

Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR)
Activity report - 2000/2001

Lusaka
2001

Introduction

The report presents the activities and programmes of Civil Society's participation in the PRSP over the period August 2000 to October 2001.

The objective for Civil Society's involvement in the PRSP is in line with one of the fundamental PRSP principles of 'partnerships' between Governments and other stakeholders such as Civil Society, the Private Sector and the Donor Community in the process of formulating a National owned PRSP.

Background

Under instructions of the IMF and Worldbank, a number of poor countries have embarked upon processes of formulating Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The PRSP is meant to stand as a precondition for further HIPC relief and also to act as a long term planning document for the nation.

The Zambian government embarked upon this process, which was officially launched in the country in June 2000. As in the case with most PRSP formulating countries, the government is spearheading the process but has invited the input of various stakeholders, Civil Society being one of them.

Civil Society has had representatives on the various PRSP working groups of the government. However, to widen participation by attempting to ensure that Civil Society in diverse backgrounds and in diverse locations effectively and meaningfully participate in the design, formulation and implementation of the PRSP, the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) was formed.

CSPR comprises over twenty (20) CSO's that meet regularly for the purpose of designing and implementing programmes to strengthen Civil Society participation in the PRSP. CSPR is driven by a steering committee and a task force comprising the following organisations; PAM, ZCSD, OXFAM, CCJP, JCTR, NGOCC, AFRONET, ZACCI, WFC, YALON, EAZ, KARA Counselling, FAWEZA, ZCTU/CSUZ, OYV, ZAW, AMIZ, National Land Alliance, SARINGHON and ZARD. The chosen CSO to coordinate this group is the 'Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection - JCTR'. The backbone to the CSPR is a Secretariat comprising a Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator.

CSPR Objective

To ensure that Civil Society effectively and meaningfully participates in the design, formulation and implementation of the PRSP and that the PRSP will ultimately provide a means by which this country can effectively strategise on reducing the escalating levels of poverty in the nation.

CSPR Activities

Regular Steering Committee meetings

August 2000 to Date

CSPR members meet regularly for the purpose of designing and implementing programmes to strengthen Civil Society participation in the PRSP. These meetings provide a forum for planning and implementation of Civil Society PRSP activities as well as ensure consensus among CSO's on issues to be forwarded to the PRSP. The steering committee meetings further set a ground for discussion and report back with the Civil Society representatives on the government working groups.

After the first CSPR meeting of 15th August 2001, CSO's under the CSPR have met regularly. Initially, the meetings were held on a weekly basis and are now held bimonthly after the setting up of the Secretariat. The CSPR Steering Committee membership has grown from 14 to over 25 CSO's. More CSO's continue to join the network as awareness levels among Civil Society increase.

Through the steering committee meetings, ten thematic areas were identified as critical for poverty reduction. The working group themes are: Governance; Industry, Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods; Growth - Agriculture, Food security; Tourism; Macroeconomics; Health, HIV/AIDS; Mining; Gender; Education, Child and Youth; and Environment.

The CSPR Secretariat

December 2000 to Date

In order to actively participate and effectively contribute to the PRSP, there was an identified need to set up an independent Civil Society Coordinating office. The Secretariat ensures that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from diverse backgrounds actively participate in the formulation of the PRSP. In addition, the office must facilitate the establishment and maintenance of links with all the major PRSP stakeholders (including international Civil Society Organisations).

The Secretariat was set up in December 2000. It is located at the Zambia Council for Social

Development (ZCSD) offices, Cha Cha Cha road, town centre. A Coordinator and an Assistant-Coordinator have been recruited and are housed at the Secretariat and a vehicle for day-to-day coordination of Civil Society activities was donated to CSPR to raise mobility and ease coordination activities of the office.

Production of Civil Society Position Papers

March 2001

Position papers were produced on each Civil Society theme to establish the position of CSO's on the various focuses of the PRSP.

Ten facilitators (experts in each theme) were recruited to guide the preparation of Civil Society Position papers and a facilitator's workshop was held on 12th February 2001 at KEPA Zambia to give facilitators an overview of the expectations and the contents of the PRSP.

Each facilitator prepared a situational analysis document in line with their respective themes and a series of consultative group meetings were held with CSO's vested in each particular theme area. The facilitators produced position papers with the assistance of the CSPR consultative groups.

A lead facilitator and the CSPR secretariat monitored and evaluated the quality of papers being produced by the facilitators.

National Forum for Civil Society's Input to the PRSP

14th and 15th March 2001

A National Forum was held to ensure participation and overall consensus of the wider Civil Society on Civil Society's input to the PRSP as presented in the ten Position Papers. The facilitators presented their papers and received reactions, comments and additional input from the forum's participants.

The national forum was held between the 14th and 15th March 2001 at Mulungushi International Conference Centre. It involved the participation of over 90 Civil Society representatives both from within Lusaka and the various provinces and was officiated by the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme.

From the forum, adjustments were made to the ten position papers and were together with an introductory chapter forwarded to a Report Editor for compilation into one comprehensive report.

Workshop on Negotiating Skills and Conflict Resolution

5th April 2001

To equip Civil Society members with the essential skills required in negotiating and minimizing conflict, a workshop was conducted on the 5th April 2001 at Chrismar Hotel in Lusaka. Two specialist consultants from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) under

the 'Peak Performance Programme – PPP' conducted the workshop. Additional workshops are scheduled to take place as part of CSPR future activities.

Provincial Poverty Hearings

7th to 14th May 2001

To gather information from CSO's in the grassroots from the various provinces as well as to complement government efforts, CSPR embarked upon provincial poverty consultations.

Due to a limitation in resources, the provincial consultations were only conducted in the nation's four poorest provinces: Northwestern, Luapula, Western and Eastern Provinces. The poverty workshops were conducted in the provincial centres of the selected provinces but participants were drawn from the various districts with the poorest districts being given higher priority.

Two CSPR Steering Committee members facilitated the workshops in each province and worked hand in hand with CSO's in the grass roots to ensure that a wide selection of participants was drawn from the various provincial districts. On average there were fifty participants at each provincial workshop and representation cut across various backgrounds e.g. rural farmers, Marketer's, traditional leaders, semi literates and illiterates.

The outcome of the provincial workshops included the participants having a clear understanding of the PRSP process and it's intended outcomes, the role of Civil Society and the various stakeholders in the process and allowed for the gathering of vital information from the grass roots on concrete ways of reducing poverty.

The reports from the provinces were submitted to a report editor for incorporation in the overall Civil Society report.

Civil Society's PRSP Report

June 2001

Following the intense consultative process carried out by Civil Society and the resultant output from this process, CSPR identified the need to compile Civil Society's input into one comprehensive report. CSPR undertook the services of a Report Editor for this specific purpose.

Press conference on Civil Society's participation in the PRSP

June 2001

On 14th June 2001, Civil Society held a press conference to bring about awareness on the role of the Zambian Civil Society in the PRSP. The press conference provided an entry point to engaging the media in Civil Society's participation in the PRSP.

The Launch of the Civil Society PRSP Report

July 2001

On the 18th July 2001, Civil Society launched its report entitled 'A PRSP for Zambia: A Civil Society Perspective'. The occasion was attended by the Honorable Minister of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED), the Resident Representatives of the IMF, World Bank and UNDP, a wide range of representation from the diplomatic corps, government and Non-governmental institutions as well as a large number of Civil Society Organisations. The launch provided for the official hand over of the report to the government, represented by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development and the PRSP Coordinator.

Drafting of the PRSP

August 2001

The draft PRSP was prepared by the Government through the office of the PRSP Coordinator in the Poverty Reduction Unit of the MOFED. The PRSP Coordinator promised to consider Civil Society's request to be part of the drafting. Unfortunately, the government was not able to accord Civil Society this opportunity.

Round table Discussion

September 2001

On the 3rd September 2001 a round table discussion was held to more widely disseminate the Civil Society PRSP report to various readers. Presentations were made by the Malawian Deputy High Commissioner, a representative from the donor community (Department For International Development -DFID), a representative from the University of Zambia (Economics Department) and a representative from the Media (Print Media). In attendance were members of the Diplomatic corps, the media and a wide range of Civil Society groups. The feedback enabled Civil Society take note of public opinion and alternative views on the report.

National Forum for Civil Society's Response to the Draft PRSP

October 2001

In preparation for discussions with the government on the draft PRSP, the draft was circulated by the PRSP Secretariat to the various stakeholders in order to obtain comments and consensus on the draft. To adequately prepare a Civil Society position on the draft PRSP, CSPR organised a National Forum to allow Civil Society from different parts of the country an opportunity to come together and discuss the draft. The Forum, which was held on 9th, and 10th October 2001 was referred to as the National Forum for Civil Society's Response to the Draft PRSP.

Civil Society's assessment of the draft led to the conclusion that the government had been able to address the majority of the concerns of Civil Society as presented in the Civil Society PRSP report. However, areas of concern that were not captured in the first draft were noted

and compiled in a short document called 'Civil Society's review of the draft Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)'. This document was forwarded to the PRSP Co-ordinator.

National Summit on Poverty Reduction

October 2001

A week after the National Forum for Civil Society's Response to the Draft PRSP, Government through the PRSP Co-ordinator organised a National Summit on Poverty reduction. The summit provided a platform for various stakeholders to react to the first draft PRSP. Civil Society participated at the government forum through allocated time in the summit's programme as well as in group work and plenary discussions. The summit allowed Civil Society to present its reaction to the draft as gathered from the Civil Society Forum.

Learning from the Experiences of Other PRSP producing countries

Ongoing

In its plan of action, Civil Society planned to conduct a National Forum to allow for a broad sharing of experiences from a number of other countries that are at various stages of the PRSP process. However, experience sharing has been done through a number of international meetings to which the CSCR has been invited. International PRSP meetings attended have included those held in Uganda, Lesotho, Ethiopia, Senegal and Sweden. To avoid duplication of the objective therefore, the Zambian forum was not held. The UNDP support to the Zambian forum was channelled towards the National Forum for Civil Society's response to the draft PRSP.

Future CSCR Activities

Media Programmes

CSCR aims to run Programmes on community radio stations, Zambia National Broadcasting Cooperation - radio and television stations, and articles in the various newspapers. Through these programmes, CSCR will: Ensure that the public are sensitised on Civil Society's involvement in the PRSP; Widen PRSP participation by Civil Society and other Stakeholders in various parts of the country; Ensure transparency of Civil Society activities in line with the PRSP; Disseminate information on Civil Society's views regarding poverty reduction and the PRSP. CSCR had planned to embark upon these programmes by mid 2001 but have not been able to do so within due to various limitations. Plans are underway to embark upon these programmes by early February 2002.

Simplification of PRSP

Civil Society through the CSCR aims to carryout the simplification and translation of the PRSP to ensure wide distribution and readership of the document. This activity will be embarked upon after the completion of the final PRSP by early 2002.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Paramount among the future activities of the C SPR are Civil Society's plans to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the resultant Poverty Reduction Strategies from the PRSP. In preparation for this, a certain level of capacity has to be built among the Civil Society actors.

There is an identified need for an ongoing analysis of effective programmes of advocacy for Civil Society PRSP positions and issues to be included in the national budget, especially in the budget 2002.

Planning Period

In November 2001, C SPR aims to conduct a period of planning for future C SPR activities. The aim of this planning is to come up with a detailed work plan for the future C SPR activities and concrete proposals to support the work plan.

Evaluation of C SPR activities to date

Positive

- The positive mobilization of a wide spectrum of Civil Society groups e.g. the business community, trade unions, church, women's organisations, the academia and other Non-governmental organisations etc.
- The production of excellent analytical papers that probe deeply the aspects of poverty reduction.
- Catching the attention of the government, the International Financial Institutions (IFI's) and donor officials as can be evidenced by the wide participation in our fora.
- Energetic commitment of a core group of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) to spend time and energy and pledge continued work in line with Civil Society's involvement in the PRSP.

Negative

- Difficulty of obtaining the desired participation at higher levels in the preparation of the PRSP e.g. Technical Committee and Drafting Committee.
- Scepticism of many in both national and international Civil Society on whether this exercise will be fruitful.

Strain upon a small secretariat has meant that some of the desired activities could not have been achieved within the specified time period e.g media coverage, international outreach etc.