

Participation in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

A Retrospective Study



January 2002

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The Participation and Civic Engagement Team in the Social Development Department of the World Bank promotes poverty reduction and sustainable development by empowering the poor to set their own priorities, control resources and influence government, market and civil society institutions to be more responsive, inclusive and accountable. For more information, please visit the website: <http://www.worldbank.org/participation>.

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFID	United Kingdom's Department for International Development
EC	European Commission
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EU	European Union
EURODAD	European Network on Debt and Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IFI	International Financial Institution
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFA	Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategies
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WHO	World Health Organization

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**PARTICIPATION IN
POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPERS
A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY**

Introduction

This exercise is a compilation of three distinct but connected products: i) a synthesis of external assessments of participation in the PRSP process, ii) a review of the content of 33 Interim PRSPs, and iii) an assessment of participation in 9 Final PRSPs that were completed by November 2001. The three tasks were approached with conceptual uniformity that sought to gauge the overall quality of participation by looking at three pillars - FORM (how the process took place), OUTCOME (how the process influenced content) and SUSTAINABILITY (whether there are indications that the process and content have been institutionally anchored for similar exercises in the future). Around ten variables receive keen attention under each dimension of quality.

The first product summarizes the main points that major development agencies and non-governmental organizations, external to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have made about participation in the PRSP process. The Synthesis distills and casts their comprehensive assessments into the succinct three-pillar structure. Second, the participatory intent of IPRSPs are captured in a detailed questionnaire with quantitative ratings on an array of variables that were then aggregated to yield region-specific trends. And third, the PRSPs are reviewed by making use of a similar methodology, but they are more comprehensive in their coverage of issues.

Overall, the exercise covers 100% of the Interim PRSP sample as of October 2001 and the Final PRSP sample as of November 2001, records and evaluates objectively the formal position of governments on participation, while complementing them with less exhaustive, but more informal assessments by external observers. The preparation of this Retrospective Study thus involved designing two separate questionnaires and reviewing at least 60 distinct documents – 33 IPRSPs, 9 Final PRSPs, and over 20 non Bank-Fund Assessments. The three final outputs synthesize results of these elaborate reviews.

Report I
**External Assessment of
Participation in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers**

A Synthesis



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SCOPE OF THE SYNTHESIS

This synthesis brings to one place a wide range of comments, arguments, observations, and evidence presented by over 20 development and non-governmental agencies that have been following the PRSP process for the past two years in over 50 developing countries. All points summarized here are made by agencies external to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and no section of this synthesis consists of official Bank-Fund view or position.

All the assessments surveyed for this synthesis differ widely in their coverage of both the issues and the countries. They range from a rigorous desk review of experiences covering a big region like sub-Saharan Africa to an inter-office memorandum drawing on observations from a handful of countries (Please see a list of references). Almost all the documents are observation-based and anecdotal in nature. Very few adopt or propose a formal framework of analysis, thus reducing many of their claims to being assertions rather than demonstrations. The country coverage is Africa-centric, and all assessments are produced by development agencies or non-governmental organizations headquartered in Western nations.

Despite these deficiencies, the assessments in aggregate cover a comprehensive gamut of issues related to participation. By bringing together into one place for the first time a disparate canon of views from divergent actors, this Synthesis is expected to contribute to future PRSP initiatives by alerting practitioners to a menu of concerns, benchmarks, and pitfalls that need to be honored to ensure an acceptable quality of participation for better poverty reduction outcomes.

The synthesis is structured in three parts. The first part deals with Form, covering issues related to how participation as a process is evolving; Outcome, covering issues related to how participation as a process is influencing the content of the strategies; and Sustainability, looking at issues that impinge on the creation of country capacity, commitment, and networks to undertake similar activities that transcend the current phase of the PRSP initiatives. These three pillars, we believe, together proxy for a standard in participation.

1. FORM

1.1 Conceptual understanding of Participation is varied. There is a considerable variance among governments, donors, and non-governmental entities on the understanding of the what, the how, and the who of participation. Donors and most governments see it more as a means, an instrument, to facilitate implementation of projects or conduct poverty assessments, while NGOs opt for a rights-based view, seeing it as an end in itself, and thus calling for long, deep, and broad processes. Countries generally indicate lack of capacity to host and manage participation up front whereas some have built on existing processes. On the Information Sharing - Consultation - Collaboration - Empowerment continuum of participation, most countries have equated it with consultations that have often been 'poorly conceived, exclusive, and badly organized' (McGee et al. 2001). Christian Aid (2001) and CRS (2001) add that the governments' constricted understanding of participation as information sharing or basic consultation is further worsened by lack of clarity on what level of engagement they expect from CSOs. Most consultations have thus been alleged to be superficial, many seeing it merely as a ploy to engineer legitimacy (Christian Aid 2001, Jubilee South et al. 2001). Agencies such as the CRS propose that guidelines for participation might establish consistency on the basics such as dissemination of documents, involvement of diverse groups, adequate homework time, etc.

1.2 The tenor of Participation as a concept in political power has been neutered. NGOs point out that the current usage of the term participation is 'technocratic', and does not acknowledge participation as a political concept where transfer of power is mandatory if the goal is to empower the poor (Christian Aid 2001). If participation is to contribute towards ownership of policies, the political implications are profound, says Eurodad (2001). It also disagrees that increased civic participation undermines formal democratic processes saying it is not a zero-sum game, and that where CSOs have participated actively, roles of formal institutions like the parliament have also become more effective as in Kenya and to an extent in Uganda.

1.3 Participation is seen as a process conditionality. Countries seem to be interpreting the mandating of participation by IFIs as a 'process' conditionality, as opposed to a 'policy' conditionality, although as Whaites (2001) acknowledges PRSPs are an 'important innovation' in the evolving area of social conditionality. Despite this shift, countries seem to be pre-adjusting to donor mindsets anyway by giving continuity to policy packages that the IFIs are known to favor. Some allege that there is often little difference between the content of the PRSPs and the Policy Framework Papers - an earlier tool piece of IFI lending (Abugre 2000). CRS (2001) worries that NGO inputs are being filtered, hence the need for an annex in PRSPs on CSO inputs which can be viewed directly by the IFI Boards.

1.4 Ownership is unreal in the face of pronounced power asymmetry between the IFIs and the countries. CSOs' engagement with the government is theoretically expected to allow the latter to enhance its credibility and bargaining power vis-à-vis the donors, who are now reduced to being 'brokers of participation', not overt dictators of policy options. This positive shift in power asymmetry between the donors and the government however might have suffered as donors expand their mandates in a country's socio-political process. While a closer linkage between governments and CSOs demands greater transparency and accountability of the former, it can also lend credibility to home-specific policies that differ from standard IFI prescriptions. That CSOs have often not been engaged in technical debates has however precluded this from happening in almost all countries (McGee et al. 2001). Further, national ownership can be made untenable by the 'heavy hand of conditionality on economic policy' (Whaites 2001). Christian Aid (2001) also notes that while the nature of relationship between the IFIs, governments and civic groups is changing with space opened for citizens' opinion on public policy, 'genuine power sharing over decisions' remains a far cry. It says the power imbalance between the IFIs and the governments, and between the governments and their poor people obstacles genuine participation and ownership. Eurodad (2001) adds that the PRSPs are 'endorsed' by the IFI boards and not the citizens, or even parliaments means an IFI seal of approval is more important which puts an implicit pressure on governments to conform to IFI development framework which may or may not have national support.

1.5 The breadth and depth of Participation has been insufficient. The practice has been to invite 'representatives' of CSOs, but these have usually been identified by the government or an actor mandated by it. Whaites (2001) alleges participation has been tightly controlled and there have been cases where some key NGOs were not invited. While the selection process in general has not been random and ad-hoc, formal solicitation of participation has ignored non-traditional NGOs, and CBOs located outside the metropolis or those engaged in niche issues. The private sector too has generally been under-involved (GTZ 2001). Christian Aid (2001) echoes this by saying involvement has been confined to national level NGOs – genuine engagement of grassroots communities has almost been non-existent. There have been exceptions, the most notable perhaps being the involvement of the Kenyan Pastoralist Strategy Group. Invitees have been given PRSP draft documents in advance, but the time allowed for preparation has been inadequate, and complementary information on budgets, for example, have usually been withheld. Interest groups such as the Trade Unions have complained that they have not been invited to participate meaningfully. ICFTU (2001) says its country chapters are often the most 'structured and representative' of the civil society, and that their absence at the discussion table in most countries indicates a deep flaw in the process. Their experience ranges from a genuine invitation to participate as in Malawi, subsequent induction as in Tanzania, to outright refusal as in Nepal. Institutions like the IDB on the other hand say that the PRSP process is taking a lot of time and is proving costly, adding,

“countries should spend less time preparing diagnoses and focusing more on design of strategy, as most countries know what their pressing problems are.”

1.6 The real poor have not partaken extensively in the process. Urban-based CSOs that do not reach out to solicit the opinion of their constituencies, especially the poor, being dominant participants raises questions of representativeness. Participatory methodologies that directly engage the poor in policy dialogues have by and large not been explored. Participatory processes that build on local traditions and cultural norms, except Rwanda, have not been adopted, with usual preferences being external, donor-prescribed templates (McGee et al. 2001). FAO (2001) lauds CSO involvement but doubts that those on the discussion table genuinely represent the lower strata of the society. Further, they often appear to be witnesses, rather than active participants, possibly constrained by lack of technical capacity and time to prepare.

1.7 Externally imposed timeline has distorted the value of an organic process. Time-bound commitments to complete the exercise have often made participation ritualistic. While CSOs lobbied successfully for time extensions in a number of countries, because these extensions were not pre-planned, quality is not perceived to have increased. In some cases IFIs themselves encouraged a slower pace which has been helpful. ADB (2001) questions why there is no consistency between small and big countries in accepting their five-year development plans with specific poverty reduction chapters as a PRSP. But early rush witnessed in country preparations of IPRSPs to access HIPC assistance was largely avoided later in preparing the fuller versions (EC 2001). Overall though, growth of participatory processes have not been wholly inorganic, especially in countries with history of participation.

1.8 Information sharing prior to and after the consultations has been inadequate. Web-based information dissemination especially by the World Bank has been laudable, but this has often not been complemented by national information dissemination strategies. Media coverage and popular debates have increased on issues of poverty for the first time owing to participation in PRSPs, but groups remain ill informed and unaware that they have the ‘right’ to participate in policy processes (Christian Aid 2001). Invitations have also been sent out often only at the last minute and in haste (CRS 2001).

1.9 Authorship is largely indigenous. There is a broad concurrence that the documents are being written mostly by national officials with occasional inputs from consultants and donors. This change is however interpreted as more symbolic than substantive, for despite national authorship, policy analyses are uniform across countries’ PRSPs (Jubilee South et al. 2001). UNDP (2001) remarks that in some cases documents show a syndrome of ‘hotel-room manufacture’ by external experts. Some call for the involvement of CSOs in the actual drafting stage of the documents, not only in discussing prepared texts (CRS 2001). Abugre (2000) notes that the CSOs are just invited to react to drafts, not debate alternative strategies and trade-offs right from the outset.

1.11 Intra-government participation exists, but is not comprehensive. The process is Ministry of Finance driven. Line ministries get a seat in the thematic groups set up to contribute to the content of PRSPs. But intra-government participation is not as rich as it should be with the line ministries and locally elected bodies engaged non-comprehensively (FAO 2001). Offering a specific case in point, WHO (2001) complains that 'health ministries have had little opportunity to contribute to the development of overall PRSP or to the development of the health content.' Institutional preparedness has been disparate across countries, with steering committees, etc., set up in some nations more formally than others. But Whaites (2001) and others point out that the IFIs must be willing to invest in capacity of both government and CSOs in facilitating, resourcing and analyzing ground experiences. Managing participatory processes through steering committees, etc. alone has a chance of being manipulated. The same paper however cautions that the advisory capacity that the IFIs assume should not become a 'means to circumvent weak capacity of the state'. EC (2001) acknowledges that while the whole PRSP experience has been 'thoroughly positive', there are areas to be improved upon. For instance, while the working group approach to having disparate agencies team up on common issues has been welcome, the process of aggregating thematic papers into a common strategy has not generally been participatory.

1.11 National parliaments are ignored and their engagement in the process is unsatisfactory. As one of the stated goals of participation in PRSP is to build ownership, the negligence of most national parliaments in the process on the one hand while mandating civil society participation on the other has been seen as an attempt to 'reinvent democracy' which undermines formal institution building (McGee et al. 2001). It is argued, however, that if the marginal role of parliaments is systemic, i.e. it already exercises little influence in governance because of capacity or constitutional provisions, PRSPs are unlikely to change that. ICFTU (2001) challenges the view that civil society involvement undermines formal democratic institutions saying that parliaments should of course be involved, but wherever parliaments have not been engaged, trade unions have also been ignored. Overall, multi-governmental bodies such as the EU seem to urge a more central involvement of parliaments including the monitoring and implementation phase (EC 2001). Eurodad (2001) adds that political ownership is key to a successful implementation of PRSPs and that parliamentary committees should be engaged more actively. UNDP (2001) suggests individual MPs could at least be involved when consultations take place at the sub-national, constituency levels.

1.12 Language concerns need to be redressed; and public availability of documents is inadequate. Even the most basic issue of language seems to have been ignored with documents, including information on PRSPs, often prepared *only* in English, and when they had been translated into national languages, local languages were ignored (Christian Aid 2001). This logistical lapse meant that some consultations done at the field level were not utilized. The poor remained alien to discussions because language and terminology issues were not thought through (Jubilee South et al. 2001). Documents are prepared with donors as audience in mind. This often means that they are written in a foreign language replete with terminologies not easily accessible to citizens. Local communication and advocacy

efforts to launch and disseminate the product have not been given enough priority. While there have been innovative media campaigns, even including songs and drama as in The Gambia, rural populations in general remain largely unaware about PRSPs (McGee et al. 2001). Sharing of I-PRSPs has not been broad, and often unavailable in the public domain.

1.13 IFIs' prescription of participation but refraining from evaluation is incongruous.

Approval of PRSPs is conditional on the adoption of an acceptable participatory process for which a tool kit of methods has been suggested in the PRSP Sourcebook. But what constitutes an acceptable process has not been specified (McGee et al. 2001). An inherent tension is thus observed between the mandating of participation and the decision to not evaluate quality. Whaites (2001) points out that placing the onus of responsibility for participation squarely on governments has created a situation in which the IFIs can show the best of intentions while disclaiming any failure in practice.

2. OUTCOME

2.1 Participation marks a fundamental shift in modus operandi of development

cooperation. That the PRSPs have offered CSOs a chance to participate for the first time in any government strategy has been welcomed (CRS 2001). This has widened the content of dialogue, enhanced government credibility, and opened the door for future collaboration (Whaites 2001, CRS 2001, McGee et al. 2001). This has also allowed the 'poverty agenda' to be integrated more with macroeconomic policies and public finance, perhaps ending the days when poverty was treated as a separate 'sector' with project-based funding (Booth 2001). This changing emphasis has restored the paramount importance that poverty reduction as a goal deserves.

2.2 Participation has been recognized as an important process in development. Many agencies acknowledge that CSO participation has helped increase public awareness about PRSP as a new IFI lending vehicle as well as development issues. NGOs have become members of task forces and steering committees lending some credibility to the 'ownership' agenda. Importantly, CSO involvement has been planned for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of PRSPs. In some countries where distrust prevails between governments and CSOs, the latter did not enthusiastically respond to government invitations but instead created parallel channels of consultations. These were less effective than arrangements where the two groups engaged more constructively.

2.3 Participation has had a mixed influence on the content. CSO presence in thematic committees has added diversity to perspectives – often to inform static technocratic understanding of issues with practitioner accounts from the ground. Most significant impact has been on understanding and diagnosing the multi-dimensional nature, causes and spatial aspects of poverty, with income-focused approaches complemented by issues of voice and service access. Cross-cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS, as well as food security and livelihoods, have been given much more weight as a result of CSO lobbying. There are cases where participation has had a causal impact on policy shifts, such as in Uganda, Bolivia and Rwanda where priorities were shifted in favor of areas that the poor value (McGee et al. 2001). But these are the exceptions. Heavy inertia, not flexibility is the norm in policy shifts. CSO inputs have also forced under-covered, politically sensitive issues such as corruption and politico-bureaucratic apathy to be incorporated as explicit issues to reckon with. The process and the content issues are linked, however. Cases where CSOs were more detached from the process are also instances where they have had little impact on the content. CSOs admit though that they often lack the technical and analytical capacity to inform intelligent debates on macroeconomic policies. While poverty, or health and education issues draw on many of their operational work, their ability to talk macroeconomics and propose policy options is limited. As it is, existing IPRSP documents have been criticized for not being able to prioritize strategic decisions, and analyze and cost them so that they differ from a

'shopping list of policies' (EC 2001). Failure to translate CSO input into the actual content has been raised as the 'most disappointing aspect' of PRSPs. They lament that there is little accountability to CSO input forcing them to call for governments to produce matrices that show areas of agreements and disagreements among participants (CRS 2001).

2.4 Discussion of macroeconomic choices and reform is avoided. CSOs believe that donors and governments have a pre-meditated intent to give continuity to and validate existing frameworks. This seems to be most starkly felt in the area of macroeconomic policies, which require greater technical skills among participants. While the private sector and some research institutes have partially influenced this agenda, NGOs that claim a more natural affinity to the poor submit that this domain is often portrayed as almost 'non-negotiable'. CSO input has been more welcomed on discussion of social issues, than on macroeconomic strategies and adjustment policies. Often arbitrary 'targets' that are devised by technical working groups prevent discussions of all spending options (Abugre 2000). Single 'models' have been proposed which CSOs are expected to tinker with, but not challenge or critique (Christian Aid 2001, CRS 2001). UNIFEM (2001) mentions that even when macroeconomic issues are discussed, they are treated as gender-neutral topics, failing to recognize that economic policies have gender and class dimensions impacting on these groups differently.

2.5 Gender concerns have been overlooked. Participation of groups has not engendered the poverty discourse to the extent anticipated. Very few countries explicitly mention issues such as domestic violence. Further, as UNIFEM (2001) notes, gender is rarely recognized as a cross-cutting issue and only relegated as a health or education sub-category. It also objects to many countries' subsuming the category of women under a broad 'vulnerable' group. A concern has also been expressed over the type of data used in analyzing poverty. UNIFEM worries that in most countries the data collection methodologies have not been 'genderized' to take stock of women-responsive questioning. By emphasizing the importance of markets, UNIFEM feels that PRSPs have undermined the role of the household economy typically dominated by unpaid women members. Christian Aid (2001) echoes this concern quoting the Gender and Development Network that male dominated NGOs, trade unions or professional associations are unlikely to prioritize the gender interests of poor women.

2.6 Neo-liberal, growth-propelled development framework faces skeptic reception from non-governmental actors. The influential package of economic policies, "Washington Consensus" seems to be just that – consensus in Washington, and an orphan elsewhere. While the research mainstream of the economics profession seems to concur with the spirit of the framework, all NGOs and practitioners are skeptic about it, often equating their degree of influence in the PRSP process by how much of the traditional Washington prescriptions they could revise. The divide between ideology and prudence is blur. The discussion of the 'poverty agenda' is thus interpreted as 'victory' and non-influence on

macroeconomic topics as 'failure'. This dichotomy is replete in *all* NGO assessments from ICFTU (2001) to even an IFI document such as ADB (2001). Jubilee South et al. (2001) also see that discussing 'poverty reduction in the context of a growth oriented strategy' implicitly encourages discussion of poverty without stepping out of what it calls the 'market framework'. They challenge the IFI assertion about linkages between growth and reduced poverty, and claim that the poor's concerns are more related to 'income and land distribution, equity, and international power relations'. OPM (2001) makes the point that the unchallenged assumption under macroeconomic discussions on growth being good for the poor needs to be unpacked into different kinds of effects - good and bad - on the poor.

2.7 Discussion on sectoral priorities and public expenditures needs greater linkage to poverty reduction. While participation has influenced the debate on the dimensions of poverty significantly, efforts to link public spending with tangible poverty reduction outcomes are slow. Eurodad (2001) calls for a fundamental shift in donor approach to development assistance from project lending to budget support. It cites PRSC as a useful instrument in this direction, but points out that other donors need to come on board. But even if thematic prescriptions and spending have a better linkage, Eurodad (2001) and GTZ (2000) caution that there are cross-cutting themes such as those stipulated in the 1992 Rio Summit on Sustainable Development that ought not be overlooked. PRSPs to date have also avoided the difficult question of trade-offs in spending choices. Merely mentioning a wish-list for increased expenditures without confronting the choices that have to be made including distinguishing high priorities from the low is unhelpful (OPM 2001).

3. SUSTAINABILITY

3.1 The process has facilitated a possibility for institutionalization of participation.

Follow-up has been deemed necessary to ensure that it's not a one-off, but an iterated exercise not only in formulation of strategies like PRSP, but also other arenas such as budget formulation, public expenditure tracking and evaluation of public sector performance. 'Participation fatigue' and 'process overload' have been noticed which requires pre-planning to not let the momentum be lost after the completion of the PRSP process.

3.2 Overall government commitment to participation is seemingly positive, but real motivation is suspect.

FAO (2001) points out that while processes in countries it observed were government-led, their motivations were influenced by the need to access 'easy' budgetary support from the IFIs. Line ministries have been represented in thematic task groups, but the process is driven by the Ministry of Finance, or Planning, with only marginal involvement of local governments. ADB (2001) notes that it is difficult to ensure ownership when the timing of the PRSP preparation is linked with country eligibility to borrow concessional IFI lending, thus producing only cosmetic changes. Such has been distortion in incentive that in countries like Honduras, PRSP was presented to the IFI well before the legislature or civic groups (CRS 2001). Christian Aid (2001) points out that real national ownership may be hard to attain as long as IFI seal of approval is conditional upon the countries adopting a certain set of macroeconomic policies. Jubilee South et al. (2001) is sharper in its assertion, "IFIs come prepared with their perspectives on the poverty situation, their analysis, their menu of policies and their suggestions on resource mobilization", making ownership and eventual control external.

3.3 Provisions for monitoring and evaluation is partially recognized.

Documents mention provisions for monitoring by involving stakeholders. But as with other segments, this needs further enunciation. The emphasis on creating elaborate 'systems' of monitoring might overshadow the real urgency of getting better data, argues Booth (2001). It also cautions that the notable focus on doing household surveys and poverty assessments to measure impact of policies need to be complemented by quicker, participatory feedback processes when the implementation is ongoing. GTZ (2000) cautions that M&E is currently being treated 'technically' with poverty indicators to track, not 'procedurally' designed to integrate beneficiaries' perception of policies and programs into decision making. Identification of indicators also needs to be less indiscriminate. EC (2001) calls for parliamentary involvement in M&E.

3.4 Some positive externalities of the process have emerged.

Spillover effects of pursuing a participatory process can be long lasting. McGee et al. (2001) argue that the process has broadened the 'policy community' which spells a need for 'dynamics between the governments and CSOs to be nurtured.' Attitudes have changed, and governments are

increasingly being more transparent because of CSO scrutiny. New networks and intensity of alliance for other tasks are being forged. Visibly active have been NGO umbrellas that have created networks of policy advocates strengthening the 'numbers, capacity, contacts and influence'. In Bolivia, an existing 'Law of Popular Participation' was drawn on during the process leading to a specific 'Dialogue Law', creating a formal, legal endorsement of future participation. The Malawi Economic Justice Network is taking the agenda further in that country. Similar innovations and consolidation of indigenous practices have been seen in Rwanda, as well as Tanzania (McGee et al. 2001). Christian Aid (2001) mentions as an example the 'Campana Terra' mobilization of church, farmers, women's groups, trade unions, etc. to change land laws in Mozambique.

3.5 Not all donors have supported the process demonstrably by assisting CSOs and reorienting their own strategies. The IFIs are only a part of a canon of external helpers, necessitating for other donors, especially the bilaterals, to also engage substantially in a singular, country-owned anti-poverty strategy to make PRSPs effective. This may mean that the donors must be willing to not only change their mindset but also the way they assist, by for example, moving away from the project based financing to budget support. While agencies like the UN, DFID, and the EU have supported the process, the level of enthusiasm is not uniform across all donors (Booth 2001, McGee et al. 2001). Bilateral agencies also seem uncertain on how best to harmonize PRSPs with their own programming tools (UNDP 2001).

3.6 The process has been constrained by technical incompetence of CSOs, availability of time, financial resources, and bureaucratic-political facilitation. While reluctance on the part of the government to open up discussions on technical topics is a hindrance, CSOs' or the poor's own 'economic illiteracy' is a constraint that often leads to the endorsement of old package of policies (Christian Aid 2001). NGOs recommend that the IFIs must invest in institutional capacity and enhance the skill base of national groups to equip them to engage in meaningful policy discussions. Capacity constraint is not only confined to the area of policy discourse, but also participatory data collection and budgeting. The few participatory poverty assessments that have been done so far have been donor-led efforts, but CSOs and governments will need to adopt these methodologies if they are to inform policy on a sustainable basis (OPM 2001).

3.7 CSOs have been distracted from their traditional work of advocacy, social mobilization, and service delivery. Some NGOs point out that their engagement in PRSP involves a serious trade off. While the IFIs always gain from their input, they were diverting their scarce resources from mobilization and development work, and giving confusing signals regarding where they stand on 'corporate driven globalization' (Jubilee South et al. 2001). ICFTU (2001) says while it ought to participate actively in a process like the PRSP, it cannot also afford to divert resources from their foremost priority of

organizing workers in unorganized sectors. Almost all NGOs call for greater resource availability to help them participate better.

3.8 Attempts to create synergy with other instruments need improvement. Whether the PRSP process can shift the mechanism of formulating national poverty policies and implementing them in a sustainable manner are critically influenced by the 'density' of previous reforms, argues Booth (2001). This is particularly true for reforms in public finance through the introduction of MTEF and reshuffling of incentive regimes in the civil service. Danish MFA (2001) states that only in Uganda was PRSP fully integrated with the MTEF; and discussion on how to proceed with such integration has only begun now in other countries.

3.9 There is no direct link between a political regime *per se* and the quality of a participatory process. But correlates of democracy such as press freedom, history of and openness to civic organization, etc. are conducive. Most PRSP countries, especially in Africa, are semi-democratized, patronage-based political systems with fragmented policy processes, aid dependency and low levels of accountability (Booth 2001). The success of the PRS processes is thus more connected with micro aspects of functioning of a regime than the overall regime type. That countries like China and Vietnam have reduced poverty dramatically, while others with more open civic processes have not, implies that the value of participation in poverty reduction strategies can be enhanced when they are brought to bear on better institutional performance. Countries where the government allows citizen involvement in areas of governance, such as accountability of public funds and citizen monitoring of public service have been able to build on the experience and conduct participatory processes effectively for PRSPs. Uganda for instance offers a good model. Predating the PRSPs, CSOs had been monitoring district level Poverty Action Funds and reporting results to government, and publicizing them in the media. An institutional window in the form of the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project allowed the government to interface with civic groups collaboratively. A 1997 Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) was what was later revised into a PRSP with inputs from a CSO Task Force led by the Uganda Debt Network (McGee et al. 2001). Political will, domestic capacity to lead and manage a process, and substantial donor assistance to participatory processes have combined to make the Uganda experience stand out. It signals that it is the correlates of a democratic environment, not the system *per se*, that are conducive to effective citizen participation and its impact on poverty reduction.

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Report II
**Participation in
Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers**

A Review



January 2002

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SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE IPRSP REVIEW

This review examines the 33 Interim PRSPs completed by October 2001 with respect to the intent of participation. The review involved designing a IPRSP Questionnaire to seek answers to the following broad questions: i) What was the state of in-country participation prior to the initiation of the PRSP process, ii) How was the IPRSP process launched, and how did it advance, iii) What features and *intentions* are mentioned in the Participatory Action Plan in terms of quality, representation, content, and monitoring, iv) Information Dissemination, vi) Donor Support and Innovation, and vi) Overall Assessment. Four or five sub-questions were created under these topics that would be rated either on a Yes/No basis or on a scale of 1 to 3 indicating degrees of sophistication in ascending order. No weights were assigned to different questions or sections, and thus no composite score or index was computed. While the exercise is a partially rigorous attempt to quantify thoroughly qualitative variables, because of hugely differing country circumstances, the purpose is not to rank countries, but present the state as it is in individual cases. To the extent possible, regional inferences are drawn.

To ensure as much consistency as possible in what are essentially subjective evaluations, reviewers were assigned the reading and evaluating of the IPRSP documents at a regional level. Sub-Saharan Africa (20 countries), Europe and Central Asia (8 countries) and Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East comprise of the rest (5 countries). Because of the location bias in the sample, the review takes greater stock of cases from Africa, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. The review is a desk-assessment, and while informal corroboration of selective information has occurred with sources outside the Social Development Unit, we categorically state that the review is static, document-centric, and is generally not informed by accounts from the site. IPRSPs also did not require an elaborate participatory process. It has to be recognized that processes in many of the IPRSP countries has advanced in a substantial way since they completed their IPRSPs and moved towards the preparation of PRSPs. This review thus suffers from a time-lag.

The rankings are summed up in a table that is structured along three dimensions: Form, Outcome, and Sustainability. The sub-questions from the questionnaire are converted into variables which are then assigned to each of the three pillars. Under Form, the variables considered are, Institutional Preparedness, Stakeholder Analysis and Preparation of Participatory Plans, Authorship, Intra-government participation, Parliamentary Involvement, CSO and Private Sector Participation, Document Disclosure and Access, and Synergy. Under Outcome, we look at to what extent participation has been planned to influence the analysis and description of Poverty, Macroeconomic choices, Public Expenditures, Gender, etc. Under Sustainability, the variables looked at are Positive Externalities, Donor Involvement, Government Commitment, etc.

KEY FINDINGS

1. **Country Specificity.** Country circumstances vary significantly affecting the scale and substance of participation widely across regions. It was observed in most ECA that constraints to engaging in meaningful participatory exercises came more from the legacy of planned economy and authoritarian system than existing legislative or political frameworks. This signals that the package of solutions to enhancing better participation should go beyond technical solutions and take stock of how historical processes influence prevailing mindsets and current mindsets. Many African IPRSP countries are still recovering from the immediate pasts of civil war, internal strife, and severe government instability. These seem to have immediate implications on the extent and quality of participation. They also necessitate the process to be assessed against the background of a particular country. A generalized criteria for evaluation applied to all of them might poses a risk of distorted policy implications.

2. **Institutional Preparedness.** In recognition of the importance of the PRSP vehicle, almost all countries indicated a high level of political and institutional commitment. Steering Committees were set up mostly at the cabinet level with usually ministries such as Finance or Planning delegated the task of daily administration. Except Mali, Ethiopia, Niger, and Zambia in Africa, and Moldova in ECA, all countries score an acceptable rating of 2 or 3. The African caucus of the listed four comes as a surprise because all of them indicate history of some participatory processes. Unavailability of sufficient time was reported as a prime reason for their unpreparedness to lead and manage the IPRSP process. But in the IPRSPs themselves, 19 of the 20 African countries clearly indicate that they either already have or plan to steer the Full PRSPs through a high-level committee with some form of CSO representation. Countries like Ghana that have undertaken in recent past major national poverty reduction strategies have found it convenient to link up their existing process to the IPRSPs and give continuity to the old committees. In these countries thus the PRSP process has grown organically positively affecting the quality of PRS content, e.g., Kyrgyz Republic.

3. **Stakeholder Analysis and Participation Plans.** Whether countries have approached participation in a structured manner in theory can be gauged through their expression of intent in participation plans, including the conduct of stakeholder analysis. Countries were evenly split when judged if they had done a formal stakeholder analysis or not. While the quality of a participatory process depended more on how widely the government publicized the consultation process and how liberally it sought external opinion, it is worth noting that most West African states claim to have had done a formal stakeholder analysis. It is impossible to trace this incidence to overall quality of participation, however. A larger number of countries indicate the preparation of a participation plan. But in general they are not well-defined and vary in scope. These plans include references to planned consultations, workshops, seminars, and some mention sector-level participation from design through monitoring, but none delineate specifically what method will be employed by whom, where, and to achieve what end. This raises a prevalent concern that countries might be treating participation more ritually and not analyzing if it

can add substantive value to poverty reduction or better governance in their countries. There are instances however where participation plans have been judged to be elaborate prompting a Bank-Fund Joint Staff Assessment to call it 'overly ambitious', as in Mongolia.

4. **Participation Type.** On the information sharing – consultation – collaboration-empowerment continuum of intensity of participation, almost all countries are located on the lower half of the spectrum, indicating that the idea of opening processes of governance to civic scrutiny has now been accepted almost universally, but the threshold that determines how far the process should go is a function of government willingness and civic capacity. Barring countries with very recent history of centralized administration with non-existent civil society such as Azerbaijan and Macedonia, or countries like Yemen in the Middle East, all countries in our IPRSP sample of 32 indicated that information sharing and consultations with non-government actors has been routinized in policymaking. But these are often confined to capital cities with direct feedback of the rural poor not explicitly accommodated. In ECA, a common instrument proposed in IPRSPs to solicit views of the poor is through surveys devised technocratically.

5. **Authorship.** The drafting of IPRSPs was largely a secluded exercise with limited intra and extra government participation. In ECA countries, the initial drafting was often done by a few individuals at the Ministry of Finance only opening the process up at a later stage. In Africa too, the drafting was done by individuals in a specialized government department. Civil society groups were not involved at the drafting stage in any country, but typically, prepared drafts were then submitted for discussion foremost within the government technical groups where CSO participation was often present. Actual authorship thus resides in governments, but to a very narrow group. Alleged active Bank-Fund roles in actually writing documents for the countries as in the past has ceased, although most countries acknowledge officially that the advisory role of the IFIs in shaping the content and structure of the IPRSPs was substantial. Sao Tome is the only country where the government's role in writing the document seems reduced, although it is not clear who was active in its place.

6. **Intra-government participation.** The process is clearly driven by the core ministries of finance and planning with line ministries like education and health playing only secondary roles through committee representation. The level of involvement of line ministries ranges from information sharing to actual co-production of draft, but vertical intra-government participation with the local bodies is very limited except in Benin and Lesotho. Benin and Laos are the only countries where the line ministries seem to have taken a more active role in the process than the core ministries. A very balanced involvement of the core and line ministries, and local governments, seem to have occurred in Lesotho, Guinea, and Guinea Bissau. In ECA especially, local governments were out of the process, except the Kyrgyz Republic and on the way to the full PRSP, the mayoralty in Albania.

7. Parliamentary Involvement. While the exact role of the parliaments in informing, debating or approving the IPRSPs is unclear in many countries, only in Rwanda, Madagascar and Kenya does it appear that the IPRSPs were formally approved by the legislature. Individual MPs were consulted in some cases, but overall, the issue of extensive parliamentary involvement is divisive. A prevailing view seems to be that since the legislature has a clear prerogative over the approval of budgets and MTEFs, the production process of PRSPs should rest with the government. This is challenged by an assertion that parliamentary engagement is necessary for broad national ownership.

8. CSO Participation. Except Azerbaijan, Laos and Yemen, most domestic NGOs were involved in some form in the process. But non-conventional NGOs, especially community groups, or poor's and women's organizations did not by and large receive a noticeable attention. Guinea stands out for its broad representation of constituents, but the range of participants in other countries in general does not seem to be diverse, or at least not reported to be diverse. It is also very difficult to infer from the IPRSPs how participants were selected. Very few set an objective criteria, and a few even mention that participants were selected either randomly or based on past relations.

9. Private Sector Participation. Most plans are growth-oriented, and explicitly recognize the role of the private sector in spurring growth, but plans to engage the private sector at par with the CSOs is not well-articulated in IPRSPs. Only 7 of the 20 African countries, for instance, mention a possibility of private sector involvement in full PRSP. In Guyana, however, the IPRSP drew on two private-sector friendly processes – the Carter Center's development strategy and the Business Summit that was organized by the President to chart a new course for growth and investment. In Georgia, a business alliance was engaged in I-PRSP.

10. Document Disclosure and Access. Country performances on how widely they shared the IPRSP draft among different actors, whether the documents were made publicly accessible, and if the content of the PRSPs were planned to be effectively disseminated vary greatly. Guyana, Kenya and the Kyrgyz Republic stand out for presenting clear dissemination plans. The issue of general translation of documents into local languages is largely unspecified, although countries like Vietnam have written the entire document in Vietnamese, not in English as is often the case. In Guyana, the government planned to make extensive use of electronic and print media to inform the public of the contents of the PRSP as well as solicit their participation by calling in their questions and comments. The IPRSP was also planned to be serialized in the local language newspapers.

11. Synergy and Linkages with Other Processes. Most countries in Africa indicate that they have not only made use of previous institutional set-ups and results of national consultations for preparing development plans and past poverty assessments and surveys, but the IPRSPs were tied wherever possible to other processes. Such synergistic approaches have in general led to better quality too. The Kyrgyz Republic stands out in ECA for the

simultaneously advanced process of the long-term CDF and the medium-term PRSP process. This has directly enhanced the process and quality of the content of IPRSP.

12. Data Availability. Access to up-to-date data on poverty seems to have affected the quality of analysis in IPRSPs. Twelve of the 17 African countries, for example, mention that the quality of data they had at the time IPRSPs were launched was deficient by either being outdated or missing key variables. In some instances, the IPRSP process itself triggered new household surveys as in Guinea Bissau. Those like Kenya that had just done a Participatory Poverty Assessment prior to the IPRSPs were better placed. Countries in general have been seen to be versatile in both adapting previously done work to IPRSP, and mentioning new needs under planned activities in IPRSPs. The intention to meet rigorous data needs through new Household surveys appears as priority plan in most documents.

13. Poverty Analysis. Almost all documents talk about the poor and poverty as a monolithic group and issue. The extent of dis-aggregation is not detailed enough. While sections on poverty profile still differentiate between subgroups of poor as rural, urban, women or minorities, the section on strategic directions rarely picks this variance up subsuming the poor into one homogenous group if mentioned at all requiring uniform policy treatment. References to the hardships of pensioners or children are found, but these are exceptions than the norm. The presentation of poverty issues is more descriptive. They rarely analyze the causes and courses of poverty. When we look at whether participation has been planned in IPRSPs for a better understanding of poverty, one fifth of the countries in our sample rate very well, while over half rate moderately. Considering that the discussion on the causes, symptoms and remedies of poverty is one area that participatory approaches can substantially influence, there remains a lot to be done here.

14. Public Expenditures and Macroeconomic Issues. No country has indicated that it seeks to engage CSOs in influencing the debates on public finance and macroeconomic choices in a substantial manner. Four to five countries mention the topic, but overwhelmingly, around 80% of the documents are silent on their intention to involve participation in these technical areas. Given a direct link between poverty reduction and economic policies, planned CSO engagement in poverty diagnosis only indicates a less than optimal use of participatory methods to affect development outcomes. Country plans to engage CSOs in evaluating the performance of public service entities is not extensive, but around 30% of the sample does indicate plans for some form of civic engagement.

15. Inclusion of Gender in Policy Context. Most countries don't fare well in adequately engendering the content of the IPRSPs. No country received the highest rating; but reflecting that the issue is recognized partially, around half of our sample countries make an attempt to disaggregate issues that relate to and impact on men and women differently. This is however usually confined to columns of poverty statistics and rarely developed into specific corrective strategies. In ECA countries, gender impact and other social content of policies is

regularly absent. Proposed participation strategies also fail to include women's groups and institutions in the consultative process.

16. Positive Externalities. As the PRSP process opens up new space for citizen involvement in policy influence and implementation, one positive development is increased coordination of activities amongst non-governmental actors promising increased effectiveness on their part. In 12 of the 20 African countries, some forms of NGO networks have been mentioned to have emerged with the intention of influencing the PRSP formulation and its implementation. In Guyana, the government itself pledged to create an NGO umbrella to coordinate their activities. Another positive externality is the drafting of new legal strictures that facilitate participation. In Cambodia, the government proposed to pass a 'NGO Law' to provide clear operational guidelines, while in Bolivia a long-dormant 'Participation Law' has been activated as a result of the PRSP process. The IPRSP process is also influencing changing of government processes. In Lao, for example, as part of a decentralization strategy, the government has reallocated resources from the central ministries to the local administrations with the responsibility of 'macro management' at the local level in security, economic development and socio-cultural protection. In ECA, NGO involvement came shortly before the IPRSPs were finalized, and evolved positively on the way to Full PRSPs.

17. Monitoring and Evaluation. Most IPRSPs (29 out of 32) indicate a plan to monitor and evaluate poverty outcomes in a participatory manner, but they are all short of specific operational details on who the governments plan to involve. CSOs, IFIs, and donors are mentioned without the roles being delineated as intended participants in M&E in around 60% of the cases.

18. Government Commitment. Reviewers of the individual IPRSPs get the sense that Governments seem committed to the process, as evidenced by setting up high-level committees and other institutional arrangements. Motivations cannot be inferred from official documents. In one third of the sample countries, government commitment has been rated 'substantial' and in over half of them, 'very high'. It is difficult to infer from IPRSP documents what constraints countries face in hosting and managing an effective participatory process. Many are silent on constraints to participation, especially factors that could have political implications. Nine countries in our sample mention however that their two most common constraints are funding and an adequate participation base line.

19. Donor Involvement. There are examples of at least a few major donors who have pledged to help the participatory process in some substantial way by either giving money, technical assistance or partaking in sustained consultation. This is so in around 60% of the IPRSP countries. In ECA especially, while Bank-Fund prodding seems to have promoted the participation agenda, the governments seem receptive to the suggestion of widening the scope of participation in preparing full PRSPs.

List of IPRSP Countries as of October 2001

1	Armenia	March 1, 2001
2	Azerbaijan	May 1, 2001
3	Benin	June 26, 2000
4	Cambodia	October 1, 2000
5	Cameroon	August 23, 2000
6	C.A.R.	December 13, 2000
7	Chad	July 16, 2000
8	Ethiopia	November 1, 2000
9	Gambia	October 5, 2000
10	Georgia	November 1, 2000
11	Ghana	June 1, 2000
12	Guinea	October 30, 2000
13	Guinea-Bissau	September 1, 2000
14	Guyana	October 30, 2000
15	Kenya	July 13, 2000
16	Kyrgyz Republic	June 13, 2001
17	Lao, PDR	March 20, 2001
18	Lesotho	December 1, 2000
19	Macedonia, FYR	November 10, 2000
20	Madagascar	November 20, 2000
21	Malawi	August 1, 2000
22	Mali	July 19, 2000
23	Moldova	November 15, 2000
24	Mongolia	September 27, 2001
25	Niger	October 6, 2000
26	Rwanda	November 30, 2000
27	Sao Tome & Principe	April 6, 2000
28	Senegal	May 8, 2000
29	Sierra Leone	September 21, 2001
30	Tajikistan	March 24, 2000
31	Vietnam	March 14, 2001
32	Yemen	December 1, 2000
33	Zambia	July 7, 2000

List of PRSP Countries as of November 2001

1	Albania	November 1, 2001
2	Bolivia	March 1, 2001
3	Burkina Faso	May 25, 2000
4	Honduras	September 27, 2001
5	Mauritania	December 13, 2000
6	Mozambique	October 1, 2001
7	Nicaragua	September 13, 2001
8	Tanzania	October 1, 2000
9	Uganda	March 24, 2000

Report III
**Participation in
Final Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers**

A Review



January 2002

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SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

This review examines the 9 final PRSPs completed by November 2001. The review involved looking at actual PRSP documents, internal assessments carried out by World Bank and IMF staff and country specific external assessments by other non-Bank and Fund stakeholders. This report should be read in conjunction with the World Bank Social Development's following two outputs that it supplements: i) Synthesis of External Assessments of Participation in PRSPs, and ii) Review of Interim PRSPs. This report would be further supplemented by country specific cases describing the process and outcomes in the 9 countries.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. Most countries have drawn on previous processes of preparing national development strategies, and have followed with modest changes the Participatory Action Plan (PAP) outlined in the IPRSPs** Most countries reviewed have drawn on the content of their most immediate development strategies. This is contrary to the general perception that PRSP is externally imposing a new framework incongruent with national plans. In Mozambique it was the Lines of Action for the Eradication of Absolute Poverty (1999) and Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA); In Tanzania it was the 1997 National Poverty Eradication Strategy; In Uganda it was the 1997 Uganda Poverty Eradication Action Plan (UPEAP); In Burkina Faso and Mauritania, governments formed national commissions to coordinate efforts in poverty circa 1998; In Bolivia, “Proposals Against Poverty” was prepared in 1997. Often, countries have adapted their existing strategies and institutions to pursuing the PRSP, and have drawn on poverty assessments and other research as supplementary inputs to PRSPs, as in Mozambique. Even the idea of producing national plans in a participatory manner is not wholly new to all countries. In both Honduras and Nicaragua, for example, a special crisis situation posed by the 1998 Hurricane Mitch triggered a consultative preparation of master plans for reconstruction and transformation. The PRSP process has drawn on mechanisms put in place then to prepare for relief efforts. In Albania, the PAP significantly improved with the inclusion of private sector and the local governments in consultations. All countries indicate that they have followed features of the IPRSP PAPs, but it has typically taken a longer period of time than anticipated. In Bolivia, the process was delayed by one year.
- 2. Participation triggered by the PRSP process has been significant at the policy level with high level of politico-institutional commitment in most countries.** Following the completion of IPRSPs, all countries formally set up steering committees usually chaired at the ministerial level complemented by inter-ministry thematic working groups, except Bolivia. These institutional arrangements have often been elaborate with setting up of many committees as in Albania, Nicaragua, and Burkina Faso. If the level of political commitment is gauged by bureaucratic arrangements, the PRSPs have attracted the highest political attention in almost all countries with several processes anchored at the president’s or the prime minister’s office. However, in countries with multi-party polities, not handing opposition parties delicately often poses the risk of derailing a process if, following an election, a party disowns the previous government’s programs. In Bolivia, the opposition did not endorse the PRSP and in Honduras, two key NGO networks that facilitated PRSP consultations withdrew their membership from a bigger alliance thus reducing the legitimacy. In countries like Albania that carry a legacy of central planning and civic inactivity, or those like Mauritania with special geographic circumstances, the mere idea of opening government processes to citizens for the first time ever has been interpreted positively. Formation of committees and thematic working groups alone has not, however, meant that they have been functional. One of the four working groups in Albania does not seem to have been active. Often the drafting and coordinating of inputs have been Ministry

of Finance led, but intra-government collaboration has intensified as a result of the process. In PRSP countries like Honduras, where five presidential candidates were made to debate the strategies, individual MPs in general have played important roles during consultations. This was the case in Nicaragua even though the parliament as an institution was. In Burkina Faso and Mauritania, however, their parliaments approved the PRSPs. Institutional arrangements have been set up to facilitate consultations in PRSPs as happened in Nicaragua by the creation of the National Council for Social and Economic Planning. For the same purpose, new regulations have emerged in the context of the PRSP preparation. Nicaragua and Bolivia are enhancing their legal frameworks with legislation on public participation in public policy. Dissemination strategies have improved much from the IPRSP stage with increasing mobilization of newspapers ads, TV, internet, brochures, etc. Donor engagement has also increased heavily since the IPRSP phase .

3. The range and composition of CSO representation has been deficient, but feedback from consultations has been presented in a structured and transparent manner.

As outlined in PAPs, consultations begun immediately after the IPRSPs were prepared in differing forms across countries. PRSPs mention a lot of numbers – often tens of consultations and hundreds of participants. This could be criticized as promoting a ritualistic understanding of participation, but the list usually conveys a sense of rich diversity in representation – from Catholic Churches, trade unions and the private sector to youth organizations, the media and donors. PRSPs do acknowledge, however, that there were constraints to deepening and widening the process to all constituents to a desired extent. As a case from Albania illustrates where representation in a technical working group remained a point of dispute, managing CSO participation could be a very political subject. In Bolivia, important coalitions of NGOs and the Church led a parallel consultative process with miners, indigenous people and small producers, only merging with the formal PRSP process much later. There does seem to be a systematic attempt however to organize the view points of participants in a structured manner and later append them to the PRSP document. To what extent these views influenced the content of the Papers is not always clear. But they are made available transparently for purposes of contrasting. These have taken form of a “Matrix of Demands of the Sectors of Society Consulted” as in Mozambique, proceedings of plenary sessions and CSO recommendations for economic policies as in Nicaragua; and in Albania, CSO inputs were channeled in a structured manner through the formally established CS Advisory Groups.

4. There are cases of specific policy changes as a result of participation, in addition to the enriching of the analysis and description of poverty; but macroeconomic issues and the broad development model remain unchallenged and consistent across countries.

CSO inputs have typically influenced the sectoral agenda of health, nutrition, education, and widened the definition and multi-dimensional understanding of poverty. The technical agenda – on aspects of liberalization, stabilization and privatization is, however, often not even on the discussion table. There is no PRSP case where CSOs have successfully challenged and altered the development paradigm for their country. Development strategies

across countries conspicuously conform to the neo-liberal growth framework advanced by the IFIs. Even countries like Uganda that have a rich history of macro-level participation do not indicate that civic inputs have substantially shaped the direction of ongoing fiscal and agricultural reforms. In Tanzania, however, as a direct result of citizen lobbying, primary school fees were abolished, higher priority was attached to community driven development projects and employment schemes were created for the poor.

5. **Participation has often brought the subject of decentralization to center stage and opened space for citizen action in areas of public service delivery and accountability.** In line with a purported goal of participation in PRSPs to enhance country ownership and accountability, there is growing evidence that issues of governance are increasingly being influenced by the PRSP process. Participatory District Planning in Mozambique has been proposed to engage citizens in the assessment of public service delivery. It also plans to adopt legislation on state local institutions to enable participatory planning and identifies the poorest districts where this will be done with high priority. The Albanian PRSP also endorses a move towards greater decentralization. Increasing work is being done by CSOs in monitoring public expenditures and this is recognized in some PRSPs. Participatory PERs and expenditure tracking instruments are proposed to be undertaken in Tanzania. In Albania, building of skill base of civil society organizations to engage in participatory budgeting was identified as a priority. Participation is being planned to influence resource allocations in MTEFs in Uganda, drawing on the country's well-known cases of expenditure tracking in education and health systems. The Ugandan PRSP also proposes to use participatory approaches for decentralized service delivery in agriculture, education, among other sectors. But these dwell more on lower-intensity forms of participation like information sharing, and the intentions to engage village councils in enhancing public accountability fall short of clear plans.

6. **Specific issues related to gender and ethnic minorities are being addressed for the first time, but still not in requisite depth.** Participation of groups with specific concerns like women and ethnic minorities, or the Trade Unions, have demanded special policy responses to their unique concerns. In Honduras, special programs have been introduced aimed at promoting gender and ethnic equality. But corrective measures are not deep enough and only focus on measures of cursory redress like preferential job opportunities, not structural changes. Some PRSPs, Albania's and Mauritania's, for instance, are especially weak on addressing gender concerns, with women's issues only superficially addressed in poverty profiles. In countries like Nicaragua, while a systematic gender perspective is not applied, select policy analyses do contain gender considerations covering issues of violence against women.

7. **Not enough attention has been given to participation in implementation and monitoring, and greater emphasis on formulation has left the impression of 'participation fatigue' and cynicism.** Most PRSPs mention an intention to set up monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress. From planned introduction of new statistical packages

in Nicaragua to creating performance indicators in Burkina Faso and Bolivia, all governments recognize that implementation and monitoring phase of the plans is crucial. However institutional arrangements for implementation are often weak conveying the impression of a 'missing middle'. A relatively vague enunciation of participation in M&E indicates a front-heavy participation process. In Mozambique, progress in implementation of the PRSP is to be documented in an annual poverty report for presentation to the parliament. The emphasis on consultations and information sharing at earlier phases is a good start, but as the extent of decentralization and devolution of public administration increases, it will be more important to include collaborations with CBOs. There also seem instances where participation is being done for the sake of it in a fragmented manner at different places with different constituencies. When these are not coordinated, chances that they reflect in the final documents are slim leading to disillusion among participants and suggestion of a prevalent 'participation fatigue'. The major challenge is to move away from inorganic forms of consultation to organic forms of collaboration and dialogue through sustained alliance building, for example.

8. **Many new civil society networks and institutional arrangements of interaction between government and civil society have emerged, but intensive period of capacity building is required to sustain the quality of engagement.** Alliances and networks of NGOs once formed are seen to adapt to new challenges. In Honduras, the Civil Society Participation Commission formed in the aftermath of the 1998 Hurricane later facilitated national consultations by mobilizing its members: the Municipality Association, Chambers of Commerce, and an NGO network. Stocks of civic capacity differ radically across countries however. In Albania for example, the government-NGO interface was being facilitated by an international NGO. CSOs are also increasingly resorting to legal endorsements. Participation has activated a dormant Citizen Participation Law in Bolivia, and in Mauritania a legal framework for CSO participation has been designed, where a program to 'professionalize' them is also in place. Governments like that in Uganda which have already institutionalized participatory feedback mechanisms at the ministry level are better placed to sustain avenues for citizen influence in policy. But even their long-established NGO outfits like the Uganda Debt Network lack adequate skills to inform technical debates. Capacity building efforts can thus be expected to yield better results if they are coincided with a period of an active participatory process.

WAYS FORWARD: STRENGTHENING AND DEEPENING PARTICIPATION IN PRSPS

Going beyond documents -- participation in implementation and monitoring of PRSPs.

Many proposed actions focus more on the participatory processes related to production of document, and less on the participatory processes in implementation and monitoring of the strategy and the development of institutional arrangements and mechanisms that improve quality and enable participatory processes to be ongoing. It is unrealistic to develop rigorous standards of participation for the initial process. If most stakeholders know that they can influence participation in subsequent implementation and monitoring and there are institutional mechanisms for making it happen in various sectors, the problem of high expectations can be obviated. One of the proposed actions could be identification of participatory mechanisms in areas/sectors/issues for implementation and monitoring (e.g. service delivery, public accountability on expenditures etc). The present description of participatory processes is very much focused on what happens before production of a document.

The emphasis should be on **development of multi-stakeholder self assessments and learning mechanisms on participatory processes and PRSPs at the country level and sharing across countries**. There is a need for the development of internal benchmarks at the country level and then monitoring and assessing progress on a periodic basis (through progress reports). Most of the stakeholders are not in favor of setting up very rigorous detailed standards or process conditionality centrally as these tend to become procedural and bureaucratic. There should be space for domestic stakeholders to do independent assessments such as citizen report cards on PRSPs, where their feedback could be incorporated in both PRSP documentation and progress reports. The important objective is to **create space for joint learning and assessment at the country level**.

Many of the assessments of PRSP are also talking about a limited impact of participatory process on content of PRSP. It would be critical to be more strategic about the limitations of the upstream process on content and emphasize some focus areas/sectors within PRSP where more investment would be made in downstream participatory process. If each PRSP is able to focus on some areas for improvement of content, participatory processes may have more impact. We could propose that **PRSP select some specific issues for more downstream and intensive participation**.

Another issue emerging is that the PRSP process has provided more space for intra government participation (parliaments, local governments and decentralization). Most assessments also indicate that in context of decentralization many local governments are frustrated that they do not have specific role to play in PRSP formulation and monitoring. **A specific focus on decentralization and local governments (e.g. Mayors in Albania) would be to improve the quality of participatory process and decentralization**. Since parliamentarians are being included as a special focus, it might be also useful to focus on decentralized local governments.

A final point about increased resources to improve the quality and increase capacity at the country level to deepen and improve the quality of participatory process. We need a

mechanism like a **competitive challenge fund to enable both government and civil society institutions to innovate, learn and implement participatory approaches.**