



PRSP IS ABOUT PEOPLE

Experiences and reflections with partner
organisations in five African countries:

Cameroon, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana and Tanzania

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Executive Summary

The present document is the joint presentation of the results of a consultation process the three German aid agencies, the Church Development Service (EED), Bread for the World (BfW) and Misereor, together with the German research Institute SÜDWIND carried out with their partner organisations in five African countries: Cameroon, the Democratic Republic (DR) Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana and Tanzania. It also includes analysis of African and Northern NGOs as well as our own reflections on the subjects treated:

- Evaluation of the chances and experiences in **participation** in the PRSP process.
- Evaluation of the **macroeconomic framework** and its coherence with PRSP strategies.
- Evaluation of the situation in DR Congo as a **post-conflict country**.

Sharing the experiences of the partner organisations and consultations and wider analysis we also want to make a contribution to the current review process carried out by the International Financing Institutions. A summary of the findings is listed here together with some key recommendations. For further recommendations see the respective chapters in the document.

Participation

In countries with comparatively good governance (Ghana, Tanzania), the dialogue with the central government was more far reaching than in countries with authoritarian governmental structures (Cameroon, Ethiopia). However, some conclusions can be generalized to a certain extent and confirm the results of similar experience collections and studies. First of all, even in advanced PRSP - processes, consultation rather than real participation was the rule. The dominance of the central government, exclusion from certain topics (macroeconomic issues), the lack of participation in the poverty diagnostic and a general lack of meaningful involvement with regard to the process, are all factors that add up to this finding.

Where Civil Society was involved in monitoring processes and where the dialogue during the implementation and review of PRSP has been maintained, there was a higher sense of ownership. However, this is the exception rather than the rule.

A lack of capabilities with regard to participatory monitoring, budget monitoring and economic literacy, as well as a lack of resources have further limited the possibilities of participation. There is also a lack of awareness among many Civil Society Organisations (CSO), especially in the rural areas, about the newly-created possibilities of participation in decision-making. This can be attributed partly to a lack of information, lack of motivation, fear of repression and the belief that the opportunities for participation are not promising.

There must be an end to **international dominance**, especially in the field of macroeconomic policies. Southern governments and the CSO community must be given the certainty that sustainable alternative ways of poverty reduction will not be rejected, even if based on economic strategies other than the standard macroeconomic framework. If the strategy best suited for poverty alleviation is not in line with this macroeconomic framework, multilateral institutions and donor countries should stick to their word and let the stakeholders determine their way of development.

Key recommendations are:

- Consultation must be transformed into sustained participation by widening the stages and topics at which CSO have a word, as well as widening the range of participating civil society by including the grassroots better.
- Capacity building must be improved both for national and local administration as well as CSO and the poor themselves.

Macroeconomic stability

Empirical evidence shows that in the analysed countries of this consultation, growth has not been pro poor. Fiscal discipline for instance, although being a desirable objective, has not been placed sufficiently in a broad development perspective. This means that fiscal discipline was neither oriented towards poverty reduction nor has it been used as an instrument to overcome functional inequalities. If managed efficiently government spending can contribute to increase aggregate demand and generate employment through an increase in output.

Strategies which promoted large-scale private investment exclusively and discriminated public investment often failed because poor countries are not sufficiently attractive for foreign direct in-

vestment and don't have well developed financial markets. To improve the environment for investment in poor countries both public and private investment are crucial. But in the five country cases of this report, public investment in essential infrastructure such as rural roads, energy and irrigation was insufficient especially due to the scarcity of capital and external support.

Most important, however, is the determined will to integrate the people themselves in the discussion of macroeconomic issues. This includes both, capacitating the people through the enhancement of economic literacy, and the acceptance of sustainable alternative economic models that are based on other assumptions than the predominant neoliberal framework.

Key recommendations are:

- PRSP have to prioritise pro poor expenditures and adjust fiscal discipline to this priority. Fiscal discipline must not stand in the way of poverty reduction.
- Several policy recommendation priorities to achieve macroeconomic stability have to be revised, such as for example in the fields of trade liberalisation, public investment and labour markets policy to have the poor benefit more from growth.

Countries in conflict situation

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is facing a humanitarian catastrophe, which is a big challenge for international cooperation. As the World Bank recognises, massive external assistance is needed for the current efforts not only to succeed in the implementation of PRSP but also to restore political stability and economic growth in the DRC.

Due to the still existing weaknesses of government institutions, the government and CSO are forced and ready to cooperate. They have already implemented a process of participatory poverty diagnostic and analysis. This constitutes an impressive chance of participation for civil society, including the community level where people have learned to build their own survival strategies. However, NGO also encounter a number of institutional deficits that make it impossible for them to live up to all the expectations imposed on them and occupy the open spaces for participation effectively. Therefore, there is a strong need for more capacity building to equip CSO better to

take over their task and chances in the monitoring process.

Indeed, a strategic framework to promote the capabilities of poor people and their organisation is very important. Time has now come for donors to invest substantial financial resources in support of peace and recovery in DRC.

Key recommendations are:

- There is a fundamental need for capacity building especially with regard to participatory monitoring and evaluation. Both, more engagement and improved donor coordination of official and NGO cooperation should do this.
- Participation of civil society must not be restricted to the consultation process. Rather, the contents of good governance and macroeconomic stability should be opened up in the dynamics of the PRSP monitoring process.

I. Introduction

The new development strategy based on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) has completed its first five years of implementation with rather modest results all together. The criticism has been oriented towards various aspects of the strategy: country ownership, participation and the links to macroeconomic policies among others. The present document is the joint presentation of the results of a consultation process the three German aid agencies, the Church Development Service (EED), Bread for the World (BfW) and Misereor, together with the German research Institute SÜDWIND carried out with their partner organisations in five African countries: Cameroon, the Democratic Republic (DR) Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana and Tanzania. The objective was to understand the participatory experiences of partner organizations in the respective PRSP processes so far, to identify the deficits encountered, and to learn and discuss about the future perspectives of the partners in the second PRSP cycle ahead. We deliberately selected a range of different countries in various regions to get a differentiated picture of the results of the PRSP process in different stages of implementation and varied surroundings. There exist detailed country analysis on each of the countries written in German.

Within this framework several workshops and consultations were conducted with the partner organisations: In May 2004 the Tanzania Coalition on Debt and Development TCDD and Caritas Tanzania organized a national workshop to exchange experiences so far, improve monitoring capabilities and prepare for the second round of PRSP. Also in May 2004 consultations with the partner organisations in Ethiopia took place. This included the networks that have worked on PRSP (CRDA and the newly created Poverty Action Network PAN), as well as various institutions of the churches in Ethiopia and individual NGOs, working in the social sector. In September 2004 a workshop was conducted with partner organisations in Cameroon, where the three German development agencies have accompanied their partners right from the beginning of the PRSP process. This workshop was now for the first time conducted with the partners in the West Provinces of Cameroon, organised by the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon (PCC). Further consultations took place in Yaounde with BASC Caritas and the Federation of Evangelical and Methodist Churches (FEMEC). Also in September 2004 the nationally

recognized NGO SERACOB (Service de Renforcement des Appuis aux Communautés de Base en Afrique Centrale) organised a workshop in DR Congo, during which representatives of the country's 11 provinces came together and discussed with government representatives their experiences so far. Finally, in January 2005 the last workshop was organized in Ghana in cooperation with the African Development Program (AFD) and the national NGO network GAPVOD. The workshop discussed experiences of participation so far and examined perspectives for improved participation in the second round of PRSP.

Partners in these African countries and the three Church Development Agencies wish to share the experiences of those workshops and consultations and make a contribution to the current review process carried out by the International Financing Institutions. In doing so, we will focus on three subjects:

- As the evaluation of the opportunities and experiences in Participation in the PRSPs was the main concern of the consultations, this is the first key issue, which is treated subsequent to the introduction (Chapter II). This chapter follows more or less the key issues of the concept for the official PRS review of the World Bank and the IMF.
- The second focus will be on the macroeconomic framework of the PRSP. As partners frequently complained about the exclusion from co-determination on macroeconomic issues and even see PRSP goals contradicted by the applied growth strategies, we find it important to shed more light on certain aspects of this strategy, which is done in Chapter III. This chapter also includes analyses done by NGOs, that did not participate in the workshops as well as from other sources so far as we considered them in line with issues carried out by partners.
- A shorter chapter IV captures the experiences made in the DR Congo as a country in a post conflict situation. Countries in conflict are given a special status in the whole PRSP process.

We hope that this report adds to the valuable contributions that have been made by numerous NGOs in Africa and elsewhere. The results confirm the substance of what has been known and criticised in the PRSP process. The present analysis reflects the authors' opinion and does not necessarily coincide with the position of the aid agencies.

II. Broadening and deepening meaningful participation

PRSPs were meant to “broaden and deepen participation”. Therefore it is legitimate to ask for a relative improvement, in contrast to the level of participation that existed before the introduction of the PRSPs. If we choose that approach, one can find in all the analysed countries a more or less intensive progress of broadened participation. The requirement for a participatory process in the PRSP offers a new and valuable opportunity for CSOs to enter into or intensify a dialogue about national policy, which many CSOs especially on the national level, as well as international NGOs have taken up. In Ethiopia, even the very weak consultation process in the different regions of the country would certainly not have taken place without PRSP. The insistence of the international community has thus helped to open up the existing centralised and closed processes of policy making and some CSOs felt safer to articulate their concerns within an internationally recognized process. In Congo a very intense participation process in the formulation of the third pillar of the Interim PRSP concerning “community dynamics” has been a good opportunity to compensate the weaknesses of State structures. Despite existing institutional deficits CSOs managed to lead consultations for the official follow up process in most of the provinces in September 2004. Overall however, considerable criticism remains about the absolute achievements of participation and the great challenge is to implement a participatory follow up and monitoring process and to institutionalise participation.

Constraints to participation

In general, two distinct constraints to better participation can be identified in all countries, which are not new and have been pointed out before. First of all there is the aspect of international dominance, especially through the influence of the International Finance Institutions and imposed macroeconomic conditionality. They continue to believe that poverty eradication is predominantly based on conventional growth, making certain policies compulsory, such as trade liberalization and deregulation of financial markets, a restrictive stabilisation policy and privatisation of services. The macroeconomic stabilisation is given priority over country ownership and pro poor policies.

Rather harsh criticism in this respect comes from Caritas in Cameroon, but it certainly reflects the experiences and feelings of many CSO and people we have met: “The criteria of how to achieve the economic results in the countries that apply PRSP have a clearly neoliberal orientation and they have been elaborated entirely by the International Financing Institutions without broad participation of the country in question. The information to the people is that the country will not receive more money unless it meets these criteria.”

A second major constraint is the political hegemony in the countries themselves, which derive from historical contexts and different production conditions. Big landowners, dominating ethnical groups, corrupt state bureaucracy, etc. have very different notions of how a poverty focussed economic policy would look like as compared to marginal and small farmers, traders and producers or wage earners. Due to their political hegemony the elite has the power to push through their concepts with the help of the state machinery.

In the view of many CSOs, sufficient poverty reduction can only be achieved if, next to quantitative growth rates, qualitative features of redistribution and equality are taken into account (see Chap. III). This touches areas of privileges and benefits of the elite. The elite knows the type of criticism it is ready to accept and understand which structural changes are to their advantage. Due to differences in political influences, the social dispute takes place under unequal conditions. And formal democratic structures do little to bring about consensus, a basic concept of country ownership. Thus a PRSP does not reflect a balance of interest.

Opening up space for dialogue

The analysis of the partners in the workshops show that their countries – while having formal democratic systems – at best are in the process of developing a dialogue between government authorities and social partners including CSOs, trade unions and other associations of producers and peasants. Thus, the consultations within the PRSP processes have provided a certain impulse to these beginnings where they existed, and in some countries started them off. However, this dialogue was hampered by the two constraints mentioned above which translates into the following deficits:

First of all, virtually all CSOs of the partner consultation complain that macroeconomic topics

have been entirely excluded from the dialogue. Rather, this framework was set in the context of the PRGF credit lines, which generally preceded or paralleled the PRSP and was not on the agenda for PRSP consultation. This is also true for countries such as Tanzania, which has widely been seen as one of the most positive examples of participation. To many CSOs this exclusion is one of the biggest deficits of the process as it means that consenting in the PRSP they are implicitly asked to underwrite a set of policies which they themselves consider as counterproductive to poverty reduction strategies. Especially where participation was low, the danger of frustration is very high. In Cameroon, for example, the conclusion of Caritas (BASC) is that PRSP are not even pertinent to poverty reduction. "Whatever is done for us but without us, is done against us. The suppositions of the IFI are not adequate and leave the people in these countries in an unfavourable situation that does not permit them to take charge of their own development. To the contrary, in our opinion the IFI act as a brake or at least an obstacle to development, democracy and poverty reduction."

CSOs promote redistribution policies to achieve more equality and allow the poor to share the benefits of growth. Yet experiences of the ongoing adjustment policies show that the income gap, jobless growth and poverty in many areas have increased. Trade unions see the requirements for pro-poor growth best fulfilled if policies to create employment are introduced, thus labour market policies rather than privatisation strategies and deregulation of financial markets should be central to PRSP. Small scale producers and peasants promote policies which prioritize their access to assets such as land or micro credit. Yet, such inputs were mostly excluded from the dialogue.

Secondly, the dialogue was predominantly restricted to the national level. In some countries, the whole process has been concentrated in the region around the capital (Ghana), in Cameroon the two provinces in the North and the provinces in the West have been excluded from decisions and in DR Congo consultations in the first stage have been concentrated in Kinshasa. Where consultations on the regional level took place, they were a medium to inform the people and collect inputs, while the further dialogue was carried out in the capital (Ethiopia). And even in Tanzania, where participation processes were among the most advanced, transparency and the willingness and capability to cooperate were perceived to be

much bigger on the national level than with local governments. Time constraints especially in the formulation of the PRSP, as well as existing capacity constraints on the regional level are to be claimed responsible for these deficits.

Thirdly, participation was usually dependent on the initiative of the CSOs themselves. As central governments dominate the process, they also choose who they invite to the dialogue. Not only trade unions were often left out (DR Congo), especially CSOs, church institutions and their networks frequently complained that they had to fight their way into the processes (Ethiopia, even in Tanzania on the regional level).

Overall, it can be stated, that dialogue between the government and social partners is restricted to certain topics and has at best become more frequent, but is far from being something that can be taken for granted or will be part of the system from now on. Moreover, it generally has been perceived as being unsatisfactory, as dialogue leads to consultation but not to participation in decision making. This is valid – to a different extent in the various countries – for the national governments, and much more so for local authorities.

Involving stakeholders

Within civil society, there is a great diversity between the actors from powerful associations and NGO umbrella organisations to many dispersed initiatives in the cities and in the countryside. The extent to which the latter have been involved in the process varies considerably between the countries, yet one tendency remains for all: Generally big associations, and this is valid for business associations in the private sector as well as for NGO networks and internationally operating NGOs, had much better possibilities of participation than small and dispersed groups. The latter also is true for local authorities or ethnic communities.

Thus, in the formulation of the PRSP, predominantly NGOs located in the capital and those that are internationally supported were involved in the process. However, even they felt that they were often selected in an arbitrary manner, leaving out certain vital organizations, or that they had to fight their way to be invited. In Ghana or Tanzania think tanks and academia were involved in the process but not in a close cooperation with other organisations of civil society. Synergy effects could have been reached if these linkages had

been established. As the most active CSOs are often networks and most international organisations have partners all over the country, they mostly took over the task of dissemination and awareness building in the regions. This was equally important at the time the implementation of the PRSP and the monitoring started. Where the political environment and the institutions are reform-oriented, like in Tanzania, these exercises were successful, although they still depend on the resources and capacities of local authorities and local CSOs. In other countries, like in DR Congo, Ethiopia or Cameroon, the political environment clearly hampers these efforts.

The distribution of responsibilities amongst government authorities are not always clear and local authorities are frequently overstretched by the new standards, both with regard to new dialogue requirements and the need for more transparency, as well as with regard to the implementation of the PRSP and the management and monitoring of new resources. Even if they wanted to become more involved, they were not able or did not have possibilities to include their own ideas about local development and poverty problems in their regions. This was the experience in Kumbo and most provinces in the Anglophone West Region of Cameroon. Authorities there want to reduce regional disparities yet regret the lack of financial resources for it. These inputs were lost in the formulation and implementation of the PRSP.

On the other hand, local CSOs are usually not well informed of their rights and possibilities, if at all. The lack of transparency and uncertainty about the competence for the implementation of programs adds to this; when asked, CSOs on the local level feel that their experiences and capacities have not been considered. To those who are aware, PRSP often is only a new program which belongs to the government authorities alone, without participation of the people. This is much stronger in Ethiopia, where the restrictive structures have a direct influence on the local governments. But even in Tanzania with a friendly political environment, CSOs complained that on a local level, openness and transparency was frequently absent.

Generally, the deficits of involvement of stakeholders participating in this consultation process have been the following:

Lack of range: meaningful involvement was predominantly restricted to the capital, other bigger

cities or certain regions. CSOs that are based in these areas have a better chance of being involved. Consultations took place in some regional areas, but if a subsequent dialogue was established at all, it was between the national government and selected CSOs in the capital. In Cameroon, the Anglophone regions were strongly disadvantaged (ex.: they only have a French version of the document). Many poor don't speak the official languages at all. Generally, the non-organized civil society and the poor themselves were not involved.

Lack of capacity: Participation needs a minimum of capabilities in many fields, which both, local authorities and local CSOs in the countryside, as well as the poor themselves often lack far more than their counterparts in the capital and big cities. This includes most of all capacities which improve their knowledge on participatory monitoring and budget monitoring. However, it also includes capacities to understand and follow better the international mechanisms and PRSP-related policies, as well as economic literacy, so that they can relate their own visions of developmental strategies to the PRSP planning, implementation and monitoring. Moreover, the need to develop a strong media strategy was uttered by partners in Ghana.

Lack of resources: Participation also presupposes the existence of an infrastructure for communication, transportation and networking, which are not available to most CSOs especially in the rural areas. Moreover, CSOs need personnel to dedicate themselves more fully in the topics mentioned above and to analyse relevant documents, both PRSP documents from their governments and documents at the international level to be able to engage in time in the process.

Lack of awareness: exists especially among local CSOs and the poor themselves about the newly created possibilities and chances of participation and the PRSP process itself. Given the scarcity of resources, some bigger CSOs would rather see in the PRSP a new source of financing for their projects and not, in the first instance, the political challenge to engage others in decision making. Connected to this is a lack of initiative and engagement by the CSOs and the people. This is partly because they do not know that they are actually meant to participate and /or do not perceive this as a good opportunity for better participation. Also, they are afraid of repression. Moreover, many CSOs have a micro perspective

and often are not interested and not empowered to get involved outside their field of expertise.

In all countries pertaining to this report, parliaments have played a very limited role in the process. In Ethiopia for example, parliament discussed the Full PRSP for one day, just before it was sent out to the IMF. Frequently heads of government and heads of ruling parties are the same. The latter distribute the "tickets" to promising party members in order to run for the party in a constituency. If they win, members of parliament are beholden to the party leadership and to party discipline. If they divert from that discipline, the "ticket" can be passed on to a more obliging party member during the next election.

For trade unions, generally the same shortcomings apply as for CSOs. They complain about not being invited or being invited too late, about limited time frames for participation and access to relevant documents. Trade unions were not involved in implementation, monitoring or evaluation of the PRSP. While in Ghana the TUC has participated from an early stage of the process, in the DR Congo one of the largest Labour Unions, the CDT, was not invited. For many trade unions involved in the process, however, the policies adopted in the PRSP are a prolongation of the old structural adjustment policies, contradicting what they believe are pro-poor policies. TUC (Ghana) for example has made a strong point against privatisation of public services (water and electricity) and argued in favour of more equity through taxation and wage policies. However, although labour policies and employment are addressed in the Ghana PRS, they do not see their submissions sufficiently included (Egulu, 2004).

Influencing programs

The question of involvement of stakeholders cannot be seen separately from the question of whether they have actually influenced the content and implementation of PRS. A widespread critique of the processes so far has been that they have at best been consultative. This is also true for the experiences of CSOs reported here.

In Ethiopia for example, where the participatory process was praised by the International Financing Institutions, there was a broad consultation process in the different regions, however, the national network CRDA states that the PRSP does not include many of the results of the consultations. For the national NGO network in Ghana

(GAPVOD), involvement in the participation process was limited because of the unclear distribution of responsibilities between the different governmental institutions, of the scarcity of its own resources and the institutional weakness of CSOs. Therefore, the influence on the program itself was very limited. In Cameroon the participatory process was very centralised by the government and did not include important areas and actors especially in the West Provinces. Other than the very positive assessment of the government in the progress report, representatives of civil society feel that they did not have any influence on the content of the program.

If consultation is only an exercise to satisfy the requirements of external partners, as it frequently was perceived by the participants of the workshops, and does not lead to a subsequent dialogue and decision making about development strategies, this is far from being meaningful participation and runs the risk that CSOs get frustrated and will mistrust participation processes in the future. So far, many partner organisations of the German church development agencies have taken on the opportunities of improved participation in the PRSP process. But now they must become involved as far as possible in the implementation, monitoring and review process. Other organisations, for example in Tanzania, have opted out of the process because they felt they could not influence the content of the program to the point that they would see their positions sufficiently considered and did not want to be co-opted by the government.

Sustaining participation.

Many of the above deficits can be traced back to a lack of time during the initial formulation of the PRSP. For example, many Heavily Indebted Poor Countries qualifying for the HIPC initiative urgently required debt relief and thus hastened through the formulation of their first PRSP. To overcome these initial deficits, it would have been essential to strengthen participation as mentioned above in the implementation, monitoring and review of the program. However, this has hardly happened in the countries covered by this report.

Only Tanzania is an encouraging example of how ownership could be fostered throughout the Review process. Tanzania sustained participation in the *Poverty Monitoring System* and its working groups, as well as through involvement in the

Poverty Policy Week. The evaluation of involved CSOs on the PRSP process is much better today than it was in the phase of formulation of the first PRSP. Other countries lag behind these achievements.

A lack of transparency and little or no possibilities for CSOs in the monitoring process characterize the implementation of the PRSP in Ethiopia, Ghana and Cameroon. CRDA in Ethiopia criticizes that no representative of civil society was included in the steering committee of the monitoring process. Caritas Cameroon fears that an integration of PRSP and debt relief resources in public budget may lead to an elimination of the almost inexistent monitoring possibilities. A further constraint is the fact that the poor performance of the Cameroon government concerning the fiscal conditionality is an obstacle for reaching the HIPC completion point. And since the financing of PRSP in Cameroon relies to a considerable extent on debt cancellation, PRSP in Cameroon depends on the conditionality set by the IMF.

In Ethiopia and Cameroon the perceived exclusion from the process has led to the emergence of more intensive parallel processes of monitoring and awareness building. These efforts certainly are a very helpful exercise for capacity building within civil society, but more importantly, they could also have been a very valuable contribution to the follow-up process and the increase of ownership, if the results were integrated into the official monitoring process. The latter has only happened in Tanzania.

Special attention must also be drawn to DR Congo: Due to institutional weaknesses of governmental structures there, NGO consultations form part of the official PRSP process. But after a long period of dictatorship and armed conflict, which affected the organisational capacities of civil society, possibilities of good networking necessary for participatory monitoring are still weak and they are the biggest challenge in a country as big as DR Congo.

The most important aspect for sustaining participation in the second round of PRSP, is to make clear that sustainable alternative ways of poverty reduction will not be rejected by the Fund and the World Bank.

This brings us back to the problem of international dominance dealt with at the beginning of this chapter. However, in the interest of sustaining participation, it seems even more important to

generally accept and recognize the increasing experiences and capabilities that NGOs and CSOs make through their monitoring and poverty assessment in the frame of the PRSP review.

Recommendations

- The process, which so far has been a consultation process, must be transformed into a process of **real participation**. The following points can help to achieve this aim.
- Participating CSOs must be **included in all stages** of the strategy, from poverty diagnostics to the formulation of adequate ways to overcome poverty to the monitoring of the achievements in poverty reduction.
- The circle of CSOs participating must be opened up to a **wider range of groups** and organisations representing the poor as well as the wider Civil Society.
- To achieve this, **awareness building** among these groups will be essential, especially outside the capital. It is vital to motivate CSOs and the poor themselves to find their way into the participation processes.
- This must be accompanied by **capacity building for national and local administrations**, by making policy decisions transparent and by ensuring proper resource management. Local administration must be familiarized with facilitating participation.
- **Capacity building** is also necessary for CSOs and the poor themselves. This includes: capacity building in participatory monitoring and follow-up, as well as economic literacy. The latter must lead to improved capabilities in evaluating different economic strategies and defining ones own strategy best suited to overcome poverty.
- The aim is **sustained participation**. Instead of institutionalising processes of mere information and consultation, which run the risk of frustration among CSOs, there should be a move towards the institutionalisation of participatory monitoring processes as a basis for mutual formulation of national strategies.
- **Macroeconomic issues must be included** in the dialogue. If civil society is meant to participate in the development of strategies to reduce poverty, it cannot exclude macro-economic policies, especially since the ones imposed are

frequently perceived as being anti-poor rather than pro-poor.

III. The macroeconomic framework

When PRSPs were introduced, the concept was accompanied by a new rhetoric, which tried to give poverty-oriented policies an increased standing in otherwise growth-oriented developmental strategies. In the workshops, one of the main complaints of partners was that they had been excluded completely from codetermination on macroeconomic issues. Frequently, they even see PRSP goals contradicted by the applied growth strategies. Moreover, there was a sense of the dominance of macroeconomic issues, which determine the lives of people and especially the poor, without a concrete notion on how this predominant area could actually be reshaped to benefit the poor and coincide with the goals of the PRSP.

Partners in Tanzania, for example, unanimously stated that although there was a good economic performance, even accompanied by increased expenditure in the social sectors, these developments were not reflected in an improvement of the poor's everyday life or income situation. One of the main findings from the partner contacts, therefore, is that there is an enormous need for economic literacy. We find it tremendously important to enable the people themselves to take part in the discussions about issues that determine their lives.

Meanwhile, international institutions and the World Bank have started discussing strategies of economic growth in benefit of the poor, called in this context "Pro Poor Growth". The question is whether economic growth revisited in this discussion adopted a new quality or whether it remains nothing else than a growth strategy based on the traditional concept of "trickle down". The relevance of this debate to the orientation of PRSP policies is reflected in this text, together with the experience of the partners. This chapter also includes our own analysis, as well as analyses done by NGOs that did not participate in the workshops and other sources.

So far, the connection between macroeconomic measures as imposed by the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) and the PRSCs of the World Bank appears to remain very weak. Rather, there is a glaring contradiction between

the policies for macroeconomic stability and growth required by the PRGF on the one hand, and the poverty-oriented policies at the core of PRSP, on the other hand. Growth policies are long-term policies and underestimate very often the impact of inequality on economic growth and poverty reduction. Stability and growth measures don't improve the situation of the poor in the short term and they are yet to prove that they create better conditions in the medium and long term. However, as the main precondition to reach sustainable poverty reduction is economic growth, the essential question remains how to achieve pro poor growth in small and open economies with little diversified economic structures?

One of the central stability measures is to achieve fiscal balance, which in developing countries is difficult to reach through an increase in the aggregate demand. And since it is not at all easy to increase tax income, government authorities find it difficult to raise enough resources to fulfil the fiscal conditionality usually connected with an IMF program, such as the PRGF. Thus, the IMF tries to achieve stability through fiscal contraction, i.e. the cut of public expenditures. Therefore, the measures established in the PRGF, which so far are negotiated outside the PRSP, frequently contradict the goals of PRSP.

Civil society groups and academics conclude that PRGF/PRSC policies of the IMF/ World Bank are very similar to the structural adjustment measures that have been carried out for many years through e.g. the former IMF programs (ESAF): liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation of financial markets. Thus, partners in Ghana stated that the PRGF has very much the same conditionalities as the traditional ESAF arrangements. In Tanzania, CSO have criticized that the PRGF actually included more formal conditionalities than its predecessor ESAF (Mwakasege, 2005). Especially privatisation policies frequently have met with strong criticism. In Ghana, ISODEC has made a strong point against the privatisation of public services, especially water, but it was pushed ahead anyway. Caritas Cameroon questions privatisation in a more general sense: "To us it seems rather paradoxical that privatisations are considered to be an adequate solution. How can you help a country to move forward if you deprive it from its assets?"

Contrary to affirmations by the international community, both civil society representatives and many government authorities feel that there is no

adequate international environment to achieve macroeconomic stability and growth. They don't see a realistic possibility to achieve sustainable poverty reduction as long as they don't have the possibility to influence the international economic environment according to their national priorities as rich countries do. CRDA in Ethiopia has also criticised that the PRSP did not include a comparative analysis on how the regional and international economic structures actually affect the economy and structural poverty in Ethiopia and have not proposed specific strategies and measures to overcome these structural problems.

Contractionary fiscal policy contradicts the goals of PRSP

Budget planning is oriented on macroeconomic stability rather than to provide for the necessary expenditures in the social sectors. Pro poor policies, understood as investment in income, assets and human capital of the poor, depend on macroeconomic stability. The majority of key reforms are still going ahead without analysis of the impact that they will have on poor women and men (through Poverty and Social Impact Assessment – PSIA). An expansion of PSIA studies together with CSOs is welcome and needed.

The Ghana research and lobby organisation ISO-DEC, for example, deplors that Ghana's PRSP took over the Fund's and the Bank's prescription for tax reforms ignoring the fact that regressive taxes like VAT and exemptions in the tax system favour the rich and are not suitable to achieve more equity. A better mobilization of resources and more efficiency in resource management and a progressive tax reform would be pro-poor strategies.

Fiscal discipline remains the most important conditionality in the IMF Programs. There is no doubt that countries which manage to achieve such discipline are in the best position to finance their social services, to reduce poverty and to increase savings and investments. But unfortunately, those cases are rather the exception than the rule. An investigation carried out by Oxfam in 20 countries shows that for the IMF, financial inflexibility and aid pessimism are still the norm (Oxfam 2003). For example, the IMF requires Cameroon to achieve a fiscal surplus by 2005. This presupposes a restrictive spending policy. At the same time Cameroon's PRSP shows that under current expenditure ceilings infant mortality in 2015 will be 44% higher

than required by the MDGs. The money needed to reach the targeted reduction of the number of children dying before the age of 5 would double the health budget.

Trade and financial liberalization and pro poor growth

Another conditionality often imposed by the IMF/World Bank is trade liberalisation. The risks of export oriented monoculture and the impact it has on small producers and domestic markets are neglected. Poor people in poor countries will mainly benefit from trade liberalization if it is complemented by pro poor interventions. For example, the financial system and banks must be equipped with a special facility (windows) for small and medium enterprises stimulating the markets in marginalized regions. Moreover, access of small and medium rural producers to ownership of land and market facilities has to be improved through strong investments in the judiciary system and infrastructure, especially roads and means of transportation. Trade liberalisation has to be accompanied by measures to promote infant industries wherever they have a development potential.

Several case studies give trade liberalization in poor countries mixed reviews. Compared to financial liberalization, greater trade openness has had, in some countries, a more positive impact on growth and poverty reduction. However, this has often been combined with import substitution policies. In Ghana, the perception by NGOs of trade liberalization remains very critical: It is perceived as being forcefully driven from the International Financing Institutions and the creditors, ignoring empirical evidence on the systematic relationship between tariff barriers and growth rates. Instead, a growth strategy should be led by domestic investors (ISODEC).

For poor countries one of the biggest constraints is access to international capital markets. At the same time, commodity prices and unstable exchange rates make them vulnerable to financial shocks. Flexible exchange rates are not always the best way to react to such negative impacts. This situation requires a more active policy role of the state and the extension of the revenue base, with which it can finance capital expenditures and direct them to poverty-reduction purposes. Case studies tend to be critical of the impact of financial liberalization, both domestic and external, and

favour capital control, stronger regulation of the financial sector and some scope for credit directed especially to poverty-reduction purposes.

Public versus Private Investment?

In order to achieve poverty reduction there is a need for an increase in productive investment both private and public. However, PRGF / PRSC policies, based on the assumption that public investment crowds out private investment, tend to reduce government spending and stimulate private investment. Stabilization policies often take the form of contraction of government spending in infrastructure. But to achieve the MDGs more expansionary fiscal policies are needed. Public investment in basic social and physical infrastructure would promote private investment and an increase in the living standards of the poor.

Public investment, for example in infrastructure, would also lead to an increased engagement of the poor and excluded peoples. One of the participants of the Cameroon workshop from the excluded Western Regions claimed that they needed most of all roads. "If you build the roads, we can provide for schools ourselves!" This shows how important public investment actually is for the inclusion of the poor. Moreover, public investment can help to accelerate and to attract more private investment while a contractionary fiscal policy rather leads to an increase in the income gap between the rich and the poor.

Other development institutions like UNDP and some bilateral agencies favour expansionary public policies, investment-focused fiscal policies and the increase of money in circulation rather than the PRGF framework, which usually puts the main accent on restrictive monetary policy and price stabilization. Public investment is also essential to poverty reduction, not only for basic education and health – on which everyone would agree – but also for essential infrastructure such as rural roads, energy and irrigation.

The medium-term orientation of the PRS – Well distributed growth reduces poverty faster

A medium-term orientation, according to the IMF and World Bank, should lead to the increasing inclusion of "appropriate growth-oriented policies, including structural and sectoral policies and trade policies" (IMF/World Bank, 2005: 3) into the

PRSP. The theory of economic growth in PRSP so far deals with at least three aspects:

- factors that determine potential growth of national income in the long run;
- conditions for "self sustained growth" and
- the problem of dynamic equilibrium, which influences growth and how it can be re-established.

Efforts to strengthen the medium term orientation of the PRSP are welcome but at least two questions should be posed in the new review of PRSP:

- 1) How many years are we actually talking about when defining the medium term?
- 2) Which factors play the key role when talking about appropriate growth-oriented policies to overcome poverty?

In most low income countries, more expansionary fiscal policies are needed to accelerate economic growth. Fiscal policies are also needed to play a counter-cyclical role in stabilizing the economy. Moreover, the growth stimulated by fiscal expansion can help to generate fiscal revenues needed to close deficits incurred in the process of expansion, depending on the elasticity of taxes with respect to GDP. This implies that for pro-poor growth, (1) public investment is increased and (2) it benefits the poor. Because saving is important for investments, in the long run international support is of vital importance for success in poverty reduction strategies and pro poor growth.

The criticism of NGOs in Ghana has been that growth oriented strategies in the PRSP derive from the classic "trickle down" approach with a focus on the agricultural sector. However, they also welcome that the PRSP contains an innovative approximation of the problem of inequality, which is recognized as a constraint on both, growth and welfare. Unfortunately, this recognition does not lead to a serious discussion on the quality of growth. The sources of growth projections are not very clear and, it is feared, that they depend on the same old growth strategies that have failed to reduce poverty in the past (ISO-DEC).

In Ghana empirical evidence shows that in the 1990s, richer groups increased their consumption by 5-6%, while the poorest 20% of the population didn't have any increase in their consumption levels. This shows, that growth in Ghana benefited the rich absolutely and relatively more than the poor. Poverty reduction occurred among house-

holds whose main activity was in the industrial sector, notably construction and mining, while poverty reduction was lower in the rural areas (Aryeetey, E. and McKay).

The situation is similar in Cameroon, the persistence of poverty goes along with the persistence of inequalities: The level of inequality measured by the Gini Index remains unchanged at 0.49, which is very high in the African context. An analysis of the evolution of the standard of living in Cameroon 1984, 1996 and 2001 shows that the trends of inequalities during this period appear to be unchanged (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/REDDA, 2002): more than a quarter of the population receive only 8.7% of total income. On the other hand, the richest 12% of the population earned almost 40% of total income. The country's economic growth (4.2% to 5.3% between 1997 and 2001) is still clearly below the targeted 7%, which the World Bank considers necessary to achieve poverty reduction induced by growth. As in many other countries in Africa geographical location of households and the level of education of the family heads are of great influence to the levels of inequality.

To put high growth rates at the core of poverty reduction is not sufficient. If defined basically as an increase in national income without considering its distributional impact, such an approach is nothing else but a tautology: Because growth is the increase in income it contributes to reduce income poverty. During the last decades there have been significant cases of "jobless growth" where the trickle-down effect does not occur, or occurs only marginally. Different types of growth have different effects on employment. Ideally, poverty reduction policies aim at the kind of rapid and stable growth that creates jobs. But fast growth can still be supported effectively, even if it doesn't directly create jobs, provided it is adequately taxed to finance social development and stimulate the local economy. Thus, the quality of growth matters. Only if there is an absolute increase in income is it possible to improve welfare, but only if this increase benefits the poor proportionally more than the rich, would growth be pro poor.

Recommendations

- Policy recommendation priorities to achieve macroeconomic stability have to be revised. The medium term orientation of PRGF must be better linked with the PRSP. Countries experience external shocks, when prices for primary

goods drop, their currencies loose value, export dumping decreases revenue collection from trade, or when natural disaster strike. Therefore, the weakness of the economy, the susceptibility to shocks must mitigate the fiscal discipline.

- PRSP have to prioritise pro poor expenditures and adjust fiscal discipline to this priority. Fiscal discipline must not stand in the way of poverty reduction.
- Partner organisations and other initiatives must be given the possibility to enhance their economic knowledge and learn to analyse better the implications of the macroeconomic framework on the poor. In many countries, there exist academic institutions that could take over this work. However, economic literacy should not be carried out by those institutions that, so far, have dominated the economic agenda in the countries, such as the IMF or the World Bank.
- To the contrary, these institutions, as well as the donor community must be more open to sustainable alternative economic models if they are consented in the country.
- To avoid likely negative balance impacts, trade liberalisation and export promotion have to be accompanied by import substitution strategies. This includes measures to promote infant industries wherever they have a development potential. Moreover, access of small and medium sized rural producers to land and market facilities has to be improved through increased investment in infrastructure, especially means of transportation and mobility.
- The medium term orientation of PRGF has to consider the positive impact of public investment, especially in developing infrastructure in areas where the poor live and which are not attractive to the private sector.
- To achieve growth that is pro poor, participation of the poor in the labour markets and access to land, credit and other assets have to be promoted so that the poor benefit proportionally more than the rich from growth.

IV. Countries in conflict situation: the case of the DR Congo

Political Situation

The PRSP process in Congo is set in a very vulnerable political situation. On July 7th, 1999 a cease-fire agreement was signed in Lusaka by all key actors of the longstanding conflict. This Agreement emphasizes the need to restore DR Congo's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to ensure that all Congolese enjoy the same rights and protection under the law. But despite this agreement, serious problems of public security, clashes among militia and human rights violations continue to this day.

One of the driving forces behind the conflict is the desire of conflict parties to control and explore the natural resources of Congo. In fact, wealth from natural resources is sustaining the war and bad governance. Such military activity has been described as 'military commercialism'. The exploitation of natural resources has become a key factor in determining military deployment, perpetuating the cycle of violence.

Although state institutions grew stronger over the years and consolidated themselves as the ruling power, their range is still very limited and, in some regions, they are still not present or effective. Moreover, in this political vacuum, people have developed their own strategies of survival, not necessarily being represented by formally established NGOs. Although the latter did play an important role during the difficult times of conflict and transition, they are very young and did not manage to establish themselves as the main link between the state and the people. Moreover, many former government representatives and functionaries were deeply involved in the NGO structures. Due to this and a lack of resources, there is a very close relationship between some NGOs and the state, which can lead to the domination through the latter. Therefore, another force was given a high importance at the partner workshop, the so called "community dynamics". In fact, the PRSP itself ascribes a fundamental role to this dynamics in the communities and the grassroots organisations with regard to social and economic reconstruction. This is developed as one of the three pillars of the PRSP.

Therefore, the weak position of governmental institutions also opened up space for involvement

of Civil Society Organisations in the implementation of the PRSP, offering a rather unique possibility of participation also for NGOs. In fact, the biggest among them have been declared responsible for the participation and consultation process in each of the 11 provinces, where they are free to design the process. Together with the PRSP Department of the Planning Minister the NGO SERACOB implemented a process of participatory poverty diagnostic and analysis in communities of several provinces. In a national Workshop, they presented the participatory monitoring and follow up developed together with the World Bank. Despite their engagement, institutional deficits of CSO have been identified, such as the above mentioned lack of resources, dangers of corruption and involvement of former government representatives, as well as a fundamental lack of capacity with regard to poverty diagnostics or the processing of long term development strategies. Therefore, NGOs felt that they could not occupy the challenges satisfactorily and the need for more capacity building was clearly identified. However, the second stage of consultations in September / October 2004 with strong involvement of CSO gave rise to a first draft towards the formulation of a sector strategy.

Overall, the cooperation between the Planning Ministry and Civil Society Organisations is a positive sign for the building up and consolidation of structures for a participatory Monitoring and Follow up System. The DR Congo faces many challenges in implementing the PRSP. There is a challenge for International Institutions and rich countries to increase their assistance and come to a closer coordination. Intense capacity building should be done to foster these dynamics. Poverty in the DR Congo is an important breeding-ground for military conflicts and in this sense PRSP should be understood as an instrument for conflict prevention.

Economic Conditions

In the DR Congo the economic situation deteriorated dramatically: Per capita income declined from US\$ 380 in 1985 to US\$ 224 in 1990 and even further to US\$ 85 in 2000. Without increased engagement of the international community, it will be almost impossible to reach the ambitious goals of pro poor growth formulated in the DR Congo PRSP (DSRP). The World Bank described the situation as follows: "Overall, the situation remains fragile: assuming a 5.3 percent economic growth

on average, it will take until 2060 for the country to reach the level of GDP per capita it had in 1960. Assuming a 4 percent growth only (and a 2.7 percent population growth), it would take 200 years!" This shows the very limited scope growth has on poverty reduction by itself. When taking inequality into account, it can be seen that the crisis affects various groups of Congolese in different ways. Most of all, people living in traditionally poorer provinces or areas tend to be more affected than those living in regions with more economic potential (e.g., mining resources in Katanga, transit activity in Bas-Congo).

Privatisation is not advisable in this environment, as benefits would not be in favour of the poor. Civil Society Organisations rather pledge for safeguarding and the reestablishment of a constitutional state founded on the rule of law, before a broad structural reform could be initiated. Moreover, they demand participation not only within the third pillar with regard to the consultation process, but also through institutional reforms that allow them to participate in the two other pillars, i.e. the consolidation of peace and good governance as well as the reinforcement of a poverty oriented economic growth.

Challenges for International Cooperation

The World Bank recognises in its report on Congo that despite the efforts of the international community, Congo's fiscal resources remain insufficient to meet the basic needs of the country, and to confront the twin challenges of reunification and recovery. Tax income is not enough to finance neither the social services, nor the expenses for state administration both on a national and the district level in DR Congo. The investment budget and the operating costs of civil administrations are minimal, if existing at all. Donors are asked to engage more in budget financing both through increased development aid and broader debt relief.

However, the World Bank Report does not analyse sufficiently the causes of conflicts in East Congo and therefore, it is not clear which resource allocation best benefits the poor people affected by the conflict. For instance, in DR Congo more than 128.000 km of roads have to be reconstructed and rehabilitated. Only 650 M. US\$ i.e. 52% of the costs for the rehabilitation of infrastructure could be covered by international cooperation.

The reform of the legal system, which is supported by the EU, has to be accompanied by increased credit facilities for small and medium size enterprises and, also, by the fight against illegal and non-ethical production, especially in the extraction of natural resources. The private sector cannot be developed if parallel mafia structures are not eliminated. There should be a benefit to the DRC, if governments reached an agreement on a global scheme to effectively certify 'conflict-free' diamonds.

Recommendations

- The Lusaka Declaration, including its emphasis on DR Congo's sovereignty and territorial integrity, must be the basis for a comprehensive institutional reform of the State with a broad participation of key actors of the Civil Society. The international community should make a more determined reference to this declaration.
- There is a fundamental need for capacity building especially with regard to participatory monitoring and evaluation. In this respect, the work of SERACOB in participatory monitoring and follow-up is very important and should be supported. This should be done by with more engagement and improved donor coordination of official and NGO cooperation.
- Participation of civil society must not be restricted to the consultation process within the third pillar. Rather, the contents of the other two pillars (good governance and macroeconomic stability) should be included in the dynamics of the PRSP monitoring process.
- Macroeconomic stability is necessary to promote the private sector in DRC, yet most important is transparency and promotion of public investment in infrastructure, both for human and physical asset.
- A coherent strategy against the pillage of natural resources in Congo has to be developed. Promotion of private investment must not be blind towards the support of illegal exploitation of natural resources. Donor governments should investigate companies identified in the UN reports and elsewhere as conducting illegal trade and alienation of natural resource, and take appropriate action.
- The World Bank and other donors must avoid ignoring violations of good governance in their lending policy, especially because the popula-

tion is looking for fundamental changes in the political system.

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