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# **Failing women, sustaining poverty:** Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

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Report for the UK Gender and Development Network

by Ann Whitehead

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**Christian  Aid**

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Ann Whitehead is a Social Anthropologist who works on gender and development issues at the University of Sussex. Ann can be contacted by email at [awhitehead50@btopenworld.com](mailto:awhitehead50@btopenworld.com).

## The UK Gender and Development Network

The Gender and Development Network (GADN) has been active in advocacy and awareness-raising on gender and development since its founding in 1985. The GADN represents 128 UK development organisations, academics, and individuals committed to promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in development.<sup>1</sup>

## Christian Aid

Christian Aid is the official relief and development agency of 40 British and Irish Church denominations. It works where the need is greatest, regardless of race or religion, in more than 60 countries worldwide. Christian Aid links directly with people living in poverty through local organisations, with the aim of strengthening poor people towards self-sufficiency. Christian Aid also seeks to address the root causes of poverty by spending around ten per cent of its income on development education and campaigning in the UK and Ireland.

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## Summary

This report explores how the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) of four countries deal with gender issues. It assesses how far poverty is analysed as a gendered phenomenon, and whether gender is integrated into each country's policies on poverty and spending plans to combat it. It also addresses the processes by which different voices and interest groups influenced the content of the PRSPs and the processes' gender balance. The report examines the form that gender issues take in the PRSPs of Tanzania, Bolivia, Malawi and Yemen, why they take this form, and how this is linked to the unique design of each PRSP process. The analysis is based on telephone interviews and a review of primary and secondary documents.

The twin requirements of broad-based participation in PRSP formulation and endorsement by the Boards of the World Bank and IMF have produced major contradictions for the content, as well as the process, of PRSPs. In many cases governments have conducted national dialogue on poverty policy not out of a genuine commitment to participation in policy-making, but simply to fulfil this condition of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative and to access debt relief funds. In some of the case studies, civil society opposition to neo-liberal adjustment, macroeconomic policies and indebtedness take the form of alternative visions of development that embody deep-rooted criticism of past government economic policy. Their criticisms of the link between these issues and poverty reduction have not been allowed to surface within the PRSP process.

Poverty analysis in the PRSPs is limited. The description of impoverished groups does not extend to analysis of why they are poor, so gender relations cannot be advanced as an explanation of women's poverty. There is insufficient disaggregation of data by sex. Women's incomes, livelihoods and resource constraints are poorly captured. Although attention is paid to the qualitative dimensions of poverty (vulnerability, 'voicelessness' and powerlessness) these are poorly integrated with the rest of the poverty analysis. There is inadequate integration between the poverty diagnosis and the policy sections of PRSPs.

Gender issues appear in a fragmented and arbitrary way in the body of the PRSPs dealing with policy priorities and budget commitments. Some women's needs issues are raised, especially in the sections on health and education, but gender is not integrated or mainstreamed. Despite being recommended by the PRSP Source Book, the separate chapter on gender is missing in half the PRSPs reviewed. They pay very limited attention to women's material well being, and there is no recognition that macroeconomic policy and national budgets can be gendered. In some cases a more elaborated set of gender and development policies is made, but the link between these general goals for improvements in women's position and tackling women's poverty is unclear.

Governments' efforts to listen to and consult women at all levels were unsatisfactory. At the popular level, the choice of who to consult and the way those consultations were carried out usually meant that few or no women's voices were sought. When more participatory processes were used in the PRSP formulation process, gender issues were given greater attention, but they were not then used to inform the policy priorities and spending plans.

Consultations with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in general were flawed, and civil society representatives had to work very hard to get their views recorded. However these views were rarely then reflected in the content of the PRSPs. Men's *and* women's voices were stifled in the contested space between government and CSOs, but this was exacerbated in the case of women and women's organisations. Women citizens were hardly consulted at all and gender advocates

within national CSOs had little success in influencing strategies. Women's voices have hardly been sought and have definitely not been heard.

National governments and the international financial institutions (IFIs) have played the biggest role in determining PRSP content. Their understanding of the scope of gender issues and the causes of women's poverty are thus extremely important. Within the IFIs, comprehension of gender issues is very uneven. Within national governments, understanding of gender issues is generally poor, particularly in the finance and planning ministries that are responsible for developing PRSPs. National bodies that represent women's interests, government ministries and civil society groups are often weak, lacking in influence and have limited capacity for gendered poverty analysis.

Within national civil society organisations as a whole, the commitment to and understanding of gender issues is at best variable and often weak. Gender advocates in national women's organisations and in a limited number of donor organisations and international NGOs (INGOs) are being left with the responsibility for pushing gender issues and advancing the understanding of women's poverty. In these case studies, donors and INGOs played a bigger role than national actors in getting gender onto the agenda. The influence and legitimacy of women's advocacy organisations affects their dialogue with other groups and some have been de-legitimised as they work within a hostile environment. In some cases, this is true of their relationships with other CSOs, but more often true of their relationships with governments, which are often very tense.

The poor development of gendered poverty analysis and gendered analysis of macroeconomic issues is common among all the key actors in PRSPs. These analyses should include attention to the sphere of reproduction; deconstructing the household; a focus on women's livelihoods, incomes and employment; and an analysis of gender implications of budget priorities and public spending. Integrating the non-economic dimensions of poverty – vulnerability, powerlessness, voicelessness and male-biased governance systems – with these economic dimensions is essential. Expertise in macroeconomics and in gendered national budgets, together with a specific focus on the micro issues that effect women's material well being, are needed in order to make PRSPs gender sensitive and effective in reducing the poverty of women and men.

Effective advocacy from groups who have adopted such perspectives will depend on much greater receptiveness within governments, the IFIs, some donors, and national and international CSOs. It remains to be seen whether an increased capacity for gendered poverty analysis and the understanding of national economies from a gender perspective will increase this receptiveness, or whether it will be blocked by a lack of political will.

## **Recommendations**

The Gender and Development Network of the UK makes the following recommendations to the various actors involved in PRSP processes around the world:

### **Gendered analysis**

- The analysis on which a PRSP is based must fully demonstrate the gender dimensions of poverty – highlighting the embedded gender biases in macroeconomics and structural policies; gender inequality as a cause of poverty; the different experiences of poverty for women and men; and the different effects of policy and budgetary decisions on women and men.
- PRSPs should be based on a multidimensional view of poverty, better integrating the non-economic dimensions of poverty (vulnerability, powerlessness, voicelessness and male-biased governance systems) with the economic dimensions, and giving space to the views of poor men and women about their own poverty.

### **PRSP processes**

- National governments should make gender-sensitive participatory methodologies central to poverty assessments, and the design and implementation of poverty-reduction strategies. All actors need a better understanding of how to make participatory poverty assessments gender sensitive. Particular support should be provided to the poorest and most marginalised people, the majority of whom are women. They tend to find it most difficult to participate, but are central to the success of a PRSP.
- All stakeholders within the PRSP process need to ensure that gender is mainstreamed within their own institutions and that gender inequalities are addressed.
- The PRSP assessment processes of the IFIs, including Joint Staff Assessments and IFI board discussions, should fully mainstream gender. They should consider whether a PRSP treats poverty as a gendered phenomenon and seeks to tackle the gender dimensions of poverty, as well as the quality of participation by women and other traditionally marginalised groups.

### **Policies for poor women and men**

- In order to have a long-term and sustainable impact on poverty levels, PRSPs must place measures to tackle women's poverty at their centre, because so many poor people in most countries are women.
- PRSP policies and associated spending plans should be firmly linked to gendered poverty analysis and gender equity.

### **Advocacy on gender**

- Advocacy by civil society groups around PRSPs should have a much sharper focus on the gender dimensions of poverty – highlighting the need for PRSP taskforces and working groups, and for the IFIs to take gender seriously.
- During the PRSP process, communication and trust building need to take place between women's organisations and other CSOs that have more access to the PRSP process.
- INGOs working on PRSPs should give special attention to gender issues and women's poverty in their international advocacy on the PRSP approach.

## **Capacity building**

- Capacity building support on gendered poverty analysis and gendered policy solutions is needed by most national government ministries, especially ministries of finance and planning which generally lead PRSP processes. They also need improved capacity to listen to CSO voices in the PRSP process, in particular those voices representing poor women.
- Ministries of gender/women need capacity support to develop their economic analysis and advocacy skills, in order to influence PRSP processes to fully mainstream gender.
- Donors and INGOs should use innovative ways of supporting the capacity of local and national CSOs to analyse and promote gendered poverty issues through PRSP policy-making and implementation.
- Women and women's groups require specific help to overcome traditional and institutional barriers and become involved in policy-making and implementation, particularly on economic issues. Specifically, gender advocates will need to develop the skills to analyse budgets in terms of their differential impact on women and men. Such support could be provided by governments, INGOs, international donors and other CSOs, which have more influence over the PRSP process.
- IFIs must train staff, particularly those involved in advising on PRSPs, and members of technical missions that advise national governments about poverty analysis, macroeconomic policy, national budgets and sectoral policies, so that they are able to provide gendered poverty analysis and gendered economic analysis.

## **Monitoring**

- In order to avoid losing sight of gendered PRSP policies during implementation, gender must be fully mainstreamed through PRSP monitoring indicators.
- National actors should collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data through both quantitative methods, such as a national survey, and qualitative, participatory methods, like interviews, and use this information for monitoring the implementation and effects of the PRSPs.

## Section 1: Introduction

### 1.1 'Poverty has a woman's face'<sup>2</sup>

More than half the poor citizens of heavily indebted developing countries are women. Since 1999, the international financial institutions (IFIs) have required these countries to formulate nationally owned participatory poverty-reduction strategies, in the form of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), as a condition of receiving concessional lending and debt relief under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. These poverty reduction strategies must aim to reduce the enormous burden of poverty carried by poor women around the world. In order to be effective in reducing national poverty levels, PRSPs must address the needs of poor women, as well as of poor men.

It is not sufficient to simply acknowledge that poor people are both women *and* men. Poverty is more complexly gendered, as men and women are often poor for different reasons, experience poverty differently, and have differing capacities to withstand and or escape poverty. Gender inequalities and gender power relations interact with other inequalities and power relations to produce these differences. As Cagatay observes, 'Gender-based power relations mean that women experience poverty differently and more forcefully than men do' (2001:14), and 'women are more vulnerable to chronic poverty because of gender inequalities in the distribution of income, access to productive inputs, such as credit, command over property or control over earned income, as well as gender biases in labour markets' (2001: 6).

Nonetheless, it is important, as Jackson has pointed out, not to conflate poverty and gender inequality (Jackson 1998). Overcoming gender inequalities is a different kind of policy objective from that of reducing women's poverty, even though experience shows that gender inequalities tend to widen if anti-poverty policies are not gender sensitive (Cagatay 2001). Reducing women's poverty requires specifically gender-informed efforts to make an impact, but these are also required to reduce poverty as a whole. Because women make up such a significant number of poor people, if national governments are to reduce poverty, they must address women's poverty, as well as men's.

### 1.2 Methodology

This report explores the way in which poverty is addressed as a gendered phenomenon in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers of four countries – Tanzania, Bolivia, Malawi and the Yemen – and in their policies and spending plans. It also addresses the processes by which different voices and interest groups were able to influence the content of the PRSPs and the gender balance in those processes. These case studies were selected for a number of reasons: because they provided a geographical spread; they have all completed PRSPs and are in the implementation stage; there was little existing work on gender and the PRSP in each; and they are significant countries for members of the Gender and Development Network.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis is based on telephone interviews and a review of primary and secondary documents.<sup>4</sup> For Bolivia and Tanzania, the exploration of gender issues is being made on the back of a significant body of more general evaluative work about the PRSP content and process, including

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<sup>2</sup> UNDP 1995:4

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of the various stages of IPRSPs and PRSPs see the World Bank website: [www.worldbank.org/poverty](http://www.worldbank.org/poverty).

<sup>4</sup> Annex 2 is a list of people interviewed by telephone. The bibliography includes documents reviewed, as well as those that have been quoted.



civil society involvement. For Yemen and Malawi, there is much less existing evaluative work to build on. The report addresses the form that gender issues take in the PRSPs in these four countries, why they take this form, and, importantly, how this is linked to the PRSP process. The aim is to evaluate whether PRSPs have the potential to reduce women's poverty or threaten to widen gender inequality and make women poorer.<sup>5</sup> In doing so, the following questions have guided the investigation of the country case studies:

### Key questions

- What are the key features of PRSPs?
- What are the key elements of their poverty analysis?
- What are the key elements of their gender analysis?
- What have been the key elements of civil society participation and consultation?
- Were women's views specifically sought and did advocacy on gender issues take place?
- What has been the process by which PRSPs have been produced?
- Whose voices are most strongly represented in the final PRSP document?
- What are the key elements of monitoring the implementation of PRSPs and what progress has been made since PRSP completion?

### 1.3 Structure of the report

Section 2 summarises what PRSPs are and looks at the issue of country ownership in the context of HIPC conditionality. It suggests that, while national governments have been responsible for their PRSPs, they have been so within the severe limits imposed by the HIPC context. Section 3 examines the poverty and gender analysis of the PRSPs. The part played by quantitative and qualitative identifications of poverty and the follow-through between poverty analysis and policy priorities are examined. Going on to explore the gender analysis, Section 3 initially takes a broad-brush approach, asking three main questions. What form do gender policies take? Is gender a cross-cutting issue? And is gender equality a stated objective of the strategy?

The report uses Derbyshire's definition of 'women in development' approaches as being 'characterised by small and separate projects and project components run by women for women, typified by women's income-generation projects' (2002a: 4). The contrast is made with gender mainstreaming which 'changes the focus of interventions from women as a target group to *gender analysis* of women's and men's roles and relations as part of the planning process of all development interventions, and to *gender equality* as a goal' (Derbyshire 2002a: 4). Each country case is also reviewed to ask whether the approach to gender fits in with poverty-reduction objectives. Section 3 ends by flagging the importance of economic analysis of gender issues at macro and micro level to address the gender dimensions of poverty.

Section 4 moves on to assess the participatory processes during PRSP formulation, and what influence these have had on the gender content of PRSPs. This section describes which people have participated at local levels, how they have participated and the content and quality of national-level consultations. It describes the considerable civil-society mobilisations that have

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<sup>5</sup> The time frame of HIPC Phase 2 is finite, so that PRSPs may not be repeated in this context. However, there is every reason to think that future lending will have many of the features of the HIPC-linked PRSPs (Robb and Scott 2001, Interview with Alison Evans, UNCTAD 2002). It is likely to be poverty focused and to involve widely-based sectoral, rather than project, support; it will also require country ownership and national consultations, transparent public spending plans and clear links between poverty reduction and public spending. So this investigation will have relevance beyond the current round of PRSPs.

taken place in response to new opportunities for engagement. This section also evaluates the extent to which women's voices have been heard through these activities.

Section 5 looks more explicitly at the politics of the drafting of the PRSP and its formulation at national levels. Governments have been relatively unwilling to incorporate civil society views. The shaping of the poverty-reduction strategies and the drafting of the PRSP emerge as intensely political processes at the national level. This section focuses on the relative roles of the IFIs, donors and INGOs as well as national women's organisations, in getting gender issues on the agenda. Two key issues are explored: first, the capacity to undertake gendered poverty analysis; second, the legitimacy and influence of the national women's groups.

The final section summarises some of the main reasons why gender has not been adequately mainstreamed in the reviewed PRSPs. It concludes with specific recommendations about how to improve the gender dimensions of PRSPs.

## Section 2: Country ownership and alternative development visions

### 2.1 What are PRSPs?

The requirement that countries produce PRSPs<sup>6</sup> is part of an increasing involvement of international agencies in the detailed spending plans of national governments. This has occurred as issues of debt relief and a move from project-based aid have become more important: 'The PRSP is simultaneously the vehicle through which governments are expected to elaborate their nationally owned poverty-reduction policies, through which the IMF and the World Bank identify satisfactory policy environments and through which donors are expected to align their assistance for poverty reduction' (UNCTAD 2002: 168).

Three key features of PRSPs are:

- **country ownership** – they should be devised by national governments and must involve wide national consultation
- that HIPC funding is linked to **pro-poor outcomes** – concessional assistance and debt relief are provided only after a satisfactory joint staff assessment<sup>7</sup> of the PRSP and its endorsement by the executive boards of the World Bank and IMF.
- **transparency** in the use of government resources, better public expenditure management and good accounting systems.

### 2.2 Country Ownership?

There has been widespread debate about the extent to which PRSPs represent a break from the past. Robb and Scott argue that, 'The PRSP concept is ambitious in its attempt to establish a framework that fully integrates – perhaps for the first time in some countries – poverty analysis, public policy, budgetary processes and monitoring systems; and to do this in a participatory way' (2001:6). Many CSOs are highly sceptical about the extent of any real changes, especially the issue of whether in practice the PRSPs embody national priorities (Jubilee South 2001, EURODAD 2001, Oxfam International 2001, Christian Aid 2001, Catholic Relief Services 2001).

The reality of country ownership is a much-vexed question given that the PRSPs are remarkably uniform in the strategies they outline for poverty reduction (Wilks and Lefrancoise 2001). PRSPs have been more firmly in the hands of national governments than previous policy documents required for World Bank lending. The IFIs remain firmly involved in PRSPs, but often far less obviously than before. The World Bank has been involved at earlier stages in the preparation of PRSPs, providing technical assistance to the committees responsible for various aspects of the process including poverty analysis and macroeconomic policies. Homogenous policies are also promoted through the World Bank/IMF PRSP Source Book, which aims to provide a detailed 'guide to assist countries in the development of poverty reduction strategies'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The World Bank website has a considerable number of documents from its own divisions on PRSPs. It also posts a substantial number of non-World Bank authored documents. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/sourctoc.htm>. UNCTAD 2002 contains a succinct and well-judged account of PRSPs and the likelihood that they will reduce poverty in low-income developing countries.

<sup>7</sup> Joint Staff Assessments (JSAs) are missions to PRSP countries involving World Bank and IMF technical staff that assess the context, process and content of a PRSP and report back to the boards of the IFIs. For Guidelines on these JSAs see [http://poverty.worldbank.org/files/jsaguide\\_annualprogrep.pdf](http://poverty.worldbank.org/files/jsaguide_annualprogrep.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> See the Source Book at <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/sourctoc.htm>. The Source Book does not seem to have been very influential, especially on gender issues (Zuckerman 2001, 2002).

The most critical point at which IFI views prevail over country ownership is undoubtedly through the processes of endorsement (Christian Aid 2001). UNCTAD identifies the responsibilities of the Joint Staff Assessments as being to assess:

- a) 'the adequacy of the poverty diagnosis
- b) targets, indicators and monitoring systems
- c) the appropriateness of the macroeconomic framework and the financing plan
- d) the adequacy of the structural sectoral policies
- e) improvements in governance and public sector management' (UNCTAD 2002:169).

A major issue here is that the IFIs' model for poverty reduction strategies shows strong continuity with the structural reform and liberalisation agendas that have been pursued for more than 20 years. Macroeconomic policy remains unaltered. 'There has been a much more significant break with the past in terms of the processes of policy formulation than in the content of the policies' (UNCTAD 2002:170), which show a continued commitment to the economic reform and liberalisation that characterised structural adjustment policies.

The twin requirements of participation in the formulation process and World Bank/IMF endorsement of the strategies have produced major contradictions for the content as well as the process of PRSPs. National governments have conducted consultations in very different ways, but in most cases popular voices have not been heard. Only a few stakeholders have been consulted and these consultations have rarely consisted of genuine dialogues. The PRSPs reflect these voices in only very limited ways. Some of these flaws can be attributed to the structure of the HIPC initiative and the tight timetables for completion. In Tanzania in particular, where the whole process took only seven months, the undue speed had a marked effect on the initial participation and consultation processes. Governments often conduct dialogues on policy simply in order to release HIPC funds, rather than from a genuine commitment to bringing the voices of poor people into policy-making.

Despite being heavily criticised by civil society as a superficial consultation rather than genuine participation, the efforts at broader participation have had one highly significant spin off. New spaces for influencing policy have been created. In the cases of Bolivia and Tanzania, these new spaces built on prior experiences of lobbying the government about economic and poverty policy. In Malawi, where many new and more critical CSOs have formed since the introduction of multi-party democracy in 1994, a new network – the Malawian Economic Justice Network (MEJN) – was founded around the PRSP process and has been extremely active (McGee with Levene and Hughes 2002).

Many Southern CSOs are extremely critical of their governments' macro-economic policies. Some have been at the forefront of national opposition to structural adjustment policies and debt campaigns for some time. In Bolivia, for example, while governments have strictly followed neo-liberal economic reform for the last 15 years, CSOs have campaigned for radical economic and social policies and for sustainable solutions to debt.<sup>9</sup> The Bolivian poverty reduction strategy is seen by CSOs as simply a deepening of what has gone before and they oppose the basic premises of the poverty reduction model. There is a similar story in Tanzania, where CSOs have spent more than a decade campaigning against government adjustment policies and for more radical solutions to debt. As Bell suggests, CSOs in these countries see the PRSP as 'structural adjustment in disguise' (Bell 2003:17).

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<sup>9</sup> This point was emphasised in the interviews with civil society representatives from Bolivia.

In both Tanzania and Bolivia alternative visions of development have been advanced in opposition to neo-liberal adjustment, macro-economic policies and indebtedness. These have been extremely critical of government economic policy and oppose the core elements of the current round of PRSPs. Despite the increase in national debates around PRSPs about poverty and government spending, strong criticism of the existing economic model and its failure to reduce poverty has not been allowed to surface within process. The tension between governments and civil society on such issues is significant to the gender dimensions of PRSPs and their processes.

## Section 3: Poverty analysis and gender analysis in the PRSPs

### 3.1 Poverty analysis

There is a substantial literature that looks at the content of the PRSPs, and examines their poverty analyses, the coherence of their poverty reduction strategies and the institutional frameworks for their implementation. Very few of these evaluations, however, take gender seriously as the yardstick by which to measure PRSPs.<sup>10</sup> The poverty analysis, policy content and the institutional framework for ensuring follow-through (from diagnosis to plans, spending, and outcomes) are all significant for assessing gender mainstreaming. The following characteristics of PRSPs help explain their attitude to gender:

- There is remarkable uniformity among the frameworks of each PRSP, which are based on the four areas considered to be key to poverty reduction by the IFIs (employment-producing growth, human capital, governance and social protection).
- Each PRSP describes the main features of poverty in the country, based largely on quantitative data and using the household as the unit of analysis.
- The link between the description of poverty and policy diagnosis is often weak. A key reason for this is the limitations of the poverty analysis itself, which is more a description of poverty than an analysis of its causes. The processes that underlie the distribution of resources, income, human capital and power are not analysed or understood.<sup>11</sup>
- The link between policy priorities and budget plans and public spending is often poor.<sup>12</sup> This may be due to a lack of technical capacity and inadequate systems to track spending and relate it to outcomes.<sup>13</sup>
- Plans for the monitoring of PRSPs are poorly developed and clear indicators of poverty reduction lacking.

One of the key problems identified by reviews of PRSPs is inadequate follow-through and lack of linkage between different parts of the PRSP. Many PRSPs fail significantly in this regard,<sup>14</sup> which needs to be borne in mind when evaluating gender mainstreaming.

### 3.2 Gender analysis and gender mainstreaming

Box 1 on page 21 summarises the main ways in which gender issues are addressed in the four country case studies. Even a cursory glance confirms that the attention to gender is shockingly limited.<sup>15</sup> Gender issues appear in a piecemeal and fragmented fashion – being addressed very little or not at all in policy sections of the documents. Despite guidelines in the PRSP Source Book to treat gender as a cross-cutting issue, two out of the four cases do not do so. Perhaps partly in response to the Millennium Development Goals, the most consistently mentioned policy areas for women are those of health and education.

The characteristics and profile of poverty generally do not provide sufficient detail on gender. In Box 1, the first column shows that gender findings from popular participations, where they took

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<sup>10</sup> It is surprising how little attention is being paid to gender in many evaluations and reviews of the PRSPs. Gender advocates in women's organisations and in a limited number of donor organisations are being left to carry the responsibility for mainstreaming gender.

<sup>11</sup> This point is also made by Thin et al 2001 and PRSP Synthesis Notes 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Booth 2001; UNCTAD 2002; Thin et al 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Jenkins and Tsoko 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Booth 2001; UNCTAD 2002.

<sup>15</sup> A view confirmed by other studies of gender and PRSPs, such as Bell 2003, Derbyshire 2001, McGee with Levene and Hughes 2002, Rodenberg 2002, UNIFEM 2001, World Bank 2002, Zuckerman 2001, 2002

place, were perfunctory (Bolivia), or uninformative (Tanzania). Poverty profiles are purely quantitative and use non-disaggregated household-based data (Column 3). The Bolivian and Tanzanian strategies particularly do not pay systematic attention to the gender dimensions of poverty. The Malawi PRSP mentions some aspects of women's poverty, but provides no quantitative data to back it up and in its summary of the poverty profile ignores all specific references to women. The Yemen poverty profile comes closest to integrating women and gender, providing quite a sophisticated examination of quantitative household-level data. However, this is still not disaggregated by sex. Women are instead highlighted through the 'Voices of the Poor' study, which informed the PRSP, and there is a strong section looking at the social and political dimensions of women's poverty. Yemen's low ranking on the Gender Development Index is mentioned here.

Even where there is some diagnosis of gendered poverty, there is little follow-through to policy or budget outlines. For example, in the Yemen case, despite the reasonable visibility of women in the poverty profile, the only gendered policy targets are for girls' and women's education. Malawi also has education targets, but conspicuously fails to mention women at all in its agricultural policies, despite earlier in the document identifying several categories of rural women who suffer gendered forms of poverty. These cases confirm the World Bank's observation of PRSPs that, 'Where gender-related poverty issues and constraints are included in the diagnosis, follow-up public actions were rarely identified and indications as to why other actions were considered to be higher priorities were rarely given' (World Bank 2002:5).

Where gender issues are addressed they mainly take a 'women in development' (WID) form (Derbyshire 2002a).<sup>16</sup> Piecemeal policies dealing with an aspect of women's disadvantage are not set within any wider analysis of the gender bases for these dimensions of vulnerability. Of the four cases, Malawi has the most elaborated policy prescription section on gender, where gender mainstreaming and gender inequality are discussed. A very wide set of policy objectives is included ranging from engendering budgets to eradicating gender-based violence. These are all important issues dealing with the multi-faceted aspects of women's poverty. Unfortunately there is not much in the rest of the document to suggest government spending commitments to meet these goals. In general the very weak commitment to gender is revealed not only in the absence of budget commitments, but also in the absence of plans for monitoring outputs and impacts.

These PRSPs, then, are clearly weak on gender issues and this is exacerbated by policy evaporation and the lack of connection between different sections of the document. The most elaborated gender policies are mainly informed by rights and empowerment frameworks. None of the PRSP gender sections address the material aspects of poverty and well-being – such as livelihoods, incomes and wages, and their relevance to women's poverty. The Bolivian Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (EBRP) does in passing mention that women receive 66 per cent of the income of men of the same educational level, but no attempt is then made to analyse gender inequalities in incomes, wages and work opportunities more widely, or the contribution these may make to poverty. The remainder of this report will examine the processes by which this highly limited view of gender and poverty has found its way into the case study PRSPs.

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<sup>16</sup> This point was initially made by Zuckerman's review of gender in PRSPs (Zuckerman 2001).

## Box 1 Gender in the PRSPs

	<b>Were any gender findings reported from the popular participations?</b>	<b>Were any women's organisations on the official committees?</b>	<b>In what way does gender appear in the poverty profile?</b>	<b>In what way does gender appear in policy sections?</b>	<b>In what way does gender appear in monitoring and implementation?</b>
<b>Bolivia</b>	National Dialogue identified abandoned children, female-headed households (FHHhDs), the elderly and the disabled as the groups most affected by poverty. Women facing domestic violence were identified as a vulnerable group.	No	Neither women nor FHHhDs mentioned; no gender disaggregated data given.	Gender is not mainstreamed and main sections on production/employment/infrastructure are gender blind. Separate section on gender inequality contains a number of piecemeal WID-type policy promises. Includes 'local ombudsman for children and women' to deal with domestic violence.	Goals 'to be discussed' with relevant ministries re: micro-enterprises, rural women's literacy, identity cards and access to basic health.
<b>Malawi</b>	No gender issues reported coming out of district consultations.	Yes – one out of 21 thematic working groups was on gender; included rep. from National Businesswomen's Association.	Rural FHHhDS are a poor group; rural women face labour constraints; high reproductive work burden due to HIV/AIDS; gender inequality a cause of poverty; high rates illiteracy. Summary ignores women. Some categories of women included as vulnerable. Women identified, but then ignored by social safety net programme.	Agriculture: women mentioned in connection with HIV/AIDS' effects; but no gender-specific policies. Education: improve girls and women's participation. Separate section on gender and empowerment emphasises decision-making but has wide list: strengthen govt capacity; engender budgets; eradicate domestic violence; promote gender sensitive legal environment. Vulnerability highlights women, but safety net programme fails to	Targets given for education and maternal health.



				mention them.	
<b>Tanzania</b>	Zonal workshops reported on 'gender, social and cultural issues'. Half the groups mentioned cultural customs and traditions as an obstacle to poverty reduction. One sixth of groups cited gender discrimination relating to property, wage employment and decision-making. A quarter of women concerned about men's drinking and laziness.	No	No disaggregation of household data, although poverty profile looks at FHHhDs. No systematic disaggregation of health or education statistics by sex.	Gender not addressed at all as a specific policy issue. Some health and education targets for women. Women not mentioned in sections on agriculture or employment.	Promise to develop gender indicators.
<b>Yemen</b>	'Voices of the Poor' study informs chapter on poverty situation and includes some gender-sensitive findings.	Yes – one of the two women on the technical committee for drafting the PRSP was from the Women's National Committee (WNC). Of the three women of 20 members of the technical committee responsible for monitoring the PRSPs, one was from the WNC and another was from the Yemeni Women's Union.	Quantitative poverty profile based on household level. Very low rate female headed households who are no poorer than male. Women highlighted in other dimensions of poverty, especially poor Gender Development Index, referred to.	Hardly at all. No separate section addressing gender issues. Target to increase women's participation in education.	Hardly at all. Education targets.

\*\*The Tanzanian PRSP Progress Reports (2001, 2002) take the analysis and policy making far beyond that in the initial and very rushed PRSP.

## Section 4: Participation and consultation

### 4.1 Participation or consultation in the PRSP process?

The requirement that governments consult widely with their populations during the formulation stage is built into the design of PRSPs. They are required to describe the consultation processes that took place in the PRSP document itself. However, this increased space for consultation still does not guarantee that civil society groups or citizens in general are adequately involved or heard through PRSP processes – a closer look is required. This section explores the quality and effectiveness of participation in these PRSPs from a gender perspective. The PRSP ‘process’ in this report, includes the discussion of policies, the drafting of the PRSP as well as some post-PRSP activities, such as the planning and carrying out of monitoring. The report particularly asks who has been included and excluded from consultations, as well as to what extent issues identified by participants inform the content of the PRSP. This discussion is returned to sharply in Section 5 – Whose Voices Are Heard?.

There is very substantial literature on participation in PRSPs and this builds on the increasingly sophisticated analyses more generally of participation in the field of development (McGee with Norton 2002, McGee and Brock 2001, McGee with Levene and Hughes 2002, Robb 2002, Norton, Bird and Brock 2001, Brock and McGee 2002, Cornwall 2002). Many of these publications make a basic distinction between differing levels and quality of participation, as determined by *who* is participating, *how* they are involved and the *impact* that their contributions are permitted to have on policy outcomes. McGee and Norton look at a number of different ways in which citizens and civil society can participate in policy making, from a rather minimalist form of top-down consultation to being partners in the determination of policy. They also summarise the ways in which participatory practices can contribute to the PRSP process.<sup>17</sup> The World Bank itself uses the idea of a ladder of participation which identifies different intensities of stakeholder participation: from information-sharing, to consultation, to joint decision-making and finally initiation and control of their process by stakeholders.<sup>18</sup>

McGee and Norton argue that participation and consultation are ill-developed in PRSP processes, and there is ambiguity as to what level of partnership can be expected. The four country case studies examined in this report confirm their main point that the involvement of stakeholders, beyond government representatives responsible for developing the strategy, takes the form primarily of information sharing and pays limited attention to their views. The IFIs have given only light guidance as to how participation and consultation should be carried out in the PRSP processes. Although arguably this was out of respect for country ownership, governments might also have received the message that the quality of participation was not important to the IFIs.

In each of the four case studies, governments made some effort to consult communities at the local level and a range of CSOs at the national level, although often in rather weak ways and on the governments’ own terms. In evaluating the extent to which gender issues are considered and women consulted the discussion addresses two areas. First it looks at the ways in which local communities were consulted. This is called ‘popular’ consultation, although it will be clear that these consultations rarely reach into wide ranging sections of local communities and the voices of ordinary citizens are rarely heard. Secondly, the discussion looks at consultation at the centre – how CSOs of many kinds were consulted and how governments treated the contributions from

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<sup>17</sup> See McGee with Norton 2002 *Box 1: What can Participatory Approaches Add to the PRS* p 12.

<sup>18</sup> See discussion in McGee with Norton 2002 p 14.

these organisations in the PRSPs. The discussion also looks at the extent to which participatory methodologies are used, how they are used and at their quality.

#### **4.2 'Popular' consultation**

The use of participatory methodologies in poverty analysis has been developing for the last decade. Essentially these methodologies, which include participatory poverty assessments, have been developed to enable citizens, especially poor people, to give their views on poverty (Norton, Bird and Brock 2001, Robb 2002). They are designed to take account of the fact that poor people are often illiterate, have rarely been consulted by government officials, and that their poverty restricts their physical mobility, and the social and political access they have to decision-making fora. Box 2 summarises some essential aspects of 'popular' participatory processes in the case study countries. The way in which ordinary people were asked to take part in the policy dialogue is very varied, although in all cases it is neither very extensive, nor very influential. Column 1 records whether participatory methodologies were used at all, while column 2 records who was involved.

In Bolivia (see Box 3), 'popular' consultation took place through a National Dialogue of roundtable discussions at the municipal, departmental and national levels. At the municipal level, participants were weighted towards local government officials and incorporated a quota system through which women were included. However, centring the process around the municipal authorities skewed local participation in important ways: it was 'more of a conversation between national and local government, rather than one which reached out to civil society organisations and poor communities' (Painter 2002). The decision to locate government dialogue at territorial level through municipalities was linked to the stance being taken by many civil society actors. Previous experience with government efforts to involve them in policymaking had left them disillusioned and cynical.<sup>19</sup> They had also become hostile to the government's PRSP dialogue because of the very secretive and non-consultative way in which the Interim PRSP (I-PRSP) had been written. Major CSOs were planning parallel dialogues that included independent participatory activities and major national networking events.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Notably through the 1995 Law of Popular Participation, which sought to bring the national budgeting process to the municipal level, and a previous National Dialogue held in 1997.

<sup>20</sup> Quite a lot has been written about the Bolivian PRSP. This section draws on Action Aid 2002, Bell 2003, Catholic Relief Services 2001, Christian Aid 2002, CIDA 2001, Eyben 2001, Moser 2001, Moser and Antenese 2001, Painter 2002, PDIs Networks, World Bank 2001.

## Box 2 Overview of popular consultation

	<b>Was a participatory methodology used?</b>	<b>Who participated?</b>	<b>What happened to the findings?</b>	<b>Are the outcomes used in the PRSPs?</b>	<b>Are gender issues raised?</b>
<b>Bolivia Municipal workshops in National Dialogue</b>	No	Mayor; vice president of municipal council; president of vigilance committee; a quarter of participants should be women.	Representatives attended departmental workshops; then representatives selected to attend national workshops. Some agreements made between govt. and national workshop of National Dialogue.	There was some limited inclusion of outcomes of National Dialogue in the PRSP, such as 70 per cent of HIPC funds being sent to poorest municipalities and a social-control mechanism put in place to monitor HIPC spending.	No
<b>Malawi District workshops</b>	No	Local elected officials; govt employees; traditional authorities and influential people. All chosen by district chief executive.	Written report on findings from district workshops.	Findings of district workshops were reproduced in PRSP, but no reference back to them in rest of PRSP.	No
<b>Tanzania Zonal workshops</b>	Yes, but limited.	four villagers; one district councillor; one district executive officer; one person each from about five NGOs.	Written reports on zonal workshops sent to PRSP technical committee.	PRSP has section on the findings of the zonal workshops. This is not referred to elsewhere in the PRSP.	Yes
<b>The Yemen 'Voices of the Poor'</b>	Yes	Several communities in three regions, using full participatory methodology.	Findings sent to main PRSP committees, including drafting committee.	Integrated into the PRSP.	Yes

### **Box 3 Bolivia's 2000 National Dialogue**

The 2000 National Dialogue was a multi-stage process linking roundtable discussions held at municipal, departmental and national levels. At the local level, discussions took place in all 314 municipalities to identify priority groups of poor people, key issues for poverty reduction and how potential debt-relief resources might be spent and controlled. Participants were the local mayor, the vice-president of the municipal council, the president of the vigilance committee and a woman from civil society selected by the vigilance committee.<sup>21</sup> A representative from each municipality was then elected to departmental and national level dialogues. They only took forward proposals on which consensus had been reached at the municipal level.

The roundtable discussions were attended by government officials, parliamentarians and representatives from trades unions, NGO networks, Jubilee 2000, producers and sectoral CSOs. A total of 2,423 people took part, 1,215 at municipal level, 935 at departmental level and 273 at national level. However, while the quota system at municipal level ensured that women participated, far fewer women were at the departmental and national-level meetings.

The National Dialogue process was strongly supported by the government – especially the then vice-president, Quiroga (who was later president, 2001-02). It got a great deal of media attention, including on some Quechua and Aymara language channels, and it raised awareness of citizens' right to participate. There were even some outcomes from the exercise that found their way into policy, such as the allocation of 70 per cent of debt-relief funds to the poorest municipalities and the social control citizen watchdog mechanism.<sup>22</sup> However, the National Dialogue process had many and serious limitations. Ordinary people were not well represented, and women and indigenous people were particularly excluded. The technical committee of the National Dialogue decided the content of discussions and although the government agreed some formal resolutions containing binding agreements, many of them did not find their way into the PRSP.

The fact that the roundtable discussions at the municipal level were so closely associated with the formal governance structure meant that ordinary people's views were not well represented. The traditional structures of decision-making in indigenous communities were ignored. Indigenous people's views and those of women in particular were under-represented. There were no attempts to use participatory methodologies or to reach out into constituent communities. Painter comments: 'The PRSP process in Bolivia rested on a flawed assumption about the depth of local democracy in existing institutions' (Painter 2002:6). Symptomatic here was the use of the colonial language, Spanish, in the documents coming from the centre that formed the basis for the roundtable discussions and during departmental and national-level meetings. Spanish is not the first language of most poor people in Bolivia, and poor women are even less likely to be comfortable communicating in it than poor men.

'Popular' consultation in Malawi was similar in form to that in Bolivia. It consisted of district-level workshops that used the existing local government structures. These workshops were composed of 'local elected officials, government employees, traditional authorities and influential

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<sup>21</sup> Vigilance committees are groups of locally elected citizens that work at the municipal level to monitor the use of funds by the local authority.

<sup>22</sup> The Mecanismo Control Social (Social Control Mechanism) is a network of inter-linked committees made up of citizens, which oversee the disbursement of HIPC funds and their impact on poverty reduction in Bolivia.

people' (government of Malawi 2002 Annex 6a). The heads of local government districts (district chief executives) drew up the list of participants and there was little guidance from the centre about the type of participation that was desirable. Some women did participate, but they generally held low employee positions, such as working as cleaners, in local government hierarchies (Chijere and Nyirenda 2001). Observers report that low-paid local government workers were included to make up the numbers, suggesting little likelihood that they participated in genuine policy-making dialogues with the officers they worked for. Few representatives from local CSOs attended these meetings and widespread dissatisfaction with their timing, resourcing and format is reported (Chirwa and James 2002).

Critical gender questions are raised by these two examples. An important area of gender inequality is the extent to which women occupy decision-making positions, including at the local level. The existing comparative advantage of men over women in local decision-making structures is further increased when these structures then become the vehicles for consultation and policy-making agendas. Through PRSP processes, more men than women are also gaining new skills in poverty analysis and policy dialogue. Such shifts can serve to increase existing gender inequalities at the local level.

In the case of Malawi, there are no figures for the numbers of women who took part. But it is unlikely that there were many females among the senior local government officers who played such an important role in the process (see Box 2). The involvement of traditional leaders – chiefs and others – further skews the gender break down of participants towards men.

Some attempts were made to overcome this problem in Bolivia, where the PRSP technical committee stipulated a quota of women participants at the municipal level. This led to the involvement of about 22 per cent of women at local-level roundtables, although as no quota was in place for the departmental and national discussions, the proportions of women participating at these levels dropped. A limited number of national women's organisations and federations participated at this level. Bolivian interviewees expressed doubts that the quota system at the municipal level was successful in ensuring that women's voices were heard and gender issues raised. Diana Urioste of the Women's Co-ordination Network pointed out that 'The majority of women who were able to participate had no gender awareness...therefore they participated as any other citizen could have participated.' Furthermore, participants 'were often political appointees, who had no gender awareness'.<sup>23</sup> This example illustrates the key importance of gender awareness rather than simply women's representation in the PRSP process.

Both Tanzania and Yemen, in contrast, employed more participatory local-level methodologies directly with communities. The Yemen, which had little prior experience of participatory poverty assessments, set up a limited 'Voices of the Poor' study using a qualitative interview-based approach for its interim PRSP, which it then revisited for the PRSP. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Oxfam played key roles in carrying out participatory poverty assessments in a restricted number of the very poorest areas. In Tanzania, popular participation took place through a series of zonal workshops. These made some effort to use participatory methodologies to draw in community members beyond local government officials. Membership consisted of four villagers, one district councillor, one town councillor, one district executive director and one person each from about five local NGOs. The extent to which ordinary people participated in the zonal workshops is not clear from written accounts and it will have depended on which villagers attended. Women's participation was, however, actively

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Diana Urioste, Co-ordinadora de la Mujer.

promoted and some separate women's discussions were held. Of the total 804 participants, 22 per cent were women.

Beyond this, comparing Tanzania and the Yemen with Bolivia and Malawi brings out an important positive point. Box 2 suggests that gender issue discussions are more likely to emerge from popular participation and consultations if participatory methodologies have been used. So, whereas in Malawi a report of district workshops raised no gender concerns, in the Yemen and Tanzania, where more effort was made to ensure women's participation, gender concerns were raised, albeit in a limited way. In Tanzania the findings from each zonal workshop were presented to the PRSP technical committee. The PRSP document includes a section recording the findings of the zonal workshops and this has a paragraph on gender. The participatory findings from the Yemen 'Voices of the Poor' study are much the best integrated in the PRSP. Several gender-sensitive findings are used throughout the chapter which deals with the poverty context, usually in the form of boxes. In the case of Yemen, interestingly, there was a great deal of external technical support for the participatory work.<sup>24</sup> However much more needs to be done to improve participatory exercises and to ensure that they are gender sensitive.

Taken as a whole, the 'popular' consultations in the case studies were clearly inadequate, and participation was offered only to a small number of people from a limited set of local organisations. With the exception of the Yemen, local level participation hardly reached out to the poor and the poorest members of society. Gender was a particular source of bias – women were less involved and less heard, and the priorities raised in participatory workshops usually neglected women's poverty issues. The lessons from these case studies are that special measures are needed to ensure that popular consultation and the use of participatory methodologies reaches women and other disadvantaged groups. Giving proper notice, scheduling meetings when women can attend, and making the meetings non-technical, accessible and meaningful are all important efforts to ensure women's inclusion.

The inadequate resourcing and facilitation of meetings was another clear area of failure, with the exception of the Yemen. Governments usually set the parameters for the discussions in local workshops. In Bolivia workshops were only asked to discuss social issues and not economic or political ones. The Tanzanian they were more focused on hearing local views about poverty but the process was structured around a reference document provided by the government. In Malawi, the discussion centred on a document sent out very late by the government, who thus not only set the agenda, but didn't provide the resources and time for genuine discussion (Chijere and Nyirenda 2001; Chirwa and James 2002).

The most glaring problem, however, lies in the follow through from the findings of the local participation exercises to the PRSP document itself. Only the Yemen PRSP actively uses the findings from the 'Voices of the Poor' study in its policy priorities. Once described, the Tanzanian and Malawian PRSPs hardly refer to local-level findings again. Neither uses the findings to prioritise policy commitments. This demonstrates that there are few explicit links between policy choices and the poverty analysis, whether using quantitative or participatory methodologies. Perhaps the most important point to be made here is the distinct difference between appearing to engage in participatory practices and a process truly being participatory – which would involve a broad range of poor people, facilitate an empowering discussion of their experience of poverty and help people to identify appropriate policies to address their problems. It must be emphasised that whatever form popular 'participation' took in the four case studies, it was not effective participation.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Susan Razzaz, World Bank.

### **4.3 PRSP monitoring incorporating participatory methodologies**

There are signs that PRSP processes thus far have provided some leverage for participation to be incorporated into post-PRSP activities. PRSPs are worthless without implementation, of course, and good monitoring systems will be required. Although poorly developed in the PRSP documents themselves, monitoring systems are being put in place in all PRSP countries, and it is also important to scrutinise these from a gender perspective.

The Yemeni government with Oxfam's support has achieved some positive steps in this area. There is a gender specialist working as part of a team in the government PRSP unit, who is responsible for monitoring the follow up to the PRSP. Gender budgeting training is planned for key government stakeholders.

In Bolivia, some of the main monitoring tools set up are locally owned mechanisms to overview the spending. The EBRP plans to spend 70 per cent of its debt-relief funds at the municipal level with local social oversight mechanisms to maintain this, drawing their members from municipalities and local organisations. Here, of course, the issue of gender inequalities in local government raised earlier remains relevant. Women participate less in these decision-making bodies and few of them have the capacity for gender advocacy.

In Tanzania, there has been a good deal of work downstream from the PRSP on the design of poverty monitoring and evaluation. The PRSP did not include a monitoring and evaluation strategy, but a comprehensive Poverty Monitoring Master Plan (PMMP) has subsequently been developed and appears to be well funded by donors. A central feature of this plan is the embedded use of participatory methodologies (see Box 4). Gender advocates and other CSOs have successfully lobbied for a role in monitoring.<sup>25</sup> Government, civil society, donor and academic representatives are involved in each of four main working groups of the PMMP, along with at least one highly qualified gender specialist per group.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Tanzania has to date produced two progress reports on its PRSP (Government of Tanzania 2001, 2002). These reports contain much more on gender issues than the initial report as well as outlining the PMMP.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Arthur van Diesen, UNDP Tanzania. The poverty monitoring system in Tanzania has not gained the full confidence of the CSOs who voiced a radical critique of the PRSP (see Box 7), despite its largely non-government base. They have set up their own monitoring systems, in which gender issues are well embedded, at least on paper. They are distrustful of ESRF as being insufficiently critical of the government's macro-economic policies.



#### **Box 4 Monitoring in Tanzania: Use of Participatory Poverty Assessments**

The Research and Analysis Working Group is undertaking in-depth research studies to identify the trends behind the statistics. A core element of their work takes the form of successive rounds of Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) in 30 different localities. The Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), whose experience and expertise on qualitative methodologies arises out of previous participatory poverty work in Tanzania, are carrying these out.<sup>27</sup> The ESRF is committed to gender sensitivity in conducting the PPAs, with men's and women's groups discussing issues separately and then exploring the differences in their views together.

Box 4 outlines how poverty monitoring in Tanzania has been sensitive to gender issues, but it will be important to monitor the gender outcome of the current round of PPAs. Some local-level reports currently on the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) website do not mention gender issues.<sup>28</sup> Where they do, the language is often paternalistic and women do not emerge as active agents. This raises the question of how local gender findings are discussed and/or interpreted by facilitators. More comparative work is needed on gender-sensitive poverty participatory methodologies and on the efficacy of guidelines to ensure women's participation and that gender issues emerge.

Additionally, the commitment to gender sensitivity in participatory monitoring needs to be backed by gender equality measures in the organisations that carry it out. Independent organisations containing increasingly highly skilled professionals are carrying out more and more PRSP-related work that provides new opportunities for skilling and influence. In the ESRF, some women with appropriate postgraduate training have been hired, but male professionals predominate. The capacity for gendered participatory policy analysis needs to be supported and young women professionals trained in the necessary social science skills.

#### **4.4 Participation and consultation of national-level civil society**

During PRSP processes governments were also required to consult relevant stakeholders at national level, and most of these consultations were top-down (McGee with Norton 2002).<sup>29</sup> A key feature of the consultations with national level civil society was that they were contested and evolving – initial consultation plans were often heavily criticised by national CSOs. These contestations led to networking among CSOs and workshops to formulate lobbying strategies, which provoked varied government responses.

In Bolivia, this policy consultation took two forms. The national-level roundtables were the culmination of the departmental and municipal-level discussions of the National Dialogue. As described earlier, many CSOs boycotted these after the PRSP had been drafted, the government held a meeting at short notice for a small circle of civil society representatives in the capital, La Paz, to solicit comments on the draft. Diana Urioste claims that 'the consultation process was essentially a formality, they sent us the document on a Friday, expecting a response by Monday because it was being sent to the publisher the same day.'<sup>30</sup> Government officials agreed to take the widespread critical comments on the draft into account but few changes were made to the final EBRP.

<sup>27</sup>For example, the 1995 World Bank 'Voices of the Poor' study in which 6,000 people participated.

<sup>28</sup>[www.esrftz.org](http://www.esrftz.org)

<sup>29</sup>McGee and Norton point out that for the PRSPs they reviewed no governments had carried out stakeholder mappings, which are an essential first step in designing a participation strategy.

<sup>30</sup>Interview with Diana Urioste, Co-ordinadora de la Mujer

### **Box 5 Parallel civil society dialogues in Bolivia**

The level of social conflict in Bolivia in 2000 at the time of the National Dialogue and the PRSP process was already considerable. A highly developed civil society, composed of a wide range of active organisations (trades unions, social movements, indigenous movements, rural interest groups), constitutes part of a broadly left-wing opposition to the centre-right government. Their opposition to the government's macro-economic and social policies, plus the negative experiences of earlier government dialogues, led many of them to boycott the proposed National Dialogue. Several groups started mobilising to organise their own dialogues quite early on. The Comité de Enlace, a broad network of small producers' organisations, involved about 32,000 people in their discussion process, which included seminars on sectoral issues. The Catholic Church led Jubileo 2000, a nation-wide consultation processes that aimed to reach the community level. The National Dialogue Technical Committee provided some funding to both parallel civil society dialogues, although much of the funding for Jubileo 2000 came from the Catholic Church abroad (CARITAS). Representatives from Jubileo 2000 were invited to present their findings at the National Dialogue's roundtable discussions.

In Malawi (see Box 6) the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) succeeded in expanding the timetable of consultations, but the extent of civil society's participation in the policy dialogue was still limited and there was widespread frustration at their experiences.

### **Box 6 Stakeholder participation and consultation in Malawi**

In Malawi, high levels of mistrust exist between the population and government. There is significant political and financial corruption at all levels of the ruling hierarchy and the government is relatively autocratic and uninterested in the views of other stakeholders. Until recently, most local Malawian CSOs have been project-based, service-delivery organisations, and many of them faith-based welfare organisations. New CSOs that are more critical of government policy have come into being since 1994 with the introduction of multi-party democracy, and they are on a steep learning curve with respect to lobbying and policy dialogue skills.

The government planned to consult around the PRSP with a wide range of national-level stakeholders of its own choice, initially over a very short time frame. The inadequacy of these plans spurred a number of CSOs into forming a new network, the Malawian Economic Justice Network, which then campaigned for more time to discuss the PRSP and for considerably more consultation with CSOs. The time frame for consultations was extended by several months.

Consultations with stakeholders were planned and carried out by the government, very much on its own terms. They took the following form:

- 20 thematic working groups (TWG), whose core members were from the relevant line ministries, did include external experts from donors and civil society organisations. Participants were all hand picked government appointees, and TWGs generally functioned poorly. There was a TWG on gender – over half of whose participants came from the Ministry of Gender. The main women's group represented was the National Association of Business Women.

- Consultation also included discussions of PRSP drafts at a series of stakeholder workshops, involving government officials, principal secretaries, MPs, the private sector, traditional authorities, councillors, donors, NGOs, civil society, faith communities and trades unions.<sup>31</sup>
- Malawi is unusual in that it had civil society representation on the drafting committee. Although the government rejected some civil society nominations, it agreed to three civil society places on the 25- to 30-strong drafting team. These civil society representatives had to meet their own costs. The government rejected the presence of the Malawian Economic Justice Network (MEJN) co-ordinator on the drafting committee, reportedly for being 'too critical' of the government. The third civil society representative was from an international NGO appointed by the government without consultation. These civil society representatives were all male.

The MEJN, which co-ordinated many CSOs and NGOs, had to work very hard to open up the consultation process at all. CSOs found the consultation meetings highly unsatisfactory – they were given inadequate notice, documentation was very poor and they were often poorly attended by CSOs.

In Tanzania, consultations were rushed and many civil society organisations felt they were superficial, with little actual dialogue taking place (Evans and Ngalwea 2001). The government held a consultation workshop with donors and a World Bank/IMF mission in attendance. It also held a later workshop with 25 participants that included government representatives (such as permanent secretaries and regional commissioners), donor and multilateral representatives, as well as representatives from NGOs, the private sector and the public media. These mainly male representatives did not raise gender issues. Throughout the process, the government was unwilling to share documents with stakeholders, especially civil society stakeholders (Mbilinyi 2001) and the dialogue between civil society organisations and the government was very conflictual (see Box 7 below). (See Bretton Woods 2002, Globalisation Challenge Initiative 2000, Muna 2001, Social Watch 2002.)

Many organisations were understandably critical of these consultations, but became even more so as the drafting stage was reached. The policy dialogue closed down at this particularly important point. A relatively small committee always undertakes drafting and these are commonly dominated by government finance ministers and economists. In Bolivia:

A small circle of government economists undertook drafting for more than four months without including or even informing civil society organisations that had participated in the National Dialogue. Bolivian organisations tried repeatedly to pressure the government to be more inclusive, even appealing to international donors the World Bank and the IMF, but to no avail (Catholic Relief Services 2001:10).

Drafting was also a closed process in Tanzania. Many organisations and lobby groups attempted to enter the dialogue – all were refused access. The drafting committee is described by van Diesen of UNDP as being 'entirely men – economists of a certain age and outlook'. As outlined above, in Malawi the drafting committee was unusual in having civil society representation, although its members were hand-picked by the government and mainly male.

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<sup>31</sup> Government of Malawi 2002.

Commenting on these processes, national actors and external observers emphasise that governments are not constrained by any aspect of the PRSP process and its findings, and there is consequently a lack of accountability (McGee with Levene and Hughes 2002; Catholic Relief Services 2001). The Bolivian PRSP failed to include 'a series of agreements reached between civil society and the government during the periods of social conflict in 2000' (Catholic Relief Services 2001). UNDP representatives went on to comment, 'The link between the contents of the EBRP, and the dialogue is tenuous. No members of the UDAPE (PRSP drafting) team attended the National Dialogue and no-one who participated in the dialogue was invited to participate in the writing of EBRP' (UNDP 2001).<sup>32</sup>

#### **4.5 Evaluating PRSP consultations from a civil society and gender perspective**

Many external observers are positive about the processes opened up by the requirements of participation and consultation within the PRSP (eg McGee and Levene 2002). An INTRAC<sup>33</sup> study of civil society engagement in Malawi identifies civil society involvement at many different levels 'despite a history that discourages participatory decision-making' (Chirwa and James 2002) and considerable achievements, including the start of civil society involvement in government policy-making. It goes on to argue that the Malawian government has become more comfortable with civil society involvement (Chirwa and James 2002). In Bolivia, Ortuno of UNDP suggests that the more progressive sections of the previous government became fully convinced of the value of participatory policy dialogue. Additionally, the Bolivian PRSP received wide media coverage and raised awareness and debate about poverty more generally.<sup>34</sup>

In some instances the response of civil society groups to the inadequacy of their government's consultation processes was to initiate their own. This was the case in Bolivia (see Boxes 4, 5 and 6), and the civil society processes ultimately involved many more people than the government's National Dialogue (see Box 5). In Tanzania, the PRSP process also generated parallel civil society activities (see Box 7), but the government of Tanzania seemed uninterested in their outcomes and the final PRSP draft included minimal civil society input. Tanzanian NGOs have voiced considerable concern that their engagement regarding in government consultations is actually co-option, and are worried that they may be used to rubber stamp or give government policies even more legitimacy.<sup>35</sup> Evans and Ngalwea also observe in Tanzania that, 'NGOs worry that their role is seen mainly in instrumental terms around the preparation of the document rather than in institutional terms, such as establishing repeat dialogue with the government on key policy issues' (Evans and Ngalwea 2001: vi).

In the Malawian case there is a similar frustration, but here the organisations are also very over-stretched – lacking sufficient personnel and resources to engage as effectively as they would like. This is a broader problem in many PRSP countries where national CSOs do not necessarily have the logistical and technical capacity to participate in the process. Although a space has been opened up (often by the actions of CSO themselves) and CSOs have gained or consolidated experience in policy lobbying beyond sectoral interests and with a newer focus on poverty reduction, the organisations that have been involved have often been left tired, frustrated and disillusioned after the process.

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<sup>32</sup> UDAPE is a think-tank located within the Bolivian Ministry of Finance which took the lead in designing and drafting the PRSP. UDAPE itself holds a very different view – believing that the PRSP drafting and National Dialogue processes were well connected (Christian Aid 2002)

<sup>33</sup> INTRAC is the International NGO Training and Research Centre

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Armando Ortuno, UNDP Bolivia

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Marjorie Mbilinyi, TGNP

These general points have a bearing on how gender issues were addressed in the civil society activities that did occur in Malawi. Gender was only very weakly addressed in the general civil society response in Malawi, where policy engagement and lobbying is an extremely new experience. The MEJN did not itself develop a document of civil society priorities at any of the meetings to discuss the PRSP draft, but was mainly kept busy responding critically to government initiatives.<sup>36</sup> Women's advocacy organisations and the gender research community are very thin on the ground in Malawi and very over-stretched. Some activists report that NGOs' understanding of and attention to gender issues is very limited.<sup>37</sup>

#### **Box 7 Civil society mobilises in Tanzania**

The PRSP process sparked off considerable, frenzied activity amongst civil society organisations and the research community in Tanzania. These actors are relatively well established in Tanzania and there is a long track record of advocacy on policy issues and in some quarters of highly critical perspectives on government policy. All civil society actors in the PRSP had to struggle hard to have any voice and were largely frustrated by the government.

In January 2000, and after publication of the interim PRSP with no civil society consultation, Oxfam GB and the Tanzanian Coalition on Debt and Development (TCDD) organised a meeting for civil society organisations. Representatives from 28 civil society organisations, plus a few government and donor personnel, met to co-ordinate a civil society response to HIPC and the PRSP (Mbilinyi 2001).

They set up five working groups and a TCDD/PRSP Steering Committee. A joint civil society report on the PRSP was later prepared and discussed at a second workshop held in March 2000. There was a highly conflictual exchange with the Deputy Permanent Secretary, who maintained that the PRSP and participation process was not significant, but that HIPC funds were. The report was critical of the macroeconomic framework of the strategy, and also called for more representation of civil society organisations in the Tanzania Assistance Strategy (TAS) task groups and the technical committee.

In response, the government:

- did not acknowledge the existence of the TCDD/PRSP committee
- did not invite further representation on TAS task groups
- blocked leaders of the coalition from taking a leadership role in the preparation and implementation of the zonal workshops, referring to them as 'briefcase NGOs'.

The subsequent final PRSP draft included hardly any input from the civil society.

In Bolivia, civil society organisations are highly developed, numerous and politically very powerful. They are also very divided, along class, ethnicity, gender and religious lines. The social movements of indigenous groups and others have a tense relationship with some NGOs and the class composition of each is very different. Groups representing the many different interests of, for example, indigenous rural populations, trade unions, peasant producers, the Catholic Church and feminist advocacy groups are vying for power within the

<sup>36</sup> The MEJN has, however, made substantive contributions to the post PRSP-period, working extensively on the national budget (Chirwa and James 2002)

<sup>37</sup> Interviews with Asiyati Chiweza, University of Malawi and Seodi Mnthali-White, WILSA, Malawi

wider political system. Each has complex relationships with the Bolivian political parties. Some of the Bolivian CSOs are also particularly well-resourced – notably the Catholic Church.<sup>38</sup> Whose voices are heard and whose interests are met when civil society groups are seriously competing for power and where national interests are very divided? The way in which the parallel civil society processes developed within the formal PRSP consultation process and the questions raised about who is excluded indicate some of the problems of achieving consensus where civil society is well developed and where there are many fora for political decision making.

Bolivian women's organisations were particularly critical of the lack of commitment to and understanding of gender issues amongst some elements of civil society, citing the leaders of social movements and trade unions as being particularly male chauvinist. Against this, other observers point out the elite and class-based nature of the feminist groups. The relationship between feminist organisations and the Catholic Church is a relatively good one, according to interviewees, with the church adopting a relatively low-key approach to reproductive issues, although some external observers are less sanguine.<sup>39</sup> More generally questions are raised about the influence and legitimacy that women's groups wield within society. Here they are marginalised by a stereotypic understanding of what gender issues are and in some cases are working in an environment that is hostile toward them.

There are important questions here too about who CSOs represent. The Bolivian parallel civil society dialogues organised widespread participation, but much more detailed study would be required to evaluate how their composition reflected the interests groups and categories of poor people at local levels. Few other CSOs in the other country case studies seem to have tried to consult with their grassroots, and indeed many are not grassroots organisations themselves. This is also an issue for women's advocacy groups. It was voiced by some of their representatives in both Tanzania and Bolivia. Marjorie Mbilinyi of the Tanzania Gender Networking Project (TGNP) argues that it is the absence of popular participation that prevents advocates from maintaining a feminist stance when they get into policy dialogue with government.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This is also raised in an interesting discussion of the role of donors in Bolivia by Rosalind Eyben (Eyben n.d)

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Rosalind Eyben

<sup>40</sup> Mbilinyi 2001 and interview

## Section 5: Whose voices are heard?

Shaping the PRSP and the systems for monitoring poverty eradication has emerged as an intensely political process. Section 4 looked at how governments set the agenda – carrying out consultations on their own terms – and at the limited departmental participation in the drafting process. The difficulty that CSOs had in getting their views heard is clear, although the fate of the views expressed at some of the formal workshops where donors and INGO stakeholders commented on the PRSP is perhaps less so. Some limitations of civil society mobilisations with respect to both general poverty and gendered poverty advocacy were also discussed.

A much less visible aspect of the whole political process lies in the individual lobbying that took place, including the final dialogues with the IFIs. In Tanzania, the World Bank played a key role in the argument about the abolition of user fees for primary schools. This had been a major and highly publicised demand by Tanzanian civil society organisations, including the feminist groups. The government refused to abolish them but the final PRSP did get rid of them. The change to the document is reported to have been made at very last stage by the President after representations to him by the World Bank. It was not agreed by Cabinet. Tanzanian NGOs had lobbied World Bank and bilateral donors heavily about user fees. The World Bank also intervened later in the process in Tanzania. Disappointed with attention to cross-cutting issues of gender and environment it asked the government of Tanzania to address these issues post PRSP. As reported earlier, this is reflected in the two progress reports on the PRSP and in the design of the monitoring and evaluation scheme.

Many observers have suggested that there are wider problems associated with the relative power of different stakeholders to have their views taken on board. Bolivia's UNDP representative in particular emphasised the importance of who had influence at government level.

In the technical process that took place in the Finance Ministry, other [external] actors took part – actors that had not been present in the dialogue. Rather than engage with the social actors that had been involved in the dialogue... they lobbied for their demands to be included during the writing up period. For example, the Ministries that wanted some programs to be included in the strategy, rather than participating in the dialogue, they went to negotiate at the Finance Ministry once the dialogue was over. The same happened with international co-operation agencies... they never sat at the dialogue table to discuss it with the people, instead they rather discussed [it] with the technicians that were writing the strategy.<sup>41</sup>

This kind of lobbying was not confined to Bolivia. In Tanzania it has been a major complaint of the radical CSOs. 'Government departments are oriented towards donor agencies not towards their own citizens. They hold themselves accountable to the donors, not citizens and not civil society organisations' (Mbilinyi 2001:23).

From a gender perspective there is a tension, since these more powerful voices are sometimes highly committed to gender issues. In Malawi, gender specialists, including independent researchers and professional women's groups lobbied hard, contacting donors known to be sympathetic to gender issues, especially the Canadian agency for international development (CIDA), DFID and UNDP. In Bolivia, these undemocratic negotiations had positive outcomes for the gender content of the PRSP (See Box 8).

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<sup>41</sup> Amando Ortuno Yanez, UNDP Bolivia

### **Box 8 Gender policy evaporation in the EBRP, Bolivia**

Donors played a large part in efforts to get gender issues into the EBRP. DFID organised internal gender training sessions to take advantage of the presence in La Paz of Caroline Moser, an international gender and development expert. This training was organised around how to mainstream gender within the PRSP.

Three other PRSP-related workshops were then held with a) international co-operation agencies and the interagency gender group b) Bolivian officials, the majority of which were from the Vice Ministry of Gender,<sup>42</sup> and c) civil society organisations. This brought together about 20 women's CSOs in La Paz. Agreement on the five priority gender issues from these workshops was high (Moser).

The interagency gender group later liaised with the Vice-Minister for Women's Affairs to produce a document based on the workshop findings. This was put on the table at a meeting of the drafting committee, but hardly any of it got into the PRSP document. The references in the paper to gender inequality and domestic violence were included, but 'they wouldn't listen'.<sup>43</sup> Gender power relations within government have been cited as the main reason for this, although women activists are more critical of the national women's machinery: 'there was absolutely no leadership from the Gender Vice Ministry, they seem to have forgotten that this was an important space for participation'.<sup>44</sup>

Box 8 describes how donors joined forces with the Vice-Minister for Women to present a gender document to the drafting committee. It also describes how this initiative was rebuffed. Representatives from some donors and national women's organisations have different political explanations for this rebuff – 'gender power relations' inside the government, or a 'weak' women's minister.

There is another possible explanation, which has been put forward in some of the previous discussions – especially those about the poverty and gender analysis in the EBRP and the relative weakness of the feminist groups within the highly developed but highly divided civil society organisations of Bolivia. Like all the other examples, the EBRP is a document from the Finance Ministry and Economic Planning Ministries. Its main thrust concentrates on economic policies related to employment, production and social protection, together with the rights and resources of indigenous peoples. In many ways this kind of focus on PRSPs is to be welcomed, because the 'Adjustment with a Human Face' model, which largely saw poor groups as the vulnerable recipients of social safety nets, produced little poverty reduction.<sup>45</sup> Few gender and development specialists have, however, concentrated on these macro- and micro-economic issues and the highly active and historically long-lived Bolivian women's movement is no exception. The gender document arising out of the DFID workshops in La Paz was also very light on these economic issues, meaning that they were unlikely to be able to bridge the language and policy concerns of economists in the drafting committee.

However, as in the case of Tanzania, capacity around macroeconomics and a focus on the material aspects of women's well-being does not guarantee that economists in the government will listen.

<sup>42</sup> *Vice-Ministerio de Asuntos de Género*

<sup>43</sup> Ros Eyben, DFID/DFID Bolivia

<sup>44</sup> Diana Urioste, Coordinadora de la Mujer

<sup>45</sup> As UNCTAD 2002 notes, making poverty eradication the responsibility of Ministers of Planning and Finance, rather than the Welfare ministries is a positive move



### **Box 9 Tanzanian gender advocates frustrated by PRSP process**

Tanzania has a well-developed, very active and diverse set of women's and feminist groups. As well as organisations of female lawyers, and other professional groups and more service-delivery NGOs, the Tanzania Gender Network Programme (TGNP) is a longstanding and high-profile group with a great deal of sustained research and advocacy in its history. The TGNP belongs to the set of Tanzanian CSOs engaged in a sustained radical critique of government policy. It is a key member of the Tanzanian Coalition on Debt and Development (TCDD), which played a leading role in the civil society mobilisation around the PRSP. The TGNP was one of the organising groups for the civil society discussions and responses to the PRSP.

The TGNP has, with other Tanzanian feminist organisations, been working on gender and macro-economic issues for some time. It coordinates FEMACT a coalition of ten CSOs working on gender initiatives which began a gender budget initiative in 1996/97. By the start of the PRSP process this had had a number of positive outcomes – eg the TGNP had been invited to become part of the Public expenditure review and TAS.

Attempts to integrate gender in the PRSP were coordinated by the Gender Macro economic Working Group composed of representatives from Tanzania's feminist groups, INGOs and active donors. Efforts by the TGNP and the Macro economic Working Group to influence the content of the PRS were, like most of the civil society efforts, unsuccessful. However, they did have some influence on the progress reports.

The experience of being ignored by the government, the PRSP technical committee and the drafting committee confirmed the TGNP's highly critical perspective of participatory policy dialogues. 'What are we participating in?' They have been much less willing to respond to subsequent invitations to be involved in discussions, eg in the Ministry of Women's Affairs, arguing that the absence of genuine dialogue means that such consultations act to legitimise government policy. Some members are also concerned at the way in which gender transformative objectives become compromised policies once they are in dialogue with the government. Some external observers suggest that the TGNP's critical questioning of the value of participation is leaving them more isolated.

Box 9 describes how a number of Tanzania's women's research and advocacy groups have been working for some time on macro-economic issues and have been carrying out a gender budget initiative. This is also the focus of a long-established working group of gender specialists from amongst the INGO and donor community, as well as from national groups. This did not prevent the gender content of the initial PRSP from being 'appalling' and subsequent negotiations around the PRSP implementation and progress reports have been difficult.<sup>46</sup>

Given the general deafness of the government of Tanzania to outside views in the highly rushed construction of its PRSP, perhaps the main issue initially was a lack of political will. However, one experienced observer suggests that technical capacity is very significant too, arguing that in general departments and personnel, the government of Tanzania lacks the capacity to respond to the gender issues put to it.<sup>47</sup> This extends to its national women's machinery, whose staff lack adequate training in gender analysis, especially in the kind of gendered poverty and economic

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Alison Evans, ODI

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Alison Evans, ODI

analysis which feminist researchers have developed in Tanzania. The capacity of women's national machineries, in the context of a lack of gender awareness within wider government departments, emerges as a critical factor in other case studies too. The gender content of the PRSPs in the four examples owes a good deal to the past policy document and priorities of the government departments that are charged with women's affairs. It is important then that where women's organisation and networks have been developing capacity for gendered macro-economic analysis and gendered budgets, these developments have rarely reached the national machineries for representing women.

### **Implementation**

The most significant impacts on poverty will come from the implementation of the PRSP. The limited time available for this study has prevented proper investigation of actual public spending and its impacts, which requires much more hands-on research. Some preliminary points can be made:

- Some nationals felt the PRSPs' gender sections did not represent realistic government commitments and this was reflected in the absence of gender indicators and effective gender-sensitive monitoring.
- As pointed out earlier, in Tanzania the post PRSP has seen more positive gender involvement via the Gender and Macro-economic Working Group and the Poverty Monitoring Master Plan (PMMP) (see Box 4).

But there are also counter tendencies:

- In Tanzania, new negative legislation concerning NGOs has been passed since the PRSP was accepted.
- The negotiated trigger points for post-PRSP IFI lending have not been open to any public scrutiny.

## Section 6: Conclusions and recommendations

The World Bank stocktaking exercise on gender in the PRSPs finds that some hardly mention gender at all, and that the range and quality of the gender analysis and policy commitment in the others is generally poor (World Bank 2002). Only a handful of PRSPs can be said to have taken women's poverty seriously, despite the enormous number of poor women worldwide. This review has tried to determine why this is the case, by examining four country case studies in depth.

Gender issues appear in a fragmented and arbitrary way in the body of the PRSPs dealing with policy priorities and budget commitments. Some 'women in development' issues are raised, especially in the sections on health and education, but gender is not integrated, or mainstreamed. Where a more elaborated set of general goals for improvements in the position of women is made, their link with tackling women's poverty is unclear. There is very limited attention to women's material well-being, and no recognition that macro-economic policy and national budgets can be gendered.

These failings have a number of sources:

- They can be attributed in part to the limited poverty analysis of the PRSPs, where the description of poverty groups does not extend to an analysis of why they are poor, so gender relations cannot be advanced as an explanation of women's poverty. There is also insufficient sex disaggregation of data, and women's incomes, livelihoods and resource constraints are poorly captured.
- They are also attributable to governments' poor understanding of gender issues, particularly in the Finance Ministries that have the responsibility for the PRSPs.
- The national women's organisations are often weak, lacking in influence and have limited capacity for gendered poverty analysis.

Beyond this, the report identifies three main issues: the quality of the participation by stakeholders other than government Finance and Planning Ministries; the politics of advocacy around PRSPs; and the capacity for gendered poverty analysis.

Governments' efforts to listen to and consult women at all levels were very poor:

- Within local communities, the choice of who to consult and the way these consultations were carried out usually meant that few or no women's voices were sought. When more participatory processes were used, gender issues were initially flagged up better in the PRSPs, but they were not then used to inform policy priorities and spending plans.
- As numerous evaluations have emphasised, consultations with national-level CSOs were generally flawed, and CSOs had to work very hard to get their views recorded, but these views were rarely then reflected in the content of the PRSPs. Men's *and* women's voices were stifled in this contested space between government and CSOs, and this seems to have been exacerbated in the case of women.

In conclusion, women's voices have hardly been sought and have definitely not been heard. Women citizens are hardly consulted at all and gender advocates within national CSOs are not heeded.

National governments and IFIs play the biggest role in determining the policy content of the PRSP. Their understanding of the scope of gender issues and the causes of women's poverty are thus very significant.

Within national CSOs as a whole, the commitment to and understanding of gender issues is at best variable and often weak. Gender advocates in national women's organisations, a limited number of donor organisations and INGOs are being left with the responsibility for pushing gender issues and for advancing the understanding of women's poverty. Donors and INGOs played a bigger role in getting gender onto the agenda than national actors. The influence and legitimacy of women's advocacy organisations affects their dialogue with other groups. Some women's organisations are operating in a hostile environment that de-legitimises them. In some cases, this is true of their relationships with other CSOs, but more often true of their relationships with governments, which are often very tense.

A major theme that emerges from this review is what kind of gender skills are needed to best help to reduce women's poverty and influence poverty reduction strategies? The limitations of gendered poverty analysis and gendered analysis of macro-economic issues are widespread among all the major sets of actors. These analyses should include attention to the sphere of reproduction; deconstructing the household; a focus on women's livelihoods; incomes and employment; and an analysis of the gender implications of budget priorities and public spending. Integrating the non-economic dimensions of poverty – vulnerability, powerlessness, voicelessness and male-biased governance systems – with these economic dimensions is essential. To influence the analysis and policy making of the PRSPs – as well as to be effective in reducing women's poverty – expertise in macro-economics and in gendered national budgets, together with a specific focus on micro issues that affect women's material well being, are needed.

Even so, it needs to be repeated that effective advocacy from women's groups or INGOs and donors who have adopted a gender perspective will depend on much greater receptiveness within governments, within the major sections of the IFIs, and from some donors and national and international NGOs. It remains to be seen whether this receptiveness is primarily a question of political will or whether it will improve with more widespread capacity for gendered poverty analysis and understanding of national economies from a gender perspective.

## Recommendations

Having looked in some detail at the PRSP processes and documents of these four countries, the Gender and Development Network of the UK makes the following recommendations to the various actors involved in PRSP processes around the world:

### Gendered analysis

- The analysis on which a PRSP is based must fully demonstrate the gender dimensions of poverty – highlighting the embedded gender biases in macroeconomics and structural policies; gender inequality as a cause of poverty; the different experiences of poverty for women and men; and the different effects of policy and budgetary decisions on women and men.
- PRSPs should be based on a multidimensional view of poverty, better integrating the non-economic dimensions of poverty (vulnerability, powerlessness, voicelessness and male-biased governance systems) with the economic dimensions, and giving space to the views of poor men and women about their own poverty.

### PRSP processes

- National governments should make gender-sensitive participatory methodologies central to poverty assessments, and the design and implementation of poverty-reduction strategies. A better understanding is needed by all actors of how to make participatory poverty assessments gender sensitive. Particular support should be provided to the most poor and marginalised people, the majority of whom will be women, who will find it most difficult to participate, but are central to the success of a PRSP.
- All stakeholders within the PRSP process need to ensure that gender is mainstreamed within their own institutions and gender inequalities addressed.
- The PRSP assessment processes of the IFIs, including Joint Staff Assessments and IFI board discussions, should fully mainstream gender. They should consider whether a PRSP treats poverty as a gendered phenomenon and seeks to tackle the gender dimensions of poverty, as well as the quality of participation by women and other traditionally marginalised groups.

### Policies for poor women and men

- In order to have a long-term and sustainable impact on poverty levels, PRSPs must place measures to tackle women's poverty at their centre, because so many poor people in most countries are women.
- PRSP policies and associated spending plans should be firmly linked to gendered poverty analysis and gender equity.

### Advocacy on gender

- Advocacy by civil society groups around PRSPs should have a much sharper focus on the gender dimensions of poverty – highlighting the need for PRSP task forces and working groups, and the IFIs to take gender seriously.
- During the PRSP process, communication and trust building need to take place between women's organisations and other CSOs that have more access to the PRSP process.
- International NGOs working on PRSPs should give special attention to gender issues and women's poverty in their international advocacy on the PRSP approach.

## **Capacity building**

- Most national government ministries, especially Ministries of Finance and Planning who generally lead PRSP processes, need support to better conduct gendered policy analysis and implement gender policy solutions. They also need improved capacity to listen to CSO voices in the PRSP process, in particular those voices representing poor women.
- Ministries of Gender/Women need capacity to develop their economic analysis and advocacy skills, in order to influence PRSP processes to fully mainstream gender.
- Donors and international NGOs should try innovative ways of helping local and national civil society organisations to analyse and promote gendered poverty issues through PRSP policy-making and implementation.
- Women and women's groups require specific help to overcome traditional and institutional barriers and become involved in policy-making and implementation, particularly on economic issues. Specifically gender advocates will need to develop the skills to analyse budgets in terms of their differential impact on women and men. Such support could be provided by governments, INGOs, international donors and other CSOs that have more influence over the PRSP.
- The IFIs must train staff, particularly those involved in advising on PRSPs and members of technical missions that advise national governments about poverty analysis, macro-economic policy, national budgets and sectoral policies, so that they can conduct capacity for gendered poverty analysis and gendered economic analysis.

## **Monitoring**

- In order to avoid losing sight of gendered PRSP policies during implementation, gender must be fully mainstreamed through PRSP monitoring indicators.
- National actors should collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data through both quantitative methods, such as a national survey, and qualitative, participatory methods, like interviews, and use this information for monitoring the implementation and effects of the PRSPs.

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## Annex 1 Acronyms

EBRP	Bolivian Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
CSO	Civil society organization
ESRF	Economic and Social Research Foundation (Tanzania)
EURODAD	European Network on Debt and Development
FEMACT	A Tanzanian Coalition of CSOs working on gender initiatives
GBI	Gender Budget Initiative (Tanzania)
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
IFI	International Financial Institution
I-PRSP	Interim poverty reduction strategy paper
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MPRSP	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MEJN	Malawi Economic Justice Network
MTEF	Medium-term expenditure framework
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
PER	Public expenditure review
PMMP	Poverty Monitoring Master Plan (Tanzania)
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRS	Poverty reduction strategy
PRSP	Poverty reduction strategy paper
SWAP	Sector-wide approach
TAS	Tanzania Assistance Strategy
TCDD	Tanzanian Coalition on Debt and Development
TGNP	Tanzania Gender Networking Project
TPRSP	Tanzanian Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
TWG	Thematic working groups (Malawi)
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UDAPE	Unidad de Análisis de Políticas Sociales y Económicas
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## **Annex 2            People Interviewed**

Sushila Zeitlyn, DFID  
Alison Evans, Overseas Development Institute  
Susan Razzaz, World Bank  
Caroline Moser, Independent  
Elaine Zuckerman, Independent  
Rosalynd Eyben, DFID, Bolivia  
Diana Urioste, Coordinadora de la Mujer, Bolivia  
Cecilia Ramos, CEDLA, Bolivia,  
Amando Ortuno Yanez, UNDP Bolivia,  
Arthur van Deisen, UNDP, Tanzania  
Marjorie Mbilinyi, TGNP, Tanzania  
Asiyati Chiweza, University of Malawi  
Seodi Mnthali-White, WILSA, Malawi  
Aimee Ansari, Oxfam GB