are budget expenditure reviews and poverty impact analysis

(PSIA). Generally spoken, participation in the macro-economic policy-making can be enhanced through some general principles adhered to in the PRS process:

- I. Offering an open, substantive dialogue in a multi-stakeholder forum, where donors, governmental representatives, parliamentarians and non-governmental stakeholders can discuss the macro-economic policy of a country's PRSP, and where alternative paths to the IFIs' targets on monetary and fiscal policies might also be developed. A more established and permanent working form could be its institutionalization as a consultative working group at the national level (Trócaire 2004: 7).
  - II. Building capacity of non-economists (also among governmental actors) to develop their understanding of the basics of macroeconomic policymaking procedures, tools and concepts and to train their – advocacy - skills appropriate to their demands (e.g. CSO representatives who want to debate tax policy in principle). On a meso or local level, economic literacy courses should be offered and intensified to broaden the basic understanding of economic issues.
  - III. Offering sufficient time during the implementation stage to adapt the time frame at least to basic capacity building and consultancy requirements of the involved stakeholders.
- An effective and transparent budget planning and budget expenditure management (PEM) needs enhanced civil society initiatives. Communal or national budget formulation and expenditure tracking can be fostered by
- I. A systematic dissemination of information to the public and parliament in an accessible and timely manner. Economic literacy on the micro level and capacity training in budget analysis on a higher level, planning and monitoring should be supported by donors and governments.
  - II. Considering the results of consultations of public and stakeholders on budget analysis and priorities, including gender budget analysis and monitoring reports of NGOs (the latter should be attached to governmental notes and reports) as well as supporting parliamentary budget monitoring procedures.
  - III. A better inclusion of independent national policy research institutes to monitor national budget expenditures and linking up with civil society think tanks: even if advocacy groups and parliamentarians or other stakeholders have been built up macroeconomic capacities, they may not be able to do economic analyses. In order to enhance the credibility of civil society representatives economic research institutes (think tanks) can play a critical role by providing the necessary expertise in the critical assessment of policies (see Box 3).




**Box 3: Good practice in Kenya – Linking up Research and Advocacy**

A successful example is the co-operation between the African women's network FEMNET and the economic research institute KIPPRA in Nairobi. FEMNET asked two economic researchers of KIPPRA to analyse the macroeconomic framework of the Kenyan PRSP from a gender perspective and used these findings to promote a public dialogue on gender and macroeconomics to create awareness on the need to mainstream equality in the PRS process.

Source: Wandia 2003 and DAC Network on Gender Equality 2004.

Sector policy reforms: As has been pointed out in the background analysis to this project, the link between policy reforms (either sectoral or administrative) and the PRS process in general and participation in particular is very weak (Führmann 2006). However, very few positive examples of participation of civil society and intra-governmental participation in sectoral reforms can be ascertained, especially in the social sector (see Box 4 below). In order to link sectoral reforms more closely to the PRS process and to include sectoral ministries better, three aspects are important:

- I. Building capacity for governmental actors from parliament and sectoral ministries firstly, on macroeconomic policymaking (see above) to support their ability to intervene substantively in their particular areas of a PRS process; and secondly, to facilitate and conduct effective participatory re-

form processes as required in a PRSP.

- II. To improve the access to information and capacity building for non-governmental stakeholders, particularly NGO-representatives, firstly, to understand complex policy processes and the planned reforms, and secondly, to be capable of developing feasible alternatives.
- III. Identify more effective entry points for NGOs and their specific capacities, e.g. in social service delivery. In Ethiopia, for example, NGOs play a key role implementing the national health strategy, but they have limited participation in health policy formulation and national program evaluations. Recently indicated positive trends towards improvement should be followed on in the PRS monitoring process (Führmann 2006: 23).

**Box 4: Intra- and Non-governmental Participation in Sectoral Reforms**

*Participation of sector ministries in Senegal:* For the purpose of implementing the PRS, the objectives and policies have been turned into Sector Operation Programs, which are the principal tools for the implementation of the PRS. These documents incorporate the objectives and lines of action in the matrix of measures for activities and projects, together with budgets and timetables. The elaboration and execution of sector action strategies lie mainly with the sector ministries and partly with regional governments. Twenty-four ministries in charge of the sectors are directly or indirectly involved in PRS implementation.

Source: Führmann 2006: 18f.

(to be continued)

(continued)



*Participation of non-state actors in the education sector:* In several instances the education component of the PRS has been significantly determined by the National Education Strategy (e.g. Cambodia, Nicaragua, Tanzania) prepared on the basis of a sector diagnosis, more often than not with the participation of donor representatives. Other stakeholders – the CSOs, representatives of education NGOs, and more generally the education stakeholders (teacher unions, academics, associations of teachers and students) – did affect, albeit to a lesser extent, the formulation of the education component of the PRS by contributing national, regional and thematic consultations. This is the case, for example, in Nicaragua, where teachers, parents and students have been involved; in Albania, where half of the members of the education sector working group were teachers, professors and education NGOs. Examples illustrate the contribution of the education stakeholders in the formulation of the PRSP: In Honduras, consultations have led to the compilation of a list of priorities, and in Vietnam, free access to primary education for the poor has been put on the agenda (Chaillods/Hallak 2004: 42f.).

- Poverty Social Impact Analyses (PSIA): As a key instrument for assessing negative and distributional impacts on the poorest, which may arise particularly within the macroeconomic PRS framework, PSIA has received a lot of attention recently (see the World Bank's User Guide on PSIA 2003 and for critical reflections: McDonald 2006). It can play a central role in the macroeconomic policy process, provided that it is embedded into a transparent process:
- I. Ex-ante: How are the topics for the World Bank's PSIAs chosen and by whom?
  - II. Ex-post: Are the results understandable and have summaries been disseminated in the stakeholder community? Have they been discussed openly with regard to the most important poverty-related board papers and PRS drafts? Have summaries of stakeholders' positions been attached (Trócaire 2004: 7 and McDonald 2006)?
  - III. With special regard to the integral part of social analysis within the PSIA approach, and emphasizing the need to bring in the views of the poor while carefully dealing with the inevitable conflicts between different interest groups in a transparent policy dialogue, valuable advice has been provided by GTZ/DFID (2006; see Box 5) for organizing community-based meetings that encourage further participation and manage conflicts on the local level. For further examples, practitioners should refer to a report on a local government taxation reform and a PSIA process, carried out in 2005 in Tanzania which reflects the challenging multi-stakeholder dialogue on different understandings and perceptions about the objectives and means of fiscal decentralization policy in Tanzanian districts (World Bank 2006).



**Box 5: Fostering multi-stakeholder dialogues on a micro level and opening space for the poor**

How to organize and manage meetings for participatory social impact assessments (PSIA):

- *Preplanning*: careful consideration of venue and distances, timing, organization and selection of participants, so as not to discourage particularly vulnerable groups from coming (assistance with transport, provision of food).
- *Composition of the meeting*: need for separate consultations for women and men and representatives from different clans/castes/classes? Otherwise: How to make use of the opportunity for bringing together these socially/culturally different groups in a neutral environment?
- *Size and composition of groups*, clarifying their positions: Homogenous or mixed?
- *Capacities of meeting facilitators*: Local language skills, mediating conflicts, etc. Also: The need to manage various levels of participation, encourage quieter participants.
- *Opening space* for follow-up meetings, and disseminating information in further political stages.

Source: Peter Poulsen, in: GTZ/DFID 2006: 9f.

## 2.2 Monitoring Processes

**Box 6: Overview: Monitoring: key area – not only for “watchdogs”**

Strengthening parliament and the legal basis

Supporting an independent “monitoring watch”

- Distributing shadow reports written by CS umbrella groups

Featuring the political nature of technical instruments

- Indicators on sensitive political issues + societal change
- Strengthening accountability through public presentation of Annual Progress Reports
- Policy research/ analyses: Be aware of policy evaporation

Emphasizing the enormous potential of a politically driven learning process inherent to the PRS principles, one main conceptual weakness of the PRS monitoring and evaluation phase has been pinpointed by recent analyses: The concentration on technical aspects and instruments, while the

wide-ranging political implications of participatory monitoring have been neglected (Eberlei/Siebold, 2006: 5; Trócaire 2004: 3). Moreover, capacity constraints have been identified again as being one of the greatest impediments to meaningful participatory monitoring (Eberlei/Siebold, 2006: 22).

Since numerous methods, techniques and tools for participatory poverty monitoring have been developed by donor agencies and independent experts from the PRS countries, the following recommendations focus primarily on entry points for channeling a better feedback of monitoring findings into the national policy dialogue (The World Bank's User Guide on PSIA 2003: 47ff provides an excellent overview over economic and social tools for poverty and social impact analysis).

Ideally, a participatory monitoring system will be developed on a legal basis and permits all relevant governmental and non-state actors to join in the monitoring process. The often quoted Bolivian law on social mechanisms that improved the legal framework for monitoring activities of non-governmental stakeholders beyond constitutionally guaranteed principles and enhanced competencies primarily at community level is a good example for steps taken by governments towards the institutionalization of participation (see Komives/Aguilar 2005: 12 and Eberlei/Siebold 2006: 18).

In turn, a legal framework does not necessarily mean that parliament will also be brought into the process as an active PRS stakeholder, although this should be intended. A comparative study on country ownership processes in various PRS countries has shown that the role and the impact of national institutions remained limited in Bolivia, since neither a parliamentary committee had been established to monitor the Bolivian PRSP nor was the PRSP submitted to Congress for approval or discussion (Entwistle et al. 2005, Vol. I: 33).

However, the instrument of the "LEADS assessments", developed by

the WB's Operations Policy and Country Services, leading to sophisticated assessment of the direction in which each country is moving, shall be recommended here as a useful monitoring instrument for complex policy reform processes:

The LEADS assessment (ibid: 33ff):

- L Little or no action: Due to a wide variety of circumstances, including political developments, capacity limitations, unforeseen events, action has remained at a virtual standstill.
- E Elements exist/being considered: There is some basis for making progress, either through what already exists, or definite plans.
- A Action being taken: Progress is being made, although not yet enough, and the basis exists for even more substantive progress.
- D Largely developed: Significant action taken already, although some further action is needed.
- S Substantially in place: The activity is virtually accomplished.

A legal framework for the monitoring procedure can also strengthen a broad public debate. A "negotiation table" that brings together governmental and non-state actors and gives room to develop new multiple stakeholder frameworks for a harmonized coordination of the country's implementation and monitoring, has been implemented in Armenia and seems to be a promising mechanism (Azizyan/Mallmann 2005; Eberlei/Siebold, 2006: 13).





Meaningful participation can be enhanced by an independent monitoring structure (a “monitoring watch”) by civil society and non-state actors, allowing critical analysis of data and processes (see below PSIA and APR). Shadow reports by national and international NGOs, transmitting also non-conforming points of view on government-led and donor-led activities can strengthen substantive political dialogues.

In order to shape participatory monitoring procedures in a more strategically way, the political character of technical instruments should be given greater emphasis:

Indicators should be specified in terms of input, output, outcome and impact and need to be formulated precisely in a SMART way (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). Another concern that should be addressed more effectively in future is the “translation” of socio-political aspects of poverty reduction processes into SMART indicators.

Good governance and anti-corruption aspects as well as empowerment and human rights-related issues need to be operationalized, despite the fact that complex and iterative societal changes cannot always be measured in a standardized manner.

Therefore, the ongoing debate should be broadened as a prerequisite to institutionalize monitoring processes of socio-political reforms. The link between the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and national PRSPs should also be seen in this context and related to debates concerning appropriated indicators (Eberlei/Siebold, 2006: 9; see Table 1 on empowerment indicators in MDGs). Present efforts made by the World Bank to develop key indicators on overall principles of aid and donor harmonization strategies (as laid down in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005), are promising steps towards comprehensive monitoring approaches.

**Table 1: Seven strategic priorities and indicators for action on Millennium Development Goal 3**

Strategic priority	Empowerment indicators for progress report
1. Strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls while meeting commitments to universal primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ratio of female to male gross enrollment rates in primary, secondary, and tertiary education</li> <li>• The ratio of female to male completion rates in primary, secondary, and tertiary education</li> </ul>
2. Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of contraceptive demand satisfied</li> <li>• Adolescent fertility rate</li> </ul>
3. Invest in infrastructure to reduce women’s and girls’ time burdens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hours per day (or year) women and men spend fetching water and collecting fuel</li> </ul>
4. Guarantee women’s and girls’ property and inheritance rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land ownership by male, female, or jointly held</li> <li>• Housing title, disaggregated by male, female, or jointly held</li> </ul>

*(to be continued)*



<i>(continued)</i>	
5. Eliminate gender inequality in employment by decreasing women's reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender gaps in earnings in wage and self-employment</li> <li>• Share of women in employment, both wage and self-employment, by type</li> </ul>
6. Increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local government bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of seats held by women in national parliament</li> <li>• Percentage of seats held by women in local government bodies</li> </ul>
7. Combat violence against women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevalence of domestic violence</li> </ul>

Source: Recommended by the UN Task Force on Education and Gender Equality 2005: 18 ff

The need for localized goals, targets and indicators that also reflect socio-political aspects has been discussed in depth within the gender community, with regard to the particularly problematical missing dimension of women's human rights in the MDGs. From a feminist point of view, gender experts have pointed out that the notion of women's empowerment in the MDGs is reductionist. Furthermore, the conflation of gender issues and poverty reduction ignores power imbalances and structural issues, such as violence and reproductive rights – a frequent criticism in PRSPs, too (see Rodenberg 2004a, Whitehead 2003). Reflecting these missing links, the UN Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (2005) has developed strategic priorities and coherent social indicators for action on MDG3 (“Promote

gender equality and empower women”), which provide comprehensive and politically sensitive tools for measuring women's participation (and to a certain extent rights) in political and socio-economic domains.

The Annual Progress Report (APR) is another important instrument that needs to be given more attention. It is meant to serve political monitoring purposes, namely as accountable reporting on governmental activities on poverty reduction. Nevertheless, the vast majority of countries do not make use of the APR in the enabling sense of a learning instrument. Instead of perceiving the APR as “another onerous donor requirement” (Trócaire 2004: 3), it should be used to share the efforts in compiling and analyzing data with civil society actors and parliament.



**Box 8: Recommendation: The Annual Progress Report (APR) as a Learning Instrument**

- Initiating an open-minded, public debate on the effectiveness of national poverty reduction measures by an early presentation of the APR to the general public.
- Using different forms of communication and media channels.
- Disseminating civil society monitoring reports ('shadow reports') on the same subject as an annex to the Joint Staff Assessments of the APRs to foster the debate on policy options.

Policy research and negotiation processes should be transparent and open to all stakeholder groups from the initial cycle stage. Poverty and social analysis and impact assessments should be designed and carried out in a participatory way. Special attention should be given to the evaluation of data and its incorporation into the strategy. All instrumental elements, which are part of the analytical and decision-making processes (PPA results, PSIA with concept notes and ToRs; presentation, draft reports etc.) should be circulated early and widely. Diverging positions and alternative views (shadow reports, gender analysis, differing statements by line ministries etc.) should be included in the annex to the respective document. In order to a) ensure up-scaling of gathered data and to facilitate monitoring of PRS impacts in future, and b) to avoid loss of data in conceptual frameworks and strategies (policy evaporation), particularly PPAs should not be seen as a one-off event but be institutionalized as an integral part of the monitoring process in all countries, preparing a second-generation PRSP (Trócaire 2004: 6). Appointing representatives, who would be responsible for mediating and negotiating the policy research findings throughout all PRS policy stages can support these efforts.

### 2.3 Revision Processes

Out of 48 countries that have completed the PRS cycle, only a few countries have finalized their PRS review processes so far. Based on that early experience and by drawing mainly on good practices in Uganda and Tanzania, the following recommendations can be distilled (cf. Eberlei 2007):

- I. Strengthening CSO ownership: funds offered by the government can be used for parallel consultative processes of CSOs in order to revise and evaluate former PRS results, and also to prepare and prioritize future policy agendas.
- II. Open and broad-based invitation modes: support to non-governmental "lead stakeholders" in organizing independent and decentralized consultative fora for broad and transparent opinion-forming processes.
- III. Multiple-method approach to information dissemination: The use of a wide variety of communication instruments (newspapers, flyers with simple questionnaires, (local) radio, TV, art and drama, etc.) helps to create public awareness. Internet posting is not sufficient. Further-

- more, translations into the main local and also plain languages are recommended.
- IV. Self-monitoring as a learning process: Upfront analysis of missing links and shortcomings in former process cycles and their open discussion helps to avoid repeating mistakes (i.e. the insufficient inclusion of gender issues) or at least helps to identify weaknesses (i.e. lack of priorities).
  - V. Reducing time pressure: a broad-based participatory revision process needs realistic time planning, resulting in an ample timeframe. The beginning of the revision process should be announced before it starts.
- I. Developing a legal framework for the review process and employing a rights-based approach (see also box 1 on the Tanzanian Consultation Guidelines)
  - II. Strengthening the legitimacy of the review process by involving parliaments, supporting civil society networks and systematically involving the voices of the poor.
  - III. Building capacity of all stakeholders by making specific efforts to strengthen and to fund independent, non-governmental, gender and community-based organizations and
  - IV. Establishing permanent dialogue fora and mechanisms for an ongoing substantive poverty analysis and joint policy agenda setting.

The successful *institutionalization of participation* in the revision processes of Tanzania and Uganda has been pushed forward by

**Box 9: Revision Processes step-by-step – A short guide to good practices**

- (i) Review experience with the participatory process during formulation, implementation and monitoring of the first PRS, and based on this
- (ii) Enter into an explicit, multi-stakeholder process of defining "terms of engagement" for the revision process/second cycle PRSP, including identifying the structures, rights, legitimacy and capacity needs of actors involved;
- (iii) Joint and public analysis of implementation experience and results, changes in the overall development context of the country that would require re-prioritization;
- (iv) In view of the implementation experience, include the voices and preferences of the various societal groups, including poor women and men and their representatives, into re-prioritization of the new strategy;
- (v) Include a plan for placing future implementation and monitoring on a more participatory basis and more fully involving the multitude of stakeholders.

(compiled by R. Forster/World Bank; April 2006; personal communication)





## 2.4 Cross-cutting issues: Empowerment and Inclusion

### Box 10: Time, Space, Voice and Choice – Requirements for meaningful participation and empowerment of the poor

- Adjusting the time-frame, reducing time pressure
- Providing public spaces for substantive policy dialogues on national agenda setting
- Guaranteeing the right to information (top-down)
- Including strategic interests of the poor (bottom-up)
- Overcoming capacity constraints of all stakeholders and supporting up-scaling of policy capacities of disempowered

Despite all good intentions and the conceptual and practical progress made during the past six years of PRS implementation, some crucial challenges remain important throughout all policy cycles. In broad terms, these unresolved problems are mutually intertwined with the development agenda and the core PRS principles, namely aiming at a comprehensive participatory poverty reduction approach and referring to a framework: increased development and aid effectiveness, donor alignment, fostering country ownership and (social) accountability (see Malena/Forster/Singh 2004).

However, there are important cross-cutting issues underlying the crucial framework-related constraints and bottlenecks that need to be paid more attention to: With regard to the background papers, particularly the poor and vulnerable sub-groups (women, rural and suburban population, marginalized youth groups, the elderly and the physically disabled) have remained marginalized in most process stages. Thus, the cross-cutting issues empowerment and inclusion of the poor with a gender perspective will be tackled here.

Empowerment can be understood as a process of gaining control

over the self as well as over the resources which determine power; it is – as the African sociologist Sarah Longwe (1991) has put it – a strategy of collective action by the disempowered people. However, to include them better especially in diagnostics phases, the agenda setting (prioritization) and monitoring mechanisms, an enabling environment and support by donors, governments and CSO representatives is needed. Thus, important steps towards their inclusion in order to overcome their state of powerlessness could be the following:

International donors and governments could give support to empowerment processes by

- I. Offering additional financial means. Donors should be ready to finance e.g. local consultations in PRS review processes (see the positive example of Tanzania) or impact monitoring exercises including the poor (like UPPAP in Uganda, see Eberlei/Siebold, 2006 and Eberlei 2007).
- II. Making stronger references to empowerment issues in the Joint Staff Advisory Notes on PRS, since none of the JSAs published in 2005 includes a

single remark on empowerment issues.

- III. Making sure that participatory processes are inclusive, representative and decentralized, that is, stakeholder analyses should reflect the level of participation of “the poor”: How many are represented? By whom? Rural and/or urban poor? Are the interests of vulnerable sub-groups like the physically disabled, the elderly, marginalized youth, widows, HIV-Aids orphans and (street-) children represented? Are women represented equally in all groups?
- IV. Adjusting the time frame and reducing time pressure.
- V. Offering space for the consideration of diverse interests, needs and instruments (see Box 5). Attention should be paid to predictable problems and conflicts. Handing over guidance (partly or entirely) of the process to facilitators or mediators – also PRS-neutral, but public person of the country – can help to find constructive, pro-poor-oriented solutions.
- VI. Institutionalizing the right to information and articulation: The planning and implementation

process as well as the dissemination of the corresponding results should be presented in a way that everybody can understand. Process- and research-related documents should be written in the national and the main local language(s) or be translated. A wide range of different forms and methods of communication, such as radio phone-ins, simple questionnaires, art and drama, public meetings, group discussions, etc. should be considered so as to inform and enable disadvantaged stakeholders.

Non-state stakeholders, especially umbrella NGOs can give support by

- I. Ensuring flow of and access to information by informing systematically about ongoing political processes (top-down feedback).
- II. Feeding back bottom-up transfer of local consultation results by considering and supporting CBOs (see Box 11) and
- III. Assisting in the development of country-specific empowerment indicators on poverty reduction, intermediating the interests of the poor.





**Box 11: Strengthening bottom-up alliances by grassroots networking**

There are not many intermediating NGOs like the international networks GROOTS. It sees its role as working exclusively with extremely poor segments of the population, who generally only benefit from short-term charity measures. GROOTS, however, is seeking to strengthen their empowerment process by supporting political literacy and civic education. In connection with the Kenyan PRSP, the national platform of the organization was involved in poverty analyses and consultations at the district level and, together with their target groups in the poor districts of Nairobi, they fought for discussion of a grassroots agenda in the municipal council.

Source: Rodenberg 2004a: 48f.

Efforts are needed to overcome capacity constraints of all stakeholders at different intervention levels:

- I. Macro level: As with the PRS processes in general and macro-economic policy-making or budget expenditure tracking in particular, the multiple efforts by donors to inform, to train, to enable and to empower the different stakeholders need to be a) intensified and b) harmonized, if meaningful contributions are wanted. At the macro level, further efforts are required to fill the “knowledge gap” between IFIs, bilateral donors and governments on the one hand and CSOs (NGOs) on the other.
- II. Meso level: The role and capability of networks in assessing the needs of their member organizations and in mobilizing support for training could be better supported by donors in terms of financial, logistic and political aspects. Empowerment indicators should be derived mainly from stakeholders working in an intermediating domain that legitimizes them to bring in the voices of the poor.
- III. Micro level: Practical monitoring and evaluation tools (e.g. Citizen Report and Community Score Card) that include and enable the poor have proved to have essential capacity building impacts. Again, particularly PPAs and – if introduced transparently from the beginning of the process – also PSIAAs can contribute to stakeholders’ capacity building as important entry points of these participatory diagnostics and monitoring techniques.



**Box 12: Representing the interests of the poor. Good practices from districts in Kenya**

The Full PRSP was prepared between November 2000 and May 2001, and was embedded in a markedly broad participation process. Consultations were carried out in Kenya's 70 districts, in some cases right down to the village level. Following the example of the surveys carried out by the World Bank (Narayan 1999), information was gathered and systematized in a participatory process, serving as an example of the needs of those concerned. The actual consultation process, which was largely managed by NGOs and international development organizations, involved three to five workshops in the districts, each lasting one or more days and attended by some 150 to 200 people. The results were presented at District or Constituency Reporting Workshops and processed for the comprehensive district PRSP report. More than 60,000 people were involved in the overall process. Great importance was attached to gender parity and to adequate participation of young people. The results of the district reports were also passed on to the sectoral and thematic PRSP working groups at the national level. Representatives of civil society participated in the preparation of the draft Full PRSP by the PRSP Secretariat in the spring of 2001, and were involved in discussions at public fora before it was submitted to the directorates of the IMF and the World Bank. One visible effect of this comprehensive participation process was seen in a shift of the priorities for poverty reduction. When these priority areas were brought together from a) the sectoral working groups, b) the thematic working groups, and c) the participatory poverty analyses in the districts, the result was a ranking in favour of agriculture and rural development, human (resource) development, and infrastructure. The fields public safety, law and order, and information technology, on the other hand, were placed at the end of the list of priorities for poverty reduction. These latter focal points were, however, the ones favoured by the government.

Source: Rodenberg 2004a: 50ff

Gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment: Criticism from a gender perspective, as voiced by national and international NGOs and gender advocates, has addressed structural shortcomings in the outcome documents (an overall concept of women as a vulnerable group; fragmented gender analysis, but no transsectoral, long-term strategies that would aim at reducing gender-specific social inequality and altering gender relations; gender-blind macro-economic framework etc.; see World Bank 2001 and 2002b; Whitehead 2003; Rodenberg 2004a: 36ff). As an inherent part of a predominant con-

ceptual misunderstanding of the gender approach, they have also called into question the participation procedure adopted during the elaboration process. It did not generally provide sufficient opportunities for women and women's organizations to contribute substantially to the process. Their criticism of the framework conditions – namely the continued use of a Women-in-Development approach that delegates gender concerns to women – is directed especially to the failure to institutionalize the gender approach in the PRS process (see Rodenberg 2004). Thus, the “engen-



dering” of an institutionalized participation in PRS process needs:

- I. A substantive policy dialogue on the gender issue, including donors, governmental and non-governmental actors that, firstly, links gender issues and the core principles of gender mainstreaming to the four parameters of institutionalized participation (rights, legitimacy, structures, capacity). Secondly, the national gender machinery should be linked up with “gender-neutral” (financial, economical, sectoral) state institutions in order to support their political will. Nevertheless, this might be hampered by limited capacities of both, in bringing in a gender perspective to other than the social service sectors. If the gender mainstreaming approach is to progress beyond occasional good practices, more financial and human resources will be needed. Tailor-made gender training for governmental stakeholders from line ministries and parliaments (as carried-out by GTZ for the Ethiopian Parliament; see Eberlei/Henn 2003) can raise gender awareness, upgrade poverty-related gender know-how, and in that respect also foster country ownership.
- II. A broad, inclusive and parity societal participation at all levels: Since there is evidence that a critical mass of at least 30% women in democratic decision-making institutions is necessary to influence policy in a gender-sensitive way, efforts to better include parliaments in the PRS process should also help to increase women’s share in parliamentary seats. More efforts to include the poor via CBOs should take into account the fact that women perform a large proportion of voluntary community work and, more than men, are involved in self-help and informal grassroots NGOs.
- III. An up-scaling of mainstreaming efforts: The issues of social inequality shaped by gender disparities and the meaningful participation of gender representatives need to be firmly embedded at a higher level of political dialogue and decision-making. Gender analysis of poverty dimensions and the impacts of poverty reduction strategies need to be mainstreamed and supplemented by additional analyses. Anchoring a gender perspective in the macro-economic framework is pivotal to the PRS framework’s enhanced harmonization with socio-economic poverty reduction measures. Thus, gender budget initiatives – actively lobbying and monitoring the national budgets from a critical gender perspective – are very effective political fora (i.e. Tanzania). South-south exchanges – as established by gender networks in southern Africa – should therefore be supported by bi- and multilateral donors. However, the opening-up of macro-economic policymaking in general and the disclosure of documents on the macro-economic framework as well as PRS processes better linked to budget cycles and PERs are preconditions for a meaningful participation of women’s organizations and gender experts on an upper level of decision-making processes in the PRS.

**Table 2: Actor-specific recommendations: An Overview**

<i>Donors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging in substantive, country-led policy dialogues; moving out of the capitals in order to support dialogues with stakeholders in rural areas</li> <li>• Intensifying support and finance on efforts for institutionalization, empowerment of the poor and capacity and network building of CSOs</li> <li>• Supporting actively the different control functions of parliaments by enquiring how parliaments were involved in the PRS-approval and reporting on this in the JSA</li> </ul>
<i>Governments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving high priority to the institutionalization of stakeholder participation in PRS processes by</li> <li>• Strengthening a rights-based and legal basis for involving other actors, e. g. parliaments</li> <li>• Strengthening transparency and accountability through improved information systems in the context of PRS monitoring</li> <li>• Increasing/initiating intra-governmental coordination in policy reforms</li> </ul>
<i>Parliaments</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seizing opportunities for policy capacity building, improving their functional capacities of legislation, budgetary power and other control functions</li> <li>• Seeking entry points for meddling in (budgetary control)</li> <li>• Strengthening interactions with other actors: creating public forums /hearings for citizens and parliamentarians to meet</li> </ul>
<i>CSOs/CBOs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensifying networking and peer learning processes</li> <li>• Building/strengthening alliances (vertical: north-south/horizontal: south-south)</li> <li>• Stronger alliances with members of parliament and link-ups with representatives of legislature committees in a transparent manner</li> <li>• Involving the poor and transmitting their interests to the macro-level (scaling-up)</li> </ul>

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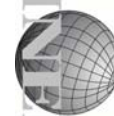
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## Abbreviations

ALAT	The Association of Local Authorities of Tanzania
APR	Annual Progress Review
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CBO	Community Based Organization
CG	Consultative Group
CIDSE	Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFID	Department for International Development
EURODAD	European Network on Debt and Development
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communication Network
GAPVOD	Ghana Private Voluntary Organizations in Development
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country
IDA	International Development Association
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (Sussex)
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFI	International Finance Institution
IIED	International Institute of Environment and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEF	Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden (Institute for Development and Peace)
INGO	International NGO
JSA	Joint Staff Assessment
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis





MDG	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NPF	NGOs Policy Forum (Tanzania)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OED	Operations Evaluation Department (World Bank)
PAF	Poverty Action Fund
PAP	Participation Action Plan
P&CE Group	Participation and Civic Engagement Group (of the World Bank)
PEM	Public Expenditure Management
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan (Uganda)
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PPA	Participatory Poverty Analysis/Assessment
PRGF	Poverty Reduction Growth Facility
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSC	Poverty Reduction Strategy Credit
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSIA	Poverty and Social Impact Assessment
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound
TANGO	Tanzania Association of NGOs
TGNP	Tanzania Gender Network Programme
UDN	Uganda Debt Network
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project/Process
VENRO	Verband Entwicklungspolitik deutscher Nichtregierungsorganisationen (Association of German Development NGOs)
WB	The World Bank

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