

**LESSONS LEARNT ON CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN PRSP
PROCESSES IN BOLIVIA, KENYA AND UGANDA:**

**A REPORT EMERGING FROM THE BOLIVIAN-EAST AFRICAN
SHARING AND LEARNING EXCHANGE**

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1. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMREF	African Medical Research Foundation
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CBO	Community-based organisation
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CdV	<i>Comités de Vigilancia</i>
CDRN	Community Development Resource Network
CS	Civil society
CSO	Civil society organisation
CWG	Consultative Working Group
DCF	District Consultative Forum
DDO	District Development Officer
DfID	Department for International Development
EBRP	<i>Estrategia Boliviana de Reducción de la Pobreza</i>
GNT	<i>Grupo nacional de trabajo para la participación</i>
GTZ	<i>Gessellschaft fuer technische Zusammenarbeit</i>
HIPC	Highly indebted poor countries
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
KePIM	Kenyan Impact Monitoring
LC	Local Council
MFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MP	Member of Parliament
MTEF	Mid-term Expenditure Framework
NCF	National Consultative Forum
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPEP	National Poverty Eradication Plan
PAF	Poverty Action Fund
PAMFORK	Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PEC	Poverty Eradication Commission
PG	Participation Group
PMC	PAF Monitoring Committee
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policy
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SPAS	Social Policy Advisory Services
UDN	Uganda Debt Network
UK	United Kingdom
UPDNet	Ugandan Participatory Development Network
UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2002, the Participation Group (PG) at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) sponsored the ‘Bolivian-East African Sharing and Learning Exchange Visit’ whereby three Bolivian civil society (CS) representatives, and one government representative visited Uganda and Kenya so that together they could learn from one another’s PRSP experiences.

The purpose of this report is to document the main lessons emerging from the East African exchange on two levels. On one level it will look at what was learnt about the way in which civil society is engaging in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, and what can be said of their participation in Bolivia, Kenya and Uganda. More specifically, the document will outline lessons shared with respect to the learning exchange’s objectives of:

- scaling-up participation from micro/ grassroots project level to macro/policy levels,
- ensuring quality participation in all phases of the policy process

In addition to these thematic lessons, the report’s second section will highlight the value of the exchange as such, challenges it faced as a process, and potential ways of overcoming these in the future.

The report is not intended to present a comparative analysis of the PRSP process and civil society engagement in the three countries involved. It is based on a learning exchange that was dominated by civil society actors and limited by time and resources. It only hopes to capture lessons emerging specifically from that experience.

3.1 Main thematic lessons

The PRSP process creates spaces for CS engagement in conventional government-run policy processes. But should CS be engaging in the process? Should it be making use of these spaces? What are the implications of this engagement?

The exchange and many of the exchange participants’ work is based on the premise that CS actors should indeed be engaging. In following, and on a general level, **key**

guidelines for effectively ‘scaling-up’ quality CS participation in the PRSP process include:

- Adoption of a learning approach to the process on the part of all actors
- Accepting the need for sufficient time. Quality participation demands space for trials and errors
- Recognition of governance issues (i.e., taking into account representation and accountability questions on the part of all actors)
- Self-reflection around institutional strengths and weaknesses; this as a basis for strategic and effective alliances and partnerships

With these guidelines in mind, **co-operation and co-ordination between diverse civil society actors and different levels of government is key**. Here, a number of challenging issues are raised:

- If the PRSP process does create a space for CS engagement in government processes, can, and if so how do concerned actors work towards warming relations with governments without compromising their respective values and autonomy?
 - A first step with donors is convincing government of the value of CS capacity building and involvement in PRSP processes. How do concerned actors do this?
 - On the other hand, how can equal partnerships between local CS actors, donors and international NGOs (INGOs) be built? How can the PRSP process be domesticated?
 - Openness to information-sharing between organisations will require a shift in institutional cultures; a transition from closed and competitive institutional attitudes built on mistrust, to more transparent and sharing cultures.

In following, and in order to ensure quality participation, co-ordinated efforts and networks should be made to **decentralise skills and information** downwards. Along the CS axis this means from INGOs to local NGOs to CBOs to citizens. Along the government axis, parallel efforts should be made to resource and build capacities of local officials. Simultaneously, **complementary horizontal relationships between CS actors and government** should be sought at different levels of governance.

PRSP-initiated processes such as consultations, Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms provide spaces for decentralising capacity building. The following issues are raised:

- How can consultations or PPAs **avoid being extractive** and actually build capacity to advocate their own rights among the poor? How can consultations and PPAs be designed so as to **avoid raising false expectations**?
- Capacity building can also be incorporated into **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** and processes. CS must be involved at this stage in the PRSP process to facilitate that policy is translated into practice.
- **Awareness raising and dissemination of information to the grassroots is key**, as is civic education.
- **Citizens need to be aware of their rights, and of how to exercise them.**
- Building a democratic culture and sense of citizenship requires a **fundamental shift in psycho-social mental models.**

In addition to having generated very valuable lessons, the exchange also developed important working relationships between participants. Partnerships and networks are being born and/or strengthened, and as their initiatives move forward, lessons learned from the exchange appear to be being translated into action.

3.2 Main process lessons

In order that this particular South-South exchange contribute to the success of future exchanges, attention is drawn to the process-related challenges it faced. Taking these into consideration in the future will help to improve future learning exchanges, making this part of a broader learning process for both their organisers and their participants. The following paragraphs outline the process lessons elaborated upon in Part II.

Time. The exchange was rushed and deserved more time. Overall, future itineraries must take into account time for readings (on the part of hosts and visitors), discussions – formal and informal, unscheduled meetings with new colleagues, individual information digestion and synthesis time. Due to insufficient time, the exchange was considered too extractive and not enough of a two-way exchange.

Continuity. There were problems of personnel continuity throughout the process. The lack of continuity had severe logistical consequences and impacted the learning process. Although difficult to have prevented – even in retrospect – these problems underscore the importance of committing oneself at an early stage and respecting the work of those who count on your attendance and participation.

Roles, responsibilities and respect. The role of IDS was not clear. It seemed that participating agencies expected more leadership on the part of others, specifically in terms of setting dates and negotiating itineraries. More direct communication between the Southern partners earlier on could have avoided this issue, and exchange participants suggested that IDS take on a more back-seat role in terms of logistical arrangements in the future.

Given the last minute changes, logistical problems, little rest and exhausting schedule, team dynamics unfolded remarkably well. Nonetheless, drawing up a team contract at the beginning of the exchange may have helped to ensure respectful behaviour and a stronger sense of ‘team work’ throughout the process.

Also challenging were the different perspectives and viewpoints emerging from the CS participants and government officials. Diversity must be respected, and all sides open to one another’s viewpoints. That said, great value came out of having a multi-stakeholder team.

3. INTRODUCTION

In March 2002, the Participation Group (PG) at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) sponsored the 'Bolivian-East African Sharing and Learning Exchange Visit' whereby three Bolivian 'civil society' representatives, and one government representative visited Uganda and Kenya so that together they could learn from one another's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) experiences.

The purpose of this report is to document the main lessons emerging from the East African exchange on two levels. Generally speaking it will look at what was learnt about the way in which civil society is engaging in the PRSP process, and what can be said of their participation in Bolivia, Kenya and Uganda. More specifically, the document will outline lessons shared with respect to the learning exchange's objectives of:

- scaling-up participation from micro/ grassroots project level to macro/policy levels, and
- ensuring quality participation in all phases of the policy process

In addition to these thematic lessons, the report's second section will highlight the value of the exchange as such, challenges it faced as a process, and potential ways of overcoming these in the future.

The report is divided into two parts. The first outlines thematic lessons, and the second, process lessons that come out of the learning exchange experience. Part I highlights actors and relationships, as well as the specific mechanisms that facilitate the participation of civil society (CS) in PRSP processes. The final section in Part I lists the main lessons from the exchange, outlining guiding questions for future research and action after which outcomes and future action plans are listed. Part II briefly draws attention to the process-related challenges the learning exchange faced. Taking these into consideration in the future will help to improve future learning exchanges, making this part of a broader learning process for both organisers and participants.

4.1 Background

Announced in 1999, PRSPs are a World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)-driven initiative for poverty reduction. They have been presented as an instrument through which the allocation of debt relief funds and concessional loans for highly indebted poor countries (HIPC)s might be allocated to poverty reduction strategies and programmes. Their design is intended to "identify in a participatory manner the poverty reduction outcomes a country wishes to achieve and the key public actions – policy changes, institutional reforms, programs and projects...which are needed to achieve the desired outcome". It is thus based on an understanding that "[b]road-based participation of civil society in the adoption and monitoring of the Poverty Reduction Strategy [...] will enhance its implementation".

Civil society organisations (CSOs) from all around the world are working to sharpen their skills, and increase their level of involvement in policy processes at national, regional and international levels. With this in mind, the PG at the IDS has been exploring means of effectively 'scaling-up' participation, both in terms of the constituencies to be involved (from grassroots/ micro-oriented, to macro-oriented) and the spaces that the PG and its partners seek to influence (national, regional and international). One means of facilitating the 'scaling-up' of participation is through networking and capacity building.

The PG's networking and capacity building programme seeks to deepen theory and practice of participation by bringing together various actors to share knowledge and skills. A key thrust of this programme is strengthening the capacities of individuals and networks to engage effectively with policy processes, as the concept of participation becomes more mainstreamed.

The PG has been specifically involved in discussions on strengthening citizen participation in the design of PRSPs. In February 2000 it hosted an international workshop on participation in PRSPs, and in April 2001 it participated in a conference on the subject in Washington D.C. As a follow-up to these activities, discussions around the possibility of a learning exchange between two of the Group's Southern partners, Participatory Methodologies Forum of Kenya (PAMFORK) of Kenya and *Grupo Nacional de Trabajo para la Participación* (GNT) of Bolivia emerged. In subsequent discussions the GNT expressed interest in visiting Uganda. These discussions culminated in the PG-IDS sponsored 'Bolivian-East African Sharing and Learning Exchange Visit', and in March 2002 three Bolivian CS representatives and one government representative visited Uganda and Kenya. The exchange was intended to be a two-way process whereby the Bolivians were not solely meant to learn from their hosts, but also to share their own experiences.

4.2 Learning Exchange

The exchange involved the participation of 3 Bolivian CS representatives affiliated with GNT, and one government official from the Vice Ministry of Popular Participation. Bolivian participants travelled to Uganda via London. At Heathrow airport they met the IDS representative responsible for facilitating and documenting the exchange and learning process (in the form of this report).

In Uganda, the Community Development Resource Network (CDRN) hosted this team. CDRN's Programme Officer for Advocacy and Fundraising joined the team. Four days were spent in Uganda. Three of the four days were spent in Kampala where the team spoke with people from the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) initiative, Uganda Debt Network (UDN), Oxfam-UK, NGO Forum, CDRN and Ugandan Participatory Development Network (UPDNet). Government Officials with whom team members spoke included the director of the Local Government Development Project from the Ministry of Local Government, and the head of the Poverty Analysis and Monitoring Unit in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED).

The team also visited Mbale and Soroti, two outlying districts east of Kampala. In Mbale the team observed an end-of-phase Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) synthesis workshop, and in Soroti, spoke with the district Poverty Action Fund Monitoring Committee (PMC), and 2 government officials: a representative of the district's head of technical staff, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), and the Local Council Five chairman. Soroti is considered a model district for CS participation in the PRSP process, particularly in terms of monitoring and evaluation. (See Appendix 2 for CDRN Report).

In Kenya PAMFORK hosted the team. PAMFORK's Network and Communications Officer and a member of its Steering Committee joined the team. Six days were spent in Kenya where the team visited a number of CS actors involved in the PRSP process. These included the Tegemeo Research Institute, who represented the private sector on

the PRSP Secretariat, the NGO Council, the CSO Taskforce, made up of local and international NGOs that participated in the process, and PAMFORK members.

The team also visited the Machakos district where it met with the District Development Officer (DDO), the district-level government officer in charge of the district consultation process, and his CSO counterpart, INADES. The team also had the chance to visit a community in the district. Two meetings were particularly key as they gathered a number of key players together, generating high level dialogue and exchange: the Civil Society Task Force meeting and the Synthesis Workshop. At these events, key learnings, driving issues, and ways forward were explored. A Department for International Development (DfID) representative attended the Synthesis Workshop briefly, giving valuable insight into the donor perspective in Kenya. (See Appendix 3 for PAMFORK Report).

4.3 Scope of Report

The scope of this report is guided by a number of factors. First, the information gathered was built around knowledge of individuals and organisations involved in the PRSP process. The team did not have exposure to any ‘hard line’ anti-PRSP advocates. Also, despite efforts made in preliminary stages of the process to involve women in the exchange, organisers discovered that there were too few women in relevant positions (i.e., in relatively senior government positions, co-ordinating GNT member organisations), and particularly few who had a strong enough command of the English language. As a result, all Bolivian participants were men. This, and the fact that the visit was dominated by CS actors, slanted the type of questions asked, and the tone of the exchange more broadly. To a large degree, the tone of the report thus reflects an NGO perspective. The districts we visited in both Kenya and Uganda were model districts. This was valuable, but not necessarily representative of nationwide experiences.

It is essential to note that this report is not intended to present a comparative analysis of the PRSP process and CS engagement in the three countries involved. It is based on a learning exchange that was dominated by CS actors and limited by time and resources. It only hopes to capture lessons emerging specifically from that experience.

Although the exchange was meant to be two-way, limited time did not allow for this. And because the IDS documentator accompanied the Bolivian team throughout, it is their learning process that is reflected in this report (the Ugandan and Kenyan host organisations’ respective reports best capture their experiences – see appendices 2 and 3). There was neither a Kenyan participant in Uganda, and despite efforts made to send a Ugandan participant to Kenya, due to illness this was not possible.

Limited time also influenced research methodology. There was often little preparation time for pre-, or post-meeting discussions and reflections, disallowing time to develop focused or guided questions. Had the team been more informed or prepared, the research could have been undertaken in a more strategic way, with more extensive triangulation.

Despite these challenges, a number of valuable lessons and enthusiasm for future action plans emerged from the experience.

PART I: THEMATIC LESSONS

4. SHARED LESSONS

One of the main lessons to have emerged from the learning exchange is the importance that contextual factors played in facilitating or constricting the degree of effective civil society participation in the PRSP policy process. A basic background understanding of country contexts and their respective PRSP policy processes is outlined in Appendix 1.

5.1 Actors and Relationships

Although a detailed exploration of the historical, cultural and political backgrounds of the countries involved was beyond the scope of the exchange, a general understanding of government, donor, and civil society's attitudes and approaches to the PRSP process was extremely valuable. Cross-country comparisons of the roles and actions of these actors, along with the relationships among and between them, generated some very interesting findings.

a. Governments

Uganda's PRSP process' success was largely attributed to the government's focal commitment to poverty reduction, and the central role of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) in Uganda's overall development plan. That its finance and planning ministries had merged at the same time as the 1997 PEAP, and that the most powerful Ministry, the MFPED, took charge of the venture was considered relevant. As a central pillar to development planning, relative high levels of co-ordination between ministries, national and district-level governments, government, donors and CS were seen to contribute substantially to Uganda's overall success.

Continuity of the Ugandan public administration – perhaps one positive outcome of a 'no party' system – and highly educated, competent and dedicated government officials in key positions were remarked upon. Government recognition of the value of qualitative data, and of the poor's participation in the collection of that data was key. In fact, most impressive was the fact that the UPPAP was situated within the MFPED but managed by an NGO, Oxfam-UK. Strategic and opportunistic leadership of the project on the part of UPPAP's Leonard Okello and his staff was also noted.

The **Bolivian's** drew many comparisons, noting that the Bolivian *Estrategia Boliviana de la Reducción de la Pobreza* (EBRP) is not a central guiding mechanism in the government's development agenda. There is little co-ordination between *sectors*, all wanting to design their own policies. In addition, the most recent governments were coalitions, with incoherent agendas.

Bolivia's public administration was also considered inherently weak, and vulnerable to massive post-election restructuring – a consequence of the country's overly politicised civil service. This might disallow continuity and the development of an on-going iterative PRSP-related process. The multi-party system in Bolivia has also meant that in order to ensure commitment to the PRSP, all political parties have had to come together and negotiate around it. As a result, the final PRSP is watered down.

The impact major shifts in political leadership were also of concern in **Kenya**. Particularly pronounced in Kenya was the internal government division between

technocrats and politicians, also considered problematic in Bolivia. The first were seen as being more open to the process.

Related Kenyan CS complaints revolved around the fact that a large component of poverty reduction funds were allocated to public servant salaries. That only 10% of the 40% of budget allocated to 'newly defined needs' was directed towards operational programmes could be interpreted as a failure. That said, given that this was 10% more than had been allocated to such programmes in earlier budgets, this shift could also be interpreted as a small step forward in a longer term vision. The question of how to shift budget allocation from salaries to operational component was also raised by Bolivian participants.

b. Decentralisation Issues

Kenyan participants saw their government as too central, and questioned their visitors on the type of structures they felt might facilitate non-governmental input into policy processes. They asked whether and how further decentralisation would promote participation.

CS participants from **Bolivia and Uganda** were critical of their respective countries' decentralisation processes. For instance, it was noted that in Uganda, Local Councils (LCs) – born out of Museveni's 'Resistance Committees', or local guerrilla cells – had effectively become tentacles of the state. They had become transmission belts for policies, and as such, a mechanism that effectively turned the process of decentralisation into re-centralisation.

In **Uganda** resources remained at national and district level; central government was seen as having trouble divesting itself and was criticised for allocating money with strings attached. The government justifies this by underlining weak infrastructures and lack of capacity at district, and lower level of governments. Information is another resource that does not seem to flow from more centralised to decentralised levels in Uganda.

In contrast, despite having only had presence at the local level since 1994, the **Bolivian** government has apparently managed to allocate funds directly to the municipalities. Their efforts to train municipalities was also recognised, although NGO facilitation of this process was seen as necessary. It was generally agreed that municipal levels must be given priority in decentralisation processes and systems.

c. Leadership

In Soroti, the **Ugandan** model district the team visited, strong political leadership was obvious. The LC5 Chairman verbally recognised the importance of CS and government working partnerships, and of fighting corruption.

In **Kenya's** Machakos district, the DDO saw NGOs as having a significant potential role with the district level. This, in terms of mobilisation, capacity building, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. At this level, the PRSP process was very successful in warming CS and government relations in Kenya. Whether this be rhetoric or representative, these officials' level of awareness and apparent openness impressed the Bolivian participants. It became obvious that political leadership was key.

d. 'Openness'

Ugandans with whom the team spoke remarked that what the Bolivians observed was the product of a long, on-going struggle carried out by donors, a few key government officials, and CS. Co-ordination combined with strategic and opportunistic approaches to engagement in the process on the part of these actors, they said, had proved quite fruitful, but there was still a long road ahead. They pointed to the fact that Uganda's economic growth is largely dependent on outside support, and that there exists a need to look at land reform issues, productivity levels, and improving governance and tax collection systems. For whatever reasons, the **Ugandan** government was perceived as 'open' to learning – something doubted of Bolivian and Kenyan governments by certain actors. That said, there is an argument commonly made that Uganda's 'openness' is too much a consequence of donor dominance in the country. Furthermore, sectors and networks that are open to learning do exist in all three countries.

e. Donors

Kenya's frigid government-donor relationship may have been slightly warmed by the PRSP process. At the time of our visit, however, there was much discontent for the lack of CS-directed donor support. The CS Task Force had just learnt that their proposal for on-going support advocacy work in the PRSP process had been rejected. This, after extensive proposal preparations with DfID staff. During the synthesis workshop, DfID representative expressed concern on a number of issues including the quality of the final PRSP product, its impact on the budget, its means of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. How would different stakeholders be involved in these phases? DfID's lack of support raised a number of concerns regarding future CS actions and influence in PRSP-related advocacy work.

In contrast, too much donor leadership was a complaint of local NGOs in **Uganda** where the economy is highly donor dependent (i.e., 30% of its PAF funds coming from donor agencies; 50% of the budget expenditure comes from aid) and where development work is seen to be externally driven. Donors hold a lot of influence, and boundaries between their and governments' roles are messy in the field of development planning.

In the PRSP process this has allowed for an international NGO (INGO), Oxfam-UK, to work within the MFPED. In carrying out the UPPAP, Oxfam has been able to lobby for the value of participation and qualitative data from within. In becoming a World Bank and IMF conditionality, donor and INGO involvement has been interpreted by some to undermine local civil society actors and their capacities. It is not odd therefore that issues of process ownership have been of concern in Uganda – particularly among local NGOs who see themselves as having taken on a subcontracting and not a leading role in the process (see *INGOs and National NGOs* paragraph below).

Ugandan donors were interpreted as being organised and strategic. DfID's role as the country's biggest donor, its interest in poverty reduction and CS capacity building made for a fruitful combination that was envied by Bolivian and Kenyan participants who wished for more donor support in their advocacy efforts. Donors, especially DfID, have been supporting NGOs directly to engage in the PRSP process, both in terms of PPAs and advocacy.

While the **Bolivian** government representative saw insufficient donor funds going directly to government, thus resulting in redundancies, inefficiencies, and a lack of

co-ordination, CS participants called for more direct donor support to NGOs. It was noted that local/ national NGOs could learn from donors' and INGOs co-ordinated efforts and strategic approaches.

f. Civil Society

Whereas **Uganda's** CS might be interpreted as having been overly influenced, or perhaps co-opted by donor and government agendas in the PRSP process, generally speaking **Bolivian and Kenyan** CS actors felt hindered by the antagonistic relationship between their organisations and their respective governments.

g. NGOs

During the exchange, **Uganda** NGOs they were described as largely Kampala-centred, incestuous and, despite some competition for subcontracting bids, generally open to information sharing. National NGOs are not representative of Ugandan CS. Although they are the most visible of CS actors, they constitute only the 'tip of the iceberg'. It is the Community-based organisations (CBOs) that make-up CSs' fabric, and were far more representative of the Ugandan population. These were not involved in policy process advocacy work, but rather in service delivery. In contrast, **Bolivian** NGOs were said to have regional foci.

NGOs both in **Bolivia** and in **Uganda** seem to be shifting away from strict service provision and project implementation. In **Uganda**, donors are going so far as to push NGOs into advocacy, making advocacy part of their agenda and in so doing legitimising and co-opting a process that, it was felt, should be initiated from the grassroots, or at least by local CS actors. In **Kenya**, NGO strengths lie in advocacy. While emphasis on advocacy might emerge out of a direct mistrust of state actors, it was noted that NGOs are not a sustainable replacement for effective public administration. Indeed, Ugandan participants mentioned the challenge associated with maintaining continuity of membership among NGO staff.

h. INGOs and national NGOs

INGOs are often equated with donors in **Uganda**. Oxfam-UK has made efforts to phase itself out as UPPAP manager, and has explicitly stated goals of capacity building local researchers' skills within the PPA process. Although these are recognised, the team learnt that local NGOs were discontent with the nature of their relationship with Oxfam, the MFPED and donors within the context of the UPPAP exercise. They felt more like consultants than partners in the process. As MFPED pushes Oxfam-UK to deliver, many local NGOs feel their autonomy compromised. Furthermore, the strong presence of well-resourced INGOs in Uganda means a 'braindrain' from local NGOs who were struggling to make ends meet while competing with their international 'partners', especially regarding skills and capacities.

i. NGO Networks

An outstanding contrast between the East African and Bolivian CS is the difference in levels of organisation and co-ordination among NGOs. There appeared to be a much higher degree of co-ordination and cohesion at national levels both in **Kenya and Uganda**.

The NGO Forum in Uganda, and the NGO Council in Kenya both served as umbrella organisations with large memberships. As an alliance they are able to present a common front to the government and lobby with a collective voice¹.

Uganda's NGO Forum plans to decentralise its district fora. It wants to train district NGOs on how the government wants them to do their work (i.e., project work plans). Although this was seen as potentially confining swift changes to local conditions, it was also considered a necessary move in response to government's request for improved NGO transparency. CDRN's representative sees this as a space for government-CS collaboration; a space for improved CS participation. A sceptic would ask, however, to what degree this will facilitate government control of NGO work? Is it about spreading more government tentacles downward? Or, is it about decentralising power?

Kenya's NGO Council was established in 1990. It is an umbrella organisation for registered NGOs. As the most organised and officially recognised network in Kenya, it was invited by government to sit on the PRSP Secretariat. Interesting to note however, is that members of the NGO Council are selected by the government after an extensive interview process.

Despite what might be interpreted as an uncomfortably controlling relationship between government and NGO networks in East Africa, it did not seem to restrict their will, or plans towards advocacy work. Bolivian participants saw the advantages to being organised in networks. It provided a valuable contrast to the challenges facing their infamously fragmented, overly-politicised, and mistrusted CS back home. The role of NGOs that wish to radically critique the process and remain outside remains to be seen.

j. Academia

The question of academia's involvement in the PRSP process, and its relationship with NGOs was raised. In **Bolivia**, that GNT is located at NUR University and is developing relationship with donors and the government is exemplary (albeit rare).

Although initiated through the Poverty Forum² initiative, neither University's involvement nor the relationship between them and other CS actors seemed to take-off in **Uganda**.

In **Kenya**, Universities are not outreach oriented and tend to be removed from the study of livelihood issues. Furthermore, they are housed in the Ministry of Education – implying less autonomy. Means of involving academia, and influencing curriculum through this particular policy process is an area that might be further explored.

k. Private Sector

There was little mention of private sector participation in **Bolivia and Uganda**.

¹ Much of the Forum's efforts are currently being directed against the government's NGO Registration Bill that will restrict NGO autonomy by, among other things, legislating their registration with the Ugandan Ministry of Internal Affairs.

² The Poverty Forum was meant to translate the *Voices of the Poor* findings into policy. Discussions at academic institutions were developed into briefing papers. The government was to respond to these papers, and the media to report on them. However, what started as an open discussion, was criticised as having become a bit like a lecture series – too incestuous and inorganic.

In **Kenya** the team spoke with a researcher from the Tegemeo Institute, who represented the private sector on the PRSP Secretariat. Their approach to private sector representation was refreshing, and reflected their commitment to small-scale employers and producers who make-up the majority of the business sector in Kenya. The institute reached out to minibus associations and other marginalized business sectors, for instance. In representing more marginalized members of the private sector, this representative found himself working most closely with the CS representative. Kenya's big business approached the process through sector working groups (i.e., commerce and industry). Furthermore, they went individually and never with a joint agenda.

5.2 Mechanisms for PRSP Participation

The exchange of experiences brought forth a series of lessons on particular approaches and methodologies, their weaknesses and strengths, successes and challenges.

a. Consultations

District-level consultations in **Kenya** were carried out in diverse ways in each district. In the district of Machakos where the team visited, consultations were limited to a one day meeting of Members of Parliament (MPs), NGOs, religious organisations, and government department heads. Two-hundred questionnaires, of which over 150 were completed and returned had been distributed one month previous to this event.

After district consultations, the DDO and CSO representative presented their findings at the National Forum. District reports were submitted, each in its own format. Information was then synthesised into the National PRSP. *The challenge now lies in translating this document into district plans and projects. Lack of funds and diverse regional concerns – often watered down in the PRSP – are main problems here.* A key question here is who does this translation.

It was recognised that few stakeholders were present during consultations. *Civic leaders dominated the consultations.* That communities often send leaders to speak on their behalf, and are often shy to speak with outsiders was something reiterated by a PPA researcher the team spoke with. In Bolivia, although consultations did reach the municipal levels, the quality of participation was also considered low (i.e., mayors most often filled out questionnaires). The question was raised as to whether this reflected their understanding of the PRSP as a document that would bring in money for their sectorial projects.

In Machakos, Kenya, the DDO saw the consultation process as successful; *they introduced the value of participation*, generating interesting information. Furthermore, animosity towards the government in Kenya has threatened the successful implementation of projects in the past. Now, with increased ownership, projects are considered more legitimate. The pace of implementation is also quickened thanks to communities anticipating the project.

b. Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs)

In **Uganda**, timing allowed for the PPAs to feed into the revision of the PEAP. UPPAP was meant to help researchers gather information that could be translated into policy. By including government officials on research teams, it also served to introduce government officials to local realities.

Similarly, in **Kenya**, *presence of both district-level and national-level government officials, principally DDOs and Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) enumerators, has contributed to government recognition of the value of PPAs and qualitative data.*

Having Oxfam-UK physically located in the MFPED warmed relations between CS and government in Uganda. Aside from divisions created among CS actors, it created opportunities for CS. The UPPAP director served as counterpart between government and other CS actors – an INGO liaison so to speak. His being in the Ministry ensured access to information that Oxfam-UK could then share with CS more broadly. Eventually UPPAP became accepted as a member of the Ministerial family; knowledge of the MFPED's internal workings (i.e., learning which office to go to, for what; what meetings to go to) cannot be underestimated in terms of enhancing strategic lobbying and action.

Timing of the exchange allowed for us to observe an end-of-phase PPA synthesis workshop in Mbale, Uganda. At this event research teams presented their findings to one another and to UPPAP (Oxfam-UK) staff. The process facilitator noted common elements emerging from the findings – both content and methodology-based and suggested ways forward. Specifically, she made recommendations to focus on issues that might influence policy.

Oxfam-UK strategically guided the research, or at least ensured that PPAs remained constructive and did not become an arena for voicing complaints. Bolivian participants made note of this role, and the fact that Oxfam-UK most likely served to ensure certain research standards. Because the team did not observe PPAs, it is impossible for us to assess the quality of participation at that level. Concern was expressed, however, that assessment skills were not translated to communities, and that despite encouragement to feedback findings to communities before end-of-phase workshops, the process was largely an extractive one.

In recognition of these process ownership and representativity issues, Oxfam-UK is pulling out of UPPAP. In doing so it hopes to transfer ownership to government and to build CS capacity. It also hopes to take on more of a watch-dog role in terms of monitoring impact of policies after the PPAs second phase. The INGO makes this move anticipating certain problems however: that local government has just decentralised and that therefore, its capacity must be built-up, and secondly that corruption is prevalent and cross-cutting.

Indeed, UPPAP's activities and priorities reflect the fact that it was driven by donors and government officials. While donors sought a better understanding of the nature and dimensions of poverty to inform their strategies and the PEAP, government held an interest in finding out what the poor considered the government should be doing. Thus, *'the major interest of key stakeholders has been in obtaining information for national level policy, not in district capacity building, and certainly not in community level action'* (Yates and Okello, forthcoming).

In **Kenya** the government contracted PAMFORK and African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF) to carry out the PPAs in 12 of the 25 districts that underwent consultation processes. It was recognised that these ended-up being largely extractive and that in the future, they must be more incremental in design. In Kenya *many communities awaited quick returns*, something they were not shy to remind the DDO of. The CBS official saw them as *complimenting statistical information*. He also

raised issues around building capacity in the collection of statistical data. There is a need to support data production, and to set monitoring indicators. Generating data and harmonising it is key.

Bolivian government representatives expressed interest in the PPA process, raising a series of valid, practical questions. PPA findings were recognised as having great potential, even in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of decentralisation processes. In Bolivia, it was argued that the government should open itself and accept the value of qualitative information that is gathered in a participatory fashion. Local government officials (mayors), *campesino* leaders, and union leaders must be involved in a PPA process in order for it to move forward.

Bolivians commented that one way of promoting capacity building in PPA processes might be to involve community members in synthesis workshops such as the one the team visited in Soroti, Uganda. NGOs, they thought, should work to phase themselves out of the process and eventually turn the PPA process over to CBOs. It was also commented that local NGOs be on the PPA management committees. As such, the process should be managed and designed as an inclusive learning process, ultimately aimed (in the long term) at decentralising skills and capacities from INGOs to local NGOs, and from local NGOs to CBOs.

That said, many would argue that a qualitative and PRA-based national policy research PPA process such as UPPAP's is valuable in and of itself. It might also be considered far too complex for CBOs to manage on their own, given their lack of resources and the fact that they are unsuited to the task of carrying out a national-scale qualitative and participatory research exercise. Challenges associated with (even) getting experienced qualitative Kampala researchers 'on board' the PPA process is evidence of this.

c. Monitoring and evaluating policy implementation

The government in **Kenya** is currently designing a monitoring and evaluation system for the PRSP. Because consultation feedback mechanisms are failing, however, there is much scepticism regarding government leadership in this area. There appears to be potential in the Kenyan Impact Monitoring (KePIM) exercise – a project carried out by GTZ's Social Policy Advisory Services (SPAS) project located at the Ministry of Finance, the Poverty Eradication Commission (PEC) and the CBS. Also, a PAMFORK steering committee member has been nominated to the monitoring and evaluation task force – encouraging local NGO impact and involvement in the process.

Complimenting what was presented as a well co-ordinated government-run monitoring and evaluation programme in **Uganda**, were independent CS efforts to monitor Poverty Alleviation Funds (PAFs), and lobby against corruption. Both these initiatives were being carried out by the UDN, an advocacy and lobbying coalition pushing for reduced debt levels, accountability and effective use of national resources for the benefit of all Ugandans.

Soroti's Poverty Action Fund Monitoring Committees (PMCs)

Through its network, UDN has helped to establish and build the capacity of PMCs. In following its broader objectives, these committees aim to monitor PAFs and advocate against corruption in the use of these funds. They have been set-up in 17 of Uganda's

50 odd districts, and were established endogenously in other districts³. They are made up of community members who volunteer their services.

In Soroti the team visited a 6-month old PMC that was hosted by one of UDN's partners, 'Community Care'. Its membership included 'Community Care' representatives, (including the chairperson), two journalists, a pastor, a government official and a women's group representative. In this particular case, the local NGO had made public announcements to organised CS groups in the region. Members expressed interest and contributed an annual fee of 10,000 Ugandan shillings. They also underwent a training workshop centred around research methods and basic knowledge of project standards (i.e., the expected width of a road and its average construction cost).

Soroti's PMC was organised into a regional coalition that subdivides into district coalitions, and further breaks-up to carry out monitoring activities. Local officers go up to districts to get quarterly project/ expenditure reports. At subcounty level, monitors visit PAF projects and gather information from communities. They speak with different actors (beneficiaries and money handlers) to triangulate data. Because community members do not know about PAFs, PMC's role is one of monitoring, as well as awareness raising and capacity building.

Soroti's PMC felt CS was too passive, and saw itself as an agent that should involve locals in the monitoring of funds. They saw their work as part of a long-term process; that generating awareness and actions of citizens at the micro-level would generate enthusiasm, and gradually build-up commitment to this cause. Their enthusiasm and dedication to this was impressive, as was their desire to share their experience.

Challenges they faced included low levels of awareness, both in terms of budget funds and of degrees of corruption. Accessing budget data was difficult, and the cost of corruption hard to calculate. People were also scared of issuing public complaints. Thus 'contextualising corruption' was seen as a priority, teaching the personal and macro-implications it has. It was also *a challenge to conquer expectations of a paternalistic-style development process*, to a more participatory and citizen/community-owned approach. This was seen as a challenge in Bolivia and Kenya as well.

The role of churches in this process was not discussed in detail. However, mention was made of the Bishop's taking a lead role in building-up a sense of civic education. This was seen as having great potential. FM radio stations and critical press were also highlighted as vital tools for awareness raising and mass civil education.

That PMCs were voluntary and CS-driven and owned impressed the Bolivian participants and led to much discussion between their government and CS representatives. PMCs were compared to Bolivia's *Comités de Vigilancia* (CdV), or Vigilance Committees – a government-designed monitoring mechanism instituted by the Law of Popular Participation. *The institutionalisation of CdVs was considered by some participants as a potential obstacle to organic CS mobilisation processes. At the same time it does serve to institutionalise CS' role in conventional government-led processes.*

³ We were not able to explore the nature of endogenously set-up monitoring committees, nor get an idea of their national coverage.

CdV are considered weak in Bolivia. Their members' costs are covered by government, perhaps contributing to a less altruistic image, and higher potential for their being 'sold-off'. That said, the cost-covering measure was taken to lessen the chances that they be co-opted or bought out by outside interests. Voluntarism in Uganda was equated with a higher sense of civic education. Anti-corruption mechanisms in Bolivia appeared more developed. There, by law, local officials can be arrested for misuse of funds, and municipal funds frozen.

Dissatisfaction with existing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms seems to have left a space for the Catholic Church in Bolivia to invite itself into this process. Concern was expressed that in so doing, the Church was actually seeking a niche for its network, taking on an illegitimate 'patron of citizenship' role.

In Kenya, the CBS official saw all stakeholders as responsible for contributing to monitoring, evaluating and implementing – both in terms of action and funding. Government did not seem committed to being the sole investor here, but rather saw its role as creating an institutional framework that would encourage NGO and private sector investment.

Questions were raised around the use of existing institutions and organised local groups in monitoring and evaluation efforts. Also of concern was the degree to which NGOs involved in anti-corruption and PRSP fund monitoring can potentially be co-opted by local political interests and systems.

5. SOME GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND ACTION

Built around the two primary objectives around which the learning exchange was designed are a series of major questions that can be helpful in guiding future research and actions for CS actors that participate in PRSP policy processes. For the purpose of clarity, I have attempted to group them into three thematic areas.

6.1 The Basics

- Do concerned actors want to engage with what are considered by many to be no more than 'superficially revamped' Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs)? There is little evidence that PRSPs can influence broader macroeconomic frameworks. To what degree do these factors guide poverty reduction? Should CSOs be focusing their efforts elsewhere?
- Does the PRSP provide an entry point for influencing macroeconomics? And, if so, how can CS engage at this level. CS is under-capacitated (even INGOs) to be involved in macro-economic processes. Are the Bank and Fund open to simplifying their language, and making their economic 'line' accessible?
- That said, the exchange points out that PRSPs do have the potential to create spaces for CS engagement and harmonising of development policies. Furthermore, they have helped to warm relations between donors, government and CS. PRSP consultations processes have also provided a basis for participatory monitoring and evaluation methods and PPAs. It is important to see PRSP as a development process as well as a product.

6.2 Institutional self-reflection

- **Who are we?** A first step for civil society organisations, particularly NGOs, is to get to understand themselves better; their roots, institutional culture, strengths,

weaknesses, goals and aspirations. On-going institutional self-reflection and the adoption of a learning approach to their work must go hand-in-hand. This will help CSOs to be more strategic in their engagement.

- **Who do civil society actors represent?** In their work, concerned actors must always ask themselves who they are representing, who they are accountable to, and how they can justify their actions?

6.3 Partnerships, networks and co-operation.

- **How can CSOs better work together?** Knowing our own institutions is a first step. It is also important to understand CS partners, their strengths and weaknesses. This will help CSOs to learn from one another, compliment each others' work – strengthening collaborative efforts –, and build effective coalitions. NGOs and other CSOs must consider the value of those who choose not to 'engage'. In what ways can these organisations contribute to positive social change but also allow space for dissent and diversity.
- **NGO networks.** Turning bilateral NGO partnerships into national-, regional-, and international NGO learning community networks is a next step that will ensure more opportunities for advocacy and lobbying efforts, and allow for strategic interventions. Openness to information-sharing between organisations will require a shift in institutional cultures; a transition from closed and competitive institutional attitudes built on mistrust, to more transparent and sharing cultures. This will undoubtedly face resistance, take time, and cause much heartache.
- **Working with government.** The PRSP process creates spaces for CS engagement in conventional government-run policy processes. How do CSOs warm relations with their governments without compromising their values and autonomy? Who are the government officials and what are the government agencies 'open' to working in partnership with NGO? Where are the doors open, and spaces available for most effective and influential working relationships to blossom, and for learning processes to move forward? How do concerned actors get politicians on board? CS must be opportunistic and make the most of spaces made available to them.
- **Consultations and PPAs** are areas where CS can make effective use of its skills and know-how to influence the PRSP process. By participating in PPA and consultation exercises, government officials are exposed to local and community realities, the value and limitations of 'participation' and qualitative data. A complementary relationship between qualitative and quantitative data is necessary, recognising the strengths and diverse actors in these research approaches. In addition to bridging CS and government more generally, we ask whether this is a potential space for convincing politicians as well as technocrats of the value of participation and accountability?
- **And donors?** A first step with donors is convincing them of the value of CS capacity building and involvement in PRSP processes. Is there room for learning exchanges centred around successful PRSP experiences between donors and INGOs? The case of Uganda showed that donor support and co-ordination is key.

- It still remains to be seen whether donor funding to NGOs or to governments is most effective – this is most likely determined by the nature of CS, of government, and the relationship between these three actors.
- On the other hand, it is important to ask: **how do concerned actors gain more equal footing with donors? How can the PRSP process be domesticated?** In Kenya there are no HIPC funds to count on, and so they are seeking to distance the PRSP from donors, and seeking co-ordinated funding from diverse actors for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This may provide lessons in sustainability and process ownership that Uganda might be interested in as CSOs, and particularly local NGOs, who wish to distance themselves from donor dependency. That said, in many cases a compromise must be made between efforts directed towards capacity building versus those directed more specifically towards influencing policy.
- Is there room for CS-private sector alliances, like the one that emerged out of Kenya's PRSP Secretariat? What is private sectors role in policy processes? How should it be contributing to poverty reduction? Who is it accountable to? Does the profit motive of the private sector present fundamental contradictions here?
- **What role can academia and the media play in the process?** There is a lot of potential for them in areas of curriculum and educational reforms, as well as awareness raising and citizenship building. The complementary (as opposed to conflicting) relationship between qualitative and quantitative data is a potential focal point for future curriculum here.
- How do concerned actors move beyond shifting the responsibility and blame, to improving their own, and others', effectiveness and self-governance? How do we deal with limited views held by certain actors as to what other actors are capable of (or institutional prejudices)?
- Capacity building in terms of wider governance issues is key. Towards what actors should capacity building efforts be directed? And, what types of different skills do different actors require?

6.4 Capacity building and civic education

- How, throughout and in the end, will the PRSP process benefit the poor?
- How can consultations or PPAs **avoid being knowledge extractive** and actually build capacity to advocate their rights among the poor? How can consultations and PPAs be designed so as to **avoid raising false expectations** that might tarnish future CS-community relationships? Micro-politics remains a challenge that reinforces the limitations of such exercises. Community involvement of the broader PPA process (i.e., in synthesis workshops) is perhaps one way of building local capacity.
- **Monitoring and evaluation must be seen as a learning process.** Is it fair to assume that involving local people will automatically lead to an increased involvement of the poor. In sum, PPAs must be designed strategically. Who should be targetted as local participants? Do the elite have a potential role here?

- **Capacity building can also be incorporated into monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and processes.** CS must be involved at this stage in the PRSP process to ensure policy is translated into practice. Strategic partnerships between different partners, including local-level actors is key.
- **Awareness raising, dissemination of information to the grassroots is key.** A focus on anti-corruption advocacy work has significant potential as well. How can PRSPs be made more accessible⁴?
- In other words, efforts along the way should be made to **decentralise skills** and information from INGOs to local NGOs to CBOs to citizens. Through decentralisation governments should make parallel efforts to resource and build capacities of local officials. Simultaneously, **complementary horizontal relationships between CS actors and government** should be sought at different levels of governance.
- **Citizens need to be aware of their rights, and of how to exercise them.**
- Building a democratic culture and sense of citizenship requires a **fundamental shift in mental models.**
- **Quality participation requires both time and a processual, reiterative approach to learning.**

6. OUTCOMES AND FUTURE ACTION PLANS

7.1 Networking Activities and Plans

The exchange brought individuals from different organisations together. Relationships between the GNT, CDRN and PAMFORK were strengthened and a series of future activities aimed at mutual capacity building were discussed.

A return exchange to Bolivia is envisioned. It is expected to include CS and government representatives from both Kenya and Uganda, and has been tentatively scheduled for October 2002. Possible areas of research focus include:

- Decentralisation
- Legal frameworks and institutionalisation of participation
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanism; improving governance, transparency and accountability of ALL actors
- Dissemination strategies and accessibility issues
- Partnerships with academia/ press
- Citizenship building and rights education

Other networking initiatives include:

- Establishment of an electronic list-serve discussion group on PRSPs and ‘scaling-up’ participation
- A shared ‘learning’ web-site
- Video conferences focusing on different areas for capacity building (i.e., training in ICT, advocacy skills, networking)

⁴ The Ugandan government did produce popular, illustrated PEAPs in various of the local languages. They also provided radio and TV messages. Unfortunately, time and resource constraints did not permit the exchange participants to access these, or explore these popular dissemination strategies.

- Translation of Bolivian documents from Spanish to English, for exchange and dissemination

In-country relationships between government and CS actors were also strengthened, and in some cases are materialising into working partnerships. For example,

- The Bolivian government and GNT are undergoing discussions on carrying-out PPAs in Bolivia; incorporating lessons from the exchange and knowledge on strengthening participatory methodologies.
- In Kenya, after (and partly attributed to) the Synthesis Workshop, the PRSP Secretariat invited a member of PAMFORK's Steering Committee into its Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group.
- In Uganda, chairman of Soroti's PMC unexpectedly met the LC5 Chairman when he joined the team for an afternoon.

7.2 Action Plans

Lessons are already feeding into the GNT's on-going and future activities. Some examples include:

- Learnings from the exchange – and more specifically around PPAs – have been incorporated into a working project proposal that is aimed at: 'strengthening the self-reflection, proposal, negotiating skills of marginalised groups, and secondly, generating dialogue between them, in order to strengthen their capacity to push for the effective implementation of policies and actions aimed at reducing poverty'.
- GNT is developing a proposal to carry out a workshop aimed at sharing Latin American experiences with the *Voices of the Poor* exercise.
- GNT is translating the publication, 'A Rough Guide to PPAs: Participatory Poverty Assessment, an introduction to theory and practice', with the intention of disseminating it to Latin American audiences

7.3 Dissemination

- This report will be disseminated to all those who participated in the exchange.
- There was discussion of disseminating findings further through a more broadly distributed documentation of lessons learnt through the exchange; something that might reach policy-makers and donors more broadly.
- Preparations are underway for a team of exchange participants to attend the 'Participation for Global Action and Change: connecting practitioners, communities, networks, organisations' conference in August 2002. It is expected that participants from Bolivia, Kenya and Uganda will present the lessons emerging from the learning exchange to other Southern CSOs, development practitioners and policy-makers. Their presentation hopes to move the discussion beyond the challenges that lie ahead for CSOs engaging in the formulation and implementation of PRSPs, and to translate lessons emerging from the PRSP experience into practical strategies that citizens and communities can employ in their efforts influence broader international development agendas.

Table 1. Summary of guidelines and areas of work for ‘scaling-up’ quality participation in PRSP processes

Summary of guidelines and areas of work for ‘scaling-up’ quality participation in PRSP processes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All actors should adopt a learning approach to the process; • Accept the need for sufficient time. • All actors must consider governance issues (i.e., representation and accountability); • All actors must be reflexive at institutional and individual levels. 	
<p>With the above guidelines in mind, the table below outlines two key areas of work, and related questions raised.</p>	
<p>Work towards co-operation and co-ordination between all civil society actors and governments is key.</p>	<p>Create spaces for decentralising capacity building (i.e., consultations, PPAs, monitoring and evaluation forums).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Openness to information-sharing between organisations will require a shift in institutional cultures; ❑ A transition from closed and competitive institutional attitudes built on mistrust, to more transparent and sharing cultures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ How can consultations or PPAs avoid being extractive and actually build capacity among the poor? ❑ How can consultations and PPAs be designed so as to avoid raising false expectations?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ The PRSP process creates spaces for CS engagement in conventional government-run policy processes. ❑ Can, and if so, how do concerned actors work towards warming relations with governments without compromising their respective values and autonomy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Capacity building can also be incorporated into monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and processes. ❑ CS must be involved at this stage in the PRSP process to facilitate that policy is translated into practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ A first step with donors is convincing government of the value of CS capacity building and involvement in PRSP processes. How do concerned actors do this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Awareness raising and dissemination of information to the grassroots is key, as is civic education. ❑ Citizens need to be aware of their rights, and of how to exercise them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ On the other hand, how can equal partnerships between local CS actors, donors and international NGOs (INGOs) be built? ❑ How do we domesticate the PRSP process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Building a democratic culture and sense of citizenship requires a fundamental shift in psycho-social mental models.

PART II: PROCESS AS A METHODOLOGY, LESSONS FOR FUTURE EXCHANGES

7. LESSONS LEARNT ON PROCESS

All participants involved felt the learning exchange was a great success! In addition to having generated very valuable lessons, it also developed important working relationships between participants. These relationships have emerged between civil society and government actors within countries, and between civil society within countries. Partnerships and networks are being born, and as their initiatives move forward, lessons learned from the exchange are translated into action.

These accomplishments are remarkable given the practical challenges associated with such an endeavour. In order that this particular South-South exchange contribute to the success of future exchanges, attention is drawn to the process-related challenges it faced. Taking these into consideration in the future will help to improve future learning exchanges, making this part of a broader learning process for both their organisers and their participants.

8.1 Time and schedules

The exchange was rushed. This has had a number of negative repercussions. In order to maximise on time, the itinerary in Uganda was hectic and exhausting. Even with the extra day added to the Ugandan visit, more time would have been necessary to ensure a two-way exchange.

There was not enough time dedicated to Bolivian presentations (and their preparations), discussions, personal information digestion and synthesis, and rest. Visiting participants were often struggling to stay awake during meetings. Needless to say, attention spans and analytic skills were not in top form. Nor were patience levels. Although the itinerary in Kenya was far more humane, recovery from the Ugandan visit took its toll.

There was insufficient time in between countries to review readings and digest debriefing findings – both of which would have allowed the team to better profit from their stay in Kenya. Finally, the lack of post-learning exchange time spent in the group was lacking. A full afternoon debriefing with IDS would have been of great value. Again, in order to make the most of such a meeting, preparation time would have to be incorporated into the programme.

Overall, schedules must take into account time for readings (on the part of hosts and visitors), discussions – formal and informal, unscheduled meetings with new colleagues, personal information digestion and synthesis time, and 7 hours sleep daily. Partially due to insufficient time, the exchange was considered too extractive.

That said, it cannot go ignored that both hosts and visitors are heavily committed and setting aside too many days may effectively discourage participation (i.e., if you want to make it possible for busy people to attend an exercise, other commitments must be respected and a feasible length set aside). On a similar note is a call for participants to schedule in preparation time, in addition to ‘attendance time’.

8.2 Continuity

There were problems of personnel continuity throughout the process on the part of all but one agency involved.

The lack of continuity had severe logistical consequences. It also impacted the learning process; questions raised by certain individuals were not always pursued by other participants, and similarly certain answers could not adequately be responded to due to unexpected absences. And, although difficult to prevent – even in retrospect – they underscore the importance of committing oneself at an early stage and respecting the work of those who count on your attendance and participation.

8.3 Roles, responsibilities and respect

The role of IDS was not clear. It seemed that different participating agencies expected more leadership on the part of others, specifically in terms of setting dates and negotiating itineraries. It was suggested by exchange participants that IDS take on a more back-seat role in the logistical arrangements.

Bolivian participants expressed a desire to spend more time in Uganda. Days were added on to the Uganda part of the exchange. Nonetheless, they requested an extra day in Uganda upon arrival, and thus one less day in Kenya. This put the Kenyan hosts in a compromising position as they had to cancel meetings. It also interfered with the Bolivian participants learning as their missed first day denied them time for a basic introduction to the Kenyan PRSP process.

More direct communication between the Southern partners earlier on could have avoided this issue. However, in a process where partnerships and networks are highlighted of utmost importance, respect for efforts made to arrange meetings, and the relations compromised in cancelling them should be headed to.

Given the last minute changes, logistical problems, little rest and exhausting schedule that tainted the experience, team dynamics unfolded remarkably well. Nonetheless, drawing up a team contract at the beginning of the exchange may have helped to ensure respectful behaviour and a stronger sense of ‘team work’ throughout the process.

Also challenging was the different perspectives and view points emerging from the Bolivian CS participants and their government colleague. Diversity must be respected, and all sides open to one another’s view points. That said, great value came out of having a multi-stakeholder team.

8.3 Host Organisations

Not enough can be said about CDRN and PAMFORK’s work and support as hosting institutions. Both made excellent use of their networks and contacts, maximising the brief stay the team had. The people the team met along the way had been told in advance of our learning objectives, leading to high quality dialogue.

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