

report

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Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: failing minorities and indigenous peoples

by Samia Liaquat Ali Khan





Endorois child in the village of Lobo, Lake Bogoria, Kenya.

Emma Eastwood/MRG.

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Minority Rights Group International

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples worldwide, and to promote cooperation and understanding between communities. Our activities are focused on international advocacy, training, publishing and outreach. We are guided by the needs expressed by our worldwide partner network of organizations, which represent minority and indigenous peoples.

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Abbreviations

APR	Annual Progress Report	OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands	OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
CBOs	community-based organizations	PEAP	Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan
CEMIRIDE	Centre for Minority Rights and Development	PEMFA	Public Expenditure Management and Financial Accountability Process
CPRC	Chronic Poverty Research Centre	PPA	participatory poverty assessments
CSOs	civil society organizations	PRDP	Peace Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda
ERS	Economic Recovery Strategy	PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
EU	European Union	PRSC	Poverty Reduction Sector Credit
EWC	Endorois Welfare Council	PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
FGM	female genital mutilation	SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	ULA	Uganda Land Alliance
HDI	Human Development Index	UN	United Nations
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries	UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
HPI	Human Poverty Index	UNDESA	UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs
IFI	International Financial Institution	UNDM	UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNDP	UN Development Programme
IMF	International Monetary Fund	UNESCAP	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper	UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
JSA	Joint Staff Assessment	UPE	universal primary education
LDCs	least developed countries	UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project
LICUS	low-income Countries under Stress	WDM	World Development Movement
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals		
MP	Member of Parliament		
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework		
NDP	National Development Plan		
NGO	non-governmental organization		
NSSD	Albanian National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development		
NUREP	Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme		
ODI	Overseas Development Institute		

Executive Summary

When they were first introduced more than a decade ago, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) were roundly welcomed. PRSPs were initiated in 1999 by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for the eradication of poverty in Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and other low-income countries. Supported by the United Nations (UN), donor governments and civil society alike, they signalled a much greater role for those countries' civil society organizations and community representatives in policy-making. Symbolically, the PRSPs represented a move towards a more just form of progress, and the recognition that economic growth alone is not sufficient in overcoming poverty.

However, research shows that PRSPs are failing to deliver. Millions of dollars, directed via governments and civil society, have been spent on development programmes that are having no real impact on the ground. Research suggests scant coordination between various stakeholders, while governments have lacked the technical capacity or shown little or no political will to engage civil society and take forward policies that benefit the poor and marginalized or take gender considerations into account. At the same time, the process has suffered from corruption and misuse of funds, with little accountability to the populations of recipient countries.

Women are identified by some PRSPs, both as vulnerable and as having specific vulnerabilities because they are women. In others, there is no mention of vulnerable groups at all in the poverty analysis section and very little in terms of disaggregated data. Research undertaken in 12 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America revealed that the analysis of the situation of women was often limited to a few sectors, such as health and education, where gender inequalities are compounded with women-specific issues. Poverty assessments rarely pointed out gender-based discrimination or gender asymmetrical relations.

More than 10 years on, PRSPs have thus failed to move communities out of poverty and, crucially, have largely ignored the plight of minorities and indigenous peoples, who are usually among the most marginalized and poor. Minorities and indigenous communities often live in remote areas. They tend not speak the official or national language. They lack information about national government procedures, and do not have the resources to participate in such processes. The groups that represent

them also tend to be on the margins of government or national NGO networks, and therefore have little capacity to participate effectively in government-led PRSP processes. Furthermore, governments tend not to disaggregate data on the basis of ethnicity, race or religion, with the result that the real situation of such minorities and indigenous communities is often hidden within the overall poverty analysis of the majority population.

Minority and indigenous women face multiple levels of discrimination and marginalization. For example, pastoralist women in East Africa and the Horn of Africa must submit to decisions made by male leaders on issues affecting them. Participation in consultation processes may be minimal, with the result that women's experiences of poverty and social exclusion are rarely properly addressed. The lack of a comprehensive analysis within the PRSPs of the status of women, including minority and indigenous women, thus makes it difficult to develop policies that can specifically assist them.

The district of Karamoja in Uganda, an area mainly populated by minority pastoralist groups, provides a good example of the failings of PRSPs. Vulnerable to deforestation and drought, and lacking basic services provided by the government, Karamojong have long been marginalized from the political, social and economic mainstream of Uganda, and their situation has not improved despite a long-standing poverty-reduction plan in the country. In fact, reports suggest that their poverty has actually increased during the past decade.

Similarly, in Kenya, where, since 2000, the government has built a process based on PRSP principles, research shows that it has had no significant positive impact on the situation of minorities and indigenous peoples. Pastoralist communities, including the Endorois, who have been removed from their ancestral lands by successive governments, remain impoverished, with elevated levels of illiteracy, high HIV prevalence, poor health, and high maternal and child mortality rates. Nonetheless, the Kenyan government has an opportunity to make the PRSP work, by supporting the Endorois community's own initiatives and efforts to tackle poverty, such as in beekeeping and agriculture, making sure that PRSP funds make their way directly to farmers.

This alarming failure across the board means that there is a serious need for all parties to rethink their strategies. Otherwise, the PRSPs – which still provide a model for pro-poor development – will never be able to

deliver their promises to the poor, most particularly minority and indigenous communities.

Key Minority Rights Group International (MRG) recommendations include the following:

- At the international level, development economists must remain focused on growth models that are rights-based, pro-poor and address inequality. This means re-examining the macro-economic prescriptions that have become the basis for all concessional lending and debt relief.
- At the domestic level, governments of the South need to develop poverty-reduction policies and strategies that are actually relevant to the experiences of poor people, addressing the root causes of poverty and marginalization.
- Governments must address failings of accountability and transparency by reducing corruption, removing all discriminatory policies and practices, and curbing the ability of big business and economic elites to undermine these processes.
- The access of minorities and indigenous peoples to development, consultation with them and their meaningful participation in decisions that affect their lives must be a key aspect of PRSPs and national strategies. All marginalized groups must be included in deliberations over national strategies, and therefore national consultation processes must improve.
- States need to commit to actions that integrate representative voices of women in the institutions and processes that set economic and social policies. Governments need to ensure that all poverty assessments are gendered, and that women's experiences of exclusion and poverty form significant parts of new policies. Properly disaggregated data, reflecting the reality of minority and indigenous women, is crucial for the design of appropriate development programmes.

Introduction

It is just over a decade since Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) were first articulated by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) as a condition for debt relief and credit facilities extended to developing countries. The PRSPs were supported by the United Nations (UN) and other international agencies, donor governments and civil society across the world because, for the first time, the eradication of poverty became a key feature of government financial policies. The five underlying principles of PRSPs – country-driven, result-oriented, partnership-oriented, comprehensive and long term – implied a much greater role for a country's people and civil society organizations in identifying and constructing policies that would support them to move out of poverty. On a more ideological level, the PRSPs represented a move by the international development system towards a more equitable and just form of progress, and a realization that economic growth alone was not and never had been enough to address the development of poor countries.

The PRSP process (which includes consultation between state and society, identification of key macro-economic policies to enable growth, an analysis of poverty and strategies for its reduction, and phased implementation) encompasses between a three- and five-year cycle, towards the end of which governments begin planning for a new PRSP. Currently, approximately 140 countries are at some stage of a PRSP process, some starting off with an interim PRSP while others have already reached a third cycle of the PRSP.¹ Given that the focus on PRSPs has not shifted during this time, this means that, both at the global and the national level, the emphasis on poverty reduction, as well as growth, remains strong. This focus has been supported by the development of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), drawn from the actions and targets contained in the UN Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 189 nations in September 2000.

There are eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. These encompass the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, universal primary education (UPE), gender equality, improvements in health, environmental sustainability and progress towards a global partnership for development.² These goals are backed by governments from the developed and developing world, and all bilateral and multilateral aid/lending to developing

countries requires some progress to be made towards achieving these goals. Thus, there is an intrinsic link between the achievement of the MDGs and the implementation of PRSPs by poor countries.

However, questions are growing over the ability of states to achieve the MDGs by 2015, and the relative lack of progress in reducing poverty across the poorest countries. The term 'lack of progress' does not imply that at some statistical levels poverty reduction has not been achieved in many countries across the world, although poverty is rising in Sub-Saharan Africa.³ The three largest economies, Brazil, China and India, which also account for half of the world's poorest people, have managed to reduce income poverty levels in their countries, that is, the number of people living on less than \$1.25 per day (in 2005 prices). Over the past 20 years, Brazil has managed a reduction of on average 3 per cent per year, China 6.6 per cent and India approximately 1.5 per cent.⁴ These figures, however, hide some vital details. While China and India have reduced poverty, inequality within these countries (as measured by the Gini coefficient)⁵ has increased. Per unit of growth, Brazil reduced its proportional poverty rate five times more than China or India. The reason for this massive reduction in inequality? Specific social policies that address the sharp inequalities within Brazilian society and that offer opportunities and benefits to the poorest 10th percentile of the population.⁶

Brazil's example allows the identification of two main conditions for poverty reduction – the need for economic growth (according to *The Economist*, Brazil could have done much better if its annual economic growth rates had been as high as those of China or India), and the even more essential need for policies to be implemented that support the uplift of the poorest and most marginalized groups, many of whom are minority and/or indigenous peoples, and of women.

However, there is an underlying issue that goes beyond the examples these countries present of poverty reduction. It is the measurement of what constitutes poverty and, thereby, how to alleviate it. There has been major progress in how the term 'poverty' is construed – Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen first conceptualized the many facets of poverty in his groundbreaking study on famine, and exposed the inadequacy of measuring poverty in purely monetary terms.⁷ His 'capabilities approach' to what constitutes poverty (or well-being) is the basis on which the UN has constructed a Human Development

Index (HDI), which provides some detail on what constitutes a multi-dimensional analysis of well-being (such as average life expectancy, child mortality and morbidity, etc.), with some gendered data. The UN has also designed a Human Poverty Index (HPI), which measures human deprivation in the same aspects of human development as the HDI.⁸ The Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI; a research centre within the Oxford Department of International Development, at the University of Oxford), develops methodological frameworks for understanding poverty and has identified missing dimensions of human development, such as 'employment, physical safety, empowerment and the ability to go without shame', in their search for better poverty measures.⁹ And institutes such as the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC; an international partnership of universities, research institutes and non-governmental organizations [NGOs] which exists to focus attention on chronic poverty), have further analysed the various dimensions of poverty and of how people can move in and out of poverty, or how poverty can be inter-generational.

But for the most part, the international development community continues to use monetary constructs to identify poverty, so that we discuss those living under a dollar a day (approximately) as 'poor' – although given the global financial crisis and rising food and energy costs, this figure probably should be revised. What is of extreme importance, but too often ignored, is the fact that to escape the various facets and dimensions of poverty (not

income poverty alone), requires myriad policies, actions and commitments by governments, bilateral donors, IFIs and civil society – but this is not happening.

The research and evidence from the past 10 years, and within this report, shows that PRSPs are failing to deliver on basic promises made by governments, and the international development community, to poor people. Millions of dollars have been spent on development programmes, directed both through governments and civil society, with no real impact reflected on the ground where it counts most. This alarming failure across the board means that there is a serious need for governments, civil society and donors to reflect upon and rethink their strategies. If the challenges of development are not critically examined now, neither the MDGs nor the PRSPs will ever be able to deliver their promises to the poor.

This report presents not only an overview of how PRSPs have become the focus of international development thinking, but also how the lack of critical analysis and evaluation of PRSPs in terms of their ability to move communities out of poverty has meant that it is business as usual for a number of interest groups. The report goes on to focus on the experiences of pastoralists in Uganda and Kenya, during the period when these countries have had PRSPs in place. Finally, the report also provides some recommendations as to how the current PRSP model and practice needs to be improved if it is truly to become an engine for positive change on the ground.

The move towards pro-poor growth

The current emphasis on poverty reduction through the use of pro-poor economic and social policies has not always been at the forefront of development thinking. In fact, it was the failure of stringent macro-economic measures to improve poor economies and the hostile public opinion resulting from the extremely harsh outcomes for those living in poverty that led national governments and international experts to think in broader terms.

In the 1980s, neoliberal economics was promoted as the mechanism for global trade and investment through which all nations could prosper and develop fairly and equitably. The paradigm of neoliberal economics leading to transformational change in the economies of developed and developing countries became the overarching global development agenda for the next two decades.

By the mid 1980s, a set of 10 economic policy prescriptions, referred to as the Washington Consensus, was promoted as the standard reform package for crisis-ridden developing countries by the IFIs, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. During this decade, policy conditionalities (notably privatization, deregulation, reduction of trade barriers and lower public spending on social services) were introduced into bilateral lending by the IFIs to developing economies in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).¹⁰

The main focus of the SAPs was to balance external debt and trade deficits. Critics of structural adjustment policies argue that specific conditions were prescribed by the IFIs and, as crisis-ridden poor governments were desperate for money, these conditionalities were accepted.¹¹ Public sector spending became a main casualty of SAPs, although in many countries public spending on the social sector and the quality of services provided was already extremely poor. In almost all SAP countries, the public services most affected (services utilized primarily by poorer families and communities) were education, public health and other miscellaneous social safety nets. Commonly, these are programmes that are already underfunded and in serious need of monetary investment for improvement.

By the mid 1990s, there was enough empirical evidence to show that poverty had increased in countries in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia where the SAPs had been rigorously adopted. East and South Asia showed some decline in populations living below the poverty line, but it was in these very countries where SAPs were not followed as prescribed.¹²

According to an UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development) report in 2002, the SAP conditionalities imposed on the least developed countries (LDCs) were catastrophic in terms of their impact on people. These LDCs experienced a fall in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as well as an increase in poverty (measured by the share of population living on less than a dollar a day).¹³

The continued worsening of poverty across SAP countries prompted a re-examination of development and debt strategies in the 1990s. The 1999 Koln Debt Initiative, which broadened the scope of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative to provide a greater focus on poverty reduction by releasing resources for investment in health, education and social needs, marked a shift in the international development agenda. The focus on poverty reduction was the result of lessons learned under SAPs. In 1999, the World Bank and IMF agreed to link debt relief to the establishment of a poverty reduction strategy based on a new policy instrument, the PRSP, and from 2000 the PRSP framework was applied to all countries receiving development assistance from the IFIs.¹⁴

So can this new paradigm of development with its emphasis on pro-poor growth be successful? The economist William Easterly, in his paper 'Can the West save Africa?', argues that Western aid efforts have traditionally taken a 'transformational' (very rapid and comprehensive social change) approach with occasional swings to a 'marginal' (one small step at a time) approach.¹⁵ This transformational approach pattern was reflected in the 1950s with the idea of a 'big push' to developing economies to jump-start economic progress and thereby development, and again in the 1980s by structural adjustment, which aimed at comprehensive economic reform leading to a jump out of poverty by afflicted countries, and most recently in the PRSP approach, which focuses on poverty reduction as a way of bringing development alongside continued economic growth.

In Easterly's opinion:

'Rather than a progressive testing and discarding of failed ideas, we see a cycle in aid ideas in many areas in Africa, with ideas going out of fashion only to come back again later after some lapse long enough to forget the previous disappointing experience. Both escalation and cyclicity of ideas are symptomatic of the lack of learning that seems to be characteristic of the "transformational" approach. In contrast, the

“marginal” approach has had some successes in improving the well-being of individual Africans, such as the dramatic fall in mortality.’¹⁶

The transformational approach, although linked to failure by the author, can be a positive model for change. Where it represents an overarching framework, linked to broader goals or ideals for the betterment of humankind, it does seem to offer hope to a broad spectrum of individuals. In essence, to achieve the kind of change desired (economic, social, political, and sometimes even cultural), marginal approaches may seem a small drop in the ocean – while the vision of transformation may in fact inspire much broader support. Where the transformational approach seems to falter, and indeed often to fail, is the way in which it is implemented, often through a one-size-fits-all mantra which has not been tried or tested. And, added to this, the lack of information about and defined ownership of the approach from within a country means that change is often imposed rather than organically driven.

The conceptual and practical failings of the transformational approach are often the very same tenets that make for the success of the marginal approach, which involves testing and piloting of new concepts and methodologies at the grassroots level, to see what works within a specific place at a specific time. An example of a marginal approach that has had relative success when adopted by the international system as a transformational model, is the Grameen Bank micro-credit system created for poor communities in Bangladesh with no access to loan facilities.¹⁷ However, research has shown that whereas this system has had much success across certain countries and cultures, it has been potentially disastrous for others, thus proving that, although broader goals of reducing poverty and inequality may be good for all countries, the ways of doing so must differ from context to context.¹⁸

It is evident that transformational approaches have taken precedence within the international development agenda, and, although success has been very limited to date, some lessons have been learnt (though possibly not applied to the extent necessary). In fact, the move towards poverty reduction as a cornerstone of bilateral and multilateral aid for development is significant in this regard. Both structural adjustment and poverty reduction can be viewed as transformational approaches – however, the poverty reduction approach has gained far more support globally (from civil society, international agencies such as the UN, and even bilateral donors) because of its apparent focus on the poor. If Easterly’s assessment is accurate, what needs to be analysed is whether poverty reduction, as a transformational approach, has actually brought something new and positive to international

development, or whether it is just a re-packaging of older discarded or failed attempts at development.

Development and human rights – why the need for pro-poor development?

Along with shifts in development thinking, there have been simultaneous movements in human rights discourse around the right to development and the need for rights-based approaches in development. Initial efforts to achieve some kind of practical integration between human rights and development focused on mainstreaming the rights of women in development. The Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, in 1993, asserted that the human rights of women are: ‘an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights’. The policy of integration of gender throughout UN human rights activities was continued at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, where it was recognized that women are not all the same, but live in diverse situations and experience discrimination differently. Factors such as race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, class, belonging to indigenous groups, or migratory status have an impact upon women’s lives, including their enjoyment of human rights.¹⁹

The mid 1990s saw a progression in the integration of rights and development, which resulted in the formation of the concept of a rights-based approach to development. A rights-based approach integrates the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the plans, policies and processes of development. The principles of a rights-based approach include equality and equity, accountability, empowerment and participation.

The 1990s also saw a deepening interest in the issue of participation and what it could achieve. Participation of the intended beneficiaries of development programmes, in problem analysis and policy-making, was shown to improve the quality of information available and of the programmes and plans that resulted. Participation was also shown to improve the quality of governance in a country specifically as it related to development and poverty reduction.²⁰

This decade provided the impetus for the human rights discourse to be taken up much more strongly by international institutions and governments. The 1994 Rwandan genocide and the Balkan wars reflected how ethnic and religious divides had been fostered, and proved more strongly than ever how identity and ethnicity remained among the key causes of conflict across the world. In these and other conflicts, people were targeted because they belonged to a particular

ethnic, religious or linguistic group different from that of the majority. In the case of Rwanda, the Tutsi minority was perceived as having greater control over economic resources and benefits, and thus viewed by many in the majority Hutu population as a threat. In the subsequent genocide against the Tutsis, the indigenous Batwa minority also became a target. In both groups, women suffered differently from men – Tutsi and Batwa men were killed while Tutsi and Batwa women were subject to sexual violence and then killed.²¹

In 1995, MRG held an international seminar on Minority Rights and Development with the purpose of creating a better understanding of the causes of inter-communal conflict, and to encourage greater participation and inclusion of minorities in the development programmes of their countries. At this seminar, reports from three continents showed that minority communities were more often than not marginalized and excluded from development processes, and ignored by governments, which often led to an exacerbation of tensions and conflicts between such communities and other groups in the country.²²

‘The term “minority” is still often portrayed as one that is controversial, with many governments continuing to deny that minorities exist or pretending that there is no agreement on who or what is a minority. Yet, the international understanding of who is a minority is quite straightforward – it is a group of people who believe they have a common identity, based on culture/ethnicity, language or religion, which is different from that of a majority group around them. A minority is often, but not always, defined as such with reference to their position within a country, but can also be defined with reference to a wider area (e.g. regional) or narrower area (e.g. by province). What matters is whether the minorities lack power – i.e. the ability to affect the decisions that concern them. It is those minorities that minority rights are designed to protect.’²³

Minority rights derive from basic international law on human rights, as well as specific treaties and declarations on minority rights, most notably the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (UNDM). Minority rights are extremely relevant to the integrated disciplines of human rights, development and poverty. The key reason for this is that the evidence shows that a significant number of people who belong to minorities across the world live in extreme poverty, and that often this poverty is directly linked to the discrimination and racism they face at the hands of majority communities and governments.²⁴

The reports also showed that minority women continued to face intersectional discrimination – i.e. because they were members of a minority/indigenous community and because they were women. Unfortunately, international legal instruments that deal explicitly with the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples generally do not differentiate between women and men. The UNDM, for example, does not mention minority women or prohibit gender discrimination. However, inroads and refinements have been made, especially to gender mainstreaming across the UN, and these include the acknowledgement of the diverse identities of women and the different realities that women face in relation to each other as well as to men.²⁵

Indigenous peoples make up over 370 million of the world’s population in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Pacific.²⁶ They are among the most impoverished and marginalized people in the world. Indigenous peoples, like minorities, share common ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural characteristics. Additionally, they can claim to have been settled in their territory continuously and prior to any other groups. They have maintained a culture that is strongly linked to their ways of using land and natural resources. This distinction is reflected in separate international standards for indigenous peoples.²⁷ In 2007, after 25 years of intense bargaining, lobbying and sheer hard work, the international indigenous peoples’ movement was successful in getting the UN Security Council to pass the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Thus, minorities and indigenous peoples together make up a majority worldwide of those who are marginalized and dispossessed.²⁸ Discrimination resulting in exclusion impacts on these groups’ ability to gain access to better educational opportunities, economic opportunities, health and well-being, that often leaves them in a cycle of inter generational and chronic poverty, and has also been linked to conflict affecting these communities. Their lack of participation, or, more to the point, their lack of access to development policy discussions, means that international and national development strategies often fail to target them specifically. It is this realization that has led many international agencies, donors and NGOs to begin using more inclusive and rights-based processes in their programmes. The new focus on pro-poor growth and the move towards using rights-based approaches by a number of UN agencies and donor organizations is thus a way of trying to integrate a more equitable and participatory methodology in development work. A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) governance document states that:

‘Both processes and practices in development will change as a result of the application of a human

*rights-based approach. A human rights perspective calls for enhanced attention to the phase of assessment and analysis providing, among others, full understanding of the legal framework of a country, and the factors that create and perpetuate discrimination and social exclusion and hinder people from realizing their potential ...*²⁹

Focusing on equity, equitable development and the removal of all forms of discrimination is critical to the successful integration between rights and development. In the literature, governments are urged to undertake measures that protect persons who suffer discrimination – specifically women, children, older people, people with disabilities, minorities, indigenous peoples, sexual minorities and others.

The CPRC *Annual Report* of 2004–5 identifies people who are most vulnerable to chronic poverty³⁰ as mainly affected by the following factors:

- ascribed status (e.g. ethnicity, race, religion or caste),
- oppressive labour relations that trap people in insecure and low return livelihoods (e.g. migrant, stigmatized, or bonded labourers),
- position as an ‘outsider’ (e.g. migrant labourers, refugees, internally displaced people, or people without citizenship documents),
- disabilities,
- gender,
- age (e.g. children, youths or older people),
- stigmatized illnesses (especially HIV/AIDS),
- household composition (e.g. young families, households headed by disabled people, children, older people, or women including widows), or
- geography (e.g. living in geographically remote or marginalized areas, areas affected by conflict or other forms of violence, and environmentally insecure areas).

However, the push for inclusion of such groups in poverty reduction strategies means dealing with extremely complex issues and ensuring that policies do not impact negatively on any such groups. Such inclusion strategies risk creating a kind of fatigue among donors and may be ignored by governments that may have agendas that differ from what human rights norms demand. As Mary Robinson (first woman President of Ireland [1990–97] and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [1997–2002]) writes:

‘The challenge of mainstreaming or of ensuring a human rights-based approach to development is thus clearly on the international agenda but it has to be

*acknowledged that there is a very long way to go before such approaches become the norm.’*³¹

It is also made more difficult because of the lack of data available through government statistics, and even the failure of international organizations to identify excluded groups within national datasets. As MRG has previously explained:

*‘[The collection of disaggregated] data is needed in development to show whether or not existing programmes that purport to be neutral (i.e. do not take into account ethnicity because they are designed to benefit everyone) actually benefit or harm minorities, or fail to reach them. Likewise, it is needed to plan and monitor policies and programmes aiming to benefit minorities.’*³²

The rest of this report reviews efforts undertaken by governments, donors and civil society to put into practice PRSPs, to identify whether this approach has been successful in benefiting minority and indigenous peoples, who often make up a large part of the poorest and most marginalized groups within their countries.

The right to development

The right to development has its origins in provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the two International Human Rights Covenants. Sources for the right can, for example, be identified in the Charter’s language in Article 1(3) concerning, ‘international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character.’ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also affirms the importance of social progress and the right to an adequate standard of living in Article 25.

The Declaration on the Right to Development, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1986, defines the right as:

*‘an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.’*³³

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) summarizes the right to development in the following way. The right encompasses:

‘Full sovereignty over natural resources, self-determination, popular participation in development, equality of opportunity, and the creation of favourable conditions for the enjoyment of other civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.’

OHCHR goes on:

*'The human person is identified as the beneficiary of the right to development, as of all human rights. The right to development can be invoked both by individuals and by peoples. It imposes obligations both on individual States – to ensure equal and adequate access to essential resources – and on the international community – to promote fair development policies and effective international cooperation.'*³⁴

Essential components of a rights-based approach to development³⁵

Express linkage to rights

Rights-based approaches consider the full range of indivisible, interdependent and interrelated rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social. Development frameworks should mirror internationally guaranteed rights in fields such as health, education, housing, justice administration, personal security and political participation.

Accountability

Rights-based approaches focus on raising levels of accountability in the development process by identifying claim-holders (and their entitlements) and corresponding duty-holders (and their obligations). They consider both the positive obligations of duty-holders to protect, promote and provide, and their negative obligations to abstain from violations. They take into account the duties of the full range of relevant actors, including individuals, states, national and local authorities, other local organizations, private companies, aid donors and international institutions.

Empowerment

Rights-based approaches give preference to strategies for empowerment over charitable responses. They focus on beneficiaries as the owners of rights and the agents of development, and emphasize that the human person is at

the centre of the development process (directly, through their advocates, and through organizations of civil society). The goal is to give people the power, capacities, capabilities and access needed to change their own lives, improve their own communities and influence their own destinies.

Participation

Rights-based approaches require a high degree of participation, including by otherwise disenfranchised minorities, indigenous peoples, women and others. Participation can either be direct or via community organizations, always ensuring that such mechanisms are truly representative. Moreover, participation must be active, free and meaningful; mere formal or 'ceremonial' contacts with beneficiaries are not sufficient.

Rights-based approaches give due attention to issues of accessibility, including access to development processes, institutions, information and redress or complaints mechanisms. They employ process-based development methodologies and techniques, rather than externally conceived 'quick fixes' and imported technical models.

Non-discrimination and attention to vulnerable groups

Particular attention must be paid to addressing discrimination against vulnerable groups and ensuring their equal access and treatment. Such groups include women; ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities; indigenous peoples; people with disabilities; children; the elderly; or sexual minorities – although there is no universal checklist of who is most vulnerable or excluded in every given context.

Development data need to be disaggregated, as far as possible, by race, religion, ethnicity, language, sex and other categories of human rights concern. All development decisions, policies and initiatives, while seeking to empower local participants, are also expressly required to guard against simply reinforcing existing power imbalances.

The PRSP agenda in practice – a review of participation

*'Successful plans to fight poverty require country ownership and broad-based support from the public in order to succeed. A PRSP describes the macroeconomic, structural, and social policies and programs that a country will pursue over several years to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as external financing needs and the associated sources of financing. They are prepared by governments in low-income countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders and external development partners, including the IMF and the World Bank.'*³⁶

In 1999, when PRSPs were first articulated as a main focus of the MDG of halving world poverty between 1990 and 2015 for HIPC and other low-income countries, the IFIs put forward the five core principles which would drive the success of the PRSPs:

- *country-driven*, promoting national ownership of strategies through broad-based participation of civil society;
- *result-oriented* and focused on outcomes that will benefit the poor;
- *comprehensive* in recognizing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty;
- *partnership-oriented*, involving coordinated participation of development partners (government, domestic stakeholders and external donors); and
- based on a *long-term perspective* for poverty reduction.³⁷

An Overseas Development Institute (ODI)³⁸ review in 2003 of multilateral policy process changes identifies the kinds of evidence bases that led to the formulation of PRSPs as a new strategy. PRSPs implied a major shift in approach towards participation by civil society in government processes, and a move towards greater equality within the development space. For recipient governments it signalled enhanced control of their policy processes, improvements in the quality of policy, public expenditure and monitoring processes, and greater impact on the poor.³⁹

Uganda led the way for developing countries that were starting to focus on pro-poor growth, and did much to lend credibility to many of the policy research recommendations related to national poverty reduction

programmes.⁴⁰ The Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), initiated in the aftermath of the 1996 elections, served as a successful pilot case and was quite powerful in convincing policy-makers of the feasibility and merits of the PRSP initiative. It was also a success story for civil society organizations (CSOs) in Uganda. A 2004 research paper by Warren Nyamugasira describes four strategies used by Ugandan CSOs to make their participation effective: effective leadership; insider-outsider strategy;⁴¹ prioritizing policies; and utilizing informal networks.⁴²

Experiences with participation

Between 2002 and 2006, a number of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), think-tanks and national CSOs undertook research, evidence collection and documentation of their experiences with PRSP processes at national and sub-national levels.⁴³ However, since 2006, there has been much less documentation and research around PRSPs, especially second-generation PRSPs that could identify improvements (or not) in consultation, participation and implementation between first- and second-generation papers. This lack of more recent research is detrimental in that it hinders a more nuanced and long-term review of the PRSP approach. It is balanced, to an extent, by more current data which, although not focused specifically on PRSPs, does provide evidence on the state of achievement of the MDGs, which are intrinsically linked to poverty reduction and development.

The earlier reviews of PRSPs were mainly focused on engaging with governments and participating in the national PRSP consultation, implementation and monitoring processes. According to the core principles, such participation should lead to policies that promoted pro-poor growth and would better enable the communities to access development opportunities and benefits and escape the poverty trap. The emphasis within the PRSP document, and from donors, on participation and involvement of civil society has been one of the key selling points of the PRSP. CSOs working on development issues for years now believed that they had a voice in crucial policy decisions that affected the lives of the communities to which they were connected. This has been a powerful impetus in legitimizing PRSPs, as it obliges governments to acknowledge the voice of civil

society in development debates, and has helped improve relations between government and civil society, thus enlarging the space for participation.

However, much of the research on participation in PRSP processes revealed that effective participation of civil society has been a huge challenge due to the reluctance of governments to facilitate in-depth and effective engagement with CSOs and communities, and to be open to any actual policy changes.⁴⁴ For example, in Malawi, district-level workshops were supposed to engage with ordinary citizens. Instead, these workshops were dominated by elected local officials, government employees and traditional leaders. In fact, the report by Christian Aid on the process in Malawi states that: 'the government acted on the belief that once elected, it had a mandate to govern and design policy without being questioned by unelected entities'.⁴⁵ The CSOs' experience in Bolivia, Mali and Rwanda also led to a further, much stronger conclusion – that the most important factor for opening up civil space within a country, and for ensuring participation in PRSP processes, was government will.⁴⁶

For example, a 2004 analysis of the Bangladesh PRSP process identifies exclusion of some major segments of civil society, such as trade unions and farmers' organizations, as well as the poor themselves, as one of the biggest faults of the process.⁴⁷ The inclusion or exclusion of indigenous and tribal groups, and minorities, is also not mentioned in the Bangladesh PRSP – rather the focus with regard to marginalized groups seems to extend broadly to two categories, women and children, and the rural poor. By failing to acknowledge the different facets of marginalization and poverty, policy-makers failed to address the underlying structural inequalities existing in the country. The analysis also showed how women's groups criticized the process for not being adequately gender-sensitive. They particularly highlighted that the PRSP has not even suggested increasing the allocation for women's development in the national budget.⁴⁸

As the Bangladesh example suggests, even when women are identified specifically, the constraints on their equal participation in the social, economic and political spheres are not factored in at the policy and budgetary levels. The nature of women's participation in consultation processes with government, as well as – in numerous instances – their participation within decision-making processes at the community level, has been proven to be decidedly weak. The result is that most women workers (the majority of whom are in informal employment) are left out of the process altogether.⁴⁹

The failure of civil society to exercise influence on key policy decisions also occurred, in some instances, because of the lack of capacity of CSOs to provide sound expertise, research and evidence to back up their

demands.⁵⁰ In Malawi, civil society was seen to be institutionally weak, lacked advocacy experience and only engaged in a limited way in constructive dialogue with government. In contrast, Bolivian civil society, which consists of strong NGOs and broad-based social movements, believed it had a right to participate in public decision-making, and thus was much more successful in engaging with policy-makers on poverty reduction issues. However, even in the Bolivian case, civil society was generally not technically skilled enough to engage on economic issues and, as a result, was excluded from national economic policy discussions.⁵¹

The nature of civil society is in itself quite complex. Civil society includes a host of organizations, from NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) that are working towards their particular mandate, to other CSOs, such as trade unions, social movements, religious groups, and any other association that is not a private enterprise or government body. Given the nature of civil society, there is decidedly no one voice that represents civil society in totality, nor, in many cases, can many CSOs provide a clear picture of who they represent, as invariably they are not elected by their focus constituencies. However, in many instances these organizations are not hampered by bureaucracy, allowing them to develop deeper relationships with communities, helping to resolve or highlight issues such communities are facing, and initiating some improvement. It also means they can design and pilot innovative projects that can have significant positive impacts on communities. The fluidity thus observed in this sector, though perfect for the comingling of flexible, open and innovative initiatives, means that its 'voice' may be less powerful in relation to government/political actors and to big business.

Minorities and indigenous peoples and participation

The challenges of participation are compounded for minorities and indigenous peoples, who often live in remote areas, speak local languages rather than the state/national language, lack knowledge and information about national government processes, and lack the resources to participate in such processes. The groups that represent them are also marginal to government or national NGO networks, and thus have little capacity to engage effectively in government-led PRSP processes.⁵²

Minority and indigenous women face multiple levels of discrimination and marginalization, often not only from outside their communities but also from within. For example, pastoralist women in East Africa and the Horn of Africa endure harmful customs such as female genital

mutilation (FGM), and must submit to decisions made by male leaders on issues affecting them, while continuing to have less access to public services because governments are failing to provide such services, especially as compared to provision in other regions of the countries. Although statistics are far from authoritative, as pastoralism has yet to be included on any of the region's national censuses and data is rarely disaggregated, they still reveal a consistent picture of women being marginalized from national resources and expenditure.⁵³ In such situations, participation is minimal in consultation processes that are often led by men, with the result that women's experiences of poverty and social exclusion are rarely properly addressed.

For both women and men, participation in socio-political and economic processes presupposes the security and self-confidence of groups to involve themselves in a process where they believe they will be listened to, by each other and by the state. For minorities and indigenous peoples, participatory processes can only begin to have results if they take account of linguistic and cultural differences, gender inequalities, the impact of direct and indirect discrimination, as well as geographic remoteness and dispersion.⁵⁴

The importance of minimum levels of education and other social and economic facilities to the exercise of the right to participation is increasingly recognized in studies on poverty and social development:

*'Rights of participation cannot be enjoyed unless certain conditions exist. These include physical and emotional security, financial resources and minimum levels of education for the minorities. There has to be a toleration of opposing, particularly minority, views, and a general condemnation of discriminatory practices.'*⁵⁵

In Ethiopia, pastoralists were broadly excluded in the first-generation PRSP in that, although there was a chapter devoted to pastoralists, there had been no proper consultation and there was no clearly indicated budget for those communities. Minority pastoralist organizations in the country have lobbied the government extensively to ensure a properly consulted strategy and plan to develop pastoralist areas, and have had some success in the inclusion of their demands in the most recent PRSP (2005). A key reason for this success has been the organization of scattered and smaller NGOs into a coalition (Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia) that has managed to raise its voice nationally as well as internationally, and has gained international backing. Unfortunately, as in many countries, implementation of the 2005 PRSP has been patchy, and pastoralist communities in Ethiopia

remain among the poorest and most marginalized groups in the country.⁵⁶

Exclusion from participatory processes often resulting from institutional and social discrimination has also been observed in Latin America and South East Asia, where many indigenous and tribal communities have had no access at all to PRSP processes, and at a global level, where minorities have generally felt the effects of exclusion far more than their counterparts in the majority populations.⁵⁷ A desk review of 14 PRSPs undertaken by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2005 revealed that:

*'With a few notable exceptions, mainly in Latin America, indigenous and tribal peoples have not been involved in consultations leading to formulation of the PRSPs... [Some reasons for this] include the "invisibility" of indigenous and tribal issues in national development agendas ... and political circumstances that may introduce restrictive and exclusionary eligibility requirements for participation in consultation processes.'*⁵⁸

However, World Bank and IMF Joint Staff Assessment (JSA) Reports⁵⁹ stress that PRSPs are a 'learning by doing' process, and each cycle brings improved levels of public ownership, institutional development and a step in the right direction towards fulfilment of the five core principles highlighted earlier. Specifically, the reports mention that the focus on pro-poor growth has led to governments collecting more information and analysing the poverty situation of their country, and retaining much more control over domestic policies as compared to structural adjustment processes. But this view is tempered by evaluations emerging from the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department and the IMF's Independent Evaluation Office, which are more outspoken and criticize these conclusions. They identify faulty processes, which continue to impede country-driven formulation of policies and which prevent the exploration of alternative pro-poor and poverty reduction strategies.⁶⁰

Improved relations between government and civil society may also not be long-lasting. Where governments are seen to be consultative, yet fail to include civil society concerns and the voices of the poor in the final PRSPs, and thus fail to identify and implement policies that could strengthen equitable development, disillusionment sets in, and with it a realization that PRSPs will end up failing to deliver on the promise of pro-poor growth. For example, Gender Action, an international women's NGO that works in a number of developing countries, no longer engages with PRSP processes because experience has

shown that macro-economic reforms implicit in PRSPs impoverish poor women and men even further.⁶¹

The literature review on participation provides some clear insights into the constraints and limitations inherent in the way that the principle of participation is put into practice. The rhetoric often used by governments around

participation of civil society and the poor themselves leading to targeted policies and actions that would support their move out of poverty has not been substantiated by the evidence. The next section explores further the role of governments and donors in taking forward the PRSP process.

Steps in the PRSP

1. IPRSP – interim stage report – a roadmap of how the PRSP will be designed.
2. PRSP design stages – participatory consultation process; comprehensive poverty analysis; costed priorities for macro-economic, structural and social policies; appropriate targets (annual or over the time-frame) and indicators identified; monitoring and evaluation system identified.
3. Joint Staff Assessment (JSA), by staff of the IMF and World Bank to evaluate the soundness of the PRSP.
4. Submission to and approval by the Executive Board of the IMF and World Bank (based on a positive review by JSA).
5. PRSP actioned – concessional lending in place and the strategy can begin to be implemented.
6. Annual PRSP Progress Report to JSA.⁶²

Table 1: Core principles of PRSPs⁶³

Core principles	What they mean in practice
Country-driven	Country-owned. Involve broad-based participation by civil society and the private sector.
Results-oriented	Focus on outcomes. Performance targets are set, particularly when supported by multilateral lending.
Comprehensive	Recognize the multi-dimensional nature of poverty.
Partnership-oriented	Involve coordinated participation of development partners.
Long-term poverty reduction perspective	Medium-term framework, usually two years, which links in to longer-term goals.

Rhetoric vs. reality – constraints in implementation

The role of government in PRSP implementation

During the years of structural adjustment, national development plans of southern countries closely followed the macro-economic policies prescribed by the IMF and the World Bank. Over the last decade, PRSPs have, to a large extent, become the national development plans of HIPC and other low-income countries. Macro-economic stability is still very much a focus of national development, but this time with a much stronger emphasis on an analysis of poverty and the design of strategies for reducing it and encouraging pro-poor growth.

The PRSP is now usually, but not always, the result of a process that starts with an Interim PRSP (IPRSP). This document is drafted by the national government, usually led by the Ministry of Finance, and usually with consultation and advice from the IFIs, other donors and civil society. The IPRSP then becomes a road map for the drafting of the final PRSP. In the period between, a participatory consultation process has to be undertaken, and data on the nature and distribution of poverty generated and analysed. The PRSP, once finalized by the country's Ministry of Finance, is then reviewed by the staff of the World Bank and IMF, through a JSA. This assessment contains a recommendation to the executive boards of the World Bank and the IMF that the PRSP is a sufficient basis for concessional lending or debt relief. Where the PRSP document contains elements that do not find favour with the assessors, changes are requested which governments must usually accept in order to receive the loans. Countries must then generate an Annual Progress Report (APR) on their Poverty Reduction Strategy, giving an account of the progress of implementation.⁶⁴

Given the negative outcomes for the poor during the period of structural adjustment, the shift of the overarching aid and development agenda to poverty reduction entailed specific changes and innovations in the new approach. The importance of participation has already been discussed in the preceding section. Two other guiding principles in the PRSP approach – a comprehensive recognition and analysis of the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty, and coordination among development partners – also need analysis.

Poverty assessments

The World Bank and IMF specify that the PRSP document must reflect a comprehensive analysis of poverty with clear policy priorities, indicators, and a system of monitoring and evaluating progress around poverty reduction.

Poverty as a multi-dimensional measure, as opposed to income poverty alone, is not easy to define. Conceptual and methodological differences in defining poverty can lead to the identification of different individuals and groups as being poor. Empirical evidence shows that poverty rates in countries differ significantly according to the approach adopted. As a result, policy options can differ depending on the approach selected. For example, increasing the money income of the poor is the solution under the monetary approach.⁶⁵

For poverty analysis to be relevant to the design of policies that tackle the root causes of poverty, a simple monetary approach is insufficient. Every country has a national poverty line, but the way this poverty line is measured differs from country to country. Some may use a simple monetary approach while others may go further and use scales similar to the HPI of the UNDP. However, research has shown that these measures do not always reflect the true scope of poverty and its actual impact on those affected by it. There are other ways of identifying and measuring poverty which, if used, can provide a much greater depth of information on poverty and well-being, and which can thereby lead to the identification of policies that can stimulate pro-poor growth. An example of this is social exclusion, a complex and multi-dimensional concept that goes beyond a simple monetary or capability approach to poverty. Social exclusion is often the result of certain processes that prevent some individuals (or groups or communities) from participating equally and effectively in the social, economic, cultural and political life of societies. Knowledge of the various aspects of social exclusion is important for designing effective policy responses to tackle poverty and exclusion. Certain groups of individuals tend to be excluded in many societies, such as women; children; the elderly; people with disabilities; ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities; indigenous peoples; the seriously ill; sexual minorities; other marginalized social groups; or people living in a particular geographic area.

The CPRC, in its 2008 study on PRSPs,⁶⁶ found that poverty analysis makes up a core part of nearly every

PRSP they studied (17 countries) – however, in most cases, although governments may have identified key causes of poverty, they have not undertaken an in-depth analysis of these, with the result that poverty reduction strategies have failed to tackle underlying poverty issues.

Albania's NSSED [National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development] refers to the international standard for extreme poverty (\$1/day), by which definition 17 per cent of the population are poor, but also uses a relative poverty line (the EU 60 per cent median income threshold) which identifies 29.6 per cent of Albanians as poor in 2001, and half of these as extremely poor. This common use of food poverty lines for poverty measurement is only linked to a limited extent to a policy emphasis on promoting food security, indicating an area of disconnect between poverty analysis and policy responses.⁶⁷

Certain countries have conducted participatory poverty assessments (PPAs) during the design of their second-generation PRSPs, while others have relied solely on statistical quantitative data on poverty lines and calorie consumption. PPAs tend to identify certain qualitative factors better – such as the links between poverty and ethnic, religious or linguistic marginalization, gender, and geographical remoteness.⁶⁸ Vulnerable groups identified in PRSPs include: children (particularly street children and orphans); women (particularly at child-bearing age and in female-headed households); people with disabilities; people with vulnerable or stigmatized occupations; the elderly; and ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities. However, it is up to policy-makers whether consideration of these issues is articulated in specific policies to protect such groups. In fact, the study shows that the way that 'vulnerability' is conceptualized in PRSPs to some extent reflects the exclusion or limited participation of particular groups in the process – and this is often linked to political considerations and/or a reluctance to provide for certain vulnerable sectors of the population.⁶⁹ Uganda's PEAP, which includes PPAs, argues for a 'wider definition of poverty to include voicelessness and social exclusion'. These definitions are reflected in more general policy statements within the Ugandan PEAP, but not in terms of specific policies and practices, which focus on income poverty, human development and governance concerns, and ignore exclusion.⁷⁰

Numerous studies have shown that ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples are likely to be among the poorest sectors of a population, with very limited access to public services, and facing considerable discrimination and multiple forms of marginalization. Where population numbers are small these groups are

often politically insignificant, and thus rarely get a mention in policy or PRSP documents. Governments tend not to disaggregate data on the basis of ethnicity, race or religion, with the result that the real situation of such groups is often subsumed within the overall poverty analysis of the majority population. For example, the district of Karamoja in Uganda, although identified as an extremely marginalized area within the first PEAP, and populated mainly by minority pastoralist groups, has not seen any real progress in terms of the key areas identified – security, disarmament and the prevention of cattle-rustling, reduced child and maternal mortality rates, and increased infrastructure development. Historically, the Karamojong have been politically and economically marginalized, and their situation has not improved.⁷¹

According to the CPRC study, most countries do provide some type of disaggregation of data in their poverty assessments – the most common being the rural–urban divide and regional differences, but there is much less disaggregation on the basis of ethnicity, age and gender.⁷² Ethnicity has been found to be a particularly strong correlate of poverty in some PRSPs but is ignored in others. Of the countries reviewed, a majority of the PRSPs examined broader inequality trends and used the Gini coefficient measure to contrast regional differences, which has allowed some analysis of who constitutes the poorest of the poor, i.e. the most vulnerable. It is interesting to note that the identification of vulnerability in many PRSPs touches on:

'geographical vulnerability (those living in areas affected by disasters such as floods and droughts in Cambodia, Pakistan and Senegal); and vulnerable occupations (such as fishermen in Sri Lanka or those working in plantation communities; small-scale farmers in Zambia; crop producers, pastoralists, fishermen and their families, and estate workers in Uganda ...)'⁷³

Yet it fails to identify whether these groups form part of minority and/or indigenous communities, or whether minorities and indigenous groups themselves are made more vulnerable due to the discrimination they suffer.

Alexandra Hughes, in her report on PRSPs, finds that out of the 37 PRSPs analysed, only 21 mention minority groups.⁷⁴ The CPRC study of 14 PRSPs showed that only eight mentioned ethnicity, while indigenous peoples were mentioned by only three PRSPs (Bolivia, Nicaragua and Sierra Leone), and then only minimally. Uganda's PEAP, for example, recognized that vulnerability varied with age, gender, ethnicity, occupation and social status, but failed to map out ways of combating ethnic discrimination and ensuring equitable development.⁷⁵ Neither did it make any mention of the 56 ethnic groups that make up its

population.⁷⁶ This lack of analysis within the poverty assessments of a majority of countries, of who constitutes minorities/indigenous groups and whether these groups suffer a greater incidence of poverty, implies a continuing practice of political, social and economic exclusion, in itself symptomatic of ignorance and/or discrimination occurring within state institutions and society. This lack of political will to ensure inclusion inevitably leads to greater inequality between majority and minority groups in society.

The CPRC report highlights a critical element of poverty assessments, as being the point from which policies can begin to target effective pro-poor growth and reduce inequalities. However, the authors' findings show that much is left to be desired:

*'The depth of causal analysis varies even in later or second-round PRSPs, and in some cases, is only informed by limited social analysis. Though governance issues are discussed in all PRSPs, the details of political analysis are also generally absent. These twin biases, reflecting the dominance of economic analysis in thinking about poverty reduction, and the technocratic character of many PRSP processes serve to limit the depth of causal analysis. Potentially this also limits the range of thinkable policy options. In that tackling chronic poverty may require innovative policy thinking based on strong analysis, the quality of analysis in PRSPs is of policy significance, not simply of academic interest.'*⁷⁷

Women and poverty

Data shows that more than two-thirds of the world's poor are women, even though women make up only half the world's population.⁷⁸ Discrimination is one of the key drivers of women's poverty. Many women are denied equal access to employment opportunities, are paid less than men for equal work, or are prevented by law or custom from owning or inheriting land, making them more vulnerable to poverty. Similarly, where women are denied equal access to education and health, or do not have control over their reproductive rights, their ability to earn an income and to be protected from poverty is greatly compromised.

Minority and indigenous women bear the brunt of marginalization and discrimination – as they tend to be marginalized under traditional cultural roles within their communities, as well as facing discrimination from the majority. For example, most urban Afro-descendant women in Brazil still work mainly as cleaners, laundry workers, maids and nannies. These are some of the lowest-paid (both in comparison to Afro-descendant men, and white men and women), low-status jobs with no security, that perpetuate the 'servile' roles Latin American society has

historically assigned to Afro-descendants. A study in Brazil reveals that only 15 per cent of 'white' women work as domestic workers compared to 40 per cent of female Afro-descendants.⁷⁹ Afro-descendant women also face sexual exploitation by both white and Afro-descendant males. The study further reveals that both institutional and social discrimination over an extended period of time have resulted in political and economic exclusion, and disproportionately high levels of poverty, for Afro-descendant women and men across Latin America. The Brazilian government's social protection policy, which includes schemes such as *Bolsa Familia*,⁸⁰ is, however, a step in the right direction in tackling the economic exclusion of Afro-descendant communities.

Poverty assessments carried out by governments, under the PRSP umbrella, are meant to be gendered, but how well do they manage to do this? There is some degree of gender disaggregation in nearly all PRSPs. CPRC's research shows that women are identified by some PRSPs both as vulnerable and as having specific vulnerabilities because they are women (Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Uganda) but in others, such as the Ethiopian PRSP, there is no mention of vulnerable groups at all in the poverty analysis section and very little in terms of disaggregated data.⁸¹

In order to ascertain participation of women and men at the consultative stages of the formulation of PRSPs, research was undertaken between 1999 and 2002 in 12 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. The findings revealed that the analysis of the situation of women was often limited to a few sectors, such as health and education, where gender inequalities are compounded with women-specific issues. The discussion on gender generally referred to women's issues. Poverty assessments rarely pointed out gender-based discrimination or gender asymmetrical relations. Furthermore, power relationships contributing to the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities and constraints were not specifically identified or analysed.⁸²

The lack of a complete and in-depth analysis of women and poverty means that it is then difficult for policy-makers to translate poverty assessments into policies that can assist women specifically as a more vulnerable group. The creation of laws or policies against discrimination was the most common strategy proposed to combat gender inequity.⁸³ However, other measures are critical. Promoting equal opportunity and treatment of women and men, and the specific protection and promotion of the economic, social and cultural rights of women, are critical to redress gender biases and gender discrimination.

Governments, however, face few penalties for failing to develop policies and practices related to PRSPs that empower women and provide them with the means of securing their economic rights. Essential development

partners (and creditors), such as the World Bank and the IMF, do not take serious account of actions around poverty alleviation – their concerns focus more on ensuring that macro-economic policy conditionalities are retained. For example, the World Bank's Gender and Development Operational Policy, which promotes gender equality in its operations, specifically exempts policy-based loans from its application. This means that, although the rhetoric around gender-sensitive development may be strong, practice remains dismally weak.

Some outcomes of poverty reduction strategies

Given the acute failing of PRSP processes, and in fact of governments, to undertake robust and participatory poverty assessments, as discussed above, what is the impact of poverty reduction strategies to date?

Research and statistics dealing with data up to 2003 and 2004 identify rising inequality as a key concern. The UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) 2005 report investigates how inequality has increased rather than decreased since 1995, especially in parts of Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa, and how minorities and indigenous peoples, women, older people, youth and the disabled continue to be excluded from economic and political processes in their countries.⁸⁴ Persistent gender gaps in access to education and to economic and non-economic opportunities often linked to women's lower status in many societies is emphasized in Gender Action's in-depth analysis of seven countries' PRSPs and desk studies of many more conducted up to 2006. The analysis shows that:

*'The rigid fiscal and monetary policies in PRSPs, PRGFs [Poverty Reduction Growth Facilities] and PRSCs [Poverty Reduction Sector Credits] and other policy-based loans choke social spending, deepening poverty particularly among women. For example, public health expenditure cutbacks increase women's home care for sick family members and reduce their time available for paid work; public sector and enterprise restructuring eliminates many jobs and benefits – women are often the first to lose jobs and last to be rehired because they are assumed to be secondary breadwinners despite increasing numbers of female headed households; and unreciprocated developing country tariff reductions threaten the livelihood of farmers, the majority of whom are women in the poorest countries.'*⁸⁵

More recently, UNICEF's *State of the World's Children* report for 2009 shows that over 1 billion children are

deprived of food, shelter, clean water or health care.⁸⁶ And MRG's *State of the World's Minorities* report for 2009 points to large inequalities in access to education across the world for minority and indigenous groups as compared to the majority populations.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find more examples of current data and research on poverty reduction that also looks at whether inequality is rising or falling in PRSP countries. It is even more difficult to find disaggregated data on minority and indigenous populations that could provide more robust proof of whether poverty reduction strategies have truly benefited the most marginalized. This author's recent research in Kenya and Uganda,⁸⁷ and experience of working in other Southern countries, has, however, provided evidence of continued exclusion and deep neglect of those who are most marginalized, resulting in increased poverty and inequality across many minority groups.

Coordination among partners

One of the main elements for the successful implementation and monitoring of the PRSP approach is the role of the main identified partners in the PRSP process – the government and specifically its different ministries involved in PRSP design and implementation; democratic institutions such as parliaments; bilateral and multilateral donors and lenders, especially the IFIs; the private sector; and civil society. Coordination is meant to strengthen the ability of a government to successfully initiate and drive through its national strategy, which in itself needs to have broad-based local support and international backing (for concessional lending to occur).

A review of PRSP implementation shows a number of issues arising in terms of little or no coordination or, in effect, partnering between various stakeholders. With regard to governments, key criticisms focus on the lack of technical capacity (at national and sub-national levels) to integrate poor people's concerns into policies and in budgets, and/or to implement programmes, due to the complexity of processes; little or no political will to take forward policies that benefit the poor and marginalized; very little parliamentary input, consultation or oversight; a lack of accountability to the public; corruption and misuse of funds; and, critically, unequal power dynamics between recipient countries and IFIs and other donors (some of these are discussed in more detail below). The effect of such elements in the design and implementation of PRSPs, when taken together, point to a process which is not necessarily country-driven, participatory or pro-poor in its orientation.

The lack of technical capacity to draft and then implement the PRSP effectively remains a major challenge. For many local government functionaries, the whole

process of poverty analysis, consultation, project planning and budgeting can be both complex and time-consuming. The PRSP monitoring process in Tanzania demonstrated that it was extremely difficult and time-consuming to analyse the budgets due to insufficient knowledge and lack of technical know-how on the part of relevant government employees. The monitoring process in Tanzania also revealed that resources were not adequately distributed to meet the demand for services. One of the reasons for this was the limited participation from the lowest local government level during the budget drafting process:

*'Normally budgets are supposed to go through a village council that involves all adults of 18 years and above before submission to the ward level. What actually happens is that only a few people (and in most cases these are those with predetermined priorities) prepare these budgets. Then at the district level, local government has a limited opportunity to influence budget ceilings that are determined by national level. As a result, budgets are not reflecting reality in the grassroots communities.'*⁸⁸

National Kenyan NGOs have also expressed their misgivings with regard to the level of technical skills and capacities of various ministry staff, who are often key implementers, to undertake their work effectively. One of the critiques with regard to implementation of programmes targeted at poverty reduction is that the national budget cycle is extremely complicated, which often makes it difficult, if not impossible, for smaller NGOs with less technical knowledge, to follow up on the status of funds or grants specified in the PRSP, and to budget for particular regions and/or communities.⁸⁹

The main findings of reports assessing the efficiency of PRSP funding have noted a lack of transparency and accountability within governments as another major obstacle hindering the further development of the PRSP process. Data is often not disaggregated, and actual expenditures on particular programmes have been difficult to ascertain as no breakdown is provided. This lack of transparency often makes it impossible to compare what resources have been allocated versus what has actually been spent. So monitoring, whether by parliaments or by civil society, is severely constrained.⁹⁰

Generally, the role of parliaments, or lack thereof, in the design and implementation of PRSPs is also heavily criticized by NGOs. If PRSPs are to be country-led and owned, parliaments must have a much stronger role in debating the various facets of the process. There is a need for the actions of the executive to be monitored by the legislature – especially in relation to the kinds of policies and programmes that are created for poverty reduction

and in the budgeting process. Many members of parliament (MPs) share the same view. A Kenyan MP has been quoted as saying:

*'Parliament is the connection between government and the people. And parliamentarians are the representatives of the people, and you cannot purport to be doing development to help the people you represent without their involvement. The only way to oversight government, to stop corruption, to have accountability, is to involve parliament.'*⁹¹

However, in a majority of countries with PRSPs, elected parliaments have not had a say in the design and implementation, or even monitoring, of the PRSP. A World Development Movement (WDM) study shows that, as of 2005, only five countries' parliaments had ratified the PRSP document, and among these, most had taken no part in debating or drafting the strategies.⁹² and the European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad) reports that the Zambian parliament as an institution has not been involved in the PRSP process nor in other fundamental debates around the design of the PRSP monitoring framework nor the Public Expenditure Management and Financial Accountability Process (PEMFA).⁹³

Significantly, while the involvement of parliaments should be an essential part of the PRSP process (from consultation through to monitoring and oversight), parliamentarians may at times not be capable of questioning the executive, or even standing up to other party members. Many pastoralist groups in the East and Horn of Africa complain that, even where members of their communities have been elected to parliament in their countries, these elected MPs have failed to raise their voice for pastoralist issues at crucial times, thus allowing the marginalization of pastoralist regions and communities to continue.⁹⁴ The capacity and responsibility of parliamentarians to respond to and take forward the needs of their constituencies is therefore a key area of governance which needs further support and strengthening if PRSPs are to have a stronger basis of ownership and accountability from within.

Formal consultations with civil society are also often an artificial construct, undertaken by governments to be seen to meet the requirement of effective participation, a core principle of the PRSP. The Senegalese PRSP review demonstrates that the government did not feel that broad-based awareness of the PRSP process was essential, nor did it encourage or ensure in-depth civil society participation. According to the author, one of the reasons for such negligence is the political risk associated with civil society involvement. Civil society is often sceptical about social expenditure (re)allocations in poverty

reduction strategies, strongly opposing reductions in allocations for social services. Governments, which are often constrained by macro-economic realities, may be unable to provide the necessary reassurance to civil society, and thus may be unable to meet the expectations which PRSP consultation processes inevitably raise.⁹⁵

Where extremely complex procedures tend to deter civil society from holding governments to account, and where parliaments have little or no understanding or involvement in the process, there is a strong chance of mismanagement of funds taking place. Corruption not only reduces the net income of the poor but also distorts programmes aimed at meeting their basic needs – from water and sanitation to education and health care. Corruption results in the misallocation of resources to the detriment of poverty reduction programmes.⁹⁶ Recent reports of the misallocation of aid specifically targeted for the universal primary education programme in Kenya,⁹⁷ provides just one of many examples of the kind of corruption that can occur when economic survival and opportunities are dependent on a system of bribe-giving and -taking, which is internalized not only in the public sector, but throughout society as a whole.

Transparency International, in its paper on *Poverty, Aid and Corruption*, recommends that:

‘Civil society needs to collaborate more strongly with parliament, as the central institution of democracy, to support efforts of the legislature to hold the executive to account. Evidence-based work with citizens is a critical contribution that civil society can bring into this partnership.’⁹⁸

One of the key setbacks identified in terms of accountability is that recipient governments usually see their primary responsibility as to the World Bank and the IMF rather than to their populace. The main issue here is that much-needed loans and credit support are primarily dependent on the IMF’s and World Bank’s approval of the PRSP, and, where there are discrepancies, the demands of the creditors usually take precedence.⁹⁹ A review of the PRSP process in Senegal notes that a ‘less optimistic’ macro-economic framework was drafted due to the encouragement and direction of the World Bank, which urged the national government to cancel the initial draft on the grounds of it being ‘not realistic’.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the Honduran NGO network, Interforos, was told by government officials that they could not negotiate with them on macro-economic policy prescriptions as the IMF’s position was non-negotiable on this matter.¹⁰¹

The power of the IFIs in relation to recipient governments’ ability to decide national macro-economic policy has grave implications. Such direct interference

undermines the core principle of national ownership that was supposed to be a key facet of the shift from structural adjustment. It also has a knock-on effect on internal government/civil society consultation processes, as it limits the range of issues on which consultation becomes possible. And, more critically, it weakens formal democratic processes, as parliaments are constrained from questioning such policies, thereby further limiting their ability to monitor, or keep in check, the actions of the executive.

Directly linked to this is just how far donors are aligning themselves behind PRSPs, through general or sectoral budget support, and cooperating with each other. Donor harmonization is essential as often capacities of government departments are overstretched or undermined when donors demand specific implementation and reporting practices on their projects (which may differ from the general practices of the department). In 2003, donor agencies committed to work with developing countries to better coordinate and streamline their activities at country level, and, by 2005, countries around the world had endorsed the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Commitments under the Declaration include, but are not limited to, the following: developing countries will exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies, and coordinate development actions; donor countries will base their overall support on receiving countries’ national development strategies, institutions and procedures.¹⁰² This has led to some improvement in coordination within the donor community, and between donors and recipient governments (take, for example, the move towards sector-wide approaches), but much still remains to be done to improve coordination.

Structural underpinnings – no real change from adjustment

Over the years, CSOs and UN agencies have published studies and reports based on evidence gathered at country level and IFI progress reports that reflect a number of issues at the centre of the PRSP debate today.

However, one key structural element that is not often reviewed in enough depth and detail is the engagement between the IFIs and specific governments (and within them more specifically the finance ministries) of low-income countries that have agreed to design a PRSP in order to be able to access IFI lending and aid support.

An ActionAid USA report of 2005 quotes Michel Camdessus, former deputy head of the IMF as stating: ‘The globalization of the world’s financial markets has sharply reduced the scope for governments to depart from traditional policy discipline.’¹⁰³ The term ‘traditional policy discipline’ reflects the original policy prescriptions (part of

the Washington Consensus) that the IMF and World Bank would place on all lending to developing countries. Although some policy conditionalities have been modified, such as the extremely reduced role of the state in providing social services (free education, health care, etc.), others, such as deregulation, trade liberalization and balancing the budget, continue to be the basis for many Southern governments' macro-economic reforms. Out of the standard 10 prescriptions, PRSPs contain an average of six. And where specific reforms or policies are not mentioned within the PRSP, they are often already in place, as most HIPC countries switched over from SAPs to PRSPs without trialling alternative economic policies.¹⁰⁴ Because of their dependence on foreign aid, loans and debt relief (in itself a vicious cycle), recipient governments have lost a tremendous amount of domestic political autonomy over choosing their macro-economic policies. Policies that stimulate aggregate demand or lower interest rates to encourage domestic investment, leading to improved pro-poor growth and reduced inequality, often do not even get a mention.

In ActionAid's 2005 report examining the extent to which there was 'policy space' for debating macro-economic alternatives within five countries, it was discovered that, apart from in Bangladesh, most officials of finance ministries and central banks felt unwilling to consider policies other than those set by the IMF.¹⁰⁵ Apart from Bangladesh, there was an extremely high level of dependency on IMF policy advisers.¹⁰⁶ In practice, though, central bank autonomy from elected politicians, who may sometimes have unrealistic demands, is generally advantageous and has proven to be a powerful tool in achieving macro-economic stability in several countries.

However, the inability to question traditional macro-economic reform policies, in turn, limits the space within which other stakeholders, such as civil society and parliaments, can influence policy at the national level. Macro-economic policies and options are often not debated within parliaments or opened up to public debate. Many national and local CSOs find themselves unable to critique or question a government's policy choices as they may not have the information or skills required to debate macro-economic policy options. Governments themselves, given identified weaknesses in poverty assessments and consultation processes, lack essential information which could allow for better understanding of whether and how various macro-economic policies are harming or helping the poor. Thus, alternative views of poverty reduction and the development and testing of policies that can actually reduce inequality and bring gains to vulnerable groups remain off the agenda for now.

The concerns raised in this chapter around poverty assessments and coordination clearly reflect how most governments are failing to take forward the PRSP agenda

both in spirit and on the ground. Governments, especially those that are politically motivated to address the issues of poverty and inequality, find their ability to manoeuvre constricted by macro-economic formulas imposed by the IMF and the World Bank. The importance of ensuring that they are not barred from concessional loans, and from donor support which is linked to their following the strictures of the IFIs, means that governments are not necessarily responsive to the needs of the poor and marginalized. Add to that the level of systemic and social corruption present throughout the system and the end result is countries where poverty and inequality are rising. However, if donors, governments and international agencies are keen to push the PRSP approach and the focus on poverty reduction (as a transformational model) into a new and possibly more promising decade, they must begin to change old patterns of behaviour and to practise in earnest the five core principles whose rhetoric they have so wholeheartedly adopted.

Examples of poverty reduction outcomes in non-PRSP countries

What do governments need to focus on to promote equitable growth and development? Certain policies have been identified as having a strong impact on improving socio-economic conditions and equality within countries. The example of Brazil is a case in point and reflects how such policies can have positive impacts on a country's economy and society simultaneously.

In a recent World Bank working paper comparing poverty reduction efforts across Brazil, China and India, Martin Ravallion found that both India's and China's success in securing economic growth, while substantial, is characterized by rising inequality. China has managed a 6.6 per cent approximate annual rate of poverty reduction but has not managed to reduce inequality; in fact, just the opposite is true. India's growth rate hit 5 per cent for most years between 1993 and 2005 (as compared to Brazil's average of around 1 per cent), but this was not backed by successful social policies to tackle inequality. Per unit of growth, Brazil reduced its proportional poverty rate five times more than China or India.¹⁰⁷

Although the high initial inequality in Brazil (linked to discriminatory practices against Afro-descendant and indigenous populations within society and at an institutional level) both held back economic growth and constrained more widespread sharing of the benefits of economic growth, the government's success in reducing poverty and inequality shows that effective pro-poor social policies can be combined with fostering a stable macro-economic environment. Brazil's cash transfer programme (*Bolsa Familia*) provides help to 11 million families or 60 per cent of all those in the poorest 10th percentile.¹⁰⁸

Ten years on – pastoralists and PRSPs in Uganda and Kenya

The PRSP on trial – experiences in Uganda and Kenya

With a population of over 26 million, growing at 3.4 per cent, a per capita income of US \$250 (in 2004 estimates), and average life expectancy of 45 years (2007), Uganda is listed by the UNDP and World Bank as one of the poorest and most indebted countries in the world. According to the latest Human Development Report (2007 HDI estimates), 38 per cent of Uganda's population lives below the national poverty line.¹⁰⁹ Uganda's own PPA showed that 20 per cent (or over 7 million people) are chronically poor, and inequality has been increasing while poverty has been deepening.¹¹⁰

The Ugandan PEAP was the nationally driven precursor to the PRSP and was an outcome of a very specific political process led by the president. By 1997, poverty eradication had become the goal of Uganda's PEAP, and in 2000 the process of reviewing the PEAP, upon urging from the World Bank, became the basis for Uganda's first PRSP document.¹¹¹

Uganda's 2004/5 PRSP document, following up on its original goals (2000/1 PEAP document), promised change on the following issues, grouping actions in a way that reflected the importance given to civil society concerns such as enhancing production and productivity, conflict resolution and disaster management:¹¹²

- economic management (addressing maintenance of macro-economic stability, fiscal consolidation and boosting private investment);
- enhancing production, competitiveness and incomes (addressing the modernization of agriculture, preservation of the natural resource base, development of infrastructure, and enhancing private sector skills and business development);
- security, conflict resolution and disaster management (key priorities being the ending of rebel insurgency – if possible by peaceful means, ending cattle-rustling and dealing with internal displacement);
- good governance (focusing on human rights and democratization, improvement of the legal system, transparency, accountability and elimination of corruption); and
- human development (focusing on primary and secondary education, improved health outcomes,

improving the ability for planned families and community empowerment).

The PEAP also lists cross-cutting issues such as gender, HIV/AIDS, employment, social protection, population growth, regional equity and income distribution.

While there was a high level of consultation in both phases of the PRSP design, with Ugandan CSO involvement in the process being deemed a success,¹¹³ the final policies and budgets that were agreed involved very few individuals – mainly policy-makers from the Ministry of Finance and IFI representatives. The result was that social policies were the first to be reduced or scrapped in favour of ensuring a certain set of macro-economic conditions such as low inflation, trade liberalization and privatization, and balancing the budget. Issues around poverty eradication, especially those to do with social protection, equity and income distribution, and human development, fell by the wayside. For example, the World Bank's loan facility for the PRSP, called Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC), puts a ceiling on how much budgetary support in the national budget can be provided to each sector, e.g. health, education, etc.¹¹⁴ Where each sector's goals (which are identified during the consultation and planning process with CSOs) were costed under both the 2000 and 2005 PEAPs, and the costs went beyond the ceiling imposed through the PRSC, these would have to be cut. Across the board, the focus of the PRSCs and other loan facilities was economic growth, while caps on public expenditure for poverty reduction and development purposes were extremely tight.¹¹⁵

The end result – 10 years of the PEAP/PRSP has brought about no change in maternal and child mortality and morbidity; gender disaggregation and gender budgeting still remain far-off goals; and regions and groups marginalized because of the effects of conflict and discrimination are even worse off than before. To illustrate the deepening crisis faced by some of Uganda's most marginalized groups, the following example provides a snapshot of PRSP failure.

Life on the edge – the case of Karamoja

The Karamoja region is located in north-eastern Uganda. It is bordered on the east by the Rift Valley escarpment

that goes down into the Kenyan region of Turkana, on the north by Sudan, on the south by the Mt Elgon region, and on the west by Teso, Lango and Acholi sub-regions. Karamoja is approximately 27,200 square km, and is dominated by vast semi-arid plains, where rainfall is seasonal, unpredictable and often insufficient.¹¹⁶

The principal Karamojong groups in Karamoja are semi-nomadic pastoralists who also rely on seasonal horticultural production. An economically similar (although linguistically quite different) group, known as Pokot, inhabits a territory in south-eastern Karamoja that includes both Ugandan and Kenyan land. In western Karamoja is the relatively more fertile area of Labwor, where horticulture is the principal means of livelihood and the people are ethnically more similar to their Acholi neighbours to the west. Several very small groups of ethnically marginalized people, such as Tepeth or So, Teuso or Ik, and Nyakwai, are also found in Karamoja.¹¹⁷

Historically, Karamoja and the Karamojong peoples have been, and continue to be, marginalized from the political, social and economic mainstream of Uganda. Successive governments have considered them backward because of their nomadic and pastoralist culture. Many groups have now been settled by the government, but continue to lack economic and political influence. However, recurring tensions with successive governments have led to continuing conflict, resulting in the increased spread of weapons in the region in the last few decades. Young Karamojong from different tribes often carry out cattle-rustling raids on other tribes and settled villages. Although the Ugandan government has, since the 1980s, initiated a strategy of disarmament in the region, it has only managed to disarm certain areas, with the result that tribes on the border with Kenya and Sudan remain armed and continue their attacks. Some of the outcomes of this low-intensity conflict are low levels of development, poor infrastructure, abandonment of rich agricultural areas, changes in grazing patterns, environmental degradation and the emergence of large settlements for security purposes.¹¹⁸

Irriri sub-county is located in the south-western part of Moroto. It is becoming a hub as settlers from the various parts of Karamoja move here, although it remains dominated by Bokora, Pian and some Iteso. Trading centres are being created as more tribes become settled and stay together in order to protect themselves in the face of the insecurity. People are organizing themselves into permanent settlements and have started to own land. Much of this is due to the conflict and drought, which has drastically reduced the cattle population and has motivated groups to settle in larger communities and to diversify their livelihood into agriculture.¹¹⁹

Some facts and figures¹²⁰

Uganda Land Alliance (ULA) undertook a poverty and social impact assessment of 600 households in Irriri sub-county. Their main findings were as follows:

- approximately 78 per cent of respondents had never attended school;
- 85 per cent lived in houses made from grass (including roofs) or mud;
- 62 per cent of people collected water from boreholes with an average walking distance of 2 km to a borehole;
- sanitation and sewerage facilities were practically non-existent for 98 per cent of the population;
- 90 per cent were dependent on wood for generating light and cooking;
- in terms of access to government services, average distances were calculated to measure how easy or difficult it would be for people to take advantage of these – the average distance to the nearest school was calculated at 2.3 km while that to a health centre was 6.8 km; and
- average distances to the nearest clean water source, market, main access road and courts of law were computed and found to be 1.7, 7.1, 4.2 and 41.6 km respectively.

In December 2009, this author visited the Irriri sub-county in order to meet with members of some of the communities to gauge how 10 years of PRSPs/PEAPs had affected them.¹²¹ The total population of the two parishes was estimated at approximately 50,000 by the ULA community workers, while the Moroto district-level government officer estimated that there were approximately 60,000 people in total in the four parishes (which include Tepeth and Nabwal), but the estimated population on which government planning and budgets was based was 37,000.¹²²

Moses, the sub-county chief of Irriri since 2002, works closely with the local authorities of Moroto District. The district has a plan with different areas of intervention for poverty eradication under the PEAP. The target beneficiaries are meant to be the 'utter poor'. The plan includes a focus on education (school and classroom construction and teachers' housing), health, works and production (i.e. infrastructure), and crop production; cross-cutting issues such as gender and women in development, youth, environment and special interest groups also need to be addressed. When asked how these decisions on areas of intervention were made, Moses responded that the PEAP framework, which was developed by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development, was transferred down through the district and sub-county level. When asked what kind of consultations had taken place in the district,

he responded that much had been done in terms of participatory planning.¹²³

Moses believes that the main problem, that is hampering development from taking place in the region is of insecurity and conflict. The government is interested in disarming groups but has not provided alternative means for the population to diversify livelihoods (the goals outlined in the 2005 PEAP, as referred to earlier, specifically mention security and livelihoods as a key target – however, practical strategies, at least for Karamoja, seem to be absent). No protection as such is being afforded to villages that have been disarmed, and neither are there any practical solutions for disarmed youth, in order to make them gainfully employed. This means that many return to stealing guns and raiding communities.¹²⁴

Discussions with the communities centred around one key question – what changes have occurred over the past 10 years, both good and bad? It was enlightening that for those consulted, women and men, two main issues were of central importance:¹²⁵

(1) *Insecurity*. For the communities, the greatest challenge has been the insecurity they continue to face, which is rooted in the government's inability to protect them from armed groups. This results in people being killed and women being raped and/or kidnapped and killed. These attacks also lead to a diminished social status for the men who cannot protect their families and dependents because they are unarmed; this sense of emasculation then leads to other social ills like alcoholism (and possibly greater domestic violence, although this was not stated overtly). The insecurity also has a serious impact on livelihoods as cattle-rustling continues; all the communities we spoke with have seen a stark reduction in the numbers of cattle they own, especially cows. Due to massive raiding since 2003 (and since they themselves were disarmed), the Alekilek community has experienced higher levels of poverty. Cows provide the labour for ploughing fields, as well as milk, which is either used directly or exchanged for other goods at the market. Without cows, cultivation is reduced, which means even less food. People have started to die from hunger and have been killed or wounded in the raids. For women, personal security is a constant worry, as they are robbed and beaten regularly, and sometimes raped or kidnapped. People do not intervene on their behalf as they are fearful of the armed raiders, and because they know that the attackers will never be caught or brought to justice. There is no government protection for the communities; even though some troops patrol the area, they are too few and are mainly situated around the trading centres. Although reports are submitted to the

district office, there is no follow-up (Karamoja has a small police force with limited capacity, and often the only security that is afforded to people is by the military). The communities we spoke with did not see or sense that there is a government in place that supports or enables them to live their lives peacefully.

(2) *Access to food*. Pastoralists in Karamoja and other areas of East Africa are on the front line in facing the pressures of climate change. Over the past 10–15 years, the seasonal rains have been dwindling and they have experienced increasingly frequent periods of drought. Drought has brought with it failed harvests and the death of livestock, and this, along with the economic downturn caused by insecurity, has severely affected the ability of people to feed themselves and their families. When households are faced with severe deprivation and starvation, they depend upon the UN World Food Programme to provide relief, not upon the government. But because of the incorrect official population figures, many people cannot register for food aid. And food aid in itself is not enough. Raiders know when and where food is being delivered, and they arrive soon after delivery and steal the food meant to feed the communities. Many people are migrating from Karamoja to the major cities to look for work and to flee insecurity. Those who remain, however, are bearing the brunt of a multitude of government failures.

For women, other issues were also important. These related specifically to the lack of provision of basic services by the government. Although there are now more schools in the parishes than there were in 2000 (12 primary schools in the four parishes as compared with only two 10 years ago),¹²⁶ women still cited lack of education, and good-quality education, for their children and even for themselves as a major issue. Hidden fees make it extremely difficult for impoverished families to send their children to school, and sometimes schools are just too far away for younger children to attend. Access to water is also a major problem for women, who must walk miles in order to collect firewood and water. Not only is this extremely costly in terms of time, it also means facing the danger of being attacked or kidnapped. There have been some benefits in terms of health care. Women receive free medicine through NGOs, which assist in providing medicine at village level. Many women find government health centres too far away to utilize (there are now four health centres as compared with only one 10 years ago),¹²⁷ but have seen some reduction in child mortality due to the anti-malarial campaigns and distribution of free mosquito nets by NGOs.

The bleak picture drawn from the community consultations differs sharply from the original plans for

poverty alleviation spelt out in Uganda's PEAP. The PRSP ideals, in practice, seem to have failed the Karamojong people totally. Facilities like the Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme (NUREP¹²⁸ – a government programme funded by the European Union [EU] with an independent staff appointed by the EU) and the other development programmes for Karamoja in place for the past 15 years, are prime examples of how development becomes subverted due to political malfeasance, misappropriation of funds, lack of technical capacity, and a deep-rooted neglect of areas and peoples that are perceived to be 'backward', so that people are actually made worse-off in the process. For example, since 2007, NUREP has received €20 million towards supporting social infrastructure development in Acholi, Lango, Karamoja and Teso regions, as well as Adjumani districts, which are some of the 40 districts identified under the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP).¹²⁹ The programme is also meant to support education and psychosocial services; improve livelihoods; and shore up the capacity of districts in the region to delivery quality services.¹³⁰ A visit to Karamoja provides no evidence of how this money has improved the lives and livelihoods of people, who are instead caught up in a vicious cycle of conflict and hunger, and seem to be giving up all hope for a better future.

Civil society has also not achieved much success in terms of improving the lives of the people. There are 101 NGOs and CBOs registered with the district planning unit in Moroto (the main town in Karamoja, which has also become a regional base for UN operations). Community consultations did point to this sector providing free medicine and some other basic services. Yet there is no information available to show communities exactly how much is being spent on or planned for them, and very little in terms of real differences in living standards to prove that programmes undertaken by international or local NGOs are making any impact at all.

CSOs argue, however, that insecurity and lack of government concern for the region make it more difficult to work in the area. In terms of monitoring the work of government, district council meetings are held occasionally, but CSOs complain that very short notice is given to them before these meetings (i.e. notice is given a few hours or the night before), making it extremely difficult to attend. NUREP also has meetings which can be attended by CSOs. However, CSO staff who have attended such meetings explain that discussions and budgets show millions of Ugandan shillings spent on infrastructure, for example improvement of roads, etc., but in actual fact there is no change on the ground. Many complain that politicians prevent proper transparency and monitoring of government budgets, allowing for corruption to occur under the noses of international

donors. And some further complain that the misused funds under NUREP are the result of inefficiency and possible misuse of funds by sub-grantees.¹³¹

ActionAid Uganda, which monitors the situation in northern and eastern Uganda, states that poverty and marginalization have actually increased in these regions over the past 10-year period, even though Uganda itself has had steady economic growth during this time. Insecurity, deforestation and drought have led to decreasing population growth in Karamoja, and there is a real danger that the conflict, along with government neglect, may threaten some of the tribes with extinction. The Office of the Prime Minister is directly responsible for NUREP and other programmes for Karamoja (and currently the president's wife Janet Museveni is the Minister for Karamoja), but there has been little visible impact of its work to date. One of the major failures of the PEAP/PRSP process has been the lack of attention to accountability, which could have provided more evidence of where money has been spent. Unfortunately, there has been a complete failure of accountability within the PEAP over the last decade.¹³²

Moving away from PRSPs?

The Ugandan government's experience with PRSPs may soon come to an end. The latest manifestation of its national strategy is the new National Development Plan (NDP), which has been prepared by a new unit called the National Planning Authority, technically part of the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development, where key decision-making has usually been located. However, because of the politicization of the NDP process, currently there is said to be a lot of friction between the NPA and the ministry. There is already much criticism of the way the NDP has been developed, with absolutely no consultation with civil society in the drafting process. A first draft of the NDP has been circulated to a limited group of national CSOs and individuals, but has found little support in these circles. There are fears that the space for civil society will become more restricted, especially with the new NGO regulations that are soon coming into place, and that this may have a severe impact on popular participation and civic awareness.

Donors have also been curiously silent on the de-linking of the national strategy from the approved PRSP process of the recent past. Uganda's history with its donors and international financiers has been unique. Beginning during the period of rehabilitation, donors invested a lot of trust, as well as finances, in the Ugandan government. Initial success was followed by a lot more funding, in terms of both grants and loans. Donors essentially became stakeholders in Uganda's economy as they were, at one stage, footing approximately 50 per

cent of Uganda's annual budget. This also brought them greater say in the structuring of Uganda's national plans. But over the longer term it has become widely apparent that a substantial proportion of this money has been servicing political patronage and increasing the wealth of Uganda's political and economic elite, while allowing the rest of the population to suffer. However, there is an even more debilitating effect of this process, which is that Uganda's indebtedness over the past 10-year period has increased rather than been reduced through its relationship with its donors and creditors. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that both the Ugandan government and international institutions and donors have failed in their responsibility to the Ugandan people.

Kenya's Endorois – where PRSP implementation could help to make a difference

The situation of the Kenyan pastoralists is similar to that of their Ugandan counterparts. Pastoralist communities in Kenya have consistently been removed from their ancestral lands by successive governments, intent on developing the areas for mining and tourism purposes, or securing areas as game reserves. One specific group of Kenyan pastoralists, Endorois, were evicted in the early 1970s from the Lake Bogoria region in the Central Rift Valley to make way for ruby mines and a game reserve. No compensation or percentage of revenue from the tourism or business in this area has ever been received by this community; in fact they have seen their wealth decline and their environment change drastically over the past 20 to 30 years.¹³³

In 2000, the Kenyan government initially worked with a PRSP. This was followed in 2003 by the Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS), which was based on PRSP principles and was meant to restore economic growth and reduce poverty. The ERS was supplanted in 2007 by Vision 2030, which aims at wealth creation, with an emphasis on five-year Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs) that link budgets to policies. Throughout this process, research shows that there has been no significant positive impact on the situation of minorities and indigenous communities across Kenya. These communities remain impoverished, with high levels of illiteracy, high HIV prevalence, poor health, and high maternal and child mortality rates.¹³⁴ Within many of these minority and indigenous communities, absolute poverty levels have been calculated to be between 60 and 90 per cent.¹³⁵

So what does the Kenyan government need to do to ensure that communities like the Endorois can move out of poverty and towards wealth creation instead of what

has currently been the trend for marginalized communities – declining wealth and assets? For one thing, understanding and supporting the entrepreneurial spirit of Endorois would provide a boost not only for the community but for the Kenyan economy as a whole (if similar practices became more widespread).

Endorois have benefited from the development of an Endorois Welfare Council (EWC), which has been set up by members of the community to help them manage the many changes that have befallen them – from legally challenging their loss of access to ancestral land, to helping community members develop alternative and diverse sources of income. With the support of MRG, the EWC and Centre for Minority Rights and Development (CEMIRIDE, a Kenyan NGO) presented a case against the Kenyan government at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Commission's decision, upheld by the African Union, creates a major legal precedent by recognizing, for the first time in Africa, indigenous peoples' rights over traditionally owned land and their right to development. The decision was adopted by the African Commission in May 2009 and approved by the African Union at its January 2010 meeting in Addis Ababa.¹³⁶

The success of this legal challenge may have a very positive impact on the communities in the Lake Bogoria region, although only time will tell. What is apparent now is that the changes that have occurred for the community over the past 20–30 years have been for the worse. Poverty has increased and the wealth of the community has seen a significant decline. Climate change has been a considerable burden – the land has changed over the past couple of decades and the major droughts of 2000 and 2009 (interspersed with smaller droughts during the interim period and exacerbated by cattle-rustling) have resulted in a huge loss of livestock. Further, because of reduced rainfall, which is now becoming the norm, it has become more difficult for the land to support cattle grazing. With the livestock losses experienced in this year's drought, for example, families that were wealthy are now reduced to poverty, and most families are now simply trying to meet their basic daily needs.¹³⁷

According to a founding member of the EWC, Wilson Kipkazi, people in the community have become aware of their economic vulnerability through solely relying on cattle and livestock, and are trying to diversify their livelihoods. Specifically they are looking at two paths to diversification. First, beekeeping is becoming a key economic activity for many Endorois villages. Whereas beekeeping was a more traditional activity in earlier days, people saw the potential of selling or trading honey at markets. Currently two social enterprises have been created which are focusing on beekeeping as a sustainable

livelihood. Beekeeping also provides an income for Endorois women, although traditionally women are not allowed to gather honey. Women can buy and keep their own beehives, and can employ men to get the honey. In turn, they provide other services during the processing of honey and in making other saleable products, such as candles and ointments from the wax. The second area that is being considered for economic diversification is agriculture, and some piloting is under way.

Opportunities

The Racheemo Beekeepers Association, a consortium of members (male and female) from three Endorois villages, established themselves in 1996 with a vision statement which reads: 'To encourage farmers to rear bees as a business to reduce poverty.' With some support from CSOs, they were trained in modern beekeeping and production, and managed to obtain a grant which allowed them to set up a honey processing plant. Their current turnover is small but they are looking to expand their enterprise and to enter the national market, and are also looking at the possibility of exporting their honey.¹³⁸

When asked if and how they had access to government PRSP programmes, the response was that, in the district budget, millions of shillings have been apportioned towards the support of beekeepers, but none of this money has trickled down to them. They are working to identify where this money has been spent, and to try to apply for funds from this budget. They have received some basic training from the Ministry of Livestock, but this requires the community to fund the ministry official's transport and other expenses, which makes it difficult to continue. What they did require specifically was training in business development skills, including accounting, book-keeping, marketing; training for other community members in modern beekeeping methods; and funds for investment which could allow them to grow the community business and develop their niche in the market. They were also keen to develop irrigation in the area to ensure that the trees crucial to supporting the bee population could survive even through periods of drought.¹³⁹

Consultations with community members showed they were not very optimistic that they would obtain support from the government. Local government meetings are held once a year to identify the priorities of the communities, an annual exercise for setting budgets that are meant to take forward the goals identified in the current PRSP cycle. However, budgets are linked to the revenues of a particular area, which means that budgets for this district are extremely tight and most of the money goes to cover government employee wages, with very little money actually being spent on social services or

community support. Hidden school costs mean that it is difficult for children to attend school continuously, and school fees charged at the secondary level are much too expensive. The result is widespread unemployment in the area, with no scope for children completing primary school to develop their skills and find good jobs.

Farming is another avenue for income diversification, but again key problems require government intervention. As water is a major problem, dams need to be built to ensure crop survival and that the soil remains fertile. Alongside this, urgent advice and guidance is needed by those community members starting up farming, to ensure that they use sustainable methods which will not strip the soil of the minerals required.

For Endorois to achieve their goal of resource and economic diversification and wealth creation, what they need apart from their own particular entrepreneurial drive, is a boost from the government through development of skills and of their environment. This means understanding the communities' needs and aspirations, drawing up a budget and a development programme that includes these requirements, and ensuring that local government and technical personnel from key ministries can provide the technical and financial support that is needed, at the right time. Civil society can also be of help, by supporting the beekeepers associations in identifying markets and providing training in business development plans and techniques, which is necessary for successful entry into today's globalized marketplace. Meanwhile, the Kenyan government must provide assistance in climate change adaptation.

Constraints

The reality of current issues that trouble Kenya's economic and political landscape may result in an altogether different outcome however. Meetings with representatives of national NGOs painted a picture of the government's Vision 2030 plan as excluding the voices of minorities, indigenous communities and others who are marginalized, in favour of an extremely modernist and ultimately urban model of development. Although Vision 2030 incorporates important areas of development concern, it does not contain the necessary details of how areas such as Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) will be managed (ASAL areas are dominated by pastoralist groups), and fails to provide a realistic portrayal of how the poor are actually coping in the current socio-economic environment.

Civil society, as in the Ugandan example, is losing out in this process. The new strategy has been formulated in a very top-down manner, with little consultation and participation of Kenyan civil society. For many, there is also a growing realization that the capacity in many key ministries is extremely weak. Discussions with a variety of

NGOs reveal there is a real disconnect within ministries between policy-makers, planners and those who ultimately create the budgets. For example, CEMIRIDE's own experience of working with local government has proven that, at the district level, the national budget cycle remains a mysterious and far-removed process. At the federal level too, the budget cycle is regarded as extremely complex, and many staff within the national ministries are not particularly well-versed in its details and processes.¹⁴⁰ Strengthening the governance capabilities and technical capacities of public sector officials is thus a necessary precondition to ensure the proper understanding, articulation, implementation and monitoring of government programmes for development. There is an urgent need to train government officials in these areas, especially where ministries/government departments are becoming more decentralized, to ensure that those at the very bottom of the chain (and often the ones most closely engaged with the public), understand the processes and practical outcomes of decisions made at the top.

The capacity of civil society to understand and monitor government planning processes and timelines is similarly weak. Unfortunately, there is little cohesion and unity within the NGO sector, where parallel disconnected programmes are the norm. CSOs need to equip themselves better, at both national and local levels, in order to have some success in holding the government to account.¹⁴¹ There needs to be an even more concerted effort by civil society to track the budgeting process, to identify how money is being allocated, and where it is actually being spent, and to create a united platform to demand government transparency and accountability. The recent revelation of the disappearance of hundreds of millions of Kenyan shillings of United Kingdom development assistance funding, given to the Ministry of Education for its universal primary education (UPE) programme, has caused a scandal in the country. However, no one within the ministry has yet resigned and the money remains missing.¹⁴²

For minorities and indigenous communities, the enhanced role of civil society and the need to make governments more accountable is an essential and critical element of their own survival and indeed prosperity. The author's own experience in Uganda and Kenya raises the

question of why one group of minorities seems to be making some progress towards their own development (Endorois), while the other group (Karamojong) has been reduced to extreme poverty and hunger, given the similarity in their overall situations and environments. Other than cultural differences and issues of aid dependency (which conditions communities negatively, leading to an expectation of being 'helped' by outsiders) – both points open to debate – the only divergent aspect seems to have been the Endorois involvement in a legal case with their government. It seems that the exposure of the EWC and, in turn, the Endorois themselves, to an in-depth interaction with international human rights norms and standards, to the extent of testing the efficacy of these standards in an international arena, has led the community to internalize the rights-based approach to development, creating in the process a voice that cannot be ignored by the government. What is equally interesting is that this community confidence and ability is not based solely on the fact that the legal decision was in their favour, but was apparent long before the decision came to pass – hinting at the importance of the process involved (which in itself has been a mixture of setbacks and successes).¹⁴³ There are certainly more examples of such community empowerment processes and models in many countries around the world. However, empowerment as a factor in taking forward the true spirit of the PRSP approach still needs further research and study.

The snapshots of Kenya and Uganda provided above are just a reflection of the kinds of challenges and threats faced by minorities and indigenous peoples, marginalized groups, and women in poverty worldwide. Governments on the whole have proven to be ineffective in supporting pro-poor growth, with vast amounts of money meant for poverty alleviation lining the pockets of corrupt politicians, government officials and economic elites in many recipient countries.¹⁴⁴ The international development system has also, in the process of imposing preferred macro-economic conditions and, in essence, controlling national strategies, inflicted severe penalties on the poor and marginalized. The result for countries that fall into the LICUS¹⁴⁵ and low-income categories, has been one of increased indebtedness, worsening inequality and decreased future opportunities for prosperity. Much needs to be rectified if this picture is to change.

Conclusions – reforming the PRSPs

*'The state continues to be an arena of institutional decisions to set the parameters of citizens' social, political and economic options. PRSPs assign substantial and leadership roles to governments from the drafting, submission and implementation stages, and accord them the responsibility to grant and sponsor participation of all members of society.'*¹⁴⁶

The previous chapters highlight areas of key concerns linked to the successful implementation of PRSPs that need to be addressed if governments are truly willing to take on the challenge of pro-poor growth. These concerns reflect the low level of priority attached to the five core principles by both governments and donors alike.

The international agenda

The first building block for reforming the PRSPs must be to challenge the conventional wisdom that has formed the basis for concessional lending (both through the older SAPs and continuing into the PRSP regimes) for the past 30 years.

It is time for development economists to re-examine the macro-economic prescriptions that have become the basis for concessional lending and debt relief. Given that many countries are already seeing reduced, if not negative growth, it is imperative that the focus stays sharply on reducing poverty and inequality through policies that genuinely tackle these difficult issues. Economic stability is essential, but the current global financial crisis has demonstrated how vulnerable many economies in the global South actually are, a condition that does not seem to have been helped by their following the strictures of the global financial institutions. Uganda's example, and specifically its increased indebtedness, should act as a red flag so far as the relationship between international donors and developing country governments is concerned. This does not suggest that such relationships should be abandoned. Rather, officials on both sides need to come together to understand and commit to supporting growth that is pro-poor and combats inequality. Only then will the mantra of poverty reduction really have an impact upon those living in poverty and deprivation worldwide.

Domestic policies and reform

At the domestic level, and free from donor conditionalities, Southern governments need to focus on some key policies if they are serious about reducing inequality and poverty within their countries. As Richard Ssewakiryanga, director of Uganda's NGO Forum says, what is needed is a model of citizen-led development, where poverty reduction policies and strategies are actually relevant to the experiences of poor people. And the way such policies need to be designed is to use the tool that is already part and parcel of the PRSP approach, but rarely given the importance that it deserves. Poverty assessments which are detailed enough to reflect the structural and root causes of poverty and marginalization need to become a top priority for governments. Participatory poverty assessments then become a key tool for poor people, civil society and policy-makers to work together to understand how macro-economic reforms hurt or help the poor, and what type of support is needed to improve people's own ability to move out of poverty (which the example of the Endorois community shows is possible given the right support).

The Chronic Poverty Report discusses how focusing on specific policy fixes can lead to improvements on the ground for the most marginalized and poor.¹⁴⁷ However, the authors warn that these policy areas are highly complex and that it is a major political challenge to change the growth path of a national or regional economy. Specifically, though, policies that focus on the following areas, and reflect a deeper understanding of the root causes of chronic poverty, can lead to positive change:

- *livelihood protection and promotion* – focusing on rural development and social policies as well as on employment in urban areas;
- *growth with equity* – identifying positive macro and structural economic policies, rural development, policies aiming to promote human development, and redistributive policies such as social protection;
- *effective empowerment* – including actions aiming to reduce social exclusion and processes that increase opportunities for chronically poor people to advance their interests.¹⁴⁸

There are certain other factors that need to be in place for such policies to result in success. Policies must be nuanced enough to identify and address the pitfalls of institutional

and social discrimination, which can lead to increased tension and conflict over land and resources where particular groups are perceived to be receiving a larger share of government 'goodwill' than others. It is next to impossible for these policies to be properly implemented without structural and institutional strengthening and reform. In essence, what is required is fully accountable good governance, which in itself requires political maturity and transparency, reduced corruption and political patronage, removal of all discriminatory policies and practices, and curbs on the ability of economic elites to undermine these processes. Structural and institutional strengthening remain highly problematic areas in many countries emerging from conflict or from authoritarian rule, and even within those democracies which limp from election to election, without any real change in the make-up of the political and economic elite that ultimately controls power. Thus, economic and social gains for the large numbers of poor within such nations, where short-term thinking is often the norm, become of secondary importance, if they are considered at all. 'There are limits to how far policies can challenge politically and historically based relationships that create and sustain patterns of distribution and discrimination.'¹⁴⁹

However, the example of Brazil can provide encouragement to any number of developing country governments seeking to design pro-poor policies. Despite the country's legacy of discrimination and inequality, the Brazilian government has managed to design and implement policies which balance economic stability with support for the poor. These policies are sufficiently nuanced to have reduced inequality:

*'The virtue of the Bolsa Família is that it reaches a significant portion of Brazilian society that has never benefited from social programs. It is among the world's best targeted programs, because it reaches those who really need it. Ninety-four percent of the funds reach the poorest 40 percent of the population. Studies prove that most of the money is used to buy food, school supplies, and clothes for the children ... thus breaking the cycle of intergenerational transmission and reducing future poverty.'*¹⁵⁰

Inclusion of minorities and indigenous peoples

The access of minorities and indigenous peoples to development, and their consultation and participation in decisions that affect their lives, must be a key aspect of PRSPs and national strategies. The situation of pastoralists across the East and Horn of Africa (an example which has

many parallels with the situation of a number of minorities and indigenous communities around the world) highlights the effect of government neglect or, worse, intentional discrimination, towards a group of people who, in fact, have much to offer their countries.

*'Using minority rights to ensure an effective rule of law that addresses security, discrimination and property rights, and a system of real participation and accountability for minority women and men in decision making, will ensure that the identities of all peoples and groups can flourish in societies, and even for old conflicts to be resolved.'*¹⁵¹

All marginalized groups must be included in the deliberations over national strategies and, for this to occur, national consultation processes must improve. Governments have a responsibility to provide development opportunities to all who reside within their borders, and such opportunities must ensure that marginalized groups and individuals have their voices heard.

Women and gendered action

For women, PRSPs represent a major failure on promises made by both the international community and by national actors to redress issues of political, economic and social discrimination that remain pervasive in most societies across the world today. States need to commit to actions that integrate representative voices of women in the institutions and processes that set economic and social policies. Governments need to ensure that all poverty assessments are gendered, and that women's experiences of exclusion and poverty form significant parts of policies that are designed. There is a need to ensure that discriminatory laws, policies and practices are reformed and to overcome the biases that allow these practices to continue unchecked.

The move towards poverty reduction and the launch of the PRSPs by the international development community was popular, timely and well-intentioned. As a transformational approach, the PRSPs, with their five guiding principles, had enormous potential for change and progress. The guiding principles underlined the need for local ownership and support, strengthened the position of civil society (nationally and globally), and demanded improved and enhanced coordination of partners at all levels of the process. The subsequent failure of this approach to improve the lives of those most in need must naturally be analysed. This review is a small step in the process, but it has identified certain key failings in the implementation of the approach. For what has been shown thus far is not a failing of the approach

itself, but rather a failing – by donors, governments and to some extent civil society – to implement and live up to the core principles. Given this failure, much remains to be done by all involved in the PRSP process if the next 10

years are to bring about the intended benefits to the world's poorest people. There follow some recommendations which can hopefully help to re-energize this process.

Recommendations

For governments:

- National poverty measurements should be constructed not simply on the basis of income poverty but should also incorporate the multi-dimensional nature of poverty.
- Poverty assessments must be thorough, in-depth and must examine the effects of social exclusion on different sectors of the population.
- Disaggregation of data, not only spatially (across regions and provinces, or urban and rural areas), but also on the basis of ethnicity, religion, language, age and gender, must be introduced for all statistical information relevant to poverty reduction, including in national censuses.
- For national development programmes, at all stages of design, implementation and monitoring, the full, effective and meaningful participation of minorities and indigenous peoples, including men and women, should be ensured.
- Obstacles preventing minority and indigenous women's participation during consultation, planning and monitoring phases of PRSPs should be identified and addressed.
- The role of civil society in holding governments to account and in ensuring transparency of planning and implementation of poverty reduction strategies should be acknowledged and encouraged by governments, and regulations on NGOs must not impact on these organizations' ability to carry out such monitoring.
- Civil society must be given proper consultation status, and must be given a role and say, when macro-economic policies and priorities are being discussed between the national government and IFIs.
- Parliaments should become designated national partners in the PRSP process, and parliamentarians must receive training and guidance on how to participate as well as to ensure they are provided with relevant information to make informed decisions.
- Governments must develop the capacity and skills of officials involved in implementing and budgeting for development programmes (from the lowest district level right up to ministerial level), to ensure that they are able to effectively consult on, plan and manage the PRSP process.

Donors and IFIs:

- A critical and open debate is needed on why structural adjustment has failed and why the emphasis on structural adjustment remains within the PRSP. Macro-economic stability as a basis for growth is undisputed – however, the one-size-fits-all policies that are often imposed need rethinking.
- Power imbalances in the relationship between donors and IFIs on the one hand and recipient governments on the other, make for little if any national ownership of PRSPs, and create perceptions of negative external influence. Again, more transparency is required in this relationship.
- The roles of trade linked to aid, and problems of trade liberalization for poor economies, have to be acknowledged. Supporting PRSPs while simultaneously negotiating bilateral trade agreements that can only harm the poor in developing countries cannot be a sustainable option.
- Civil society must be accorded a role in debating the efficacy of various macro-economic policies and instruments – this must occur during, as opposed to after, negotiations between recipient governments and IFIs are concluded.
- The rhetoric around institutional strengthening, good governance and reduced corruption must be supported by good practice on the part of donors themselves. In-country offices of donors and IFIs should support civil society tracking of donor money and government spending, and should support civil society demands for more transparent budgeting.
- Donor harmonization still remains a distant reality. Donors must work with each other and with recipient governments to ensure that aid is relevant and effective. International and national civil society must be involved in monitoring aid effectiveness.
- The strengthening of civil society must remain high on the donor agenda. Part of this strengthening must include supporting groups that are marginalized within mainstream civil society – especially those that represent the voices of minorities and indigenous peoples – in every country.

Civil society:

- There needs to be a concerted effort by civil society to track the budgeting process in their countries, to identify how and where money is being allocated, and where it is actually being spent, and to create a united platform to demand government transparency and accountability.
- The skills and capacities of national civil society organizations must be developed so that they can hold their own in debates around macro-economic stabilization and adjustment – and be able to push for policies that reflect local priorities.
- National and sub-national NGOs and CBOs must ensure that they are truly participatory and reflective of the voices of the many communities that make up any one country. To do this, their internal practices must reflect the rights-based approach and must also reflect the gendered and multi-ethnic/religious/tribal and linguistic make-up of their societies.
- Women's and minority/indigenous NGOs must be supported to participate in debates and consultations around poverty reduction programmes, and such groups and their communities must see the benefits from this participation.

Notes

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Meetings and consultations

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Kenya

Nairobi: Meeting with Yobo Rutin, Centre for Minority Rights and Development (CEMIRIDE), 18 December 2009.

Lake Bogoria: Meeting with W.K. Kipkazi, Endorois Welfare Council, 19 December 2009.

Lake Bogoria: Meeting with six members of Racheemo Beekeeping Association including village councillor, 19 December 2009.

Lake-Bogoria: Meeting with members of Beekeepers Association in Koibos-soi, 19 December 2009.

Getting involved

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Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: failing minorities and indigenous peoples

When they were first introduced in 1999, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) were enthusiastically received. Initiated by the International Monetary Foundation and World Bank, they constituted a plan for pro-poor growth in low-income countries.

This report shows, however, that PRSPs have been failing to deliver. Crucially, they have largely ignored the plight of minorities and indigenous peoples, who are usually among a country's most marginalized and poor. While some PRSPs identify women as vulnerable, others make no mention of vulnerable groups at all in the poverty analysis section and provide very little in terms of disaggregated data.

Millions of dollars, directed via governments and civil society, have been spent on development programmes that are having no real impact on the ground. Research suggests that there has been sparse coordination between various stakeholders, while governments have shown reluctance to engage civil society and take forward policies that benefit the poor and marginalized. In addition,

the process has suffered from corruption and misuse of funds, with little accountability to the populations of recipient countries.

The report's author, Samia Khan, advises that all parties need to urgently reassess the process, or the PRSPs will never be able to meet their promises to the poor, most particularly minorities and indigenous communities.

Following an overview of how PRSPs have become the focus of international development thinking, the report demonstrates how a lack of critical analysis and evaluation of these strategies in terms of their ability to move communities out of poverty, has meant that it is business as usual for a number of interest groups. The report goes on to focus on the experiences of pastoralists in Uganda and Kenya, during the period when these countries have had PRSPs in place. It concludes with recommendations on how the current PRSP model and practice needs to be improved if it can truly become an engine for positive change on the ground.