

Rounding the Table?

Emerging Lessons from National Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS') in Southern Africa

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SANPAD Poverty Challenge 2007,
Southern Sun, Elangeni Hotel, Durban,
26th – 29th June 2007

Introduction

- # Context: SAT PRS Mapping Project
 - # Aims and objectives
 - # Methodology
- # Outline
 - # PRSP Approach: nature and scope
 - # Low Income Countries: first and second generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)
 - # Fragile states: particular challenges
 - # National Poverty Reduction Strategies in Middle Income Countries

PRSPs: Background

Mid to late 1990s:

- ▣ Responsibility for failure of SAPs primarily attributed to govts of developing countries.
- ▣ Economic reforms were seen to produce periods of hardship that adversely influenced political commitment
- ▣ Acknowledged that politics matter and that highly personalized power relations and their societal impact (neopatrimonialism) influence outcomes pro-poor reform

Emerging from these beliefs: attention shifted to ensuring

- ▣ 'national ownership' as the means to long-term commitment to developmental goals, and...
- ▣ 'good governance' by promoting inclusivity and accountability through partnerships, participation and decentralisation.

PRS approach informed by this thinking


Poverty Reduction Strategy Approach

- # Recognising this policy need: recent adoption of Poverty Reduction Strategy approach noteworthy
- # Late 1999: IMF / WB announced that developing countries would in future need to complete **Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)** as a precondition for accessing concessional finance and debt relief (other donors following suit)
- # Premised on following **core principles**:
 - # Country driven
 - # Results-oriented
 - # Comprehensive in scope
 - # Partnership-oriented
 - # Long term in perspective
 - # Participatory

PRSPs in Africa: Experience to Date

PRSPs: dominant vehicle for development policy in SSA

Southern	7	54%	1	2	4	6
East	6	60%	1	3	2	4
Central	7	78%	3	4	1	2
West	15	94%	3	10	2	1

8 not eligible – MICs (Bot, Eq.G, Gab, Mau, Nam, RSA, Sey, Swaz) 

3 preparing I-PRSPs (Erit, Sud, Togo)

2 not engaged w/ PRS process (Zim, Som)

PRSP Status in Southern Africa

1. Tanzania	Mar-00	Oct-00	Aug-01	Mar-03	Apr-04
2. Mozambique	Feb-00	Apr-01	Feb-03	Mar-04	Jun-05
3. Zambia	Jul-00	Mar-02	Mar-04	Feb-05	n.a
4. Malawi	Aug-00	Apr-02	Aug-03	May-05	Jan-06
5. Lesotho	Dec-00	Jul-05	n.a	n.a	n.a
6. D.R.C.	Jun-02	Jul-06	n.a	n.a	n.a
7. Angola	Feb-04	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
8. Madagascar	Nov-00	Jul-03	Jul-04	Jun-06	n.a.

Zimbabwe: eligible for PRSP, but process stalled due to the political situation in the country. A concept note for the development of a Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy (ZEDS) has been prepared

1st Generation PRSPs

- # Broad (though not universal or uncontested) consensus:
 - ▣ Advanced a ‘new poverty agenda’: greater focus on poverty reduction and national development challenges/constraints
 - ▣ Creating spaces: Opening up opportunities for non-state actors = milestone in civic oversight of policy processes
 - ▣ CS strengthened org. capacity and political position by participating in PRS processes.
 - ▣ Catalyst for new national CSO networks to engage with poverty policy (e.g. MEJN, CSPR). Pre-existing umbrella organizations also instrumental (LCN)
 - ▣ PRS consultation processes more inclusive than historical processes of policy-making
 - ▣ ‘Fast track’ PRS’: less consultative

1st Generation PRSPs

- # Concerns...
 - ▄ Normative shift in the traditionally top-down mode of decision-making and policy planning?
 - ▄ Mode of engagement: consultn vs participation;
 - ▄ Institutionalising participatory processes: ensuring a ‘participatory turn’ rather than a ‘participatory moment’
 - ▄ Recognition: govt-CS relationship remains uneven.
 - ▄ Not equal decision-making authority
 - ▄ Concern: Involvement of CSOs as a marriage of convenience

1st Generation PRSPs

- # Concerns...
 - ▣ Strengthening analytical capabilities of CSOs and Parliament
 - ▣ Politics of representation:
 - ▣ Representativeness and capacity of CSOs
 - ▣ Country studies: not been a significant influence of elected officials in PRS processes.
 - ▣ Bypassing legislative bodies in favour of introducing new mechanisms for participation (FGDs, consultative workshops).

1st Generation PRSPs

National ownership...

- ▣ Inherent tension in PRSP approach:
- ▣ Between emphasis on a country-driven process, and...
 - ▣ the origins of the approach with the BWIs (‘old wine in a new bottle’ or ‘the new tyranny’).
- ▣ Also, Each PRSP must be reviewed by the IFIs
- ▣ Ownership tends to reside with one core ministry (MoFDP) rather than across sectors

PRSP Implementation

- # Has participation been sustained during **implementation?**
 - ▀ Participation of civil society actors in implementation been variable but generally weak
 - ▀ Dialogue bet. state and non-state actors tends to wane after PRS completion
 - ▀ Institutionalisation: permanent dialogue structures missing in a number of instances
 - ▀ BUT...are Southern African success stories
 - ▀ Moz, Tanz: participatory inst. frameworks for monitoring implementation

2nd Generation PRSPs: Ownership

- # Strong attempt to re-brand the PRSP and reclaim/reassert ownership; subsuming it under national development planning processes
 - ▣ Zambia: 5th National Development Plan (FNDP)
 - ▣ Malawi: Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS)
 - ▣ Tanz: National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction (Mkukuta)
 - ▣ Madagascar: Madagascar Action Plan (MAP)
 - ▣ Moz: Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty II (PARPA II)

- # Perception: been an improvement in ownership of the PRS
 - ▣ Stronger political will, with executive level support [ZAM, MAL]
 - ▣ Attempt to use PRS as the single development framework (or reference document) rather than a diffuse set of parallel development policies;
 - ▣ Get line ministries to align sectoral strategies with it [ZAM, MAL]

- # Greater efforts at donor alignment and harmonisation (more predictable budget support, reducing reporting burdens, etc)

2nd Generation PRSPs: Participation

- # Participation is a significant focus in revision processes
- # Compared with the first PRS preparation, participation has improved in quality and quantity
 - ▣ PRS revision processes tended to be more broad based and inclusive, with more voices from local to national level being heard
 - ▣ Role of civil society networks: strengthening the revision process esp. by organising independent consultations and preparing consolidated inputs into the drafting process [Tanz, Zam, Madag]
 - ▣ Ability of CSOs to influence policy content has improved
 - ▣ Moving from a limited number of dominant NGOs to the broader involvement of stakeholders.
- # Involving the poor themselves: some improvement [Tanz: local consultations and PPAs]

2nd Generation PRSPs: Content

- # Some critiques questioned what is new in policy proposals: sufficient to overcome policy and implementation failures?
- # Tension: between comprehensiveness and depth in coverage and policy responses
 - # Lack of prioritisation (IFIs, external reviews)
 - # But... lingering, worrisome gaps
- # Need for a critical engagement on gaps in the PRS' in the region
 - Youth, Migration, Rural Productive Sectors
- # Participation is a significant focus in revision processes

2nd Generation PRSPs: Content

- # PRSPs are not (yet) the overarching framework for pro-poor growth
 - ▣ Growth model: tends to be one of 'trickle down': lack specific measures to address the particular needs of the rural poor
 - ▣ PRSPs are biased towards public social spending, with insufficient treatment of rural productive sectors
- # PRS implementation: emphasis predominantly on policies / activities to enhance human capabilities, esp. primary education and basic health.
 - ▣ Overshadows potentially poverty reducing investments in other economic or productive sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture, and rural development.
 - ▣ Most countries redirected some resources towards social sectors, which appears to have begun to produce tangible improvements.
- # 2nd generation: signs of an increasing focus on productive sectors
 - ▣ Tension: between social and productive sector spending?

2nd Generation PRSPs

- # Developing a formal framework for the revision process
 - ▀ Tanzania: gov and non-state actors agree on guidelines
 - ▀ Zambia: preparation and joint discussion of a ‘roadmap’ document
- # Sensitisation / dissemination
 - ▀ Using mass media in local languages (esp. radio)
 - ▀ Translating documents into key languages

2nd Generation PRSPs: Limitations

- # Mixed evidence on overcoming some of the earlier weaknesses, such as insufficient timing for the process and exclusion of certain stakeholders
- # Efforts required to ensure local CBOs participate:
 - Progressive shift away from larger, urban-based NGOs
 - Working more with organisations that work closely with poor
- # Parliaments: still limited involvement of elected bodies in the PRS revision process
- # Out of bounds: Still some concern about the extent of participation in the macroeconomic framework

2nd Generation PRSPs: Capacity

On constraints to civil society engagement:

- # Funding and skills limitations still inhibit engagement
 - ▀ Tanz: gov and donors funded the stakeholder consultations
 - ▀ Zam: GTZ and others provided financial support to strengthen civil society participation
 - ▀ Need for technical capacities to maximise policy influence
- # Difficulties in generating credible evidence to influence gov policy, despite some gains (Malawi)

PRSPs and Fragile States

“How donors meet the challenges of fragile and failing states provides the acid test for aid” (Browne, 2006)

Conflict affected countries

- ▀ Common problems of weak econ performance, poor governance and vulnerable livelihoods, but particular challenges of conflict related poverty:
 - ▀ Damage/destruction of social, econ, institutional, physical capital
 - ▀ Loss of livelihoods, destruction of HH assets, poor mkt access
 - ▀ Breakdown of informal coping mechanisms
 - ▀ Weak human capital due to disruption/absence education
- ▀ Governance
 - ▀ Weakened or reduced state capacity, low political legitimacy
 - ▀ lingering problems of insecurity, corruption
 - ▀ Low levels of poverty related public spending

PRSPs and Fragile States

Consultation processes

- ▀ Political will: politics of inclusion and human welfare; challenge of consensus-building
- ▀ Some positive first steps under difficult circumstances (PPA in DRC with donor support)

Ownership

- ▀ PRS typically initiated due to desire for debt relief/devt assistance;
- ▀ PRS competes with other agendas and policy priorities;

Implementation

- ▀ Institutional challenges, incl. public sector capacity
- ▀ Basic level of institutional capacity essential for national ownership
 - ▀ Collect, analyse and interpret data
 - ▀ policy formulation and implementation,
 - ▀ planning, budgeting and monitoring expenditures
- ▀ Modest results: PRS not well costed or prioritised; not linked to budget

Poverty Reduction Strategies in the Region's Middle Income Countries

Botswana	UMC	National Strategy for Poverty Reduction (2003)
Namibia	LMC	National Poverty Reduction Action Prog. (2000); 2nd National Development Plan (2001-06)
South Africa	UMC	RDP (1994); GEAR (1996); ISRDS and URP (2000); Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA, 2006); Provincial Growth and Development Strategies Municipal IDPs
Swaziland	LMC	Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan (2005)

PRS' in the Middle Income Countries

The participatory ethos in the development of national poverty reduction strategies has not been as evident

- **Botswana:** limited consultations in the NSPR due to time constraints, though umbrella CSOs have been involved in national structures to some extent. Focus is more on the more deeply established and owned National Dev Plan.
- **Namibia:** NPRAP had no real civil society input. The Third National Development Plan (NDP3), which is currently being prepared, is set to become the key national poverty strategy. Eight sectoral groups have been established headed by lead ministries. CS is expected to be involved though this remains to be seen.
- **Swaziland:** some efforts to include participation (community consultations, thematic workshops) but ambiguous views on the impact on policy content

PRS' in the Middle Income Countries

Multiple and competing development frameworks

- Botswana: The focus since independence has been on six-year development plans. The NSPR sits independently of this. Plans for the next NDP to be more consultative and poverty focused
- Namibia: the NPRAP similarly coexists alongside National Development Plans. Again, the latter are becoming the focus for poverty reduction and for the development of participatory approaches.

Implementation failure

- In a number of cases, there has been a failure to make progress in implementing the poverty reduction strategy (Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia)

PRS' in the Middle Income Countries

- # Being classified as a Middle Income Country presents a challenge to CSO participation in PRS processes**
 - ▣ In Swaziland and Botswana, donor flight has meant that the resources available for CSOs is highly circumscribed.
 - ▣ Funding constraints constrain the ability to hire or retain skilled personnel, which affects the scope and quality of participation
 - ▣ In Botswana, one important network CSO has even had to close down (Women's NGO Coalition)
 - ▣ Namibia: shift in funding back to the state, with many NGOs experiencing serious cutbacks.

Concluding remarks

- # While on one level the **policy table is being rounded**, with:
 - ▣ new and deepening spaces for civil society in policy-making;
 - ▣ a broadening out of debate on economic and social policy;
 - ▣ improved civil society networking and intra-governmental coordination

- # Some contest that the **legs are being sawn off** at the same time:
 - ▣ Complex questions remain about whether this is serving to legitimate a neoliberal policy agenda.
 - ▣ Dual conditionality: policy conditionality + process conditionality
 - ▣ The PRS approach tends to depoliticise policymaking and reduce it to a technical exercise: need to recognise role of political culture, political timing, political transitions, and the politics of representation

Concluding remarks

- # Ownership: improving political will
- # Participation: deepening; role of CSO networks
- # Policy directions: productive sectors

Concluding remarks

CSOs/CBOs:

- ▀ Strengthen networking and alliances: working with partners; amplifying voice
- ▀ Develop and consolidate alliances with parliament
- ▀ Deepening representation to ensure that the poor and their voices are heard at the policy table
- ▀ Need to continue pushing for open, multi-stakeholder fora for critical dialogue on the macroeconomic policy framework and policy options.
- ▀ Informed policy engagement: focus on improving the use and communication of rigorous evidence

Concluding remarks

Government

- ▀ Prioritise the institutionalisation of stakeholder participation
- ▀ Improve informational systems and flows (transparency, accountability)
- ▀ Strengthen intra-governmental coordination around policy reforms

Development partners

- ▀ Supporting country-led policy dialogues at national and sub-national levels
- ▀ Scale up financial and technical support for institutionalisation, empowerment of the poor, and CSO network development and research capacity
- ▀ Deepen coordination and harmonisation

Planned Future Developments

- Finalisation of the briefing papers
- Preparation of a consolidated regional report
- Periodic updating
- Knowledge sharing events

Thank You