

Intranet launch

The PRSP Monitoring and Synthesis Project launched its site on the DFID intranet on 8 August 2001. The site contains information about the project, copies of newsletters and briefings, a list of acronyms, links to other projects, and electronic copies of relevant documentation. It will be updated as new content is added.

One way to find the site is to look in the A-Z list under P for PRSPs. This link will take you to a page on which there is a link to the PRSP Monitoring and Synthesis Project. Comments on the site are welcome at prsp@odi.org.uk.

Thanks also to those who have been sending us PRSP-relevant information; we would encourage more of you to do the same.

Briefing note published

We have published a new briefing note called 'Key findings on PRSPs to date'. This note synthesises a number of DFID-commissioned papers on PRSPs, and covers subjects such as poverty diagnosis, participation, policy content, public expenditure management, monitoring and evaluation, capacity issues, and donor behaviour.

The briefing is available on the intranet site, but can be emailed to you if you require it.

Questionnaire on donor engagement

Thanks to all those who completed the questionnaire sent in August. We received a great deal of pertinent information which will feed into two studies - answers from African countries will feed into a study for the SPA on donor engagement with PRSPs, while the responses from non-African countries will contribute to a DFID-wide study of PRSP engagement. Both studies should be available in early November.

Preliminary findings from the African countries show that the impetus towards better coordination and moves towards more programmatic forms of aid predate the PRSP process, but the PRSP is providing a clear focus for these shifts. In DFID, most country

offices are seeking to align their Country Strategy Papers and the national PRSP, and are providing support to government and civil society organisations in their engagement with the PRSP process. There were a variety of concerns about the behaviour of the IFIs, but this was generally thought to be improving.

Resources

Two more synthesis papers have become available. Contact us for copies or download them from the intranet.

- 'Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Macroeconomic Framework', David L. Bevan and Christopher S. Adam, University of Oxford, January 2001
- 'Food Security and PRSPs: A rapid assessment of PRSPs and their relevance to food security problems' (draft), Gareth Williams and Alex Duncan, OPM, April 2001

Sunningdale IV

PRSPs featured strongly at DFID's top management policy retreat, Sunningdale IV, with several speakers including Clare Short keen to see PRSPs develop their potential.

The Secretary of State commented that the past 4 years had achieved more than could have been expected. One of the achievements she noted was that the WB and IMF were now engaged, through debt relief, in the PRSP process. She wanted to lock DFID, HMG, the UK and the international system into the pursuit of the International Development Targets and into the measuring of progress against them. She stressed that DFID could not do everything and must prioritise; therefore for each country DFID must be satisfied that the international system as a whole was doing what is required within the PRSP context.

Barrie Ireton (DFID Director General, International and Resources) led a discussion on aid effectiveness, and discussants agreed that PRSPs are 'potentially a radical prize, worthy of much DFID effort', although not a panacea for development problems.

Those who would like a copy of Lucia Hanmer's briefing on PRSPs that went to Barrie Ireton ahead of Sunningdale IV, please email us on prsp@odi.org.uk

WIDER Conference

In August, the World Institute for Development Economics Research held a conference on debt relief. The conference yielded no clear opinion on the success or otherwise of the enhanced HIPC initiative, with discussion mainly revolving around broader issues around escape from indebtedness and the position of creditors.

Details of the conference are available on <http://www.wider.unu.edu/conference/conference-2001-2/conference2001-2.htm>

Dakar:WB Forum on PRSPs

As part of the wider review of PRSPs, the World Bank hosted the 2nd Forum on PRSPs in Dakar, Senegal.

The main themes that emerged from the discussions of African officials were governance and accountability, public policy for poverty reduction (including central budgets and sector policy), monitoring and analysis (including social impact analysis), and donor attitudes. For more on social impact analysis, see below.

For a summary of the conference and conference papers, see <http://www1.worldbank.org/wbiiep/attackingpoverty/activities/dakarforum.htm>

CDF/PRSP Focal Points

Donors supporting CDF and PRSPs met on 14 September in a Focal Point meeting at Sheraton, Heathrow, London. Despite the difficult circumstances there was high-level participation from bilateral and multilateral donor organisations, and a video link to Washington ensured that American officials could be included. UNDP was present for the first time, and Ghanaian and Guyanese representatives also attended.

The meeting reinforced one message from Dakar: that donors are not doing enough to coordinate their activities. Richard Manning (DFID Director General, Policy) stressed that donors' internal procedures are hampering coordination, and that efforts need to be made to 'harmonise harmonisation'.

The Ghanaian minister highlighted the need for realistic targets against which progress could be monitored. He stated that the GPRS would be a primary policy document in the next budget and would be debated in Parliament, an unusual move among the PRSP countries.

There was also discussion around the application of CDF principles to the PRSP process, such as enhancing participation and accountability for development results, linking the long-term vision with short-to-medium term plans, and cultivating strategic partnerships among donors. For more details of the meeting, contact us on prsp@odi.org.uk.

Participation Study

APED has commissioned a study of participatory processes and PRSPs in Africa. Rosemary McGee of IDS Sussex is the main consultant for the project. Phase 1 synthesises experience to date. Phase 2 will involve in-depth case studies in a selection of African countries.

For more details, please contact Rosemary McGee on r.mcgee@ids.ac.uk, or alternatively, Barbara Hendrie of APED.

Poverty and Social Impact Analysis

DFID is supporting pilot studies of the poverty and social impact of macro adjustments and structural reforms in 6 countries (Rwanda, Mozambique, Uganda, Armenia, Honduras and an Asian country to be decided). This is part of the larger exercise on PSIA being conducted by the World Bank. For more information, see the APED intranet site.

Poverty and Social Impact Analysis was also discussed at the World Bank's Dakar Forum on PRSPs (see above). It was noted that while the most common form of analysis of policy impact is *ex post*, *ex ante* analysis is important for governments to make informed decisions about policy choices in the context of the PRSP. The meeting also discussed key principles for carrying out PSIA.

For more information or copies of documents, please email us on prsp@odi.org.uk.

IMF and WB PRSP review

The World Bank and the IMF have recently begun a comprehensive review of the PRSP approach, with the IMF also carrying out a parallel review of PRGFs. The reviews are intended to be participatory, and will culminate in an international conference to be held in January 2002.

DFID will be an important contributor to these reviews, with support from the Synthesis Project. For more information on the review, see <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/newsletter/pressrel.pdf>

New WB Progress Report

The World Bank has released a new Progress Report on Implementation of PRSPs. The Progress Report highlights the strengths and weaknesses of PRSP processes so far, and provides a valuable oversight of the key challenges ahead, including the speed of creation as impacting on PRSP quality and the need to avoid lengthy reporting requirements that hamper implementation.

PSIA was also addressed in the report, and DFID's support for this initiative was highlighted. A commitment was made to undertake more systematic analysis of poverty and social impacts, in relation to PRGFs as well as PRSPs. It was also suggested that PRSCs should contain information on likely poverty and social impacts on reforms, and alternative reforms considered.

Please contact us for a copy of the report and associated documents.

Mozambique and Nicaragua: full PRSPs

Mozambique and Nicaragua's full PRSP was approved by the Joint Staffs of the WB and IMF in September, making a total of seven countries with full PRSPs. They join Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Tanzania, and Uganda.

An additional 34 countries have completed their Interim PRSPs (including, recently, Sierra Leone), with at least 12 more countries expected to prepare an I-PRSP this year or early next. An update on the

expected timetable for completion of PRS documents is expected from the World Bank by the end of September.

Furthermore, Mozambique is the third country to reach completion point under the enhanced HIPC initiative, following Bolivia and Uganda. It will now receive a total debt relief package estimated at \$4.3 billion.

Bolivia: Donor Coordination

Some donors are taking the opportunities presented by the PRSP to improve donor coordination. In Bolivia, for instance, 12 bilateral donors participated in a cooperation network around the PRSP. This network worked to produce expectations papers, provide technical advice and flexible funding arrangements, and organise a Bilateral Assessment Team to work with the IMF/WB Joint Staff Assessment.

After the endorsement of the PRSP, the bilateral network decided to cease its activities as an identifiable separate network, having completed their self-identified task. Individual agencies now play an active part within the wider international cooperation community in its dialogue with the GoB concerning the implementation of the PRSP. The Network will be revived should the need arise.

This type of coordination proved extremely valuable in the case of Bolivia, but has clear resource implications for country offices. One DFID officer in Bolivia stated that she spent at least half her time on coordination issues around the PRSP.

For those who are interested in learning more about the experiences of the Bolivian Bilateral Cooperation Network on the PRSP, please email us on prsp@odi.org.uk for a copy of their self-assessment.

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Finally, thanks again to those who have sent us information, comments, and opinion via the dedicated email address. Please continue to copy us in on trip reports, personal reflections, meeting summaries and other documentation that relates to PRSPs. This will reduce our demands on your time, and prevent us from missing important information. It will also ensure that our outputs continue to be of use to you. Many thanks.