

SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGIONAL POVERTY NETWORK

NEWSLETTER No 4

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1: SARPAN UPDATE

1.1 In this newsletter

This newsletter focuses primarily on new developments affecting civil society within Southern Africa. SARPAN commissioned three contributions, from institutions and persons with a long-standing interest in civil society dynamics, to stimulate some thinking on this key topic.

In the first article Bocongo, based in Gaborone, writes about the imminent establishment of formal linkages between SADC and a SADC-wide Council of NGOs. As Bocongo notes, one of the objectives of the CNGO will be to facilitate an enabling environment for NGOs across the region, with poverty policies being a key focus of the Council and its national affiliates. As the region moves almost inexorably towards deeper political and economic integration, so too will linkages between civil society organisations increasingly deepen. Arguably, linkages between regional civil society, even if restricted to some specific sectors, are more advanced than formal inter-governmental linkages. SADC has committed itself to increasing civil society access to its workings; this space needs to be grasped by civil society formations.

The second article, by Georgie Frohlich of DRNF/Netwise from Namibia, reflects upon some of the technical issues involved in information sharing and dissemination between NGOs across the region. This NGO has built up specific expertise and experience in environmental networking which should be of direct relevance to other NGO or regional sector networks.

These articles are supplemented by a contribution from Roy Clarke, a Lusaka-based analyst and consultant. It takes the form of a dialogue between imaginary actors, representing key players in the development field. Despite its satirical nature, it raises key issues which need to be confronted in the development arena in Southern Africa.

The poverty analysis section closes with two articles reporting on a new regional network (for farmworkers) and a review of civil society in South Africa, drawn from a new research report.

SARPN will be pleased to carry any short responses to these articles in the next edition of its newsletter. Please send comments to sarpn@hsrc.ac.za as soon as possible.

Other sections of the newsletter carry a wide variety of reports on poverty reduction processes and initiatives. Researchers amongst our newsletter readership will no doubt be particularly interested in the recently published proceedings of a conference organised earlier this year by Ravi Kanbur on the long-standing "Quants vs Quals" debate in poverty research.

1.2 Forthcoming SARPN events

Readers might be interested in two very different SARPN forthcoming events.

The first, to be held in Pietermaritzburg later this month, is a follow-up to our June conference on Land Reform and Regional Poverty in Southern Africa. The workshop will examine the relationship between HIV/AIDS and land reform, specifically focusing on the experience within KwaZulu-Natal. The workshop will be held in conjunction with HIVAN, based at the University of Natal, Durban, and the HIV/AIDS desk at the South African National Department of Land Affairs.

Given the centrality of the topic, especially within a rights-based approach to development and poverty reduction, SARPN will also be facilitating similar

workshops in Zambia and, possibly Malawi. These will probably take place in January next year.

Further details on the Pietermaritzburg workshop can be obtained from:

<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/corporate/conferences/sarpn/forthcoming/index.html>

SARPN will also shortly be hosting Ravi Kanbur, the world-renowned scholar from Cornell University. Earlier this year, we commissioned Professor Kanbur to write a short critique of what is now known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Professor Kanbur will be speaking at a SARPN event on 10 December in Pretoria, where he will present his views on NEPAD, particularly how it might flesh out its anti-poverty agenda. SARPN will be bringing a wide range of regional actors to the meeting. Full details will be announced shortly.

Readers who wish to read the final NEPAD document can access it on our www at:

<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/corporate/conferences/sarpn/roundTable/NEPAD.html>

Given the centrality of NEPAD to the poverty debate we would like to host a number of smaller discussions across the region, in partnership with existing actors. Options for these workshops will be discussed at the Kanbur meeting.

Finally, SARPN has commissioned a number of reports from diverse actors and analysts in Mozambique on various issues affecting land rights and land utilisation particularly focusing on the Mozambican Land Law which is regarded as a progressive framework for regulating investor/community developmental partnerships. These papers will be debated by a wider range of persons at a roundtable event in Maputo in January. Our partner in this process has been the Nucleo de Estudos da Terra E Desenvolvimento (NET) at the University of Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo. This initiative also follows from debates and comments raised at our June land conference. Details will be available from SARPN shortly on the planned event.

1.3 New additions to the SARPN www

SARPN's www continues to grow as we develop firmer linkages across the region. For some time now we have been posting material sent to us by organisations and networks central to the fight against poverty and who do not have a www at their own disposal; these include the CSPR in Zambia and the MEJN in Malawi.

Some specific new additions can be mentioned:

- ❖ the draft Zambian and Malawian PRSPs
- ❖ the NEPAD document
- ❖ a commentary (by Andrew Whiteford) on poverty data sources available from selected Southern African countries
- ❖ an analysis by the South African Institute of International Affairs on poverty policies within the SADC region
- ❖ some sectoral analyses, notably water, migration, HIV/AIDS and trade and their impact on poverty. Some of these latter papers will be posted in the next few days.

These papers, and others, can be accessed at:

<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/corporate/conferences/sarpn/roundTable/roundTable.html>

Persons who might have missed our earlier newsletters can access them at:

<http://www.hsrb.ac.za/corporate/conferences/sarbn/newsletters/newsletters.html>

Finally our www will also shortly include extracts and summaries from published documents on poverty from some SADC states. Our objective in posting these extracts is to alert readers to the extent of material that is available; these documents are often not available on government wwws. By publishing these extracts we hope to spur the demand for, and utilisation of, such material by a wider group of persons and institutions across the SADC region. They will be posted under specific country headings (material gained from a recent visit to Zambia and Malawi will be posted in the next few days).

2 REGIONAL POVERTY ANALYSIS

2.1 The case for a regional NGO body in Southern Africa

SADC's linkages with the non-governmental community in Southern Africa will be strengthened when it officially recognises a regional Council of NGOs. SADC Ministers are soon to discuss a memorandum of understanding to regulate the relationship between SADC and the Council of NGO (CNGO). The long-awaited Southern African CNGO is scheduled to be launched officially in Malawi early next year.

The Council, which will link national umbrella NGO organisations, will develop programmes in the areas of policy capacity building and enhanced information management and dissemination amongst NGOs in the Southern African region. The council intends, through its national affiliates, to make poverty reduction at a regional and national level, a key focus of its activities.

There is a good case for a regional NGO council. When SADCC was established in Lusaka in 1980, NGO's across the region wanted to be associated with SADC's regional co-operation initiatives. This interest was generated by the fact that almost all SADCC sectors of co-operation had elements, which were suitable for NGO intervention and involvement. However SADCC was a purely inter-governmental body which did not provide room for collaboration between itself and the NGO community. The relationship between SADCC institutions and the NGO's of the region, where it existed, was rather lukewarm and very distant.

This changed with the establishment of the Southern African Development Community. SADC's founding treaty included specific references to NGO activity. For example:

- i) In pursuance of the objectives of this treaty SADC shall seek to involve fully, the peoples of the region and Non Governmental Organizations in the process of regional integration.
- ii) SADC shall cooperate with and support the initiatives of the peoples of the region and Non Governmental Organizations contributing to the objectives of

this treaty in the areas of cooperation in order to foster closer relations among the communities, associations and peoples of the region.

At its meeting in August 1993, SADC Council of Ministers directed SADC institutions to ensure the full participation of NGOs in the activities of the organizations and ensure that NGOs attended all SADC meetings, except those of the Council of Ministers and Heads of State. With clear legally enabling instruments in place, NGOs felt encouraged to come forward and claim a role in the integration of the region. A series of regional NGO meetings were organized to clearly define a role for the NGO community.

Some NGOs had already established regional sectoral networks - notably in the areas of agriculture, food security, human rights. But no such networks existed in other sectors. As national NGOs agitated for a wider, regional role, they were equally aware of their limitations in the areas of skills and financial resources to address regional issues, specifically those of policy, democracy, good governance and human rights.

Against this background the Botswana Council of Non Governmental Organizations (BOCONGO) organized the Gaborone NGO conference in 1998. The goal of the conference was to broaden NGO participation in the regional integration process by developing a regional forum and structure that would interface with international organizations and partners. BOCONGO was nominated as the secretariat of the CNGO; in this role it has organised a number of CNGO meetings. Three were held this year - in South Africa, Zambia and in Harare - and were organised with the support of different partners.

As a result of these meetings an action plan was adopted which tentatively set the formal launch date for this month: but this has since been set back to early next year. A draft memorandum of understanding to regulate the council's interaction with SADC was developed in January this year but could unfortunately not be finalised during the August 2001 Heads of State Summit. But we remain confident that this will be finalised soon.

The following can be seen as the main objectives of the Council of NGOs.

- ❖ To provide a forum for NGOs in the SADC region to develop common positions on areas of concern and to petition governments for better enabling environments for NGOs at national and regional levels; a better enabling environment will improve NGO effectiveness and efficiency across the region.
- ❖ To represent NGO interests at SADC institutions and other bilateral arrangements and meetings with international cooperating partners.
- ❖ To collect and disseminate information on the activities of NGOs throughout the region, in order to influence national and SADC policies and resource utilisation towards people-centered development; and to facilitate the process of sharing information, experiences and NGO best practice amongst civil society organisations.
- ❖ To develop civil society inputs in the formulation of policies that influence regional co-operation and integration and to represent the views and interests of

NGO clients across the region. The Council will also jointly identify with SADC structures and governments sectors where development and delivery may be best tackled by NGOs, even where NGOs have to use resources raised by or through Governments.

- ❖ To organize policy discussion workshops and research papers on the basis of which the SADC-CNGO can rally NGOs across the region around key issues of concern. These can include democracy, good governance, human rights, poverty reduction and unemployment.
- ❖ To prepare position papers on issues relating to the abuse of human rights, corruption, and war and peace for consideration by SADC's Summit.
- ❖ To develop protocols and Memoranda of Understanding to advance the interests of civil society with key intergovernmental bodies and other co-operating partners across the region. This would include the access of NGO bodies to SADC institutions.

* **Meanwhile**, SADC's executive secretary, Dr Prega Ramsamy, has said that the role and contribution of NGOs in the region was most noticeable in the areas of community-based natural resource management and environmental conservation, sustainable agriculture, education and training, gender issues, health, HIV/AIDS and small scale development enterprise. He said that SADC was eager to benefit from NGO's innovative, flexible and responsive approaches to development issues and their ability to ensure grassroots involvement in the development process.

Linking up: This article was contributed by Bocongo. Persons or NGOs wanting further details on the Council of NGOs can contact Bocongo at info@bocongo.bw.

2.2 Regional networking on poverty and environmental issues

NetWise is a non-governmental organisation based in Windhoek, Namibia, with strong links to the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN). Netwise and the DRFN have successfully harnessed the power of the Internet in the fight for sustainable environmental management and pro-poor policy interventions in the SADC region. Lessons from its experience can be usefully considered by other regional networks.

The aim of DRFN/NetWise is to support capacity building in Southern Africa to ensure the wise custodianship of the environment by communities, governments and individuals. It does this by maintaining a regional partnership network, which contributes to information exchange about sustainable natural resource management between countries, communities and the scientific sector. DRFN/NetWise provides improved access to information about training opportunities, research findings, development programmes and organisations relating to all aspects of natural resource management.

The DRFN is an independent, non-governmental organisation dedicated to sustainable use of Namibia's environment and includes a centre for Arid Land Studies that conducts and facilitates appropriate participatory and applied short- and long term research on the environment. The DRFN/NetWise partnership is centred at the website: <http://www.drfn.org.na/NetWise.html>; this site contains a wide range of information as well as a directory of organisations, institutions, and individuals that work within the natural resource management field. Members focus on government, non-government, private, academic, research or development activities but generally have information, skills and experiences to exchange with others. Through the network, Netwise aims to strengthen the capacity of local communities so that they may engage with poverty issues surrounding sustainable environmental management.

DRFN/NetWise has helped bridge the gap between grassroots, community actors and the research, education and scientific sectors by providing a means for disseminating information along what might be regarded as horizontally and vertical channels across the region. NetWise employs a method whereby selected Primary Partners throughout the SADC region network with Secondary Partners to ensure that information is widely disseminated.

For example, Namibia's Programme to Combat Desertification (Napcod) aims to enhance drought preparedness amongst Namibian farmers, both communal and commercial, as well as other key players such as diverse service organisations. It focuses on combating land degradation and desertification through the direct involvement and co-operation of local communities and service providers. Napcod is run by DRFN and the Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (Nepru) which is a respected public policy research institute in Namibia.

NAPCOD supports communities to develop their capacity to identify and solve the problems that affect them directly. NetWise, originally a project funded by Sida (from 1997-2001), has now become an integrated component of DRFN's communication unit. DRFN/NetWise passes information, which it believes may be useful to communities, to Napcod (as the primary partner) for distribution to communities; in return Napcod passes back information which it has gained through its interaction and work with their partners. For example, Napcod recently completed a report on the first approximation of desertification in Namibia; this report was made available to partners via the DRFN website.

In addition, DRFN/NetWise has been researching the use of Internet communication tools for enhancing its regional and national networking activities. A recent exercise examined the use of 'Chatrooms' for 'virtual' workshops. DRFN/NetWise explored available options and organised a virtual workshop to trial the use of this technology. Partners throughout the SADC region were invited to participate and to submit comments on its impact. Mixed reactions were received and as a result it was decided that the use of Chatrooms (such as the one trialled) were not an easy solution to overcoming networking barriers across the SADC region. Further information on this point can be obtained from the DRFN/NetWise website.

DRFN/NetWise has now found an alternate virtual networking platform that seems to overcome many of the problems experienced in the trialled chatroom. This platform uses the participant's Internet interface (i.e. web browser) for access to its facilities and thus has many more information sharing options available. For example, it allows

easy simultaneous access to and discussion of documents; this provides partners, across the region, with the ability to work on proposals co-operatively without emailing versions back and forth. It also supports webcams and voice-over facilities so that in the future, participants will be able to both see and hear each other. The DRFN will be offering these new networking services (on a cost recovery basis) to interested organisations in the near future.

In summary, DRFN/NetWise has gained many valuable experiences in regard to networking among highly dispersed and variably skilled partners. DRFN NetWise would be extremely happy to share the range of valuable lessons that they have picked up in this new area in the fight against poverty.

Linking up: This article was contributed by Georgie Frohlich of DRFN/Netwise in Namibia. DRFN can be reached at drfn@drfn.org.na while its website can be accessed at www.drfn.org.na

2.3 Beauty and the Beast: The two faces of regional development strategy

Imagine yourself in the mythical African country of Sundae, which has for many years received assistance from NORDIDA, the development agency of the European country of Nordic. This agency has always had strong development policies focused on poverty reduction and gender equality. Life has therefore become increasingly difficult for NORDIDA, with poverty increasing rapidly under the rule of the People's Patriarchal Party.

So the newly arrived NORDIDA representative in Sundae, Ms Sympathy Egalitarian, is very intrigued to hear about plans for a new Regional Poverty Alleviation Programme being planned by the Global Bank. So she arranges to meet with the local Bank Representative, Dr Economical Technocrat, to hear more about it, and to see how NORDIDA might contribute.

'From what I've heard so far,' said Sympathy, as she sat down for a cup of tea with Economical, 'this is just the sort of larger programme we have been looking for. You know the NORDIDA programme in Sundae is running at about \$4 million a year. But being a small agency, we simply do not have the administrative capacity to monitor the proper utilization of funds. Much of our funding finishes up being used as perks for senior officials, rather than for the intended grassroots development.'

'That's where we can help,' said Economical. 'We are putting together basket funding, so that each of the various contributing agencies can support their preferred component in selected countries. With all our past experience in the planning and implementation of multi-sector and multi-agency projects, you can rest assured that your funds will be properly utilized and supervised. A regional programme in ten countries enables much more efficient ways of planning and supervision.'

'You see,' said Sympathy, 'we have found that much of rural poverty, especially amongst female headed household in rural areas, arises from entrenched discrimination against women in access to land, labour and credit. We want to support

action on a range of crucial issues which stand in the way of a more equitable distribution of wealth, especially in the area of gender inequity.’

‘I do understand,’ said Economical, adopting a kindly and fatherly tone, ‘that you come from rather a socialist country. But there is a severe limit on how much you can pursue such policies here. According to our Assistance Agreement with Sundae, the Bank’s role is to support government policy, which is concerned with enabling entrepreneurship, capital accumulation and foreign investment. We can’t discriminate in favour of men.’

‘Well,’ gulped Sympathy, ‘I am not saying that NORDIDA is trying to force Sundae to become another Nordic. But you have to admit, if we are going to reduce poverty, we have the options of either increasing production, or more equitable distribution. And recent Sundial economic history shows a steady declining production, per capita, over the past ten years...’

‘Well, of course in principle, between the two of us, I can agree with you. But as far as this regional development programme is concerned, as the title reveals, it is about Poverty Alleviation, not Poverty Reduction. Because of the misapplication of structural adjustment programmes by most of the governments in this region, we now have pressing problems of destitution, starvation and disease.’

‘So it’s more a programme of humanitarian aid?’

‘Exactly. But we call it development, because nobody wants to use words that give a bad name to structural adjustment.’

‘Even so,’ persisted Sympathy, ‘if we are putting in the money, maybe we can fund a more developmental corner within a programme which is mainly humanitarian. After all, if you are successful, your programme will need to progress in a more developmental direction. We could use our position to focus on the important gender issues which stand in the way of development, such as male control of land, and robbing widows of their marriage property ...’

‘Half a minute,’ laughed Economical, ‘we have to work within the existing societies, their traditions and norms. If we try to upset their traditions, the whole programme will be at risk. Some of the governments around here haven’t even ratified the Women’s Convention. Neither for that matter has the United States, which is our main source of funding...’

‘But surely,’ interrupted Sympathy, ‘if you have a regional programme, it needs to be informed by a regional strategy of identifying the pattern of major issues and obstacles which stand in the way of development, and then developing appropriate strategies focused on these very issues. If we could piggy-back on your programme, we could reach all the major women’s NGOs in the region, and build their capacity for direct action on selected gender issues which stand in the way...’

‘But governments are our cooperating partners. We are prepared to work with some NGOs, provided they are not anti-government, and are able to provide support or supplement government services. We cannot get into political mobilization, we are a

non-political organization. We certainly can't get involved in fomenting anti-government NGOs to oppose and undermine government's efforts.'

'OK, Perhaps my suggestions were a bit radical. But explain to me how you take advantage of a regional multilateral programme to develop a more focused regional strategy. Or is it just national strategy replicated on a larger scale?'

'Not mere replication, because it takes advantage of economies of scale. That is our strategy. We save the duplication of efforts by different agencies, enabling specialization in monitoring and evaluation, fuller utilization of expertise, and standardised accounting procedures. So everybody is better off. We are concerned with the application of known and proven interventions, involving humanitarian service delivery and capacity building for entrepreneurship. The problem is not how to intervene, but how to do it effectively and efficiently.'

'What is your gender strategy?'

'All our staff are gender trained, and we do everything in a very gender sensitive way.'

'It seems to me,' said Sympathy with a sigh, 'that you have your own corporate strategy, but no development strategy.'

'That's an interesting distinction,' laughed Economical.

'And I wonder if your corporate strategy,' said Sympathy, 'is less concerned with development, and more concerned with orchestrating and controlling the bilateral agencies.'

'I know you're new here,' laughed Economical. 'You'll soon get the hang of it.'

'I'm learning fast,' said Sympathy.

Linking up: This article was contributed by Roy Clarke, who is based in Lusaka. Roy Clarke works as a consultant in the area of gender and development, in partnership with Sara Hlupekile Longwe. He can be reached at sara&roy@zamnet.zm

2.4 A farm-workers network for Southern Africa?

Representatives from nine countries have been tasked with examining the viability of establishing a network around farm worker's rights in Southern Africa. This follows a major recent conference in Harare organised by the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe. The aim of the nascent network is to "enhance and add the voice of farm workers' issues in regional debate, especially in the current period where the region is going through a process of land reform".

Membership would be drawn from all NGOs who share an interest in issues related to farm workers. The conference recognised that some regional networks did operate around land and poverty issues; thus the proposed network would examine the extent

to which its focus could be accommodated by existing networks. If this were not possible then the proposed network would proceed with its establishment.

The Harare conference elected an interim committee with representatives drawn from Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique and Botswana. The interim committee has been given a mandate to:

- ❖ Draw up a policy paper on the status of farm workers in the region
- ❖ Fund raise for a planned conference
- ❖ Develop a draft programme of action
- ❖ Develop specific campaign issues around farm workers including themes of tenure, citizenship, gender, social grants and pensions, education of farm workers and how farm workers could be recognised as a clear constituency in land reform policies.

Linking up: The SARPAN web site carries both the conference report and the conference communiqué. They can be accessed at:

<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/corporate/conferences/sarpan/otherNetworks/zimbabwe/index.html>

The conference organiser was Godfrey Magaramombe of the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe; he can be contacted at: fctz@ecoweb.co.zw.

In addition, the Oxfam www contains the paper presented to the conference by the respected analyst Robin Palmer; it can be accessed at <http://www.oxfam.org.uk>. His paper dealt with:

- Issues of labour migration within Southern Africa in the 20th century
- The vulnerability, isolation and invisibility of farm workers in the region
- The changes in the treatment of farm workers and xenophobia caused by recent political trends relating to land tenure systems.

2.5 A profile of South African civil society

Two South African research institutions (Idasa and Core) have just released the results of a major study on the state of civil society organisations (CSOs) in South Africa. This research was commissioned by Civicus International, through SANGOCO as part of a broader assessment of the health of civil society across the globe. The project focused on a subjective assessment of the health of civil society in South Africa, as perceived by civil society organisations themselves. Respondents and NGOs were questioned on issues around structure, space, values and impact. In brief the results cover the following areas:

Structure

1. CSO's run their programmes and projects in:
 - a.. Metropolitan areas (40%)
 - b.. Small Urban areas (44%)
 - c.. Informal settlements in urban areas (34%)

- d.. Informal settlements in rural areas (27%)
 - e.. Rural areas (52%)
2. CSO's deliver services mainly to ordinary citizens (75%) and community leaders (60%)
 3. 75% of the organisations indicated that they were a member of SANGOCO
 4. 61% of the respondents felt that their organisation was representative of the South African population
 5. 78% said that there was not enough co-operation among CSO's
 6. CSO's, generally, are too dependent on donor funding

Space

1. 66% of the organisations indicated they had an active membership base
 - a. Individuals (19%)
 - b. Groups or Organisations (19%)
 - c. Both Individuals and Groups (28%)
2. 8% of the organisations were not registered at all
3. 38% are registered as a Section 21 not-for-profit company
4. 36% are registered as a Non-profit organisation (with the Dept. of Welfare under the NPO Act of 1997)
5. 36% believed the registration process was difficult
6. Most of the organisations worked with Local Government (92%) and Provincial Government Departments (90%)
7. Types of programmes and projects
 - a. Fighting HIV and AIDS (80%)
 - b. Education (78%)
 - c. Welfare (75%)
 - d. Health (74%)

Values

1. Respondent's relationship with government
 - a. Co-operative (54%)
 - b. Critical (27%)
2. 71% said that CSO's do not adequately represent ordinary citizens
3. 91% reported to control and monitor their expenses fairly well /very well

4. 43% of the organisations make their financial records and reports publicly available on request
5. 58% felt that the RSA government was handling human rights issues very well / fairly well
6. In terms of staff diversity:
 - a. 55% have a gender policy in place
 - b. 45% have a race policy
 - c. 36% a disability policy

Impact

1. 68% of the respondents indicated that CSO's did not have sufficient influence over government
2. 70% said that CSO's also have insufficient influence over parliament
3. 81% of the organisations reported to have had seminars and workshops with government officials and legislators
4. 34% said that their involvement with seminars and workshops with government officials and legislators had an impact on the policy process
5. 36% of the organisations indicated an impact on White or Green Paper processes
6. 53% of the organisations indicated they had sufficient access to the media
7. 70% of the organisations felt that the media had a positive impact on the work that they perform

Linking up: For further information on the project and its findings contact samantha@idasact.org.za

3. POVERTY POINTERS

3.1 Botswana Poverty Reduction Tender

The Botswana Government has awarded a tender to the Gaborone office of the UNDP to formulate a National Poverty Reduction Strategy for the country. The UNDP team is expected to submit its report within the first quarter of next year. As a middle income country, Botswana falls outside the PRSP initiative of the IMF and the World Bank. The background to the tender lies in the results of a number of commissioned reports which have noted that despite Botswana's impressive record of sustained economic growth, the national poverty rate has only declined from 59% of the population in 1985 to 47% in 1994.

Specific terms of reference for the project include:

- ❖ Producing a national strategy in line with the development goals, aspirations and objectives of the Botswana government's Vision 2016 policy document;
- ❖ Critically reviewing the design, implementation, management and evaluation of existing intersectoral policies and programmes;

- ❖ Critically reviewing current poverty-related sectoral policies, strategies and programmes and to suggest ways of re-focussing and harmonising them for increased efficiency and effectiveness;
- ❖ Investigate causes of poverty and to recommend effective reduction strategies for individual and household self-sustenance;
- ❖ Assessing the institutional arrangement, capacity and overall effectiveness of existing institutional structures at both the national, district, sub-district and community levels and to recommend improvements.

An interesting aspect of the tender is the decision by the Botswana government to establish a wide-ranging reference group to oversee the project. Members of the reference group include members drawn from various civil society agencies, the national umbrella agencies, Bocongo and Bocobonet.

Linking up: The SARPEN www contains the full terms of reference for the tender.

It can be accessed at:

<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/corporate/conferences/sarpen/otherNetworks/botswana/index.html>. The UNDP co-ordinator of the project is Senny Obuseng. He can be contacted at senny.obuseng@undp.org.

3.2 Parliaments and poverty reduction strategies

Poverty reduction strategies in Africa needed to give far more attention to the role of parliamentarians to ensure they were not marginalised in the formulation and implementation of PRSPs. This point was made in a declaration by African parliamentarians who participated in the recent Dakar Forum for Poverty Reduction in Africa. To illustrate their perceived marginalisation the group noted that parliamentarians constituted only seven of the 300 delegates. An earlier PRSP conference was attended by only three parliamentarians.

The declaration noted that African parliaments had to perform the traditional function of a watchdog on the executive but that parliaments "were increasingly an agent of change". PRSPs were meant to be a participatory process and "therefore should not exclude the representatives of the poor themselves".

Specific proposals made in the declaration were:

- ❖ That governments and the donor community should ensure that MPs were a part of the process leading to the development and implementation of PRSPs;
- ❖ That MPs participate at international, regional and local forums on poverty reduction strategies;
- ❖ That, where necessary, courses be held to upgrade the skills levels of parliamentarians to enable them to engage effectively in the process of designing PRSPs;
- ❖ That regional parliamentary forums needed to engage with poverty reduction; if they did not they would be "irrelevant to the cause of the poor".

Linking up: The text of the declaration can be accessed at:

<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/attackingpoverty/activities/parldeclaration.pdf>

3.3 Other points from the DAKAR forum

One of the central issues under discussion was the capacity of government institutions and personnel to tackle national challenges in response to the plight of the poor. Accountability for government actions was tied to this. Discussion revealed that some positive steps were being taken to reduce the general outcry against poor governance. Among them were the recent inclusion of the poor in the process of policy design, the flow of information to the rural poor, a more positive and pro-active interaction between parliaments and civil society, the decentralisation of government to local levels and other outreach programmes as having a positive impact on accountability. Delegates agreed that if these actions were to be maintained, it would be necessary to cultivate tendencies like freedom of expression, an independent judiciary and a well-equipped free press.

Delegates agreed that to make sustained and serious inroads against poverty, it was necessary to formulate monetary, fiscal and structural policies aimed at maximising per capita labour productivity by the poor. To achieve this government budgets should target capacity building for the poor by providing them with skills in areas such as education, health, capital, infrastructure, management skills and other necessary tools to increase their capacity to meet both local and global market demands. Prioritisation of government expenditure on these should be based on a clear understanding of the impact and efficiency of the particular choices made, given the capacity of the available supporting institutions and the wishes of the poor themselves.

The importance of analysing empirical situations, monitoring the relevance of existing policies and following up on programmes was highlighted. Governments needed to be properly informed about the situation on the ground; this implied the need to use appropriate measuring techniques and equipment to gather the relevant information. Co-ordination of information input to government was necessary to create a systematic approach in addressing common experiences and also to facilitate the assessment of policy outcomes. The role of the poor themselves in this process was not clear because of the disparity in perception between the local and the national levels.

National ownership and broad endorsement of poverty reduction strategies necessitated a shift in donor practices to the empowerment of governments that had earned consensus on national priorities. Delegates agreed that the focus of donors ought to be on the outcomes of policies and programmes rather than on conditionalities and ex ante promises. It was important for countries to be able to develop their own solutions and strategies to implement policies that were deemed essential to the reduction of poverty. Governments also needed to be able to predict the commitments of donors in financing medium term plans, but they also had to show their own commitment in achieving set out objectives with a clear mechanism for domestic accountability.

Delegates also agreed that poverty was at the heart of conflict situations and action was needed to reduce their potential.

Linking up: For more information on the conference summary and papers:
<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/attackingpoverty/index.html>

3.4 Different Poverties, Different Policies

The Development Studies Association of the University of Manchester held a three day international conference from the 10th – 12th September 2001 with the title “Different Poverties, Different Policies”. Over 100 papers were presented; many had a direct relevance to Southern African themes. The papers dealt with a variety of issues affecting poverty, including trade, economic growth, management of natural resources, land reform and relations with donor countries and organisations.

Panel titles included Development Management, Core Issues on Chronic Poverty, Policies on the Measurement of Poverty and Poverty Reduction, Labour and Migration, Remote Rural Spatial Poverty Traps, Social Exclusion and Demilitarisation.

Linking up: These papers should be of interest to a wide group of persons and institutions active in Southern Africa. The papers may be accessed at:
<http://www.bham.ac.uk/DSA/conf01papers.htm>

4 POVERTY REPORTS

4.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Poverty Appraisal: complementarities, tensions and the way forward (edited by Ravi Kanbur)

In poverty studies, as in other fields of social studies, the merits of qualitative and quantitative “methods” have long been debated by their supporters. For both groups, the objective is a better understanding of poverty and the formulation of policies that would most efficiently alleviate it. This collection of “notes” summarises presentations at a workshop organised earlier this year by Ravi Kanbur of Cornell University. The workshop brought prominent poverty proponents of each tradition to debate the strengths and weaknesses of each tradition. Apart from a commentary by Ravi Kanbur on the workshop’s discussions, the collection consists of a series of “notes” reflecting the views of participants. These notes tend to be two or three pages long encapsulating the thrust of arguments rather than arguments or theories.

The thrust of the workshop centred on proponents of each school, rather than defending their preference, attempting to “be self-critical and ask what other approaches could bring to the task of understanding and reducing poverty”. The working collection offers a succinct and informed overview of the “quant-qual” debate within the context of studies of poverty.

Given conferences stipulation of self-criticism and the search for what other methods may contribute to their understanding poverty the notes, perhaps inevitably, reflect a need for the two schools to move closer together. Various arguments are made for a rapprochement between the two schools. Suggestions are forwarded along, *inter alia*, the lines of qualitative studies using sampling frameworks more systematically and of quantitative studies incorporating more open ended questions. Despite the suggestion that such a rapprochement may be of benefit to our understanding of poverty there is a strong sentiment that anything more than a slight convergence between the two schools may result in the intrinsic merit of each being sacrificed. The notes capture some of the potential benefits of convergence while warning of the potential cost of each school moving too far from its traditions. As summarized by Ravi Kanbur “getting a little bit of the best of both worlds seems relatively easy. Getting more than this, it seems, may be quite a bit more difficult.”

The workshop seems to serve as a promising point of departure for further debate as to how tensions between the two schools can better enlighten our understanding of poverty. The participants are content to urge the appropriation of greater insights which "the other school" offers for the benefit of the poor.

The debate seems however to miss a central issue that informs the essence of what either school does. The cost of collecting data, whether qualitative or quantitative is not, by any stretch of the imagination, negligible. What practitioners do is a reflection of the scale of the enquiry (global, national, local etc.) and the resources, capacities and access they have. Each school does the best it can within the context of these constraints. The debate needs to ensure that the benefits, for example, of redesigning national surveys to include a more qualitative dimension or of ensuring that qualitative studies draw on a more rigorous sampling framework are worth the additional resources invested in the research project. The sober economics of research needs to be introduced into the debate if the dialogue is to benefit of the poor.

Linking up: The full text of the workshop can be accessed at:

<http://www.people.cornell.edu/pages/sk145/papers/QQZ.pdf>

Readers might be interested in another new contribution by Ravi Kanbur to the broad poverty debate: a chapter entitled Aid, conditionality and debt in Africa.

It can be accessed at: <http://www.people.cornell.edu/pages/sk145/papers/africaid.pdf>

4.2 Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions Mission Report to Zimbabwe

The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, based in Geneva, recently released a mission report on Zimbabwe entitled: Land, Housing and Property Rights in Zimbabwe. The report attempts to evaluate the situation pertaining to property, land and housing rights in Zimbabwe before the Abuja Agreement in September 2001.

The report argues that the land invasions in Zimbabwe are being fuelled by the unprecedented rise of poverty, unemployment and income disparities that exist in the face of ineffectual usage of Zimbabwe's immense natural and human resources. These problems have been compounded by a genuine land hunger of people living on

marginal rural areas without fertile soils or reliable rainfall. A fundamental problem facing Zimbabwe's land reform policy has been how to balance the control and access to land by redistributing it from large-scale landowners to new small-scale and medium-scale users.

The challenge has therefore been how to peacefully transfer land to new users and to assist them to achieve the required production levels to support the ailing economy. However, genuine land redistribution demands have been subordinated by non-transparent policy formulation procedures, which have distracted from the grounds that justify land reform including the need for local and international resources to be mobilised towards this cause. The report argues that a combination of parochial political pressures and a crisis of legitimacy for the ruling ZANU-PF party have marred land reform.

Linking up: The report can be accessed at www.cohre.org (click on the "library" section under "fact finding missions").

4.3 From Savings Mobilisation to Micro-Finance: A Historic Perspective on the Zimbabwe Savings Development Movement (Brian Raftopoulos and Jean-Paul Lacoste)

Recently, within both Southern Africa and the rest of the world, there has been an increasing emphasis on micro credit in development debates; this mirrors a gradual shift in policy focus away from petty capital accumulation or savings to micro-credit. Raftopoulos and Lacoste provide a useful overview of the move away from savings mobilisation in Zimbabwe to one of micro-finance.

The Savings Development Movement (SDM) was initiated in the 1960s and aimed at encouraging the mobilization of the micro-savings of its small group of members, most of whom were rural women; in so doing it actively discouraged the use of micro-credit. However, as the authors point out, the idea of encouraging saving amongst the poor in Zimbabwe, pre-dates the savings movement, and can be traced to the emergence of burial societies from the early years of colonial occupation after 1890. The history of attempting to provide credit to the poor, proved for the most part to be a failure during both the colonial and pre-colonial periods in the country. The reasons are fundamentally related to several factors including the gross inequalities in resource allocation, the movement of accumulated capital into the dominant areas of the money market, government debt, real estate and, during the period of economic liberalisation, into a range of speculative activities.

Thus through the latter activities, the leading financial institutions in the country have directed capital into more profitable areas of investment and away from the credit requirements of the poor. Even attempts by the post-colonial state to extend credit to the rural poor have been carried out in a manner that is directed more to the maintenance of political control over the peasantry, than to a sustainable poverty eradication programme. In addition the practice of banks themselves has actively discouraged the development of micro-credit to the poor.

In the period of the Structural Adjustment Programme after 1990, the donor community took advantage of the new ethos of economic liberalization, to push the SHDF into a micro-credit scheme, aimed at providing a more sustainable financing basis for both the SHDF and its membership. This new trajectory found an increasingly sympathetic audience from a state unable to meet the welfarist needs of its citizens, and desperate for new policies on poverty reduction. In the 1990's this call for easier credit, broadened into an indigenisation lobby, that played a central role in placing the issue of black economic empowerment on the government's political agenda. Thus as the state sought new policies to reduce poverty in the era of structural adjustment, the donor community has channelled funds away from the state to community based organisations, as part of the reduced emphasis placed on a dirigiste state by the international financial institutions. Finally, the programme boosted the creation of new clubs, but many among them seem to be "credit clubs" rather than "savings clubs".

There are also some challenges for new micro-finance institutions (MFI). This institution should always bear in mind two principles. First, from the members' point of view, saving (in cash or in kind) is the objective and borrowing a means. Secondly, MFIs are not commercial banks: their objective is to reach to poorest, not the wealthiest.

On the credit side, the growth of the portfolio should not be an aim in itself. Not all members need credit, and those who need it should be carefully selected and trained. The authors quote Brother Waddelove: "Credit is like a fire: it is useful to cook your sadza but if you are careless, it will burn your hut". A good number of SHDF borrowers have "burnt" their capital, instead of increasing it. SHDF should also work hard towards sustainability, but not by giving up its mission to serve the poorest women. It is believed that an appropriate "cross-subsidization policy" would allow to achieve both outreach and sustainability objectives.

Although this report is a case study of a Zimbabwean experience around micro-finance, its analysis will be of use to a broad range of persons or institutions interested in methods of local economic development in both rural and urban areas across the region.

Linking up: Persons or institutions interested in obtaining a copy may contact SARPN at sarpn@hsrc.ac.za. Alternatively they might like to contact the major author, Brian Raftopoulos, at raftop@mweb.co.zw

5. CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

5.1 Development Policies for Rural and Urban Development in South Africa

The Johannesburg-based National Institute for Economic Policy (NIEP), in conjunction with the History Workshop and the National Land Committee (NLC), will be hosting a conference on the theme of "Implementing Development: The Practice and Effectiveness of Development Policies in South Africa". **The aim of this conference is to identify practical approaches to development policy**

implementation in South Africa. Interested authors are invited to submit contributed papers, which may be either of a theoretical or a practical nature. Abstracts must be submitted before 31st January 2002.

Linking up: For more information contact Dr. Samuel Bonti-Ankomah at samuel@niep.org.za

5.2 Adult Education Conference within SADC

The Centre for Adult Education at the School of Education, Training and Development, based at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, is arranging an International Conference on Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) in the SADC region. The scheduled date is October 2002. The conference will focus on regional development, co-operation and the implementation of projects.

Linking up: Contact the organiser, Wendy Smith, at SmithWA@nu.ac.za.

5.3 The concept and practice of civil society in International Development

To mark its 10th anniversary, INTRAC will be holding an international conference at Balliol College, Oxford from the 13th – 15th December 2001. The theme is '**Changing Expectations? The Concept and Practice of Civil Society in International Development**'.

Although the programme is not yet finalised, keynote speakers will include:

- Clare Short (UK Secretary for International Development)
- David Begg - Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Dr Rajesh Tandon - Director of PRIA, an Indian NGO.

INTRAC, an international NGO, works in the broad arena of civil society training. Within SADC, it operates in Malawi where it strengthens local NGO support organisations to provide high quality capacity-building services to local NGOs.

Linking up: For more on the conference watch the INTRAC website at <http://www.intrac.org/conference2001.htm>

5.4 Zimbabwe conflict prevention workshop

The Southern African Conflict Prevention Network (SACPN) will be hosting a two-day workshop between the 9th and 13th December in Bulawayo to discuss ways in which the capacity of Zimbabwean NGOs might be bolstered to prevent further violence in the country. The workshop follows an earlier SACPN workshop held in July this year. Specific objectives of the workshop are to:

- ❖ Analyse the underlying causes of conflict in Zimbabwe from a national and regional perspective;
- ❖ Provide an environment for reflection on civil society's role in Zimbabwe's conflict; and
- ❖ Provide an insight on conflict prevention and resolution interventions for Zimbabwean civil society.

Linking Up: The regional co-ordinator of SACPN can be contacted at yaliwe@kepa.org.zm. SACPN maintains a conflict prevention database, which can be accessed at: <http://www.katu-network.fi>

6. Relevant websites

This new feature of the newsletter will highlight some websites, which may be of interest to readers across the region.

6.1 PLAAS Website: <http://www.uwc.ac.za/PLAAS/>

The Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) is located in the School of Government at the University of the Western Cape. It fosters critical scholarship on land and agrarian issues and seeks to support processes of social, political and economic transformation within South and Southern Africa. PLAAS focuses on:

- the land restitution and redistribution programmes initiated by the post-apartheid democratic state
- land tenure reform
- emerging regimes of natural resource management
- rural livelihoods and farm-household production systems
- chronic poverty and rural development
- processes of institutional restructuring and reorientation in support of land and agrarian reform in South Africa.

Visit the website to download the first report in a series of Policy Briefs on land and agrarian reform in Southern Africa - 'Land Reform in South Africa: is it meeting the challenge?' by Edward Lahiff.

6.2 The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection: www.jctr.org.zm

The JCTR is an active partner and facilitator of debates within Zambia and Malawi on social and economic justice and of debt relief for HIPC states. Its web site contains a number of extremely interesting papers and documents on these issues written by JCTR staff. Some recent papers include issues of HIV/AIDS and education and debt relief for Zambia. The JCTR also publishes a quarterly bulletin and a monthly analysis of the "cost of a food basket". Its www has been recently redesigned and is easily navigable.

SARPN and the HSRC

SARPN is hosted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in Pretoria. The HSRC, a nationally-funded social science research agency in South Africa, undertakes research in eight key areas, all of which have clear developmental foci. They include governance and democracy; integrated development; HIV/AIDS; labour market analysis; human resource development; children, youth and family and research into various aspects of educational issues. The HSRC is committed to undertaking applied social science that is problem solving, multi-disciplinary, large-scale and often empirical. Its new vision is “social science that makes a difference”.

More details about the HSRC's unfolding research programme can be obtained from www is [http:// www.hsrc.ac.za](http://www.hsrc.ac.za)

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