

## **PROCESS OF RWANDA'S PRSP. WAS CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVED?**

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Warren asked me yesterday to make a presentation on Rwanda's PRSP. So, I did not prepare anything before coming as it was not planned. However, I will try to meet your expectations.

This presentation highlights the process used by Rwanda to elaborate its National Poverty Strategic Paper and the extent to which civil society organizations that represent the communities were involved.

### **I) THE CONTEXT OF THE ELABORATION OF RWANDA PRSP**

Rwanda is a country that has experienced one of the most traumatized event in modern history.

Around 1000000 persons were killed during the war and the 1994 genocide which destroyed the country's social and economic fabrics. Historical gender imbalances were also exacerbated. Women constitute 54% of the population but compared to men, they have limited access to public social services and economic opportunities. 34 % of the households are held by women and 80% of them are widows without resources.

One of the critical aftermath of the 1994 was the abject poverty of the population. The households living conditions undertaken in 2000 found that 62% of the population are under the poverty line.

The civil society organizations along with development partners played a tremendous role during the emergency phase to answer to the great demands of shelter, social protection of the populations. They are also contributing to the reconciliation and peace process as well as to the reconstruction of the country. It is within this context of post conflict and genocide that the national poverty reduction strategy paper has been elaborated.

### **II) Process of the PRSP. Was Civil Society Involved?**

Following the emergency phase, the government of Rwanda put in place a set of comprehensive policy reform frameworks to address the reconstruction of the country. Those reforms include the Vision 2020, the PRSP, the decentralization process, and the elaboration of the new constitution.

This new agenda articulated around good governance and poverty reduction and based on the guiding principle of participation of all, was conducive to the participation of the civil society in decision making that shape the life of the communities they represent.

The first critical window of opportunity for the CSOs was the elaboration of the Vision 2020, a framework that expresses the populations' aspirations over the next 20 years.

Open and critical discussions led to the elaboration of the Vision 2020 which was approved by the populations.

Thus, a process of elaborating the PRSP followed based on the Vision 2020.

Indeed, participation of the populations and the civil society organizations was also the critical strategy and approach used.

The process of the Rwanda PRSP is articulated around the following steps:

**Step 1** was the Poverty Participatory Assessment (PPA) which objective was to assess the dimension and characteristics of poverty in Rwanda.

Using Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques the PPA carried out with communities, at district level and yield information on:

- different categories and characteristics of poverty
- a ranking of the problems faced by the community
- an analysis of gender roles
- a discussion of the issues surrounding land ownership and tenure
- a detailed analysis of the coping strategies of one of the poorest households

Furthermore, a Pilot Community Action Planning was carried out at cellule level in one of the 12 Provinces (Butare) to take the PPA a stage further. After identifying and ranking their problems, communities developed action plans to solve the problems they identified. A detailed analysis of the coping strategies of one of the poorest households was also undertaken. The approach is being carried out at national level as part of the decentralisation process.

A Policy Relevance Test (PRT) was also carried out. The PRT looked more specifically at existing policies and those proposed in the IPRSP. After a round of discussion with line ministries the policies were evaluated primarily using stratified socio-economic focus group discussions in terms of their relevance both to the individuals and their communities as a whole. The relevance of policies were assessed on the basis of their effectiveness, inclusiveness, and level of participation of the communities and also looked at providing solutions to problems identified.

The CSOs such as PRO-FEMMES, the umbrella of women organizations, the communities based organizations, the human rights NGOs, etc participated in the process by mobilizing the communities in order to help them speak out and to express the ways they are affected by poverty. Interviews and focused groups discussion were carried out in Kiyirwanda the only language. The fact that Rwandan populations share one language is also a great advantage to mobilize the communities and hear from them.

Furthermore, the ways in which poverty affects differently women and men, girls and boys have been documented.

**Step 2** was the diagnostic and analysis of the poverty

On the basis of the outcomes of the poverty participatory assessment and the poverty relevance test, poverty dimensions were analysed. The outcomes of the PPA lead also to the definition of poverty in Rwanda. Thus, the following characteristics of poor and households have been identified and given names in the local language:

**1) Umutindi nyakujya (those in abject poverty )**

Those who need to beg to survive. They have no land or livestock and lack shelter, adequate clothing and food. They fall sick often and have no access to medical care. Their children are malnourished and they cannot afford to send them to school.

**2) Umutindi (the very poor)**

The main difference between the *umutindi* and the *umutindi nyakujya* is that this group is physically capable of working on land owned by others, although they themselves have either no land or very small landholdings, and no livestock.

**3) Umukene (the poor)**

These households have some land and housing. They live on their own labour and produce, and though they have no savings, they can eat, even if the food is not very nutritious. However they do not have a surplus to sell in the market, their children do not always go to school and they often have no access to health care.

**4) Umukene wifashije (the resourceful poor )**

This group shares many of the characteristics of the *umukene* but, in addition, they have small ruminants and their children go to primary school.

**5) Umukungu (the food rich)**

This group has larger landholdings with fertile soil and enough to eat. They have livestock, often have paid jobs, and can access health care.

**6) Umukire (the money rich )**

This group has land and livestock, and often has salaried jobs. They have good housing, often own a vehicle, and have enough money to lend and to get credit from the bank. Many migrate to urban centres.

This ranking also emphasized the fact that poverty is not only financial but has different dimensions that are related to each other.

Indeed, the poverty has been analysed from a gender perspective and the poverty profile has been elaborated. It shows the gender and the geographic distribution of poverty:

- poverty in Rwanda has a female face, 62,15% of headed households are under the poverty line against 54,32% of men headed households,
- the rural areas are more affected by poverty

Gender issues have been also mainstreamed into the poverty priority areas of action as well as the poverty monitoring and evaluation.

It is important to mention that so far, Rwanda's PRSP is considered as one of the most engendered.

**Step 3** was the identification of the poverty priority areas for actions

On the basis of the findings of the poverty diagnosis and analysis, participatory approach was used again to determine and agree upon the priority areas of actions as well as the criteria of prioritization of public expenditures towards the fighting of poverty. The communities were asked to say which area they would like actions to be taken to improve their situations. Then, a workshop that took together line ministries, CSOs, etc was organized to identified the 6 following priority areas of action :

- **Rural development and agricultural transformation**
- **Human resource development**
- **Economic infrastructure**
- **Private sector development**
- **Governance**
- **Institutional capacity-building**

Yet, nine criteria of prioritization were agreed upon:

- 1) Expenditure must contribute, whether directly or indirectly to the reduction of poverty: Expenditures will be targeted as those activities that the private sector cannot realistically be expected to undertake.
- 2) Expenditures will target those activities that can be shown to have high socio-economic impact, as measured by rates of return or other quantitative criteria.
- 3) Expenditures will target the activities that the communities have identified as important to them.
- 4) Expenditures will be directed to well-planned activities for which realistic and modest unit costs have been identified and where there is a well developed expenditure proposal.
- 5) In cases where the previous two criteria are not met but the activity meets the other criteria, priority will be given to supporting policy development and planning in the sector.

- 6) Expenditures that reduce future recurrent costs will be prioritized, for instance bed-nets, books, materials and teacher training for schools, road maintenance, and water supply.
- 7) Expenditures will be targeted at those activities which can affordably be extended to the whole relevant target population, rather than those which could only be delivery to a few.
- 8) Activities that are labor intensive and create necessary infrastructure for development will be prioritized.
- 9) Activities that favor disadvantaged groups, including activities which address gender or age-based inequities and protect the rights of children, activities that reduce economic inequality will be prioritized.

**Step 4:** Monitoring and evaluation of the PRSP

This step includes the identification of indicators. A Poverty Observatory Unit has been set up to coordinate the monitoring and evaluation activities of the implementation of the PRSP.

**Step 5** is where we are now e.g. the implementation of the PRSP

A task force on civil society and PRSP was set up in collaboration with the international organisations based in Rwanda such as Trocaire, CRS, Care, Actionaid, etc. The main aim of the task force is to support Rwanda civil society organisations for their effective participation in the implementation of the PRSP. To do so, the strategic entry point is the existence of a Medium term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). The MTEF is a 3 year planning and budgeting framework aims at linking policies with budgets. It is based on 3 principles:

- accountability
- transparency
- and efficiency

As such, like the PRSP, the MTEF opens windows of opportunity for the participation of the civil society organisations.

Meanwhile, the gender budgeting initiative that is being implemented which is in fact a tool for influencing the MTEF enhances the opportunity for CSOs to participate in the PRSP implementation through their participation in the budget process to shape the budget decision making.

Thus, the umbrella of women organisations is leading the process towards the constitution of the Rwanda civil society budget group in order to undertake applied budget work and advocate for effective pro-poor budget allocation. Different meetings have been organised to plan the process.

To support them, we have contacted the international budget group and IDASA in order to build the capacity of civil society organisations on budget issues.

### **III) Main challenges recorded:**

- Limited capacities of CSOs is a big constraint for their involvement in monitoring and evaluation of policies and budgets. Most of them tend to deal with welfare activities.
- Because of their limited capacities, CSOs need a lot of technical assistance and back up.
- The complexity and “technicity” of the policies and budget jargon does not encourage a systematic participation of civil society organizations. There is a need to simplify the language of policies and budgets if CSOs are to be involved.

### **IV) Conclusion: What did we learn?**

Nobody can be more expert on poverty than the poor themselves as they are the ones who experience all aspects of poverty. Thus the condition sine qua none for effectiveness of the PRSP is the effective involvement of the populations at all levels through effective involvement of the civil society organisations that represents them.

There is still a long way to go. Although in Rwanda (as in other countries), CSOs participated in the elaboration of the PRSP process, the main challenge is their effective participation and inputs in the implementation for the PRSP if it is to produce good impacts in the life of people.

I thank you for your attention.