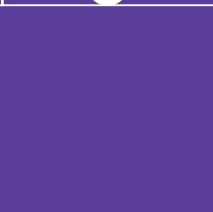
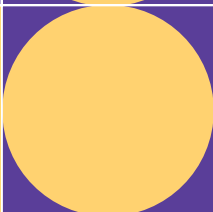
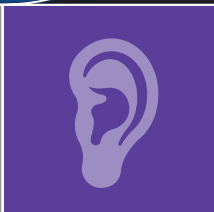
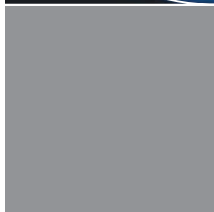
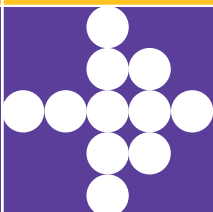
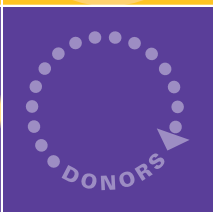
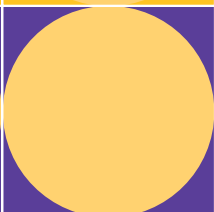
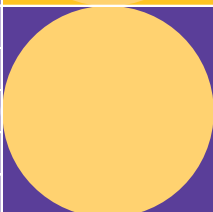
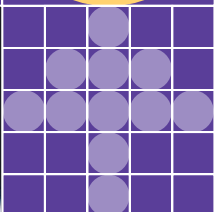
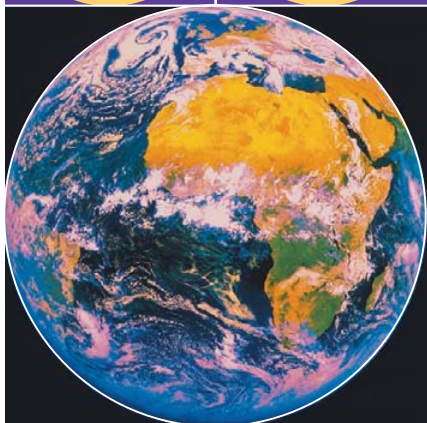
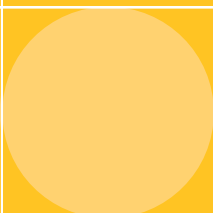
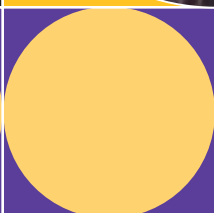
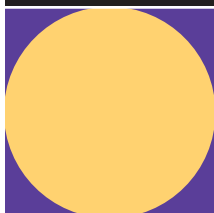
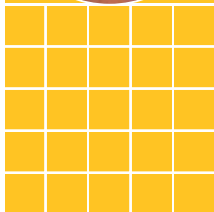


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Masud Mozammel
Sina Odugbemi

With the Support of Multitudes

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fight poverty
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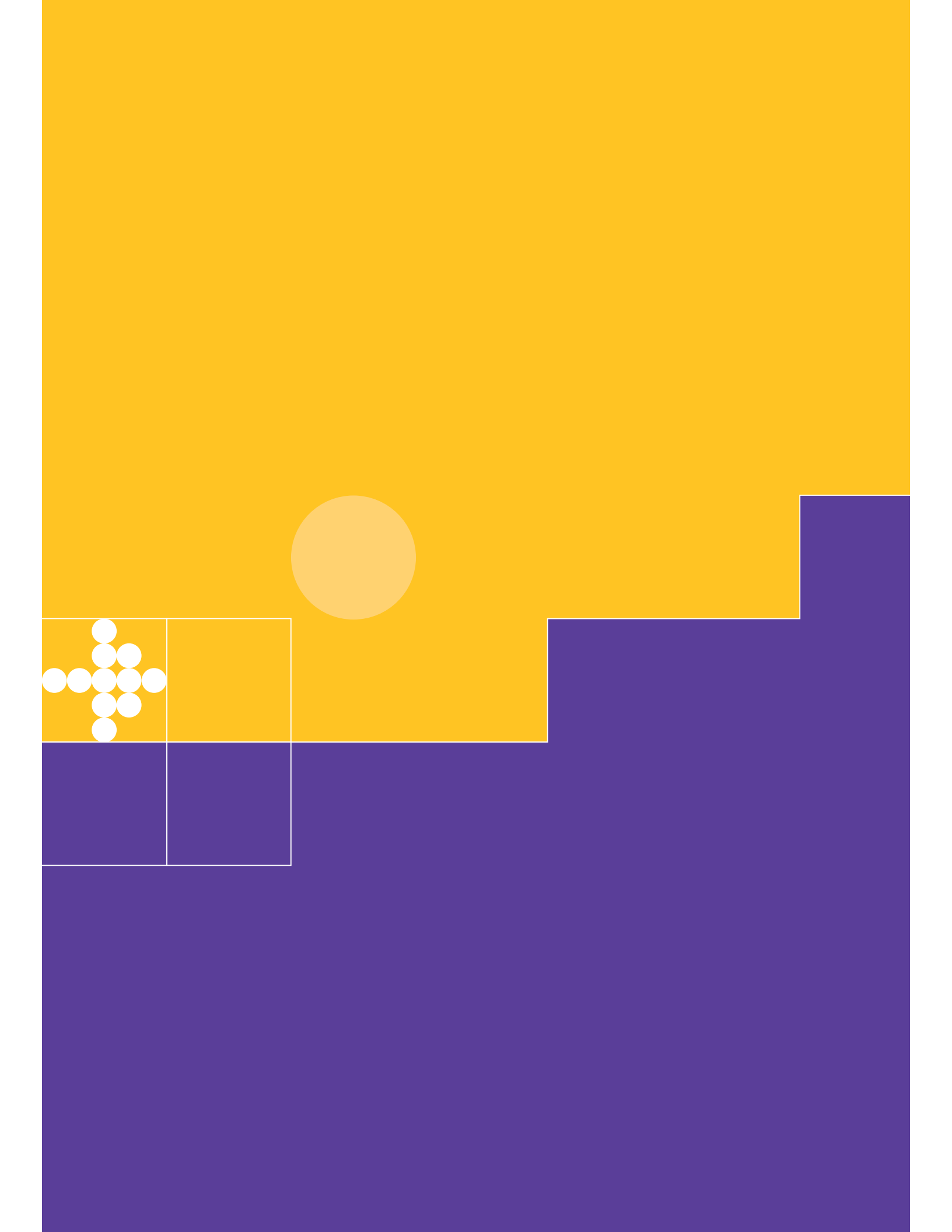


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Masud Mozammel
Sina Odugbemi

**With
the Support of
Multitudes**

**Using strategic
communication to
fight poverty
through PRSPs**

With the Support of Multitudes: using strategic communication to fight poverty through PRSPs

edited by Masud Mozammel and Sina Odugbemi

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Foreword

Although only five years old now, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) approach has become established as the country-level framework for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Two of the six principles of the approach are particularly important: country ownership and the participation of broad segments of the political community in strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring. Yet a recent review of the PRS approach by the staff of the World Bank and the IMF said:

- Some countries are beginning to link the PRS to domestic decision-making processes more effectively, and to deepen the involvement of line ministries and local governments. There is also growing parliamentary involvement in Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) oversight and implementation. However, sustained efforts are needed to align the PRS process with country systems and processes.
- The PRS approach has raised awareness of the value of civil society contributions to policy dialogue. However, there is as yet relatively little evidence of a broad-based and open discussion of macroeconomic policy alternatives in PRSPs. There needs to be support for building the capacity of different groups to engage in constructive dialogue on policy options and to ensure their sustained participation in PRSP implementation and monitoring.

(Poverty Reduction
Strategy Papers – Progress in
Implementation',
20 September 2004)

It is pertinent to ask: why is it important that political leaders and policymakers in developing countries generally – and especially those implementing Poverty Reduction Strategies – ensure that there is broad and sustained participation in the evolution and implementation of these strategies? There are two excellent reasons why this is a matter of the first importance:

- Experience has shown that top-down approaches to development do not work and are, in any event, not sustained. Development is about people. It is not something that is done to people; it is best done with people. Poverty Reduction Strategies are far more likely to be effective and sustainable when they are evolved and implemented with the full participation of the broadest possible segments of the country. That way they unleash the power, energies and commitment of multitudes.
- What is more, intelligent political leaders know that engaging the population in constructive dialogue over policy options is an effective way of managing public opinion and securing political success. It might often be messy and challenging, but the rewards are manifold. It also protects political leaders from blame; for, a problem openly discussed with voters is a problem shared.

This is why this book is timely and relevant. It makes the crucial point that while building support for Poverty Reduction Strategies is vital to success, such support will not happen without planned, deliberate and sustained efforts to involve the citizenry in an open and inclusive process of two-way communication. This is what is meant by strategic communication. This publication offers policymakers and their technical staff four important forms of support:

- 1.** Case studies from a variety of countries on the use of communication to enhance the effectiveness of Poverty Reduction Strategies;
- 2.** Best practice guidance on which methods are known to have been effective and which have been less so;
- 3.** An analysis of the structural impediments to participation and country ownership; and
- 4.** A detailed list of further sources of information and guidance.

Senior policymakers in countries implementing Poverty Reduction Strategies, as well as donor organisations, are urged to read and reflect on the lessons reported in this study. And to pass the work on to technical staff responsible for the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategies around the world.

Acknowledgements

This publication came about as a result of work that we have been doing to support the strategic use of communication in the PRSP process. We would therefore like to thank the senior officials in our respective organisations who supported and approved that work: Paul Mitchell at the World Bank and Guy Mustard and Michael Green in DFID. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the World Bank and DFID colleagues – too numerous to list – responsible for the programmes in all the countries we visited and have featured in this publication as case studies. Without their active support this work would not have happened at all.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AP	action plan
APR	annual progress report
CBO	community-based organisation
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CIDA	Canadian International Development Association
CNA	community needs assessment
CS	communication strategy
CSO	civil society organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
EU	European Union
HIPC	heavily indebted poor countries
ICTs	information and communication technologies
IDA	International Development Association
IFI	International Financial Institution
IMF	International Monetary Fund
I-PRSP	interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
JSA	Joint Staff Assessment
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSIA	Poverty and Social Impact Analysis
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policy
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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issues. Communication is one of four themes within the RAPID programme, which focuses on the interface between research and policy: how can policymakers be more evidence-based in their policymaking; how can researchers be more policy-aware in their research; and how can communication between the two be improved. Specific communication projects have included a large study for FAO, DFID and the World Bank on information systems for rural livelihoods, support to several projects to help them communicate better to policymakers, and work with DFID on the communication elements of the Central Research Department's new research strategy.

Executive Summary

Purpose This publication has been produced in order to improve the chances of success of Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) in two ways:

1. To show policymakers how strategic communication can help them to achieve some of their objectives in formulating and executing effective Poverty Reduction Strategies.
2. To give the technocrats and officials actively engaged in the execution of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) guidance on best practice as well as lessons from a community of practice spread around the world.

What strategic communication offers

Strategic communication is much more than merely informing citizens about PRSPs. Rather, it is the active seeking of the perspectives and contributions of citizens so that they can help to shape policy. It also means ensuring that mechanisms are in place for a two-way flow of information and ideas between the government and the citizenry as well as making deliberate efforts to build consensus amongst stakeholders about the development strategy the nation wishes to pursue.

Done properly, strategic communication contributes to the effectiveness of PRSPs in the following ways:

- It creates open and inclusive national dialogue on policy options. This leads to greater and informed participation in policymaking by significant segments of the population. The result is increased support and commitment for the strategy that is agreed.
- It manages expectations. Rather than a revolution of unrealistic hopes it gives the people a balanced sense of what policy options can deliver. This helps governments.
- It promotes transparency and accountability. Open and inclusive dialogue richly informed by a full airing of the facts helps citizens to hold governments to account. They can measure progress against promises more easily.
- It establishes and maintains momentum. This is because once vast multitudes are engaged in the process of working out the strategy to be pursued the energies of the nation are more easily unleashed; and once unleashed it

is almost impossible to switch off.

- It creates or deepens a public culture of citizen–government dialogue. This is already evident in several PRSP implementing countries, as this study affirms. Such a culture has enormous benefits all round for the development agenda.

Major issues

The question is this: as countries implement PRSPs, what are the major issues arising regarding the need to create national ownership and ensure broad participation in the process?

Here are some leading ones:

- Lack of information about the strategies being developed and implemented among major stakeholders remains an issue. All too often finance and planning ministries treat the process as their exclusive property.
- Lack of trust and confidence about the process remains a major problem. Cynicism is rife. In several cases, public attitudes can be summed up thus: ‘another strategy to lift us out of poverty? Great! It will go the way of the last ten’.
- So-called participatory exercises are still too often mere public information campaigns, involving top-down dissemination and a few workshops and seminars. What is worse, they are usually ad hoc, rather than strategic.
- All too often once the PRSP is finalised communication processes come to an end. There is often no effort to institute systems for continued citizen engagement and the regular flow of information.

Structural impediments to genuine participation

One of the main lessons of this study is that PRSPs are not implemented in green houses, but in very specific national contexts.

Depending on the situation in each country, the following structural factors are critical to whether or not you can have genuine citizen participation in and ownership of PRSPs:

- The underlying political culture can be decisive. If it is inherently authoritarian, for example, both the governed and the ruling elite will believe that public policy is the exclusive preserve of governments and nothing more needs to be said.
- The state of the mass media in the specific country is also a crucial factor. This is a bill of three particulars: (1) do the laws allow a free and independent media system? (2) Do all sections of the community and all regions have access to the media? (3) Is mass media content such as to promote informed debate on the policy options in the effort to eradicate poverty?
- Access to official information is the third structural impediment. If all the facts needed for informed debate are in the possession of government departments who treat everything as an official secret, genuine participation is all but impossible.
- The fourth is the density and capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) in each country. This includes not just the modern non-governmental organisations (NGOs) but organic institutions of civil society such as churches, mosques, temples, age-group associations and so on. How organised civil society is often shapes how participatory PRSPs are, both in their formulation and their implementation.
- Finally, there is the vexed question of communication capacity within government. The skilled management of public opinion is an essential skill for all governments, yet the information ministry in many countries is a backwater of low skill, low pay and low

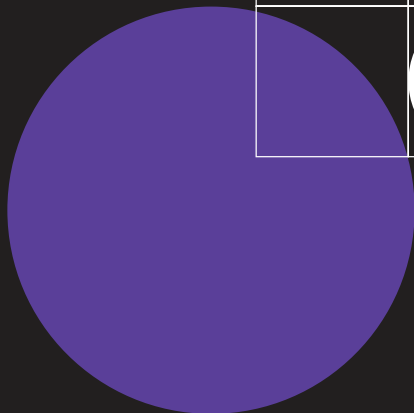
morale. This affects the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategies in quite significant ways.

Implementation lessons

For technocrats engaged in implementing PRSPs, the main lessons of this study can be summarised as follows:

1. You must distinguish between mere consultation or awareness raising and participation.
2. Strategic communication is planned, deliberate and long-term rather than ad-hoc or reactive communication.
3. The purpose of the communication strategy is to create ownership via a process of free, open and inclusive national dialogue. It also helps to manage expectations, so that governments do not unwittingly make rods for their own backs.
4. It is important to involve the opinion leaders in the community; for while the focus of strategy is the poor, elites have crucial roles to play in the struggle against poverty.
5. Mechanisms for ensuring free flow of information between policymakers and the citizenry must be institutionalised. Otherwise, the process loses momentum after the initial push and cynicism will triumph.
6. Build communication capacity within government. It is important for governments to be skilled at practicing two-way communication. It is in their interest to be appropriately organised, staffed and equipped in this vital regard.
7. Help the mass media to be able to foster the process of open and inclusive national dialogue. With regard to PRSPs the economic literacy of journalists is a major challenge.
8. Increase civil society resources and capacity and always seek to engage them.
9. Finally, it is not enough to integrate strategic communication when devising macro-level Poverty Reduction Strategy; it is equally important to integrate strategic communication planning for specific sectoral and thematic areas prioritised in each PRS.

Part 1 : **Strategic
Communication in PRSPs:
An Overview**



Strategic Communication in PRSPs: An Overview

Introduction

The introduction of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in 1999 by the International Financial Institutions saw the arrival of a *process conditionality* establishing participation as a major element required for enhancing national ownership (Booth 2003). As the governments along with the civil society and donors in developing countries start preparing their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) they recognise that ensuring effective engagement of stakeholders is an enormous challenge both in the preparation and later in the implementation of the poverty strategy. Luckily in the very early stages of PRSP era it has been felt that a systematic application of communication tools and techniques is essential for the delivery of the *participatory process* requirement of PRSP. In fact communication is crucial not only for upholding the participation element but also critical for ensuring several other aspects of the six core principles that underpin PRSPs. The principles determine that the strategies should be:

- results oriented, with targets for poverty reduction that are tangible and monitorable
- comprehensive, integrating macroeconomic, structural, sectoral and social elements
- country driven, representing a consensual view of what actions should be taken
- participatory, with all relevant stakeholders participating in formulation and implementation
- based on partnerships between government and other actors
- long-term, focusing on reforming institutions and building capacity, as well as short-term goals

The effective engagement of stakeholders to build ownership through the country-driven approach of the PRSP is heavily dependent on the availability of and access to information. However, it is not assumed that an information-rich environment would ensure the effective participation of stakeholders and establish ownership of the effort. One of the major challenges in using information to promote an open, inclusive, and informed dialogue is to apply communication tools and techniques in a strategic manner taking into account the socio-political, historical, cultural, and economic dynamics of a given country.

How does the process work?

The PRS process involves government machineries developing and implementing a national plan of action for reducing poverty, known as a PRSP. This should be done through a participatory process, with a detailed assessment of the nature of poverty in a country, and wide discussion of the strategy within civil society. Donors then provide support in the form of grants or loans aligned with the PRSP once the government has prepared it. At the heart of the PRS approach is the idea that the process is country-owned rather than donor-led.

Once fully formulated, the PRSP is then implemented. A process of ongoing monitoring, including through an Annual Progress Report (APR) produced by government, and a Joint Staff Assessment (JSA) produced by the World Bank and IMF, should provide information with which to improve the next PRSP. In this way, the approach is intended to be an iterative process of formulating, implementing and monitoring PRSPs, which contributes to an ongoing, long-term process of poverty reduction.

What is strategic communication in PRSPs

Strategic application of communication tools and techniques is more important than carrying out a set of standard and traditional communication activities that are common in many other development efforts. Strategic communication intervention cannot be occasional and ad hoc. It must be integrated and institutionalised in the overall PRSP process. One of the reasons being that communication in PRSPs is not only focused on public education or raising awareness about a set of issues or actions. It involves other aspects that are linked to stakeholder expectations, keeping momentum of the process, or follow-up actions, or involvement of stakeholders in a cyclical process.

The other major characteristic of strategic communication intervention in the PRSP process

is to focus on issues related to the socio-political and economic dynamics of a society: language, culture, attitude, and behavioural patterns; level of engagement, position and influence of stakeholders; structural issues such as media and the information environment and the nature and capacity of the civil society. A strategic communication intervention would typically involve a Communication Strategy (CS) and an Action Plan (AP) with clear resource allocation for both human and financial resources.

Strategic communication is much more than merely disseminating information to people to inform them about the PRSP. It is the active solicitation of their perspective to help consider options to shape the formulation of policy, ensuring that the mechanisms are in place for a two-way flow of information and to build consensus among stakeholders about the development agenda. (Mozammel and Zatlouk 2002)

Strategic communication is aimed at achieving a set of objectives during the PRSP preparation and implementation stages and continues throughout the future rounds of the PRSP preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. Therefore, the communication objectives should include a set of short-, medium-, and long- term goals based on a set of data derived from solid research and analysis on economic, political, sectoral and thematic issues.

Systematic application of communication tools can help the PRSP process in the following ways:

- engage stakeholders in different levels of preparation and implementation phases
- raise awareness of stakeholders through the dissemination of information in a simplified manner so that they are able to understand the issues and participate in the dialogue effectively
- continue an informed policy dialogue and debate
- institutionalise the participatory process

- build ownership and accountability
- provide a space for citizen participation in defining country priorities to fight poverty
- incorporate the views of the poor
- establish a feedback mechanism

Why strategic communication in PRSP?

Strategic communication intervention puts strong emphasis on socio-political, behavioural, and attitudinal issues in addition to the common communication activities including information dissemination, campaign or feedback. Therefore, a strategic communication programme relies heavily on a set of complex communication objectives that deal with issues such as building consensus, establishing ownership, managing expectations, and building trust and confidence in the PRSP process. A popular communication intervention would generally include activities that deal primarily with information dissemination, and sometimes information sharing, through events like consultation workshops and seminars. A strategic communication programme also relies considerably on information dissemination activities. However, it also places a strong emphasis on public opinion data, stakeholder dynamics, non-regular media channels including civil society networks, and so on.

The PRSP process involves four major groups of stakeholders. These include government, civil society, parliamentarians, and donors. Each of these groups would have some common and some specific communication dynamics. All of them would have different internal communication dynamics within their own groups and external communication with each other. They would all have different needs for different types and formats of information. However, they would have some common interests and issues other than the need for basic information on the PRSP and its principles and progress.

Some of the major issues and challenges that a strategic communication programme would address are:

- create awareness of PRSPs and explain the underlying principles
- create a communication environment
- create momentum and reinforce the continuity of the PRSP process
- use the watchdog role of the media
- manage expectations
- build confidence and trust
- build capacity for designing and managing the implementation of communication programme
- help institutionalise the participatory process

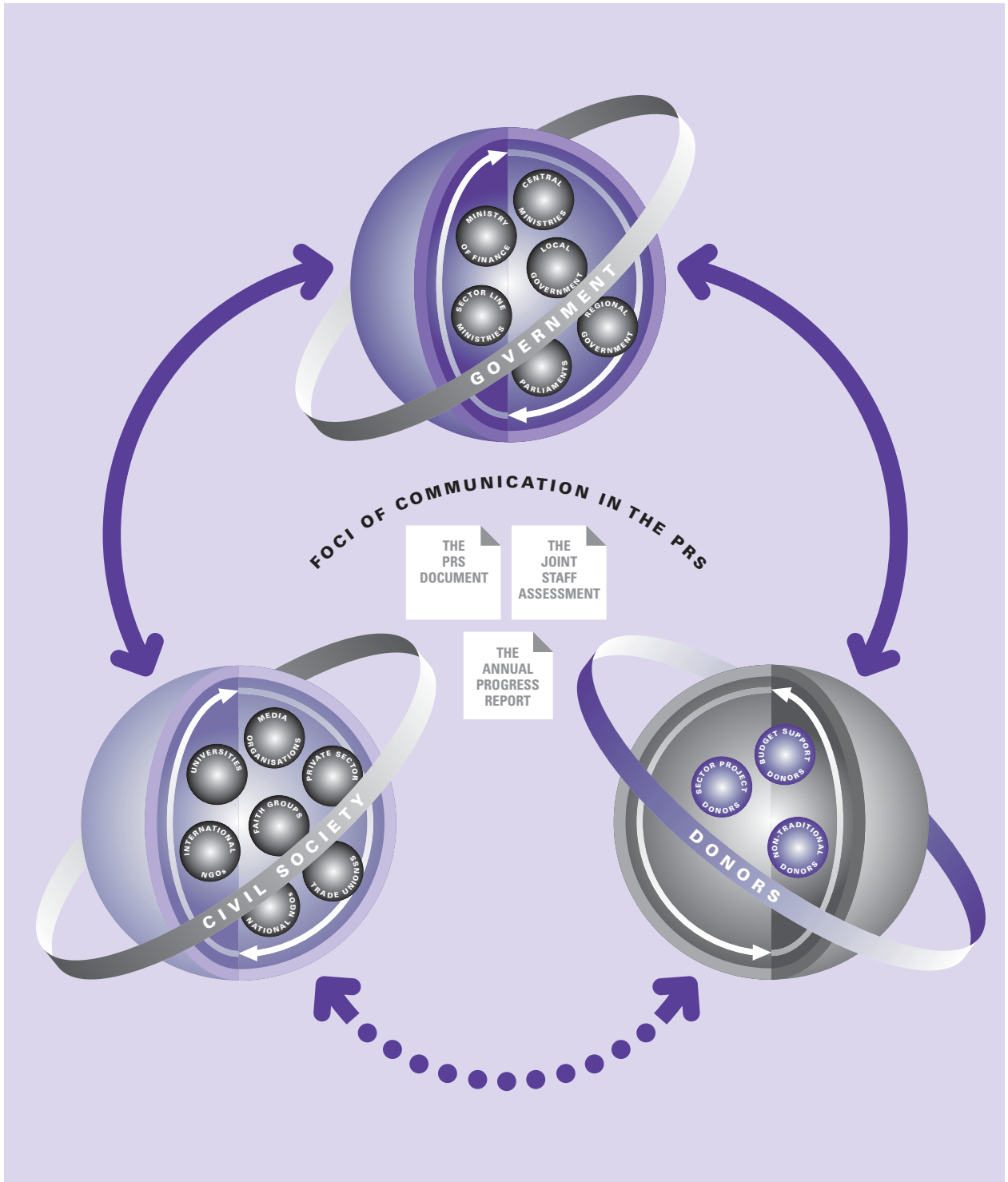
Major stakeholders in the communication process of PRSP

For the PRSP to succeed in its aims, both its formulation and implementation need to integrate and apply communication tools and techniques primarily within and between three major groups of stakeholders: government, civil society, and donors. These groups are, however, far from homogenous:

- *Government* is made up of a central ministry with overall responsibility for the PRS process – usually the Ministry of Finance in Africa and the Ministry of Planning in Asia – and also sector line ministries (for health, transport, education etc.). Most countries have local government offices, and some have a level of government at regional and state levels (for example Pakistan or India). Although levels of separation vary, this category also includes parliaments and other checks and balances on the executive such as National Audit Offices.
- *Civil society* is a notoriously diffuse and broad category, which may include a host of organisations depending on the social and political context. With definitions varying around the theme of groups which act between the individual and the state, civil society organisations can include national and international NGOs, political parties, media organisations, faith groups, trade unions, universities and private sector

Figure 1

A framework for analysing strategic communication in the PRS process



organisations. The extent to which media and other civil society groups exist independently of government varies according to country context.

- *Donors* can be usefully divided into three categories for the purpose of this analysis. First, there are the multilateral donors such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and regional development banks. Second, there are bilateral donors including both those who are strongly supportive of the PRS approach (such as DFID and others offering budget support) and those who are less so (such as project or programme-oriented donors like Japan and the US). Third, there are non-traditional donors, such as Vietnam, with their emerging aid programmes.

Communication within and between these three stakeholder groups, in relation to the three key moments in the PRS, can be mapped as a framework for strategic communication in PRS processes as seen in Figure 1.¹

How strategic has communication in PRSPs been to date?

Communication processes in PRSPs are often only as good as the organisation and quality of the PRS process itself. Rarely addressed in its own right, the development of strategic communication often occurs alongside improvements in the participation process, government capacity and donor harmonisation. Importantly though, whilst strategic communication may develop as a kind of added bonus to improvements in other PRS activities, an investment in strategic communication has the potential to act as a catalyst which dislodges obstacles and creates an impetus for development in core elements of the PRS. Across different countries experiences are mixed, but whilst communication within PRSPs is often far from ideal, strategic approaches to communication have proved central in forging

the PRS as an iterative process which will work towards reducing poverty in the long-term.

Each stakeholder group has a part to play in developing strategic communication in PRSPs. Whilst building a coherent country strategy requires strong leadership from governments, the contributions of civil society and donors are also critical. Activities specifically targeted towards communication, such as the dissemination of information amongst the general public, or initiatives to develop dialogue between government and civil society, must run alongside efforts to improve communication within other elements of the PRS, such as the budgetary process or donor harmonisation. Approaching the full range of communication issues in PRSPs illuminates the systemic and interactive processes that forge strategic communication.

Each stakeholder group needs to be aware of how their position in the PRS process confers particular communication issues, and understand how approaches to communication can cause transformations in their positions, and in the trajectory of poverty reduction itself. Thus, a resilient plan for strategic communication in PRSPs requires that the responsibilities and opportunities of all stakeholders be made clear from the outset.

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¹ A similar model was drawn by Steliana Nedera, DFID, at a SIDA workshop on strategic communication and PRSPs in Stockholm in March 2004.

The structural impediments to participation and country ownership

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Introduction: rich or thin? This chapter is an exploration of the structural challenges that can impede true country ownership of and participation in the PRS process. However, it is important to make explicit from the outset the standard against which PRS processes *ought* to be assessed. I emphasise the word *ought* because the value-laden standards at the basis of many development instruments tend not to be made explicit for fear that donors will be accused of practising a new imperialism.

For instance, Robert Cooper, a senior British diplomat writing in his personal capacity locates much of international development assistance within what he calls *postmodern imperialism*.

According to him:

Postmodern imperialism takes two forms. First there is the voluntary imperialism of the global economy. This is usually operated by an international consortium through International Financial Institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank – it is characteristic of the new imperialism that it is multilateral. These institutions provide help to states wishing to find their way back into the global economy and into the virtuous circle of investment and prosperity. In return they make demands which, they hope, address the political and economic failures that have contributed to the original need for assistance. Aid theology today increasingly emphasises governance. If states wish to benefit, they must open themselves up to the interference of international organisations and foreign states...³

³ Robert Cooper 'The new liberal imperialism' *The Observer*, London. Sunday April 7, 2002.

Cooper's blunt and controversial assessment might explain the reluctance of donors to make explicit the standards at the basis of aid instruments like the PRS. But these standards cannot be avoided in any serious examination of PRS processes. Thus when two of the six principles of the PRS process require that each one be *country owned* and *participatory* those requirements have to be unpacked. And the first step in that process is to point out that the

requirements can be understood in either a thin or a rich sense.

Let's take them one by one. Country ownership of the PRS process can mean ownership only by the government of the day, or even just the finance ministry. No other players or sectors in the political community own the strategy. This is the thin sense. But country ownership can also mean that the PRS is the crystallization of a genuine national consensus. It means a political community saying: 'This is what we are going to do; to this strategy our entire nation is committed'. This is the rich sense. In the same way, participation in the formulation and implementation of the PRS can mean a technical exercise involving donors, consultants and government officials with some *dissemination* of the outcome to civil society groups and the media. This is the thin sense of participation. But participation can also mean the active involvement of all the significant sectors of the political community in the formulation, implementation and real time monitoring of the PRS. This is the rich sense of participation.

What ought to be clear from the above is that the thin sense of participation almost inevitably begets the thin sense of country ownership. And I would argue that by necessary implication the rich sense of participation almost inevitably begets the rich sense of country ownership. Now, the fundamental question is as follows: Is the internationally accepted PRS approach committed to the thin or the rich senses of *country ownership* and *participation*? The overall impression one gets, and this is my

⁴For a discussion of the rich tradition of political studies on political culture and democratisation see Dalton 1998: 338-41.

private view, is that the rich senses of *country ownership* and *participation* are the real goals of the PRS approach.

The problem is that the rich senses of *participation* and *country ownership* amount to a highly ambitious agenda of social and political change that is hardly ever explicitly avowed. What follows is a discussion of some of the structural impediments to the realisation of genuine participation and ownership of PRSs together with the evidence from the case studies contained in this study. The justification for this chapter, if any is needed, is that while strategic communication can help to foster participation and country ownership, the overall context in which communication takes place has a decisive impact on what communication can contribute. In other words, strategic communication is not a magic bullet. We shall conclude with a word or two on the policy implications.

The underlying political culture

The underlying political culture in a specific political community has important consequences. But what is political culture? The concept has been described thus:

A political culture is formed by the practice of politics. It is the sum of the dispositions created by the regular operation of the political system of a particular society. A political culture can encourage participation and involvement by the majority of citizens, as tends to be the case in democratic politics, especially the smaller ones (ancient Athens, 18th century Geneva). Or it can promote attitudes of passivity and acquiescence, as in authoritarian or totalitarian systems. A political culture is largely formed by the political system, but it depends for its persistence and vitality on the support of other social institutions.
(Bullock and Trombley 1999: 660)

Political culture affects whether or not you can have the kind of free and inclusive dialogue that

will make the PRS genuinely participatory and help to produce true country ownership. The evidence suggests, for instance, that if the political culture is authoritarian this will not happen. For old habits die hard; and this is true of both the rulers and the ruled. It is important to realise that the rich senses of participation and country ownership really imply or assume a democratic political culture. But if the underlying political culture is not democratic, inclusive public policy dialogue will be difficult to organise.⁴

The outstanding examples here are the former Soviet Republics, now independent countries. Under Communist one party rule, the narrow political elite decided for entire countries. The people themselves did not expect to be involved. The situation would not appear to be radically different today, given the reported extent of the gap between public preferences and public policy in these *new democracies*. This is what political scientists call the *representation gap* and it is quite wide in this part of the world. Thus, when the leaders of governments are told that the PRS approach requires free and inclusive dialogue, they offer resistance.

In this publication the case studies of Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, and Cambodia make instructive reading. They show just how challenging it is to organise inclusive policy dialogue in such political communities. The Tanzania and Ghana case studies illustrate what is possible when a free and inclusive dialogue happens; they also show how the underlying political culture shapes what is possible.

State of the mass media

Free, independent and plural mass media systems are a condition for genuinely participatory PRS processes. This ought not to be a controversial point to make. In modern societies the mass media are the chief mediators of political reality, the main sources of political and economic intelligence, and significant influencers of public opinion. The role of the media in development

is now generally accepted after years of doubt and contention. According to the *World Development Report 2002*:

...and the media can affect politics and culture, supporting institutional change and market development. Open information flows can promote institutional reform by affecting people's incentives and by sharing ideas and knowledge. New information can change people and culture – and create demand for new institutions. Information on how other institutions work can stimulate public debate and facilitate collective action. And greater access to all media, including the foreign and the vernacular, can provide a voice for social groups to press for changes in institutions and norms of behaviour.

Under ideal circumstances, the media's role in the PRS process could be identified as follows:

- explaining the strategic options to the public
- encouraging free and open debate around the options
- supporting the process of strategy formulation
- explaining the PRS to the public
- keeping the flow of information going during implementation
- insisting on performance and accountability
- monitoring and reporting progress against stated PRS objectives

Where you do not have a free, independent and plural media system these things are not likely to happen. Three factors determine whether or not you have a free, independent and plural media system. The first is the regulatory environment for the media: whether the laws of the land allow a thousand mass media flowers to bloom. The second is media access or penetration: do the mass media reach all sections of the political community? Are rural communities cut off? This is a question of both physical and audience reach. The third is media content: do the mass media cover the PRS process in an intelligent,

inclusive and accessible way? Do the journalists understand the issues? Do they have the skills to break down the complexities of economic strategy in a way that engages and inspires a mass audience?

Several of the case studies in this publication discuss the state of the media, for example in Pakistan (lack of media debate) and in Kyrgyztan (poor media infrastructure). A particularly instructive example is provided by Ghana, regarding the way to train journalists to cover the PRS process in an intelligent and inclusive way.

Access to information

What is access to information? A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) practice note on the subject offers a useful guide through the conceptual maze:

Freedom of expression and the right to information held by public authorities are related but different concepts. Freedom of expression and the free flow of information and ideas include the right to information, but the right to official information is a more narrowly defined concept, which requires specific legislation. Access to information is not only about promoting and protecting rights to information but is equally concerned with promoting and protecting communication (use of information) to voice one's views, to participate in democratic processes that take place at all levels (community, national, regional and global) and to set priorities for action.(UNDP 2003: 3)

In each country the PRS is the outcome of a process of public policy formulation. Information, including technical data on the economy and society, is used by policymakers to shape every stage in the policymaking and implementation process:

- problems identification
- objectives

- options
- analysis and appraisal
- consultation
- decision implementation
- policy maintenance
- monitoring
- evaluation

As the PRS passes through all these stages – and all its phases – you will not have genuine participation and national ownership unless there is free flow of relevant information. The problem is that most of the relevant information will be generated by, and belong to, the state. If the state will not willingly share the information with the media, parliament and CSOs, the participatory process will end abruptly. This is especially important once the PRS is agreed and the media and civil society need the information necessary to monitor progress. If they cannot do that, pressure for accountability becomes far more difficult.

In practice, the problem has manifested in the following way. When the PRS is being formulated, governments, under pressure from donors and civil society groups, will often agree to the participation of the representatives of the media and CSOs. But as the implementation process unfolds the same governments will often resist any attempt to institutionalise participatory mechanisms that will give the media and civil society groups full access to official statistics regarding progress on implementation. This publication highlights the mixed lessons from the case studies on Rwanda and Moldova.

Density and capacity of civil society organisations

The density and capacity of CSOs is a factor in how participatory PRS processes are. If civil society is the space between the state and the household, the density and capacity of CSOs will determine the efficiency of the intermediation between state and society. And this will help determine how responsive the state

is to the needs, views and concerns of the citizenry. As is now well known, when civil society is weak and badly organised those who control the state are better able to get their way and escape scrutiny. As is now equally well known, CSOs need to be genuinely anchored within society; for that is the basis for legitimacy and effectiveness. In short, the modern concept of civil society is that it is ‘the locus of free and deliberative politics’ and it has added an ‘an important dimension to our understanding of politics as public action and participation.’ (Young 1998:494)

The case studies we publish here show that for CSOs to be effective in the PRS process they need to be:

- well organised
- have good advocacy skills
- have basic economic literacy and policy capacity
- be adult and responsible rather wild and fractious

Rwanda is a case where, after the genocide, it has not been easy for CSOs to organise and gain strength. The Bolivia case study shows how fractious CSOs can do more harm than good. While Tanzania provides a good example of a country where CSOs have played a dynamic and powerful role in the PRS process.

Communication capacity within government

Communication capacity within governments is also a factor that affects how inclusive and participatory PRS processes are. Sometimes developing country governments mean well and would like to involve their citizens in policy dialogue around the PRS. The problem is that they do not know how to do it well. In many developing countries, government information services are dreary backwaters. The government information officers are badly paid, badly trained, and very often lack confidence as well as basic equipment. The brightest and the best soon

get out and become ‘proper’ civil servants or move into the private sector.

The contrast with what happens in places like the UK couldn’t be starker. Government information and communication specialists belong to the Government Communication Network. They are well paid and well equipped professionals with a wide range of skills. The list of strategic objectives that these professionals work with is striking. They include:

- to explain the working policies and actions of Ministers and their departments, including executive bodies
- to create awareness of the rights, benefits and obligations of individual citizens and groups of citizens
- to persuade groups of citizens to act in accordance with agreed policies in defined circumstances
- to advise the Department/Government of the public’s and the news media’s reactions to its policies or actions

It is all about the two-way flow between the Government and the public.

The challenge, then, is to make governments in developing countries realise that becoming better communicators does not mean becoming skilled propagandists. True communication is a two-way process. It is about dialogue; it is about listening as well as talking. What is more, intelligent political leaders realise that it is in their own interest to become better listeners. That way leads to the skilled management of public opinion and, hence, political success.

Two of the case studies in this publication are particularly relevant. The section in the Kyrgyzstan case study titled ‘Strengthening governance through communication’ rewards careful study. It illustrates how many governments involved in PRS processes have come to realise that becoming better communicators with the citizenry (a two-way process) actually strengthens and improves governance. In addition, much of the work that the Information and Communication for

Development (ICD) team in DFID has been doing in collaboration with the Development Communication Division (DCD) of the World Bank has been to support and improve the capacity of governments to become better communicators with their own citizens and, hence, make PRS processes more inclusive and nationally owned. One successful example is the work the Bank is doing to improve the capacity of Ghana’s Ministry of Information and Presidential Affairs (MIPA).

Conclusion and policy implications

These, then, are some of the structural impediments to genuinely nationally owned and participatory PRS processes. One nagging question is: why do we not talk about these issues? Two answers suggest themselves. First, there are many people involved in the PRS process who see development as essentially a technocratic – and not a political – process. Yet what can be more political than the insistence that poor country governments spend the majority of their resources on the needs of the poor? It is a point tellingly made by Moore and Putzel (1999):

There is a tradition in aid and development agencies of bringing in political analysis, if at all, in terms of problems and difficulties. ‘Politics’ is why desirable things may not happen. Politics is messy. Political analysis is used only to explain and try to fix things that have already gone wrong. In reality, political analysis is not a gloomy science. It has a great deal to offer in understanding what to do about poverty.

Second, many of the issues raised in this discussion are grounded in the bottom-up approach to development, that is, the voice and accountability agenda. The trouble is that this is an agenda that both donors and developing country governments find utterly challenging. Donors are wary of being accused of political interference; and governments know that voice and accountability issues are ultimately about

power. Thus we often have the ludicrous spectacle of governments that have committed themselves to free and inclusive policy dialogue shutting down radio stations and jailing ‘difficult’ journalists.

In spite of the difficulties, however, this is a compelling agenda. To shut our eyes to the impediments listed above would be deeply unwise. For every impediment identified is both a call to action and an opportunity. And it is an opportunity for both donors and partner governments alike.

Finally, in spite of the impediments listed above there is evidence that the PRS process is unleashing a dynamic for change in many of the implementing countries. In a recent briefing paper, Oxfam (2004: 6) concluded:

In response to the question whether the PRSP represented the most open policy dialogue in their country to date, the uniform response from Oxfam offices and civil-society partners in virtually every country was a clear yes. The processes vary enormously, but it is undeniable that PRSP has opened up new spaces for participation in most countries.

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Strategic Communication in PRSPs: Principles, Challenges and Applications⁶

⁵The author is a Communication Officer in Development Communication Division of the World Bank.

⁶This article is based on the country PRSP experiences and the strategic communication framework developed in the chapter on 'Strategic Communication in PRSP' in the World Bank's 2002 PRSP Sourcebook.

Introduction Communication interventions to ensure effective participation of stakeholders are generally planned and implemented in different ways based on the country context and situation. In most cases, however, the application of communication tools and approaches so far are apparently limited to information dissemination activities and are primarily utilised during the preparation of the PRSP document. Few countries have designed long term participation plans that include extensive communication activities and events. During the implementation phase, some countries have also focused on communication activities in sectoral and thematic areas such as budget tracking, citizen report cards, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and so on. A few countries are also continuing regular information dissemination activities on the progress of the PRS implementation. Many others are in the process of developing communication strategies and implementing communication activities following the preparation of their PRSP documents.

One of the major challenges that still needs attention is the institutionalisation of the process of communication and participation. Most of the activities related to communication so far have been carried out on an ad hoc basis. It is crucial to institutionalise communication in order to sustain the participatory process, build capacity and allocate resources as necessary.

This chapter focuses on the experience of communication and information interventions that have been carried out in different PRSP countries to date. It talks about the fundamentals of strategic communication in PRSPs and highlights some strategic issues that need to be taken into consideration while designing, managing, or implementing a PRSP communication programme. Finally, the chapter discusses the strategic communication framework for PRSPs.

Popular Communication Approaches

Information and communication tools can be used in many ways. They can promote a set of ideas and thoughts to garner support for a cause or they can be used to create confusion about any issue. However, this depends on how communication tools are applied and with what objectives, through what channels and for what period of time. Communication approaches in development intervention are often looked at as a mechanism for information dissemination, a campaign, public education or a feedback

system. In addition, communication activities are often occasional and temporary interventions planned or implemented in reaction to a certain situation or challenge.

In most cases communication intervention in the PRSP process has so far been used as a one-way information dissemination mechanism. In some cases country teams have developed comprehensive participation plans that include a set of communication activities focusing on a systematic intervention with specific timeline and objectives with short- and long-term goals. On many occasions communication

intervention has been considered as a ‘consultation’ process that generally focuses on workshops, focus groups, or roundtables discussions, etc. Some of the most common activities and approaches that have dominated the PRSP process are:

- information dissemination
- public relations
- promotion of the PRSP approach
- consultations
- awareness raising
- workshops
- seminars
- campaigns

In a few cases government units/departments responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of the PRSPs have continued communication activities, although not on a regular basis, following the preparation of their PRSP document. A very small number of countries have developed and/or are in the process of adopting strategic communication plans as part of the monitoring activities of PRSP implementation and also for the preparation of the second round of the PRSP.

The danger of not using strategic communication

Communication intervention is one of the major elements of the PRSP process because participation of key stakeholders is one of the major characteristics of the approach. In addition, the PRSP process also puts emphasis on the issues of partnership and country ownership during preparation and implementation. However, participation of stakeholders has often been viewed as an element only during the PRSP preparation phase, in order to approve a draft strategy document that is prepared with inputs from different government departments, sectoral experts and consultants. Communication interventions to ensure this kind of participation are often limited to a few sector-specific

workshops, consultation meetings, or similar events where a selected group of people representing government departments, CSOs, academia, donors, and occasionally some representation from CBOs. As a result, participants in these events often do not have prior knowledge or ideas about the issues and therefore are not able to provide their views and inputs as expected. Sometimes there are few awareness raising or educational activities such as the printing of brochures or simplified versions of PRSP documents. Press conferences are also planned prior to and/or following those consultation workshops, seminars or similar events.

What impact does this have on the PRSP process? Two major concerns are often raised. First, it undermines trust and confidence over the participatory nature of the process. Second, it greatly raises the expectations of stakeholders. In both cases these ad hoc and non-strategic communication activities do not contribute to establishing ownership through effective and meaningful participation in the PRSP process.

This type of communication intervention can be the result of some of the following perceptions, actions or reasons:

- communication intervention is viewed as simple information dissemination activity without having a strategic approach (i.e. strategic communication)
- not involving professionals in the design and implementation of communication intervention and therefore communication is not integrated into the overall process
- lack of capacity to design, manage, and implement communication strategies and action plans
- lack of resources – both human and financial

Building confidence and trust through a regular flow of information is crucial for the success of the PRSP process. It would be much more challenging to deal with the issues and concerns that normally emerge from the ad hoc and non-professional occasional communication activities.

Strategic and institutional issues to consider

One of the critical elements of a strategic communication intervention in the PRSP process is that the communication activities are planned, designed, organised or implemented in a very strategic manner. For example, awareness-raising in a standard communication intervention would focus primarily on issues such as content, messages, channels, packaging and timing. However, in a strategic communication intervention there are several other crucial aspects that are researched and analysed while designing and implementing or modifying an existing communication programme. These might include issues such as:

- the sender of a particular message or information
- audience-specific information and messages
- the timing of a particular communication activity
- coordination and synchronisation of communication activities with other ongoing or upcoming interventions that have direct or indirect linkages with the PRSP communication programme
- involving non-standard channels (i.e. media and website)
- using existing networks (such professional association and NGO networks) and establishing similar new ones
- internal and organisational communication (especially important for building ownership and support with the government machinery)
- communication capacity

Strategic issues

Some of the main strategic issues to be taken into consideration while designing and/or implementing a strategic communication programme are:

Sender of the information

One of the major issues relating to building trust and confidence is the sender of a particular piece

of information or message (Who is the provider of the information? Who is arranging the workshop or seminar? Who is credited for the public service announcement on the television or the radio? etc.). Stakeholder familiarity and socio-psychological proximity is crucial for information to reach its receiver effectively. An open and inclusive dialogue is only possible when the information or message is understood, accepted and analysed effectively by the stakeholders. Identifying the sender of information for each of the communication activities is important. The more important aspect however is to involve and engage that sender in a given communication activity. This also is linked to the issues of effective participation and ownership of the PRSP process.

Message development

Some communication activities would require the production or formulation of the message for a specific group of stakeholders and/or participants in a communication intervention. Designing and disseminating messages is perhaps the most critical element of a strategic communication intervention. One of the many reasons being that a message can raise huge and unrealistic expectations among individual stakeholders, or a group of stakeholders. Thus it is important to ensure that the messages carry adequate, reliable and substantial information so that they do not contribute to the raising of unrealistic expectations.

Confidence and trust

Well-crafted messages and the timely flow of information among the stakeholders are two major elements for building confidence and trust during the PRSP process. This encourages stakeholders to participate in the formulation and implementation of the poverty strategy. Otherwise there is a risk of undermining the success of establishing the PRSP principles due to distrust of the process. Establishing a systematic feedback mechanism is crucial, especially for follow-up information sharing activities, in order to build trust among stakeholders.

Packaging the information

The design and production of communication materials should be very specific to the target audience. These information materials should be easily understandable. Often it is assumed that the level of understanding is primarily correlated only to the level of education. This might be correct while dealing with a very specific issue and/or intervention that focuses on a group of stakeholders that is fairly homogeneous.

However, in PRSP communication interventions, stakeholder groups are very diverse with very different backgrounds, education, specialisation, level of involvement and influence.

Timing

It is important that the receiver of information has enough time to read or understand the issue before providing any feedback. As regards effective participation in workshops and seminars, participants are often not given enough time to go through these documents. It is important to take into consideration the socio-political and economic context while planning any communication activity. For example, will it be useful or appropriate to broadcast a radio programme or distribute a brochure regarding PRSP during a natural disaster, national elections or an international event (such as World Cup football or the Olympic games)?

Sustaining momentum

A timely flow of necessary information among stakeholders is essential for keeping momentum of the PRSP process. Timing is thus one of the major elements for keeping momentum and ensuring the sustainability of the process. It helps mitigate risks from unrealistic stakeholder expectations about the PRSP process. It is also important to collect feedback or results on time, encourage debate and eventually establish momentum of the process. Sustaining momentum of the process is one of the prime purposes of the communication plan.

Quality and accuracy of information

The involvement of relevant government departments and specialised groups/organisations such as NGOs, academics and research institutes is important for disseminating correct and trustworthy information. For example, it would be useful to coordinate with the health or education department while designing an information product on these issues.

Follow-up and linkages

It is necessary to link each of the communication activities to short-, medium- or long-term goals so that there is a regular flow of information on each of the issues that are in the public domain for debate and dialogue. In addition, building linkages with other relevant ongoing development projects and programmes is important for the consistency of messages related to a particular issue (such as budget information and governance).

Culture, language, attitudes and behaviour

In the PRSP process, a considerable and extensive information sharing process takes place through communication intervention at various levels of the society. Therefore, it is essential to understand and analyse the perception and attitudes of people towards the institutions that are directly or indirectly involved in the country's development process. These might include government or non-government institutions, local or international, political or social groups, community based organisations and the media. Stakeholder attitudes towards those institutions should also be explored carefully during the development of PRSP communication strategy. Language is the other important factor that has a very influential role in fostering the process of an informed public dialogue and debate. Therefore, it is essential that information materials are translated into the local language so that they can be understood by people at all levels, from village communities to urban areas, on their own terms.

This discussion has highlighted some of the major factors that can contribute towards developing appropriate messages and identifying the right channel or vehicle to deliver information and gather feedback effectively in order to formulate, implement and monitor the implementation of the PRSPs.

Institutional issues

One of the major obstacles for a successful implementation of a PRSP communication programme is that in most cases communication and information functions are considered temporary and ad hoc. Most of the time communication activities are centred around some kind of launch events, sectoral or thematic seminars and workshops (i.e. discussion on health or education issues or governance or reforms), and the communication needs and/or the participation aspect for the PRSP are completed as soon as the PRSP document is finalised. For these reasons, the communication function is generally handled by a group of temporary staff or consultants in occasional coordination with the information department of the government or the press or public relation wings/units at the Office of the President, Vice President, Prime Minister or some large ministries (such as finance, planning or agriculture). However, only in a few countries has the communication function slowly and gradually been institutionalised with long-term or permanent staff within a particular government department. They have also formed operational and thematic groups working on communication and participation issues and have developed a regular form of discussion and dialogue with different stakeholders.

It is essential for the success of the participatory principle of the PRSP process to clearly identify the role and responsibilities of a communication team within the organisation chart of the PRSP and institutional arrangements for ensuring sustainability with clear mandate and budget. An institutional basis for communication

is also essential to ensure the participatory monitoring mechanism for the implementation of sectoral and thematic priorities.

Generally, one of the thematic groups for PRSP preparation or implementation should design and implement the communication programme. This group might include communication professionals from the relevant government departments and non-government bodies including media, civil society, and academics. In some cases it might be necessary to hire communication consultant(s) to help design or implement the communication strategy. Consultants can be contracted to carry out specific activities or to help produce communication materials.

Coordination and collaboration with other government and non-government departments and agencies is also essential to have a systematic institutional arrangement for the communication functions in the PRSP. This will help engage the communication professionals from the relevant departments or organisations within and outside the government. However, it is much easier and more efficient to coordinate and complement the ongoing or upcoming development intervention (i.e. projects or programmes) that would also involve some communication activities or a programme.

Capacity building

Building capacity to design, implement and manage strategic communication programmes within and outside the government is one of the crucial factors for the success of true participation in the PRSP process and its sustainability over time. It is essential both to raise human skills levels and develop necessary infrastructure to implement or carry out communication activities. It is not only the issue of building capacity to design and implement a set of communication activities, but also to ensure that the relevant stakeholders are using information efficiently in order to establish a two-way communication flow.

Developing and institutionalising a strategic communication programme

It is recognised that the integration of a Strategic Communication approach is crucial for an informed policy dialogue to address the challenges of participation and ownership of the PRS process. This is also important for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation during the implementation of the strategy. Development of a Strategic Communication programme would require institutional support, capacity building, coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders at different levels.

A well designed strategic communication programme would establish a mechanism for a two-way flow of information with specific objectives, activities, channels, messages, feedback, timelines, budget and responsibilities. This approach would help establish momentum and build trust on the poverty reduction process through the application of different strategic communication tools as necessary considering the context of a given country.

A strategic communication programme can be designed during the PRSP preparation phase. However, while most countries have used short-term communication programmes during the preparation of the PRSP in many cases they have not focused on the challenges that arise during the implementation phase. Usually, even if the communication or participation plan has been developed they have not been implemented due to several reasons including non-availability of resources. A communication programme does not necessarily need to include a large number of activities every week and month, but they should be more strategic and systematic with clear target goals with an emphasis on the objectives for participation during the implementation phase. On the other hand, each communication activity should also be complimentary to the other in order to achieve a clear set of goals (through a set of communication activities) that would eventually establish ownership and ensure accountability

through effective participation of the stakeholders. It is essential to remember:

...communication process for the formulation and implementation of PRSPs involves several levels of people with various requirements and interests. Relevant factors include literacy levels, socioeconomic status, attitudinal and cultural factors, whether stakeholders are government or non-government, elected representatives, bilateral or multilateral agencies, the private sector, and the wider public. Within each group there are several layers as well. For example, within the government there are departments dealing directly with the formulation of PRSPs, but there may be several other line departments involved in the implementation of the PRSPs. Specialised groups within the government will also have a perception and a stake in the PRSP, such as technical experts or staff who deal with policy related issues.

(Mozammel and Zatlouk 2002: 5)

A strategic communication programme would include a Communication Strategy and Action Plan. The strategy would focus on issues that are linked to socio-political, cultural, attitudinal, behavioural and structural aspects of a society. Therefore, a strategy and action plan would be designed based on information from research and analysis on the following major issues and topics:

- demographic information
- media-communication structure (i.e. information on media coverage, type-print, electronic, web-based, ownership, level of freedom)
- communication environment and dynamics (i.e. what are the most popular media channels? For example: newspaper, radio, television, Internet, community radio, traditional forms of communication, folk media, social interaction)
- civil society dynamics

- socio-political trends, structure, and dynamics
- position, influence, advantages and disadvantages of stakeholders
- culture, tradition, and history of the system of governance
- structure of the government machinery

This first level of research to develop a communication strategy with a guideline or roadmap for preparing an Action Plan is generally carried out during a PRSP *Communication Needs Assessment* phase. It is considered the first stage of designing a strategic communication programme for a PRSP.

Some of the main objectives of a PRSP Communication Needs Assessment are:

- to understand the existing communication mechanism to promote participation and ownership of the PRSP
- to identify the major issues directly or indirectly linked to the information dissemination and sharing process
- to conduct a stakeholder analysis
- to explore the needs for developing a systematic approach for a two-way communication flow in support of the PRSP process
- to understand the overall communication environment (channels, tools, capacity, etc.)

Developing a PRSP communication strategy and action plan

Once the Communication Needs Assessment is conducted, the process of designing a PRSP Communication Strategy and Action Plan could be launched. It is suggested that a PRSP communication programme which is centred on a Communication Strategy and Action Plan is developed, managed and implemented by communication professionals in collaboration with other relevant experts such as social scientists, sector-specialists, project management, budget and procurement professionals. A thematic group can be formed within the PRSP

Box 1	PRSP communication: steps to consider
Objective	● set communication objectives for short, medium, long term
Research	● data collection (primary or secondary)
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● define activities for information sharing and dissemination ● set goals for each activity ● define timings, budget, and responsibilities
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● select audience groups, understand their interest, advantage and disadvantage ● analyse their status, education, position, and influence
Messages	● develop group-specific messages
Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● identify existing networks ● understand the dynamics of the networks
Channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● assess the existing channels at national, regional and local level ● identify the accessibility
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● incorporate feedback mechanism such as baseline, opinion research, activity/event specific evaluation ● aggregate feedback data to monitor and evaluate the overall PRSP communication programme
Costing	● establish existing and required capacity for human and financial resources

preparation and implementation unit of the government to provide technical and policy advice regarding the design and management of the communication programme. In many cases this type of thematic group would also be responsible for, and oversee, the overall participation agenda for the PRSP process.

A PRSP Communication Strategy and Action Plan could be developed using the framework elaborated in the World Bank *PRSP Sourcebook* chapter on ‘Strategic Communication in PRSP’.

Setting objectives

The development of a national communication strategy for the PRSP should begin with a set of clear communication objectives focusing on the principles of the PRSP process. In other words, the communication objectives would contribute to the process of establishing the PRSP principles and achieve the target goals. Such objectives necessitate the proper use of the communication tools and concepts, establish the time frame required and the resources needed to solicit useful inputs to the PRSP process. A comprehensive strategy sets the objectives for both the formulation and the implementation of the PRSPs.

Conducting research

The research data can be collected from both primary and secondary sources (opinion research other research activities carried out in the country by local, regional or international agencies, academic or research institutions). Collecting this information will help identify different stakeholder groups, their position and interests, influence, advantages and disadvantages, to better understand the existing communication channels and the communication capacity within the country, as well as the relationships between actors within and outside the country.

Defining activities

Since the PRSP process is country driven and partnership oriented it involves various groups

of stakeholders at different levels including the wider public, government, civil society and bilateral and multilateral agencies. Each activity should be targeted for each audience group with different messages and channels to achieve specific goals. These activities might include consultation workshops, radio and television programmes, print materials such as brochures, simplified versions of the PRSP document, progress reports, budget education, participatory monitoring and evaluation, citizen report cards, community level interaction, community radio and so on. It is crucial to identify activities that are realistic in achieving the target objectives with regard to timing, institutional arrangements, and financial and human resources.

Identifying the audience

Selecting the audience and understanding their interests, advantages and capabilities in order to disseminate or share information is essential for designing a communication plan. The development of messages and their effectiveness in reaching different stakeholder groups depends largely on the selection of the target audience. However, the type of audience varies and the channels or form of communication vehicles to reach it change as well. For example, the target audience for using mass media channels is different from the audience in a consultative meeting with NGOs or a particular government department. They would include:

- those who have the greatest capability for further transmission: the media, civil society (NGOs, academics, institutes and think tanks)
- those who need to understand the principles themselves: government officials at all levels
- those who need to be open to the principles of the PRSP, contribute to its development and sustain the process: NGOs, international organisations working within the country, aid organisations
- major opinion formers throughout society, such as religious leaders, union leaders and school heads

It is important to establish the relationships between different groups and any limitations to their working together. Are they isolated? Do they trust each other? Workshops and seminars should include as many different sectors as possible (on the same level of representation) such as government officials and members of civil society. Their early juxtaposition will encourage dialogue between them and create new information channels to reach other sectors. Such a mixture of different sectors will also make the message more readily acceptable, create an atmosphere of confidence in the project and reach a greater number of people, as well as sending the message, from the beginning, that the PRSP is a participatory programme for the entire population.

Designing the messages

The next stage in a communication strategy is to develop the appropriate messages to address different groups of audiences. For example, messages for communicating with government stakeholders (such as line ministries) will be different from messages designed for academia, civil society groups, local or international development partners (including bilateral and multilateral agencies) or the general mass audience. Within these stakeholder groups, the messages will also be different for different professional groups. Some may be interested in knowing the technical details of the PRSP process. Others will be interested in policy-related issues. The broader public will want to know how the PRSP process can improve their quality of life.

The types of messages, their different target audiences and their channels of dissemination are all interrelated. The information process will also address different groups of audiences based on their education level, profession, customs and culture and their level of involvement in the PRS. Sharing opinions, ideas and information can be facilitated by means of consultation workshops, seminars, town hall meetings and public debate.

Each target group will require a different presentation of the same information. The figures should never vary and the content should be different only in the detail, the visual presentation or the simplification of concepts. It is important to ensure that awareness of the PRSP, its principles and phases, as well as expectations for contribution and participation are contained in the first messages to all target audiences. From the initial steps of both the PRSP and the Interim PRSP (I-PRSP), documentation should be translated into local languages to be accessible to local authorities, the media and as much of the wider population as possible.

It is also important to take into consideration that the general mass audience and broader public will certainly include people who do not want the status quo to change. The messages must in some way make this group see the benefit of the PRSP and the importance of inclusive communication.

Identifying the networks

Using the existing networks of various stakeholders or creating new networks to achieve the target goals is essential for PRSP communication. The use of networks not only helps disseminate and share information and knowledge and form public opinion, but also establishes momentum and creates a communication friendly environment.

NGOs and international organisations have both formal and informal networks with each other, may have electronic capabilities and often carry out training, education and out-reach to the socially excluded. They may be the only contact an isolated village has with the rest of the country. Small organisations with limited funds often have creative ways of reaching their populations through their networks and have a great deal of credibility with their contacts.

Civil society is more easily reached by the media, is a creator of its own media and can be relied upon for interaction among its members, with government, big business and NGOs. In

analysing civil society, it should be broken down into as many groups or networks as possible: professional groups (doctors, lawyers, accountants, nurses, teachers, others), institutes, research centres and universities/polytechnics, religious groups, and so on. Each will invariably have a network of members and contacts.

The channels or vehicles

An assessment of existing communication vehicles on a national, regional and local level is essential to ensure that networks are exploited so as to maximise the proportion of the population involved in organised and timely communication. In preparing print materials, it is essential to identify the target audience, their literacy levels, capacity to understand and language. For specific audiences, incorporating visuals such as cartoons and basic simple pictures may be essential for comprehension.

Appropriate distribution of communication materials is another important area that needs to be considered. The costs of regular distribution and whether this can be maintained throughout the lifetime of the PRSP should also be considered. The PRSP is an evolving process and, if communication is successful, understanding will develop as well.

Feedback

One of the main goals of designing and implementing a PRSP communication strategy is to obtain feedback from stakeholders (including different technical and non-technical audiences, government or non-governmental agencies, development partners and the wider population). Collecting feedback in a systematic and timely manner helps drive the preparation and implementation of the PRSP. Developing a clear feedback mechanism is essential in both policy formulation and the implementation process. In the preparation stage, the feedback will be particularly helpful in establishing ownership and partnership, while in the implementation stage it will ensure transparency and accountability.

Costing: the human and financial resources available

The costing of communication activities to support the PRSP, both financial and in terms of human resources, is one of the most important parts of the communication plan. If possible a full budget for each of the activities should be developed. It is important to remember that the design, implementation, and management of a strategic communication programme is a major intervention and could be an expensive undertaking.

Assessing existing communication capabilities within the country is the basis for any further communication activity. They are made up of the human resources (those who will design, manage, and implement the communication strategy), and the communication infrastructure (the vehicles, channels or the networks) within the country.

Conclusion

A systematic communication intervention in the PRSP process is inevitable since it promotes ownership through effective participation of a variety of stakeholders. This participatory nature of PRSPs has provided a mechanism where a multi-dimensional information sharing process can take place. However, it is also essential to understand that a good flow of information does not necessarily contribute to establishing ownership of the process. This requires a systematic communication approach to ensure that the stakeholders are empowered with the necessary information to provide genuine views and feedback that can be used in a meaningful way to build ownership and ensure accountability.

References

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Part 2 : **Country Case Studies**



Part 2 **Country Case Studies**

This part presents detailed information from three of the case studies: Ghana, Moldova, and Tanzania. Each case study describes the background of the PRSP in the respective country, the communication process and interventions so far, obstacles and challenges, the steps taken to overcome these obstacles, and the plan for strategic communication which each country has put in place to take the PRSPs forward.

The part concludes with a summary of a set of recommendations based on the examples of practical applications from the three detailed country cases studies.



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Ghana

Summary The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) set in motion a process of communication between government, CSOs and donors on public policymaking. This involved a broad consultation with national stakeholders culminating in events such as the National Economic Dialogue and the Civil Society Forum. The media stimulated some national interest in the GPRS regarding the implications of HIPC for the country. However, the GPRS was prepared according to a tight schedule at a time of transition for the administration of the incoming government. The strategic communication activities were stalled by both funding and time restrictions. Donors have provided considerable assistance in this area notably in the development of the GPRS Communication Strategy, the preparation of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan with a strong dissemination component and the design of a programme for the restructuring of the Ministry of Information and capacity building for the media. The majority of the work in implementing the communication strategy for the GPRS still needs to be done and there is now an opportunity to build the momentum in relation to the revision of the GPRS in 2005. Despite a comprehensive strategy there will need to be considerable capacity improvements in the government if the proposed communication activities are to be carried out effectively. If they are not, the challenges of a tight timetable and limited resources are likely to reassert themselves. This is particularly important for extending the breadth and depth of the communication effort out to the regions and the districts beyond national level stakeholders.

Background

Ghana country context

Ghana has a population of 20.7 million and a total land area of 230, 940 sq. km. It is located in West Africa and is bordered by Burkina Faso to the North, Ivory Coast to the West and Togo to the East and has a 539km coastline to the South. The majority of the workforce (60%) are engaged in agriculture and 25% work in services with the remaining 15% working in industry. The agricultural and service sectors contribute 35.2% and 39.4% to the GDP respectively with industry contributing 25.4%. Ghana gained independence from Britain in 1957 with cocoa, timber and gold exports forming the basis for aspirations of economic growth. However, the

overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966 ushered in a period of political instability with long periods of military rule (1982-92). A series of military coups, including two by Rawlings (1979 and 1981), made Ghana one of the most unstable countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The economy suffered as a result of mismanagement by the successive regimes and vulnerability to external shocks such as falling cocoa prices. This resulted in declining living standards especially during the period 1975-84 such that subsequent growth has merely returned per capita GDP to the level achieved soon after independence in 1960. The growth experienced since the early 1980s has, however, been above average for Africa and the re-democratisation following the establishment of the constitution in 1992 has improved stability.

Background to the Ghana PRS

Poverty related policymaking began in Ghana during the 1980's with the introduction of safety-net provisions relating to structural adjustment reforms. A Technical Committee on Poverty produced a *Policy Focus on Poverty Reduction* in 1996 and this was followed by an Accelerated Poverty Reduction Programme with costed poverty-focussed activities for the period 1999-2001. However, these policies were not implemented to the extent that they had any significant impact.

An Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) was submitted by Rawling's government in June 2000 and was endorsed by the IMF and World Bank. A participatory process was not required for preparation of the I-PRSP and later that year Rawling's National Democratic Congress (NDC) party lost the third elections since the 1992 constitution to Kufuor's New Patriotic Party (NPP). The incoming government extended the timescale for the preparation of the full PRSP known in Ghana as the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS). The NPP also decided early on to request HIPC debt relief which placed renewed emphasis on the importance of the GPRS in terms of government planning and policy coordination.

The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) was responsible for the development of the GPRS through a special Task Force set up to coordinate the process. Core Teams were also established to assist in the preparation of the strategic policy framework for the GPRS in the following five areas: macroeconomy, gainful employment/production, human resource development/ basic services, governance and vulnerability and exclusion. The Core Teams were made up of a ministry official who chaired the team and six others including people from CSOs and donors, government officials and consultants. The first draft of the GPRS was prepared towards the end of 2001, revised by February 2002 and costed for the 2003 budget discussion. The GPRS was

approved for the three-year period 2003-2005, and its production led to the release of HIPC funds at the end of 2002 and agreement with the IMF for a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) loan.

A Monitoring and Evaluation plan was developed with support from DFID to assist the NDPC and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Regional Cooperation to analyse and report on the progress being made with implementation. NDPC prepares Annual Progress Reports on the GPRS which will contribute to the evaluation and revision process in 2005. The M&E Plan outlines 52 indicators that were agreed with the MDAs and will be used to track the progress of the GPRS. In addition information will be available from the Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIAs) studies that are being carried out on agricultural modernisation, pro-poor decentralisation, tackling vulnerability and exclusion, energy and petroleum sector pricing.

Communication in the Ghana PRS

Consultation process

Participation and national ownership were regarded as key principles in the preparation of the GPRS. The methods used to encourage broad support from stakeholders are described in the GPRS as *information dissemination, collaboration, coordination and consultation* to achieve the following objectives:

- to ensure the reflection of the views of the average citizen in the GPRS
- to ensure input of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
- to make certain that civil society's role in implementation was well defined
- to enhance the advocacy and watch-dog role of civil society

Consultations were organised both within government and between government and civil society. Three ministerial workshops and a one-

day meeting with sector ministers and their deputies were arranged to ensure commitment within government. Chief directors of MDAs and the directors of technical departments took part in additional meetings on the GPRS and budget policy including workshops for the functional sectors of administration, public safety, economic services, infrastructure and social services. Donors were included as stakeholders in the process through the staff on the Core Teams, the development partners Consultative Group meetings and a development partners seminar on the draft GPRS.

Consultations took place in six of the country's ten administrative regions, which included a total of 12 districts (out of the then total of 110) and 36 communities (three from each of the selected districts). The community level consultations used focus groups made up of men, women, youth, representatives of traditional authorities and occupational and interest groups. The groups were selected in consultation with the District Assemblies usually through the District Planning and Coordinating Units. These community level consultations aimed to disseminate information on the GPRS and to ascertain community perceptions on poverty. The District Assemblies conducted wrap-up sessions for the community consultations with the Planning and Budget officers, the district directors of agriculture, education and health and the district coordinating director.

The consultations at the regional, district and community levels were intended to support the work of the Core Teams and feed into the national level harmonisation process. At the national level consultations were organised between the Core Teams and the MDAs and other organisations such as NGOs, religious groups, trade unions and the private sector. Separate seminars were also arranged at the national level for stakeholders from the Communication media, the Trades Union Congress (TUC), professional bodies and student unions, coalition of women's groups, NGOs in

service delivery and religious bodies, research institutes and policy think tanks to discuss the first draft of the GPRS. Groups such as the National Association of Local Authorities received calls for comments that they responded to. Other groups, such as the TUC and the coalition of women's groups, submitted statements of their concerns with the document. The national level consultations culminated in a Civil Society Forum and a National Economic Dialogue.

A consultation workshop also took place in 2002 as part of the design of the Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) activities. Government and CSOs were encouraged to work together to improve public accountability and collaborate in assessing the impact of the GPRS at the local level. Two participatory activities were planned for selected districts. First, to use citizen report cards to assess the impact of specific poverty related programmes such as the Village Infrastructure Project of the Ministry of Agriculture. Second, to carry out participatory expenditure tracking of social service expenditure particularly on water and sanitation. These could form the basis for an extended role for PM&E in the monitoring of the GPRS.

Media dissemination

The dissemination and publicity strategy sets out to *create national understanding of the GPRS for effective participation of the communities, groups or individuals in influencing decisions on development policies and expenditures.* The GPRS was officially launched at a press conference in 2000 but no effective media campaign followed. Many media editors remained unaware of the GPRS throughout the preparation period of the first draft resulting in limited reporting and low public awareness. There was some coverage of the respective consultation events such as the regional workshops and the National Economic Dialogue. The government's decision to apply for HIPC debt relief also generated media interest and debate. This raised the profile of the GPRS and initiated a discussion on public

Box 2 Chronology of the consultations by activity (GPRS 2003)		
Activity	Participants	Date
Conceptualisation forum	Cross section of stakeholders on Poverty Reduction	March 2000
Launching of GPRS process	Cross section of Ghanaian society	July 2000
Core teams orientation fora	Core Teams	August 2000
Community, district and regional consultations	Community groups, district and regional representatives	October- November 2000
Harmonisation	Core teams, CSO, Private Sector, Development Partners	March 2001
Special Forum for Civil Society (as input to the National Economic Dialogue)	Civil Society Organisations	May 2001
National Economic Dialogue	Cross section Ghanaian society	May 2001
Linking GPRS to annual /MTEF budget	MTEF/budget division of MOF	June 2001 to date
Presentation on draft GPRS	Development partners	July 3, 2001
GPRS Instructional Workshop for MDAs	MTEF sectoral groupings	July 23-27, 2001
GPRS consultation workshop	Chief Directors – MDAs	August 2, 2001
Call for comments	Divisional Directors, MDAs	August 8, 2001
GPRS consultation workshop	NGOs and Religious Bodies	August 10, 2001
GPRS consultation workshop	Labour Unions and Civil Society	August 17, 2001
GPRS consultation workshop	Policy advocacy groups and think tanks	August 20, 2001
Review workshop	Think tanks, research institutions and policy activists	August 20, 2001
Call for comments	Professional bodies & NUGS, NUPS	August 24, 2001
Call for comments	PEF, AGI, GCC, NASSI	August 24, 2001
Call for comments	Core Teams for GPRS	August 24, 2001
Call for comments	National Association of Local Governments	August 24, 2001
Call for comments	Gender Network	August 31, 2001
Call for comments	National Association of Local Governments	August 24, 2001
GPRS consultation workshop	Women's groups and the media	August 31, 2001
Consultation and training workshop	Budget officers- Ministry of Finance	September 4, 2001
Policy review workshops with MTEF/ Budget Division	Admin Group A, Economic and Public Safety groups	September 17-18, 2001
Policy review workshops with MTEF/ Budget Division	Social, Infrastructure and Admin Group B	September 19-20, 2001
GPRS/MTEF cross sectoral meetings	MDAs	October 2001
Policy Hearings	MDAs	October 10-12, 2001
Retreat	Parliament	October 25-27, 2001
Budget Hearings	MDAs	October 29- Nov. 2, 2001
Finalisation of draft estimates from MDAs	MOF	November 13-18, 2001
Review of draft estimates	Cabinet	November 2001
Review of budget with GPRS priorities	Parliament	November 30, 2001
Regional and District workshops	Regional and district personnel, CSOs, NGOs	June- December 2001
Stakeholders forum on final draft	Cross section of Ghanaian society	March 14, 2002

policymaking. However, it was not on the scale or of the quality that was required. The government's dissemination campaign to the media was stalled and the media itself had limited capacity for macroeconomic policy reporting.

The World Bank has initiated a Media Capacity Enhancement Program to build the capacity of the media through training editors and producers as well as journalists in reporting techniques for economic policy subject matter. The programme was managed by the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana for a 12 month period from September 2003. The themes for the training sessions included the GPRS and Multi-donor Budget Support (MDBS), strengthening media coverage on development issues and improving radio coverage on development issues. Journalists are encouraged to understand their role in improving accountability in the public sector by informed reporting on a wide range of issues in the scope of the GPRS such as economics, business, the environment, rural communities, health and education. The World Bank has also been supporting training for financial and economic reporting through the Institute of Financial and Economic Journalists including training via video-conference from the World Bank Institute.

The M&E Plan includes a set of dissemination activities to keep stakeholders informed on the progress of the GPRS. The plan outlines the importance of using expert media advisers to assist NDPC with the packaging of information into appropriate formats for the different target stakeholder groups such as the District Assemblies, MDAs, academic and policy units or the general public.

Systemic challenges

Resources

The Task Force for the GPRS is based within the NDPC, which has been severely under-resourced. Donors have provided support for

Ghanaian and external consultants to fill human resource gaps but this is seen as a temporary measure. Communication activities for the GPRS such as the media campaign not only require additional resources but also sufficient staff to manage them. The GPRS Communication Strategy outlined below will require a dedicated team of communication specialists with the appropriate resource allocation. This will also be essential for the management of a documentation centre and the effective implementation of the M&E output dissemination activities.

Novelty of the process

Civil Society Organisations in Ghana have had some experience of engaging with the government and donors through the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI). The World Bank and the Government of Ghana supported the establishment of a tripartite process with a network of CSOs to assess the social impact of the Ghana Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP). SAPRI started in Ghana in 1997 and provided a focus for greater networking and coordination amongst CSOs in the country than had occurred previously. Irrespective of problems with the SAPRI resulting from the level of commitment by the government at the time there were definite benefits in terms of CSOs having a voice on public policymaking and gaining confidence in networking for that purpose. This has provided a basis for CSO engagement in policy dialogue in Ghana that would have otherwise been absent. However, by the time of the GPRS preparation the processes of consultation with government and coordinated participation in public policymaking still remained very new to both sides.

Despite concerted efforts by the new government to consult widely and build a consensus around the GPRS it remained a government driven process. Civil society organisations broadly welcomed the process in principle but were unable to take control to the

same extent as in Kenya and Uganda through independent CSO initiatives to engage in the PRSP process. CSOs and the media in Ghana are becoming increasingly able to promote active debate on policy issues but governments in the past have been authoritarian and top-down and have tended not to favour participatory governance. This has made CSOs wary as to whether the new government's intentions are genuinely participatory or whether they are merely responding to donor conditionality. The donors themselves have actively promoted CSO engagement in public policymaking which has contributed to the perception that donors are driving the process. The fact that there was so much time pressure on the consultation process was certainly seen as a symptom of external pressure on the government.

The World Bank initiated a Development Dialogue Series in March 2003 to promote dialogue between a range of stakeholders including CSOs on Ghana's development and encourage inputs to public policymaking. This series has included themes such as Empowerment for Development, the GPRS and MDDBS: Strengthening the Links of Accountability, Decentralising the Poverty Reduction Strategy: Challenges and Opportunities for Strengthening Partnerships between Government, Civil Society and Donors. The series is ongoing and could be an important forum for debate on the forthcoming revision of the GPRS.

Timing

Time pressure was a real factor limiting the extent of communication activities in the preparation of the GPRS. The change of government in 2000 was generally regarded as bringing more genuine efforts at consultation. However, both the transition of administrations and the decision to go for HIPC put more time pressure on the process that had the effect of precluding extensive consultation. Although the new government extended the original schedule the consultations were still planned to a tight

timetable. This led to the perception by many CSOs that the process was more like a series of 'public announcements' rather than a genuine consultative process. This was compounded by the fact that even those who were invited to participate in consultation meetings often received the relevant documentation very late in the day leaving little time to prepare and coordinate inputs. Future consultations will need to develop ways to ensure more inclusive access by interested parties and clear mechanisms for incorporating their feedback through an ongoing process.

Institutional capacity

The problems with timing may be due in part to the government's limited capacity to conduct such a public dialogue as a new administration conducting a new type of public policymaking process. Many CSOs felt that the consultation exercise was really only just the beginning of the type of engagement that is required for genuine participatory policymaking. CSOs were not the only group that would have benefited from greater access to the process. Parliament also had very little involvement and could have been the focus of more strategic engagement. Parliament has now set up a sub-committee on poverty reduction to engage more proactively with the GPRS.

Many CSOs now coordinate their inputs through the umbrella organisation GAPVOD – which brings together 419 members from all over the country, including 25 INGOs. They have recently been included in the government's capacity building programmes for two ministries, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the Ministry of Manpower, Development and Employment. The training courses include topics such as financial management, project planning and monitoring. GAPVOD has also initiated a programme with the media to coordinate inputs to the revision of the GPRS and is establishing a civil society platform for regional and district level meetings on the GPRS.

Communication on the GPRS between the government ministries was also a limiting factor. Many ministries did not show significant interest in the GPRS until the beginning of 2002 when it became clear that donors would channel resources through the Government of Ghana (GoG) according to the priorities and programmes in the GPRS using budget support. NDPC was effectively driving the process alone for much of the preparation period and had its own resource constraints to contend with. The structure of the Core Teams exacerbated the problem because they were not aligned with existing line ministries and government departments. The GPRS M&E plan identifies the need for NDPC to establish a regular quarterly bulletin to provide information on GPRS implementation to the Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Divisions of the MDAs, government staff and other civil servants, Office of the President and Cabinet and the District Assemblies.

The Ministry of Information and Presidential Affairs (MIPA) could also have provided more support to the NDPC for the communication activities. The World Bank has supported the preparation of a Development Communication Enhancement Programme to effectively restructure the MIPA. This would involve a significant programme of human development, institutional restructuring including decentralisation and support for district information centres, the development of a national portal and pilot electronic governance, commercialisation of selected ISD activities and government message development. MIPA's stated mission is *to use communication as a process for popular participation and empowerment for social and economic transformation* and the goal of the programme is *to empower the country's population to own and internalise government's policies, programmes and activities*. This would involve support to NDPC for the communication activities required for the GPRS but the programme and resulting restructuring have been stalled due to delays in funding disbursement.

What lies ahead?

GPRS communication strategy

To address some of the challenges outlined above NDPC, supported by the GTZ, developed a GPRS Communication Strategy in 2003. The strategy sets out to achieve the following objectives:

- To effectively create awareness about the goals and objectives of GPRS, solicit stakeholder support and induce the requisite sense of ownership.
- To regularly inform the various stakeholders and the general public about progress of the GPRS and solicit feedback.

The approach that has been developed is based on three main activities. First, the encouragement of stakeholders to participate through the more specific messages designed for them. Second, creating greater awareness amongst all stakeholders to reduce misconceptions and stimulate broader debate and demand for information on the GPRS. Third, creating a mechanism for stakeholder consultation and feedback that is *continuously seeking the views of the various stakeholders*.

The proposed mechanisms for implementing the GPRS Communication Strategy focus on internal government channels, targeted stakeholder consultation and mass media for the public at large. Internal communication channels include seminars, newsletters and circulars to inform staff of the MDAs and the district assemblies and to encourage feedback from them. Other stakeholder groups such as CSOs and CBOs will be encouraged to participate through community fora and general assembly meetings. The mass media will be used to provide information on the GPRS to a wider audience including the portrayal of key messages through drama on radio and television. There will be messages specifically tailored towards individual stakeholder groups and general messages relevant to all groups. The general messages include explaining the role of NDPC

Box 3 GPRS Communication strategy	
Target audience for the GPRS Communication Strategy	Media/communication channels*
<p>National level Members of Parliament Ministers of State, MDAs General public Civil Society Organisations/NGOs Private sector Media houses and journalists Development partners</p>	<p>National level Radio Television (GTV, TV 3, Metro TV, TV Africa) Newspapers Seminars and workshops Internal government newsletters, circulars and notice boards Annual and quarterly reports Consultative meetings Internet/email/website Documentation centre</p>
<p>Regional and District Levels Opinion, Traditional and Religious Leaders Regional Planning and Coordinating Units (RPCU) District Planning and Coordinating Units (DPCU) Regional and District heads of Government agencies and departments Private sector Civil society organisations NGOs Project Management units of Poverty Reduction Projects eg. VIP Media houses and journalists</p>	<p>Regional level Television: GTV transmits nationwide and has programmes in five local languages Radio: Almost all regional capitals have at least one FM radio station Parliamentary hansard used to disseminate national policy information and could be reintroduced General assembly meetings organised by the District Assemblies CSO Association meetings</p>
<p>Community level CBOs/FBOs Assembly persons Sub-district institutions Opinion, religious, traditional leaders (ORTLs) Community members Women's groups</p>	<p>Community level Mobile vans with loudspeakers used during public gatherings such as market days Communal labour groups Public radio boxes Youth outreach programmes Notice boards and posters Community fora organised by traditional authorities or the district assembly School management committee meetings Community durbars Churches and mosques</p>
	<p>*Identified by the communication audit/needs assessment carried out as part of the preparation of the GPRS Communication Strategy</p>

Box 4 Specific Messages of the GPRS Communication Strategy
<p>MDAs and local government as implementers and coordinators require information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges in terms of new roles and responsibilities ● Impact of GPRS on them as targets ● Role as implementers and co-ordinators ● Role as facilitators of good governance
<p>Government and Parliament are essential for their overall support and for consistency in public pronouncements. Messages targeted at this group include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The scope of the GPRS ● Transparency
<p>The Private Sector is seen as important especially with the current Government's focus on growth. Messages for the private sector include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specific government actions to improve the private sector ● Public/private partnership opportunities offered by the GPRS ● Progress being made in public/private partnership ● Shared objectives and responsibilities ● Role expected of the private sector ● The rationale and scope of the GPRS ● The macro economic targets of the GPRS and its justification
<p>The General Public remain relatively unaware of the GPRS both in terms of the process and the content of the current strategy. The focus of messages for the general public will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The scope of the GPRS ● Benefits of the GPRS ● Clarification of major misconceptions and concerns about the GPRS ● The process of transparency and accountability within the GPRS
<p>The Media has the potential to carry the messages of the GPRS to a high proportion of the general public and to stimulate greater national ownership and debate. In order to achieve this, those working in the media will need to be far better informed themselves. The messages identified for the Media include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The rationale and scope of the GPRS ● The macro economic targets of the GPRS and its justification ● Key issues and policy areas of production and gainful employment ● Key components of human resource development and basic services ● Programmes for the vulnerable and excluded ● The scope of good governance ● Ongoing activities under the 5 thematic areas ● Clarification of misconceptions and concerns about the GPRS ● The process of transparency and accountability

and transparency in the GPRS process, the goals and objectives of the GPRS together with its scope and benefits. The more specific messages are outlined in the Box 4.

A comprehensive series of communication activities have been planned. The activities are designed to address the information gaps of the target audience through an integrated approach using a mix of radio and television programmes as well as workshops and seminars. There are also plans for a quarterly magazine, flyers, and posters. Media editors will be trained through workshops to encourage more informed discussion on radio and television. Newspapers will also be used to improve the flow of information especially where there is a high circulation such as the main urban areas. At the regional and community level local radio stations are to be the most appropriate channel of communication for the GPRS. The local language programmes will be able to disseminate information beyond the English speaking and literate audience of the other mainstream media. Mobile vans will also be used to show video documentaries and raise awareness using loudspeakers in more remote areas that have limited access to other media.

A number of these activities have recently been implemented. A Trainer of Trainers workshop was held in Kumasi for regional officers from eight frontline institutions from all 10 regions. These officers were trained how to train the district officers to provide community level sensitisation on the GPRS. The training also included how to monitor the district officers and provide technical backstopping for media activities. The training of the district officers will require considerable resources and coordination but it is important for building the capacity of the local government to prepare three-year plans based on the GPRS. To assist this training a GPRS trainer's manual has been prepared and is currently being tested.

In preparation for an extensive media campaign a simplified version of the GPRS has been prepared. The English version has been

published in nine newspapers as a supplement. This version has also been translated into seven local languages⁸ and printed ready for distribution to regional and local media and other community stakeholders. The media campaign will also form part of the need to disseminate information on the progress of the GPRS based on the results of the ongoing M&E activities.

Revision of the GPRS 2005

The NDPC is now preparing for the revision of the GPRS in 2005. The GPRS Communication Strategy is expected to assist in this process by building on the consultation processes of the first GPRS to generate more dialogue and feedback and extend ownership further. The annual National Economic Dialogue, for example, took the GPRS Annual Progress Report as its theme for 2004. The NDPC is also planning to improve the integration of the government's medium- and long-term plans through the GPRS. This is likely to involve the linking of the GPRS with the MDGs⁹. The government's longer-term Vision 2012 Comprehensive Social and Economic Policy could also be harmonised with the other frameworks such as the MDGs and NEPAD. This could contribute to more focussed public debate as the GPRS becomes the central framework for longer-term development plans. However, the increase in complexity in the short-term may make the task of communicating information on the GPRS and encouraging feedback more difficult. Government stakeholders and CSOs will need more information on these longer-term frameworks and enhanced capacity to provide coordinated analytical inputs on the detailed programming for the GPRS.

⁸Asanti-Twi, Fanti, Nzema, Hausa, Dagbani, Ga, Ewe.

⁹UNDP is assisting the government with this.

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¹⁰Steliana Nedera was head of the DFID office in Moldova between 2000 and 2004.

Moldova

Summary Despite widespread capacity issues, through the PRS process some thought and progress has been made in developing communication within the Moldovan government. Donor groups have managed their contributions well, integrating projects to inform the general public on the PRS with similar efforts by government. These, unfortunately, have been fairly poor, and communication between government and civil society has been hampered by a lack of media interest and lack of initiative amongst civil society groups themselves. Participative processes are now gradually improving, and a flurry of recent activities around the draft PRSP paid dividends in a constructive and relevant debate, which made tangible contributions to the redrafting process. Overall, communication in the Moldovan PRS has generated some innovative and successful approaches; Poverty Forums bringing together representatives from key ministries, donors and civil society groups; online feedback forms to send comments directly to the central government working group; and a clustering of participation activities which build momentum over a short period. Donors have provided effective support, working closely with ministries and providing technical support to broker dialogue between government and civil society groups.

Background

Development, Transition and Poverty

The Republic of Moldova is a small (33,800 sq kms) landlocked country, situated in southeast Europe between Ukraine, in the north, east and south and Romania in the west. It has a multiethnic population of 4,264,300 people¹¹: Moldova gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and is a parliamentary republic. Moldova is a predominantly rural country (over half of the population lives in villages in rural areas); it has only 4 large cities and 42 small towns.

There is broad agreement on the key features of the Moldovan development context. In short, the country has had a difficult and fairly disappointing transition, with the development gains from market liberalisation so far failing to translate into higher living standards and a better quality of life for most of the population.

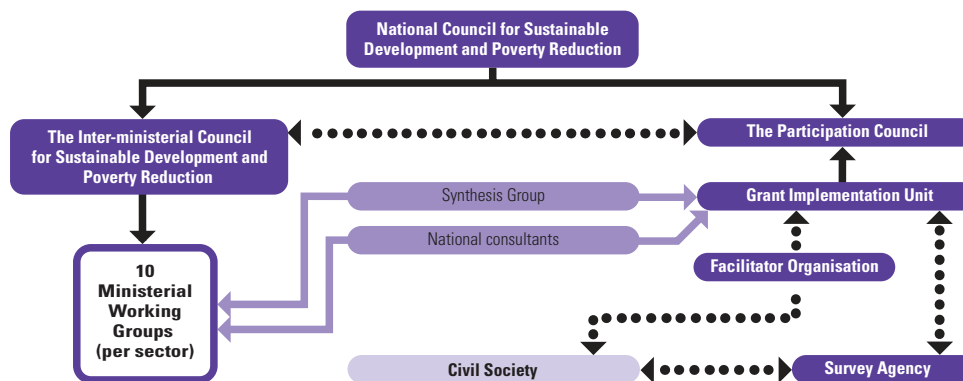
The transition to a market-based economy has been slow and difficult: major internal political divisions within successive governments have delayed the implementation of structural reforms aimed at improving the business climate and attracting investment into the economy. The secession of the region of Transnistria in 1992 exacerbated these problems, further eroding Moldova's industrial base. This lack of progress in structural reforms was accentuated after the 1998 Russian financial crisis. The cumulative decline of the economy during 1990–2000 exceeded 60% (second only to Tajikistan among transition economies).

Since 2001 the Moldovan economy has registered an annual growth of 6–7%. This growth has been triggered by a sharp increase in both external and domestic demand. The export growth is due primarily to the recovery of the Russian market, but also to some diversification of the export geography: exports to the EU have increased rapidly in the past two years. At the

¹¹ 64.5% Moldovans, 13.8% Ukrainians, 13% Russians, 3.5% Gagauz, 2% Bulgarian, 1.5% Jewish, and 1.7% other (including Belarusian, Polish, Roma, and German).

Figure 2

Moldova: institutional framework for EGPRS elaboration



same time, exports to the CIS and to the Russian markets remain very large. The increase in domestic demand is due to the very rapid growth of remittances from Moldovans working abroad. According to official statistics, remittances amounted to US\$286 million in 2002¹². In few years, Moldova has become one of the most migration- and remittance-dependent countries in the world. The very rapid growth of remittances is likely to be the single most important factor behind the growth in the past few years.

Brief summary of the PRS process in Moldova

The process of developing the first PRSP in Moldova has taken considerably longer than initially envisaged. Although Moldova has started the work on the Interim PRSP in 2000 – at the same time or even before other countries in the region, the Government only examined and approved the full PRSP very recently, on 19 May 2004.

The Interim PRSP was completed in November 2000 and went to the IMF and Bank Boards on 19 December 2000. After a parliamentary crisis in December 2000, general parliamentary elections were held in February 2001, and were won by the Communist Party. The process of elaborating the full PRS paper stopped for more than a year, and resumed when the government had re-established a basic dialogue with the international financial institutions, familiarised itself with the PRSP process and filled key vacancies created by the departure of officials who had been involved in the initial PRSP exercise. A revised I-PRSP approved in April 2002 came to prove the commitment of the current Government to the process. The Government decided to name the Moldovan Poverty Reduction Strategy the Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EGPRS), emphasising the role of economic growth for poverty reduction.

The approval of the revised I-PRSP was followed by the design, discussion and creation of

the institutional arrangements for the elaboration of the full paper (see diagram above).

The National Council for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction, chaired by President Vladimir Voronin, leads on the elaboration of the EGPRS and provides a good link between this medium-term strategy and longer-term development plans (the Moldova 21 strategy and the MDGs). The structure of work has been organised around two arms of the PRS elaboration of the EGPRS and the participation agenda: there is a Council for Participation (which includes seven civil society representatives, seven representatives of state institutions, five donor representatives, one local public administrator and one representative from the private sector) and an Inter-ministerial Council for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction, responsible for the elaboration, promotion and implementation of the EGPRS.

The Participation Council doesn't represent the participation process per se, but forms the nucleus of its institutional framework. The purpose of the Participation Council is to organise a wide-scale participation of the public and to ensure that the World Bank Trust Fund (US\$415,000) provided for participation activities is implemented in an effective and efficient manner. The Council monitors how the Grant Implementation Unit (created in May 2003) manages the grant money. The Trust Fund supports: international and national expertise contributing to the elaboration of the paper (most of the national consultants came from civil society), a contract to a survey agency to carry out a qualitative analysis (akin to the *Voices of the Poor* study), a contract to a national NGO network ('Facilitator organisation') to facilitate the consultation of the document with the public through a series of events at national and local level and different communication activities.

The Ministry of Economy led the elaboration of the strategy. This was a process made up of two distinct streams of work – the

¹² The actual figure is likely to be between US\$ 400 and 500 million, which is the equivalent of about a quarter of GDP

sector working groups, led by relevant deputy ministers, were responsible for specific strategies and action plans in areas covered by the EGPRS and the Ministry of Economy with a Synthesis group worked on the concept and EGPRS framework.

The progress in elaboration was slow between 2002 and 2003. The main constraints were the weak capacity of the working groups to produce good quality sector strategies, as well as the lack of capacity at the other end – the Synthesis Group struggled with the EGPRS vision, priorities and objectives.

Capacity for policy formulation is a generic problem for the state institutions involved in the policy cycle – the high turnover of staff due to political reasons meant that some good specialists left the ministries and the policy documents prepared are weak. The specific requirements for the EGPRS preparation – including identification of priorities, objectives, targets and indicators – were new additions to the traditional process of policy document preparation and many working groups did not have the knowledge and the skills to meet this challenge.

The team contracted at the beginning for the Synthesis Group did not have sufficient knowledge of PRS processes and struggled with the formulation of the framework and with the integration of the sector documents prepared.

These shortcomings required staff changes at different levels of the institutional framework; after this, the process gained momentum by the end of 2003 and progressed well until the approval of the strategy by the Government in May 2004.

The EGPRS is linked to the MTEF (2004–2006 cycles). The Government considers the MTEF an important institutional mechanism that will contribute to greater fiscal discipline and efficiency in resource allocation and in operation. It will ensure that budget allocations are consistent with EGPRS priorities, given the availability of resources.

The institutional arrangements for the strategy implementation envisage a permanent

body in the Ministry of Economy, which will coordinate the implementation and monitor the reduction in poverty levels according to the poverty indicators (in cooperation with the Department of Statistics and Sociology). This body will also be responsible for the monitoring of MDGs indicators, ensuring good links are made between the EGPRS and the MDGs. The same unit will have the overall responsibility for communication with different stakeholders. Line ministries involved in the EGPRS will have designated officials responsible for the implementation of their sector's action plan, and for more targeted communication and participation activities in their specific area. At the national level the re-elected (to ensure appropriate representation) Participation Council will have responsibility for the participation initiatives and events. The EGPRS identifies roles and responsibilities for the public authorities, private sector and civil society, both at national and local level, in the strategy implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Actors and Roles

The Government of Moldova is leading on the EGPRS elaboration process. The Government has demonstrated ownership of the strategy and is committed to finalise it. The Ministry of Economy is the overall coordinator whilst a number of line ministries, through their deputy ministers, are chairing in sector working groups. These are responsible for the elaboration and implementation of sector action plans.

The Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finance need to collaborate closely in order to ensure a viable link between the MTEF and the EGPRS. The Ministry of Economy is responsible for coordinating the inputs from donors so that assistance funds elements of the EGPRS which are not provided for by public funds.

The donor agencies are also key actors in the process – they support the government in the elaboration of the strategy and provide resources for the implementation of different parts of it. The PRS process was strongly

supported by a number of donors, including the World Bank, IMF, DFID, and UNDP. These donors are part of the Participation Council and contributed directly to the implementation of the participation agenda, but also supported the process with advisory and technical expertise capacity through existing projects or through specific targeted projects.

Civil society is becoming more involved in the PRS as it progresses, especially as windows of opportunity appear for the non-governmental organisations, professional organisations and other civil society constituents. These actors are increasingly stepping into the policy debate and leading activities related to participation and communication and dissemination of information.

The participation process

Participation until December 2003 was fragmented and limited to very few stakeholders – only a few events were held by the Government, in partnership with the World Bank (two poverty forums, several video-conferences and workshops).

In 2002 DFID organised several roundtables with civil society to disseminate information about PRSPs (nature and specifics of the exercise, examples from the region) and encourage civil society to take an active part in the elaboration of the Moldovan PRSP. At the end of 2002, DFID financed a project by the OWH TV Studio NGO to carry out an information campaign. The campaign would inform the public about the EGPRS and would facilitate the communication between stakeholders as the participation process goes ahead. The campaign included the following package: several television programmes, one video-clip (social advertising), radio programmes and a poster. The NGO's main partner is the Participation Council and the GIU. Due to the slow progress and operational difficulties of the EGPRS between 2002 and 2003, the Government did not launch the participation process until the end of 2003. The OWH TV Studio responded by delaying the project

implementation to match the EGPRS progress. Some of the information campaign elements were not implemented until the end 2003.

In December 2003 the Government put forward the draft EGPRS for consultation with the public. According to its terms of reference, this participation process is organised in three stages: the first informs the public about the process of EGPRS elaboration, focusing on identifying problems and concerns of stakeholders, possible solutions and getting stakeholders involved in the process. This first stage is made up of 10 national seminars and nine local level roundtables. The second part of the participation action plan is more complex and includes 36 activities: nine seminars at national level, 18 round tables at local level and nine roundtables at national level. This phase concentrates collecting all the contributions, comments, critics and suggestions on the EGPRS from target audiences. The third stage is about providing feedback to the stakeholders on how their contributions were taken on board and identifying ways for stakeholders' participation to the EGPRS implementation. The third stage includes 36 activities: 27 local seminars and nine national level conferences.

These events have turned out to be quite successful. The national-level discussions had a lot of substance, and the comments were relevant and constructive. All feedback was collected by the team which worked on the finalisation of the strategy and a report on how this feedback was integrated into the final strategy was presented at the EGPRS Forum on April 2. Through this work, the EGPRS gained better visibility within Moldovan society.

Alongside direct communication with civil society, the participation process also facilitates indirect communication. The public can comment on the EGPRS through the website forum and email to GIU. The facilitator organisation has established 30 temporary enquiry points, where people can get information about the strategy and can send their comments to GIU and the Synthesis Group.

Overall communication approach in Moldova's PRS process

The participation activities and subsequently the communication related ones are implemented by the GIU. The GIU is reporting to the Ministry of Economy and to the Participation Council. The Participation Council discusses and approves the plans for participation and strategic communication. The GIU has presented for discussion to the Participation Council an updated version of a Communication Action Plan at the beginning of 2004. As mentioned before, the institutional arrangements for the communication during EGPRS implementation are not yet made public.

Most of these events form both part of the participation action plan and the communication action plan, and are therefore inter-related. The Participation Council is in a good position to monitor the implementation of these plans and suggest changes and amendments as necessary.

Feedback mechanisms

At the present time, most feedback on the PRS concerns the elaboration phase. There are several systems in place to gather feedback: the facilitator organisation collects stakeholder feedback on EGPRS draft documents from events and passes it on to the Synthesis group, which examines the comments and sees how they can be incorporated. There are plans to inform stakeholders on how their contributions were used through a number of designated events.

Building effective feedback mechanisms into the PRS has not been easy. In a number of meetings with donors and larger NGO events, civil society groups – mainly NGOs – have commented that they have limited access to the process and are not welcomed by the Government¹⁹. Their comments have not reached the bodies responsible for the EGPRS directly, but were communicated via the media. There

has also been a widespread failure of officials to respond to criticism and follow up on meetings.

Examples of communication interventions

The Poverty Forums organised by the Government and the World Bank were however more successful. Designed for key stakeholders in the public and non-profit sector and selected representatives of the private sector, they were helpful in advancing the dialogue on the PRSP process and building ownership for the process in Moldova.

The roundtable discussions with civil society, organised by DFID, had mixed success. Participants felt they were very useful at the time when the process had only just started in Moldova and the PRSPs were a new and unfamiliar exercise. The roundtables were intended to be a kind of demonstration, which civil society groups would use as a template for similar events of their own. In fact, NGOs were suspicious of these kinds of events, feeling that they were a somewhat artificial exercise.

The decision to select a national NGO network to facilitate the participation events proved successful: the NGO – The Network of Social Area NGOs – had good relationships with grassroots organisations and was able to arrange successful events with the general public.

Another success story was the communication established during the process of elaboration of the social sector strategy in the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP). DFID has a very good partnership record with the MLSP, and also worked extensively with civil society groups. When the MLSP working group started to work on the social sector strategy for the EGPRS, DFID provided assistance through the existing projects based in the ministry and tried to build a dialogue between the working group and a civil society group – the Network of NGOs working in the social sector. The Network representatives

¹⁹Statement from the Council of NGOs at the EGPRS Forum, 2 April 2004

Box 5		A History of Communication Interventions		
Date	Item	Who	Quantity	Distribution
October 2002	Roundtables with civil society and government officials	DFID	2, about 120 participants in all, representing all sectors of NGO work	Organised in Chisinau, the capital city, with invitees from the regions
November 2002	Poverty Forum	Government of Moldova and WB	Circa 150 participants	Organised in Chisinau
March 2003	Second Poverty Forum	Government of Moldova and WB	Circa 100 participants	Organised in Chisinau
August 2003	Videoclip – advertising the EGPRS	Produced by OWH TV Studio	1	Broadcast so far on Euro TV channel (capital city)
2003	Documentaries	Produced by OWH	2	Broadcast on the National TV channel (national coverage)
September 2003	'Tell Poverty No' booklet	Elaborated by GIU	16000 copies, in Romanian, Russian and English	Distributed at all participation events and through other channels
September 2003	'Tell Poverty No' poster (in the state language only)	Elaborated by the OWH through the DFID grant, endorsed and promoted by the Government and GIU.	2000 copies	Distributed at all participation events and through other channels
October 2003	EGPRS website – www.scers.md	Created and run by GIU	1	Can be visited by those who have Internet access – mainly in the capital city and larger settlements
October 2003	EGPRS newsletter	Created by the Association of Independent Press on behalf of the GIU	4 editions, 77200 copies each, in Romanian and Russia	Nationwide, as a free supplement to the local and national newspapers-members of the Association of Independent Press
2004	Briefing with the media	GIU		
December 17, 2003 - January 10, 2004	National Seminars	Government of Moldova, GIU	10	Chisinau With key stakeholders to present the draft EGPRS
27 January – 10 February 2004	Local round tables	The Women's Forum, under the contract with the Ministry of Economy, GIU	9	Across the country, to start the consultation exercise
Since mid-2003 until now (on-going)	Journalists are invited to the meetings of the Participation Council, press releases are prepared by GIU and sent to media outlets	GIU	N/a	Chisinau

participated in the discussion of the draft sector strategy and were subsequently invited to comment on other policy papers. The MLSP is now opening more to NGOs, both in terms of dialogue and also partners in social work implementation.

The work with mass media has so far been poor. The national media have shown little interest in the process, tending to portray it just as another event and failing to engage in any sustained debates or develop their own views on the strategy. Media agencies are increasingly harassed by the Government and are not truly independent. Most of the media groups which are not owned by the state are still dominated by the interests of small elites.

All of this underlines the importance of ensuring communication is well timed and coordinated with the participation process. In Moldova, the launch of a large-scale consultation exercise was not accompanied by a communication campaign of a similar scale. Events at the local level got some limited coverage, but the national media has remained consistently quiet on the EGPRS.

Overall challenges

Resources

Financial constraints have not been an issue in communication activities so far. The Trust Fund disbursement was slow, because of the overall slow progress of the strategy, but donors have been open to contributing funds when the need has arisen.

Systemic issues

Placing EGPRS communication and information management within the Ministry of Economy has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, being centralised, the communication activities are well integrated into other streams of work. The Government has genuine ownership of the strategy and is consulting fully with its citizens. On the other

hand, this arrangement may well slow down communication processes. Communication events are often delayed because of procurement problems, procedural issues or disagreements between the Government and donors.

The internal communication between the groups was poor. This was partly due to imbalances within the EGPRS institutional framework. As times, consultants working in the Synthesis group caused confusion and tension between other working groups.

As mentioned earlier, civil society organisations reported insufficient access to information about the EGPRS. A number of the Participation Council members are civil society representatives, who are supposed to report back to the sector. However, discussions at the National NGO Forum in November 2003 showed that civil society overall knows very little about EGPRS and has not undertaken any work at its own initiative to discuss the strategy. Civil society groups are not very involved in the policy processes in general, as the state does not really allow them to be. Communication within civil society, and the mechanisms for sharing information, are still in formation and need support. This would be an excellent opportunity for donors to provide financial support and develop more active participation in such policy exercises.

Countries from the former Soviet Union often lack a tradition of consultation or accountability. Moldova being no exception, the EGPRS with its mandatory participation is something of a shock to the system. The process opens up possibilities for CSOs to become part of the policy dialogue, but state institutions are often unwilling to facilitate this. The state generally does not perceive the non-profit sector as an independent, active and knowledgeable actor and tends to either ignore or install control over its activity. Over time, and with governmental reform, this may well change.

National television and radio cover the entire territory of the country making lack of media coverage particularly frustrating. This has

limited information flows on the PRS to the capital city.

Capacity issues

Government of Moldova has ownership of strategic communication work and is leading on this. However, the capacity for design and implementation has had to come from outside, as internal resources are very limited.

Donors and civil society need to support the government of Moldova to sustain the momentum behind PRS formulation and take it into the implementation phase. By itself, the government of Moldova will not have the capacity and resources to carry out targeted and large-scale communication and information campaigns.

What lies ahead

After the EGPRS is approved by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, its implementation will start. As this begins, it will be important to keep the momentum of consultation with different stakeholders, which was initiated in the preparation phase. Government willingness to communicate with the private sector and civil society could contribute significantly to strengthening the voice of the latter in the policy dialogue. The participation of different stakeholders in implementation and monitoring and evaluation looks set to be of primary importance.

In the forthcoming months it is crucial to scale up the strategic communication work (see box 6), and make the participation process as active and effective as the current conditions allow.

A concerted effort by the Government and donors is needed in order to coordinate work, which supports communication at ministerial level, horizontally, vertically, and especially downwards. Civil society groups have a critical role to play in implementing different communication initiatives.

Box 6		Communication Activity Plan		
Strategic approach	Target group	Tools	Terms	
Administrative mobilisation	Parliamentarians	To elaborate a leaflet for parliamentarians To elaborate a database including fax numbers, emails of parliamentarians in order to inform them periodically about the EGPRSP elaboration process	1-15 March 2004 15-29 February 2004	
	Sectors working groups	To ensure the public is informed on how the feedback provided is taken on board	27 January - 30 March 2004	
	Mayors	To send by mail the information about EGPRSP and to ask their involvement through accumulating opinions of citizens. Round table with participation of mayors associations	25 February 2004 17 March 2004	
	Political parties	Round table with the participation of political parties representatives To include parties in our email group and to send periodically information about EGPRSP	22-28 March 2004 20 February 2004	
	NGOs	To send draft sector strategies and the governmental strategy and to discuss with them To invite NGOs representatives to participate in seminars and round tables organised within the participation process Permanent communication by email, telephone	1 February - 30 March 2004 27 January – 13 May 2004 permanent	
Social mobilisation	Youth, parents, teachers	To organise the essay contest for pupils from schools, high schools and residential institutions.	1 February – 2 April 2004	
	General public	To promote the website forum in order to accumulate the public opinions To publish the sector strategies resume in the national mass media To publish in national and local media articles and analysis regarding the EGPRSP To edit the EGPRSP bulletin	permanent 15 February – 30 March 2004 permanent 12 February, 5 March 2004	
Advertising/publicity	General public	To place the video spot on National TV Channel To organise the show "Buna Seara" dedicated to PRSP process To organise 2 special TV shows with the participation of the minister and other invitees To organise 6 radio shows (OWH TV Studio) To realise one TV show dedicated to PRSP and to place it on local channels To organise interactive shows on National Radio To print and place stickers in city transport To promote the site in national media To place billboards	February – April 2004 March 2004 February, March 2004 February – May 2004 March 2004 February – May 2004 March 2004 February – March 2004 March 2004	
Interpersonal communication	Mass media	To invite mass media at national and local activities To organise a contest for journalists	permanent February – April 2004	
	National and local coordinators of the Facilitator Organisation	To organise press briefings and press conferences To organise non-formal meetings with journalists To inform about messages to each stage To send the media list with all local journalists	3 February 2004, 30 March permanent permanent January 2004	
Point-of-service-promotion	Public	To distribute the information through information points throughout the country	permanent	
	Academia, the public	To print and place the strategy in public libraries	February 2004	



Tanzania

¹⁴ Waheeda Shariff Samji is the managing director and owner of Carpe Diem Ink, a Tanzanian development consultancy based in Dar es Salaam.

Summary Tanzania has been successful in using communication techniques in PRSPs both to include a wide variety of people in the PRS and, currently, in seeking to ensure that a well focused and ongoing conversation on the strategy can develop. In the initial stages, the variety of communication interventions used were not particularly well focused, and there was no central mechanism to capture comments and integrate them with the PRS. Civil society groups later tried to coordinate their feedback with limited success – although they have acted as effective mediators, working between government and donors as a watchdog on public expenditure. Overall, there were three particularly notable successful communication initiatives: First, the *Tanzania without Poverty* booklets which had an extensive print run, were widely distributed through CSO networks and were explained alongside workshops, posters and other communication activities. Second, the *Poverty Policy Week* event was very effective in bringing together key stakeholders, including donors, civil society groups and government officials, and has become a regular annual event. Third, a policy and service satisfaction survey managed to establish baseline indicators for gauging the level of public satisfaction with the PRSP, drawing on widely gathered data to compare various policy initiatives, including the PRS. On a more operational level, communication flows between working groups have been limited due to problems in the way work was been organised. In the future, it seems that the need for broad-based working groups must be balanced with the need for consistent attendance which enables an ongoing dialogue and follow-up activities to develop. There is a move towards narrowing down the focus of working groups and ensuring they are well prioritised, to ensure that communication and discussion is better engaged with and more consistent.

Background

According to gross economic and social indicators, Tanzania is still ranked amongst the world's poorest countries. Recent studies have shown that while macroeconomic gains are significant, income poverty has not changed significantly. Although the proportion of those living in poverty has decreased from 39% to 36%, absolute numbers of poor people have increased, and will continue to do so, given the 2.9% population growth rate. It has also become clear that improvements in the

economy at a macro level have been more beneficial to urban areas, particularly Dar-es-Salaam, where poverty has declined from 7.5% to 4.1%, compared to a marginal rural decline from 12.7% to 11.5%. Inequality in Tanzania has grown from 0.34 to 0.37 in the last ten years, and the rural population has seen the least gains from macroeconomic growth, with 39% of the rural population falling below the poverty line.

Rural areas are incredibly diverse, with cotton growing areas south of Lake Victoria, densely populated coffee, banana and dairy areas in the northern highlands, the maize and

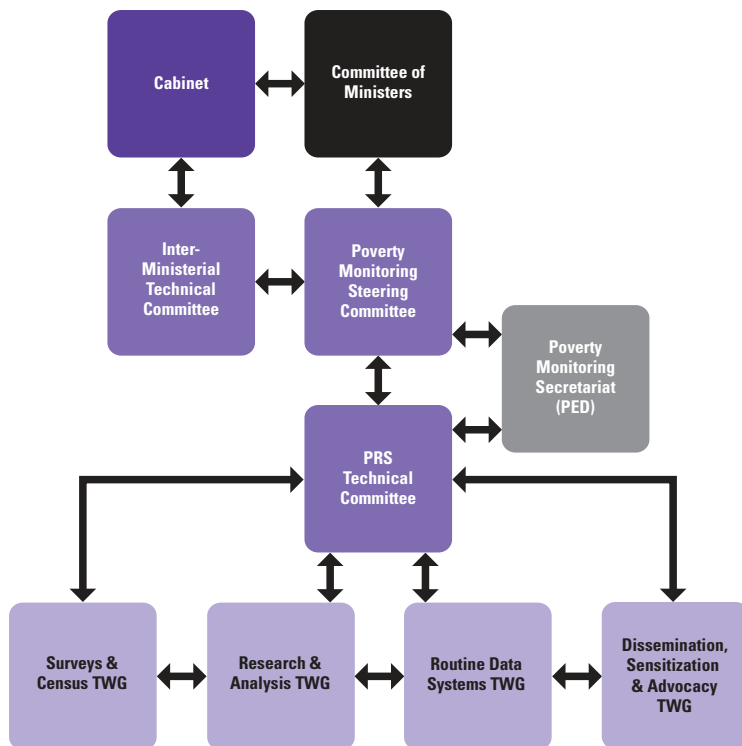


Figure 3

PRS Actors

Source:

- 'Measuring Poverty
- Reduction: Understanding
- Tanzania's Poverty
- Monitoring System',
- Poverty Eradication
- Division, Vice-President's
- Office, URT, August 2002

legumes growing areas in the south west, and the semi-arid interiors dominated by agro-pastoralists. There are significant regional disparities on regional poverty estimates, with those regions that are isolated from markets (for example Lindi and Mtwara), or that do not grow export crops (such as Dodoma, Kigoma and Rukwa) being worse off than others.

Structural adjustment programmes in Tanzania and a high debt to service ratio have reduced the country's ability to provide basic social services for its people. The 1980's saw a crisis in the form of a decline in physical production, a decline in employment opportunities, a shortage of consumer goods, a high rate of inflation, a fall in real incomes, a fall in export earnings, and a deterioration of the social sectors as a result of decreased government expenditure many of which the country is only just recovering from.

Since 2000, Tanzania has embarked on following a Poverty Reduction Strategy under the enhanced HIPC initiative, initially driven by the World Bank and other multilateral financial institutions. Tanzania's first PRS was finalised in October 2000, following a year of consultation both within and outside of government. The PRS document provides a medium-term (three year) strategy of poverty reduction, with a focus on reducing income poverty, improving human capabilities, survival and social well-being, and containing extreme vulnerability. It is set within the wider context of *Vision 2025*, a nationally owned long term development strategy, and the global Millennium Development Goals.

Priority areas of the current PRS were identified through a national consultative process, and include agriculture, health, primary education, rural roads, water, and the legal and judicial system. Cross-cutting issues include rural development, environment, HIV/AIDS, gender, employment, governance, and local government reforms.

A new PRS (PRS II) was being developed, following an extensive review process begun in late 2003. PRS II is likely to run from 2004 to

2009, in order to allow poverty policies the space and time for implementation that will result in a significant reduction in poverty.

The PRS is driven by the Ministry of Finance and the Vice-President's Office (VPO) as central government institutions who implement it. It is underpinned by budget allocations to priority sectors, with a number of donors contributing to government budget support on this basis. The PRS is reviewed annually, with progress reports published and discussed at national policy fora. These are based primarily on studies carried out over the course of the year through the poverty monitoring system, including national surveys and the annual *Poverty and Human Development Report*.

A poverty monitoring master plan was developed in December 2001 in order to assess the impact of the PRS on poverty. Working to a committee of ministers, a Poverty Monitoring Steering Committee and a PRS Technical Committee are driven by the Poverty Monitoring Secretariat (see figure 3), which is based in the Poverty Eradication Division (PED) of the VPO. The secretariat is responsible for ensuring that the PRS is monitored on a regular basis, and that appropriate data and analysis are produced each year in order to inform policymakers. A number of Technical Working Groups have been created to address specific issues in poverty monitoring, which are described below.

The technical working groups

A number of technical working groups (TWG) have been created in order to address the needs of the Poverty Monitoring System (PMS). They are:

- **The Surveys and Census Technical Working Group (SCTWG)** The group is chaired by the National Bureau of Statistics, and has 13-15 members from government agencies, multilateral and bilateral donors, and academic institutions. It has designed a

survey programme that covers key data requirements until 2012, including household budget surveys, national census, labour force surveys and agricultural surveys.

- **The Routine Data Systems Technical Working Group (RDS TWG)** The group is chaired by the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), and comprises of 13 members, mostly from sector ministries and a few development partners. It is charged with improving information systems between central, regional and local government offices, and ensuring routine data collection and analysis is carried out.
- **The Research and Analysis Technical Working Group (RA TWG)** The group is chaired by the President's Office, Planning and Privatisation, and has 13-15 members, ranging from research institutions to development partners to civil society organisations. This group sets the research priorities of the poverty monitoring system, and provides analysis on the causes of poverty, poverty trends, and the impact of poverty reduction initiatives. It uses a variety of research methods, including participatory poverty assessments.
- **The Dissemination, Sensitisation and Advocacy Technical Working Group (DSA TWG)** The group is chaired by the PED in the VPO, and has 26 members from civil society, development partners and government institutions. The group is charged with coordinating a distribution programme for information that is generated from the poverty monitoring system, and raises awareness on key poverty policy messages emerging. It is committed to adapting information into user-friendly formats for different target audiences, and to developing PRS communication feedback mechanisms at a national level.

Like all the technical working groups, the DSA TWG designs and develops an annual work plan based around the perceived communication needs of the PRS. These work plans are costed out and endorsed by the PRS Technical Committee, and then implemented with input from the group's membership, PED staff, and a host of technical advisors based in the PED.

In essence, the annual DSA TWG work plans comprise the communication strategy for the PRS as a whole. Members of the DSA secretariat (i.e. PED staff) sit on all the technical working groups, and are expected to feedback on communication requirements from all angles.

The movers and shakers in PRS communication

At all levels, the government is a key player. It is responsible both for driving the PRS process and for implementing various parts of it. It also contributes up to one third of the total PMS funding. At a central level, a number of permanent secretaries from various ministries are charged with ensuring that the PRS is kept on track on an annual basis. Senior level government officials chair the various working groups, and the PED is a central institution in the overall system.

Over the last four years, an increasing number of development partners have shifted their development aid from projects to budget support, largely based on the PRS. A large percentage of the development aid received is channelled through the government budget, and development partners are therefore significant players in the PRS process – they provide much of the resources required to operate the PMS, as well as technical expertise.

The PED has continued to receive strong technical support from a number of donors, including the UNDP and DFID. Most of this support has been in the form of staff and advisors providing specific technical expertise placed within the PED and expected to work

with specified staff counterparts, with a short- to medium- term goal of sustainable skills transfer.

Increasingly, CSOs have also become involved in PRS communication initiatives. They have undertaken dialogue with the Government on poverty policy issues, and are playing an important role in stakeholder consultations and policy monitoring. As more information has become publicly available and policy awareness levels have grown, CSOs have also begun to look at the monitoring of policy impact. More donor funding has become available for civil society to undertake policy engagement activities and to serve as a watchdog on government. Moreover, civil society networks have developed their capacity to engage at high levels on public expenditure reviews and PRS consultations.

The government has also recognised the potential of the benefits to be derived from CSO participation in policy debates, adding a public dimension to feedback on poverty policies. CSOs are seen as intermediaries for communication strategies, taking information from the government to their own constituents and the general public; they are seen as an effective means of disseminating information downstream, as well as a means to gather feedback from a large rural population. Civil society in Tanzania is no longer limited to NGOs and CBOs – a multitude of media and faith-based organisations, trade unions and research institutions are becoming key players in the accountability debate.

A chronology of key PRS communication interventions

A number of communication interventions related to the PRS have been undertaken in the past three years. It is interesting to note that the earlier interventions (until January 2002), were mostly ad-hoc measures, driven and implemented primarily by development partners and civil society, and not part of a wider communication

Box 7		PRS information communication		
Date	Item	Who	Quantity	Distribution
May 2001	Tanzania Without Poverty – A plain language guide to Tanzania's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper' (published by HakiKazi Catalyst) A booklet outlining basic themes of the PRS, as well as thought-provoking questions	Local civil society organisation (with technical & financial support from DFID) – not endorsed by government	200,000+ (English & Kiswahili)	Nation-wide, using media (newspaper inserts), government and civil society networks
August 2001	Tanzania Without Poverty – (Published by DFID and PED) A series of 6 posters focusing on the 5 priority areas of the PRS	DFID and Poverty Eradication Division – officially endorsed by government	2,000,000+ (English & Kiswahili)	Nation-wide, using the private sector, civil society networks, and government agencies
January 2002	'First Progress Report on Tanzania Without Poverty' A booklet containing basic information on progress made on PRS targets, as well as future plans	Ministry of Finance, Government of the United Republic of Tanzania	10,000 (English & Kiswahili)	Government agencies
August 2002	'Measuring Poverty Reduction – Understanding Tanzania's Poverty Monitoring System' A booklet containing a 'user's guide' to the poverty monitoring master plan	DSA TWG, Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office	5,000 (English & Kiswahili)	Government agencies and postal system
September 2002	Poverty Policy Week 2002 workshop A 5-day workshop designed to combine the launch of a number of poverty monitoring 'products'	DSA TWG, Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office government	500+ participants	Workshop
September 2002	'Household Budget Survey (HBS) 2000/1' reports (National Bureau of Statistics) A report presenting the findings of the HBS, with analysis focusing on poverty indicators defined in the PRS.	National Bureau of Statistics, President's Office Planning & Privatisation	1,000 full reports (English) 5,000 summary reports (English & Swahili)	Postal system and government agencies
December 2002	'Poverty and Human Development Report 2002' (RA TWG) An analytical report presenting an overview of the status of the main poverty indicators, magnitudes and trends.	Research & Analysis TWG	5,000 (English)	Random
July 2003	PRS Workshop for Members of Parliament A workshop aimed at raising PRS awareness levels for Members of Parliament	DSA TWG, Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office	250+ Members of Parliament	Workshop
October 2003	Poverty Policy Week 2003 workshop A 4-day workshop focused on the theme of vulnerability and the PRS Review	DSA TWG, Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office	500+ participants	Workshop
November 2003	'Policy and Service Satisfaction Survey' (RA TWG, 2003)	R & A TWG	Drafts available in English	Not published
December 2003	www.povertymonitoring.go.tz (Created and run by the PED) A website aimed at increasing coordination between the TWGs, with key poverty monitoring documents	DSA TWG, Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office	N/A	In the public domain
December 2003	'PRS Review Calendar 2003/4' (PED) A 14-month calendar highlighting key events in the PRS Review process, as well as summary recommendations from Poverty Policy Week 2003	DSA TWG, Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office	1,000 (English)	Postal system

Box 7		Continued		
Date	Item	Who	Quantity	Distribution
February 2004	Guidelines for the PRS Review	Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office	Training for PRS Review National Consultation facilitators	Available to PRS Review Consultation facilitators
March 2004	Village and Council level consultations	Association of Local Authorities Tanzania (ALAT), coordinated by the Poverty Eradication Division	42 councils and 168 villages	Report in process
March-April 2004	Civil society consultations in various regions	Tanzania Episcopal Conference; BAKWATA; NGO Policy Forum; Haki Kazi Catalyst; ACORD; CARE Tanzania; TANGO; Tanzania ECD Network	Consultations through forums and radio	Report in process
March-April 2004	Consultations with parliamentarians, trade unions, youth groups and private sector	Ministry of Labor and Youth Development	Questionnaires distributed to various groups	Reports in process
March 2004	Tuma Maoni Yako 'Give us Your Views' – 4 page leaflet with PRS Review information and questionnaire	DSA TWG, Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office	500,000 copies and available on the Internet	Nation-wide through post, networks and forums, with media launch
March-May 2004	Government workshops briefing sector ministries and parliamentarians on PRS Review mandates	PRS Secretariat	Inter-government exchange meetings	Sector ministries and Members of Parliament
August 2004	Voices of the People – A report summarising feedback from the PRS Review Consultation process and questionnaires	DSA TWG, Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office	Unknown	Draft in process
August- September 2004	A Comprehensive Communication Strategy for PRS II	DSA TWG, Poverty Eradication Division, Vice-President's Office	In progress	In progress

NOTE: This chronology does not include the PED 'Tujikomboe' radio show (a documentary aired weekly since April 2000), focusing on issues of poverty eradication, but not necessarily limited to PRS. It also does not include the 'Mapambano', the biannual PED newsletter, which also discusses poverty - but is not limited to the PRS.

strategy per se. These interventions were quite simply aimed at getting information beyond the usual suspects (a close circle of government, development partners, research institutions, and few CSOs) in order to encourage engagement in the process. Many of these interventions were opportunistic in nature, with activities undertaken with minimum consultation and participation.

Interventions that followed have been more strategic, with specific target audiences and defined outcomes in mind. The intention behind many of the interventions is to create dialogue on the issues, and to have meaningful debates on the findings emerging from the system. Many of the newer interventions (post January 2002) have been aimed primarily at government stakeholders involved in the PRS process. This has included creating documents aimed at increasing knowledge on the PMS within government at district, regional and central levels (for example *Measuring Poverty Reduction* booklet), and documents which increase the breadth of poverty knowledge for policymakers mainly at central level (for example the *Household Budget Survey 2000/1* and *Poverty & Human Development Report 2002 and 2003*). It has also included a number of awareness-raising events (such as *Poverty Policy Week* and workshops for members of parliament) for government officers, in an effort to increase participation in the various policy processes underway.

With respect to the quantity of information that has been communicated around the PRS (as indicated in Box 7), most products that were distributed prior to January 2004 were in response to demand from other Technical Working Groups, rather than as proactive measures within a wider communication strategy.

Post the PRS Review launch in October 2003, communication interventions have been further narrowed in scope to gather views from the people to feed into the PRS II. It is expected that those views will culminate in a publication (*Voices of the People*) in the third quarter of 2004.

It should be noted that a number of specific research studies undertaken by the RA TWG have not been included in the table below, mainly because of their limited circulation and access. However, the Poverty & Human Development Report is an annual publication, key to the Poverty Monitoring System, and a Participatory Poverty Assessment, released in 2004, is also a key publication.

Feedback

Until recently, feedback mechanisms within the PRS communication field have been relatively ad hoc. All official publications request that informal feedback or enquiries be sent to the PED. However, until January 2004, there was no designated body in charge of dealing with this or responding to questions. Even in the case of more formal feedback (through workshop reports and papers), response mechanisms have been irregular, and there was little evidence of key feedback issues being raised or discussed during policy drafting until the PRS Review kicked off in late 2003.

Civil society organisations began to coordinate feedback to the PRSP, using the simplified PRSP booklets as a starting point. Responses to questions raised in the booklet were compiled and presented in a booklet entitled *Bouncing Back – Some Grassroots Responses to the PRSP* (HakiKazi Catalyst and Concern 2002). Although the booklet was published in both English and Kiswahili, distribution was limited.

As the focus of the DSA TWG in 2002 had been on dissemination activities, the group agreed that activities in 2003 should focus on creating feedback mechanisms around information campaigns. A tender was put out in August 2003 to invite bids for a pilot feedback project exploring views on information coming out of the PMS, with a view to rolling this out on a national scale should it be successful. Exploratory work on how this might be done is currently underway.

Box 8	Results of the policy and service satisfaction survey											
	Dar es Salaam			Other towns			Rural areas			Tanzania mainland		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
HIV/AIDS	97	94	97	98	90	96	98	93	98	98	93	97
Anti-corruption	91	88	90	87	83	86	88	75	86	88	80	87
Education	88	86	87	84	73	81	87	75	85	87	78	85
Health	88	84	88	81	77	80	85	75	84	85	78	84
Environment	87	84	87	82	76	80	84	75	83	84	78	83
Taxation	78	77	78	82	70	81	82	70	81	82	74	81
Privatisation	88	85	87	83	64	78	77	62	75	80	69	79
Agriculture	76	73	75	71	64	69	82	69	81	79	69	78
PRS	76	75	76	74	66	72	79	58	76	78	65	76
Water	82	82	82	68	69	69	68	67	76	77	72	76
Civic education	79	75	79	70	64	69	75	59	74	76	65	74
Local government	64	64	64	75	58	73	81	74	80	75	63	73
Rural roads	69	64	69	64	64	64	76	61	75	73	63	72
Land	62	72	76	62	62	62	72	61	70	71	64	70
Law and order	63	61	62	69	55	68	83	78	82	71	62	69

Qs 2.1.01-15. 'Which government policies have you heard about?' Percentage of respondents indicating they know about each policy.

Source: 'Policy and Service Satisfaction Survey', REPOA and Research and Analysis Technical Working Group, URT, 2003

Given the somewhat weak formal feedback mechanisms, assessing the impact of various communication interventions in the PRS has been difficult. Objective evaluations are questionable, as no formal baseline has been conducted, and indicators of success have not been developed.

In 2003, the RA TWG commissioned a *Policy and Service Satisfaction Survey* to gauge levels of policy perception and public understanding during the PRS period. The PRS scored ninth in a list of 15 policies surveyed (see Box 8). Whilst this could be seen as a negative indicator, given the relative newness of the PRS (Tanzania is currently in its third year of implementation), and the absence of a mass marketing campaign, this is a relatively good score.

In the absence of a formal PRS awareness baseline, the above study can be a useful tool in analysing the relative successes and failures of policy communication strategies. It can (and should) be developed and taken as a baseline for further communication interventions on the PRS.

In March 2004, the DSA TWG launched the *Give us Your Views* leaflet, which incorporated PRS Review information with a feedback questionnaire. With 500,000 copies of this being distributed nation-wide, and its availability on the Internet, some 40,000 responses have already been received and are being processed to feed into the drafting process of the new PRS.

What worked

As mentioned above, it is relatively difficult to gauge the success of various interventions as these have tended to be reactive measures, with little thought having gone into developing awareness indicators or a baseline awareness survey. In this respect, judgments on interventions as made in the following discussion have all been done on a relative (in comparison to each other, rather than to an ideal) scale. Very basic subjective indicators (informal public reaction at launches, use of the

intervention, availability of the intervention) have been used by the author in an informal way.

Tanzania Without Poverty booklets

The success of the *Tanzania Without Poverty* booklets has been phenomenal. What began as a pilot attempt at raising public awareness on poverty reduction (with an initial print run of 7,000), quickly escalated into a mass policy awareness campaign. The content of the booklet not only presented the facts around the policy issues, but also used political cartoons and a colourful (and patriotic) cover graphic to convey messages. The final print run totalled 212,000 (distributed mainly through civil society networks); in addition to a serialised newspaper insert that reached over 40,000 primary readers, and up to 400,000 secondary readers¹⁵. In the run up to the PRS Review in early 2004, further copies of the Kiswahili version have been printed and used as tools in the consultative process.

The booklet was initially intended for the general public, and it became clear that although it was advanced in its language use to be read by the population at large, many people in rural areas were having it read to them by school-going children. It is worth noting, however, that PRS awareness levels in both rural and urban areas are similar, with only rural women being less aware than the rest of the population (applicable to all policies, not just the PRS).

Following the initial print run in May 2001, the booklet became increasingly popular reading material, and was even being sold on the streets of urban areas. Further print runs had to be branded 'Not for Sale', in order to keep circulation high.

The booklet became an important awareness tool for local and regional government offices, and was also highly appreciated by rural-based CSOs as a vital tool in increasing their (and their constituents) awareness of a significant national policy process. Even today, the booklets are in demand, and it is not unusual to see them in local government offices in rural areas.

¹⁵ Steadman Research Services & Research International (based on their data that newspapers have 11 readers per copy)

The success of the booklet triggered the onset of the PRS posters, once again on a mass scale. These, however, were not as successful as the booklet for a number of reasons. Posters tend to have a short shelf life (around 2 weeks, depending on the elements), and the distribution method used (mostly private sector networks with an unspecified target population in rural areas) did not allow for the context behind the information to be understood. As a stand-alone intervention, posters tend to have more measurable impact when centred on behaviour change, rather than when used for information exchange.

The booklet format became a trend-setter in the Tanzanian context, with further editions of the PRS Progress Report also commissioned by the Ministry of Finance in the same manner. In addition, popular versions of the Zanzibar Poverty Reduction Plan (2002) were also produced using similar formats. Popular versions of a number of social sector policies, such as the Agriculture Sector Development Policy and the National Forestry Policy, are currently being developed by different government agencies and civil society organisations.

It is also interesting to note that the success of the booklet and ensuing awareness campaign depended in large part on the minimum consultation undertaken, and the massive scale of the campaign. The opportunity to raise awareness on a key government initiative was seized, with little wastage of time and resources on extensive participation by all stakeholders. This was largely an independent initiative that was not bound by the bureaucracies that invariably follow consultation.

Whilst the popular version of the booklet was initially successful as an accessible format for tedious government policies, towards the mid 2002 there were a multitude of similar publications which were not so well received. With some refinement and revision, however, this format can be a useful communication tool.

Poverty Policy Week 2002/3

Poverty Policy Week was another surprise success story. Poverty Policy Week 2002 was initially designed as a week of workshops intended to draw together stakeholders engaged in poverty reduction and release new information generated through the PMS. New data was available through the *Household Budget Survey 2000/1*, and a new national database (Tanzania Socio-economic Database) had been released. In order to effectively launch these products, it was agreed to combine them into a single five-day workshop, culminating in the release of the 2002 PRS Progress Report. The event was officiated by the Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania, and each day chaired by permanent secretaries and directors from relevant ministries.

Over 600 people (from government, development partners and civil society) were invited, and 300 participants attended each day. The event was highly publicised in the local media, with press conferences and a series of articles appearing in the daily papers both prior to and during the workshop. Senior government officials also gave radio interviews pertaining to the new findings and analysis. The report of the workshop was circulated to all participants.

Initially a donor-driven event, the workshop had little appeal to those outside the development partners and select academic and research organisations. However, the workshop's success in the first year has made it into an annual event on the government calendar, with government ownership and interest increasing significantly over the course of a year. Indeed, interest in the event has increased amongst a variety of different actors, including key government agencies and civil society at large.

In a follow-up to the 2002 event, *Poverty Policy Week 2003* was designed as a series of theme-based workshops running simultaneously over a four-day period. It was designed bearing in mind lessons learnt from the first event, where plenary sessions were thought to be less useful than separate working sessions where the

most value could be added. It was intended primarily for policymakers to debate and discuss key policy issues related to the PRS Review process, which was also launched simultaneously.

The workshop was attended by over 500 participants, and over 1,000 copies of the summary report in English were distributed to government offices and CSOs. As in the case of the previous event, it was preceded by a media campaign, and officiated by the Vice President, with various sessions chaired by permanent secretaries, senior government officials and members of parliament.

The media hype surrounding the event has no doubt added to its appeal, as has the anticipation of receiving unreleased poverty information, and being able to participate in meaningful policy debate. It is now a completely government-owned event, marred only by occasional in-fighting between Technical Working Groups to determine who drives the agenda.

Whilst this is by far the most high profile event of the DSA TWG, it must be said that this caters only to a very select audience (mainly urban-based policymakers). Perhaps part of its success can be attributed to the fact that it is a very focused event with defined outputs.

Systemic Challenges

Access to Resources

Financial resources have not been an issue as far as communication initiatives are concerned. Funds have been committed by both government and development partners, either through the Poverty Monitoring Pooled Fund – a funding arrangement to which the Government and a number of development partners contribute – or through bilateral funding arrangements. However, access to the funding has proven more problematic.

Whilst the notion of placing the implementation of the PRS communication and information needs within government systems

can be commended for its idealism, in practical terms, this does not always work. Given the lengthy government procurement system within which the DSA TWG is expected to operate, it is not realistic to expect this communication mechanism to be responsive and demand-driven. A number of activities that have been planned and budgeted for within the DSA TWG (for example the website) were not implemented for over 12 months, mainly due to restrictive procurement processes. Although government procurement processes are expected to be rigorous and lengthy in order to prevent corruption, in the demand-drive environment of the PRS, this has proven to be a serious shortfall.

Technical Assistance

Whilst technical advisors can contribute significantly towards the achievement of Communication initiatives, they are often put in the difficult positions of having to balance the production of tangible outputs with relatively futile attempts at capacity development within very short periods of time. The current staffing structure of the PED does not possess the time, experience and incentive to undertake the implementation of all Communication activities, and nor should it be expected to in the long run.

Although the efficiency of the PED to carry out its PRS mandate may be improved in the future, it is not realistic to expect staff to acquire specific technical skills in the short- to medium-term. Within the wider PMS, more attention will have to be paid to whether this kind of work should be continuously outsourced thereby making output production more efficient, or whether the PED should attempt to build that capacity in-house, perhaps working towards making it more sustainable.

In the run-up to the PRS Review and PRS II, the PED has employed two full-time staff who handle the consultative process and public information management. These positions are temporary (nine months duration), and supported by the UNDP. The focus of these positions has not been on building capacity

within the PED, but on managing and implementing activities during the PRS Review. This has resulted in many more communication activities (see Box 7) being undertaken during the review process than would otherwise have been possible.

In July 2004, the DSA TWG put out a tender for the design of a comprehensive communication strategy for the PRS II. This is again intended to complement the work of the DSA TWG through the identification of key stakeholders, communication channels and planned activities.

Communication flows between technical working groups

There is a fundamental error in the way the system works at present, and the role of dissemination, sensitisation and advocacy activities within the PMS needs to be reviewed. The DSA TWG has in the past received a final finished product from other TWGs (for example the *Poverty & Human Development Report* or the *Household Budget Survey 2000/1*) - who often design their own dissemination strategies without consulting the DSA TWG, - and is expected to review the need for communicating the contents in different formats to different audiences. This is difficult to do when presented with a finished product, and with little guidance on what the key policy messages are, and who needs to know about them.

Communication flows between the various TWGs of the poverty monitoring system have been limited. This can be partly attributed to the structure of the PMS, which does not designate communication between the TWGs in a systematic manner. Members from other TWGs often attend DSA TWG meetings, although this is usually done in their own individual capacity, rather than as an attempt to feed information across working groups. However, appointed representatives from the DSA TWG do not regularly attend other TWG meetings, perhaps due to time constraints and work pressures. Feedback and input from other TWGs has therefore been minimal in the

past, and the DSA TWG is often unable to respond quickly to demands from the system. During the PRS Review process, however, the Chairs of the TWGs have committed to meeting monthly in order to ensure cohesion and synergy between the TWGs.

There is also a tendency amongst all the Technical Working Groups (including the DSA) to want to disseminate information amongst the general public, even when this is not necessarily appropriate. It is taken as a given that the ideal dissemination strategy for any product of the PRS would be to distribute it nationwide to all and sundry, with little thought given to why this may be so, and what people are expected to do with information once they have received it. These basic questions do need to be asked at conception stage.

This has resulted in a lack of ownership on the part of the DSA as well as a lack of targeting particular audiences and messages at the product design stage. There is a tendency amongst other TWGs (particularly the RA TWG) of relegating the DSA TWG to the role of post office or event organiser for finished products, rather than as a think-tank on communicating policy messages to select target audiences. A productive and sustainable working relationship between the TWGs has not yet emerged as envisaged, although with increased communication between the TWGs in the last seven months, this is more likely to increase.

Whilst there are a whole host of reasons behind the initially random nature of DSA activities, the crux of the issue lies in the structural and systemic bureaucracy that has been created as a result of it being hosted, managed and implemented by the PED. The PED plays the vital role of being secretariat to the PRS Technical Committee, and the coordinator of the PRS. The PED has also been burdened with the management and implementation of DSA activities, and is expected to be able to respond to the communication demands from the poverty monitoring system in a timely, efficient and effective manner. Increasingly, it is becoming

clear that communication initiatives to be undertaken for the PRS II will need to be contracted out, and minimally managed within the PED.

Group membership and logistics

In comparison to the other technical working groups which average 15 members each, the membership of the DSA TWG was large and cumbersome (26 members plus four PED representatives). There has been a lack of commitment by appointed members to attend regular meetings (Carpe Diem Ink 2003), and a lack of consistency in representation from members. Many members did not attend meetings when invited, particularly those from sector ministries, and those that did were often spectators rather than participants. This sporadic attendance has led to massive inconsistencies in contributions from members, which often translates into a lack of follow-up on the work plan from members, leading in turn to many activities not being undertaken as planned, or indeed at all.

This has led to less group ownership on tasks undertaken, and a dependence on a very small group of core members and technical advisors to take things forward. This has also resulted in the secretariat moving forward with activities that have not necessarily been endorsed by a wider group, which has had budget implications as well.

The DSA TWG work plan (2003) contained quite a large number of routine activities, many of which fell behind the intended timeframes as they depended almost entirely on other TWGs to generate information for dissemination. The delays in implementation meant that the DSA TWG work plan was always, to some degree, out of date and beyond their control.

Following recommendations made by technical advisors in December 2003, the membership of the DSA TWG was reduced to 14 individuals selected for their potential to contribute significantly to the process. Although this has made the DSA TWG conceptually quite strong, it remains operationally weak.

Mediums of communication

As can be seen from the above, the majority of communication interventions on the PRS have used the written medium, in the form of booklets, posters, reports and so on. In a country with a vast rural population (76% of the population), and a 29% illiteracy rate (with women being twice as likely as men not to have any education), a large segment of the population is unreachable through current communication means. Whilst this may be wholly appropriate given the level of policy debate and the focused target groups, it presents challenges for a truly effective mass media campaign, which to date has not made full use of audiovisual communication means.

Radio continues to be the most widely used medium with access to over 96% of the population, and television has also begun to attract a significant number of viewers, with a reach of about 11% of the population (although 65% of these are in Dar es Salaam), and yet, neither are utilised to their full potential in delivering key policy messages, or in raising awareness on policy issues. To be sure, the high costs (of airtime versus printed matter) of utilising these mediums have played a part in this, but their effectiveness in nationwide campaigns cannot be matched by print or press. This is further highlighted in the *Policy and Service Satisfaction Survey* (URT, 2003) where radio is by far the major source of policy information in both urban and rural areas.

Distribution methods for print matter

Given the broad geography and size of the country and population, it has been difficult to develop mass awareness campaigns using written materials. The most efficient and least time-intensive distribution method is the postal system, although this is not always cost-effective.

The most effective method is to use CSOs, which often undertake to sensitise their audiences on content, rather than to simply distribute. However, this is the most time-consuming to coordinate and implement, and can have high cost implications as well. It is also

difficult to get full geographic coverage, as some remote areas will not be reached.

Finding the balance in terms of distribution methods – as a combination of methods often works best – is quite difficult, and the cost implications have been tremendous, in both human and financial terms.

What lies ahead

Following *Poverty Policy Week 2003*, an emphasis has been placed on communication within the PRS, especially on developing links with the grassroots, and encouraging public consultation. Given the very broad scope of dissemination activity, each TWG has given some thought to narrowing the focus of its dissemination activities and of being selective in determining target audiences. Whilst disseminating all poverty monitoring products to the public at large may be admirable, it is an expensive undertaking and may not produce desired results.

The feedback that is obtained during the PRS Review Consultation process will undoubtedly be useful to policymakers, and the feedback system that has been used has proved to be valuable. However, this again draws attention to the issue of scale. In those cases where it is necessary to reach the wider public, communication interventions need to be massive in scale, using not only written mediums but also the mass media.

DSA activities within the PMS have been narrowed down to focus on upstream policymakers at local, regional and national levels, as the objective is to impact on poverty policies. Downstream dissemination has been undertaken by civil society (used here in its broadest sense, including the media, trade unions, NGOs, academia, etc.) and other stakeholder groups, who address their constituents according to the broad parameters set by the PED. Development partners are also taking initiative in this field; UNICEF, for example, is in the process of developing youth-friendly PRS materials.

The PRS Review Action Plan suggested a number of consultations and activities that have been undertaken within very short timeframes. This has been built upon and refined, and included additional useful publications such as a *PRS Review Resource Pack*, containing all relevant materials for stakeholders and the *PRS Review Calendar*. The poverty monitoring website also contains a PRS Review page which is used to exchange ideas and gather feedback from selected audiences, and particularly to increase communication flows between the TWGs.

During this period, it is also clear that communication activities will be focused around the production of outputs, and not on capacity building of government staff, which is a longer-term process issue. An interim DSA TWG work plan was developed and is being used to guide the PRS Review process in order to provide cohesion within the system and clear indicators and outputs against which progress can be measured. A comprehensive communication strategy will be developed for the PRS II as a final output of the interim work plan.

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Emerging lessons for strategic communication and summary of good practice

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This chapter sets out to identify emerging lessons for strategic communication both within and between each of the three main PRSP stakeholder groups – government, donors and civil society. Information is drawn from case studies and examples of practical experiences from the ten countries profiled in the appendices to this publication. The emerging themes are organised on the basis of the conceptual framework laid out in Figure 1.

Based on the learning from country case studies the chapter concludes with a list of emerging good practices on integrating strategic communication in the PRSP process. These good practices are fleshed out in more detail in the following sections to develop the practical applications of the conceptual framework. It is hoped that these may provide the basis for developing future strategies and action plans for communication in future generation PRSPs.

An overview of communication in PRSPs

This section focuses on drawing the connections between the role of the key stakeholders in the PRS process and the communication challenges that they face. It outlines the approaches that have been used to tackle these challenges, with specific examples drawn from the country experience and challenges.

Every stakeholder group has a part to play in developing strategic communication in PRSPs. Using the conceptual framework (figure 4), this analysis will attempt to outline how government, civil society and donors can improve communication within their own sector, and in their relationships with other stakeholder groups. We organise the analysis by first examining the communication challenges and approaches *within* stakeholder groups:

- **within government**
- **within civil society**
- **within the donor community.**

We then examine the communication challenges and approaches *between* these groups:

- **between government and civil society**
- **between government and donors**
- **between donors and civil society**

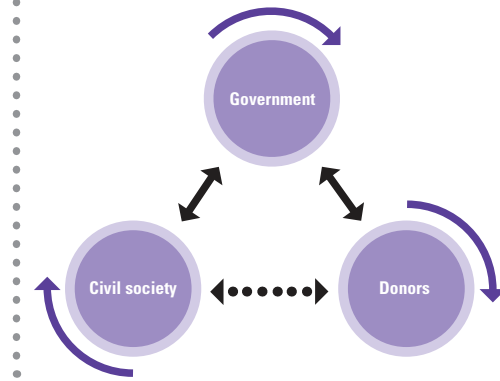
The equilateral triangle of neatly bound relationships shown in Figure 1 does not always reflect the complex and fluid relationships that develop on the ground. In practice, communication within and between government, civil society, and donors may be better represented as floating spheres that may move into different formations as they overlap, divide or disengage. This section illustrates how communication issues affect the way these relationships are configured, and how approaches to communication can change them.

Communication within government

The role of government in the PRS process is essentially one of coordinating and leading the efforts of national and international actors engaged in the national poverty reduction effort. These actors include the various institutions and individuals that make up the government itself, such as the legislative and executive branches, politicians and officials, central and sub-national tiers, and various sector line ministries.

Experience to date with the intra-government dimension of this coordination and leadership role points to two emerging challenges. First, clear lines of communication need to be established between the central PRS unit and other parts of government, particularly

Figure 4
A conceptual
framework for strategic
communication in
PRSPs



line ministries and local government. Those charged with leading the PRS process inside government will not be able to design, deliver or monitor a comprehensive national strategy for poverty reduction if they are unable to maintain relationships across the breadth and depth of government institutions.

Second, clear links must be articulated between the PRS document and process, and other national plans and processes. These include national parliamentary, budget or planning traditions, including their sector or local government aspects. Regional processes such as European accession in the Balkans or free trade in Central America, and donor-driven exercises such as United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) efforts to localise the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) may also be relevant. If links are not articulated, the PRS risks competing with rather than adding value to existing processes. If such processes command stronger ownership inside government, the result is likely to be an unsustainable PRSP.

Several approaches are proving their worth in addressing these challenges:

The location of the PRS unit in a place where it is able to exercise influence over and facilitate joint working between different parts of government is proving crucially important. A carefully chosen location enables coordination and leadership to take place at both ministerial and official levels. In Asia, strong traditions of government planning, have made the Ministry of Planning the location of choice, but in Africa and other regions, such units appear to have been more effectively located within Ministries of Finance or Offices of Prime Ministers or Presidents. The key lies in ensuring that the unit responsible for driving the poverty reduction effort is placed in a power position, and not in its traditionally marginal position of social sector line ministries. For example:

- **In Pakistan:** Responsibility for the PRS was given to the Ministry of Finance, even though Pakistan's Ministry of Planning (MoP) has responsibility for long-term planning processes at national level. The PRS was not properly integrated with the MoP's 10 year development plan, and communication flows across government have been strained. In the Punjab region, responsibility was allocated to the regional Ministry of Planning, where relations have gone much more smoothly. Here, the PRS has increasingly been used as a technical tool across regional government.
- **In Cambodia:** A PRS unit was placed within the Ministry of Planning, and as the Ministry of Finance became increasingly estranged from the process, the PRS became increasingly detached from budgetary processes. Divided between parties of the coalition government, the two ministries had opposing methods of work, and an inter-ministerial group has struggled to mediate their relationship. Once fully established, a medium-term expenditure framework looks likely to bridge these interests for the time being.

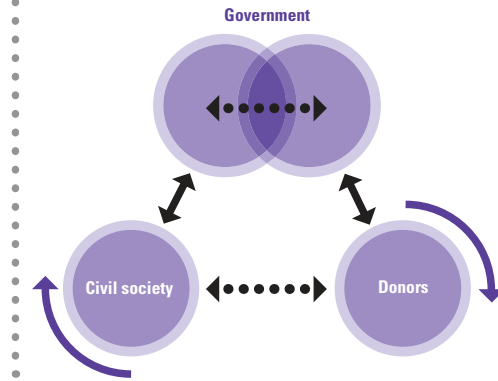
Working groups around particular sectors or themes in the PRSP are also proving effective at facilitating joined-up working between different parts of government. These groups are often instigated by the PRS unit itself but each is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Finance or Planning, relevant sector line ministries, and local government. They may also include donors and NGOs engaged in financing and delivering the relevant part of the PRSP. They provide a useful forum for developing and monitoring detailed strategies for priority sectors or cross-cutting themes (such as gender or environment) featured in the PRSP. For example:

- **In Uganda:** Sector working groups, particularly on health issues, are working

Figure 5

Split communication in the Pakistani PRSP

Overlapping, but divided responsibilities between the Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Finance have left the PRS poorly integrated with the 10 year development plan.



well. At monthly meetings officials from the central Ministry of Health discuss recent developments with those from local line ministries, representatives from particular civil society groups and key donors. Linked by personal connections as well as institutional ties, these individuals are in close collaboration, and have engaged in an ongoing discussion from the planning to the monitoring stages.

- **In Tanzania:** Four technical working groups have been established to plan, implement and monitor the PRS, one of which is specifically mandated to ensure that the general public are properly informed on the PRS and to elicit their feedback. They are responsible for drawing up a communication strategy for the PRS as a whole. With members from the central PRS secretariat, across civil society and donor groups making up the committee, the working group has been effective in ensuring 'buy-in' across stakeholders. In the future, the committee aims to slim down, in order to create more continuity in meetings, and make it easier to develop more consistent plans that are properly followed through.

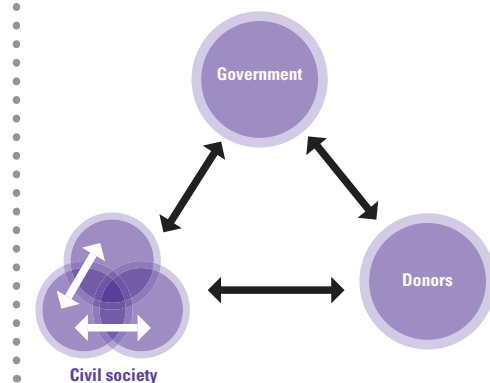
High quality core documents are important touchstones for discussion on the PRS, especially when communication between national, sector and local government becomes strained or confused. Central PRS documents such as the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), Annual Progress Report (APR), and the PRSP itself are an opportunity to crystallise knowledge, opinions and plans, providing a focal point on which discussion can turn. When well timed and designed to meet national rather than donor reporting needs, both the process of producing documents, and the texts themselves can be useful in building links between disparate planning, budget and parliamentary processes. For example:

- **In Rwanda:** The PPA became an authoritative and widely referenced source on the state of poverty in Rwanda. Debates on the efficacy of the PRS often used the PPA as a central point as there was a consensus that it was the most credible and reliable source on poverty. Simply by providing a comprehensive and coherent data set, the PPA became a useful tool for improving communication between central and regional government officials by providing shared common ground and focus in their discussions.
- **In Cambodia:** After attracting criticism from both civil society representatives and donors over the lack of participation in PRSP formulation process, the Minister for Planning led a concerted effort to improve dialogue with the public through the APR. After specifically appealing to key NGOs, line ministries, working groups and the general public, the APR was praised for bringing together civil society to plan their contributions and integrating feedback well within the document. By making explicit efforts to improve on the PRSP, the APR document has encouraged a sense of trajectory for developing communication and reducing poverty through the process, with donors remarking that the PRS was working on the basis of 'iterative improvements'.

Communication within civil society

The PRS approach challenges CSOs to move beyond their traditional role of service delivery in poor countries and towards engagement in policy debates. Civil society's role is to help ensure the full range of citizen and national interests are represented at both design and monitoring stages. Such a role is made possible by the sheer diversity of a sector which can embrace international and national NGOs, media organisations, faith groups, trade unions, political parties, research institutes, and many other types of organisation.

Strategic information sharing allows different parts of civil society; including NGOs, community groups and the public; to work together on the PRS.



This diversity also creates a number of communication challenges within civil society itself, however. On the one hand, horizontal relationships need to be established between organisations with very different constituencies, interests and structures if civil society is to articulate an effective voice on either the national PRSP or particular policy areas within it. On the other hand, vertical relationships must be forged between urban elites and poor people, especially in rural areas, if that voice is to be truly representative. Both sets of relationships demand funds and capacity for communication that have not historically been available in weak civil societies in poor countries.

Several approaches are proving to be especially effective at addressing these challenges:

Strategic information-sharing between CSOs about the PRS process is a key pre-requisite for effective joint working. Many CSOs have produced translations of key documents into local languages, engaged the media in discussing the PRSP in ways that ordinary citizens can understand, and pro-actively disseminated information to organisations which lack links into government or donor sources of information about the PRSP process.

For example:

- **In Tanzania:** Simplified booklets named *Tanzania without Poverty*, were extremely successful in explaining the PRS process and prompting discussion amongst the general population. Published in English and Kiswahili, the booklets were distributed through CSO networks alongside workshops and posters, and serialised in local newspapers, they had a great impact through their own print run and the other publicity activities that they sparked.
- **In Rwanda:** Radio 'soap operas' have been used to engage the general public in the latest developments in the PRS. Storylines linking poverty reduction initiatives with the lives of familiar characters have aimed

to demonstrate the relevance of the PRS to everyday people. Whilst only accessible to 32% of the population, these have been backed up by additional coverage in local newspapers and monthly *PRS update* sheets published by NGOs.

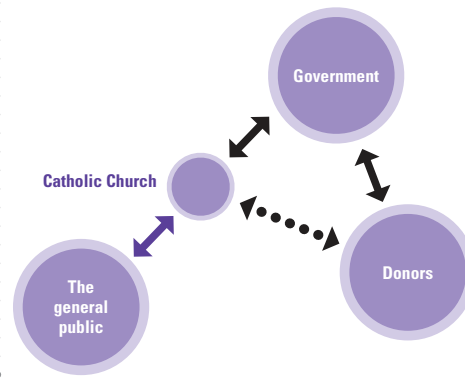
National networks and sub-committees on either the PRSP or particular policy themes within it have been created by CSOs in many countries. In some cases, these have attracted donor or International NGO (INGO) financing to help overcome capacity and resource constraints. These networks have helped transcend differences between organisations and allowed the development of joint policy positions and the pursuit of coordinated advocacy and monitoring strategies. For example:

- **In Bolivia:** Capitalising on the relative strength of organisations at municipal level, HIPC funds were allocated through *Comites de Vigilancia*, made up of locally elected representatives. These were supported by international NGOs running training sessions on resource allocation and budgetary transparency. Although heavily influenced by local power relations, the committees made unprecedented steps towards formalising civil society monitoring at a community level, and ensuring that spending was well aligned with community interests.
- **In Pakistan:** Whilst the participative process itself was weak, protests to the lack of civil society participation in the Pakistani PRS were well coordinated with a strong central message. In 2002, The Sustainable Development Policy Institute led a diverse network of CSOs and NGOs to formally reject the PRS process on the grounds that the participative process had been wholly inadequate. Their letter was widely circulated at the highest levels of government, amongst donor groups and development professionals internationally.

Figure 7

Mediation between government and the general public in the Bolivian PRSP.

Where government and civil society are estranged, the trusted Catholic Church runs a parallel consultation to pass public feedback to government officials and, to a lesser extent, to donors.



Participatory processes within civil society itself have also proved an important means of overcoming weak representation of poor people and other marginalised groups. In some countries, civil society networks have organised their own parallel consultation processes because they felt government-led consultations did not allow sufficient representation of diverse interests. In others, civil society has organised PPAs and fed the findings into national policy debates, as a means of bridging the gap between ordinary citizens and the national policy process. For example:

- **In Rwanda:** As part of the PPA, hundreds of cellules at village level were given \$1000 to carry out a PRS related project designed, monitored and implemented by the community themselves. Borrowing the traditional Rwandan practice of *ubudehe*, this initiative was a great success within communities and a point of pride amongst both the NGO groups who led the initiative, and government officials who commissioned it. It was highly successful in strengthening country ownership, and creating ongoing connections between NGOs and poor people in rural areas.
- **In Bolivia:** Gathering some consensus amongst a deeply divided and fractious civil society, the Catholic Church ran an independent consultation process, parallel to the state-run National Dialogue. Drawing on the status of the Church as a respected arbiter of disputes, this *Foro Nacional Jubileo* facilitated debate on the structural causes of poverty, and enabled civil society to feed into the PRS without raising unrealistic expectations about how their contributions might be taken on board.

Communication within the donor community

The role of donors in the PRS process is intended to be one of providing financing and other support in ways that maintain a focus on poverty

reduction but avoid undermining country ownership. Yet in reality, this role is complicated by the sheer diversity of interests and behaviours that exist within the donor community. Each donor has its own set of objectives, which often relate to domestic foreign policy or economic interests, rather than poverty reduction per se. Each also has its own ways of working, expressed in preferences for certain sectors, aid instruments or monitoring requirements.

This diversity again poses Communication challenges for those seeking to ensure a coordinated and harmonised response from the donor community to countries engaged in the PRS process. Before coordination can take place, donors need to build lines of communication around common interests in a certain sector or theme, but this is extremely difficult in a context of proliferation and fragmentation. Before activities can be harmonised, these communication channels need to be developed into relationships of trust, but high staff turnover and lack of in-country representation often mitigate against this.

Nevertheless, there are some signs of emerging good practice within the donor community:

Joint donor groups have been created in many countries, either in support of the national PRSP, for example around general budget support, or around detailed sector strategies that sit within the national strategy. These groups allow donors to share information in a systematic way, engage in joint dialogue and coordinate their support for government and civil society actors engaged in the PRS process. They are however, proving to be extremely time-consuming, especially for those agencies tasked with leading the group. This may be the inevitable consequence of donors beginning to bear the transaction costs which have undermined national government institutions in the past. For example:

- **In Bolivia:** After a history of rather fragmented donor relationships, two

networks were recently established to aid donor coordination. DFID set up a network of bilateral donors in 2002, and the 'Donor Support Group' was initiated by the IMF and World Bank in 2004. These groups have already been helpful in encouraging flows of information between donor groups and ensuring that each agency has similar and reasonable expectations of what can be achieved in the PRS, ironing out difficulties between CIDA and the IMF and World Bank.

International partnerships have also been created or given added impetus as a result of the PRS process. These include the OECD-DAC, the Strategic Partnership with Africa, and informal networks such as the Utstein group of 'likeminded donors', all of which are increasingly acting as fora for dialogue between donor headquarters on different dimensions of the PRS approach. Whether their activities will translate into tangible behavioural change from those donors demonstrating weak commitment to alignment and harmonisation remains to be seen. For example:

- **In Cambodia:** Collaborative working is smoothing relations between the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank who had serious fall outs after the two donors backed different and competing policy processes. Responsibilities for donor involvement have now been separated, with the ADB concentrating on supporting the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, and the two banks cooperating on public administration reform.
- **In Rwanda:** After ongoing difficulties with coordinating their work, a donor conference in 2001 clarified guidelines for shared working, which have formed the basis of a number of joint donor initiatives led by UNDP. This central reference point, combined with other credible and rigorous documents such as the PPA, facilitated more clear and forthright discussions, allowing donors in Rwanda to develop more trusting working relationships.

Communication between Government and Civil Society

The PRS approach envisages a two-way relationship between government and civil society, which not only enables the development of a nationally owned PRSP, but also contributes to the development of an accountability relationship between government and citizens. By strengthening lines of accountability, the approach seeks to overcome the tendency of much development aid to encourage national governments to focus outwards, on accounting to donors, rather than downwards, to their own domestic constituency.

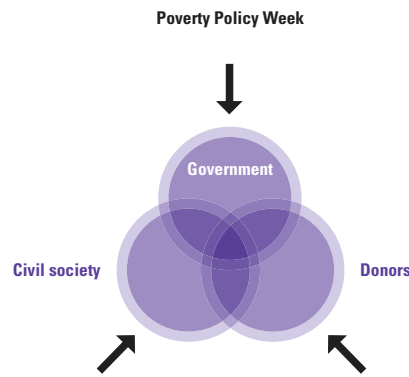
As is the case for relationships within a given sector, those between these two spheres are complicated by a number of communication challenges. Many poor countries are prebendal or semi-democratised states, in which lines of accountability between citizen and state remain extremely weak. Where there has been dialogue between NGOs and the state in the past, it has often been characterised by mutual distrust or extreme antipathy, rather than constructive cooperation. Politicians and officials tend to have little history of practising open government and CSOs lack experience of engaging in public dialogue or speaking the technical language of budget reform.

The scale of this communication challenge is enormous, but the PRS approach has catalysed a number of contributions to addressing it:

Consultation processes led by government but engaging a range of civil society organisations are a basic requirement of the PRS approach and have been organised with varying degrees of success in all countries engaged in the process. They have worked best where governments have been genuinely committed to taking civil society views into account, and where CSOs have organised effectively to articulate these views. There is evidence of improvement in consultations over time, but concerns have been expressed about the poor quality of many held to date.

Figure 8

Tanzania's Poverty Policy Week created a focused opportunity for government, civil society and donors to come together and discuss the PRS, plan joint working and launch the Annual Progress Report.



Key elements of a quality process include dissemination of essential documents in advance and in a format or language that participants can understand; allocation of sufficient time and resources for civil society to prepare comments; organised workshops which encourage participants to prioritise and focus, but also give space for comprehensive discussions; broad geographical and thematic coverage; and a commitment to ongoing dialogue with civil society to explain how these views will be taken forward by government. For example:

- **In Moldova:** The government has established a website to gather feedback on the PRS, it presents key information on the strategy, news on recent developments, and offers members of the public the opportunity to give their feedback either by email or an online form. With only 3% of the population online (CIA 2002), the effectiveness of this has been limited. The network that managed consultation events with the public at large has organised 30 temporary enquiry points.
- **In Tanzania:** Whilst many governments have run one-off, or even a series of consultation events or roundtables, Tanzania's 'Poverty Policy Week' has provided an annual focal point for discussion of the PRS. Originally intended as a forum to release new research data and information systems, the four day event has become a platform to launch the Annual Progress Report. Bringing together over 500 participants from civil society, ministries, working groups and donors, concentrating PRS discussion in this way has not only facilitated a more focused and constructive dialogue, but attracted better media coverage and more convergence in the work of different stakeholders.

Partnerships between civil society and government have also been formed to good effect in many PRS processes. At the consultation stage, certain 'insider' NGOs have

been able to draw upon long-standing relationships with government officials and develop these into channels for influencing, while 'outsider' NGOs maintain the necessary critical distance. At the monitoring stage, partnerships have been developed between local governments and NGOs to carry out household surveys, PPAs and other studies designed to track the impact of PRS implementation. In some countries, parliamentarians and civil society organisations have formed alliances aimed at holding government to account for delivering on its PRSP promises. For example:

- **In Kyrgyzstan:** Where the general public have a long-held distrust of government agencies, NGO groups were commissioned to conduct a PPA and gather views on the PRSP. This research uncovered that many poor people were unsure how to access state-run services and unaware of how to assert their rights with official agencies. The government here can inform the public indirectly through traditional *ashur* schemes, side-stepping and improving their poor relations with civil society.
- **In Bolivia:** Think tanks have worked to diffuse an often antagonistic relationship between government and civil society. Policy research contributes to bringing better informed and more constructive discussion to a debate over the PRS which has typically taken crude and violent forms. Close partnerships between government officials and think tank researchers have served to place the latest PRS developments in the public arena.
- **In Kyrgyzstan:** One key NGO, the DIALOGUE network worked in partnership with the government to publish regular summaries of the latest PRS documents. These were made available online in Russian and English, and were championed by the NGO's Director, who toured the country explaining and discussing the latest PRS developments with a wide variety of civil society groups.

Permanent spaces for civil society participation

have been created as a result of the PRS process in some countries, through legislative reform. This may simply entail the introduction of civil society representation on government bodies such as sector working groups tasked with developing the sector strategies that constitute the PRSP. In other cases, national watchdog bodies have been created for poverty monitoring and ongoing arrangements for dialogue with civil society have been created at local government level. These legal changes create ongoing communication channels between government and civil society and augur well for strengthened accountability lines over time. For example:

- **In Bolivia:** Between 1995 and 2001, four pieces of legislation were put in place to ensure civil society participation became a permanent feature of the policymaking process. The legislation aimed to decentralise administration and monitoring systems, with local people at municipal level taking a key role in the PRS. It also enshrined extensive consultation activities, known as the National Dialogue, to take place every three years. Economic problems and civil unrest have undermined the practical effectiveness of this legislation to date.
- **In Cambodia:** With tense relationships hampering cooperation between the Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Finance at a national level, regional Commune Councils were elected in 2002 to move the PRS process forward at community level. Made up primarily of local leadership figures from civil society, these side-stepped the political divisions endemic at national level, but stumbled on their lack of expertise and experience. UNDP has been engaged in a capacity building programme to help them grow into their responsibilities, and the Commune Councils look like providing a useful complement to national participation processes in the longer term.

Communication between government and donors

The PRS approach demands new positioning from both government and donors through its central focus on the principle of national ownership. This implies not only that donors refrain from undermining national ownership through stepping back from intrusive conditionality, but also that governments stake their claim as leaders of the national poverty reduction process by beginning to play a more powerful role in the aid relationship.

The potential gains are clearly immense, but they require negotiation of complex communication challenges along the way. Donors are called upon to end the dictation of detailed terms for development financing and move towards softer forms of negotiation and influencing around broad poverty reduction goals instead. Governments are expected to undertake a process of empowerment through which they begin to articulate their own terms and take leadership of the process.

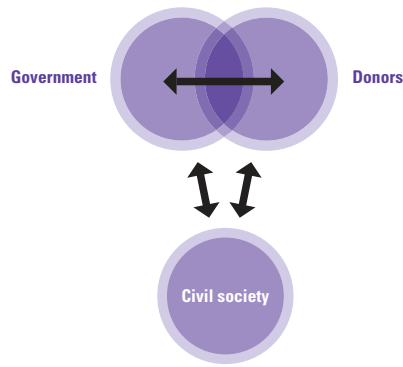
In aid dependent countries, governments are often understandably reluctant to risk offending donors, and can be left confused as they seek to understand the inevitable donor 'bottom line', but it is no longer articulated in stark and concrete terms. As donors increasingly coalesce into groups, for example taking joint decisions about budget support, there is also a risk that governments feel 'ganged up on' rather than empowered.

Several approaches are being tried and tested to help these two sides negotiate the changing aid relationship, with varying degrees of success:

Joint donor assessments have been instituted by joint donor groups in many PRS countries. They provide a coordinated response to government from the donor community to drafts of the PRSP and augur well for reducing the amount of time spent by government officials on handling feedback from individual donors. The process has worked best where

Figure 9

The coordination of Vietnam's JSA and APR created a hub for information exchange between donors and government.



donors have succeeded in prioritising their concerns, and articulated clearly to government whether these are hard conditions for support or mere suggestions for improvement.

Joint Staff Assessments (JSAs) carried out by the World Bank and IMF fulfil a similar feedback function and have worked well in some countries, but the need to simultaneously signal that the PRSP provides a sufficient basis for financing can make these assessments less than candid. For example:

- **In Cambodia:** The JSA was a relatively open process, incorporating comments from DFID and other smaller donors as well as the World Bank and IMF. Informal consultations were held across stakeholder groups at an early stage of the drafting, involving them in discussions of the criterion for assessment as well as whether these have been met. These measures contributed to greater transparency in the JSA, clarifying its implications for government.
- **In Vietnam:** Early and late drafts of the JSA were circulated to individual donors, with substantial comments received from Japan and other like-minded donor groups. This process allowed the document to emerge as the consensus view of donors. Combined with the Annual Progress report, these monitoring documents brought together an unprecedented amount of data from across government. They were seen as an important step towards more integrated national planning.
- **In Ghana:** The World Bank presented the JSA to other donors at the last minute in a formal meeting, and they were effectively only given the opportunity to rubber stamp it. There has been little joint working across donor groups.

Operational principles for donor support have been developed in a very small number of countries that are leaders in the PRS approach, such as Uganda. These are a conscious attempt

by governments to articulate in writing some terms for their relationship by donors. They often include a stated preference for certain types of aid instrument such as budget support, for predictable commitments and disbursements timed with the national budget cycle, or for donors to restrict their activities to a limited number of sectors. Whether such strategies are matched by behavioural change from donors remains to be seen. For example:

- **In Uganda:** The government wrote 'partnership principles' for donors into the PEAP (PRSP). They outline that donors should confine their support to the PEAP strategy, channel funding through government systems, and to provide medium term projections of aid that can be coordinated with the budget cycle. In return, donors are systematically consulted at macro and sector levels in the formulation and implementation of plans and budgets. The operational principles are continually evolving, and their coordination by the governments' Aid Liaison Department has been seen as a particularly successful and innovative move.

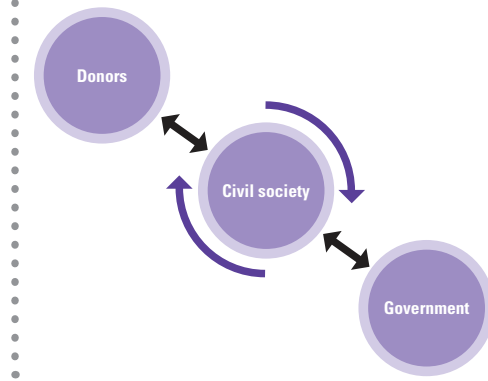
Communication between Donors and Civil Society

Relations between donors and CSOs engaged in the PRS process can appear to be something of a one-way street, in which donors channel funds and other support to organisations seeking to engage in consultations and monitoring activities. There is often however an element of reciprocity in the relationship, with CSOs providing donors with a non-government view on the PRS, and a relatively non-controversial means of supporting government accountability to citizens.

Once more, this is a relationship characterised by a number of communication challenges. On the one hand, donors are understandably keen to articulate their support for civil society engagement by forging relationships around funding and other resource

Figure 10

In Ghana, donor supported capacity building has helped media based CSOs to both inform the general public on the PRS, and provide transparent feedback to government.



gaps. On the other, they need to take care to ensure such relations do not compromise the vision of a nationally representative civil society. In reverse, CSOs need to fulfil their need for financing and information, but maintain a sufficiently critical distance from international donor agendas.

Several approaches appear to be helping these two sets of actors strike this delicate balance:

Donor championing of the participatory process is another means of ensuring donors support civil society without undermining country ownership. In several countries, donors have acted as a useful bridge between NGOs and government, conveying concerns about the need for a quality consultation or monitoring process, and providing financial and technical support for this. Where civil society has organised its own parallel consultations, donors have also played a useful role in supporting national networks tasked with designing and organising their own independent consultations, instead of selecting their favourite individual NGOs. For example:

- **In Moldova:** Where the participation process had been disappointing, in August 2002 DFID organised extensive roundtable meetings for civil society representatives, disseminating information on PRSPs and encouraging them to be involved in the elaboration of the strategy. They also financed an indigenous NGO to run a communication campaign, working through television, radio and posters. This NGO group came to work in close partnership with the PRS unit in the government, and coordinated their information campaign with the activities of the Participation Council.
- **In Ghana:** The World Bank in Ghana has initiated a Media Capacity Enhancement Programme to build the capacity of the media through training editors and producers as well as journalists in reporting techniques for economic policy subject

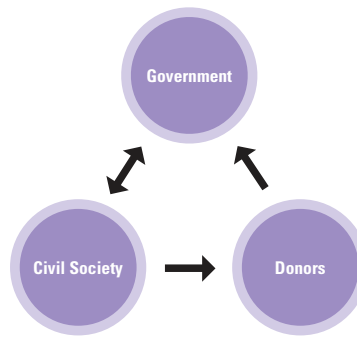
matters. This helps both the communication of the PRS to the general public, and creates a public ‘watchdog’, providing feedback to government. Although funded by the Bank, the programme is managed independently by the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana and has been an effective way to support media coverage of the PRSP whilst maintaining the autonomy of the sector.

Civil society as a resource for donors to keep them informed of developments. In several countries civil society groups have been a useful ‘third party’ to mediate donor relationships with government. Providing information, opinions and feedback on the process as a whole, the donor–civil society relationship also provides forum for public views where issues have arisen between civil society and national government. For example:

- **In Bolivia:** Where relations between all actors in the PRS have at times been acrimonious, think tanks have been a valuable resource for clarifying PRS debates. Donors have invested in their analytic capabilities; synthesising the issues raised by government and other parts of civil society. These have aided donors in their efforts to have more reasonable expectations of government.
- **In Pakistan:** When conflicts over the participation process were reaching crisis point, CSOs communicated directly with donors to inform them of the scale and gravity of the problems. Donors referenced their correspondence in the Joint Staff Assessment, and problems with the participative process were flagged as the central issue that the PRS needed to address.

Figure 11

In Pakistan, civil society groups communicated directly with donors when relations with government broke down. Donors conveyed concerns to government through the JSA.



Summary of good practice

The role of strategic communication in PRSPs has been discussed in the context of a conceptual framework that highlights the linkages within and between three main stakeholder groups: government, donors, and civil society. This section draws on the case study experiences and considers the practical applications of strategic communication in PRSPs for the different stakeholder groups identified in the framework. The chapter also intends to focus on some of the good practices that have been identified from the case studies and provide a basis for developing future communication strategies.

Government

For many developing country governments the PRS formulation process is new territory in public policy planning terms. Although policies aimed at reducing poverty are not in themselves all that new, the realignment of the national budget for this purpose is. The PRS brought with it process conditionality that required widespread participation to ensure national ownership. This element of the PRS formulation process is most relevant from a strategic communication perspective and a practical application for government stakeholders should focus on the design and implementation of effective participatory and consultative mechanisms.

National governments seem to be more successful where they build strategic communication into the core business of leading the PRSP. There are many opportunities to do this, including:

- Building good working relations between the PRS unit and other parts of government. This is particularly important where the location of the PRS unit (in the Ministry of Planning or Ministry of Finance) has meant that budgetary and planning processes must be coordinated.
- Developing working groups around sectors or themes that can bring together

individuals from across central and local government to work on a particular issue.

- Writing or commissioning high quality core documents, such as the Participative Poverty Assessment or the Annual Progress Report can provide key reference points for debate between stakeholders.
- Running open, broad and well organised consultation processes can be a key forum for disseminating information to the general public, as well as gathering views and feedback on each stage in the process.
- Creating permanent spaces for civil society participation, whether through legislation, capacity building or working partnerships, can help develop two-way, ongoing and interactive communication, rather than one-off and one-way consultation exercises.
- Delegating specific responsibility for liaising with donors can be a useful way to clarify donor–government relationships and ensure good flows of information between parties.

Communication strategy

An approach that has been taken in Ghana, Moldova, and Tanzania is to develop a communication strategy specifically for the PRSP. In all cases this has been a retrospective measure taken to redress imbalances in the way information on the PRSP has been communicated to different stakeholder groups. A PRSP communication strategy provides the basis for considering how all the relevant groups can be encouraged to participate most effectively in the formulation of the PRS. The communication strategies include a combination of media campaigns, consultations with stakeholders at different levels of government, and capacity building to assist groups in understanding and engaging in the process. The fact that these communication strategies are being developed after the first PRSP has already been prepared has implications for their implementation. In cases where the PRSP was prepared without widespread consultation then the communication strategy needs to fulfil this task whilst also

encouraging feedback that will be constructive for the revision of the PRS. This will involve disseminating information both on the PRSPs original goals and on the results achieved so far. Where widespread consultation and ownership took place initially, the communication strategy can focus on extending the scope of participation and encouraging feedback based on the results of monitoring and evaluation exercises to assist the revision process. The communication strategy is therefore more than a comprehensive list of the communication activities that need to take place because it must integrate them with the timing of the PRS events to ensure an ongoing communication process.

Core team of staff with communication expertise

The design and implementation of the communication strategy requires a core team of staff within the government PRSP preparation team that have specialist communication skills. There are often capacity constraints in the government that restrict the production of the PRSP and, in this context, the funding for communication experts may be considered a lower priority than for other staff. However, even with the most basic communication strategy there needs to be a suitable team of communication experts in the government PRSP preparation team to implement it. The role of strategic communication is to create a dialogue between stakeholders and therefore implementing the communication strategy should be considered as an ongoing process that can improve the quantity and quality of the dialogue as it progresses. Without an effective team of communication specialists the activities in the communication strategy will be at risk of being implemented as a series of one-off events that have no cumulative impact on stimulating broad participation and ownership. The staff of the core team need to have the capacity and resources to ensure that there is a strong institutional memory and that feedback can be used effectively to encourage ongoing participation.

Civil society

Civil society groups vary in their capacity to engage with governments in public policy planning processes. In many developing countries where democratisation or re-democratisation processes are relatively recent, CSOs have limited experience of sharing information with government. In cases where the media has been controlled by government it will take time for a free, vibrant and independent media to grow up within civil society. It is therefore important when considering practical applications for civil society to focus on building their capacity to communicate amongst themselves as a basis for engaging effectively with government on the PRS.

The extent to which civil society groups can effectively communicate is partly conditioned by the extent of their participation in the PRS, which they negotiate with national governments. However, CSOs can create an independent impetus for constructive Communication in various ways:

- Civil society groups can be key figures in disseminating information on the PRS, through the media, soap operas, booklets and workshops. Publishing précis of debates and summaries of the process is often a useful means both to inform the general public and communicate clearly with government.
- National networks and sub-committees can pool the expertise of civil society groups on a particular problem, crystallising their understanding and finding new ways to develop solutions.
- CSOs are often well positioned to gather information on the nature of poverty in a country, taking a key role in Participative Poverty Assessments, as well as facilitating participation processes.
- Some CSOs have also been important mediators, smoothing relations between antagonistic or conflicting groups brought together through the PRS, whether they be within civil society itself, government or donors.

- Some CSOs have established a niche as providers of reliable, up-to-date and independent information and expertise. This is often a particularly useful resource for donors to ‘triangulate’ their views of the PRS process.

Civil society networks

Civil society networks provide a good basis for communication on the PRS because they provide a link between groups with a shared common interest such as faith groups and political parties. In Bolivia municipal level committees *Comités de Vigilancia* were used to strengthen civil society monitoring at the community level. In Ghana, the Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development (GAPVOD) is an umbrella organisation of 419 member organisations including 25 international NGOs. GAPVOD has initiated a programme with the media to coordinate inputs from its members on the revision of the GPRS and is establishing a civil society platform for regional and district level meetings with members on the GPRS. Civil society groups need to be able to coordinate in this way to increase the impact of their engagement with the government on the PRS. It is often most effective if an independent consultation process can be organised by a civil society group. In Bolivia the Catholic Church managed to organise an independent consultation even amongst a deeply divided civil society and encouraged a national debate on poverty through the *Foro Nacional Jubileo*.

Dissemination and public engagement

Civil Society Organisations can play an important role in the dissemination of information on the PRS to the public at large. Local media are able to discuss the PRS in ways that are easily understood by relating it to issues of local importance and relevance. In Tanzania CSOs distributed booklets in English and Kiswahili that stimulated broad debate and encouraged further dissemination through other

local publicity activities. In Rwanda radio soap operas have been used to update audiences on PRS issues through the drama of the radio programmes. These have formed the basis for monthly PRS update sheets that are published by CSOs and used to extend the reach of the radio programmes. CSOs are able to disseminate PRS information widely and in a way that can encourage the type of ongoing dialogue that is needed for greater ownership and empowerment. In cases where CSOs find it difficult to access the relevant information from government they need to be more actively included in the process. In Moldova a national NGO network was selected by the government to facilitate participation events which improved the discussion amongst the general public.

Donors

Donor organisations are a driving force in the PRS process in developing countries. Despite efforts to ensure that national governments develop their own strategies there is the intrinsic link between PRSP preparation and donor funds in the form of HIPC debt relief and other multi-donor budget support (MDBS). For many governments donor funding is the reason for the preparation of the PRSP and strategic communication is a necessity to fulfil the requirements for broad based participation. It is therefore important when considering practical applications for donors to focus on supporting governments in their efforts by maintaining a consistent approach and by targeted capacity building.

Donor initiatives demonstrate that strategic communication can work to clarify the distance between actors, as much as bring them together. Donor efforts to improve strategic communication often focus improving coordination of their work, developing their analytic capacity, or making donor relations with other actors explicit. These take on a number of forms:

- Joint donor groups have established networks to share information amongst donors, ensuring they have similar and reasonable expectations of the ongoing PRS process.

- A development of this work has seen international partnerships providing joint funding to capacity building projects, and establishing greater clarity on the ‘division of labour’ between donor agencies.
- Closer collaboration between donors has made for more constructive and thorough joint donor assessment documents.
- Whilst still in their early stages, drawing up operating principles for donor support has been an effective tool to clarify donor relationships and behaviour.
- Donor initiatives to support civil society have been most successful when they have separated their funding from implementation or monitoring structures; for example, by working through independent actors, providing contracts which make CSO autonomy explicit, or ‘lending’ technical advisors as independent consultants (rather than donor staff).
- Donors must be careful not to undermine government–civil society relations when responding to civil society requests directly. Some donors have managed this by explicitly acknowledging civil society views through formal mechanisms, for example, in their JSAs.

Consistency and coordination of approach

Many donors are working towards greater harmonisation of their approaches to common goals such as poverty reduction. From the perspective of strategic communication in PRSPs, this is essential for the consistency of the messages that are being developed to encourage participation from a wide range of stakeholders. Conflicting messages from different donors or regularly changing donor priorities will make the government’s task of developing an ongoing dialogue with a well informed public much more difficult than it already is. Joint donor groups are time consuming but have helped donors coordinate their support to the PRS process in many countries. This could help in the monitoring of

strategic communication in the PRSP and generate more collective action from donors when necessary. Joint donor assessments are one way of coordinating donor priorities and the Annual Progress Report is becoming increasingly important as a monitoring tool. In Vietnam the Joint Staff Assessment of the IMF and the World Bank was circulated to other donors for comment in good time and substantial feedback from other donors was incorporated. In this case the JSA could be relied upon by the government as the consensus view of the donors.

Capacity building

Donors are anxious not to undermine national ownership by excessive conditionality and interference in the PRS formulation process. However, the requirements for widespread participation are a type of process conditionality that does need support to be implemented effectively. Initially support is required to the government for the preparation of a PRSP Communication Needs Assessment that constitutes the preliminary research for the Communication Strategy. Capacity building for these activities is likely to require both training of national experts and funding for external communication experts at least in the short term. This should be part of a long term and ongoing package of support for the design and implementation of the PRSP Communication Strategy that centres on a core team of communication experts as discussed above. There is also a need to enhance the capacity across all the government departments that are responsible for the dissemination of information on government policy. Capacity building of the media is also likely to require long-term donor support to improve the quality of reporting on macroeconomic policy issues as is occurring in Ghana. Civil society more broadly can also benefit from donor support to assist with the cost of networking and consultation activities.

Document quality and transparency

In view of the challenges of information sharing between many developing country governments and their constituents there is a particular need for the core PRSP-related documents to be of high quality. This means they need to be very clear in their structure and content to enable a wide range of stakeholders to understand and discuss the relevant issues. For very wide circulation simplified versions have been developed that focus on the key messages – but this still relies on the core documents being clearly written in the first place. Donors have the capacity and resources to ensure that the central PRS documents such as the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), the Annual Progress Report and the PRSP contribute to improved communication and transparency of the policymaking process rather than hinder it. In Cambodia efforts to improve on the PRSP led to a focus on the APR that included greater participation from government and NGO stakeholders and incorporated their feedback more effectively. This led to a more transparent process that encouraged broader participation aimed at achieving iterative improvements.

Practical applications

The issue of strategic communication in PRSPs has emerged out of a need to include a wider range of stakeholders in policymaking for poverty reduction in developing countries. The objective is to enable widespread participation between donors, government and civil society in the design and implementation of the PRSP. In order to achieve this greater communication is needed both within and between all three groups than is currently taking place.

In conclusion, the key components of a strategic approach to communication in the PRSP can be summarised as:

1. Develop a PRSP Communication Strategy and Action Plan: including mass media campaigns, consultations and workshops, internal communication with government,

civil society and the donors – the earlier in the process the better but at whatever stage the activities should be closely integrated with the progress of the PRSP itself.

2. Provide a core team of communication experts: as an ongoing part of the government department responsible for PRSP formulation, to implement the Communication Strategy and Action Plan, ensure institutional memory, encourage and manage feedback and maintain ongoing dialogue.
3. Encourage civil society networking: to develop discussion and consensus amongst civil society groups that can help to improve the quality of inputs into PRSP formulation and review.
4. Support NGOs and local media: to disseminate information on the PRSP in a way that is accessible to the general public with discussion in local languages and related to local issues.
5. Ensure consistency of PRS approach: in order to limit confusion and misinformation and to help generate broad ownership over time.
6. Facilitate targeted capacity building: of CSOs for information sharing and establishing independent consultations, the national media editors and producers and journalists for economic reporting, and government for improved coordination of dissemination.
7. Produce high quality core PRS documents: to ensure clarity of the messages to be discussed amongst a broad range of stakeholders and improve transparency of the process as a whole.

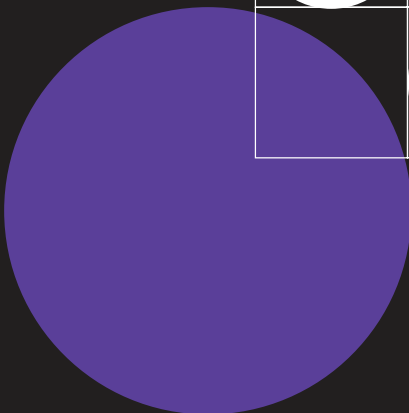
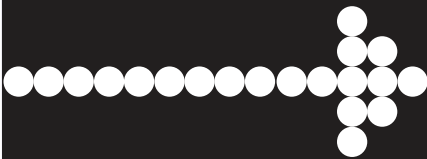
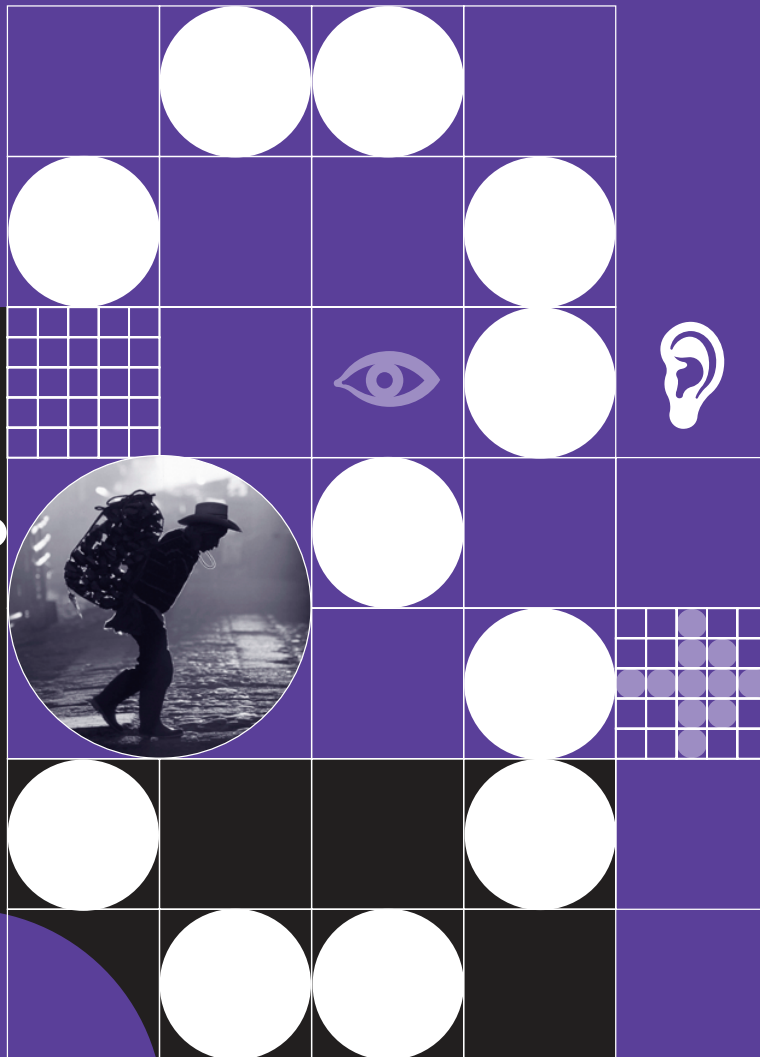
Conclusion

The challenges of communication in PRSPs both within and between governments, civil society and donors correspond to some of the key challenges of the PRS initiative – how to

create a genuinely country-owned, participatory, and comprehensive process. As improving the exchange of information facilitates greater collaboration, joint working and coordinated activities, strategic communication can provide a catalyst to reconfigure relationships between stakeholder groups, bringing them together in new ways. At times, building strategic communication may mean putting in place activities specifically targeted towards improving communication, such as consultation networks, meetings to bring together stakeholders, or dissemination campaigns. In other instances it may mean addressing the communication issues within activities which are primarily concerned with other matters, such as sector working groups, operating principles or donor partnerships. Improving communication here can be a catalyst to dislodge entrenched issues, providing opportunities to reconfigure and clarify the relationships between government, donors and civil society in the PRS.

Whilst governments can provide leadership in a strategic communication approach, CSOs and donors have a central part to play in making these initiatives work. Strategic communication facilitates the involvement of all stakeholders in the PRS, allowing core PRS activities to be fully capitalised on as part of an iterative process for reducing poverty.

Part 3 : **Short Case Studies
from Five Countries**



Part 3 **Short Case Studies from Five Countries**

This part builds on the understanding gained from the detailed country case studies by presenting summary information from a further five PRSP countries: Bolivia, Cambodia, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan and Rwanda. Each case briefly describes the background of the PRSP in the country concerned and then explores the communication challenges and approaches experienced both within and between the three principle stakeholder groups; government, civil society and the donor community.



Bolivia

Summary Communication initiatives in the Bolivian PRS have worked towards building constructive links between very diverse groups with fragile relationships. The Bolivian government as a whole has long-term problems with clientalism and corruption, and an acrimonious relationship with a very vocal and internally-divided civil society sector. Steps towards bridging these gaps through the PRS process have been made in three ways. First, by conducting consultation processes and participative monitoring at the relatively stable and coherent level of municipalities. Second, an independent consultation on the PRSP was conducted by the Catholic Church – an organisation which cuts across disparate civil society groups - and run in parallel to the government-led National Dialogue. Finally, think tanks such as ILDIS have worked to mediate between government and the general public by promoting more informed and constructive debate. Steps are also being taken within the donor community to develop closer collaboration amongst themselves, with DFID leading a new network of bilateral donors. There is, however, room for improvement in the links between donors and other stakeholders. There have been calls for donors to capitalise on the success of the Bolivian think tank sector, and invest in research and analysis which can promote a better match between donor expectations of government, and its practical capacities.

The PRSP process in Bolivia

Bolivia was one of the first countries to write a PRSP, submitting an interim PRSP in January 2000 and a full document in 2001 (Christian Aid 2002). The Bolivian Government is currently working on a second PRS, known as the EBRP (*Estrategia Boliviana de Reducción de la Pobreza*).

Bolivia's PRSP process has been noteworthy for its innovative approach to engaging CSOs and local government, which builds on a tradition of social activism and gives civil society a role in holding municipalities to account. The approach has been enshrined in legislation ensuring a lasting legacy, but it has also faced formidable challenges in a pressurised political environment.

The development of a second PRS had been scheduled for 2003. The process has been somewhat held up due to a change of government in 2002, and civil unrest in October 2003. The government presented a first draft to

CEPAS-CÁRITAS, the Social Commission of the Bolivian Episcopal Conference, in September 2003, and was advised that a much more thorough process of participation and consultation with civil society was necessary. Ten days later, in the midst of mass protest and civil unrest, the President was forced to resign and a new government was formed. The new government is currently engaged in a second National Dialogue but continues to face formidable political pressures.

Communication challenges and approaches within government

Context of government

Bolivian governments have had problems with corruption, clientalism and lack of state capacity for generations. Bolivian party politics is highly fragmented, and with no outright winner of

recent elections, successive governments have been made up by coalition. The president is indirectly elected by congress, and ministries are divided up between highly personalistic political parties, who co-exist in an uneasy ‘pacted’ or ‘prebendal’ democracy (Booth and Piron 2004). The Ministry of Finance is seen as particularly weak, and the budget process has been correspondingly difficult. There is no permanent civil service and the national state has limited presence and authority across vast swathes of territory (Booth and Piron 2004). Circumstances are somewhat better at regional level, and municipal authorities do have a much greater capacity to deliver core services.

One of the central challenges facing the Bolivian government is developing a constructive relationship with a highly sceptical and vocal public. The government as a whole has had serious problems establishing legitimacy and credibility with the general population, and constant pressure from extreme social movements has often hampered the process of developing its capacity (Booth and Piron 2004).

Capitalising on municipalities

The latest PRS process capitalised well on the relative strength of municipal authorities. The 1997 Law of Municipalities stipulated that HIPC debt relief funds should be dispersed at the municipal level. Although going against a long centrist tradition in Bolivian politics, the decentralisation process was managed relatively smoothly, and municipal governments have good relations with their own local civil society associations. Although some INGOs have criticised the devolution process for undermining the input of national CSOs that are not organised territorially (Christian Aid 2002), municipalities have been remarkably effective in commanding funds: The first National Dialogue involved 1200 encounters at municipal level, and as a result of their overwhelming presence in the dialogue, small, rural poor municipalities gained disproportionately from HIPC and concessional funds (Booth and Piron 2004).

Coordinating the EBRP

The EBRP was initiated by the Vice President and President, and was deliberately insulated from party politics. However, although poverty itself tends to be eclipsed by other issues in Bolivian political debate, poverty *reduction* remains highly contentious between the various central and municipal bodies responsible for operationalising the EBRP. Consultants have suggested that the new PRS needs not only to provide capacity building for government institutions, but also to provide training in negotiation and management skills to help municipalities and central government agencies cooperate (CEPAS-CARITAS 2003). There have also been calls for a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, which would help co-ordinate EBRP with other public policy budgets, whilst the Ministry of Finance is under development.

Communication challenges and approaches within civil society

Context of civil society

Whilst Bolivian civil society is vibrant, politically engaged and highly organised, it is also highly fractious, extreme and sceptical of government. Groups often represent different functional interests, such as cocaleros, peasants, mine workers, and regional groups, working outside formal structures often in an antagonistic relationship both with the state and each other. Overall, there is a tendency for policy dialogue to take extremely crude and quite violent forms (Booth and Piron 2004). Street protests tend to dominate, and over several decades, the peasant union movement has grown stronger, more autonomous and ethnically conscious. In the 2000 civil disruption, confrontations with police led to 60 deaths.

Bridging a divided civil society

There were two major participation initiatives in the first Bolivian PRS; the state-run National Dialogue and the Church-led, *Foro Nacional*

Jubileo 2000 (or Jubilee Forum) which ran in parallel. The Catholic Church is arguably the most reliable and widely respected civil society organisation in Bolivia¹⁷, and was successful in including a wide range of CSOs, trade unions, universities, and groups for human rights, women and the environment in its consultation. The format of the Jubilee Forum was intended specifically to enable discussions on the overall structural causes of poverty, (as opposed to dividing up the discussions into political, social and economic, as in the National Dialogue) and was eventually able to feed into the official Dialogue at both departmental and national levels. The process was built on existing decentralisation mechanisms and succeeded in facilitating much greater representation of poor people than the formal National Dialogue. This second initiative was also more successful in managing public expectations of how civil society contributions could be integrated with policy documents, building on the trusted status of the Catholic Church¹⁸.

The role of international NGOs

International NGOs were active in assisting the dissemination of information on the PRS, and provided funding, guidance and capacity building support for civil society groups (Driscoll 2004). Oxfam GB built up contacts with networks of local CSOs, informing them about the PRS and offering guidance on how they might influence the process. INGOS have also lobbied for the release of information on the PRS in local languages, and using media forms that are appropriate to each community (Christian Aid 2002). This seems to have had modest impact in practice, and the effect of INGOS, walking a tightrope of between government and a fractious civil society, has often been ambivalent.

Utilising the media

The National Dialogue maintained a fairly high profile in the media, and was covered by local language radio stations as well as national broadcasters. Some have suggested however that

the coverage did not actually promote a well informed dialogue on the PRS; it has been seen as a cynical move by government to ensure good public relations and draw attention away from substantive problems with the process (Christian Aid 2002).

Including civil society in monitoring

The National Dialogue and Popular Participation legislation created *Comites de Vigilancia* (or vigilance committees) composed of six elected CBO leaders, which were charged with ensuring that community interests were properly reflected in local investment decisions. They had the right to insist on audits and petition for funds to be frozen if they suspect any misuse. Whilst these arrangements have not always functioned as intended, with local power relations having a much greater influence than national laws, international NGOs have supported their development. For example, Oxfam GB is working towards strengthening existing local monitoring organisations at the municipal level, where decisions on HIPC funds are taken, and strengthening organisations that work on resource allocation and budget transparency (Christian Aid 2002, McGee et al 2002). Enshrined in law for the first time, this Civil Society Social Control Mechanism created a more formal, and more effective monitoring system for civil society, than had previously been seen.

Communication challenges and approaches within the donor community

The context of donors

Against a history of fragmented, un-coordinated aid relationships, donors seem to be taking steps to improve their communication and collaborative work. The main bilateral donor groups in Bolivia are the Dutch, Swedes, Danes and Swiss. Their financial input is dwarfed by the IMF and World Bank funds, and that of the

¹⁷ Ramiro Cavero Uriona, Minister of Sustainable Development and Planning, Bolivia, personal communication (June 2002)

¹⁸ Juan Carlos Requena, lead coordinator of the first Bolivian poverty reduction strategy, personal communication (June 2002)

Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). Until recently their communication has been ad hoc and sporadic, with no organised networks or meeting structures. In January 2004, however, the IMF launched a *Bolivian Support Group* for donors, meeting regularly to coordinate their activities, share knowledge and discuss progress.

Differences in priorities

There have been some problems in reconciling the differing priorities of CIDA, the Canadian aid agency with the IMF and World Bank. CIDA recommended that governance was a more pressing priority for Bolivia than comprehensive planning procedures. It argued that comprehensive planning would not fix critical problems surrounding the implementation of PRS, and would instead risk undermining country ownership. They have created pressure on the rest of the donor community to accept a partial, rather than comprehensive, process of development in the current PRS iteration. This has quelled the enthusiasm of the Bank, and the two groups have come to an understanding that progress will be slower than originally envisaged.

Donor coordination

Although Bolivia still has problems with donor coordination, there are a number of practical initiatives to increase it. Preceding the IMF's *Bolivia Support Group*, DFID established a network of bilateral donors in 2002, with the explicit aim of increasing dialogue on the participatory process and maximising the scope of the PRSP (Eyben 2002). Not all assistance is coordinated with the PRS – consultants suggest that donors still tie too much assistance to projects, on common basket funding and as directed by their own external agendas, such as coca eradication (Piron and Evans 2004).

Communication challenges and approaches between government and civil society

Legislation to institutionalise civil society participation

Given the volatile relationship between the Bolivian government and civil society, the PRSP was a particularly bold effort to institutionalise a participative process in policymaking. There were four key pieces of legislation which aimed to put in place a framework to facilitate participation.

- The 1995 Law of Popular Participation: this attempted to institutionalise decentralisation.
- The 1995 Law of Administrative Decentralisation
- The 1997 Law of Municipalities
- The 2001 Dialogue Law: this attempted to provide a legal framework through which the results of the National Dialogue will be implemented. The legislation stipulated that further dialogues should take place every three years and that HIPC debt relief funds are to be dispersed through municipalities.

The decentralisation process was successful in entrusting more power and resources to municipal governments, but it has been criticised for undermining the input of some national civil society groups that are not organised territorially (Christian Aid 2002). Whilst the legislation entrenched a very progressive distribution formula, in the 2003 PRS process, circumstances became too difficult to consolidate institutional reform. In the recession that followed Argentina's economic collapse, the PRS timetable slipped from 2003 to 2004. Rioting and civil unrest in February and October 2003 led to a change of government and a new president committed to governing without parties (Piron and Evans 2004). Overall, despite the legislation, stakeholder monitoring has not been as useful and sustainable as it could have been. Whilst the National Dialogue contributed substantially to the PRSP, there was much less public involvement in the Joint Staff Assessment and Annual Progress Report.

Building trust between civil society and government

There have been a variety of complaints from civil society groups who say money earmarked for the PRS is going missing and that only the usual suspects are invited to consultation meetings. Consultants have claimed that the funds freed up by the EBRP have turned out to be meagre compared with social needs, and the municipal governments, the principal agent for the expenditure of HIPC funds, have showed themselves to be incapable of fulfilling their role. An estimated 200 of 312 local governments are considered *unviable*, and in many municipalities, spending is below 50% of funds allotted (Kruse 2003). There have also been claims that indigenous people have gained nothing from the legal changes around participation and that exclusion is as severe as ever. Others have suggested that the climate of public distrust has been so severe that legislative changes to cement public participation have had little impact, and the general public still feel that they are not properly represented or listened to.

These concerns have been acknowledged at government level: Juan Carlos Requena, lead coordinator of the PRS, acknowledged that there were different understandings of the appropriate level and form of participation by civil society: whilst some INGOs assumed civil society would take part throughout the process (including the drafting itself), the government assumed that they would be responsible for drafting a document for discussion, in line with feedback from the National Dialogue.

But with both doubts over the competencies of government, and confusion over the participative process, there has been a fraught and at times unproductive relationship between CSOs and the government. There have been suggestions that the few who have been engaged in genuine discussion were already *insiders*, known to government and the political system. A few key organisations, such as the EPSC and other think tank groups, have made successful first steps as go-betweens; aiming to link

government and civil society. Commentators have suggested that these groups may have a critical role in resolving some of tension between civil society and government, and contribute to a much more constructive future dialogue on PRS.

Communication challenges and approaches between government and donors

Continuity in the face of political change

Steps to improve coordination and communication between donors are likely to contribute to improvements in the aid relationship with government over time. As in other countries, however, they have not succeeded in removing the inevitable tensions between government and donors in the PRSP process. Following the change in government in 2002, donors became edgy that the PRS would no longer be a priority. These concerns proved not be founded, but the civil unrest had affected the government's ability to deliver to the previously agreed timetable, and had to be taken in account in a realistic way by donors.

Timing and expectations

It has been suggested that some donors have had unfair expectations of the Bolivian government so soon after they had taken power. There have been calls for donors to invest in better analytic capabilities and institutional memory, capitalising on the capable indigenous think tanks, to ensure they are positioned in an effective and reasonable way to assist government with the PRS. The second PRS was centred on agreements for specific tasks between government and key interest groups, and it has been suggested this approach will generate new institutions, and especially think tanks, that could provide an ongoing counterweight to the politics of confrontation (Booth and Piron 2004).

Communication challenges and approaches between civil society and donors

Vested interest groups

There have been concerns that the Social Control Mechanism, designed to allow the vigilance committees to monitor spending of HIPC funds, can not at the same time be an effective mechanism to monitor the implementation of the PRS. There have been suggestions that this created vested interests in donor groups like DFID, who are supporting the process, and also amongst the Church, which have undermined the independence of monitoring (Piron and Evans 2004). Observers suggest that PRS and donor monitoring must not become too intertwined with domestic civil society monitoring structures; donors can potentially crowd out the voices of domestic stakeholders, and dominate communication around the PRS.

The aid relationship

Whilst some have accused donors of having low standards, and ignoring inadequacies in the participative process, others have claimed donors are too demanding (for example, Kruse 2003 and Molenaers & Robrecht 2002).

Kruse (2003), for example, claimed that the international financial institutions and donor community have ignored the repression of repression and suspension of constitutional rights that occurred in parallel to the National Dialogue. He claims that government and donors were working together to keep problems in the process away from public attention. However, Kruse wrongly predicted that the donors would accept the proposed PRS 2 in Paris in 2003 – in fact, they rejected it and agreed with Kruse that a more rigorous participatory process was required.

Molenaers and Robrecht (2002), on the other hand, considered that the ‘participation as imposed by donors is at the same time too ambitious to be workable and too vague to be

monitored’. They suggested that the Bank should be wary of engaging of ‘political conditionality by stealth’. They claim that linking democracy and good governance to civil society participation is a complex and contradictory task, and that donors may need to acknowledge the political nature of their relationship with civil society in order to facilitate constructive debate. In this instance, the connections between communication processes, and sensitive political relationships are revealed.

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Cambodia

Summary Although communication processes in the Cambodian PRS had been somewhat problematic, current initiatives are making steady improvements. With weak state capacity in the government overall, organising the PRS and integrating it with budgetary processes had been hampered by chaotic relations between the Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Finance. Split between parties in the coalition government, the Ministries have had a rather contradictory style of working and deep political divisions. Increasingly, however, the PRS has become widely recognised across government, and has become a shared reference point around which tentative cooperation now develops. There was little such recognition or discussion of the PRSP amongst the general population; the lack of translated drafts of PRS documents, and lack of discussion in the media was not well compensated for by the Participative Poverty Assessment or civil society consultations on the PRSP. Communications around the Annual Progress Report were a marked improvement on this, as Ministers have specifically invited CSOs to comment, and organised a series of open meetings on the implementation phase. CSOs worked together to coordinate their feedback, and plans were formed for a wide programme of communication materials and activities targeted at the general population. Even amongst the donor community communication is improving: after a long running dispute between the World Bank and ADB, there are now a number of jointly organised initiatives for capacity building, working with both government and civil society groups.

The PRSP process in Cambodia

Cambodia passed an Interim PRSP in October 2000 and Governance Action Plan in February 2001. There was a Joint Staff Assessment (JSA) in December 2000. The Governance Action plan was redrafted as a Socio-economic Development Plan, which was eventually worked up into a full PRSP in December 2002.

Communication challenges and approaches within government

Context of government

The Cambodian state as a whole has serious capacity issues and is still recovering from the conflict and instability of the Khmer Rouge era. The political system is underscored by informal patronage structures, which whilst simultaneously undermining state capacity to perform essential functions of economic and social management, confers the under-resourced state with what little supervision and implementation capacity it does have (Conway and Hughes 2004). For the last six months, the government has been disabled by political deadlock. The 2003 elections left the CPP with

the largest block vote but no overall majority – other parties have refused to form a coalition, throwing the government into paralysis. This has drastically affected the investment climate, and forced delays to the Cambodian application for WTO ascension (CSD 2003).

The government have placed the reduction of poverty and inequality as an integral part of their post-conflict work towards political stability and national reconciliation. As such, they have placed a particular emphasis on participatory approaches in their official documents (Kingdom of Cambodia 2002). Whilst the Cambodian government had met the requirements of the World Bank in seeking feedback and public involvement on the PRS, there have been suggestions that there is still room for improvement, and there is a wide perception that the PRS is a donor-driven process.

Co-ordinating government departments

One of the main challenges in organising the PRS process in Cambodia has been difficulties in the relationship between the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Finance. The PRS was formulated by an inter-ministerial group under the chair of the Ministry of Planning. Initially, the Ministry of Finance was not engaged with the PRS process, partly because the ‘inter-ministerial’ approach of the PRS was odds with their usual way of budgeting. Line ministries such as the Ministry of Planning tend to have a more participatory approach, whilst Finance adopts a more centralised approach. The government created a National Poverty Forum, built into the Ministry of Planning, to develop long-term expertise on consultation forums and public dialogue on the PRS (IDA and IMF 2003). The Ministry of Finance has tended not to include the Ministry of Planning in its work, although it is now showing more interest in the PRS process and is engaging with the inter-ministerial group to some extent, but they are not playing a central role in the PRS (Conway and Hughes 2004).

Problems have been exacerbated in the last six months by the hung parliament: With no

party having an overall majority, Ministries have been divided between parties and entrenched political divisions have cemented chaotic inter-ministerial relations.

Integrating PRS with the budget and other poverty reduction initiatives

Ministry of Finance engagement is particularly important for linking the PRS with the budget, which has so far proved difficult. The annual budget covers recurrent costs such as salaries and maintenance, while the PRS is focused on investments funded by donors. The Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) intended to merge these interests, but it may be some time before this is sufficiently established to be effective. The MTEF itself is not well linked to the PRS (CSD 2003). As a whole, the PRS was less well debated in parliament than the preceding Social and Economic Development Plan (SEDP).

Including parliament and officials across government

Whilst NGOs have praised the PRS for including sector ministry officials in the formulation process, others have characterised involvement as ‘broad but shallow’. The PRS has increasingly been used as a reference document for government development activities, including in public presentations by the Prime Minister, and at meetings with donors.

Communication challenges and approaches within civil society

Literacy and translation issues

A Khmer version of the I-PRSP document was not available until the eighth draft was already submitted to the Cambodian cabinet (Guttal and Chaves 2001), and all major government documents were initially prepared in English, which obviously limited involvement to an educated elite. There has been a general lack of PRS discussion in wider media outlets.

Although some English language newsletters offer a useful précis of key debates to an audience of development professionals (for example, *The Cambodian Development Review*), the government has not succeeded well in prompting debate on the PRS amongst the general public.

Levels of literacy are very low across the country, with only 37% of the country functionally literate. Levels are lowest amongst poor and rural communities. This is clearly a significant barrier to communication of the PRSP, even if better distribution of documents and better coverage in the press were possible.

Synthesising civil society contributions

The Participative Poverty Assessment, run by the ADB, was poorly structured and collated, failing to present poor people with policy options and simply gathering descriptions of their hardships (Conway 2004). NGO groups have claimed that consultations leading up to the PRS were rushed and poorly documented, and the group of participants involved was seen as rather narrow. No civil society representatives were included on the PRS drafting inter-ministerial team. CSO contributions to the APR, however, were much more successful. For this report, CSOs came together to coordinate their comments and communicate them directly to donors (IDA and IMF 2003).

Communication challenges and approaches within the donor community

Donor context

There are various donor groups in the Cambodian context: the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Danish International Development Cooperation Agency (DANIDA), the German Development Assistance Agency (GTZ), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

(SIDA), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the IMF and the World Bank. The ADB championed the Socio-economic Development Plan which preceded the World Bank-led PRS process.

Donor coordination

Donor coordination is said to be in very early stages and as such the alignment and harmonisation agenda is not well developed (CSD 2003). The CAP process has been seen as a testing ground for how well donors can coordinate. There are several jointly funded initiatives currently under development, particularly between DFID, the ADB and the World Bank. These have co-financed the health sector programme, support to decentralisation and budget management processes. DFID has provided commentary and drafting support for the PRS and JSA.

The PRS and the SEDPII: the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank

There were serious tensions between the World Bank and ADB over the relationship between the PRS (supported by the Bank) and the SEDPII (supported by the ADB). The Second Social and Economic Development Plan was a constitutional requirement, and the agreement was eventually reached that the full PRS would be based upon an improved version of the SEDPII. The Prime Minister has committed to merge the PRS and SEDP processes and these will be presented as a single document in 2005. The PRS was intended as a less comprehensive, but better prioritised document for poverty reduction (CSD 2002). The ADB is now leading on the MTEF process and working jointly with the World Bank on public administration reform.

Building capacity for devolution

Commune Councils were elected in 2002 and although they have been slow to grow into their responsibilities, UNDP-sponsored capacity building programmes have been very successful. Developed over a number of years, the

programme has given sustained support to local capacity building, enabling the communes to assert themselves against assumptions from the Districts and Provinces that they should be subordinate. The Commune Councils aimed to increase the representation of rural people in the PRSP, and create local poverty reduction initiatives oriented to their needs. For donors, the challenge of not undermining country-ownership here is particularly important, as the principle problems for these Councils have come when other agencies working in the area crowd them out of their responsibilities. UNDP has coordinated its training programmes with similar schemes run by NGOs and other donors, to ensure the councils have sufficient space to develop.

Communication challenges and approaches between government and civil society

Making the most of opportunities

There has been some concern in the NGO community that although the Cambodian government has had good intentions to involve civil society in the PRSP, these have not been carried through on a practical level, and opportunities to rebuild trust between Government and the public have been missed. Overall, participatory initiatives have worked well in some areas where they were introduced slowly, but have failed in most cases where they were rushed through without building up partnerships with CSOs, and undertaken without complementary top-down institutional reform (Conway and Hughes 2004).

Some agencies, like the NGO Forum, have been heavily involved in the PRS, synthesising material and making public commentary at various stages. However, their submissions to the I-PRSP drafting process were not formally acknowledged by government and are said to have had little impact on the content of these documents. Time pressure and bureaucracy have also limited the comprehensiveness of

consultation exercises and discussion, for example; the National Assembly did not attend the first public event on PRS, despite having been invited (IDA and IMF 2002).

Iterative improvements

Whilst there may have been missed opportunities, donors have judged that the Government have made a reasonable start in building a participative PRS process. The JSA stated that the Cambodian Government is keen to build an open and consultative policy process, and although its efforts fall short of the mark at present, they are a good basis for iterative improvements (IDA and IMF 2003). An ODI evaluation considered the PRS consultation process as exemplary given the Cambodian context, and the involvement of trade unions, for example, is truly a first. In the PRS formulation there was a failure to document consultation exercises and keep full records of the contributions of CSOs (Acharya 2001). There were also problems with timing; the PRS consultation was undertaken in the run-up to national elections, when the public may not have been most receptive to discussions on poverty reduction (ANGOC 2002).

The preparation of the APR showed marked improvements in some of these difficulties. Chhay Thon, the Minister for Planning wrote public letters to the NGO Forum, line ministries and the heads of the PRS working groups appealing for input into the process. They were specifically encouraged to gather contributions from CSOs, donor contacts, officials and other stakeholders. The NGO forum organised a series of meetings on APR implementation, and fed into the process enthusiastically.

Disseminating information

Although dissemination on information on the PRSP was poor, H.E. Kim Saysamalen, the Secretary General with overall responsibility for the PRS, made dissemination a priority for the implementation phase in 2002. He reported that a grassroots manual, prepared in Khmer, was

being distributed to the communes explaining the 20 core messages of the PRS in a simple format. The government has also been working with NGOs to do ‘show and tell’ mobile shows at the community level, to gather feedback of the PRS. This was undertaken in 53 locations in 13 provinces, and included a video, poster and calendar featuring core messages on the PRS.

Communication challenges and approaches between government and donors

Too much too soon?

As described earlier, post-conflict Cambodia has serious problems with state capacity, and some have suggested that in pushing for economic liberalisation, peace-building and the transition from one-party to multi-party elections simultaneously, donors have asked for too much too soon. Consultants have suggested that the international community take an incremental approach to Cambodia (Conway and Hughes 2004). Whilst the state has little formal power and is heavily dependent on external aid, donors can exacerbate these problems if they ask government to work beyond their capacity. Communication channels, and analytic capacity, are not sufficiently developed to enable good judgements on this (Conway and Hughes 2004).

An open JSA process

Cambodia is said to be somewhat unique in having what was a relatively open JSA (CSD 2002). Consultation was informal but most donors and some NGOs were consulted as well as Ministers of Finance and Planning. DFID provided comments, while H.E Kim Saysamelen worked with USAID, World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF to develop a working group of monitoring and evaluation experts. Kim Saysamelen explicitly prioritised developing a set of indicators that were seen as

legitimate within ministries and could be the basis of consensus amongst stakeholders.

Jointly organised initiatives

The Ministry of Planning organised a joint PRS workshop with the World Bank and IMF in April 2001. The workshop was attended by approximately 200 people, representing key stakeholders in the Cambodian PRSP process: central ministries, line ministries, local government officials, local NGOs, international NGOs, and the donor community, and explicitly aimed at promoting dialogue and information sharing between different PRS actors (Kingdom of Cambodia 2001). More recently, individuals at DFID have spotted opportunities for further cooperative workshop events, particularly in relation to participative monitoring practices. DFID responded to the lack of parliamentary involvement in the PRS by initiating joint working with the World Bank and Government of Cambodia to re-run the successful PRS workshops run by NGOs in 2002.

Communication challenges and approaches between donors and civil society

Poorly timed comments

NGO Forum noted that the World Bank adopted a ‘hands off’ attitude to the PRS until the first draft of the PRS was produced. However, the network criticised the Bank for producing ‘50 pages of comments’ on the draft and for bringing in international consultants to prioritise the PRS and restructure the document according to World Bank’s comments. After the second draft, they sent another extensive set of comments, and it has been suggested that these dramatic overhauls would not have been necessary had the Bank taken greater interest in the early stages. A more pre-emptive approach was evident in the preceding Joint Staff Assessment, where informal consultations were made across stakeholder groups at an early stage of drafting.

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Kyrgyz Republic

Summary In the circumstances, communication in the Kyrgyz PRSP has worked well and offered good examples of what can be done to work around seemingly entrenched problems. From the inception of the initiative, the government formed a working group on the PRS which included numerous and varied civil society representatives. The PRS prompted concerted efforts to improve links between ministries and a process of strengthening institutional capabilities; a process which has gone fairly smoothly with few surprises as the implementation phase has progressed. In this post-soviet republic, the general population have tended to be wary of government and officials, and this has dampened civil society participation in the PRS. Working around this problem, an independently commissioned participative poverty assessment did manage to gather very candid views from poor people by capitalising on the good communication links between NGOs and ordinary citizens. Facilitating feedback on implementation and monitoring is more challenging, as the dissemination of information is hampered by poor communication infrastructure, and although online versions of documents have been produced in English and Russian these are only available to less than 2% of the population. Whilst donor cooperation has been patchy, recent collaborations have focused on supporting CSO involvement in the PRSP drafting process, and in this context, donors are well placed to help bridge the civil society and governmental sectors.

The PRSP process in Kyrgyz Republic

The PRSP in the Kyrgyz Republic is called the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS). This was completed in 2003 and was built on the back on the Comprehensive Development Framework, which was designed with an approach similar to the ideal PRSP process: it had a strong emphasis on the importance of addressing development in a holistic way, building a country-led initiative and was very inclusive of CSOs. The preparation of the NPRS started in 2000 in parallel to the CDS, and both the CDF and the Interim NPRS (I-NPRS) were completed almost simultaneously in May 2001. In June 2001, the I-NPRS was presented to the IMF and the World Bank; it underpinned their agreement of concessional lending arrangements. The full NPRS, completed in August 2002, was discussed by the consultation committee and

submitted to the IMF and World Bank in December 2002. The implementation phase has been now been ongoing for a year and a half, and is said to be running relatively smoothly.

Communication challenges and approaches within government

Context of government

The Kyrgyz Government established a new Governmental Commission on NPRS to take responsibility for managing the PRS process. The commission reported to the Government via the Prime Minister and was made up of the ministers, heads of government departments, and regional governors. It was located in the Ministry of Finance, which had overarching responsible for coordinating the process. Thirty new interdepartmental working groups were also

Box 9**Inputs into the Kyrgyz NPRS process**

March 2000: meeting to present information on the PRSP initiative and participation issues: government officials, the public and donors attending

March 27–April 11 2000: Regional seminars; 800 copies of the NPRS/CDF distributed to participants.

April 2000: the I-PRSP preparation process begins: initiative groups established within interdepartmental working group.

May 2000: Draft CDF is published for discussion. Results of seminars are published online, with home pages written by each relevant stakeholder group.

July 1999–Dec 2000: Five international seminars to draft CDF: total attendees are 1214 representatives of various structures and regions of the country, of which the Government constituted 44 %, NGOs - 13 %, political parties - 1 %, private sector - 8 %, mass media - 1 %, scientific institutions - 4 %, international organisations - 29%.

Feb 2001: Resource book created collating all proposals by the general population to improve the NPRS. Specialists within the Ministry of Finance assess these proposals and adjust the NPRS appropriately.

July 1999–Dec 2000: NGOs in all regions held 30 round table discussions: over 500 representatives from the private sector and NGOs. During round tables discussions representatives of NGOs made more than 700 proposals and recommendations on 17 directions of the CDF. Proposals were submitted to three national seminars and handed onto the developers of CDF and NPRS.

Feb 2001: 45 roundtable meetings at local and regional levels, with 766 people of whom 515 were from NGOs. 850 copies of the NPRS and 850 copies of the CDF were disseminated.

Source: Kyrgyzstan Development Gateway 2004

established, and these were much more heterogeneous in nature, made up from specialists in the Ministry of Finance and other ministries, representatives of science, culture, business, NGOs, and regional representatives with specific expertise in the NPRS. They were responsible for covering different sectors and issues in the drafting process (CDF and NPRS 2002). The CDF was managed separately by the Coordination Council, headed by the Prime Minister (Kyrgyzstan Development Gateway 2004). The Kyrgyz government has been relatively stable, and there have been no surprises as the implementation phase of the PRS has progressed.

Strengthening governance through communication

The PRS process has prompted the Kyrgyz government to make a concerted effort to improve the links between different ministries. It is the first time that ministries such as transport have linked their work to poverty reduction, for example.

The Kyrgyz Government has acknowledged that economic growth alone will not be sufficient to lead to poverty reduction and has made a commitment to improving governance to ensure that economic improvements will translate into alleviating poverty. The government has begun a process of strengthening institutional capabilities addressing four areas; reforming public administration, promoting decentralisation, creating transparency of public finance management and improving corporate governance.

Amongst other measures (such as improving wages for civil servants and reducing bureaucracy) the principle reforms are around communication issues. Central government has pledged to improve public consultation and accountability. A broad commitment was also made to improving the involvement of civil society, feedback between different the state and the public and creating a transparent environment, although it is not apparent how this is being translated into a practical programme of reform. The government also

pledged to distribute budget documents more widely, and to reform the judicial system through a new commission which will coordinate the drafting of laws and ensure better consistency across legislation.

Communication challenges and approaches within civil society

Building trust using networks and traditional models of cooperation

Many Kyrgyz civil society groups had a generally wary and suspicious attitude to the PRS. The CDF consultation process preceding the PRS was perceived as inadequate, and this combined with a long-held distrust of government agencies. Many civil society representatives did not feel committed to implementing the strategy and, at the level of local communities, the document was practically unknown (Gerster 2002).

It was in this context that the PPA was launched between March and May 1999. In a context where officials, police and those working for the government are often suspected of corruption, a number of NGO affiliates were taken on to work with a team of 15 Kyrgyz researchers to help gather the contributions of poor people to the NPRS. Interviews and focus groups were held in local languages with 1,100 people, from nine sites in the poorest regions of Kyrgyzstan, from around 100 people in each community. The final published study cited communication issues as a central aspect of Kyrgyz poverty: there was a lack of trust in regional and national government institutions and a sense that only some members of civil society had full access to resources and officials; many participants said that only those with personal relationships had this privilege. Informants said that the hierarchical structure of administrative institutions meant they had little idea how to access information, and were unaware of the mechanisms they could use to make state institutions attend to their needs. Instead of turning to official agencies, most people took

their problems to community groups for support; both traditional *ashar* schemes and NGOs were seen as a more trusted and reliable source of help. The PPA was a fairly comprehensive document and capitalised on good communication between NGOs and civil society to overcome the problem of poor communication channels between civil society and government.

A range of materials for dissemination

The DIALOGUE network has consistently produced summaries of key PRS documents and translated Russian and English drafts through its *Development Network* project. This has been developed in partnership with government, championed by Emil Alymkulov. Alymkulov has been active in presenting simplified versions of the PRS process to various civil society groups, and has made powerpoint presentations available online.

Communication challenges and approaches within the donor community

Donor context

Kyrgyzstan's largest donors are the Asian Development Bank (providing assistance on roads, agriculture, education, health and corporate governance) and the World Bank (working on irrigation, health, and micro-credit). As well as the US, the Swiss and German governments support important land reform activities, and the Dutch promote legal cooperation in judicial reform. The WHO and the German, British, and Japanese Governments support health activities while UNDP, UNHCR, OSCE, INTRAC and the Soros Foundation all support NGOs with small grants. UNHCR, UNAID, the Soros Foundation and the EU co-fund civil society support centres.

Donor coordination

Donor coordination has reportedly been patchy. Some consultants suggest that there are ad hoc coalitions of cooperation amongst a rather small donor community, and that recently bilateral

donors have tried to make these more formalised (Gerster 2002). Others have criticised the World Bank and IMF for not seizing the opportunity of the PRS to revisit the rather orthodox project assistance of many donor groups in Kyrgyzstan; suggesting that donor impact as a whole could have been more effective if communication within the community had been closer.

Their involvement in the PRS has differed considerably:

Communication challenges and approaches between government and civil society

Momentum from the CDF process

The pre-cursor to the PRSP – the Comprehensive Development Framework – had been very participatory and inclusive, but because it was consensus-oriented, the CDF was said by many to be a badly prioritised document (Gerster 2002). The discussion process on NPRS was therefore more sharply focused, with responses to drafts taking a more structured format. This produced very mixed results – and opinions ranged from the ‘Government dominating the process’ to ‘the Government is no longer running the show’ (DIALOG 2001). There are a substantial number of meetings, seminars and workshops documented, and the input of these contributors appears to have been followed-up and made public (CDF-NPRS newsletter 2002).

Overall, the PRSP process is considered to be the CDF made operational and has benefited from some of the momentum already built-up from the initiative: the government has distributed hundreds of copies of the PRSP to stakeholders for comment, convened 23 working groups, and held over 50 events with civil society. The public website: <http://cdf.gov.kg/en/>, originally set up for the CDF, was converted to include the PRS and brings together information on the two initiatives in one place. The CDF has carved out a niche as a longer-term complement to the PRS process.

Working around a poor dissemination capacity

Communication in the Kyrgyz Republic is often made difficult by the mountainous landscape, which covers 90% of the region and has obstructed the laying of telephone networks, Internet and the distribution of newspapers. It is said to have hampered the dissemination of NPRS documents, although those who attended workshops and networking events had good access to information (Dialogue Network 2003). There are no national television broadcasters in Kyrgyzstan, and press outlets have distribution problems and are generally poorly developed. This may explain an almost total lack of media coverage in-country.

Documents were translated into Russian and English at various stages in the drafting – although they were not produced in summary or basic form in Kyrgyz or Dungan, which are the principle languages of the general population. The government did however produce regular monthly newsletters in English which detail meetings, events and developments in the PRS and CDF processes. These have been made publicly available and have been scrutinised by various independent groups internationally (Alymkulov 2001, Gerster 2002). These list the communication activities and emerging actions and are available online and across various distribution lists. Needless to say, with less than 2% of the general population online, the effectiveness of this should not be overstated.

Communication challenges and approaches between government and donors

Linking the PRS to existing plans

Both the PRS process and the preceding CDF have to some extent been donor-driven processes, yet some have suggested that the donor community failed to encourage the articulation of clear links between the two processes. This created some confusion on the government side.

Box 10 Donor involvement in the Kyrgyz PRS

Department for International Development (DFID): The DFID corporate strategy requires special attention to PRSPs and deals with them as a priority concern. There are, however, no specific instructions from headquarters on how to become involved in the process as DFID wants to make sure that the NPRS is country driven and owned. DFID provided unfocused support to the process in Kyrgyzstan in the form of a consultant for 45 days. DFID's operational priorities in the Kyrgyz Republic are health, rural environment and governance – all three areas are considered to be compatible with the NPRS so no changes of the DFID programme are envisaged.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID): There are no directives from headquarters on how to deal with PRSPs. USAID provided extensive comments on the October draft version. The adjustment of USAID priorities due to the NPRS will be considered as many USAID supported programmes lie in NPRS priority areas and are expected to be affected.

German Technical Cooperation (GTZ): GTZ activities are strongly focused on economic reform and private sector development. It has a Resident Representative in the country but GTZ is an implementing agency and not a policymaking body. In its ongoing working contacts related to the priority areas some of its experiences have been transmitted to Government. Beyond the current contacts GTZ abstained from participating in the NPRS process.

Norway: Norway was hardly present in the Kyrgyz context, supported through its Norwegian trust fund at the World Bank the World Bank Report 'Kyrgyz Republic. Enhancing Pro-poor Growth'. The explicit goal of this report was to assist the Kyrgyz authorities in designing their NPRS.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): For the UNDP, PRSPs are a corporate priority in view of proactive policymaking. The UNDP focuses its support on its human development concerns, being convinced that these are preconditions for any other achievements. In the Kyrgyz Republic, the UNDP had been actively involved in the CDF, the I-NPRS as well as recently in the NPRS, in close cooperation with the leading office of the Government. The UNDP is very satisfied with the effectiveness of its interventions. In particular, it claims that, due to its activities, the inequality issue and gender aspects are now part of the draft. In the NPRS process, UNDP activities included organising workshops and seminars, including one on gender for members of working groups; providing national and international consultants as technical support; preparing its own assessment of the NPRS draft; providing a research report to support the working group tasked with developing a macroeconomic framework for the PRS; and preparing a field study on *Voices of the Poor*.

Communication challenges and approaches between donors and civil society

Changing perceptions

Whilst a variety of consultation activities including government, donors and civil society have been put in place, there have been consistent reports that the sense of ownership in-country is weak, and the NPRS as a whole is seen as a government–donor matter. When donors became more interested in the PRSP, making significant inputs into the process, they were also at risk of crowding out the civil society contributions that were a strength of the CDF process (IDA and IMF 2001). Donors have taken some steps to try to counter this. For example, the Swiss Development Cooperation has funded support for the civil society involvement in the drafting process. This grant led to a consultation group meeting with a large platform for exchanging views on the NPRS (Gerster 2002). Such steps form part of the long-term project of strengthening communication between donors and civil society groups.

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Kyrgyzstan Development Gateway
http://eng.gateway.kg/prsp_partic

The CDF and PRSP website: <http://cdf.gov.kg/en/>

Interview: Roman Mogilevsky, Executive Director, CASE Kyrgyzstan

Interview: Anonymous, Government of Kyrgyzstan



Pakistan

Summary Communication in the Pakistani PRS has been highly problematic; marred by poor institutional links and a lack of trust between government, donors and civil society groups. Responsibility for the process has been confused both between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning, and between provincial and federal levels. With relations becoming increasingly tense and politicised, the drafting process has moved slowly and unevenly across different regions, and inputs to the PRS have become correspondingly unrepresentative across ethnic groups. Some optimism may emerge from the Punjab region, where responsibility for the process has been placed within the Ministry of Planning, not the Ministry of Finance, and where political agendas are increasingly aligning around the PRS. In the midst of all these problems, civil society organisations united to reject the PRS process as a whole, arguing that the participation process had been woefully inadequate. At this stage of breakdown, civil society groups succeeded in involving donors, who shared their concerns and put the brakes on the process until the issue was properly tackled. Their role as brokers though has been compromised by repeated suggestions that donor agendas are at odds with interests of the long-term interests of Pakistan itself, and a wide perception amongst both civil society representatives and government officials that the PRS is a donor-driven process.

The PRSP process in Pakistan

Pakistan completed an Interim PRSP (I-PRSP) in November 2001 and a full PRSP in April 2003. The Joint Staff Assessment of the I-PRSP in January 2003 approved concessional lending based on the progress that had been evidenced by the I-PRSP initiative. There have been some delays to Pakistan's PRS due to the hung parliament that resulted after the 2003 elections. The World Bank and IMF decided to delay the initiative until national and local Government had been secured, so that the PRS would have a chance to develop better ownership in-country (IMF and IDA 2003). The full PRS was finally published in December 2003 and there was a JSA in February 2004. Alongside the development of a National PRS, sub-national and federal PRS strategies have been worked out. These have been in place since July 2003.

Communication challenges and approaches within government

Context of Government

When the PRSP process began in 1999, responsibility for the strategy was given to the Poverty Alleviation Department within the Federal Planning Commission of the Government Pakistan. A Centre for Research on Poverty Reduction and Income Distribution was also established at the Planning Commission, using financial assistance from the World Bank and UNDP. The Pakistani PRSP had a strong regional emphasis and the each province was asked to develop a PRSP document. Both the national and provincial PRS processes were delayed by the hung parliament in 2003.

Box 11 Participatory activities in the Pakistani PRSP process

- 10 district workshops (out of 108 districts of Pakistan) organised and facilitated by government officials. Government officials participated.
- 4 provincial workshops (none in Northern Areas and Azad State of Jammu and Kashmir or Federally Administered Tribal Areas) jointly organised by Planning Commission and ADB. Government and selected civil society representatives participated.
- 1 national workshop where draft I-PRSP was presented by Planning Commission. Comments were sought during the plenary session. Government, multi- and bi-lateral donors, and selected civil society organisations participated.
- Consultation between federal and provincial governments led by the Federal Finance Minister to persuade provincial governments to prepare their own provincial PRSPs as the primary framework for future development planning. Provincial governments are also expected to engage their respective district governments in preparation of provincial PRSPs.

Confusion of responsibilities at provincial and federal levels

Although the regions were supposed to be supported by district governments, many provincial and federal government representatives have struggled to develop a good working relationship (Akhtar 2002). It was planned that the federal PRSP Secretariat would provide the Provincial Governments with a tentative structure for the PRS and that these would be drafted through a process of partnership. The experience across the provinces has been variable, but for many the drafting process has moved slowly. The location of ownership of the PRS process at provincial level has been unclear and efforts to create sharper distinctions have been hampered by complex political affiliations. Provinces and regions in Pakistan correspond to ethnic and religious groupings and establishing leadership of the PRSP process has become a deeply politicised issue. On a practical level, links between federal and provincial levels have been poor; for example, hampering efforts by the Federal Bureau of Statistics to use the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) to generate district level service delivery information.

As well as affecting formulation, problems with coordinating different tiers of government have also affected the implementation process. A lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of federal, provincial and district was judged in the JSA to be the critical component limiting the decentralisation process, and there have been suggestions that a single institution needs to be charged with identifying needs and coordinating support.

Integrating government departments and initiatives

Within government, a limited number of officials have been involved in the PRS directly, and general awareness of the initiative is low. Training programmes are currently working to address this problem, but facilitators report that in sessions involving those with budget

responsibility for the Federal Health Ministry, Welfare Ministry, and central Ministries for Finance and Planning, fewer than half a dozen people had even heard of the PRSP¹⁹. A major problem was that whilst the PRSP was written by the Department of Finance, the Department of Planning is responsible for planning processes, and is in a much stronger position to integrate the PRS with long-term country planning documents. For this reason, whilst the PRS draws on both the former Social Action Plan, and the Planning Commission's Poverty Reduction Programme 2001–2004, and references the Debt Management Strategy, the draft PRS does not appear to refer to the Planning Commission's Ten Year Plan.

Developing government ownership

Whilst there are plans to place the PRS before Parliament with the budget, there has been a lack of parliamentary involvement in the drafting process leading some CSOs to suggest this process is simply a 'rubber stamp'. However, there is increasing optimism that greater ownership can be developed at a provincial level. In Punjab, for example, responsibility for the PRS has been placed by the Planning Development Department (not the Finance as in the National strategy). As Punjab has become an increasingly coherent and stable political state, the PRS has become well aligned to the political agendas of both the dominant party and heads of local government. In this context, it has become an effective technical tool for devolved government.

Communication challenges and approaches within civil society**A united CSO community**

In December 2002, Pakistani CSOs came together to formally reject the way that the PRSP was being developed by the Pakistani Government. They wrote a letter to the PRSP Secretariat in the Ministry of Finance, contesting the I-PRSP claim that extensive consultation

¹⁹ Tim Williamson, personal communication 3 May 2004.

processes had taken place in the PRS formulation stages, arguing that any existing participation was wholly inadequate, and that the content of the PRSP itself was too heavily influenced by IFI agendas. The letter was coordinated by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, and signed by 36 civil society groups (SDPI 2002). The letter was circulated to the highest levels of government as well as the donor community, including the World Bank, ADB, UN and IME.

An independent Participative Poverty Assessment

The National Poverty Assessment (NPA), published in 2003, used data from community consultations in 51 sites around the country, and highlighted the sensitivity of relations between different regional and ethnic groups. It suggested that responses to previous poverty initiatives have been heavily inflected by ethnic identities, religion and other micro-political factors (PPA 2003). This was conducted by the Rural Support Programme Network, not directly under the auspices of the PRS, but was fed into the process later. Whilst this independent assessment captured the interaction of regional, ethnic and political tensions very well, it did not undertake detailed capacity mapping of the civil society sector. Consequently, whilst capacity building within the public sector was build into the PRS at federal, provincial and district levels, the capacities within civil society were not well considered.

Communication challenges and approaches within the donor community

The influence of donor agendas

Some have suggested that members of the donor community have come to Pakistan with their own agendas and that these have been in conflict with the long-term interests of the country. Whilst USAID has an interest in military aid and securing cooperation for the

US presence in Afghanistan, other donors also have 'cash to offload' for political reasons – as part of positioning themselves regarding General Pervez Musharraf and the *war against terror*²⁰. These factors may unite donors in action (ie. in their need to give aid and concessional lending), but they also create an incentive to produce a PRS as soon as possible, rather than address long-standing problems for poverty reduction. It has been suggested that whilst some World Bank projects may have been earmarked as PRS-related, they would in fact have taken place without the PRS, and that the various agendas of donors have obstructed rigorous dialogue on the most effective assistance for Pakistan.

Communication challenges and approaches between government and civil society

Breakdown in dialogue

Consultation processes were in full flow at a regional level when they were interrupted by the hung Pakistani parliament. Once resumed, most provinces have reportedly engaged in multiple workshops and seminars, although the Sikh and Balochistan districts in the North-West are far outstripping the Punjab areas. As was mentioned earlier, Pakistani CSOs united to formally reject both the PRS process and its content. The consultation process has been criticised for not fully including all stakeholders, particularly civil society actors and marginalised groups. It has been argued that there has been token representation of some major groups, whilst other major public sector actors are completely missing; for example, the PRSP Implementation Committee not only has no civil society representation but is devoid of key ministries such as water and power, agriculture, petroleum and natural resources, and the environment (SDPI 2002).

Lack of media debate

Although the outrage felt by civil society groups over the PRSP process does not appear to have

²⁰ Tim Williamson, personal communication 3 May 2004.

been translated into a major media debate, it has spawned some international comment and discussion (Akhtar 2002). After the breakdown in communication between CSOs and government, grassroots organisations have not been included in monitoring mechanisms, which have been criticised as fragmented. With little consistency on procedures and expenditure, it is difficult to compare across the provinces, and in this the government has lost an opportunity to present the PRS to the media as a publicly accountable initiative. Overall, the lack of media coverage is said to be symptomatic of a rather lethargic public, who are not proactive in the political arena. Some suggest that this trend is linked to a political system based on patronage, which has historically linked political involvement with self interest, kinship and religious ties, rather than public benefits.

Communication challenges and approaches between government and donors

Capacity building assistance

The World Bank and UNDP provided financial assistance for the establishment of the Centre for Research on Poverty Reduction and Income Distribution, housed at the Planning Commission.

Developing ownership

Some government officials clearly see the PRSP as a donor document; as a means to gain funding at a federal level, before ownership develops at a provincial level. Recently the Finance Secretary has emphasised the importance of PRS in a number of speeches and presentations, and this has reportedly given government ownership of PRS a boost in the minds of central Ministry staff. There has been some confusion over the role of donors however; some Federal level staff reportedly believed that DFID were going to be responsible for instituting the Medium Term Expenditure Framework.²¹ These confusions have been exacerbated by cuts in the civil

service and the movement of personnel. It has been suggested that donors should try to build strong relationships with departments and teams within government, not just with individuals, so their communication can be more consistent and resist these changes.

Communication challenges and approaches between donors and civil society

Awareness of capacity issues

Donors have been aware of problems both with ethnic conflict and lack of media capacity hampering civil society involvement with the PRS. Redressing the ethnic balance of consultations was an expressed priority of donors in the recent JSA. In previous JSAs, donors have expressed concern that opportunities for broad based public discussion, through the media and other forums have been missed (IMF and IDA 2003).

Lack of trust v honest broker

The SDPI and its alliance of CSOs are roundly suspicious of IFIs and their neo-liberal agenda, which is seen as undermining democratic institutions in Pakistan (SDPI 2002). They have expressed concern that the IFIs support the military government and that their own agenda in providing assistance is in conflict with the long-term goals of poverty reduction in Pakistan.

On the other hand, the broader donor community was able to play the role of honest broker between CSOs and government at a moment in the PRSP process when communication had broken down. Donors were able to advocate for a better participatory process, a role which underscores the potential for alliance building between this community and Pakistan's civil society.

²¹ Tim Williamson, personal communication 3 May 2004.

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Interview : Tim Williamson, ODI Associate



Rwanda

Summary Several innovative and constructive approaches to communication were adopted in the Rwandan PRS process, with varying degrees of success. The government has made clear efforts to develop dialogue with the civil society sector, which remains weak and is viewed with some scepticism a decade after the genocide. The Participatory Poverty Assessment, for example, borrowed traditional *Ubudehe* methods of mutual assistance to fund poverty reduction projects which were planned, implemented and monitored at a village level. This was widely regarded as successful, and although the PPA itself was published too late to feed directly into the PRS, it has since become a core reference document on poverty in Rwanda around which discussion amongst the donor community has turned. This document was a rare opportunity to bridge relations between civil society and government, and within the donor community. The *Ubudehe* techniques were popular and effective amongst the general public, and a point of pride for government officials. Although communication between government, donors and civil society has typically been ad hoc and marred by clashes of expectations, opportunities present themselves for the future in three main areas: First, the linguistic homogeneity within Rwanda could make radio a powerful instrument for informing the public on PRSPs. Second, the PPA has established a well informed and extensive network of civil society groups at a community level which could act as champions for further communication approaches. Finally, the infrastructure for donor coordination has been improved, enabling the donor community to communicate their concerns, for example about the participatory process, to government more effectively.

The PRSP process in Rwanda

The PRS process was officially started in Rwanda in June 2000 with the production of a *zero draft* and announcement of the process by the President in Parliament. Following a consultation process between various Ministries, donor agencies and CSOs (mainly at national level with some provincial meetings), the Interim PRSP (I-PRSP) was finalised in November 2000, and endorsed as a suitable document for assistance in a Joint Staff Assessment in December. A full PRSP document was completed in November 2001. The implementation phase is now in full swing.

Communication challenges and approaches within government

Context of government

The Rwandan PRSP is being implemented at a time when the scars of recent history are still fresh. The political regime is very authoritarian yet overall it seems to be offering competent governance and using aid successfully. Responsibility for coordinating the PRSP was given to the National Poverty Reduction Programme, which was set up in the Ministry of Finance and Planning in 2000. Its role was to synthesise the contributions of different sector ministries and civil society, and ensure that two particular sets of issues; decentralisation and traditional Rwandan culture, were fully incorporated to the PRSP process.

Box 12		Calendar of key policy documents	
1999	Policy Framework Paper	2001	National Environmental Action Plan
1999	Medium Term Expenditure Framework Development Plan	2001	Agricultural Strategy
1999	April National Gender Policy	2001	March National 5-Year Plan of Action for UNLDC-III
2000	Vision 2020	2001	November PRSP
2000	September 2001-2003 Budget Framework Paper	2002	National Constitution (drafted by National Constitutional Commission, adopted by referendum)
2000	November Interim -Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP)		
(From Mutebi, Stone and Thin, 2001)			

Decentralisation

It was planned that during implementation the role of local agencies would expand to gradually edge out sector ministries from leading the initiative. This was tied into initiatives developed under the PPA, which we will come to later. The local government ministry implemented a decentralisation programme at prefecture and community level with the aid of village communities who were in the process of developing their own development strategies.

Communication challenges and approaches within civil society

Context

A decade after the genocide, organised civil society remains weak and distrust prevails within many communities. This is a particular problem in rural areas, and religious groups and small local NGOs are often isolated and poorly engaged with national policy processes. Many international NGOs are still focused on post-emergency rehabilitation projects (Booth 2003). However, Rwandan civil society does have a history of organising groups of people to address community problems:

- *Umuganda*, work on community projects.
- *Ubudehe*, the tradition of mutual assistance
- *Gacaca*, the communal resolution of disputes. This has been adapted to deal with the legacy of genocide cases
- *Umusanzu*, support for the needy and work towards a common goal

The need to build capacity

Some commentators have suggested that as a whole, civil society organisations have struggled to make the most of the opportunities afforded them in the PRS (Trocaire 2003). After a history of centralised, authoritarian governance, few Rwandan citizens feel they have a right to participate in public decision-making. CSOs have a few competent professionals, but they are overburdened with heavy schedules and there is a high

turnover of staff. Most NGOs have few resources, and are not online. As a whole, civil society groups did not have the capacity to challenge government strategies in the formulation stage, proposing few alternatives and generally failing to engage with analysis at a policy level. In general, their contributions focused on short-term solutions and immediate service problems. This has led to numerous calls for work to address their capacity building needs (Bugingo and Painter 2002, Renard & Molenaers 2003).

Disseminating information

There have been some problems with lack of media outlets, which has hampered communication and public discussion of the PRSP. Newspapers have been relied upon to spread information to the general public, but they are too expensive for many citizens and levels of literacy are low in any case. Radio has also been heavily relied upon, and although it is available to only around 32% of Rwanda's population, the medium does have a strong history of radio soap-operas. These not only address social issues, but also political debates and policy initiatives. They have been seized upon as an opportunity to engage the wider population in the PRS process, by telling stories which demonstrate the link between policy processes and the lives of real people²². In addition to this, Trocaire have provided clear and detailed monthly updates on PRS activities, circulated widely amongst NGO groups and international development professionals. The linguistic homogeneity of Rwanda presents a great opportunity for dissemination activities to reach a wide variety of the general population.

²² Karin Christiansen, personal communication, 2 April 2004

Communication challenges and approaches within the donor community

Coordinated donor activities

Despite successive efforts, there have been ongoing difficulties in coordinating activities

Box 13	PRSP activities timetable
May–Nov 2000:	Preparation of Interim PRSP
May–June 2000:	Preparation of first draft of I-PRSP
June 2000:	Establishment of National Programme for Poverty Reduction
June 2000:	Donor discussions on preparatory process for I-PRSP
July 2000:	Consultation with Préfctures
July–Aug 2000:	Request for donor comments on working draft
Aug 2000:	Preparation of participation action plan
Aug 2000:	Distribution of first draft of I-PRSP
Sept 2000:	Civil society consultations on working draft
Sept 2000:	Sectoral ministry consultations on working draft
Sept/Oct 2000:	Preparation of policy matrix and presentation to Cabinet
Oct 2000:	Editing and Cabinet approval of final draft I-PRSP
Nov 2000:	GoR/donor meeting to discuss I-PRSP
Sept 2000–Jul 2001:	Participatory assessment for the PRSP
Sep 2000–Jan 2001:	Development of Monitoring Indicators
Jan–Mar 2001:	“Ball-park” costings of sectoral priorities for PRSP
July 2000–Sep 2001:	Consultations with civil society and other stakeholders
Jan–Apr 2001:	Macroeconomic Analysis
Sept 2000–Feb 2001:	Survey and analysis of social service expenditures and outcomes
May 2000–June 2001:	Household Survey
July–Nov 2001:	Demographic and Health Survey
July 2001:	Three-day workshop on ‘Operationalising the PRSP’
June–July 2001:	PRS process inputs to Budget Framework Paper
Sept 2001:	PRSP draft outline followed by zero draft PRSP
Oct 2001:	National Consultation on Draft PRSP
Oct 2001:	Integration of national household survey results
Nov 2001:	Finalise draft PRSP and submission to Steering Committee

(From Mutebi, Stone and Thin, 2001)

between donor agencies. A donor conference in 2001 drew up a number of guidelines for shared working (UNDP 2001) and floated several ideas, such as establishing lead agencies and lead ministries, sector by sector to ease relations between donors and between donors and government. Three years on, these appear to have somewhat fallen by the wayside. Cooperative working has been eased by the emergence of key reference points on which consensus has centred, notably the National Poverty Assessment. This was conducted in around 1000 community regions with several thousand participants and has become a highly credible source on poverty in Rwanda (Bugingo and Painter 2002). Other sources had been less useful either because their data sets were contradictory and incomplete, or because they had failed to make explicit linkages to the PRS process. The PPA research has proved an enduring touchstone for discussion on the efficacy of the PRS.

Communication challenges and approaches between government and civil society

Credible action-research in the PPA

The Participatory Poverty Assessment was not only a valuable resource for donors, but had tangible benefits for communities, and fed into the PRS process itself. The PPA had three components: a National Poverty Assessment, A Butare Pilot of *ubudehe mu kuvanya ubukene* (Community Action Planning) and a Policy Relevance Test.

- The National Poverty Assessment was a national survey, using standard participatory techniques in 100 districts across Rwanda.
- *Ubudehe* was more unusual, and involved providing every cellule with US\$1000 to carry out a project designed, monitored and implemented by the community themselves. The process starts with the drawing of a social map of the community, they then classify households into social classes, identify

their development problems and prioritise them, and select the most significant problem to be addressed by the community project. Community members select two groups of people – one to implement the project and the other to monitor it. Once the project has been endorsed by a technician from the District level (who will also have been involved at earlier stages), the funding is released. This was undertaken on a national level in 2002.

- The poverty relevance test analysed I-PRSP policies through focus groups; evaluating how well the policies were solving problems of individuals and communities. It was conducted in 38 of the 100 Districts in groups of twenty-five people, selected on the basis of a series of criteria to cover different social and economic groups.

The study, implemented by a team of 18 social scientists from the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), was intended to synthesise civil society contributions, and feed directly into the PRS as a key mechanism for fostering in-country ownership. In the event, however, the study was finished in early September 2001, just a couple of months before the final adjustments were made to the PRSP document. Although well received when it was finally published, and a point of pride amongst government officials, it was a missed opportunity to publish this study so late. Despite this, the priorities as ranked by communities in the PPA are covered in the PRSP and reflect a range of both sectoral (eg. agriculture, health and education) and thematic (eg. security and governance) issues. They include some very specific ones (the need for candles and fuel for oil lamps).

Access of information and communication

The Rwandan government has been active in publishing a variety of documents around the PRS as it has developed. Several drafts have been made available in English and French, but

not in Kinyarwanda and the documents have not been adapted into summaries or guides aimed at a general audience. There have been concerns that agendas and documents were not properly circulated, and some felt that the PRS process as a whole was rushed and that participatory activities simply ‘went through the motions’ (Bugingo and Painter 2002, Renard and Molenaers 2003). On the other hand, the Government of Rwanda did include phone numbers of the officials responsible for coordinating drafting process on all their literature, and have made clear efforts to encourage public dialogue on the PRS.²³

²³ Karin Christiansen, personal communication, 2 April 2004

Communication challenges and approaches between government and donors

More coordinated dialogue on difficult issues

Greater impetus behind donor coordination as a result of the PRSP process augurs well for better coordinated dialogue between government and donors in future PRS processes. It has not, however, removed the need for ongoing dialogue around issues of concern and differences of opinion between the donor community and government. For example, some donors have pressed the government to take its commitments on participation more seriously, or to pay greater attention to certain dimensions of poverty highlighted in the PPA.

PRSP and donor monitoring

One area of tension has been government and donor monitoring of the PRSP. Donors have expressed some concern and surprise that the Rwandan government, after hosting perhaps the most ambitious evaluation study ever conducted in the humanitarian and development sector, appears to lack interest in monitoring and evaluation procedures (Shaffer 2001). Civil society groups have in turn expressed concern that in donor monitoring of the PRSP there is

insufficient distinction between core indicators by which the whole PRS can be judged, and broader indicators which inform analytic questions and more participatory monitoring. DFID work analysing gender in the PRS, for example, was criticised for passing off a set of questions as a list of indicators (Mutebi, Stone & Thin 2001).

Communication challenges and approaches between donors and civil society

Donor support for civil society participation

To support CSO participation, DFID funded a technical advisor from Action Aid India, an NGO renowned for its participatory practices, to help design the participatory bottom-up approach of the Rwandan PRS (Booth 2003). The Government of Rwanda has made a stronger effort to hear ordinary people's views through the PPA.

Calls to tone down expectations

This effort has not however, been altogether welcomed. UDPM-UA have argued that civil society participation is neither possible nor desirable in a Rwandan context, where civil society capacity is weak, and the public are adjusting from years of authoritarian rule. They suggest that donors should tone down their ambitions for interactive processes and instead set contextually sensitive, firm targets which take account of the state of civil liberties in countries like Rwanda. These capacity issues may explain why the most meaningful PRS contributions have come from large, national and international NGOs.

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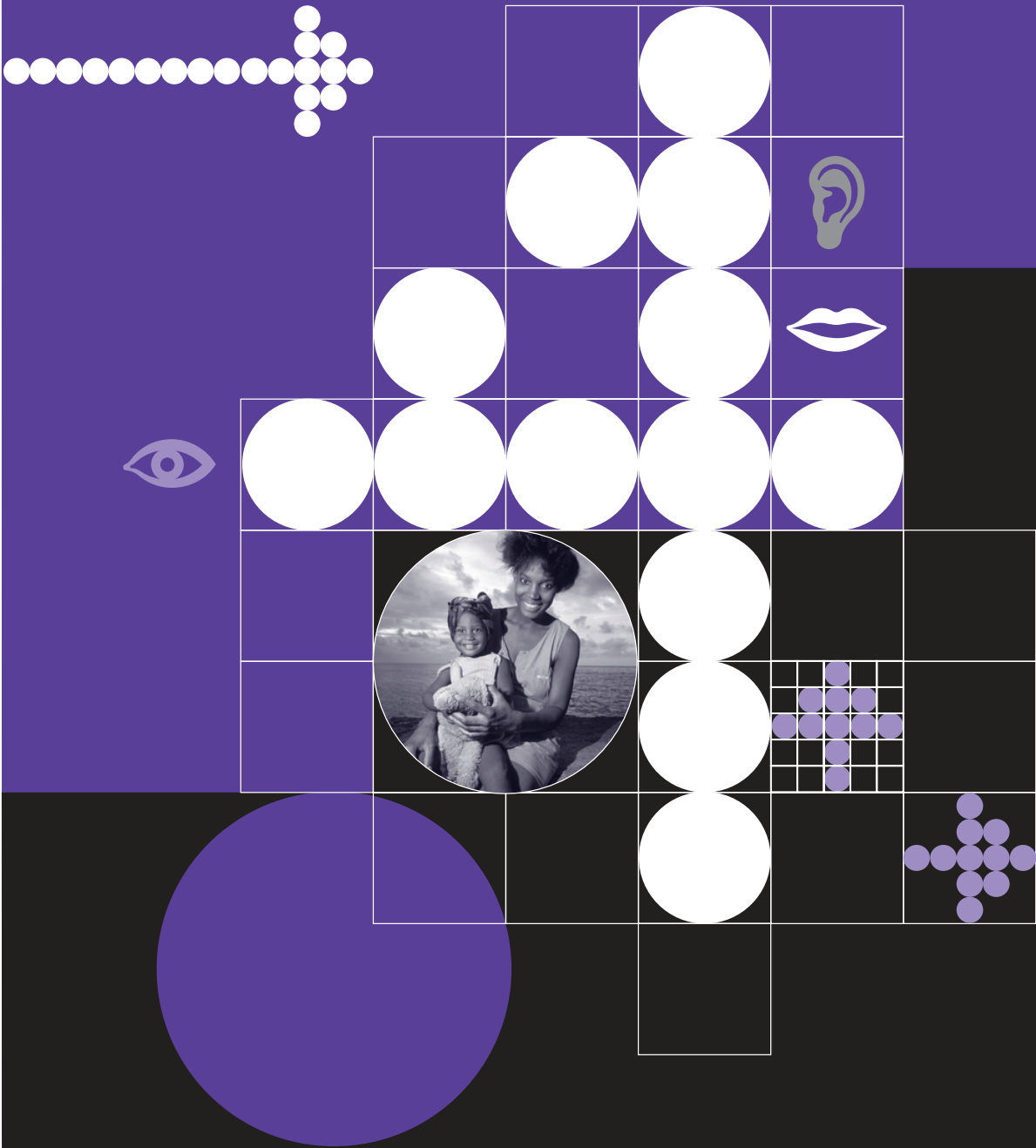
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Part 4 : **Appendices**



Further case studies

Part 4 and additional material

²⁴ The case examples presented in these appendices were prepared by Amy Pollard.

Appendices A to J contain short case studies of communication in PRSPs from ten countries.²⁴ They are intended to provide brief and easily accessible case examples – seven of the countries covered are examined in more detail elsewhere in this publication.

Appendix K provides a summary of a workshop on strategic communication for poverty reduction, held at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in Stockholm on 9 March 2004.

Appendix L presents an annotated bibliography on strategic communication in PRSPs, together with suggested further resources.

A Bolivia

Bolivia was one of the first countries to write a PRSP, submitting an I-PRSP in January 2000 and a full document in 2001. The Joint Staff Assessment in 2001 judged that it set out a particularly ambitious set of reforms, and whilst remaining optimistic, raised some doubts around the capacity of the government to deliver. Bolivia's government has long-term problems with corruption and has often lacked legitimacy due to its coalition structure, the government has been consistently committed to participation and decentralisation. In 2000, a National Dialogue (ND) was held to feed into the PRSP. This was a government-led, countrywide consultation process involving municipal, departmental and national level government structures, civil society, business and international actors. Round table discussions were most successful at municipal level, because the issues discussed were focused around very concrete questions concerning the priority populations and issues for poverty reduction, distribution and control of potential debt relief resources. International cooperation agencies were extremely involved in the dialogue process and played an important role in encouraging and funding civil society participation. Some of the outcomes of the ND brought real policy change, for example for the first time Bolivia's resources will be allocated to favour the poorest municipalities.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP

Although in many ways the National Dialogue in 2000 was a positive participatory process, it remained extremely limited and exclusive. Bolivia has a diverse and forceful civil society (as shown by the recent electoral success of a popular coca growers' leader). Despite divisions within and between social movements and NGOs, civil society organised an independent consultation process (the *Foro Nacional Jubileo 2000*) which ran parallel to the National Dialogue but was eventually able to feed into the official Dialogue at departmental and national levels. This process built on existing decentralisation mechanisms and succeeded in facilitating greater representation of poor people than had occurred in the formal National Dialogue. It was set-up by the Catholic Church and involved many CSOs including trade unions, university, women, environmental and human rights groups. The format of the Jubilee Forum was intended specifically to enable discussions on the overall structural causes of poverty, as opposed to dividing up the discussions into political, social and economic, as in the National Dialogue.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information

In terms of disseminating information on the PRSP, this effort was greatly aided by donors and international NGOs who actively provided funding, guidance and capacity-building support for civil society participation. Oxfam GB, for example, worked to inform CSOs about the PRS process and enable them to influence it, as well as broadening their knowledge and building capacity for policy analysis. Christian Aid recommended that information on the PRS should be communicated in local languages, using media forms that are appropriate to each community, although this seems to have had modest effect in practice.

In terms of monitoring, the National Dialogue started a move to create a civil society Social Control Mechanism to monitor the expenditure of funds and to participate in the drawing-up, follow-up evaluation and reformulation of the PRSP. This is currently being followed up by international NGOs; Oxfam GB is working towards strengthening existing local monitoring organisations at the municipal level, where decisions on HIPC funds are taken, and strengthening organisations that work on resource allocation and budget transparency.

B : Cambodia

Cambodia passed an I-PRSP in October 2000 and Governance Action Plan in February 2001. This was redrafted as a Socio-Economic Development Plan, which was eventually worked up into a full PRSP in December 2002. The government have placed the reduction of poverty and inequality as an integral part of their post-conflict work towards political stability and national reconciliation. As such, they have placed a particular emphasis on participatory approaches in their official documents. Based on extensive NGO and civil society consultations, the Cambodian NGO Forum, suggested that whilst the Cambodian Government had often gone beyond the requirements of the World Bank in seeking feedback and public involvement. They have also created a National Poverty Forum, built into the Ministry of Planning, to develop long-term expertise on consultation forums, informed dialogue and consensus building on poverty reduction strategies.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP

There has been some concern in the NGO community, that the good intentions of the Cambodian government have not been carried through on a practical level, and that opportunities to rebuild trust between government and the public have been missed. Despite the goodwill and effort to make communication smooth in the Cambodian PRS process, there have however been various problems: all major government documents were initially prepared in English, and this severely limited Cambodian involvement with their development. A Khmer version of the I-PRSP document was not available until the eighth draft was submitted to the Cambodian cabinet. NGO submissions to the I-PRSP drafting process were not formally acknowledged by government and appear to have had little impact on the content of these documents. Within Government, there were no representatives from civil society groups on the Inter-Ministerial drafting team. Time pressure and bureaucracy have also limited the scope of consultation exercises and discussion.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information

In addition to the lack of translated drafts of the PRSP documents, there appears to be a general lack of discussion of the PRSP in wider media outlets. Although some English language newsletters offer a useful précis of key debates to an audience of development professionals (eg. The Cambodian Development Review), the Government does not seem to have promoted the PRSP amongst the general public. This might be a missed opportunity, as the government been seen as relatively effective: the Joint Staff Assessment judged that the Cambodian Government has been particularly successful in developing an open and consultative policy process, which despite its shortcomings, has been seen as a solid foundation for iterative improvements.

C Kyrgyz Republic

The PRSP in the Kyrgyz Republic is called the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS). This was completed in 2003 and was built on the back on the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) which, like PRSPs in theory, has a strong emphasis on holistic approaches to development, a country-led approach and was very inclusive of civil society organisations. The preparation of the NPRS started in 2000 in parallel to the CDF, and both the CDF and the Interim NPRS (I-NPRS) were completed almost simultaneously in May 2001. In June 2001, the I-NPRS was presented to the IMF and the World Bank and used to underpin their agreement of concessional lending arrangements. The full NPRS completed in August 2002 after the co-ordinated work of 30 groups covering different sectors and issues in the drafting process. In addition to government officials and members of Parliament, representatives of civil society and the private sector were invited to participate in the working groups.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP

The pre-cursor to the PRSP – the CDF process, had been very participatory and inclusive, but this consensus-oriented CDF paper was said by many to have led to a document without priorities. The discussion process on NPRS was therefore more sharply focused, with responses to drafts taking a more structured format. This met with very mixed results – and opinions ranged from the ‘Government dominating the process’ to ‘the Government is no longer running the show’. A number of key figures from central government and the major donors were seen to make the main inputs into the process and the involvement of civil society organisations was felt to be much more modest in comparison to CDF process. Despite this, there are a substantial number of meetings, seminars and workshops documented, and the input of these contributors has been clearly followed up and made public.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information

As a whole, Kyrgyz Communication are often made difficult by the mountainous landscape, which covers 90% of the region and has obstructed the laying of telephone networks, Internet and the distribution of newspapers. It is said to have hampered the dissemination of PRSP documents to some extent. Documents were translated into Russian and English at various stages in the drafting, although they were not produced in summary or basic form in Kyrgyz, Uzbek or Tajik which are the principle languages of the general population. The government did however produce frequent newsletters in English which detail meetings, events and developments in the PRSP process; these have been made publicly available and have been scrutinised by various independent groups.

D : Moldova

Moldova's PRSP process was stalled by political events. In the original schedule, a full PRSP paper was to be produced by the end of 2001, but in the event unforeseen constitutional changes caused significant interruptions. In mid 2000, the Moldovan parliament passed major constitutional changes; moving from a presidential to a parliamentary republic and parliamentary elections in 2001 were won by the Communist Party, and the PRSP process was held up for more than a year. An Interim PRSP was finally approved in April 2002. The Joint Staff Assessment in June 2002 judged that despite these interruptions, Moldova was committed to progress towards PRSPs, and approved concessional assistance and adjusted lending for the county. The full PRSP document was approved in July 2004.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP

The interim PRSP described two major bodies: the Mass Media Group and the Council of Experts to facilitate the process of dialogue in producing the PRSP. The remit of the Mass Media Group was to produce press releases to disseminate information and the public promotion of the PRSP initiative and the Council of Experts to manage participatory process. Subsequent discussions however resulted in the establishment of the PRSP Institutional Framework in late 2002. The general public, the poor and those who were not considered to have an expert status were involved only through the 'household budget survey' and other poverty monitoring instruments.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information

Overall, communication during the PRSP process in Moldova has largely been focused on dissemination and public relations. There are very few documents available which can give us an indication about public reactions, or the responses of NGOs to the PRSP. Although there were two rounds of meetings run by the World Bank, aiming to bring together experts from think tanks, NGOs and other civil society groups to discuss the initiative, these kinds of meetings seem to be occasional, and very much on the periphery of the main focus of the initiative. Most government literature places legislative reform and the importance of fostering a good investment climate at centre-stage, provoking complaints that other issues, such as gender, have been overlooked. As a whole, the sharing of communication in the Moldovan PRSP seems to be closely tied to demarcated organisational partnerships, rather than more open and unstructured debates.

E Niger

Niger completed an I-PRSP in October 2000, and a full PRSP document in January 2002. The Joint Staff Assessment, also in January 2002, judged that these documents had particular strengths in their participative approaches, and were good examples of a genuinely country-driven initiative. A national workshop was held in 2001 to start the consultation process, which led to the formation of 11 delegated groups.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP

The JSA noted that there was a significant problem with lack of information when attempting to analyse the state of poverty in Niger. Few studies existed with the comprehensive data necessary, although government staff were judged to have managed well with what they had. There was a strong emphasis from those working on the documents that feedback was to be gathered as a continuous process, rather than just amending specific mistakes. There were significant efforts to involve a broad range of consultative partners: NGOs, civil society groups, students, trade unions, the media and a number of other groups have been involved at various stages. A participatory poverty analysis was launched to capture the input of poor households as well as possible.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information

The consultation process for the PRSP was developed in conjunction with a communication plan aimed at raising awareness within the country about the PRSP's objectives, process, and the input needed from all concerned stakeholders. This was said by the JSA to have been moderately successful, although the dissemination process was hampered by the relative disorganisation of Niger's NGO sector, which did not have the capacity to act as an intermediary or translator of PRSP literature. Although a dedicated webpage has established an excellent hub of news, documents and explanation of the PRSP, this can only have limited impact in a country of 11 million people with only 12,000 Internet users.

F : Pakistan

Pakistan completed an I-PRSP in November 2001 and a full PRSP in April 2003. The Joint Staff Assessment of the I-PRSP in January 2003 approved concessional lending based on the progress that had been evidenced by the I-PRSP initiative. There have been some delays to Pakistan's PRSP, due to the hung parliament that resulted from the 2003 elections. The World Bank and IMF decided to delay the initiative until National and Local Government had been secured, so that the PRS would have a chance to develop better ownership in-country. The National Poverty Assessment, published in 2003 used data from 51 sites around the country, and highlighted the sensitivity of relations between different regional and ethnic groups; it seems that responses to the poverty initiatives have been heavily inflected by ethnic identities, religion and other micro-political factors.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP
Consultation processes which were in full flow at a regional level, were interrupted when the Pakistani parliament had no overall majority. Once resumed, most provinces have reportedly engaged in multiple workshops and seminars, although the Sikh and Balochistan districts in the North-West are far outstripping the Punjab areas. Redressing this ethnic balance is an expressed priority of donors. More seriously however, Pakistani CSOs came together to formally reject the way that the PRSP was being developed by the Pakistani Government. They disputed not only the lack of consultation, but also the substantive thrust of the PRSP document; arguing that a neo-liberal led policy prescription has led only to sharp increases in economic, social and environmental poverty in recent years.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information
Donors have been concerned that opportunities for broad based public discussion, through the media and other forums have been missed. Although the outrage felt by civil society groups over the PRSP process does not appear to have been translated into a major media debate – it has spawned some international comment and discussion. There has been criticism of the fragmentation of monitoring procedures and data; ODI has suggested that there is a need for a single institution charged with identifying key information needs and coordinating monitoring support.

G Rwanda

Rwanda completed an I-PRSP in November 2000, and a full PRSP document in November 2001. The Rwandan PRSP is being implemented at a time when the scars of recent history are still fresh. Organised civil society is weak, distrust prevails within many communities and many international donors and international NGOs are still focused on post-emergency rehabilitation projects. The political regime is very authoritarian yet seems to be offering competent governance and using aid successfully.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP

Participation has been strongly promoted in the Rwandan PRSP process. DFID funded a technical advisor from Action Aid India, an NGO renowned for its participatory practices, to design the participatory bottom-up approach of the Rwandan PRS. Subsequently, the Government of Rwanda has made a stronger effort to hear ordinary people's views, through Participatory Poverty Assessments, Policy Relevance Tests (to discuss the effectiveness of sectoral policies) and *ubudehe* approaches (based on traditional Rwandan practice values of problem-solving at community level). Priorities as ranked by communities participating in the PPA are covered in the PRSP and reflect a range of both sectoral (eg. agriculture, health and education) and thematic (eg. security and governance) issues. They include some very specific ones (the need for candles and fuel for oil lamps). This has not been altogether welcomed however; UDPM-UA has argued that 'civil society participation' is neither possible nor desirable in a Rwandan context. They suggest that donors should moderate their ambitions for 'interactive processes' and instead set contextually sensitive, firm targets which take account of the state of civil liberties in countries like Rwanda. Overall the communication of civil society has been limited by a lack of advocacy, training and low literacy levels. The most meaningful contributions have been from large, nationally based NGOs.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information

The Rwandan government has been active in publishing a variety of documents around the PRS as it has developed. Several drafts have been made available in English and French, although these have not been adapted into summaries or guides aimed at a lay audience. Amongst professional groups however, there has been an effort to co-ordinate between agencies, a donor conference in 2001 drawing up a number of guidelines for shared working. This co-operative working has been eased by the emergence of key reference points on which consensus has centred, notably the National Poverty Assessment, which was conducted in around 1000 community regions with several thousand participants and has become a highly credible source on poverty in Rwanda.

H : Tanzania

Tanzania was one of the first countries to prepare a PRSP document. The first PRSP was prepared in late 2000, followed a couple of months later by a joint staff assessment. While the achievements of Tanzania's first PRSP are still being debated, there seems to be a general discontent with how the process was carried out. According to the Joint Staff Assessment, the original PRSP was prepared through a process of consultation between government, NGOs and national and international development partners. The consultation process revolved around a number of events, workshops and seminars, which were held at various levels and stages during the preparation of the PRS. The government was said to have made great efforts to establish systematic monitoring systems when the PRS was actually being implemented; setting up four technical working groups, a steering committee and technical committee. Whilst superficially these initiatives attempted to institutionalise a participative PRSP process, in fact, the true authorship of the PRSP has been said to resemble a traditional 'iron triangle' of homogenous professionals working in international agencies. There is evidence to suggest that these deficiencies in the participatory process have not only reduced country ownership of the initiative, but fundamentally undermined the effectiveness of macro-level economic and legislative reform; in driving a wedge between the local context of poverty, and the general economic framework, the initiative has failed to harness potential for change, particularly in rural areas.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP

In the Tanzanian PRSP, it appears that most communication efforts have focused on the dissemination of information, rather than a more wide-ranging two-way process of developing ideas. Critics have suggested that the communication process in Tanzania was heavily limited to stakeholders in urban centres and senior government officials in central government. The working groups responsible for overseeing the participatory process have focused their efforts on senior officials and major organisations, marginalising the broader range of civil society groups and local NGOs from the process. This provoked some anger and criticism from various NGO groups, many of whom have resorted to letter writing campaigns from the margins, rather than entering a direct dialogue with donors or government.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information

Although some excellent basic versions of key documents have been produced, it appears that these were only distributed to mid-level governmental staff, researchers, academics and the most major NGOs. Surprisingly, it seems that even amongst governmental staff, those without direct responsibility for producing the document had seldom read the paper, or even mastered its key points. Despite this, Tanzania has been held up as an example of good monitoring practice. Tanzanian PRSP monitoring was led by an independent group, made up from both Tanzanian and international experts; this has been used as a model for others around the world.

I : Uganda

Uganda was one of the first countries to complete a PRSP, drafting the first document (called a PEAP) in 1996/7 and a second iteration in March 2000. The PEAP is said to have led to impressive changes in policymaking, public expenditure management and the prioritisation of poverty reduction in Uganda. It has been a heavily documented process, with three sets of Joint Staff Assessments in 2001, 2002 and 2003, and two poverty progress reports in 2002 and 2003 maintaining the interest of many international development professionals, who cite Uganda regularly as a key case study of the PRSP process.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP

Overall, the Ugandan experience of participation and PRSPs has been comparatively positive. The government has recognised strong networks of civil society groups, and has used their skills and experience to facilitate workshops in poor rural areas. Some consultations have been general in scope, others have been organised along sectoral or thematic lines, which are said to be the most productive. The scope of public consultation has been wide, covering analytical and diagnostic work, institutional and budget analysis, and agenda-setting. Overall, Uganda has been praised for the width and depth of participation in the PRSP process, but government has still attracted criticism for limiting the freedom of NGOs to express themselves. The contributions of NGOs, although widely sought, have been strictly bound up within state-set parameters.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information

The Ugandan government has developed specific monitoring systems for the PRS process. It set up a small technical unit located very close to the budget office in the Ministry of Finance, so that when the new incentives created by budget reform processes began to generate demand for poverty information, this would be immediately noticed and responded to. Uganda's model has been praised for recognising that poverty monitoring needs to involve a network of institutions such as a statistics department, sectoral planning units, and NGOs with a commitment to participatory monitoring. They appear to have succeeded in establishing a well-resourced and well-placed unit to assume principal responsibility for making things happen. Improving the disseminating of information on the PRSP beyond those in the development profession is one of the principle areas for improvement identified in critiques of participation rates.

J : Vietnam

Vietnam produced an I-PRSP in March 2001 and a full PRSP (termed CPRGS in Vietnam) was completed in May 2002. The Joint Staff Assessment in June 2002 was broadly supportive of both the plan and PRSP process. It was assessed that the Vietnamese government had demonstrated a strong commitment to an inclusive and broad based PRS process, and that this was endorsed at the highest levels of government. Overall, the CPRGS is widely perceived to be government owned, but based on a solid consultative process. It is broadly understood to have good content and reasonable priorities, however it's success is seen as dependent on various other factors; in particular the 10 year socioeconomic plan, annual budgets and ministry plans. Taken together, these policies are seen by some to make up a more influential set of measures for poverty reduction.

Communication in the PRSP process

Process of dialogue in producing the PRSP

The CPRGS was drafted by government, by a committee of 52 officials from 16 government agencies. There were multiple workshops nationally, held across the country to gather views from CSOs and regional representatives. More than 1800 poor people were consulted through the Participatory Poverty Assessment, and there was general support for the overall policy direction. There were widespread concerns about the ability of the local institutions to convert the statements into reality and many constructive suggestions about how the actions could be made to work best for the poor may have gone unnoticed. Five international NGOs (Action Aid, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam GB, Plan International, and Save the Children UK) were partners in the community-level consultations, and although there have been complaints from some NGOs that local groups have not been fully utilised, this was partly due to the weakness of Vietnam's independent NGO sector. Vietnam has had particular success in incorporating gender aspects to the PRSP document, with government working closely with several NGOs, and making special effort to involve women in roundtable discussions and consultations. Relations between national and local government, donors and NGOs have been brokered by the Poverty Task Force, and overall

involvement has been maintained fairly steadily.

Process of disseminating the PRSP, monitoring and sharing information

Some local researchers and experts were employed as consultants to aid parts of the drafting process, and four drafts were translated into English and circulated for comment amongst the international community. However, this effort doesn't seem to have been matched by efforts to disseminate PRSP documents more broadly within the public at large. Vietnam has a relatively underdeveloped media and communication infrastructure, especially compared to its neighbouring countries, although there have been moves to improve it in recent years. There have not been moves to translate major documents into native languages, or even French – and no basic summary versions of the PRSP documents produced. Despite this, there is a good range of analytic literature on the PRSP process in Vietnam.

K Strategic Communication for Poverty Reduction: the SIDA workshop

The increasing demand for communication in development programmes brought together around forty officials and professionals from different agencies in a workshop in Stockholm to discuss strategic communication for poverty reduction: experiences from PRSPs and development programmes.

The workshop was held at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in Stockholm on 9 March 2004. The event was jointly organised by SIDA, the Development Communication Division (DevComm) of the World Bank and the Information and Communication for Development (ICD) group of the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

Summary

- In the first session, Paul Mitchell, from The World Bank, explained how the Bank has been going about addressing strategic Communication in their development work.
- Next, Klaus Palm, a consultant for SIDA, outlined the three major challenges he saw for strategic communication in development.
- Questions from the floor addressed a range of issues.

- Erik Illes explained how SIDA were going about building partnerships and better external communication in their organisation.
- Ingemar Gusafsson from the SIDA Methods Development Unit developed this theme by exploring the conditions which allow strategic communication to take place easily.
- Questions from the floor were broadly supportive of SIDA's assessment, and identified various other ways that it could be applied.

- Sina Odugbemi and Masud Mozammel outlined the issues and challenges for strategic communication in PRSPs, based on their experience of working in DFID and the World Bank.
- Steliana Nedera outlined the specific communication issues in the Moldovan PRSP.
- Servacius Likwellie described the communication challenges facing the Tanzanian government in developing their PRSP.
- Questions from the floor mostly asked for more detail on the Tanzanian PRSP.

- James Deane talked about the role of Panos in opening up media involvement and discussion on PRSPs. He opened up debate about the best way to improve media capacity.
- Outside the context of PRSPs, Anders Ronquist talked about SIDA's experience of building national ownership through a health programme in Nicaragua.

- The final session discussed how to go forward, and explored potential joint working on Communication in PRSPs.

In the first session, Paul Mitchell, from The World Bank, explained how the Bank has been going about addressing strategic communication in their development work.

1. Paul Mitchell highlighted that communication must be seen taken seriously as a development tool which works to improve development effectiveness in four ways:
 - by generating consensus internally and externally
 - building trust and developing a conducive environment for development work
 - as a tool for advocacy which can bring important issues to the attention of decision-makers
 - as part of the design of development work itself
2. Mitchell argued that because development is all about change and social transformation, it is always political. The World Bank has started to accept that political risk is another risk dimension.
3. Both the world of communication and the world of development are changing very rapidly. This makes it increasingly important to communicate well with your audience; there are increasing demands for a more transparent, holistic and participatory approach to development.
4. Good communication is critical to successful development work; a recent study showed that projects who had sought the involvement of beneficiaries had a 68% success rate, compared to those who planned their projects independently who were successful in only 10% of cases. Corruption and good governance are currently the main development problems, and communication is key to dealing with them.
5. Working partnerships bring both benefits and costs; we need to work to alleviate the risks that accompany partnerships in a sector which deals with globalised, highly political and sensitive issues.
6. Strategic communication must be adapted for different political and social contexts; a proper assessment should be made to create communication that take account of various factors:
 - audience
 - behaviour and attitude
 - messages
 - channels
 - evaluation
7. Strategic communication needs to be built into three major stages of the project cycle
 - communication research assessment: empirical research and surveys, audits, dialogue
 - communication design and implementation; designing a strategy to achieve change
 - monitoring and evaluation; proof of change achieved
8. Mitchell outlined a seven point checklist for building good communication
 - ask the communication question at the planning stage of projects
 - define the scope to the public debate
 - actively listen stakeholders an ongoing dialogue
 - manage expectations
 - use communication specialists
 - build consensus
 - promote local ownership

Next, Klaus Palm, a consultant for SIDA outlined the three major challenges he saw for strategic communication in development.

9. Palm explained why he preferred the term planned, rather than strategic communication; because he thought the critical aspects of communication were planning ahead and thinking about communication as an instrument to achieve change.
10. The first challenge Palm identified for planned communication was that of clarifying relationships between numerous ongoing processes; capacity building, participative processes and developing dialogue. All of these areas are very closely related and linked through communication, and they need to be carefully coordinated.
11. The second challenge is to develop our listening skills. All too often discussion of communication focuses on how to improve the way we deliver messages, but it is equally important to learn how we listen and respond to others.
12. We need to develop planned communication at a process level, so that it is part of all development work. The interests and views of stakeholders should be analysed and incorporated into projects so that ownership develops across different groups and organisations.

Questions from the floor addressed a range of issues:

- When working on strengthening the media, there is a challenge in harnessing the momentum behind national processes; especially PRSPs, MDGs and national reports. We need to be as imaginative as possible in engaging poor and vulnerable people.
- The danger with focusing on the strategy of communication is that we forget the cultural issues involved: you can't expect to resolve long-term, entrenched problems just by changing the way you deliver a message – sometimes things are more complicated than that.
- In PRSPs, there is often an initial bout of enthusiasm for participative approaches while countries are being supported by donors and other international actors. The difficulty is maintaining this energy during the implementation phase.
- We shouldn't assume that consensus is a good thing; often people have irreconcilable positions and the best that we can do is incorporate a little bit of everyone's views. At the end of the day, we can list a range of things that would be great for poverty reduction, but these must be prioritised and we can't expect to agree about how to do that.
- You have to respect different cultures to an extent, but everyone has an agenda; development is political and everyone wants to achieve something. You need to define what you will 'respect' in culture and what you will not (eg. genital mutilation) – but once you start trying to do that, you will quickly find yourself in very deep water.
- We simultaneously talk about listening to all groups in society, large and small, and about *building* a consensus and persuading them of our views: can consensus building really be a bottom-up?
- We should be clear about the two roles of strategic communication; fostering debate and amplifying different views on the one hand, and trying to get people to understand and come to conclusions together on the other.

Session 2**Erik Illes explained how SIDA were going about building partnerships and better external communication in their organisation.**

1. The overall goal of SIDA is to develop relations that enable the poor to improve their lives, and the organisation places a great emphasis on cooperation for institutional change.
2. Arranging partnerships can be a long and difficult process. SIDA works to design partnerships that reduce administrative costs and administrative burden on both parties.
3. Communication can be broken down into various categories, all of which represent a significant management challenge for development agencies:
 - objectives
 - capacity
 - accountability
 - mainstreaming
 - implementation strategy
4. You can arrange partnerships in different ways to make them more productive for all parties; have silent partners, joint lead agencies or one; it is important to organise them as appropriate for each project or initiative.

Ingemar Gusafsson from the SIDA Methods Development Unit developed this theme by exploring the conditions with allow strategic communication to take place easily.

5. Gusafsson pointed out that whilst most people within development agree that partnerships are useful and productive, there are always constraints that limit how far they can commit to working co-operatively.
6. He pointed to four main issues which partnerships need to negotiate:
 - purpose of the development initiative
 - forms of financing may be overall sector support or core funding for a particular organisation
 - process of working; harmonisation, dialogue or capacity development which brings different actors together
 - financial flows can be organised in various ways; through budgets or the pooling of donor funds
7. When moving from project to programme mode, the dialogue shifts in three ways:

- Content: shift from discussion of technical details of individual projects to discussion of the sector as a whole.
 - Relationship between different agencies and governments: Developing clear *rules of the game* for communication and dialogue. This process is matter of negotiation between number of actors who come with their own baggage and agendas.
 - Consensus building; developing mutual trust and consensus about what should be done and how corporation should be organised. We must be prepared to represent other agencies, and to let others speak for us.
8. SIDA conducted a study with the aim of finding the enabling conditions for good dialogue, on the basis of 9 project evaluation studies. They found that good dialogue requires four processes:
 - dialogue in the partner country
 - dialogue between country's government and the donor community
 - dialogue among various donors
 - dialogue between and bilateral or multilateral donors
 9. There are various trans-boundary factors which are conducive to good dialogue:
 - high capacity for dialogue and sensitivity to perspectives of others
 - decentralised structures
 - clear division of roles
 - high level of insight into the cooperative arrangement
 - strong local ownership
 10. There were also a number of clear success factors for donors working in partnerships:
 - common vision as to what programme support will lead to
 - clear distribution of roles clarified early
 - coordinator with limited personal interest but sufficient capacity
 - decision made at same level among various donors
 - avoidance of closed groupings
 - openness to discussing policy issues
 - shared views on building capacity
 - international dialogue on formalised donor cooperation
 - exchange of expert know-how in the partner country

Questions from the floor were broadly supportive of this assessment, and saw other ways it could be applied:

- You could do a very similar set of success factors not just for donors, but for other interest groups.
- Buy-in from local stakeholders is clearly a key factor, but it is one of the most difficult both to assess, and to develop through planned activities. It is hard to build this into logical frameworks, but examining evaluation reports seems to be a good method for analysing buy-in.
- We can not assume that partnerships can be built simply by donors and other partners doing the right things; civil society groups are often denied full access to information because of restrictive legislation. We need tackle structural limitations that put the breaks on partnerships, as well as improving how we operate ourselves.

Session 3

Sina Odugbemi and Masud Mozammel outlined the issues and challenges for strategic communication in PRSPs, based on their experience of working in DFID and the World Bank.

1. Odugbemi and Mozammel first drew attention to the role of communication within PRSPs. PRSPs have six core principles, including being *country-driven* and involving broad participation, and being *partnership-oriented* through the coordinated participation of many multilateral groups. Both of these principles are underpinned by good communication.
2. Reasons for strategic communication in PRSPs:
 - greater and informed participation
 - create open and inclusive national dialogue
 - ensure transparency and accountability

- manage expectations
 - establish momentum
 - institutionalise two-way flow of communication
3. Major issues:
 - trust and confidence
 - lack of information among major stakeholders
 - ad hoc communication activities (often PR) mostly during preparation of PRSP document
 - absence of regular flow of information and follow-up
 4. Challenges:
 - capacity within and outside the government
 - institutionalisation of communication intervention
 - resource allocation both human and financial
 - sustainability and momentum
 - simplification and demystification of information
 5. Lessons:
 - good communication intervention creates ownership
 - involvement of opinion leaders is essential (need to focus on the poor, but recognise that elites also need to be incorporated)
 - focus on sustaining the level of confidence on PRSP
 - distinguish between participation and consultation
 - emphasise on institutional arrangement. (how will monitoring etc happen in terms of flow of information – against what baseline of poverty assessment – how much can people trust agencies to tell the truth about how it is going)
 - build capacity within government (supply side of information – many developing country governments do not see that it is in their own interest to be good communicators)
 - increase civil society resources and capacity
 - develop the media sector: economic literacy of journalists, motivation and engagement and pressure for accountability. (discourse is a million miles away from the vocabulary of the general public – don't make it alien and alienating) Use intermediaries to engage people with this highly technical documentation
 - foster the process of creating an open and inclusive dialogue (where this has not been the culture – need to tease out the possibilities for this)

Steliana Nedera outlined the specific communication issues in the Moldovan PRSP.

6. The major pattern of communication in Moldova was a disconnection between parties. Most dialogue was going one-way, between donors and civil society organisations, and also between donors and governments.
7. There was very little communication activity which completed this loop and allowed flow of information in both directions, between all parties.
8. Tackling this problem is very challenging and there are major capacity issues which limit how much progress can be made. Although there is a great deal of goodwill and commitment to making the Moldovan PRSP successful, more wide-ranging strategic communication may be out of reach for this country at present.

Servacius Likwellie described the communication challenges facing the Tanzanian government in developing their PRSP.

9. With a socialist history, the Tanzanian population were used to rallying around a government initiatives which had a strong agenda. This was shaken in the economic crisis in 1987, which was a serious set back to years of economic progress.
10. When the government set the priority of Vision 2025 in the PRSP; that Tanzania would become a middle-income country in 21 years, they could not rely on mass support from across Tanzanian business and society.
11. The government set about creating partnerships, not just budget allocations, to bring together the private and public sector. They set up an institutional framework to ensure wide participation; with four technical committees to assess what worked and what didn't.
12. There were national surveys to gather data, strengthen administrative systems, aid analysis and gather opinions, but the bulk of information has been flowing 'downstream'.

13. Lessons:
- clarity on respective roles – can't have bleeding of responsibilities
 - let all have their own agenda and perspectives –pluralist
 - institutionalised interface between and within stakeholders

Questions from the floor mostly asked for more detail on the Tanzanian PRSP:

- On integrating the MDGs into the Tanzania PRSP: the PRSP was used as a vehicle to achieve the MDGs, and MDGs were used as a yardstick for monitoring and evaluation.
- On donor support: The problem in Tanzania was not donors withholding support, but government delaying the process. There has been increasing success in harmonising donor assistance and communication.
- On how accountability works in Tanzania: There is an annual week long event where the government reports on what it has been able to do, asking for opinions from CSOs, donors, schools and the public as a whole.
- On gender in the PRSP: Women have held leadership roles in many groups and were not felt to be marginalised in the Tanzanian PRSP as a whole.

Session 4

James Deane talked about the role of Panos in opening up media involvement and discussion on PRSPs. He opened up debate about the best way to improve media capacity.

1. Panos aims to stimulate public debate by promoting effective media involvement and performance, with a view to advancing the MDGS.
2. In many developing countries the media do not have the capacity to generate the kind of public debate that promotes country ownership of PRSP; ownership depends on public debate as well as participation and consultation processes.
3. Panos is a neutral actor on the content of PRSPs, working internationally to bolster media activity through training workshops, seminars and studies.
4. Panos has come to several key conclusions on the media and PRSPs:
 - very low level of awareness of PRSP within countries
 - reporting disengaged and formulaic
 - lack of technical skills to report sectoral specific issues
 - poor relationship between government and journalists hinders investigative and strong coverage
 - lack of interaction between CSOs and media
 - media outlets demand payment for coverage of development-related issues. (journalists won't come to workshops unless paid, etc)
 - strategies to engage media not adjusted to new media environments
 - fundamental issues of media engagement with poverty related issues
5. A changing media environment has led to the marginalisation of poverty issues:
 - increasingly democratic, plural and complex media landscape
 - increasingly commercial, advertising driven, consumer focused media
 - decline of investigative journalism, economic journalism, heavily focused on a narrow business agenda
 - explosion of radio (particularly in countries like Uganda), particularly commercial FM radio and community radio provides new opportunities for public debate
 - the talk show host can be as effective as the traditional journalist
 - new strategies developing to communicate grassroots perspectives to national audiences, including policymakers (listening clubs, oral testimonies etc)
6. Panos have identified some complex issues in how best to develop media capacity. Whilst training for journalists has been highly successful in the past, print journalists are rapidly being sidelined in favour of radio presenters, and are not always in a position to work autonomously even when they are more skilled. We may need to move towards more imaginative development activities to cater for their needs.
7. A report by Panos in 2002 criticised the World Bank, IMF and Governments for not allowing public debate about alternative views to the fundamental questions of economic policy underlying PRSPs.

Outside the context of PRSPs, Anders Ronquist talked about SIDA's experience of building national ownership through a health programme in Nicaragua.

8. The project started in 80s as an NGO initiative that twinned institutions in Nicaragua and Sweden. The programme trained approximately 200 Obstetric Nurses.
9. It was technically successful, and trained many Nurses who had the capacity to work. They developed a good enthusiasm in Nicaragua and the staff on the project had a deep personal commitment to methods.
10. There were various problems with sustainability: the National Health Authority and Local Authorities were unaware of the project, and the project was financially insecure. There was insufficient dissemination in local communities and professional groups in-country were not fully on board.
11. Eventually, the project finished and NGO commitment decreased. Enthusiasm faded and the training capacity was not fully used – only a handful of those trained work as nurses today.
12. In late 2000 SIDA was asked to do the project again. They did a feasibility appraisal with a professional communicator and team of four. Interviews were conducted with all stakeholders and seminars were held with key stakeholders to draw up log frame.
13. There was a programme of negotiations with key professional groups: discussion with the Ministry of Health and formation of a Core Advisory Group for the programme.
14. SIDA has developed its role as donor/partner – offering technical assistance to broker partnerships, being a facilitator for dialogue and providing financial support for the design phase of the project.
15. The donor community was fully informed and involved, and the project promoted in-country dialogue at local levels. SIDA included communication components in the programme design and budgets. SIDA communicated with Core Group, and used professional support with communication.
16. There was a great effort to think about how communication connected with target groups and objectives. Doing this was effective, but it was a long-term investment that required significant 'donor patience'.

Session 5

The final session discussed how to go forward, and explored potential joint working on communication in PRSPs.

1. A survey of the workshop participants showed that the key issues in taking strategic communication forward in PRSPs were:
 - capacity issues
 - knowledge – sharing and consolidating knowledge across organisations
 - working together as teams – finding ways to work on projects, programme and products
2. Sometimes working *in partnership* is not the best thing to do; we are better off just working 'in communication'. For our organisations it sometimes undermines our capacity to be involved if we are not seen as independent – we need to retain our status as a distinct organisation.
3. The key issue is about how we can develop awareness of other organisations; we need to use synergies and training to utilise the work of other people – to stop reinventing the wheel. This will help to elevate communication work so that it is taken seriously as a development tool.
4. This meeting could be useful to develop three areas: knowledge sharing: we could create an email group to share drafts and ideas. We could create joint missions; these are often good ways to use partnerships with institutions to alleviate awkward politics around sensitive missions. Lastly, we can start to move beyond the 'battle of approaches': people get very territorial about the vocabulary that they use. We should use communication approaches as a toolbox; choosing the appropriate technique pragmatically.
5. In terms of changing of behaviour, we need to assess who needs to be changed. When we want to create internal change within organisations, it is sometimes easier to do this with the support of others. We can use the credibility and weight of other organisations to act together.
6. We could extend the circulation of the Strategic Communication Reader which is a collection of relevant and interesting materials. We need to make sure we have mutual links and think about how we can package our work collectively to make it as powerful as possible.
7. We need to mainstream communication within our own programmes and set aside budgets to handle communication; thinking carefully about the specific added value that communication can bring to development.
8. We need a set of simple tool-based documents that can tell people quickly, 'this is how this problem has been done in the past', and 'these are some ways you can do it'.

L Strategic communication in PRSPs: An annotated bibliography

²⁶ Amy Pollard worked as a Research Officer at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) between 2003 and 2004. John Young is Head of Communications and Partnerships at the ODI and Robert Chapman is a Research Officer at the ODI.

Besley T and Burgess R. 2000, *Does the Media Make Government Responsive?: Theory and Evidence from Indian Famine Relief Policy*, London School of Economics Working Paper, (London, LSE)

This paper argues that where the media is better developed, state governments are more responsive to issues around poverty.

The determinants of government responsiveness to its citizens are key issues in political economy. Here, we develop a model based on the solution of political agency problems. Having a more informed and politically active electorate strengthens incentives for governments to be responsive. This suggests that there is a role for both democratic institutions and mass media in ensuring that the preferences of citizens are reflected in policy. The ideas behind the model are tested on panel data from India. We show that state governments are more responsive to falls in food production and crop flood damage via public food distribution and calamity relief expenditure where newspaper circulation is higher and electoral accountability greater. [From abstract]

Booth D. (ed) 2003, *Fighting Poverty in Africa: Are PRSPs making a difference?* (London, Overseas Development Institute)

This is the most substantive formal publication to date on politics and the PRSP process.

PRSPs have helped to mainstream anti-poverty efforts in national policy processes in Africa. However, the seven country experiences synthesised in this chapter reveal differences as well as commonalities. Can vicious circles of patrimonial politics, state weakness and ineffectual aid be replaced by virtuous ones, based on greater national ownership of anti-poverty effort? This is still uncertain. PRSPs add value to technocratic reforms in public

management, by opening new spaces for policy dialogue, but those reforms remain vital, especially in regard to the budget. For their part, donors need to be prepared to take risks and impose disciplines on themselves. The hypothesis that PRSP processes can promote changes leading to more effective poverty reduction needs refinement, but remains plausible. [From summary]

The publication has case studies on eight African countries, including Tanzania and Rwanda.

Booth D and Lucas H. 2002, *Good Practice in the Development of PRSP Indicators and Monitoring Systems ODI Working Paper No. 172*, (London, Overseas Development Institute)

'PRSP monitoring...needs to be geared to what is new and challenging about the PRSP initiative – particularly the effort to engage a wider range of stakeholders in policy dialogue about poverty reduction at the national level.'

This paper is based on a Desk Study of Good Practice in the Development of PRSP Indicators and Monitoring Systems commissioned by DFID for the Strategic Partnership with Africa (SPA) in 2001. The first phase of the study defined an approach to the monitoring of PRSPs and undertook a preliminary analysis of the content of current PRSP documentation (Interim PRSPs, PRSPs and Joint Staff Assessments). A number of gaps, issues and challenges were identified. The second phase adopted a more forward-looking perspective and a more upbeat mood. Its purpose was to make some practical suggestions, based on actual experiences of a relevant sort, about how to meet some of the biggest challenges facing those concerned with PRSP monitoring. [Paper Summary]

In terms of communication issues, the paper suggests that PRSPs need to be monitored in terms of 'key inputs' rather than outcomes. Booth

and Lucas found that whilst PRSPs have produced an unprecedented number of household surveys and poverty outcome measurements, people often turn a blind eye to the poor quality of these reporting methods. There is little information available on how the information from stakeholders is incorporated into either monitoring processes or policy documents. Booth and Lucas suggest that problems with routine information systems demand a more imaginative approach to PRSP monitoring.

Bretton Woods Project. 2003, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs): A Rough Guide* (www.brettonwoodssproject.org/topic/adjustment/PRSP_rough_guide/PRSP_rough_guide.htm)

This briefing aims to provide information to a non-specialist audience on key aspects of PRSPs. It is an update to Bretton Woods' ABC of PRSPs (1999).

Written in a question and answer format, this guide gives an introduction to PRSPs, explaining how they relate to World Bank and IMF spending, structural adjustment loans and the HIPC initiative. It also explores the issues of 'ownership' and participation. The guide examines the conditions that countries must meet to receive aid under a PRSP, looking at how the World Bank and IMF assess PRSPs, and what monitoring systems are in place. It offers an outline of the technical aspects of the PRSP cycle as a whole.

The guide assesses the nature and extent of civil society participation in PRSPs, saying that there is no uniform threshold which must be met, just a commitment to openness and transparency. It highlights that many NGOs consider that the World Bank and IMF are not well equipped to assess participation, and that in several countries, including Bolivia and Cambodia, the concerns of civil society organisations have been overlooked by donor boards.

Burke A. 1999, *Communication and Development: a practical guide* (London, Social Development Division, Department for International Development)

Communication activities have always been central to DFID programmes. But DFID's new poverty agenda has given them a much stronger emphasis, with a growth of interest from all advisory groups and most geographical divisions. Newer, more broad-ranging programmes give far greater scope for innovative communication activities with new partners. If priority is placed on eliminating poverty, then it is vital that channels of communication involve poor and excluded people. This involves people's rights to be involved in development programmes, and in society and governance more generally. The engagement of poorer people with government involves many complex Communication issues, whether it takes place at a village level or in policy debate. With a high level of interest in communication, and a growing awareness of how central it is to many new DFID priorities, there is need for good practice material from Social Development Division. This guide fulfils those aims, and complements other communication initiatives under way in DFID. [From introduction]

Chapman R and Slaymaker T. 2002, *ICTs and Rural Development: Review of the Literature, Current Interventions and Opportunities for Action*, ODI Working Paper 192 (London, Overseas Development Institute)

This paper investigates the role that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have to play in developing countries, focusing particularly on those rural areas that are currently least affected by the latest advances in the 'digital revolution'. The need for flexible and decentralised models for using ICTs is discussed in the context of 'content and control'. The challenge of achieving rural development goals by supporting knowledge and information systems is analysed through an epistemological perspective illustrated by case studies from the literature and the authors' research on the operation of these systems at the community level. The concept of building partnerships at the community level based around information exchange is explored, using ICTs to improve

systems for the exchange of information sources that already exist locally and also providing established information intermediaries with the facilities to enhance their capacity for information sharing.

Responsibility for incorporating technological innovation in ICTs into development strategies has traditionally fallen to those with the mandate for infrastructure within governments and development agencies. This is largely due to the large-scale and high costs of building telecommunication, electricity and, to a certain extent, broadcasting networks. As the technology becomes more powerful and more complex, with satellite-based and fibre optic cable networks encircling the globe with increasing density, the position of ICTs within this infrastructure mandate is unlikely to diminish. ICTs, however, also consist of a wide range of equipment nowadays that can be operated individually or within small, local networks that do not require vast infrastructure investments. Long lasting batteries, solar and wind-up power sources are now being used to enable ICTs to operate in remote areas. This paper focuses principally on the role of ICTs as flexible and powerful tools for social development through small scale strategic interventions, linking to, and extending beyond, formal and centralised systems operating on a larger scale. [From the executive summary]

Christian Aid. 2001, *Ignoring the experts: Poor people's exclusion from poverty reduction strategies*, Christian Aid policy briefing prepared in partnership with INESC, Rede Brasil, Mozambique Debt Group, LINK, CEDLA, UNITAS (www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0110prsp/prsp.htm)

This is a damning critique of IMF and World Bank attempts to incorporate civil society participation in PRSPs. It argues that poor people's involvement so far has been minimal and superficial.

The paper suggests that while poor people's views are invited on some issues, they are not allowed to address the broad package of economic reforms from World Bank and IMF. It argues 'one size fits all' packages, which do not take full account of the poverty situation in each country, are still in evidence. The paper suggests that poor people and their representatives need to be supported in developing 'tools for participation'; especially training about how they can inform choices in economic policymaking. Poor people are currently being used to 'rubber stamp' PRSPs; the rhetoric is not

being backed up by the proper support. The paper calls for a review of PRSP process in terms of participation, which involves the poor at every juncture. It argues that improved quality participation is essential if PRSPs are to achieve their aims of more flexible poverty reduction policies which have a stronger sense of ownership in country.

'People's participation in decision making is in crisis. In both rich and poor countries, hundreds of thousands of people are taking to the streets to protest against policies set by global institutions and powerful governments. It is in poor countries in particular that millions of people, whose lives are affected most by these policies, have little voice.

While World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials discuss ways of opening up dialogue with poor people, large protests have taken place outside their meetings in recent years. Christian Aid believes the sentiments of many of those protestors echo those of people in poor countries who have to live with the impact of decisions made by global institutions.

Two years ago the World Bank and IMF introduced Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Poor countries must now complete PRSPs in order to qualify for debt relief and further loans. In order to write their PRSPs, governments are required to consult with poor people.

The real picture of participation in PRSPs is now becoming clearer. Thirty seven countries have produced an interim PRSP, and five countries a full one. These have been endorsed by the boards of the World Bank and IMF. But research from Christian Aid, in consultation with partner organisations in poor countries, shows that the involvement of poor people in drawing up policies and writing PRSPs has been minimal and superficial! [From summary]

Christiansen K with Hovland I. 2003, *The PRSP Initiative: Multilateral Policy Change and the Role of Research*, ODI Working Paper No. 216 (London, Overseas Development Institute)

This paper traces the emergence of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) initiative and the various factors that contributed to its adoption in September 1999, including the role and relative influence of research in this process. A PRSP is a document that sets out an analysis of poverty in a country and defines the national strategy on how the government is going to reduce it. Preparation of a PRSP is an

entry criterion for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme, and is also an eligibility criterion for concessional lending from the World Bank (IDA) and IMF (PRGF programme).

This Working Paper forms part of ODI's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme, which seeks to learn more about linkages between development research, policy and practice. The main questions addressed are:

- How did the idea of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) come to be adopted, and
- What was the role of research in this process?

The relative contribution of research is considered using a three-dimensional framework:

- Policy context: politics and institutions
- Evidence: credibility and communication
- Links: influence and legitimacy

Church M, Bitel M, Armstrong K, Fernando P, Gould H, Joss S, Marwaha-Diedrich M, de la Torre A L and Vouhé C. 2003, *Participation, Relationships and Dynamic Change: New Thinking on Evaluating the Work of International Networks*, DPU Working Paper 121 (London, Development Planning Unit, University College London)

This paper reviews central issues concerning the use of networks in the field of international development. Formal networks today have become a preferred organisational form for cooperation on a range of issues, and there are many advantages to a networked structure – not least the network's capacity to challenge and change unequal power relations. The authors therefore begin by stating that:

'If we are to find our way to counteracting the negative effects of economic liberalisation and globalisation, especially on the marginal and under-represented on the world stage, we need a greater understanding of how to build and sustain powerful networks based on the values of dignity in development for all.'

They continue by discussing problems and solutions for networks based on the four Ds used by Chambers in his participatory approach to development: Diversity, Dynamism, Democracy and Decentralisation.

The paper then draws on several case studies and illustrative examples to highlight topics such

as network relationships, trust, structure, and participation. They argue that trust grows as network members work together. They also argue that networks will benefit from evaluation of these various relationships and processes, and suggest a number of angles that can be used when evaluating networks:

- Contributions Assessment can be used to see where the resources lie in the network and whether the network processes have facilitated circulation of these resources.
- Channels of Participation mapping can help the network to understand how and where the members are interacting with the network, and what their priorities are.
- Monitoring Networking at the Edges will highlight how much 'networking' is being stimulated by the secretariat function and helps to assess the level of independent exchange that is going on.

A two-page checklist for networks is provided, with suggested evaluation questions covering the issues raised above. The authors then show why networked linking and coordinating can bring much added value to advocacy work, and summarise the reasons as follows:

- The improved quality and sophistication of joint analysis that underpins the advocacy.
- The extended reach to key actors in key contexts through which that improved analysis can be channelled.
- The capacity to act simultaneously, with shared ideas, in many places at once.
- The space for competing views to be discussed and consensus positions achieved.
- The opportunity for those with few other avenues to powerful decision-makers to gain access through the networked relationships.

The paper concludes that there are numerous, well established barriers to improving information exchange. Knowledge capture, the high cost of information access and infrastructure constraints all affect the equitable distribution of information in rural areas. However, technological advances in ICTs have reduced the cost and increased the quantity and speed of information transfer dramatically. This is set to continue and the technologies are already being designed to accommodate a wide range of user choices. The need for a concerted effort to build knowledge partnerships and to engage the private sector and technology drivers in the pursuit of rural development goals is paramount if ICTs are to have a role in future strategies.

Craig D and Porter D. 2002, 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: a new convergence' in *World Development*, Vol. 30, No. 12, December 2002.

(www1.worldbank.org/wbiep/decentralisation/afrlib/craig.pdf)

This paper looks at the political dimensions of the PRSP approach, arguing that the liberal ideological framework behind PRSPs obscures the power relations which remain despite it. It uses Uganda as a case study.

'PRSPs may...be seen as a "third way for the third world"'

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers represent both a primary policy device of international development institutions, and an instance of a wider international convergence of public policy around global integration and social inclusion. Charting the emergence of these approaches, this paper argues that this convergence has a number of structural predilections which favour the technical and juridical over the political economic, and a disciplinary framework over practical contest. Drawing extensively on decentralised governance and Poverty Reduction programmes in Uganda, this paper shows how these predilections obscure power relations and restrict practical and political options, while exacting heavy establishment and compliance costs. [From abstract]

Driscoll R and Christiansen K. 2004, *The PRSP Approach: A basic guide for CARE International* (London, CARE International)

This guide provides an introduction to the process of developing a PRSP, as well as the history and politics of this approach. It was originally developed for CARE International, but gives a useful overview for anyone new to PRSPs.

The guide explains the significance of an emphasis on 'participation' in PRSPs, pointing to the links between participation and country ownership, improved donor behaviour and a more programme driven approach to aid, rather than aid driving a series of isolated projects. It also describes the technical aspects of the PRSP, explaining the idealised policy cycle, and the principles behind the approach. The guide outlines the political associations of PRSPs; as a process which may challenge dominant power relations and requires a shift in the process of policymaking. PRSPs can also change the power relationships between rich and poor countries by making aid conditional on a process

rather than specific policies. The guide offers an assessment of how successful the PRSP process has been overall so far. It evaluates the quality of PRSPs in terms of public ownership of the process, whether PRSPs have managed to reform institutional practices sufficiently, and whether donors have provided sufficient aid to resource PRSPs. The guide suggests that the PRSP has so far been broadly successful but is not a magic bullet for poverty reduction.

Driscoll R, Christiansen K, and Jenks S. 2004, *An Overview of NGO Participation in PRSPs* (London, Overseas Development Institute)

This paper explains why 'participation' has become a buzz-word associated with PRSPs. It gives an overview of NGO participation in PRSP processes to date and explains why participation is seen as particularly important in PRSPs.

Driscoll et al outline that participation is seen to increase country ownership of poverty reduction policies, that it is part of holding governments to account for their spending, and that it has intrinsic pro-poor outcomes. They offer a framework for analysing NGO participation; taking account of the type of NGO involved and the extent of their participation, as well as their engagement at a particular level of the PRSP cycle (national, regional, local etc) and the stage to which the whole PRSP has advanced. NGO participation is examined in the context of the 'ideal' PRSP cycle.

The paper maps NGO participation in PRSP to date, suggesting that International NGOs have had the most meaningful engagement with government and donors, whilst national and local groups have tended to be limited to consultation exercises and data gathering. It offers short case studies taken from Vietnam, Rwanda and Bolivia. Overall, the paper assesses that NGO experiences of participation have been a mixed bag: on the one hand they have developed new links between other organisations, government agents and poor people, but on the other, they have felt their contributions were often sidelined and participatory processes have often been haphazard.

Figueroa M E et al. 2002, *Communication for Social Change: An Integrated Model for Measuring Process and Its Outcomes, Communication for Social Change: Working Paper Series (The Communication Initiative)*

(www.comminit.com/strategicthinking/stcfscindicators/sld-1500.html)

The Communication for Social Change initiative is based on an iterative process where 'community dialogue' and 'collective action' work together to produce social change in a community that improves the health and welfare of all of its members. This is an integrated model that draws from a broad literature on development communication developed since the early 1960s. It is particularly influenced by the work of Latin American theorists and communication activists who wrote how to create a more people-inclusive, integrated approach of using communication for development. Theories of group dynamics, conflict resolution, leadership, quality improvement and future search, as well as the network/convergence theory of communication, have been used to develop the model.

This paper examines how this model of communication facilitates an assessment of the communication. It identifies a series of indicators to measure the process of community dialogue and collective action; based on equity of information, levels of participation, a sense of ownership and levels of cohesion. It uses different kinds of evaluation and self-evaluation. Whilst not highly rigid, it offers a systematic approach to communication which promises to identify the factors that help community initiatives succeed, and identify what is lacking in others.

Edwards M, Fraser C and Restrepo Estrada S. 2002, 'Community radio for change: NGOs in the Age of Information', *IDS Bulletin 25 (2) 117-124 (1994)* (Brighton, Institute of Development Studies)

In this article, Edwards links the rise of NGOs within the development field to the emergence of the information age, and poses the question of whether NGOs have a comparative advantage in linking information, knowledge and action in an efficient and relevant way. He suggests that NGOs have a distinctive competence in this area due to three factors: 1. NGOs have

direct access to fieldwork and local accounts. 2. NGOs usually have offices that span the different levels of the global system, and therefore information can flow easily between the grassroots, NGO local offices, NGO headquarters, and NGO lobbying activity in global centres. 3. NGOs' value base implies a democratic approach to communication that emphasises openness, sharing and non-hierarchical communication channels.

NGOs rely on their distinctive competence in handling information for four main purposes. The first and second purposes concern their own management systems and strategic plans, and their processes of institutional learning. The third purpose is for advocacy. NGOs have realised that they have a far greater chance to influence government and donor policy if they are able to make systematic use of grassroots information in their advocacy work. The fourth purpose is one of accountability. NGOs face increasing pressure to evaluate the impact of their work and to stand accountable to various stakeholders, both upwards to donors and downwards to the communities in which they work. The danger with multiple accountabilities is that upwards accountability may carry more weight than downwards accountability, which in turn may result in a one-way information flow away from the field rather than in both directions.

Edwards reviews possible barriers to information use in NGOs: internal organisational obstacles; problems with representativity and the images that are used; and the gap between raw information and knowledge. Possible solutions include organisational decentralisation, viewing information as an integral part of all organisational processes, emphasising the need for information to be relevant, and taking advantage of the opportunities provided by IT.

Fraser C and Restrepo-Estrada S. 2002, 'Community Radio for Change and Development' in *Development (the Journal of the Society for International Development)*, 45(4): 69-73, (December 2002)

The authors illustrate the role of a radio station, owned and run by a community, in providing the forum for the participatory, public dialogue which is essential for social change. The radio station is a platform for identifying and analysing problems and their solutions, thereby determining development inputs that truly meet local needs. Open access to on-air complaints from the

audience can pressure local authorities to adopt practices of good governance and transparency. Cheap and easy to install and operate, community radio can also be the interface between poor communities and the Internet. [Abstract from article]

Gellner G. 1986, *Plough, Sword and Book: the Structure of Human History* (Chicago, the University of Chicago Press)

Gellner puts forward a comprehensive philosophy of human history, from the Neolithic age to the present. Gellner divides human endeavour into three fundamental activities - production, coercion, and cognition - and examines how these activities were transformed by the 'great leaps' of the agricultural and industrial revolutions.

In tracing the social changes that occurred as humans moved from hunting and gathering to agriculture to industry, Gellner rejects genetic and teleological explanations and stresses instead the roles of special combinations of circumstances and of cognition. He argues against cultural relativism and contends that human societies have progressed in genuine knowledge, even if at a price.

Despite the triumph of cognition and the abundance of goods offered by industrial production, Gellner warns, coercion still plays a menacing role in modern society. He advises that, though we cannot predict the future, we can understand our options by comprehending the past.

Gilchrist A. 2000, 'The well-connected community: networking to the "edge of chaos"' *Community Development Journal* 35(3): 264-75.

Complexity theory provides new insights into the behaviour and 'emergent properties' of social systems. The experience of 'community' is both an outcome and the context of informal networking. A 'well-connected community' is achieved when people feel part of a web of diverse and inter-locking relationships. These networks sustain and shape an integrated and dynamic social and organisational environment representing life at the 'edge of chaos'. It supports the familiar patterns of interaction and collective organisation that characterise the voluntary and community sectors. Community development involves creating and managing opportunities for connection and communication across sectoral, identity and

geographical boundaries. This is termed 'meta-networking' and is a core function of the professional role. The purpose of community development is to support and shape social networking. [Abstract from article]

Hovland I. 2003, *Communication Literature Review* (London, Overseas Development Institute)

In preparation for a new research strategy, the Central Research Team (CRT) at the UK Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned a series of studies on relevant topics - among them the topic 'communication of research for poverty reduction'. This literature review contributes to the study by mapping the current recommendations and emerging themes in the literature relevant to this issue, drawing on an annotated bibliography of over 100 documents from DFID and other development agencies, research institutes, academics and practitioners.

Conclusions and findings from the documents are summarised in the literature review, divided into four sections. The first section sets out the background and, more generally, some links between communication and poverty. Section 2 presents previous DFID material on communication of research, and compares it to material from other bilateral and multilateral agencies. Section 3 summarises the major concerns and recommendations related to communication of research for poverty reduction in current literature from research institutes, think-tanks, academics, NGOs and practitioners. The third section is divided into three sub-sections: communication to policymakers, to researchers, and to end users. Finally, Section 4 discusses some of the gaps in the field and emerging themes that seem to be potentially important issues in the near future.

Hudock A. 2003, *Hearing the Voices of the Poor: Encouraging Good Governance and Poverty Reduction through Media Sector Support*, World Learning paper series

(www.worldlearning.org/wlid/docs/wl_pp4.pdf)
(www.eurodad.org/articles/default.aspx?id=484)

This is the fourth of a series of five World Learning papers that examine the linkages between global and national governance as reflected in the PRSP process.

"Perhaps no reform can be as significant for making democratic institutions work as reform of the media..." (UNDP; Human Development Report, 2002)

This paper argues that heightened media involvement in the PRSP process could help build a stronger independent media sector while preparing citizens to take an active role in dialogues that will have a huge impact on their lives. Therefore, the media has a vital role in ensuring quality consultation and participation. Media involvement it is argued; would help frame the issues for discussion; provide background analysis; and disseminate the results of the consultations, noting minority or dissenting points of view. In addition, similar to the steps taken to strengthen the private sector in developing countries, the resulting PRSP could itself include legal and regulatory frameworks that would facilitate the development of an independent media sector which could serve as a watchdog holding governments accountable for commitments made to citizens.

Lloyd-Laney M. 2003a, *Making Information User-Driven*, (Wallingford, UK, Communication and Information Management Resource Centre)

(www.cimrc.info)

Tailoring information to suit your audience increases the likelihood that your information will be accessed and taken up. To provide user-driven information it is important to understand who your target audience is, what information they want/need, how they access information and whether you are trying to inform or influence your audience. Questionnaires can be employed to determine your audience's information needs and the media they use. With this knowledge you can provide the information your target audience wants, in media they can use, and place your information where your audience will look for it. If you are clear about who has produced the information, who it is intended for and its purpose, the user can make informed decisions about the value of your information. Involving end users in research is also more likely to produce outputs that are quickly disseminated and taken up. Awareness of the strategic role of information within your organisation can be enhanced by encouraging all organisation members to become involved in identifying information needs, dissemination and community building. Practices such as using a database of people

who have requested information to regularly inform them about newly available materials, and ensuring that your organisation has a focal point responsible for responding to information demands will help you to reach your target audience. [Summary from paper]

Lloyd-Laney M. 2003b, *Making Knowledge Networks Work for the Poor: Final Report, (ITDG – the Intermediate Technology Development Group)*
(www.itdg.org/?id=knowledge_networks)

Making Knowledge Networks Work for the Poor is an ITDG initiative that seeks to improve the integration and coordination internationally of information and knowledge resources on appropriate technology, and the purpose of the preliminary study was to consider the role of a network in bringing about this aim. The project emerged out of a recognition by both development practitioners and donors that poor men and women face a series of problems in locating and using other people's knowledge and information for their own benefit. In particular, information about new technical options is required both to enable adoption of appropriate technologies, and to facilitate technology adaptation and development. The project undertook a number of activities, including investigation of key centres of knowledge resources on these issues, discussions, organisational case studies, and a workshop to identify requirements for appropriate technology information and knowledge to contribute to the information systems of poor people and to brainstorm the concept of a coordinating network. The research confirmed that:

- there is poor coordination amongst information providers
- poor people have difficulty accessing the right kind of information
- many of the information systems that do exist to provide information to the poor are not demand-driven, they overlook local knowledge, they do not understand or ignore the role of intermediaries, and they do not monitor usage
- the ICTs revolution provides opportunities but can undermine traditional, local communication, by taking attention away from them and supplanting them

The main findings of the project were:

- The proliferation of networks is itself a problem. Development practitioners complain of

'information overload', and there is confusion about the role of each network with respect to another.

- Networks are themselves 'not networked', so that information users cannot get an overview of what information is available, and where.
- Networks do not incorporate and strengthen the systems that people already use to access information (e.g. social networks), and consequently do not understand why they do not reach their target audience.
- It is also important to recognise and value local knowledge and information channels, through participatory approaches.
- Organisations do not always communicate effectively with their constituencies, and are often guilty of confusing information dissemination with communication.
- Development practitioners and those engaged in the provision of information services aimed at reducing poverty, emphasise that 'face to face' communication is the most effective mode of transferring information. The challenge, therefore, is how any information system or network can engage with this mode of communication.
- The role of the information intermediary is key in addressing this challenge, but they are little understood and quite often overlooked.
- Participation in knowledge networks can be influenced by institutional competition for resources, especially when knowledge and information is seen as an organisational asset.

The creation of a new network would not necessarily resolve these issues, unless it attempted to consolidate and provide additional facilities not already on offer to users. However, there was doubt amongst project participants and informants about the need for another network. Rather, it was suggested the focus should be on making existing networks work better. The need for better co-ordination between information generators and providers was recognised, as was the need for sharing of good practice in information services and systems. This suggests that there is a role to be played as a 'broker of brokers', and to be a catalyst for better communication and coordination within networks and between network members. [From executive summary]

Mahmoud, M O M. 2002, *The Media in Democracies: Role, Responsibilities and Human Rights Issues (Geneva, UNHCR)*
(<http://193.194.138.190/democracy/D-Mohamedou.pdf>)

This paper argues that the media is generally good for democracy, and leads to improved human rights. It does however point to several common problems which mean that, for issues such as human rights, the media is often less helpful than it might be.

The paper suggests that although the media is increasingly being organised on a global level, the different political, economic and cultural conditions in which media agencies operate in different countries determines how the media can address issues of public interest and human rights. In fact, press freedom and human rights are inseparable things – press freedom often working to strengthen human rights at the same time as depending on them. In this way, the media and politics are in a kind of 'cycle of production' where numerous actors are part of an interconnected system. At present, many human rights stories are either underplayed by the media or reported without sufficient attention to the social context of each incident. Ideally, the media should deal with human rights in transparent, democratic, consistent and accurate manner. The extent to which it may do so is affected by how concentrated the media sector is, its distribution capabilities, and the quantitative and qualitative capacity to produce coverage. Often, media agencies adapt news material to suit their largest audience, and this often reduces the quality of coverage. Most often, human rights stories in the media are reductionist, rather than deliberately misleading, and miss the complexities of each case which would be brought out by a closer attention to social context.

Marker P, McNamara K and Wallace L. 2003, *The Significance of Information and Communication Technologies for Reducing Poverty (UK Department for International Development)*
(www.comminit.com/st2002/sld-5235.html)

This study sets out, for DFID staff, the fundamental principles underlying a proposed approach to ICTs and development, and draws from those principles a set of recommendations for DFID's priorities in this area.

'DFID should mainstream attention to the information and

communication aspects of poverty and appropriate use of ICTs in the development process'

Here, ICTs are defined broadly to include radio, television, mobile phones and landlines, computers and the Internet. The paper argues that ICTs can be used to empower the poor as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Information and communication issues should be considered in all areas of DFID work, and must be given particular attention in the PRSP process. DFID should try to build multilateral partnerships and joint programmes of work on ICTs. These should be a higher priority for DFID country offices and are central to empowering the poor and generating wider participation by civil society organisations in DFID work.

Mattelart M and Mattelart A. 1998, *Theories of Communication: A short introduction* (London, Sage)

The first formal information theory model was Claude Shannon's mathematical model of communication, developed in the 1940s, which laid out a linear schema of production, transmission, channel, receiver, and destination. This model views technology as an instrument that is merely inserted into (human) calculations, plans and predictions. The reaction to the mathematical model came when social science researchers started emphasising the circular nature of communication. Even the smallest situation of interaction is determined by so many variables that a linear schema can only obscure more than it clarifies, and instead they suggest analysing interaction through looking at different levels (such as the communication between the actual elements of the message; the communication embodied in the human/social relations involved; the communication implied by previous messages; the communication of the message in relation to wider society). This approach argues that it is also necessary to take into account the large amount of 'silent' messages that surround every pronounced message, such as the implicit understandings of gestures, space, linguistic codes, time, ways of relating, and ways of disagreeing or reaching agreements. From this perspective, both the 'sender' and the 'receiver' are equally important actors.

McGee R and Norton N. 2000, *Participation in Poverty Reduction Strategies: A Synthesis of Experience with Participatory Approaches to Policy Design, Monitoring and Implementation, IDS Working paper 109* (Brighton, Institute of Development Studies)

(www.ids.ac.uk/ids/bookshop/wp/wp109.pdf)

This document reviews the extent and affect of civil society and NGO participation in the PRS process. It concludes that donors, governments, civil society organisations and NGOs all need to take a learning approach the PRS process. It has a substantial section on communication between the poor and state institutions; 'upwards', 'downwards' and 'horizontally'.

'Experience shows that several kinds of information flow – 'upwards' and 'downwards', as well as 'horizontal' among networks and alliances – are essential in participatory policy processes for poverty reduction.'

It looks at Participatory Poverty Assessments as upwards communication - designed to give donors information that goes beyond 'measuring poverty' without its qualitative aspects. They are providing a more dynamic picture of poverty which has led to practical lessons for policy. In terms of downward information flows, it looks at the consultation exercises and dissemination, and the steps that have been taken to demystify bureaucratic processes. They conclude that information flows are a critical element of reflective practice amongst donors, governments and CSOs.

'The purpose of this synthesis is to review the experience to date in applying participatory approaches to macro-level policy formulation, implementation and monitoring, with a view to supporting country-led facilitation of inclusive and high-quality participation in the PRS process. The participatory experiences reviewed are drawn from research initiatives, donors' country strategies, aid coordination processes, policy advocacy campaigns, institutional change processes, budgetary analysis and formulation, and citizens' monitoring mechanisms. Sections are organised around key themes which crystallised in the course of reviewing these experiences.

This synthesis is directed towards a range of actors involved in PRSP processes. In the South, it aims to serve governments responsible for leading the process, and civil society organisations wishing to engage with it at various

levels. In the North, it aims to guide and inspire bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, NGOs, and other civil society organisations seeking to play a supporting role as their Southern partners engage in national PRS processes.

The document outlines the significant challenges which must be overcome in the course of establishing participatory, sustainable, country-owned poverty reduction strategies. It testifies to the existence of many competent participation advocates and practitioners, and to a considerable wealth and depth of experience on which governments can draw to overcome these challenges. It also highlights the need for a learning approach, and for State and Donor agencies and many civil society organisations themselves to promote internal institutional changes, as the PRS process unfolds.'

Mozammel M and Zatlouk B. 2003, *Strategic Communication in PRSP*, World Bank.

(www.worldbank.org/developmentCommunication/where1/prsp.htm)

This document makes explicit connections between communication and core aspects of the PRS process, particularly participation. It details practical steps for making communication in PRSPs effective.

'Participation, the cornerstone of PRSPs, relies on accurate, consistent and continuous communication that provokes response and encourages debate'

The paper advocates for more 'strategic communication'; based on a two-way flow of information that builds a consensus amongst various stakeholders and is integrated into the policy agenda. It maps the cultural and social issues involved with communication in PRSPs, arguing that communication is an integral aspect to all stages of the process, and that it is critical to create a 'communication environment' to do this. The paper suggests that the key to this is setting clear objectives for the communication process, with a focused audience in mind, and send thoughtfully designed messages through appropriate channels. It details the financial and human resource issues associated with communication. The paper provides case studies from Niger, Uganda and Vietnam.

NCDDR. 1996, *Review of the literature on dissemination and knowledge utilisation, (USA, National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research)*

(www.ncddr.org/du/products/review)

This review offers some frameworks for understanding the use of knowledge. Their categories are: (i) conceptual knowledge (which changes attitudes), instrumental knowledge (changes practices), strategic knowledge (achieves goals, such as increase in power); (ii) spread of knowledge (one-way diffusion of information), choice of knowledge (process of expanding access to sources), exchange (interactions), implementation (increasing use of knowledge or changing attitudes and practice). Ideas about how knowledge diffuses have not changed greatly over the years; for example, that there is a cultural and needs gap between researchers and users, but information technologies have transformed practice. The notion of learning taking place on a blank slate still prevails in many schools, whereas constructivist theories point out the obvious fact that learners filter knowledge through pre-conceived ideas and people make sense of ideas based on their prior experience. People change their beliefs only when serious discrepancies emerge in their thinking and practice. The source of information is more important than the content, for example people accept information more readily from those they trust, e.g. dairy farmers trust each other more than experts. Comprehensibility has more impact than quality. Also summarised are key ideas from social marketing, e.g. audience segmentation (dividing your audience into different groups and designing different information, training, rewards etc.). Identity and cultural differences will also play their part in deciding how information will be received.

OECD DAC. 2003, *Harmonising Donor Practices for Effective Aid Delivery, Guidelines and Reference Series*

(www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/48/20896122.pdf)

This paper offers guidelines for how donors could better improve their various procedures; how they relate with governments, how they relate to one another, and how they operate internally.

The effectiveness of a donor's assistance in a partner country is affected by the nature of

the institutional framework for its relations with the partner government and with other donors, and by its own internal rules and culture. In recent years, donors have recognised the importance of ensuring that these frameworks support nationally owned Poverty Reduction Strategies or similar approaches. Different objectives and interests between donors and partner governments can impair aid effectiveness. Donor support can be opaque and unpredictable. The way aid is delivered can create an unnecessary burden on partner countries, hinder efforts to build partner country capacity and weaken partner government leadership and its accountability to its own people. This chapter sets out nine guiding principles for providing more coordinated and effective development assistance. This chapter also sets out specific good practices donors may adopt for developing the overall framework for donor-partner government relations, for donor-donor coordination and for individual donor systems. If adopted, they would enhance a greater sharing of objectives between donor and partner governments, clearer expectations of each other and more predictable and transparent aid flows. Donors would coordinate in a way that would be transparent and minimise unnecessary transaction costs for partner countries. Donors' internal rules and cultures would encourage their staff to behave collaboratively and as flexibly as possible. [From abstract]

Otsyina J and Rosenberg D. 1999, 'Rural development and women: what are the best approaches to communicating information?' *Gender and development*, 7(2): 45-55.

The authors present the topic of rural development and women by stating that the main problem in this area is the lack of effective communication strategies and methods. In this paper they reflect on why this is so and what might be done to improve the situation. They present the findings of a study carried out in Tanzania in 1992, charting the communication strategies employed by an extension agency in the HASHI (Hifadhi Ardhi Shinyanga) project, a soil conservation and afforestation programme under the Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Tourism, supported by foreign aid. The HASHI project employed several different means of communication: village meetings, film shows, radio, school projects, seminars, neighbour contacts, and posters.

The evaluation study of HASHI interviewed 200 farmers, with equal numbers of women and men, to find out which of these communication methods were effective and whether there were gender differences. The results of the survey showed that village meetings were the most popular channel of communication with both sexes, but that men had participated and benefited more than women from the information that was shared at the meetings. The reason for this was that the meetings were held in the morning, and so – although attendance was compulsory for all – women were less likely to attend due to household chores at that time of day. Film shows and radio broadcasts were also popular among both sexes, but more so among men. One major disadvantage with film shows was that they often took place at night, when women were either reluctant to go out or had to stay home with the children. Thus the official communication strategies and methods of the HASHI project were more accessible to men than women, and men also seemed to profit more from the information communication activities run by HASHI than women. Women, on the other hand, relied far more on secondary sources of information, such as neighbours and school children, who passed on information that they had received from the project. Informal communication networks were more directly important to the women than the formal communication activities. The authors conclude that there is a need to design communication channels that take into account existing socioeconomic differences between men and women.

Oxfam. 2003, *The IMF and the Millennium Goals: Failing to deliver for low income countries, Oxfam Briefing Paper 54 (September 2003)* (www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/debt_aid/bp54_imfmdgs.htm)

'The IMF has a key role in achieving the MDGs, but as one partner in a broad alliance for poverty reduction, and not as the all powerful on/off switch for aid and debt relief.'

This policy brief is critical of the IMF saying it is too conservative and has too much of a monopoly on aid decisions. It argues that the IMF needs to radically change the way it works in low income countries; moving from a focus on short-term macro-stability and pessimism about aid to an approach based on long-term poverty needs and the MDGs. This is seen as essential if PRSPs are to be successful. Oxfam argues

that aid and debt relief should be de-linked from the IMF programme and should instead be based on the implementation of the PRSP and the PRSP progress report. The PRSP progress report should be discussed at the annual Consultative Group meeting of all donors in a country and this should be open to all stakeholders.

Oxfam. 2002, *Oxfam PRS guide: Guide of participation in policy formulation and monitoring in the context of PRSP*

(www.eurodad.org/articles/default.aspx?id=208)

“The guide is developed with the intent to serve as a resource not only for Oxfam staff but also for other organisations involved in influencing national policymaking and monitoring of the PRS process. The document focuses on policymaking in low-income countries (LICs), because present donor conditionality stipulates civil society participation in preparation and in the implementation of plans under the PRSP approach. However, Oxfam emphasises that “many of the areas covered will be useful to organisations working in middle-income, or even developed countries.”

Section one gives a background and introduction to the increasing opportunities for civil society to participate in policy formulation and implementation in low income countries, and in particular the new opportunities created by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper programme introduced jointly by the World Bank and IMF.

Section two looks at what is meant by the participation of Civil Society organisations in policy formulation and implementation, and particularly those organisations made up of or representing the poorest sections of society and women. It gives a definition of the different levels of participation and what is required to ensure that meaningful participation is achieved. As such it provides a resource for influencing and assessing the participatory process in individual countries.

Section three looks at the policy formulation process, and specifically how the content of policies can be influenced by Civil Society to ensure that they are pro-poor and will ensure poverty reduction. It therefore provides a resource for CSOs seeking to influence the content of national policies and in particular PRSPs. Annex one then contains a table of the typical policy reforms mooted for low-income countries and

the arguments for and against.

Section four looks at monitoring of policy implementation. It examines the role CSOs can play in ensuring that pro-poor policies are actually implemented and the impact on poverty reduction is maximised.’ [from summary]

Philo G. 1996, ‘Seeing and Believing’ in P Marris and S Thornham (eds) *Media studies: A Reader* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press)

What leads people to accept or to reject the portrayal of an event in the news? Philo analyses a case study of the television news coverage of the Miners’ Strike in the mid-1980s and the extent to which the news was believed to be ‘true’ by the audience. The news coverage selectively focused on violent incidents, portraying an image of the picket lines as primarily violent places. In Philo’s general audience sample, 54% believed that picketing was indeed mostly violent. Some important reasons given by the audience for believing the television story were the perceived credibility of the source (historically and culturally mediated trust in the BBC), as well as the impact of the visual images – seeing is believing. However, the remaining 46% of the audience sample did not accept the story as it was portrayed by the news. One of the most important grounds for rejection was direct or indirect experience of the issue, e.g. through having driven past picket lines or through knowing miners. Another ground for rejection was comparison between the television coverage and other sources of information, such as newspapers. In addition, some people were sceptical due to their perception of the political agenda of the television news.

The portrayal of the miners’ strike as violent stuck in the minds of over half the sample audience, strongly influenced by the visual images. Footage and photographs carry a lot of weight as credible evidence in information societies, and are seen as more ‘neutral’ or ‘true’ than written reports. However, this was not enough to make the news coverage stick as a credible story in all of the sample audience. In sum, how people understand and interpret news depends on the extent to which the news is compatible with their existing cultural/political beliefs, their direct and indirect experience, and their ability to compare the television account with various other accounts.

Provan K and Brinton Milward H. 2001, ‘Do Networks Really Work? A Framework for Evaluating Public-Sector Organizational Networks’ *Public Administration Review* 61(4): 414-23.

Provan and Brinton Milward start with the question: Do networks for community-based, publicly funded health services deliver what they promise? How do we evaluate network effectiveness? In principle, community-based networks would seem to be logical mechanisms for providing public services that cannot or should not be centralised. Community-based networks in the health sector typically bring together a collection of programmes and services that span a range of cooperating but autonomous (frequently private or non-governmental) organisations. However, there is still a lack of comparative network data, and the authors state that in practice it is premature to conclude that networks are effective mechanisms for addressing complex policy problems. They then propose a framework for network evaluation that focuses on three different levels of analysis: community, network and organisational participant level.

- Evaluation at the community level: At this level, networks must be evaluated against the service contribution they make to the communities they are supposed to benefit, using criteria such as improved access, utilisation, responsiveness, integration, and cost effectiveness. Since the network’s end users are frequently not a politically powerful interest group, Provan and Brinton Milward suggest that evaluation at community level should include consultation with representative consumer advocacy groups or local officials.
- Evaluation at the network level: To operate effectively, the collaborating organisations must recognise the need to act as part of a network. The simplest way of evaluating whether this is happening is to map the ebb and flow of organisations to and from the network, as compared to the maturity of the network. Newly established networks should be attracting new members who can offer new services, while mature networks should have a relatively stable core group of agents with a broad range of loose or informal ties. Frequently, a network will require a principal agent, or network administrative organisation, in order to manage the evolution of the network.

- Evaluation at the organisational participant level: This level considers the benefits that accrue to the organisational members of the network. Do the individual agencies feel that they stand to gain from participating in the network? The answer to this will mostly depend on four primary criteria: client outcomes and integration of services; legitimacy and status; resource acquisition and fundraising; and cost.

Rogers E. 1995, *Diffusion of Innovations*, (New York, The Free Press)

Rogers, perhaps the most widely known diffusion theorist, presents a comprehensive overview of issues and problems related to diffusion in his fourth book. These include the generation of innovations, socioeconomic factors, the innovation-decision process, communication channels, diffusion networks, the rate of adoption, compatibility, trialability, opinion leadership, the change agent, and innovation in organisations.

The book makes use of the important concepts of uncertainty and information. Uncertainty is the degree to which a number of alternatives are perceived, with respect to the occurrence of an event, and the relative probabilities of these alternatives. Uncertainty motivates an individual to seek information. Information is a difference in matter-energy that affects uncertainty in a situation where a choice exists among a set of alternatives. One kind of uncertainty is generated by an innovation, defined as an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or another unit of adoption. An innovation presents an individual or an organisation with a new alternative or alternatives, with new means of solving problems. But the probabilities of the new alternatives being superior to previous practice are not exactly known by the individual problem solvers. Thus, they are motivated to seek further information about the innovation to cope with the uncertainty that it creates.

Information about an innovation is often sought from near-peers, especially information about their subjective evaluations of the innovation. This information exchange about a new idea occurs through a convergence process involving interpersonal networks. The diffusion of innovations is essentially a social process in which subjectively perceived information about a new idea is communicated.

The meaning of an innovation is thus gradually worked out through a process of social construction. [From the book's preface]

Roth C. 2002, *The Media in Governance, Developing Free and Effective Media to Serve the Interests of the Poor: A Guide to Assistance DFID Governance Department, UK Department for International Development (February 2002)* (www.dfid.gov.uk)

This paper aims to 'improve the quality and impact of government-media relations and media effectiveness in serving the interests of the poor and the disadvantaged'.

The paper discusses how to help government and development agencies support the media in developing countries with a view to improving the livelihoods of the disadvantaged in these countries. It examines government-media relations, regulatory mechanisms, and what kinds of government strategies can help to make the media more pro-poor in different countries. It has a sizeable directory of resources for training media practitioners.

Samiullah Y and Srinivasa R. 2000, *Role of ICTs in Urban and Rural Poverty Reduction*, UK Department for International Development (www.teri.res.in/ictcap/present/session4/sami.doc)

This paper argues that information and communication technologies can be used to reduce poverty. ICTs can play a significant role in combating rural and urban poverty and fostering sustainable development through creating information rich societies and supporting livelihoods. If ICTs are appropriately deployed and realise the differential needs of urban and rural people, they can become powerful tools of economic, social and political empowerment. Key to successful ICT interventions is the enabling environment, participation of the private sector and NGOs, free flow of information, access by women and capacity building. The challenge for governments is to ensure the convergence of their initiatives and those taken up by various donors, multilaterals, NGOs and other organisations and to address the digital divide. [From abstract]

Smith M J. 1997, 'Policy Networks' in Hill M (ed) *The Policy Process; A Reader* (London, Prentice Hall)

Smith suggests various ways to distinguish between different policy networks. The first distinction is based on the theory that policy networks can be arranged along a continuum from a policy community to an issue network. At the policy community end one would find networks that were well defined, with formal membership and frequent interaction among the members. At the issue network end of the continuum, on the other hand, one would find a large and loosely defined network of various people, with fluctuating levels of activity and interaction.

Another way of distinguishing between policy networks is to look at them by policy sector. Smith's chapter focuses on the interaction between networks and government. The network's aim is to influence government policy, while the government wishes to use networks to achieve specific policy goals. The nature of this interaction will vary by sector, as different sectors operate with different levels of resources and prestige. The author also suggests that if networks wish to maintain a good relationship with the government they have to abide by certain 'rules of the game': they have to act constitutionally, accept the government's final decision, show that they can be trusted, and only make reasonable demands. High profile campaigns, for example, fall outside the rules of the game and will change the nature of the relationship to government.

The chapter also outlines differences between core members of a policy network and peripheral members. Some members will be active in the network for a longer period of time, will have more resources, and more contacts. However, this does not necessarily mean that they will take power away from other members. Rather, the author argues that in a policy network, power is positive-sum, i.e. the resources of one group also benefit the others.

Song S. 1999, *Guidelines on the use of electronic networking to facilitate regional or global research networks* (Ottawa, International Development Research Centre [IDRC])

Recent developments in information and communication technologies - including the rapid spread of telecommunication infrastructure

and the growth of the Internet - have dramatically lowered the barriers to research collaboration in the developing world. Electronic networking offers the potential for researchers anywhere to communicate with peers in their field and to gain access to valuable research information via the Internet. However, while the problem of access is a substantial hurdle which has been overcome, there are many other barriers to successful electronic collaboration. This paper highlights some key issues to be aware of in fostering electronic collaboration.

Benefits of electronic networks are clear. Firstly, they allow researchers to share information dynamically and far more quickly than previously. There are distinct advantages in terms of interaction. Song also points out that electronic networking should be seen as a tool to enhance the gain from face-to-face meetings, rather than a replacement for these. However, there are substantial prerequisites to a functioning electronic research network. Access to Internet is not always guaranteed in Southern institutions even where it is physically possible. Political interests may provide obstacles, especially if the activity is perceived as undermining other authority structures. Equally important is a reliable commitment to the functioning of the network. Without fundamental buy-in from the participants, electronic networks are doomed to fail. In order to strengthen commitment, Song suggests that a network should have a facilitator who stimulates discussion, regularly summarises the debate, draws in inactive participants, and provides assistance to participants not previously familiar with electronic discussion forums. [Partly from abstract]

UNDP. 2003, *Access to Information UNDP's engagement and a guide to key actors (United Nations Development Programme)*

This document is principally aimed at UNDP country offices and establishes a strategic framework for the support UNDP provides to access of information. It aims to lever support in a way that maximises people's participation in democratic and policymaking processes. UNDP highlights the importance of a strong regulatory framework as well as Communication infrastructure.

UNDP takes the following position:

- Implementation of the rights to freedom of expression and access

to information are prerequisites of ensuring the voice and participation necessary for a democratic society

- Access to information and communication build on these internationally recognised rights and together encompass the core principles of democratic governance: participation, transparency and accountability.
- The promotion and protection of both access to information itself and flows of information exist between constituents, governments, parliament, community groups, civil society organisations and the private sector are of equal importance.
- It is essential to create and strengthen the communication mechanisms that enable poor people to influence national and local government policy and practice.

Vyas A. 2002, 'Connecting voices and expanding horizons' in *Development (Journal of the Society for International Development) 45(4): 55-60.*

Vyas describes the genesis, developments, doubts, dilemmas and challenges of moderating an electronic discussion list on gender issues in South Asia. She elaborates on the contents, subscribers' profile, methodology and technical issues relating to the discussion list. She strongly feels that e-discussion lists have immense potential for resource sharing, networking and advocacy activities which need to be fully explored and utilised by the women's groups and researchers in the South Asian region. She further shares her optimism about how this simple email technology can connect researchers globally, forge collaborations and share information through the email networks, and connect the people. [Abstract from article]

Warnock K. et al. 2002, *Reducing poverty: is the World Bank's strategy working? After 3 years what progress, if any, has the PRS made? (Panos Institute / Medianet)*

For over 70 countries producing a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), approved by the World Bank and IMF, is either a condition for getting debt relief, or a condition for receiving concessional loans and some aid. This Panos report examines the progress made so far after 3 years of the Bank and IMF's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and looks at the arguments about whether it can succeed. The report

draws on specially commissioned research from Lesotho, Ethiopia and Uganda.

The report first gives an overview of the PRS process which finds that:

- Since their introduction, PRSPs have been widely welcomed as the first serious attempt by the international community to put poverty reduction at the centre of development planning
- They have also been criticised by some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as being merely a new name for Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs)

Positive outcome include

- Better dialogue between government and civil society organisations on priorities for government spending
- Increased government commitment in developing countries to poverty reduction generally and to agreed basic factors for helping people out of poverty – generally education, health and rural infrastructure.
- Increased transparency, in which government budgeting and expenditure can be scrutinised by parliaments and public.

However some PRSP critics charge that the whole approach is fundamentally flawed being based on the same premise as SAPs that economic growth is the first step towards reducing poverty and the report notes that even the World Bank and IMF, in their own review of PRSPs earlier this year, admitted that many countries have given little detail about how they expect to achieve the high growth rates needed.

The report is critical of the World Bank and IMF, and governments for not allowing debate and alternative views on these fundamental questions of economic policy. The participation in economic policymaking to which civil society is being invited in the PRSP process is strictly limited.

In order for PRSPs to succeed, the report stresses the need for a strong sense of commitment and 'ownership' by governments and people and concludes that so far this sense of ownership is not very strong partly because countries have not paid enough attention to the potential role of the media in informing people and stimulating engagement. [Summary from id21]

Further resources

Debt Relief International

www.dri.org.uk

Examines the PRSP approach and its links to debt relief.

Development Gateway

www.developmentgateway.org

Has major sections on poverty, discussion boards etc. Numerous reports, events and summaries of PRSP relevant documents.

UNDP Information and Communication Technology

<http://sdnhq.undp.org/it4dev/>

A good focal point for ICT.

World Bank Communication Centre

www.worldbank.org/developmentCommunication/index.htm

Good general centre point for communication in development.

The PRSP Monitoring and Synthesis Project

www.prpsynthesis.org

The PRSP Monitoring and Synthesis Project is a 3-year project commissioned by DFID UK and managed by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). It provides advice to DFID staff on key issues arising in the implementation of PRSPs, based on a synthesis of information about progress in-country. The project has produced a number of papers on experience to date, for example:

- Politics and the PRSP Approach: Synthesis Paper (2004)
- Experience with Poverty Reduction Strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean (2003)
- Experience with PRSPs in Transition Countries (2003)
- National Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs) in Conflict-Affected Countries in Africa (2003)

PovertyNet

www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/review/index.htm

PovertyNet provides an introduction to key issues as well as in-depth information on poverty measurement, monitoring, analysis, and on poverty reduction strategies for researchers and practitioners.

The World Bank and IMF conducted a Comprehensive Review of the PRSP in early 2002. Several donor agencies, academic institutions and civil society organisations made independent contributions to this review and the IMF and World Bank produced syntheses of their contributions. These are available on the PovertyNet website. The World Bank and IMF carried out a second Comprehensive Review of the PRSP initiative in 2004.

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