

Introduction

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Poverty and poverty reduction have become major themes in development discourse. *Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS)* are, at the beginning of the 21st century, the preferred instrument to combat poverty. The contributions in this volume deal with the political dimensions of implementing such a strategy in Zambia. Their overall concern is to establish whether the new approach of poverty reduction strategies can succeed where previous strategies have failed, i.e. to improve the plight of the impoverished majority of the population.

In order to do justice to the complexity of the development process the volume adopts a three-pronged approach to the analysis. The politics of poverty reduction in Zambia is dealt with by analysing the three groups or clusters of actors - the government, the donors and civil society - involved in the process. Case studies from the grassroots look at the impact of the PRS process in various relevant issue areas and in different parts of Zambia. The broader context of poverty reduction strategies beyond Zambia is analysed in contributions which pursue a global and regional perspective.

1. Poverty and Poverty Reduction

In sub-Saharan Africa 300 million people live in extreme poverty – almost half of the continent’s population. According to the World Bank definition living in *extreme poverty* is measured by a per capita income of less than one dollar per day. Those who have an income of less than two dollars per day are considered poor in a broader sense – this applies to the large majority of Africans.¹ Although often measured in income terms poverty is nowadays seen as a multidimensional phenomenon incorporating economic, social and political aspects of living. One decade after UNDP brought the *human development* concept into the debate in the early 1990s the international donor community published new *Guidelines on Poverty*

¹ See the annually published data in the World Bank’s *World Development Report*.

Reduction in which they proposed that an adequate concept of poverty should include all the most important areas in which people of either sex are deprived and perceived as incapacitated in different societies and local contexts (OECD/DAC 2001: 26). Building on the UNDP concept as well as on ideas propounded for example by Nobel prize winner Amartya Sen, this new international understanding of poverty includes economic, human, political, social-cultural, protective, gender and environmental dimensions. The Zambian Government shares this view and refers in its PRSP to the multidimensional concept, although – for statistical reasons – poverty figures continue to be compiled according to income indicators (GRZ 2002: 20-21).

Poverty trends worldwide show significant differences. Although some progress in social development can also be observed in Africa (for example, the child mortality rate decreased in almost all countries of the continent during the last decades), the overall poverty situation measured in terms of per capita income is deteriorating. Compared with significant positive developments in other parts of the world, such as Southeast Asia or China, sub-Saharan Africa has been losing ground since the early 1980s. Africa has the highest poverty level in income terms, the highest child mortality rates despite progress, the lowest life expectancy and the lowest ratios of human development.² However, while the overall poverty picture in sub-Saharan Africa is gloomy, notable differences between countries can be observed. Some countries, like Mozambique, Uganda and Tanzania, have been able to reduce poverty (measured in terms of income) while increasing poverty in other countries (like Cameroon, Kenya and Zimbabwe) has continued unabated during the past two decades.³

Unfortunately, Zambia belongs to the second group of countries with declining social indicators. Poverty levels increased throughout the 1990s (GRZ 2002: 22). With regard to the past five years there is an ongoing debate whether this trend has continued or has been

² See the annually published reports of UNICEF (*The State of the World's Children*) and UNDP (*Human Development Report*).

³ Compared on the basis of World Bank's *World Development Reports* 1993 and 2003.

stopped.⁴ In any case, the risk of living a life in poverty is not distributed equally within a country (for Zambia, see evidence in UNDP 2003). People living in rural areas, families with a large number of children, women and female-headed households, unemployed people and small-scale farmers are especially vulnerable population groups in Zambia (as in other African countries).

Since the beginning of the 21st century the worldwide fight against poverty has become a key global task. In the final declaration of the autumn 2000 UN Millennium Summit, which was supported by both industrialised and developing nations, the world community committed itself to halve the number of people living in absolute poverty by the year 2015.⁵ The Millennium Declaration was undoubtedly the climax of the international debate on the war against absolute poverty. This is a debate which, at least since the 1995 UN World Social Summit in Copenhagen, has attracted international attention and contributed to the introduction of national *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers* (PRSPs) as a new instrument to fight poverty. Since the turn of the century PRSPs have been adopted in almost 60 developing countries.

2. Poverty Reduction in Development Debates

The political and academic discourse about poverty reduction did not, however, begin at the turn of the century. The first development decade (the 1960s) demonstrated that economic growth per se was not a panacea to fight poverty ('growth without development'). Belief in the 'trickle-down effect', i.e. that massive capital transfers and investments would facilitate a process of catching-up development, was effectively demystified. An intense debate ensued to explore alternative ways of reducing poverty (Nuscheler 1982).

In the mainstream of development policy debate (especially in industrialised countries and international organisations) the concept

⁴ According to the Government's statistical office, there was a slight decline in absolute poverty levels between 1998 and 2002. This assessment is based on the most recent available figures compiled in a survey from 2002/03 (CSO 2004). The problem is that the Central Statistical Office used different methodologies for the 1998 and 2002/03 surveys, the comparability of the figures is therefore highly questionable.

⁵ Source: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.html

of *basic needs* came to the fore (see references in Menzel 1991: 218-222). The basic definition of this concept was provided by the International Labour Organisation (ILO 1976). The issue of how to fulfil these basic needs became yet another matter of intense debate. In this regard, the World Bank re-oriented its strategy by adopting an income-generating approach which was essentially aimed at developing measures to increase the productivity of the rural poor, to be coupled with supplementary investment in basic social services. Bilateral and other multilateral donors followed suit. Alternative proposals, such as redistribution policies advocated by ILO, were not considered.

Since the beginning of the 1980s this discussion was overshadowed by the developing countries' debt crisis. Industrialised nations (in which as a result of changes of government in the USA, the United Kingdom and Germany neo-liberal convictions had come to the fore) reacted to this crisis by demanding the liberalisation of markets and world market-oriented reforms under the stringent supervision of the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF). Introduction and implementation of *Structural Adjustment Programmes* (SAPs) dominated the development debate from the beginning of the 1980s until the late 1990s. Based on the expectation that developing countries would overcome their problems in a few years following the introduction of SAPs, the negative social consequences that accompanied SAPs were tolerated, at least in the beginning.

While a few "newly industrialising countries" did manage to cushion the most severe repercussions of structural adjustment, the policies introduced by the IMF and World Bank proved to be basically unsuccessful in the poorest countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, in economic as well as social terms. By the first half of the 1990s the realisation that the structural adjustment programmes implemented so far had largely failed gained ground (Siebold 1996). From the beginning of the 1980s to the mid-1990s economic development had become the hallmark of the development debate again (in the more or less explicitly expressed renewed hope of achieving trickle-down effects). However, the World Social Summit held in Copenhagen in 1995 saw the return of social development issues to the centre stage of development policy.

The World Social Summit sparked off a broad-based discussion about poverty reduction. Significantly, it was able to draw on the important preparatory work conducted by UNDP and UNICEF.

UNDP's *Human Development Report* had since the beginning of the 1990s given a new impetus to a poverty-oriented development debate, while UNICEF had been advocating "adjustment with a human face" (Cornia et al. 1987) since the end of the 1980s. Among other things the summit in Copenhagen expressed strong criticism of the IMF and World Bank's neo-liberal structural adjustment policies and their accompanying poverty-worsening consequences. Furthermore, the summit's call for a more concerted effort to combat absolute poverty prepared the ground for the current consensus between developing and developed nations to give the eradication of absolute poverty a high priority (Fues 2001). It is against this background that the *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)* with their core vision of halving the population living in absolute poverty by 2015 have now become a strong policy benchmark for both industrialised and developing nations. Five years after the adoption of the MDGs there is a lot of scepticism whether they can be reached at a global level. But there is hardly any doubt that they will not be reached in sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest region worldwide (cf. UN 2005), although almost all African countries have introduced the PRS approach and regard the PRS as the vehicle to achieve the MDGs. While critics argue that the PRS concept is not an adequate approach to fight poverty in Africa, supporters refer to the necessity of a long-term effort to eradicate poverty in Africa and see the PRS as being without an alternative.

3. The PRS Approach

The PRS approach was introduced in 1999 in the context of the G-7 countries' decision to enhance debt relief for the *Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)* and to link debt relief to poverty reduction strategies. For the long-term perspective, however, it is much more important that all new World Bank and IMF loans for the so-called IDA-only countries (about 70 poor countries) as well as commitments of bilateral development aid for these countries will essentially be made on the basis of a PRSP only. It is part of the concept that a PRSP should not be designed as a one-off exercise but will give rise to a continuous strategic discourse about the best ways to achieve poverty reduction. In terms of a classical policy cycle it is intended at regular intervals to go through the phases of analysis (of the poverty situation), strategy design (for poverty reduction), implementation,

monitoring, and evaluation. According to the World Bank the countries concerned should present a new PRSP every three years, and in between *reviews* will take place on an annual basis. Zambia is in the process of finalising this first cycle by the end of 2005 and of starting afresh with a new strategy based on its experiences so far. The new PRSP will be incorporated in the *National Development Plan* and will run for a period of five years.

One of the most innovative PRSP principles says: "*The country in the driver's seat!*" (an often quoted phrase used by former World Bank President Wolfensohn). In other words, development and structural adjustment strategies should in future no longer be worked out by the international financial institutions in Washington but by the recipient countries themselves. To do that is not only a matter for the governments of the recipients' countries. The PRSP is to be elaborated in a participatory process, in which *inter alia* political parties and parliaments, trade unions and business associations, churches, NGOs, cooperatives and community-based organisations are expected to be involved.

Six years after the PRS approach was introduced its balance sheet with regard to ownership and participation is mixed (Siebold 2005, see also Roberts in this volume). It is accepted by most observers that the PRS processes have strengthened national debates about poverty reduction. Prepared within the institutional framework provided by government and drafted under government authority, the strategies are nevertheless supported by the majority of political stakeholders. Compared with the former structural adjustment blueprints a stronger *country ownership* and an increase in societal *participation* has definitely been achieved. On the other hand, deficits and shortcomings of the PRS processes have also been identified. A major shortcoming, pinpointed in several contributions in this volume (*Elemu, Imboela, Matenga, Waldenhof*), is that the poor people themselves have rarely been involved in the PRS processes.

Mixed results are also identified in terms of strategy content. It seems to be self-explanatory that all strategy papers - under IMF pressure in this respect - contain the macro-economic concepts that were already in use during the structural adjustment phase. It is still not clear, on the other hand, how the *pro-poor growth* that is envisaged in almost all PRSPs can be achieved. Important and contested aspects of economic policy, such as the distribution of natural resources, notably land, are hardly discussed in any of the

strategies. However, additional resources freed by debt relief are often spent on extended social programmes. There can be no question that such programmes are desirable, but doubts have been raised whether they are sufficient to initiate a significant reduction in the poverty levels in Africa.

4. Poverty Reduction and Debt Relief – Zambia’s Endeavours

The HIPC Initiative represents the latest round of debt relief on which Zambia has pinned her hopes to free resources for development and poverty reduction. Prior to reaching the ‘HIPC completion point’ in April 2005, Zambia’s external debt was described as “high and unsustainable” (UNDP 2003:21). The country’s external debt was estimated at US\$7.1 billion as at December 2002 (GRZ 2003: 2). This translated into a per capita debt of over US\$700 as compared to a per capita income of US\$360, making Zambia one of the most highly indebted countries in the world (ibid).

Zambia reached the ‘HIPC decision point’ in December 2000 after fulfilling a number of benchmarks and triggers agreed upon under the SAP. Completion of the privatisation of the country’s major mining assets and the drawing up of an Interim-PRSP were key triggers that Zambia satisfied. The Government of Zambia also signed the *Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility* (PRGF) with the IMF and World Bank to replace the SAP. The PRGF established the parameters for measuring the country’s progress towards the ‘HIPC completion point’. This entailed satisfactory implementation of key policy reforms agreed at decision point, i.e. maintenance of macroeconomic stability, and adoption and implementation of the PRSP. Unfortunately, the PRGF went ‘off-track’ due to slippages in the implementation of some triggers and benchmarks. This put in jeopardy Zambia’s attainment of the debt relief completion point, which initially was envisaged to occur in December 2003. As a substitute for the PRGF Zambia was put on an IMF *Staff Monitored Programme* which was made subject to quarterly reviews. In June 2004 the country was deemed to have made sufficient progress to graduate from a Staff Monitored Programme to a full PRGF to run for three years up to 2007.

In April 2005, the Boards of the IMF and World Bank announced that Zambia had satisfied all the conditions for reaching the ‘HIPC

completion point'. This has important implications for Zambia's poverty reduction efforts. It has placed Zambia's creditors under obligation to give irrevocable debt relief. Since December 2000 when Zambia reached the HIPC Initiative decision point, the country began receiving some interim debt relief from some multilateral creditors such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank Group, the European Investment Bank and the IMF. For the period between 2001 and 2004, these savings were being factored in successive national budgets as part of the *Poverty Reduction Programmes* (PRPs). The modalities of delivery of irrevocable debt relief are envisaged to fall in place by the end of 2005. This is expected to involve debt relief of about US\$4 billion, leaving a balance of US\$3.1 billion.

With regard to the bilateral creditors under the Paris Club, all except one agreed to cancel 100 percent of Zambia's debt by the end of 2005. It is a condition agreed upon between Zambia and its cooperating partners that savings from debt relief be channeled into important poverty reduction programmes including infrastructure, health and education. From a global perspective, such investments are seen as contributing to (achieving MDGs).

A final important point related to Zambia's accession to the completion point under the HIPC Initiative is the G-8 proposal on further enhancing the cancellation of debts owed by the HIPC Initiative countries (announced in July 2005). This initiative has proposed to cancel 100 percent of all debts owed to the IMF, the World Bank and the African Development Bank by the 18 countries that had reached the HIPC Initiative completion point by May 2005. As a result of the strong backing which this debt initiative has received from the G-8 Ministers of Finance, both the IMF and World Bank Board of Governors endorsed the proposal in September 2005. It is expected that the African Development Bank will follow suit. If implemented, the Enhanced HIPC Initiative completion point and the G-8 Initiative would entail that Zambia's foreign debt would come down from US\$7.1 billion to less than US\$1 billion (Magande 2005: 4). The country's debt to GDP ratio would amount to less than 10 percent, while its debt service to export earnings ratio would reduce to less than 5 percent. This means that through the debt cancellations in 2005 Zambia will reach the status of 'debt sustainability' after almost 25 years of ongoing debt crisis.

The challenge for Zambia is whether the country can summon and maintain the necessary political will to sustain the goodwill of its cooperating partners to be able to reap the benefits of debt relief. Zambia's creditors are looking to improvements in the country's management of public resources. This is not purely a technical matter, but principally a political issue. It is in this regard that achieving the poverty reduction which debt relief is intended to serve is ultimately dependent on the nature of Zambia's political system.

5. Democratic Transition and Neopatrimonial Rule

The new initiative to promote development in African countries through the PRS approach is taking place against the background of long-standing failures, which, looking back to the 1980s and 1990s, have been characterised as a "permanent crisis" (van de Walle 2001). During this time processes of political change took place across the continent. Many one-party systems were, along different paths of transition, replaced by multi-party systems (Bratton/van de Walle 1997). At the beginning of the 1990s there were great hopes that autocratic rule, which characterised the post-colonial one-party systems whose statist development strategies had led to persistent socio-economic decline, would be a thing of the past and that democratic multi-party systems could open up the perspective of new development progress. Already in the mid-1990s, however, disenchantment set in again when it became apparent that the new regimes, which had now adopted development strategies of structural adjustment, showed marked similarities to the one-party systems of the past. This led to the introduction of concepts such as "blocked democracy" (Schubert/Tetzlaff 1998), "defective democracy" (Merkel et al. 2003) or "hybrid regimes" (Erdmann 2003) in order to refer to novel forms of political rule which retained autocratic features while embracing institutional change.

The process of political change raised new questions for the analysis of political systems in Africa which are relevant also for a study on the conditions for the successful implementation of poverty reduction strategies. It became apparent that there was not a clearly marked trajectory of transition from autocratic rule to democratic consolidation. The conclusion O'Donnell and Schmitter drew from their study of "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule" in Latin America

emphasising “the extraordinary uncertainty of the transition” (1986: 3) has been confirmed by experiences with transition in Africa.

Comparative research about transition in Africa has furthermore led to general statements which identify a common denominator for various specific characteristics of transitions. Bratton and van de Walle submitted the argument that the experiences with transition in Africa have been influenced by neopatrimonialism, which they define as “the incorporation of patrimonial logic into bureaucratic institutions” (1997: 62). Patrimonial logic, a concept developed by Max Weber in his studies on traditional societies, signifies the preeminence of individual authority based on personal power and prestige. *Neopatrimonialism*, however, is a modern phenomenon and refers to political systems “in which the customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with, and suffuse, rational-legal institutions” (ibid.). Systemic characteristics of neopatrimonial rule, which Bratton and van de Walle point out, are presidentialism, clientelism, and the use of public resources for the purposes of political legitimation (ibid.: 63-68). From their point of view, the process of transition is dominated by internal factors whose dynamics results from contradictions inherent to neopatrimonial rule. A case in point is the situation which arises if resources, which are required for the maintenance of the system, become rare, or if they are no longer available at all due to economic decline.

A different - though not completely unrelated - approach is proposed by Richard Joseph who attaches greater importance to external factors. According to his view, the original transitions in the 1990s were caused by the decline of socialism and the end of the East-West conflict. The further process of transition in Africa, characterised by the stagnation of democratisation and its reduction to a hollow shell, led Joseph to refer to African political regimes as “virtual democracies”. For him this African reality is determined by external requirements, in particular the need to maintain the flow of international aid (Joseph 1998). After the initial high expectations regarding democratic transition have disappeared, Joseph sees the core of political change in the maintenance of appearances (“presentability”) vis-à-vis the outside world. This assertion also needs to be considered in respect of the willingness of African nations to adopt a poverty reduction strategy.

The link of this approach to neopatrimonial rule is provided by the concept of rent-seeking, which in general terms is understood to refer

to the procurement of financial resources by the ruling elite of a state through extra-economic means. In accordance with Joseph's emphasis on external economic factors rents are usually sought outside the national economy. In development studies the concept was initially developed with regard to mineral-rich countries and the income they derive from the sale of their oil or diamond resources on the world market, but it has been expanded to include also the flow of international aid which has become increasingly important for the poorest developing countries (Boeckh/Pawelka 1997; Mkandawire 1995). The relevance of rent-seeking for neopatrimonial rule lies in the political interest of the ruling elite in a state to procure the resources it needs in order to maintain the system.

For the purposes of our study on the political dimensions of poverty reduction the focus on neopatrimonial rule proved to be of principal importance given our interest in the current conditions and future prospects for the implementation of measures to improve the livelihoods of poor people in Zambia. We do on the other hand share the view proposed by Erdmann and Engel (2002) that the concept of neopatrimonialism encompasses features such as patronage, clientelism, nepotism, corruption, ethnic politics and also rent-seeking, which are not infrequently used as separate terms to analyse the politics of post-colonial states. The varying significance of each of these features in specific places and at specific times then provides the analytical basis to distinguish between different forms of neopatrimonial rule.

In discussing the relationship between highly personalised patrimonial behaviour patterns of the ruling political elite and rational-legal administrative structures, the recent debate on neopatrimonialism in Africa has provided different answers to the question regarding the dynamics of development. In their frequently quoted study Chabal and Daloz (1999) speak of a permanent predominance of patrimonial behaviour patterns, compared to which changes in the transition process are only of secondary importance. Other writers refer to the systemic results of many transition processes in Africa as 'hybrid regimes'. Transition in Zambia has also been referred to as "the hybridisation of the Third Republic" (Erdmann/Simutanyi 2003). Erdmann (2003) defines the "neopatrimonial multi-party system" as a specific African form of a hybrid regime. He characterises this system as potentially sustainable, although it continues to be informed by inconsistencies inherent in

neopatrimonial rule. Therefore, the system remains susceptible to changes, which may lead towards consolidation but also backwards to increased repression and autocratic rule. Similarly, Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 61ff., 233ff.), whose approach we have adopted in our study, are aware of the inertia of neopatrimonialism, but conclude in their broad comparative study that a democratic transition in African nations can reach the phase of consolidation through political-institutional reforms and resultant impacts on political culture.

From the persistence of neopatrimonial rule in post-colonial development in Africa it follows that there is a high degree of systemic continuity which was able to outlast the transition from one-party to multi-party systems. This assertion is also very relevant for a strategy of poverty reduction, as van de Walle (2001) shows in his study of Africa's "permanent crisis". One of his important concerns is directed towards the interrelationship between democratisation processes and structural adjustment programmes and comes to the conclusion that we need to scale down expectations that clientelistic systems would be curbed by structural adjustment programmes (Schmidt 1995: 134-136). Van de Walle's explanation for this unexpected observation pinpoints internal factors, namely the persistence of neopatrimonial rule. His conclusion demonstrates how difficult it is to realise significant political change. We reiterate, however, that Bratton and van de Walle in their joint study mentioned above do also argue that the balance between patrimonial and rational-legal characteristics of a polity can shift in favour of the latter and that the political reforms of the 1990s were a step in this direction. Their analysis forcefully emphasises the position that "politics matters". What this means is that "(u)nless the economic reform is accompanied by political changes that increase the checks on executive abuses of influence" (van de Walle 2001: 286), it is highly probable that the current reforms manifested in the introduction of poverty reduction strategies will be usurped by neopatrimonial interests.

6. Good Governance and the Politics of the PRS process

Focusing on political dimensions of poverty reduction in the above sense entails identifying those actors who are involved in the overall process and assessing their respective contribution. In broad terms

three groups of actors, each of which is quite diverse in its composition, have to be taken into account: the state, international donors and civil society. The premises of the PRSP approach give these three groups of actors an initial role. The international donors by offering debt relief in exchange for PRSPs got the ball rolling. If the process is not donor-driven, it was to say the least initiated by the donors and they proposed some ground rules. One of these - national ownership - puts the countries in the driver's seat and this gives the government prime responsibility for embarking on poverty reduction measures. However, another ground rule - participation - demands that in doing so the state should incorporate society at large represented by civil society organisations. The dynamics of the interaction and relationships between these three groups of actors determine the process of poverty reduction. But the main beneficiary of their efforts, the poor, should not be ignored in this equation. For one, while all actors claim to serve the poor, none of them can be said to be their legitimate representatives *a priori*. More importantly, as the broad understanding of poverty and the poor adopted in this study stresses, listening to and respecting the voices of the poor, empowering them, is as crucial to poverty reduction as improving their material wellbeing.

A process involving diverse actors with the aim of devising norms and rules to deal with certain problems - in our case poverty - is what informs the governance discourse which has gained increasing prominence in development studies (Hyden et al. 2004). Expressed in a normative vein along rational-legal lines "good governance" becomes an antithesis to neopatrimonial rule, and we go along with Hyden et al. when they say, "there is a growing recognition that getting politics right is, if not a precondition, at least a requisite of development" (ibid.: 10). How the interaction between donors, the state and civil society plays out in specific cases can differ in terms of outcomes, but also in respect of perceptions of good governance.

In jointly conceived case studies of poverty reduction strategy processes in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia Gould/Ojanen (2003: 16-17) and Bwalya et al. (2004: 1) use what they call a "molecular model" of stakeholder interaction in which the more influential representatives of the donor community, the state and civil society form an inner triangle while other actors are grouped around them on the periphery. The triangle reflects a modification in the governance constellation from the structural adjustment phase when donors and

key players in national government (generally from the finance ministry) formed the key link to the current PRSP phase in which the focus on participation has led to civil society organisations being incorporated into the inner circle.

In their study on Tanzania Gould/Ojanen suggest that the new space opened for civil society actors was to a large degree occupied by international NGOs whose greater experience and professionalism gave them the edge over emerging local advocacy groups (2003: 25). With regard to Malawi and Zambia Bwalya et al. observe that newly formed civil society coalitions at national level have gained a higher profile in the PRSP process (2004: 27, see also Waldenhof in this volume). Both assert, however, that the main government actors - in close collaboration with the international donors - have retained a predominant role in the triangular relationship.

National ownership, called for under the HIPC initiative, can, as Bwalya et al. point out, be “a double-edged sword” (2004: 4). It may give the national government greater control over the poverty reduction process. On the other hand, although good governance is also called for, it might at the same time reinvigorate rent-seeking politics thereby consolidating established hybrid regimes. As Bwalya et al. argue: “While greater national ownership may challenge the power of external agents, it does not follow that it would also alter the domestic, neopatrimonial power relationships inherent in national institutions.” (ibid.: 5)

Kakande (2004) in her discussion of experiences in Uganda takes a different approach. She favourably highlights the achievement of the Ugandan government to steer the development process from the driver’s seat (see also Ssewakiryanga in this volume). The significance of the PRSP process in her view is to transfer control of development policy from the international donors to the national government, which then ensures the participation of other actors. To use her words, referring to the case of Uganda: “The government coordinates the sector-wide approaches in all sectors, and ensures that planning involves the relevant donors and civil society members (...)” (ibid.: 90). This approach is premised on a concept of the developmental state which may not be applicable in many African states given the persistence of neopatrimonial rule (see Meyns in this volume).

To conclude these general reflections on the triangular relations between the state, donors and civil society, a study on Bangladesh, a

country outside Africa which has been grappling for years with poverty-related problems as much as with endemic corruption, is useful to show that the state, while undoubtedly having an important role to play may also be part of the problem, and to emphasise the complexity of the relations between the three groups of stakeholders. Sobhan (1998: 41-42) criticises that the state in Bangladesh has surrendered much of its autonomy over policy issues to international donors, a situation made worse, he contends, by donor cooperation with a large number of NGOs to ensure aid delivery. He insists that the state needs to recapture its autonomy as a necessary step towards good governance, policy coherence and poverty reduction, but adds that these goals can hardly be achieved as long as the state continues to be permeated by interest groups pursuing purely private gain.

What is needed, therefore, Sobhan argues, is for national leadership “to rebuild a coalition which bypasses those elements of state power which have stood in the way of serving the poor” (ibid.: 42) and which also incorporates civil society forces willing to support political change. Building such a coalition of reform-minded forces is no mean task, as it has to face the resistance of entrenched forces unwilling to relinquish their power and privileges. Both Sobhan, referring to Bangladesh, and Bwalya et al., speaking of Malawi and Zambia, assert how difficult it is to change “neo-patrimonial power relationships” (Bwalya et al. 2004: 26).

7. The Role of Government, Donors and Civil Society in Zambia

How the generally accepted important role of the state in the poverty reduction process relates to the reality of Zambia’s political development is what *Peter Meyns*’ contribution deals with. Given the neopatrimonial features of the Zambian political system, which he traces from Kaunda’s post-colonial statist rule through Chiluba’s neo-liberal paradigm shift to Mwanawasa’s current “new deal” administration, the state-centred approach to development cannot be regarded as appropriate. What is needed, he argues, is a political environment which reflects a more balanced relationship between state and civil society. Good governance certainly requires a functioning government, but the strengthening of civil society is described as a component of the political equation needed to shape the constellation of political forces in a way conducive to development and poverty reduction. If Zambia’s political system is to

deliver the goods, in other words, reform-minded forces in the state and government bureaucracy need to form a development-oriented political coalition with like-minded civil society forces so that, together, they might curb the influence of neopatrimonial forces, which also operate within state and society.

In his contribution *Fred Mutesa* explores the links between reforms being undertaken by the Zambian government to improve the management of public resources and the neopatrimonial culture embedded in the country's political system. He argues that public finance management reforms are both a threat to, and endangered by, systemic features of the political system. Mutesa sees potential in these reforms to undermine the worst excesses of neopatrimonialism. For this to happen, however, he suggests the need for an alliance of "champions" of reforms comprising technocrats, civil society forces, private sector and parliamentarians. He also envisages a role for cooperating partners in supporting such alliances and dialogue platforms.

Walter Eberlei focuses on the donor side of the equation. He states that the PRS approach reflects in theory a new quality in the relationship between donors and countries like Zambia. In the light of the Zambian case, however, he sees a twofold implementation problem. While the Zambian Government reveals serious weaknesses in the implementation of the strategy (as several contributions in this volume show), Eberlei argues that the donor community is also not implementing the new principles adequately. Firstly, the operational basis of many donors is still driven by their own interests and policy agendas, and not or only half-heartedly by the Zambian PRS. Secondly, almost six years after the introduction of the PRS approach the harmonisation of aid modalities is still in its infancy. Thirdly, donors fail to use the opportunity to strengthen reform forces within the country. Eberlei concludes, that this twofold implementation problem contributes to continuously high poverty levels and persistent neopatrimonial behaviour in Zambia.

Venkatesh Seshamani raises the question whether the PRS approach reflects a new type of donor conditionalities. Compared with the former *Structural Adjustment Programmes*, he does identify a number of new elements in the PRS approach. The general picture, however, does not show substantial evidence for the enthusiastic view of "new wine in a new bottle". Zambia is heavily dependent on donor support and hence does not have much independence to decide on

any course of action that does not meet with the approval of the donors. Change of nomenclature from “donor-recipient” to “cooperating partners” may lend some dignity to Zambia, as Seshamani argues, but does not fundamentally alter the nature of her relationship with the donors. The *International Financial Institutions* continue to be the financial gatekeepers of Zambia’s poverty reduction and development programmes.

Turning to the third group of actors, the political participation of civil society organisations in the PRSP process in Zambia is the focus of *Beatrix Waldenhof’s* contribution. By looking at the involvement of civil society at national level as well as at local level (in a case study conducted in Eastern Province), she captures the difference between participation in the core arena and conditions in the peripheral arena. At national level the highly effective umbrella organisation *Civil Society for Poverty Reduction* (CSPR), supported by a wide range of NGOs, made significant inputs to the formulation of Zambia’s Full PRSP, and has performed a ‘watchdog’ role subsequently in the form of regular critical comments on the implementation process. Government has, however, been unwilling to give civil society more than an advisory role in the implementation and monitoring of PRSP measures. At local level, Waldenhof finds that organised civil society is barely involved in the PRSP process at all. Interestingly, she notes that this is true of various government offices as well, an observation which leads one of her respondents in Chipata to characterise the PRSP process as a “Lusaka based elitist programme”.

Even though civil society does play a pro-active role at national level its influence is comparatively limited. Government retains a predominant role in the development process. Donors are involved in this equation in a double sense. For one, their HIPC initiative calls for a participatory PRSP process. Thus, government has an interest in allowing civil society involvement in order to secure the desired debt relief. In addition, CSPR receives significant support from donor agencies. Waldenhof stresses that it would be erroneous to see civil society as ‘donor-driven’ because of this support, but a degree of dependence does arise in the sense that should donor support come to an end CSPR would likely be in serious trouble. Civil society in Zambia does also have strong indigenous roots, e.g. in the trade union movement and the Christian churches, but its role should not be overrated.

8. Case Studies from the Grassroots

Frequently, a bottom-up approach to development strategies, which are intended to benefit the poor, is advocated. This may be difficult to put into practice, the more so if the funds to be made available for pro-poor programmes are linked to donor aid disbursements and debt relief. However, if such programmes are to be participatory there can be no doubt that they not only need to be designed in such a way that they reach the poor, but they must also provide the beneficiaries with adequate opportunities to give voice to their own needs and desires. The case studies in this volume show that this is one of the major shortcomings of the PRSP process in Zambia. Moreover, they suggest that neopatrimonial practices continue to be a strong factor in local politics.

One of the key initiatives to promote agricultural production in the PRSP process is the *Fertiliser Support Programme* (FSP) targeted at small-scale farmers in the rural areas. *Bruce Imboela* looks at the implementation of the FSP in Kaoma district in Western Province and gives voice to poor farmers' views' on the implementation of the programme. He asserts that the FSP has the potential to reduce poverty, but that in reality it benefits the better-off farmers. It was generally reported to him that agricultural field officers take little interest in poor farmers, particularly those in remote locations. Therefore, farmers with links to the administration, e.g. retired government workers, are more likely to hear about new agricultural programmes and gain access to them more easily. Apart from that, the 50 percent upfront payment required to access fertiliser through the FSP is more than most poor farmers can pay. And if they manage to raise the money and the fertiliser is delivered late, because of the lack of transport for instance, they run the risk of being unable to recover their investment. No wonder, as Imboela observes, "the FSP is perceived by poor small-scale farmers as an instrument of social inequality".

A glimpse into neopatrimonial politics was provided by a political leader at a public meeting in Kaoma, who was reported to have responded to a question regarding the repayment of fertiliser loans (initially fertiliser through the FSP had been available on loan) by telling his audience: "Have you ever heard of anyone being arrested and prosecuted for not paying back government fertiliser loans?" In her research in Chipata in Eastern Province Waldenhof came across a

different aspect of the FSP, which also shows how funds allocated to serve the poor are diverted for private gain. It was reported at a meeting of the local *District Development Coordinating Committee* that people in Chipata were aware that subsidised fertiliser acquired through the FSP was being sold in “town shops for a very good price, instead of benefiting the small-scale farmers”.

According to the PRSP growth in tourism is seen as a pillar of economic development and poverty reduction in the country. *Crispin R. Matenga* examines the tourism industry in Zambia in general and in the Livingstone and the Victoria Falls area in particular in the light of the concept of pro-poor tourism. Although he confirms that tourism takes a central position in Zambia’s current development, he criticises that its potential still remains largely unrealised, especially with regard to pro-poor dynamics. His analysis of the newly created *Tourism Development Credit Facility (TDCF)* shows, for example, that only a few private sector companies have so far benefited from the TDCF in the Livingstone area, while the bulk of small local tour operators in Livingstone are dissatisfied. The lack of transparency in the management of TDCF and the disbursement of credits facilitate neopatrimonial practices. The upshot is that the intended beneficiaries do not access the facility. Furthermore, there have been no tangible efforts by government to integrate local communities in the development of tourism. Matenga concludes that the much talked about poverty-reducing spread effects may not materialise to any significant degree in Livingstone despite tourism growth in the area.

Zambia’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper gives issues of gender “a very important role in developing a sustainable strategy for poverty reduction” (GRZ 2002: 113). *Derrick Elemu* looks at the issue of gender mainstreaming in the context of PRSP implementation, taking the Luanshya district on the Copperbelt as his case study. The severity of poverty in this once flourishing mining town hardly needs mentioning. The plight of women is highlighted drastically by one of his respondents who says that “to ask how we are coping (..) gives the wrong impression that we are managing. Women in Luanshya are not coping. They are suffering.” Elemu finds that gender mainstreaming at local level is virtually non-existent. A gender focal person at national level even questioned why he was focusing on the district level when the laudable gender-related aims of Zambia’s PRSP have yet to be implemented at national level. It is

a case of 'policy evaporation' he concludes, using the phrase coined by Sara Longwe, one of Zambia's leading feminists.

9. Global and Regional Perspectives

Fantu Cheru discusses the PRS approach in the broader context of globalisation and asks whether it offers the political space for a new beginning that will enable Africa to address the numerous economic and political challenges of the present era. Six years after the introduction of the PRS concept, his assessment is that it is not a 'magic bullet' that would transform many aspects of national development planning as well as donor-recipient relationships overnight. Without throwing the baby out with the bath water, Cheru identifies many inherent contradictions associated with the PRSP process. On the donors' side, he does not see a visible reorientation of IMF and World Bank programmes towards poverty reduction as well as no evidence that the PRSPs are determining the nature of Bank and Fund programmes. Furthermore, he criticises that external pressure for deep reform has not been accompanied by substantial resource flows. But he does not blame the donors alone for little progress in poverty reduction. A successful reduction of poverty hinges also on improving the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of public service and policy management within the African countries. He therefore calls for the deepening of reforms (civil service, legal system, public finance management, decentralisation) to improve the governance performance of poor countries.

Benjamin Roberts contributes a comparative analysis of countries in the Southern African region that have adopted the PRS approach, namely Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. He characterises these countries as semi-democratised states in which domestic politics tend to be patronage-based with fragmented party systems and policy processes, and weak civil societies. The general theme that runs through his analysis is that in these countries poverty reduction is quintessentially a political objective. Roberts' analysis is centred round the PRS principles of participation and ownership. He observes that the participatory principle is a potentially positive factor as it may weigh on the accountability of the state, enlarge the democratic debate and improve the circulation of information. The focus on ownership and participation has, he observes, created new political space for the involvement of civil society forces. To what

degree this space has been used has varied in the countries studied, but common to all is the limited involvement of elected parliaments in PRSP processes. The ownership principle, on the other hand, has been characterised by debate on whether the PRS approach has been country or externally-driven. The continued predominance of government decision making, particularly with regard to spending patterns, leads Roberts to raise the question, without having sufficient evidence for a definite answer, whether successful policy reform is being achieved or “getting lost in translation due to the filtering effect of neopatrimonial politics”.

The comparative experience of Uganda, which *Richard Ssewakiryanga* deals with in his contribution, is of considerable interest for the concerns of this volume in several respects. Uganda can be said to have been a precursor of the current PRSP processes and its *Poverty Eradication Action Plan* (PEAP), initially launched in 1997 and now in its third cycle, is often referred to as a model case. Ssewakiryanga shows how PEAP resulted from a government initiative to focus on poverty eradication as a national task against the background of the devastation caused by the civil war from which Uganda’s president, Yoweri Museveni, emerged as national leader in 1986. In line with the subsequent HIPC debt relief initiative the poverty reduction discourse in Uganda was broadened to include local government actors and civil society organisations. By creating the *Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process* government also institutionalised efforts to give voice to the poor in the PRSP/PEAP process. Given the significant input of the donors their influence, as Ssewakiryanga says, “is not a small matter”, and he adds that by exercising their power from within the distinction between the donors and central government actors tends to become somewhat blurred.

Notwithstanding such complex interaction in the PRSP/PEAP process in Uganda government has remained predominant, as Ssewakiryanga asserts. The most clear-cut expression of the neopatrimonial features of the country’s political system is President Museveni’s highly personalised style of rule, which he uses, for instance, to allow or deny CSO actors access to the inner triangle of the PRSP/PEAP process. Uganda has benefited from Museveni’s development initiatives. On the other hand, he instrumentalises these initiatives in such a way as to maintain patron/client relations. An example Ssewakiryanga mentions is decentralisation (which in

contrast to Zambia has been implemented in Uganda) where the autonomy of local government has steadily *decreased* since 1997 as the share of local revenue has gone down while central government grants have risen. Uganda's experience shows how closely intertwined good governance and neopatrimonial practices can be.

10. Concluding Remarks

The PRS process has been underway since 1999. Zambia embarked on the initiative in late 2000 when it reached the 'HIPC decision point' and qualified for full debt relief only in April 2005 when it passed the 'HIPC completion point'. After such a comparatively short time it is still too early to draw definite conclusions on Zambia's poverty reduction efforts under this programme. Nonetheless the contributions in this volume do provide insights into the process of change in Zambia which has occurred as a result of the PRS approach.

Zambia is not the only country in sub-Saharan Africa to look back on a long history of neopatrimonial rule. Political systems so characterised do not change easily, but given their inherent contradictions they are also not immutable. How they develop is largely dependent on the constellation of political forces at work within a system. The outcome of systemic dynamics is uncertain.

It can be asserted that the notion of participation which was introduced as an important element of the PRSP process has enlarged the space for political forces to pursue their agendas. It has created opportunities, notably for civil society actors, to become more closely involved in developmental issues than was the case before. This change should not be overrated, but it should not be ignored either, as the opening of the political arena has led to new voices being heard and taken notice of, particularly at national level.

It remains true, however, that the state continues to be in control of the PRS process. Initiatives to improve governance performance, such as the introduction of PRS reporting systems or reforms of the public expenditure management, etc., have been taken in an effort to modernise and rationalise decision-making and implementation of policies. Evidence abounds, on the other hand, that politics in Zambia is still permeated by neopatrimonial practices, beginning with the highly personalised style of leadership at presidential level right down to the mode of operation of officials at local level.

Ambivalence characterises the role of the international donors in the PRS process. They launched the HIPC Initiative and by granting significant debt relief provide the funds which go into poverty reduction efforts. Countries like Zambia remain highly dependent on aid. Indeed, it is argued that poverty reduction cannot succeed without aid flows. In this sense, donors continue to pull the strings, while at the same time calling for national ownership of the PRS process. Whether their influence and insistence on good governance can impact positively on the politics of a recipient country like Zambia is a matter of much debate. Instruments like *budget aid* and *outcome-oriented indicators* can serve to enhance rational political processes. On the other hand, donors themselves are subject to interests determined by the politics of their own organisations and have on occasion acquiesced to neopatrimonial practices in recipient countries. Therefore, while fully aware of the important role donors play in the internal equation of politics in Zambia (and aware that they are also susceptible to change), we contend that the main impetus for good governance must come from within.

Given the neopatrimonial reality of government politics much hope has been pinned on the intervention of civil society actors. Zambia has had a long tradition of civil society activity in areas of humanitarian aid and service delivery, but civil society influence in the political arena has been limited. The advent of the 3rd Republic, but also the PRSP process more specifically, led to an increased number of advocacy-oriented civil society organisations, and the formation of networks has definitely strengthened the influence of civil society in the political arena. Civil society actors have added their voices to demands for more transparency of decision-making and greater accountability. They have become a positive factor in the constellation of political forces in Zambia. However, they cannot be expected to provide the clout for decisive changes in the balance of forces in favour of good governance and poverty reduction by themselves.

Five years after the introduction of the PRSP in Zambia poverty persists at high levels. The time span is certainly too short to expect significant changes, but initial signs of improvements in the livelihood conditions of poor people around the country should be visible. However, it is precisely with regard to their impact at grassroots level that poverty reduction efforts in Zambia seem to be severely deficient. Whether we look at the *Fertiliser Support*

Programme or the *Tourism Development Credit Facility* - two examples referred to in this volume -, it is often not the intended beneficiaries who gain access to the support programmes. Those people who are close to the implementing agencies and who know how to use the system to their advantage are frequently the ones who benefit from them, while the rural poor and women are disadvantaged. These are the hallmarks of neopatrimonialism which stand in the way of effective poverty reduction, and their occurrence at grassroots level shows how deeply entrenched the system is.

The bottom line of poverty reduction efforts is whether they actually reach the poor people who are in need of support most urgently. So far participatory mechanisms do not adequately involve poor people themselves. This is most obviously an area for future improvement. But the other end of the pipeline is equally important, state, donors and civil society as the actors who in different ways are involved in raising or channelling the funds needed for poverty reduction policies. The state retains the key responsibility. It may be neopatrimonial but it is not homogeneous, and those forces which are reform and development-oriented within the state need to be strengthened. Both donors and civil society are called upon to bring their influence to bear on the state in this sense. The aim is to facilitate a development-oriented coalition of political forces within the country which will create conditions for sustainable poverty reduction, and in so doing will also be receptive to the needs and desires of the poor majority of the population. For such conditions of good governance to prevail over longstanding neopatrimonial practices, Zambia still has a long road ahead.

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