

Education and PRSPs

A review of experiences

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Foreword to the series

A large number of developing countries are dependent on development assistance to expand their education system and provide quality education for all. Some of them are heavily dependent on international aid; others are less dependent, yet need educational assistance to finance their capital expenditures and to implement the necessary reforms. During the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 the international community resolved to support countries that are seriously committed to fulfilling the objective of Education for All, so that no country which has developed a sound educational plan will fail to reach its goals for lack of financial resources.

Traditional approaches of development assistance have, however, been very critically assessed in the past decades. Amongst the most common criticisms are the fact that international assistance was too often based on big, unco-ordinated projects entirely led by agencies, with no strong support at the national level. Thus projects often failed to be sustained once donor support was withdrawn. Findings of several studies have also shown that project support is sometimes incompatible with national institution-building. Run by parallel administrative systems within the ministry of education, it was noted that projects undermined rather than strengthened national capacities to plan and implement policies. There is a strong perception also that project support often contributed to institutional fragmentation and incoherence in policy execution. The projects suffered from a lack of ownership, not only at national government level, but more importantly at the local level where they are to be implemented. Worse still, education projects, like projects in other sectors, failed to reach their basic objective to support national development and reduce poverty.

In the past years a number of new approaches have emerged in international assistance, with important consequences for educational policy

and planning. One of these focuses on poverty reduction strategies, another promotes sector-wide approaches (SWAp).

Poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) originate from the idea that if poverty is to be reduced it is necessary to co-ordinate all efforts in all sectors around one major policy framework. As a result, financial flows of aid, whether linked to the reduction of debts, grants or concessional loans, have been linked to the adoption by recipient countries of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. Learning from past failures, the PRSP approach is based on certain principles. For example the strategy should be: results-oriented, with targets that can be easily monitored, and comprehensive; it should integrate macroeconomic, structural, and social policy elements; and it should be country-driven, participatory and based on partnership between the governments and other actors. Education is one major element of PRSPs.

PRSPs will eventually be central to the whole process of development assistance to the least developed countries in the sense that grants and concessional loans will increasingly be allocated as budget support and managed at national level, with a central role being given to the ministry of finance. Having an approved PRSP is already one of the conditions for obtaining funds within the Fast Track Initiative.

In the same spirit of ensuring government-led development and ownership, an increasing number of agencies are promoting SWAp, in education as in other sectors, whereby project support is being discouraged and replaced by modalities of programme support. The education sector is one of the sectors where such SWAp are increasingly applied and where processes are in evolution. The SWAp is directed holistically at the sector, taking the full strategic plan of the sector as its focus. Generally it also involves channelling most, if not all, of the funding through the recipient government's own revenue fund.

Some of the questions that naturally arise concern the extent to which such approaches in development assistance are driven by the development partners or by the recipient government, the extent to which they start a genuine process involving all stakeholders and therefore have a better chance of being implemented, and the extent to which they improve the efficiency of government action in education. Another question, which is directly relevant for the IIEP, is what sort of capacities have to be created and strengthened so that the ministries of education are really in a position to define and negotiate their educational policy with the various stakeholders, amongst which are the aid agencies and the ministry of finance, and to implement it, mobilizing the support of all? One of the interesting consequences of such developments in international co-operation is the increased importance that has been attached to plans in recent years – long-term strategic plans, medium-term plans, operational plans – that ministries have to develop, implement and monitor. Preparing such plans and implementing them requires extensive technical and political skills, to develop, on the one hand, very complex policy and financial documents and, on the other hand, to listen to and mobilize a variety of actors around a widely accepted national project.

The studies in this series analyze the principles that guide such new international approaches in development co-operation, the way they have been applied in practice to education, and the consequences for capacity-building in the education sector.

This study on PRSPs is based on an analysis of the first strategy papers that were approved as of May 2003. Focusing on the preparation process and the content of the education and training chapters, it examines the extent to which the PRSP approach may have affected the definition and implementation of educational policies and priorities.

As PRSPs become more and more central to international assistance in education, it is to be expected that they will improve, present better integrated

strategies, be better costed, etc. Meanwhile the focus on processes and on monitoring, and the link with other sectors including with the ministry of finance, has important consequences on the training of educational planners and managers.

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List of abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFDB	African Development Bank group
CDF	Comprehensive development framework
CDHLCPI	<i>Commissaire aux droits de l'homme, à la lutte contre la pauvreté et à l'insertion</i>
CILP	<i>Comité interministériel de lutte contre la pauvreté</i>
CNDLP	National Commission for Development and the Fight Against Poverty (Benin)
CONPES	National Council for Social and Economic Planning (Nicaragua)
CSD	Council for Social Development
CSO	Civil society organizations
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EFA	Education for All
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GDI	Gender Development Index
GER	Gross enrolment rate
GER1	Gross enrolment rate, primary school
GER2	Gross enrolment rate, secondary school

GSCSD	General Secretariat of the Council for Social Development (Cambodia)
HIPC	Heavily indebted poor countries
IDA	International Development Association
IFI	International financial institutions
IGE	Index of Gender Empowerment
IMF	International Monetary Fund
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JSA	Joint staff assessment
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEAD	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NAFA	Second chance schools (Guinea)
NER	Net enrolment rate
NFE	Non-formal education
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PAF	Poverty Action Fund, Uganda
PAP	Priority Action Programme, Cambodia
PARPA	Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty, Mozambique

PEAP	National planning framework on which to develop detailed sector strategies (Uganda)
PEM	Public expenditure management
PNAEA	National Literacy and Adult Education Policy
PRGF	Poverty Reduction Growth Facility
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PRSC	Poverty Reduction Support Credit
PSIA	Poverty and Social Impact Analysis
SDA	Social dimension adjustment
PSR	Public service reform
SETEC	Technical Secretariat of the Presidency (Nicaragua)
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SMI	Small and medium-sized industries
SPACO	Strategy for Poverty Alleviation Coordinating Office
SWAp	Sector-wide approach
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UPE	Universal primary education
WG	Working group

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Executive summary

Poverty reduction strategies (PRSs) were introduced in 1999 by the World Bank and the IMF and signalled an important change in the way developing countries were being helped out of poverty. From then on a broader, more comprehensive and, more importantly, country-owned process was set in motion.

PRSs are formalized in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which constitute the framework for development assistance beyond the operation of the international financial institutions (IFIs). PRSPs are based on the principle of country self-help and support from the international community. They have the potential to improve development assistance because the approach tends towards tackling poverty globally. The salient point is that the conceptual framework provided by the PRS attempts to integrate poverty analysis, public policy, macroeconomic policies, budgetary processes and monitoring systems and attempts to do so in a participatory way. Today, in more than 60 countries, these broad-based, country-led processes have helped promote a more open dialogue on the most effective policies for poverty reduction.

This paper aims at clarifying the role of education and share of finances assigned to it in the PRSPs of the countries having either achieved a full PRSP by May 2003, or those being close to completion of their paper.

The review shows that overall the quality of the education chapter in the PRSPs is variable across countries. Education, however, seems to be one of the best chapters, having benefited from much of the previous sector work. Human development staff from the IFIs and from line ministries have not been as integrated in the preparation process as they could have been. This could have an impact on the implementation of the PRSPs.

Chapter 1: Definition and conceptual framework of PRSPs

The conceptual framework of the PRSPs draws essentially on two theories: the human capital theory and the integrated development approach. According to the human capital theory, educating and training the poor will increase their capacity to raise income. But education alone is not sufficient. It is therefore necessary to integrate education strategies with strategies in other sectors. What seems to be missing is a theory concerning teaching and learning: the PRSPs do not discuss the teaching and learning strategies most likely to facilitate participation of the poor and ensure real learning.

The structure of the PRSPs, because of the preparation process of the papers, tends to be similar from one country to the other, and a standard format is encouraged by the IFIs. This is also possibly rooted in the fact that the IMF and the World Bank are associated throughout the process and are ultimately in charge of the approval of the document.

Chapter 2: The preparation of PRSPs

There is a noticeable convergent pattern in the preparation of PRSPs. The different steps can be recapitulated as follows. Countries begin with the submission of an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP). This document is reviewed by the different ministers. It is then adopted by the national government and finally by the boards of the International Development Association (IDA) and the IMF. Once this step is completed, the preparation of the PRSP proper is launched. This involves the preparation of poverty assessments and the carrying out of surveys and studies. Different options are examined to assess the scenarios with costing and financing implications.

This work is completed by a PRSP team, headed in most cases either by the prime minister or by the minister of finance. It is composed of representatives of line ministries, of the stakeholders, of different layers of

government, of the private sector, and of civil society. The PRSP team is assisted by a technical secretariat, one function of which is to centralize the contributions of the different forums and working groups.

The preparation process is meant to be iterative, the consultations being both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’. The PRSPs reviewed attest to a wide involvement of the education stakeholders at different levels. This, in turn, has led to the identification of significant measures. The structure of the team usually allowed the education sector to be fairly well represented. The level of involvement, however, varies considerably from one country to another, and the ministry of finance seems to predominate in the process.

Financing agencies are also widely implicated. The IFIs structured themselves to face up to the exercise, both internally and in the division of tasks. The IMF tends to be more involved in the macroeconomic framework corseting the PRSP, while the World Bank handles the sectoral approaches. They have the power to block the process before it reaches the full stage of approval. Certain questions were raised as to the respective role of the country directors and the task managers, which parallels the debate between the ministry of finance and the sector ministries at national level.

Chapter 3: The education agenda in PRSPs

Most PRSPs refer to Education for All (EFA) goals, but more especially to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, even when targets are set, the way they determine the strategy is far from being clear. This results in the problematic application, in PRSPs, of the notion of inter-sectorality.

The fact that PRSPs aim at tackling poverty from all possible angles implies that the cross-cutting of themes is a necessary exercise. Therefore, education and training are pervasive in the documents, if only through cross-cutting issues such as empowerment, gender and HIV/AIDS – three themes

that were chosen to illustrate this point. Empowerment, promotion of gender and equality are cross-cutting issues fairly well addressed in most PRSPs. HIV/AIDS, on the other hand, is still very much considered as a health issue, and it is too rarely mentioned as an education matter. Education becomes a cross-cutting issue itself. It is seen as a tool for capacity-building in different sectors.

In several instances, existing national policy documents significantly determined the contents of the education chapter. These do not necessarily aim at poverty reduction in the sense that they were not initially designed to this end. When used to elaborate the education chapter, they were not necessarily redirected towards poverty reduction, to the exception of some PRSPs. None the less, when such documents were available, they were used as a working-base and greatly improved the overall quality of the education chapter in the PRSP. Primary education is well covered, but this is not always the case of non-formal education, even though literacy is being dealt with.

Training activities proposed by sectors other than that of education may be regarded, on the other hand, as one of the major achievements of the treatment of capacity-building in the PRSP in articulating linkages between the education sector and other sectors (institutional, social and economic).

Chapter 4: Implementation

Vulnerability also stems from different points related to costing and financing, the treatment of which is often not fully satisfactory in the PRSPs reviewed. Many PRSPs are not fully costed. When they are, one could have reservations as to the realistic aspect of the overall figures provided. This would pose questions regarding the credibility and sustainability of the PRSPs.

Many financing solutions rely on high and sustained growth rates: a highly volatile hypothesis if any. In an attempt to tackle this issue, some PRSPs reviewed presented several scenarios. Most PRSPs built their financing

proposals on the basis of the funds that would be released under the HIPC scheme or under previously approved and externally funded projects. The remainder would be financed by domestic resources. The availability of these is difficult to assess. External funding may also be problematic.

Countries attempt to comply with the different criteria for the releasing of complementary funds by donor agencies by striving towards more transparency and efficiency. Schemes are designed to prevent the fungibility of funds; attempts are made at overcoming financial rigidities, etc. Overall, this represents considerable efforts from the countries and their governments to see the PRS through. Nevertheless, detailed figures on the contributions of the different stakeholders and donors towards educational programmes are non-existent in the papers. Without them, an assessment of the change brought about by the PRSP approach to the mobilization of further funding cannot be made. Having an approved PRSP is a condition for being considered in the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI). This new initiative should have a major influence on funds for education. But how much of the FTI will itself be financed and supported by large numbers of agencies through a 'catalytic fund'¹ or through existing donor channels is yet to be seen.

The choice of indicators to monitor PRSPs is another critical area. The choice of indicators reflects the policy that will be put in place. As indicators turned out to condition the release of funds, some countries have started reducing the number of indicators chosen and selecting some which can be attained. Several indicators, however, concern outcome. The soundness and consistency of the latter will determine the results of the progress reports and the possible political orientations. It is understood that PRSPs are documents in progress and there is possibly room for revision when the progress reports are handed in.

1. Launched and financed by four donors (Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway).

Chapter 5: Critical issues and prospects

The following critical issues and prospects ultimately stand out from the review conducted: (a) the credibility of education policies in the PRS; (b) the low financial credibility of some PRSPs; and (c) the challenge of implementation capacity, even though the issue of capacity-building is addressed.

Unless some co-ordinated measures are taken to implement a more enabling environment with a minimum of financial incentives and to tackle in an integral and co-ordinated way the issue of institutional capacity constraints, the PRSPs will not be implemented.

In spite of all the weaknesses and vulnerabilities mentioned above, it remains that what has been achieved in the past four years is encouraging and seems to open the way for a more optimistic outlook.

Introduction

In December 1999, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a new approach to the challenge of reducing poverty in low-income countries based on country-owned poverty reduction strategies (PRS). These strategies are country driven and owned; oriented towards obtaining results that make a difference to the lives of the poor; comprehensive and multi-sectoral; long-term in perspective; and based on domestic and external partnerships in line with the principles that underpin the Comprehensive development framework (CDF).² For the countries eligible for the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative,³ which constitute over half of the countries, pursuing these objectives is intended to ensure that debt relief, and aid more generally, will be provided in the context of a country-owned, poverty-focused strategy. For all countries, the strategies were to be embodied within a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which is expected to serve as a framework for development assistance beyond the operations of the World Bank and the IMF.

In the last four years there has been widespread acceptance of the PRS approach. Today, in more than 60 countries, these broad-based, country-led processes are taking hold and have helped promote a more open and inclusive national dialogue on the most effective policies and public actions for poverty reduction. The approach has increasingly been embraced by countries' external development partners. Based on the two principles of country self-help and support from the international community, the PRS approach has the potential of making development assistance more effective.

2. See definition in *Appendix 1*.

3. See definition in *Appendix 1*.

Human development – in particular education and training – is central to long-term equitable development and must be reflected throughout the core of the PRSP if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be achieved. By the same token, PRSPs are important tools to mobilize policy changes in the human development sectors and to allocate adequate resources in support of these changes. While PRSPs to date have attempted to incorporate human development issues and remove any constraints to achieving better human development outcomes, the quality of the analysis, the prioritization of public expenditures and actions, and the implementation of proposed strategies have been variable across countries. Human development staff, both in the IMF/World Bank and in line ministries in the countries, have often not been integrally involved in their preparation, and this may have some impact on the way in which the PRSPs are implemented.

This study presents and discusses the changes brought about by the PRSP approach with regard to human development and the focus on education and training, i.e. what considerations have been made regarding the education sector in the preparation of PRSPs? To what extent has the PRSP approach affected the definition and implementation of educational policies and priorities? Is the PRSP approach affecting co-operation between the IFI and governments in education and training? These are generally the main questions raised and discussed in this study. While roughly around 100 reports are available (I-PRSPs, PRSPs, progress reports) to document these questions, this paper draws primarily on the reports of countries that had achieved full PRSP by May 2003, and a small sample of countries from different regions that were near completion (Cambodia and Viet Nam in Asia, Rwanda in Africa, Yemen in the Arab region and Nicaragua in Latin America).

Four years of experience are not sufficient to draw firm conclusions. Given that only a small number of countries have completed the full preparation of their PRSP so far, it may appear problematic to generalize findings on the PRSP approach, which is still undergoing changes and adaptations. None the

less, there are already some important findings of relevance both for the development of new and/or revised versions of PRSPs and for their implementation, for different stakeholders at national and international levels. This is well demonstrated by the report of the joint evaluation carried out by the IMF/World Bank in 2002.⁴

The paper will first present a broad definition of the PRSP, underlining the conceptual framework which is being shared by the national strategies of poverty reduction. A second chapter will review the approach taken by the countries (the process) in the preparation, approval and implementation of the PRSP. Two topics will receive particular attention: (a) How have the stakeholders of the human development sectors (limited to education and training) been involved in the process? (b) Did the prevailing process within the human development sectors (i.e. Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAp), EFA plans) permeate the preparation of PRSPs? A third chapter will deal specifically with the content of PRSPs, focusing primarily on education and training. A fourth chapter will analyze the implementation of PRSPs, the institutional framework and financing mechanisms, and the monitoring system put in place. A fifth chapter will raise a few critical issues related to the human development sectors, including the credibility of education policies, the financial feasibility of the strategy, the links with other donor initiatives in educational financing, and the issue of implementation capacity. The conclusions will summarize what appear to be the most important achievements of the PRSPs, together with the pending challenges.

4. Review of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach: main findings, IDA/IMF, 15 March 2002.

Chapter 1

Definition and conceptual framework of PRSPs

Macroeconomic policies affect the level and distribution of national incomes as well as institutional structures and, as such, have poverty-related and social outcomes. The need to understand the effects of macroeconomic and structural policies on poverty has been recognized for some time, and extensive research exists on the subject. As far back as 1985, a shift can be observed in conventional development thinking, stressing that development is about people, social organizations, and their knowledge and institutions as opposed to mere commodities and technologies. In 1987, the international financial institutions (IFIs) established the Social Dimension of Adjustment (SDA) programme (1987-1992), in which the social impact of adjustment policies was clearly highlighted. Also in 1987, the UNICEF report *Adjustment with a human face* (1987) was a source of inspiration for many actors in the donor community. When the objectives of the IFIs' concessional lending (in particular those of the IMF) were broadened in 1999 to include an explicit focus on poverty reduction in the context of a growth-oriented strategy, the knowledge base on the complex relationships between economic growth, macroeconomic stability, the status of poverty and economic inequality, and social and political stability was, to some extent, available, drawing on both research work and countries' experiences.

Policy analysis in the past has been focused on a classic statistical approach to poverty based on income, health and education indicators. Poverty itself was measured using an income-based poverty line. However, more recent studies have concluded that an approach dominated by economic analysis fails to capture the many dimensions of poverty, while a multidisciplinary approach can deepen our understanding of the lives of the poor. Direct consultations with poor people have revealed that vulnerability,

physical and social isolation, insecurity, lack of self-respect, lack of access to information, a distrust of state institutions and powerlessness can be as detrimental to the poor as a low income. Furthermore, the poor are not a static group – people fall in and out of poverty depending on their vulnerability. Maximizing incomes may prove to be as important as increasing the security of their livelihoods and decreasing vulnerability (see *Box 1*).

Box 1. Sources of poverty

The experiences of Albania and Bolivia are good illustrative examples of the sources of poverty:

Poverty in **Albania** is a multidimensional phenomenon. The low or very low income of the poor has been expanded to include: (1) higher incidence of disease and lack of appropriate medical services; (2) illiteracy or low level of schooling; (3) lack of hope, exclusion from economic and social life, high level of risk exposure; and (4) low voice in government decision-making institutions ... Being a multidimensional phenomenon, poverty is an outcome of many factors: transition to market economy; ... political unrest; ... economic paralysis; ... and social upheavals, etc.

In **Bolivia**, the poor are highly vulnerable to natural disasters and economic and social changes, social welfare programmes are non-existent, and there are almost no risk-management mechanisms. Despite the changes resulting from decentralization and popular participation programs, the poorest segments of the population, particularly indigenous peoples, the traditional forms of organization known as the *Ayllu*, and rural communities are still marginalized from decision making, do not participate effectively in the allocation of resources, and are not adequately represented politically.

Sources: Albania, *National Strategy for Socioeconomic Development*, November 2001.
Bolivia, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, March 2001.

Livelihoods are sustainable when they are resilient to shocks and may be enhanced without undermining the natural resource base. In brief, during the decade 1986/87-1996/97, students and major actors of development were on a learning curve, increasing their knowledge about the intricate and complex links between poverty alleviation and economic and human development. In the late 1990s, two contrasting schools of thought – with a variety of in-between views – coexisted:

1. On the one hand were the traditional social scientists with a neo-classical economist view, who still believed primarily in the trickle-down paradigm: economic development will gradually contribute to reducing poverty through the trickle-down effect of economic growth. What matters, therefore, is that there is a focus in the economic policy on the acceleration of growth.
2. On the other hand were those who considered that poverty reduction should be based on both economic growth and pro-poor targeted policies, including mobilization and empowerment of vulnerable groups, institutional development, and the strengthening of societal democratic values. Promoters of the PRSP approach are of this view.

Our review of the PRSPs shows that this second school of thought is explicitly (sometimes implicitly) used in the design and preparation of PRSPs. The PRSP conceptual framework is ambitious because it attempts to integrate – probably for the first time in most countries – poverty analysis, public policy, macroeconomic policies, budgetary processes and monitoring systems, and attempts to do so in a participatory way.

In the particular case of education and training, the conceptual framework of poverty reduction strategies (PRSs) seems to be rooted in two theories: the theory of human capital, and the theory of an integrated approach to development. There is no evidence, however, that it is based on any revisited theory of the third theory of teaching and learning. The following brief arguments and comments can be made in this regard.

Human capital theory

The basic arguments behind the education and training component of a PRSP are well known: (a) in order to empower the poor and increase their capacity to raise their income, the strategy should remove any obstacles and facilitate access to education and training for the poor; (b) more education is equated with higher productivity and income; (c) there is a high rate of return to investment in education, the highest of which is for investments at primary level, in rural areas and remote areas, targeted at women and girls. Hence a PRS is regarded to be sound when it includes generalized access to education as one of its components, and when education gives priority to populations in rural areas and to girls and women. However, it is also widely recognized that the theory of human capital suffers from a number of deficiencies and limitations which have not yet been addressed. Some relate to the basic assumption of a 'perfect market' and will not be discussed here. Other weaknesses result from the assumed relationship between education and productivity. These weaknesses can bring into question the common assumption that more education means less poverty. One example may illustrate the fact that this relationship is not so straightforward and should not be taken for granted: In remote rural areas, where employment opportunities are limited and especially if no adequate actions are taken to create possibilities for economic growth and development, school leavers and graduates may have difficulty finding work and earning an income. This has two possible consequences: migrations to urban settings and unemployment. In such a case, the impact of increasing investment in education on poverty alleviation may not be significant at all.

Integrated approach to development

One of the most interesting features of the PRSPs, as far as education and training are concerned, is the comprehensive approach for both promoting the achievement of education targets in their own right (linked to the human

capital theory), and for crossing education and training targets with targets in other sectors (economic, infrastructural, social and institutional). A multi-sectoral and integrated approach is regarded by most development researchers as being preferable to a piecemeal approach, where each sector develops its policy and activities independently of the others. But if a consensus exists on the merit of integration, very little is known and documented on 'how to integrate'. In practice, the strategies include proposals combining actions regarding education and training with other sectors. These are based on pragmatic views (for example when training activities are linked to rural development or to managing infrastructure development programmes) without supporting grounds on how much of each sector should be included to make the package of policies and measures work.

Teaching/learning theories

Reducing poverty requires that the poor do not only attend school or education centres, but that they should really learn and acquire relevant skills. It is interesting to note that the theories of learning and teaching have undergone a variety of changes during the past 20 years, and in particular during the 1990s. Although these differ considerably (mastery learning, constructivism, etc.), some convergences in the trends towards a 'hybrid' theory emerge, which stress the following principles: a teaching/learning strategy built on the environment of the learners; an interactive process between learners and between learners and teachers to facilitate socialization and empowerment; a learner-focused education (as opposed to system- or teacher-focused) and a well-structured teaching/learning environment. This hybrid theory seems to be quite consistent with the strategic objectives of empowerment of and ownership by the poor adopted in the PRS. Unfortunately, however, with very few exceptions involving pilot or experimental activities, the principles behind the hybrid theory are seldom applied in practice on a wide enough scale to have a significant impact conducive to achieving the targets of the PRS.

The underlying existence of these theories brings about a series of questions that will be dealt with in the subsequent chapters. We are indeed led to wonder how the PRSPs examined dealt with the limits inherent to the human capital theory and how it was proposed to address them. How is multi-sectorality implemented and monitored? Does the review suggest that a pragmatic approach is indeed being used for addressing this question of integration and comprehensiveness? Finally, to what extent do the PRSPs discuss the issues of strategies most likely to facilitate the participation of the poor and induce real learning?

Building on the experience learned during the past decade, and on the basis of the sourcebook prepared by the World Bank (Klugman, 2001), the PRSPs – whether at interim stage or in their final versions – usually follow a similar outline.

The introductory part informs the reader of the process followed to consult, inform and seek participation from various stakeholders. It includes also a report of past experiences and earlier initiatives of formulating strategies for poverty alleviation (I-PRSPs, Sector-Wide Development Strategies).

Then a diagnosis is made of the source, scope, magnitude and regional perspectives of poverty. (Household surveys are used to provide the basis for poverty diagnosis supplemented by more in-depth studies of the sources of poverty.) A number of common features can be found in the PRSP (Bolivia, Cambodia, Mauritania, Yemen): Poverty is affecting certain regions (isolated areas with adverse geographic conditions) more than others; it is often a rural phenomenon linked to remoteness, social vulnerability and discrimination, illiteracy and powerlessness, lack of access to basic services including communication and infrastructures, water, shelter, health and education.

The main dimensions of the strategy, also referred to as ‘pillars’ in some country papers, for addressing the challenge of achieving higher growth and poverty reduction (the PRS) are identified. In general, three time horizons are

considered: the long-term, or ‘the vision’, which for some countries means 2025, for others 2015; the mid-term planning (three to four years); and the one-year planning within the framework of the budget. Although the pillars vary according to the PRSP, there seem to be three common dimensions shared by most countries (Albania, Bolivia, Mauritania, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam and Yemen), both HIPC and non-HIPC, namely:

1. A sustained macroeconomic growth framework based on increasing the strength of the public sector, improving fiscal revenues, boosting the private sector, expanding sectors of comparative advantage for the country (tourism, energy, mining ...), promoting rural development and developing infrastructures. The framework also emphasizes the development of pro-poor activities, by promoting economic activities from which the poor derive direct benefit, and by developing their productivity and focusing on areas which they inhabit in disproportionate numbers.
2. Human development, mostly with explicit reference to social development (health education and training).
3. Institutional development and good governance (including capacity-building of the public and private sectors).

Finally, the measures and actions to be implemented are discussed in detail. Attention is paid to the translation of the PRSPs’ long-term targets into three- to four-year action plans, to budgetary mechanisms and funding arrangements, to monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and, lastly, to capacity-building for decentralized and local implementation with participation from the poor. A number of PRSPs include: feasibility analyses, both for the targets and the reforms included in the strategy; impact analyses, such as Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA), and assessment of risks.

Adopting a multidisciplinary approach in the PRSP improves the basis on which to establish the components of the strategy. Involving the poor and,

more generally, all the stakeholders is regarded as an appropriate approach to producing a valid assessment of the scope of poverty and of how to address the challenge of poverty reduction.

The principles of country ownership, recognizing the specificity of the issues and challenges in different national settings, and the need for flexibility in the policies elected to address them imply that rather than setting uniform standards on the process and content of PRSPs, each country would follow its own approach, based on the conditions prevailing nationally (scope, magnitude, and the cause of poverty) and in the light of its own practices for addressing socio-political and economic challenges. However, guidelines have been prepared and made available by the World Bank and the IMF for preparation of PRSPs, and consultations and various exchanges take place, normally between the staff of the donors and the countries' officials.⁵

Consequently, while experiences actually differ from country to country, a common/similar pattern emerges both in the institutional arrangements (the process of preparation) and the content and theoretical grounds on the basis of which the strategies have been designed.

5. "A full PRSP is expected to include a set of priority public actions for poverty reduction. These public actions over a three-year horizon should be summarised in tables presenting the country's macroeconomic framework, the overall public expenditure program and its allocation among key areas, and in a matrix of key policy actions and institutional reforms and target dates for their implementation. While noting that a good strategy should integrate institutional, structural, and sectoral interventions into a consistent macroeconomic framework, the guidelines for PRSP do not indicate what these public actions should be because this will depend on the country's circumstances and choices. In particular the guidelines do not mandate detailed treatment of any particular sector or cross-cutting issue. However, it is stressed that PRSP should define a set of priorities for public action that: (a) are consistent with a comprehensive diagnosis of poverty, and (b) realistically take into account the country's opportunities and its financial and institutional capacity constraints. In addition, within each priority area, the PRSP should be as specific as possible about intended policy and institutional reforms and public expenditure programs." (IMF/IDA, 2002b.)

Chapter 2

The preparation of PRSPs: How are the education stakeholders involved?

The process and the different steps followed in the preparation of a PRSP vary among countries depending on individual experiences during the 1990s, both with regard to the approaches followed in designing development strategies and the level of attention given to the challenge of poverty alleviation. Notwithstanding this comment, a convergent pattern seems to emerge from the review of the PRSPs.

In 1999 and 2000, Interim PRSPs (I-PRSPs) were quickly prepared using all existing and relevant materials and data, including macroeconomic reports, national poverty assessments, sectoral diagnoses and plans, etc. I-PRSPs were reviewed by a number of ministers, with a pivotal role given to the minister of finance, and in consultation with the IFIs. They became official documents after they were adopted by the government and submitted to the boards of the International Development Association (IDA) and IMF.

Once the I-PRSP was adopted, the preparation of the full PRSP began, involving a number of steps which sometimes occurred parallel to each other:

1. Poverty assessment preparation. The aim is to: (a) produce an accurate diagnosis of the scope and magnitude of poverty; (b) to discuss the policies and recommendations included in the I-PRSP; and (c) to mobilize the civil society representatives in the challenges of poverty alleviation and obtain their views and contributions on how to address them. Some PRSPs specifically refer here to a “*participatory process involving the poor*”.

2. Conducting surveys and studies. Several initiatives to collect data to complete the information base and document on missing aspects are usually implemented during the year in which the PRSP is prepared. These initiatives include surveys in such domains as ‘living conditions’, ‘demography and health’, ‘food and nutrition’, etc. At the same time, national or/and regional conferences involving NGOs and different representatives of civil society are held to identify and discuss both the causes and the consequences of poverty. The purpose of these conferences is to collect suggestions regarding the priorities of various stakeholders and communities.
3. The core team(s) in charge of PRSP preparation examine(s) a number of options using, in some countries, different scenarios to assess the costs and financial implications of the proposed strategy. The public sector (ministerial representatives) and the private stakeholders are solicited through what might be regarded as *validation meetings* (in some cases after wide circulation of the drafts). These are often followed by consultations within the government and with the IFI. A final draft is then produced using, to some extent, the feedback received.

The official adoption and/or ratification of the final document by the national authorities is necessary if the PRSP is to be used both by the government and by financial partners to secure HIPC funds, for example. This adoption requires deliberations at the cabinet level, and in the last instance in parliament. In theory (although we could not document this observation in the review), some measures with heavy financial implications – for example salary increases in the public sector – could be withdrawn at the last minute by parliament. Nevertheless, several informants suggest that the involvement of parliament in the last stage is more a formality than a reality. Presumably the earlier, wider, and the more intense the process of consultation and participation in the different phases of PRSP preparation, the more likely it is that the official adoption will become a simple formality. The exceptions are when a change of the team in government occurs during the preparation of

the PRSP (as in Nicaragua), but this is not a rule (as the case of Bolivia illustrates).

The international review of the PRSP approach (IMF/IDA, 2002a) assesses the process and the role of different stakeholders as follows:

1. “While the quality of the I-PRSP has varied, the preparation of I-PRSP has served a useful purpose by encouraging countries to take stock of existing data and policies, to launch a broader process of rethinking current strategies, and to produce time-bound roadmaps for the preparation of their full PRSP.” In particular, I-PRSPs have often been used to promote consultation and the participation of stakeholders.
2. “There is some evidence that the active involvement of civil society has influenced PRSP content, particularly in drawing attention to social exclusion, the impoverishing effects of poor governance and specific policy issues such as the elimination of school fees in Tanzania ... ”
3. “Various concerns have been expressed regarding the lack of involvement of specific groups in the participatory process. While the patterns differ across countries, civil society organizations (CSOs) that were out of favour with government, local government officials, private sector representatives, trade unions, women’s groups, and direct representatives of the poor are among the groups that have not been fully involved in the PRSP process.”
4. According to OXFAM, who was quoted in the same report, the lack of participation from parliamentarians in the PRSP process would be a major weakness.
5. “Most donors indicated that they have been able to engage in PRSP preparation at the country level. Some donors, however, fear that the PRSP has been dominated by the Bank and the Fund.”

Box 2 presents the process adopted in the preparation of the PRSP in Mauritania. It confirms in many ways the findings of the international review

mentioned above: “the process is participatory, since it involves the relevant actors (administration, civil society, private sector, unions, donors) in a process that goes beyond the mere validation of documents to make a real contribution to the development of policies and programs, to the monitoring of their implementation and to their assessment”.

While the process followed in other countries may vary – sometimes considerably – from that which was adopted in Mauritania, a standard format encouraged by the IFIs has emerged; this has been adopted by several countries. It has been determined by two complementary considerations: ensuring country ownership of the PRS, and building strong partnerships with the donor community. Some of the main features of the format are given in *Table 2.1* and are summarized here.

**Box 2. Preparation of the PRSP in Mauritania:
a process involving all participants in development**

The process of drawing up the PRSP is both iterative and participatory: (a) it is iterative, since the PRSP is progressively enriched as strategic reflections on the best poverty alleviation policies move forward; and (b) it is participatory, since it involves the relevant actors (i.e. administration, civil society, the private sector, donors) in a process that goes beyond the mere validation of documents to make a real contribution to the development of policies and programmes, to the monitoring of their implementation and to their assessment. The present document thus serves as the framework for a new partnership between the government, civil society, the private sector and development partners.

Preparation of the document began during the Outreach and Consultation Meeting on the National Poverty Reduction Strategy that took place in Nouakchott from 7 to 9 December 1999.

The mechanism subsequently established to produce the document makes it possible to involve all participants in its development. Supervision of the production and validation of the PRSP is the responsibility of an Inter-ministerial

Poverty Reduction Committee (*Comité interministériel de lutte contre la pauvreté*, CILP), presided by the Prime Minister. The committee's work is co-ordinated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development (MAED), in consultation with the Commissioner for Human Rights, Poverty Reduction and Social Action (*Commissaire aux droits de l'homme, à la lutte contre la pauvreté et à l'insertion*, CDHLCPI).

A consultative committee, presided by MAED and consisting of the top officials within the main ministries and associate agencies involved in poverty reduction, and certain local elected officials and representatives of civil society, monitors the process of producing the PRSP, as far as its technical aspects and promotion of the participatory approach are concerned.

Technical co-ordination is handled by a committee presided by the Counsellor on Development Policy within MAED. This committee is made up of: (a) a co-ordinating secretariat; (b) representatives of the technical ministries; and (c) the presidents of 12 technical working groups created to deal with various themes, including the following: growth potential; the effectiveness of public expenditure; governance; private sector promotion; rural development and environment; urban development; employment and micro-financing; support for women's activities; education and training; health and nutrition; etc. Each group includes representatives of the relevant ministerial departments, civil society and development partners, as well as resource persons selected for their technical expertise and competence.

A donors' committee was created, consisting of representatives of all development partners represented in Nouakchott.

Apart from the work completed by the actual preparation entities themselves, the intention was also to deepen the national dialogue on development strategies by organizing several events. Thus, the draft PRSP was the subject of two day-long presentation sessions to non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In addition, on 24 and 25 November 2000, four interregional poverty reduction seminars were organized, for which the representatives of 13 *wilayas* were grouped at four different sites. These consultations were attended by all elected officials,

representatives of NGOs and other organizations of civil society, and development partners active in the zone.

Finally, national sessions on poverty reduction were organized in December 2000 to discuss and approve the PRSP. These sessions, which were veritable general assemblies on poverty reduction, gathered together representatives of parliament, mayors' offices, NGOs, labour unions, development partners, and individuals recognized for their commitment to poverty alleviation.

At the end of the preparation process, the strategy paper will be submitted to parliament for approval in the following months.

This dialogue will be consolidated throughout the entire PRSP implementation process through efforts to monitor, evaluate and update the national strategy and its corresponding programmes, the implementation of which will be based on allied action on the part of the Government, local collectivities, economic operators and civil society.

Source: PRSP of Mauritania, December 2000.

2.1 Involvement of national stakeholders

The organizational structure

A PRSP team is formed under the auspices of the prime minister (or the minister of planning or finance) with representatives of different stakeholders, representatives of the cabinet concerned, different layers of government, the private sector, and the civil society. Representatives of the IFIs attend the team meetings. The team is usually entrusted with the responsibility of leading, co-ordinating and mobilizing different stakeholders in the process. A technical secretariat contributes to the work of the team by providing input on the scope, magnitude and determinants of poverty, and on the formulation of the strategy by linking it to previous initiatives – global, thematic and by sector. The technical secretariat is a focal point for receiving the contributions of:

(a) consultative national, regional and local forums; and/or (b) a number of working groups (between three and 21) dealing with different sectors and thematic concerns.

Representatives of line ministries – including the ministry of education – of the funding agencies, and of the civil society organizations (CSOs) sit in relevant working groups. Consultations, forums and conferences are organized with representatives of the civil society to collect information, identify issues, and generate contributions to address the challenge of poverty reduction. In some cases (Guyana, Mozambique), communication plans are designed – especially when the I-PRSP is ready – to ensure an adequate organization and a proper monitoring of the participation in the preparation of the full PRSP. In other cases (Albania, Viet Nam), private consultants and professional institutions, including universities, are mobilized to contribute data analyses and thematic studies. Some donors contribute financially and technically to the organization of the consultations with CSOs, especially in countries with weak traditions and little experience in social mobilization and participatory democracy.

The mode of operation

The process is iterative in the sense that it follows a sequence of exchanges between different layers of the public sector (from the highest level of government to the lowest local entities) and a variety of stakeholders (including the funding agencies, the members of the profession, the unions, the church, and the poor) with a system of ‘loops’ that facilitates both broad participation and cumulated learning in the finalization of the PRSP preparation. However, in actual fact the concept of an iterative process bears different meanings, depending on the context.

1. In some cases (Yemen and Viet Nam), civil society is not really organized and the existing CSOs are weak. Support is provided by some donors to promote the mobilization and participation of civil society, whose role is rather passive: it receives information on the PRS from the government.

None the less, iterations do take place to produce and make use of additional information – in particular on the status of poverty – in the preparation of the full PRSP.

2. In other cases (Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua), CSOs are well structured and rather strong. They are directly involved at different stages, and their representatives are in the technical secretariat and some working groups. Several consultations, including sector and thematic consultations, with CSOs are organized at different stages. Contributions and input from CSOs are used to some extent. Nonetheless, several CSOs complained about the formal nature of the consultations and their lack of capacity to influence decisions and to criticize the process followed (Bolivia).
3. Yet in certain contexts the frequency of consultations on various issues was considered tedious (Mozambique).

The process actually followed in most countries is between these extreme cases. From the standpoint of the education sector, the organizational structure and the iterative mode of operation, combined with – where it was present – the involvement of stakeholders, led to the identification of significant measures. The structure allowed the agenda of the education sector to be fairly well represented by the minister of education or his representative in the PRSP team, and in the working group dealing with education and the social sector. In several instances the education component of the PRS has been significantly determined by the National Education Strategy (Benin, Cambodia, Nicaragua, United Republic of Tanzania and other countries) prepared on the basis of a sector diagnosis, more often than not with the participation of donor representatives.

Other components of the structure – the CSOs, representatives of education NGOs, and more generally the education stakeholders (teacher unions, academics, associations of teachers and students) – did affect, albeit to a lesser extent, the formulation of the education component of the PRS by

contributing during national, regional and thematic consultations. This is the case, for example, in Nicaragua, where teachers, parents and students have been involved; in Albania, where half of the members of the education sector working group were teachers, professors and education NGOs; and in Yemen, where academics have been solicited in local consultations. Consequently, on the whole, the priorities of the education sector have been identified through the process. Organizing a participatory process on such a large scale is a major undertaking, particularly in countries where the civil society is not well organized. It cannot be expected that the successful setting up and institutionalization of such a process can be achieved overnight.

A few examples will illustrate the contribution of the education stakeholders in the formulation of PRSPs. In Benin, the population policy declaration made specific suggestions for the improvement of education quality and of technical and vocational education; in Honduras, consultations have led to the compilation of a list of priorities, i.e.:

to improve quality and efficiency at all levels, orient formal and non-formal education (NFE) to productive technical and vocational education, decentralize and improve the management of the sector, offer fellowships on the basis of merits and economic need, improve supervision and teacher training, promote community education and bilingual and intercultural education, and extend university at regional and departmental level ...

In Mauritania, demands were expressed for pre-school education, teacher training and pedagogical tools; in Viet Nam, free access to primary education for the poor has been put on the agenda.

There were countries where an education strategy was not yet available. The partners from the donors' community (especially from the World Bank) recommended strongly that the formulation of an education strategy should

be regarded as a key step in the preparation of a full PRSP, preferably using a sector-wide approach (SWAp).

However, while there are several positive examples of the merit of the organizational structure and the mode of operation of the process, there are also examples of less significant involvement of the education stakeholders – in particular the ministries of education – in the PRSP. In some countries, the representatives of the ministries of education are lower-rank officers or belong to the administration and finance units of the education ministries (not to the academic and professional wings). Consequently, they are neither in a position to influence the PRSP team nor to report and channel the PRSP priorities in education back to their own administration, thus contributing to modifying the sector's priorities. Clearly a great deal depends on the starting point: if an education plan is ready, whether it is in a context of a SWAp or not, then it is used quite naturally by the PRSP team; if no previous work on the education sector is available, the influence of the ministry of education tends to be less significant. In addition, if the level of representation of the ministry in different levels of the PRSP preparation process is low, priority programme actions identified in the PRS tend to be ignored or receive little attention in the implementation of the strategy.

Table 2.1 offers a number of illustrative examples both of the organizational structure and the mode of operation of the process:

1. *Of the PRSP team:* A National Commission for Development and the Fight Against Poverty in Benin; a Council for Social Development in Cambodia; a Steering Committee chaired by the Prime Minister in Niger.
2. *Of the technical secretariat:* A technical working group supporting the strategy for poverty alleviation co-ordinating committee in Gambia; an inter-ministerial technical committee in the United Republic of Tanzania; a technical secretariat of the presidency (SETEC) in Nicaragua.

3. *Of the sector or thematic working groups:* Eight thematic working groups in Guinea; 11 thematic working groups in Niger; 12 sector working groups in Mauritania.
4. *Of the iterative process:* In Guyana, the integration of some education priorities in the PRS is the outcome of consultation of the CSOs (declaring “unmet expectations from the education sector, i.e. bad conditions of schooling; lack of textbooks; overcrowded classes etc.”); in Albania, the critical input from line ministries’ technical groups and the significant role played by the National Civil Society Advisory Groups in the formulation of specific elements in the PRS (i.e. financial decentralization; transparency in the distribution of funds, etc.); in Honduras, the built-in participatory process combining 19 regional consultations, open-line dialogue and hearings of candidates for congress and presidential elections at different stages of the preparation of the PRSP; in Uganda, from the cabinet back and forth to the district and local levels, with broad consultations from a variety of stakeholders, including CSOs.

Table 2.1 also provides useful information to document the question raised earlier concerning the involvement of the education stakeholders in the PRSP preparation process.

In summary, at country level, an iterative process is engaged, which is meant to be both ‘top-down’ (from the team through to the secretariat, to various stakeholders at central, regional and local level) and ‘bottom-up’ (involving the poor in the assessment of the phenomenon of poverty and of the issues to address in the PRS, mobilizing representatives of CSOs and different stakeholders in the preparation of contributions, by themes and sector, to be used by the team drafting the PRSP, to be submitted and approved at the highest level of the cabinet). However, as we shall see below, the preparation and approval of the PRSP are responsibilities very much shared with international stakeholders, particularly with the IFIs.

2.2 Involvement of the donor community

In the field

As indicated above, the financing agencies are well represented at country level, both by proposing the format (producing guidelines) of the PRSP process (mainly the IMF/World Bank) and by participating – either actively or as observers – in the different structural layers, and financing consultations and forums with stakeholders, in particular representatives of the CSOs. More particularly for the education sector, (as well as for other sectors), the donor community is very active in contributing to determining and giving credibility to the methodologies (e.g. in various SWAs), in fixing the international agenda (EFA in 2000 in Dakar, and the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) for its implementation), in different international conferences such as the World Congress on Higher Education in Paris in 1998, and in providing assistance in the preparation of sector diagnosis and strategy (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, etc., bilateral donors and international NGOs). Altogether, the involvement of the donors is so broad and so conspicuous that the objective of ensuring that the PRSP approach and its components – in particular the education sector – is country-led may prove quite problematic to achieve in the short term, despite major efforts made by both the IFI and the countries to that end. Indeed, the conclusion of the international review carried out by the IMF/WB that “some donors fear that the PRSP has been dominated by the Bank and the Fund” can be extended to include, in some cases, UNICEF (Cambodia, for example) and other international and bilateral donors and NGOs. At the same time, in their effort to promote and respect the principle of country leadership, the IMF and IDA, according to some of our informants, tend to soften the rules of budget constraints and financial sustainability in their dialogue with some countries. Some measures are taken (such as recruiting large numbers of teachers, and sometimes increasing their salaries), which have significant consequences on the recurrent budget and financial stability of the public sector. In the

short run, external support will provide much of the financial requirements. What will happen in the long run? How will sustainability be reached? Our interviews with the staff in the IMF/IDA did not provide answers to these questions.

In the IFIs

The organizational aspects

The main partners are the IMF and the World Bank,⁶ who are ultimately in charge of the approval of the PRSPs. In each of these two agencies, a special entity is in charge of leading the PRSP work of the agency, guiding in-house the arrangements for co-operation with the countries, and providing direct support through secondment and deployment of staff to activities linked to the process of preparation, approval and implementation of PRSPs. According to the staff interviewed, the division of labour between the IMF and the World Bank is quite clear, even if some flexibility seems to prevail. The IMF is in charge of the macroeconomic dimensions, financial stability, and governance and budgetary issues. All the concerns of the different sectors lie with the World Bank. This is particularly the case for education: The IMF relies on the World Bank, except when the cost implications of some policies are significant for the budget and may have consequences on the financial stability of the public sector. In this case, the arguments of sustainability of growth, absorptive capacity and financial balance are shared between the two agencies.

In the World Bank, a PRSP group is in charge. In each region (Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), etc.), one in three PRSP leaders serves as a reference/resource to the country directors or/and country

6. Other development banks, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and other agencies – multilateral and bilateral – also play a significant role. In some agencies there are PRSP units, in others responsibilities lie with one staff member – a focal point – or are disseminated among officers operating at country level.

economists who chair the country teams and are ultimately responsible for PRSPs in the World Bank. The education task managers are members of the country teams and are, in a sense, the focal points for all matters related to education. As in the case of the ministry of education in the country, the intensity of their involvement in the PRSP process in the country and at the Bank level can be regarded as critical for judging whether the PRSP approach is affected by the education sector and contributes to determining the formulation of the education sector policy changes.

Finally, there is a joint organizational structure which is mobilized throughout the process: the joint staff IMF/World Bank assessment (JSA) missions. Its role is to advise, provide technical support, assess different steps reached in the process, agree on the agenda, formally recommend to the boards of the IMF/IDA that it be approved, and monitor/supervise implementation. Hence, the JSA is at the same time a technical support resource, a political intermediary between the country and the IMF/IDA, and an in-house source of information for the World Bank/IMF staff at large.

The process

The process is iterative and follows closely the same principle: Once the country considers that a first draft of the PRSP is ready, the document is sent to the IMF/World Bank for comments. The draft is then circulated both within the two institutions and shared among different donors. Comments are solicited and, when received, are aggregated by the teams in charge at the World Bank/IMF. Consolidated comments are sent to the country. A second draft is then prepared and submitted to the two institutions for comments a second time. This is done a number of times before the PRSP approved by the government/parliament is sent to the IDA/IMF. Then a JSA mission is undertaken and normally concludes its work with a report supporting the adoption of the PRSP as full.

The final approval of PRSPs by the boards of the IMF/IDA is basically a formal procedure that marks the end of an iterative process involving several stakeholders at different stages. Answering the question “Who has the final say in the approval?” is not easy. Some key actors, both at national and international levels, nevertheless, have the power to block the process before it reaches the stage of approval. Undoubtedly, the IFIs and the ministries of finance have a greater capacity than others to determine the outcome of the process.

In interviewing the staff in connection with the education sector, two major questions were raised and documented.

1. The respective roles of the chair of the country team/country director and the education task manager. The chair is responsible for ensuring consistency, credibility, financial feasibility and sustainability of the PRSP submitted by the country; the education sector is looked at with these macro principles in mind. One recurrent concern is to check the capacity to implement the PRSP and to take into account the time required for capacity-building. The issue of absorptive capacity, for example, which seems to be raised more by the IMF than the Bank, is treated *de facto* with discretion and given less importance, one informant said. Another concern is the insufficient recognition of the multi-sector dimensions of PRSPs that require appropriate measures to link education to other social sectors (health, nutrition), infrastructures, etc. This suggests that, to a large extent, the challenge of designing PRSPs in a holistic and comprehensive way is not yet really addressed.

Task managers are normally in charge of the professional soundness of the policies and programmes proposed for the education sector. They are supposed to look both at the education sector and cross-cutting dimensions, and to assess proposals in the light of the outcome of their own participation in country level education sector activities.

2. The perception of the process by the country team leader and the education task manager. Some leaders of country teams feel there is still a long way to go before the education task managers are able to contribute constructively to the PRSP. They still perceive the education sector in a traditional way, without any genuine concern for poverty. They merely indicate, for example, that expanding access to basic education is a pro-poor policy, as the poor are those who are the last to be served by education when there is a need to revisit the priorities and ensure consistencies within the sector, and also with other sectors (social, economic and infrastructure).

Some task managers expressed much concern about the PRSP process and its consequences. They felt that: (a) the PRSP was well intended, but it diminished – rather than increased – the attention given to the education sector (as a matter of fact, the most important sectors in the PRS are agriculture, infrastructure, employment, industry, etc., and not the education sector); (b) the PRSP is a mandate – the role of the country economist or the chair becomes central as he/she will ultimately affect the decision taken to provide budgetary support to the PRSP without having much expertise and knowledge in the field of education; (c) it is not clear whether or not budgetary support is generating extra funds for education; and (d) the main concern is not financing, but due to competition between resources, there is a real risk of driving the education sector in the wrong direction.

These divergent views between task managers and country leaders – which bear similarities with divergences at country level between the representatives of the education profession and of the ministry of finance – certainly do not exist in all countries and for all PRSPs. But where they do exist, a likely scenario is that they will manifest themselves in the following ways.

1. *At the country level.* Lack of involvement, internalization and ownership of the objectives of the PRSP by the education administration lead to a cumulative feeling of frustration and scepticism. At the same time, the implementation of the PRS in the budget takes place in the ministry of finance with a representative from the administrative and finance entity of the ministry of education, without assurance of follow-up by the professional entities of this ministry.
2. *At the World Bank.* Task managers continue business as usual with no real sense of ownership of the PRSP, but in the end it is the country directors who control the resources allocated to the education sector, and he/she will make decisions, paying more or less attention to specific education sector concerns.
3. *Within the education administration of the country, and among education task managers at the World Bank.* The fungibility of the budget resources is regarded as another reason for feeling less concerned by the financial incidence – in HIPC countries or where budgetary support exists – of the PRSP.

While recognizing these difficulties, country directors at the World Bank believe that the change brought about by the PRSP approach will require a radical change in the mode of operation of the institution (responsibilities, incentives, etc.). This change will take some time, but it has already started and the challenge is being gradually addressed in the terms of reference of field missions, in the planning of the time budget, and perhaps in the rewards system. In this regard, it is relevant to note the capacity-building programme launched by the World Bank both at country level and for its own staff (a first course took place in Addis Ababa in 2002).

Table 2.1 The process: organization and the role of stakeholders

Country	Location, names	Structure	Education (WG)	Consultations civil society (CS)	Comments
Albania 2002	Prime Minister; Steering Committee	Minister of Finance/ WG of ministers; local governments, members of parliament.	Education sector technical group: 9 members (1/2 CS Advisory Group) (teachers, professors, education NGOs)	National CS advisory groups	Public awareness campaigns, financial decentralization; transparency in distribution funds; national standards; increased access; rules for private schools
Benin 2002	National Commission for Development and the Fight Against Poverty (CNDLP)	Plenary Assembly, Technical Committee and Permanent Secretariat	Existing sector strategy, programmes and projects	Population Policy Declaration (DEPOLIPO); quality education; technical/vocational; employment	
Bolivia 2001		National dialogue in 1997 and 2000; bottom up; 9 regions/ round tables	National round table in 2000 by sector (education)	Jubilee 2000 Forum of NGO, 'The Government listens'	Criticisms by CS but resolution on education of national working groups of social agenda
Burkina Faso	Inter-ministerial Committee; Parliament and Economic and Social Council; Chair of Ministry of Economy and Finance	2 meetings with donors; 2 regional workshops; 4 thematic groups	Human resource development WG (including education); 10-year education plan	CSO contribution to 10-year education plan	

Table 2.1 (continued)

Cambodia 2002	Ministry of Planning; Council for Social Development (CSD)	GSCSD: General Secretariat; 4 National Workshops and 2 National Poverty Forums	Education Strategic Plan (ESP) by MOEYS 2001/2005; priority to reduce poverty in ESP "emphatically pro-poor"
Gambia 2002	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs; SPACO Strategy for Poverty Alleviation Co-ordinating Committee	Technical WG with Education	Associations of NGOs; direct consultations of the poor
Guinea 2002	Minister of Economy/ Finance; Permanent Secretariat; Inter-ministerial Committee.	8 thematic groups (academics) 'social sector'	CS in thematic groups; debate in 8 regions with CS – students
Guyana 2001/02	PRS Steering Committee (Participation Action Plan P/AP)	Office of the president: PRS secretariat resources teams 1; community/target groups/regional/ national conference	Reduce illiteracy; drop-out; improve facilities; train teachers; reform curricula; target support to poor. Unmet expectations; bad conditions; textbooks; teachers; overcrowded classrooms; facilities; high costs; access; drop-out.

Table 2.1 (continued)

Country	Location, names	Structure	Education (WG)	Consultations civil society (CS)	Comments
Honduras	Ministry of the Presidency (Social Cabinet)/Ministry of Finance (National Technical Team)	Both regional and thematic	In social cabinet	19 regional consultations; open line dialogue; hearings of candidates for Congress and presidential elections	CS gave high priority to improving education; mixed outcome of PRSP
Mauritania 2000	Prime Minister; CILP	Minister of Economic Affairs as co-ordinator CDHLCPI secretariat; 12 WG		Workshop in Sept/Oct 2000 where about 100 NGOs gave their views on education; workshop on implementation in 2001 with some 100 NGOs	Reform of pre-school, primary and secondary; TT; more resources for pedagogical tools
Nicaragua	Presidency CONPES 1999 SETEC Technical Secretariat of Presidency	Consultative Group meetings; early events NNES	Links in 1997 New National Education Strategy NNES	Teachers; students; professors; parents; 16 focus groups of the extremely poor.	CONPES and SETEC benefited from earlier consultations
Niger 2002	Prime Minister chairs a Steering Committee	Commission for Domestic Dialogue and Joint Action; Permanent Secretariat. 11 thematic groups	Education is a thematic group produce the PRSP building block	Students, university	Use the recently finalized basic education policy
Uganda 2002	PEAP/PRSP	NGOs; district-level government representatives; parliamentarians; unions; media research institutes	Education sector plan linked to PRS, iterative	Civil society, iterative	

Table 2.1 (continued)

United Republic of Tanzania 2000	Steering Committee of Ministers	Inter-ministerial technical committee; zonal workshops	MoEC "Comprehensive Basic Education Strategy"; Primary Education Development Programme	Abolition of school fees; enrolment-related costs; education fund for poor children
Viet Nam 2001	Ministry of Planning and Investment; 16 line ministries	Four consultation workshops (with CS)	MoE; sector task force to co-ordinate input	Poor communities and local officials; high costs of education; exemption
Yemen 2002	Ministry of Planning; Preparatory Committee of 21 members	4 conferences by governorate with 3-4 WG each; surveys in poor districts	Contact with sector (line ministries) by Preparatory Committee.	Academicians

Chapter 3

The education agenda in PRSPs

The previous chapter provided indications on the involvement of the education stakeholders in the PRSP approach and gave illustrative examples of links between the education sector policies and strategies and the PRSP. This chapter deals more specifically with the scope and coverage of education in PRSPs with two concerns in mind: (a) the extent to which the agenda and the priorities of the education sector are being taken into account; (b) the impact of PRS on the definition of education policies and priorities.

After examining the links of education goals of PRSPs to international goals (Millennium Development Goals and Education for All), *Section 2* aims at providing a comparative review of the scope of the education chapter in PRSPs to help understand the extent to which the strategy includes formal and non-formal education, adult literacy, and training as a means for capacity-building. *Section 3* will deal specifically with the links of PRS with traditional topics covered by the line ministry: level and type of education, quality and efficiency, and pro-poor policies (management, incentives, etc.). Finally, *Section 4* addresses three cross-cutting issues and policies of particular relevance to PRSPs: empowerment, gender and HIV/AIDS.

3.1 Links to the international agenda on education

Reference should be made here to the work commissioned by UNESCO on the extent to which Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are reflected in PRSPs, both in the process of their development and their product (Bagai, 2002), and the first report of Monitoring of Education For All (UNESCO, 2002). *Table 3.1*, extracted from the

UNESCO report, identifies EFA goals and MDGs for education in the PRSP of 16 countries (all of which have achieved full PRSP).

EFA goals and objectives appear across a range of national, state and provincial level policies and plans, and in separate plans and programmes, to meet the needs of particular groups of people. To a large extent they are regarded as being consistent with the strategies for poverty reduction because they are targeted at the last-served groups, addressing their access to education and their specific needs. It is therefore natural that EFA goals appear in the overall development framework (MDGs) and the PRSPs.

Table 3.1 shows also that, while most countries refer to the MDGs relating to education and/or to the EFA goals in the education strategies within the PRSP, they do not necessarily use all of the EFA goals as an integrated set of actions to successfully achieve the PRS. EFA goals numbers 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6, and MDG goal number 2, are not included in all the PRSPs reviewed. Only the following goals of EFA and of the MDGs seem to be included in almost all the PRSPs reviewed: “Ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality” (EFA); “Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling” (MDG).

The main reason why there is limited reference to most of the EFA goals is probably the lack of a formalized theoretical framework, supported by the development profession and linking education to poverty-reduction in order to guide the preparation of the PRSPs. Another reason is the particular conditions prevailing in different countries when, in most cases, education goals are set out in very general terms rather than as specific outcomes that can be measured or assessed. According to UNESCO, one broad conclusion emerges from the surveys carried out: “Whether in PRSP or EFA sector plans, there is often a failure to develop a clear relationship between the

diagnosis of education and poverty on the one hand, and the education outcomes and actions that are proposed in the plans and strategies on the other” (UNESCO, 2002). Even when targets have been set, the extent to which they determine strategy content is far from being clear. In a sense, this is yet another confirmation of the observation made earlier about the problematic application in the PRSPs of the principle of inter-sectorality.

However, some progress should be expected in the future thanks to the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) for universal primary education (UPE). The criteria to be considered in the FTI⁷ include that a country should have both an approved PRSP and an education sector plan. This could possibly lead to more consistencies between a country’s goals in its PRSP and the goals of MDGs and EFA. This was not entirely the case for the first eighteen countries that have been included in the first phase of the FTI: Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.⁸

3.2 Scope

Formal and non-formal basic education

All PRSPs reviewed include references to both formal and non-formal education (NFE). However, while in most reports formal education is covered extensively in the diagnosis of poverty, in the analysis of its causes, and in the list of strategic actions, the treatment of non-formal education for out-of-school children varies considerably. This is partly due to the low status NFE is often given by the representatives of the Ministry of Education:

7. Until November 2003.
8. In November 2003, the FTI partnership was opened to all low-income countries. How this will be implemented and financed is yet to be defined.

1. No reference to NFE for out-of-school children is made in the PRSPs of Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen. This may reflect the absence of any reference to NFE in the education sector work (diagnosis, plan, strategy) of these countries.
2. When there are references to NFE in other PRSPs, they are more often than not related to actions aimed at meeting the needs of the poorest. *Box 3* provides a few examples.

Table 3.1 EFA and Millennium Development Goals in PRSPs

Education for All goals	Millennium Development Goals	Albania	Bolivia	Burkina Faso	Gambia	Guinea	Guyana	Honduras	Mauritania	Mozambique	Nicaragua	Niger	Uganda	U.R. Tanzania	Viet Nam	Yemen	Zambia	Total
Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children				✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓		✓	8
Ensuring that, by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality	Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	15
Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	12
Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults				✓					✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			7
Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015				✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			✓	✓			9
	Total (average)	3	3	5	4	5	4	2	2	4	4	3	3	4	5	3	4	

Source: UNESCO, 2002: Table 3.4.

Box 3. Non-formal education for out-of-school children

- Cambodia** The promotion of NFE (basic, vocational, functional literacy and life-skills) for the poor is an element of the Education Sector Support Programme (2001/2005) and is adopted as such in the PRSP; provision of alternative NFE opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults is included, for example, in the strategy.
- Gambia** The review of the 1988-2003 Education Policy emphasizing the increased attention given to NFE.
- Guinea** The PRSP includes a detailed objective of enhancing informal education for girls and adults in the most disadvantaged segments of the population as a way of “extending the ‘second chance’ schools to provide opportunities for uneducated young people and dropouts”.
- Guyana** Reference to investments in NFE is made under one of the priorities of the poverty reduction programme, without any indication as to the intention or the modalities.
- Honduras** In the consultation process, civil society made a recommendation to “orient education – including NFE – towards productive technical training, according to regional needs”. One of the sub-objectives of the strategy is to establish “policies that link formal and non-formal education”.
- Viet Nam** NFE is regarded as a form of assistance among farmers through providing support to ‘education and training groups’ with the aim to “re-organize production, protect and encourage household, farm and private economies towards large-scale labour intensive production”.

Source: Respective countries’ PRSPs.

Literacy and adult education

This has been an area of major concern for the education sector for more than four decades. Fighting illiteracy and reducing drastically the number of illiterates is on the international agenda of both EFA and the MDGs. As it is well documented in a few PRSPs, illiteracy rates by region and gender are found to be correlated with the level of poverty. Therefore it is not surprising that explicit reference is made to adult illiteracy in almost all PRSPs. However, as the examples in *Box 4* indicate, while acknowledging the magnitude of the problem, some PRSPs do not include any action measures to address it. Others include the target of 'reduction of illiteracy' with relevant monitoring indicators, but do not indicate how this objective will be achieved. Yet others present comprehensive approaches to reduce illiteracy – sometimes cutting across other issues – with very close links with poverty alleviation.

Skill development programmes

Most PRSPs make specific references to vocational and technical training as a critical component of capacity-building to include the poor in the development process. PRSPs include training activities in different pillars of the strategy as a component of a package of actions aiming at developing the capacity of the poor in production, in income generation, in improving their quality of life, in having access to information and becoming aware of their rights, and in participating in the elaboration and adjustment of the PRS. At the same time, a number of proposed training actions target different CSOs and different layers of government (at central and local levels). They aim at improving social control and institutional capabilities for implementing the PRS. Innovative, informal and alternative approaches are proposed to address the specific training needs of different target groups. *Box 5* illustrates the diversity of areas covered by training.

Overall, training activities proposed by sectors other than that of education may be regarded as one of the major achievements of the treatment of capacity-building in the PRSP, in articulating linkages between the education sector and other sectors (institutional, social and economic).

Box 4. Illiteracy in a few PRSPs

<i>Albania</i>	Illiteracy is regarded as a cause of poverty.
<i>Benin</i>	Illiteracy is regarded as one of the causes and determinants of poverty; improving literacy is one of the priorities of the second strategic pillars of the PRS. Hence a comprehensive National Literacy and Adult Education Policy (PNAEA) has been adopted by the government with a long-term objective of eradicating illiteracy, and six specific short-, mid- and long-term objectives. Two of these are quantified: to reduce the rate of illiteracy (among women and girls) from 68 per cent in 2001 (79.65 per cent for women and girls) to 59 per cent (60 per cent for women and girls) in 2005, and to 50 per cent (40 per cent for women and girls) by 2019 within the age group 15 to 49 years. For effective implementation, a number of innovative actions are defined. Furthermore it is proposed that a TVET reform will reach out to the development of technical and professional skills in formal and non-formal education.
<i>Bolivia</i>	During the 1990s, improvements occurred and the illiteracy rate declined from 20 per cent in 1992 to 15 per cent in 1999 (although the rural illiteracy rate remains high at 34 per cent). To develop the productive capabilities of the poor, the PRSP recommends that adult literacy programmes be linked to work training, focusing on the economically active population – preferably women of child-bearing age. In addition, literacy campaigns with nutritional components should be implemented.
<i>Burkina Faso</i>	The ten-year education plan is part of the PRSP. One of its objectives is “to offer quality literacy training for adults (especially for women and people living in disadvantaged

<i>Cambodia</i>	<p>zones) and raise the literacy rate from 18.4 per cent to 40 per cent using basic and functional literacy programmes run by NGOs and community associations at low cost”.</p> <p>Illiteracy is regarded as a barrier preventing the poor from improving their lives (the literacy rate is 71 per cent); an illiterate environment favours a relapse of the educated into illiteracy; illiteracy contributes to the vulnerability of women to contract infection or HIV/AIDS; the ‘new social policy agenda’ includes dealing with the problem of illiteracy; a strategy facilitating entry and re-entry into the formal system will be complemented through measures providing alternative literacy opportunities; while adult literacy rates are at 82.9 per cent for males and 61.1 per cent for females, the target set in the PRS for adult literacy is 90 per cent for the year 2005 (but no gender-specific targets have been set).</p>
<i>Guinea</i>	<p>Literacy rates are given according to gender, rural/urban areas and region. Targets are set as part of the PRS to increase overall literacy from 36 per cent in 1999 to 45 per cent in 2007. The sector development strategy includes measures for training adults, for strengthening grass-roots services, and for expanding NAFA centres (second chance schools) to enhance informal education for girls and adults in disadvantaged segments of the population. A communication strategy is included to promote adult education.</p>
<i>Gambia</i>	<p>Literacy rates are correlated with both poverty and gender (ranging from 11.7 per cent among extremely poor women to 52.8 per cent for non-poor men), but there is no reference to adult education in the PRS.</p>
<i>Guyana</i>	<p>Illiteracy is considered an obstacle to implementing a participation plan for PRSP; high levels of illiteracy are regarded as ‘poverty’s social face’; as illiteracy is high in rural and backward communities, one of the priorities that emerges from regional consultations is to “reduce the high level of illiteracy, including adult illiteracy”. One of the priority goals of</p>

<i>Honduras</i>	<p>the PRS is under the aim of investing in human capital to reduce illiteracy rates, and to achieve this goal the government strategy focuses on targeting functional illiteracy among out-of-school youth.</p> <p>During the consultation process, the civil society recommended “orienting education, including NFE, to productive technical training, according to regional needs”, and one of the sub-objectives of the strategy is to establish “policies that link formal and non-formal education”. The literacy rate is almost the same for men and women (around 69 per cent). The PRS includes ‘investment in human capital’ as one of its priorities. A project on ‘adult education through alternative forms’ is part of it, which emphasizes women and ethnic groups from rural and marginal urban areas, through various modalities: participation by NGOs, municipalities and churches; recruitment of local facilitators and interactive radio; and the allocation of quantified amounts per year until 2005 and beyond (total US\$42.5 million).</p>
<i>Mauritania</i>	<p>Functional literacy and the vocational training of women will be boosted by the opening of new centres; this is an action programme that belongs to a cross-sector theme ‘Advancement of women’. The following are targets set for adult illiteracy: 42.8 per cent for 2000, 23 per cent for 2004, 13 per cent for 2010, and 5 per cent for 2015. Priority measures (2001) and priority actions (2002) are indicated.</p>
<i>Mozambique</i>	<p>Illiteracy is defined as a lack of ‘basic human capacity’ and is an indication of poverty; illiteracy rates are given according to region and rural/urban areas (from 15 per cent in Maputo to 75 per cent in Cabo Delgado, and a national average of 60.5 per cent). One of the components of the programme in the field of education is literacy and adult education, whose objectives are to reduce illiteracy rates, particularly in rural areas, and to overcome the problems regarding access of children and young people to primary education. Different measures are proposed:</p>

<i>Niger</i>	<p>indicative projected budgetary requirements per year are provided until 2005 (total of 152 billion meticaï), and unit cost figures are included.</p> <p>Literacy rates are provided by gender and region in 1999: the lowest is for females in Tahoua at 6.3 per cent, the highest is amongst males in Niamey at 69.3 per cent. The national average is 19.9 per cent: 30.4 per cent for males, 10.6 per cent for females. The low level of literacy among females is explained by socio-cultural factors (forced marriage and the confinement of women), certain interpretations of Islamic precepts governing society, and women's ignorance of their own rights. High illiteracy is regarded as a major obstacle to implementing the PRS. A priority identified by the communities is literacy, and one objective is to increase the adult literacy rate from 19.9 per cent in 1999 to 28 per cent in 2005 and to 44 per cent in 2015.</p>
<i>Uganda</i>	<p>The government is "enhancing basic education, both primary and adult literacy, aimed at equipping the population with skills to survive and improve the quality of life"; the current literacy rate stands at 62 per cent of the population, with male literacy double that of females.</p>
<i>United Republic of Tanzania</i>	<p>The literacy rate was estimated at 84 per cent in 1997, lower for women (64 per cent) than for men (79.6 per cent); in 1991, 54.3 per cent of the rural poor were literate, compared to 61 per cent of the rural population as a whole. This figure increased between 1983 and 1991. Zonal workshops declared a high rate of illiteracy to be a major concern; the logical framework of the PRSP targets the eradication of illiteracy by 2010; the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) of 2001 includes adult education.</p>
<i>Viet Nam</i>	<p>One of the social and poverty reduction targets is to eliminate illiteracy in under-40-year-old women by 2010; the literacy rate among people aged 15-24 is retained as a monitoring</p>

Yemen

indicator of the objective of 'universal education'. Targets are also fixed concerning the literacy rate of certain ethnic groups. Eighty-seven per cent of the poor are illiterate; 59.8 per cent of the employed poor are illiterate as compared to 50.8 per cent of the non-poor; while 64 per cent of the entire population is illiterate. The poverty rate among families that have an illiterate head of household is at 47.3 per cent; the illiteracy rate is 55.7 per cent (males 31.2 per cent and 73.5 per cent females), but no reference can be found in the PRS to measures taken to address the challenge of reducing illiteracy.

Zambia

An integrated functional literacy programme is included with the following priorities: to increase functional literacy for all marginalized groups; to improve quality; to enhance the capacity of provision; to launch campaigns to sensitize communities to demand access to literacy programmes.

Source: Respective countries' PRSPs.

Box 5. Areas covered by training

Albania

The PRSP includes: (a) a comprehensive programme for the training and retraining of staff in the Ministry of Education, local authorities and school principals; (b) a programme to improve social care for marginal groups will be supported through the development of professional capacities to fulfil the needs of social groups at risk; (c) the training of tax inspectors; (d) raising the professional level of judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and court administrators; (e) training schemes that support marketing to contribute to the goal 'development of non-farm economy in rural areas'; (f) the training of medical staff in rural areas.

<i>Bolivia</i>	(a) The national dialogue concluded that production training is part of “the social agenda and the economic agenda” under the fourth pillar of the PRSP; (b) a comprehensive proposal is made to provide “support and training for civic organization and citizen participation”, which includes training for municipal governments; and (c) indigenous communities will be given training to better benefit from and use natural resources with the aim of “reducing inequalities and barriers based on ethnic discrimination”; also, to improve the institutional environment, it is proposed to promote the ‘professional development’ of the public bodies in charge of implementing the PRS.
<i>Cambodia</i>	The PRS proposes that training be provided: (a) to workers in industrial and export processing zones; (b) to civil servants in tax administration; (c) to increase the capacity of the fishing sector (officials will be encouraged to learn from the experiences of local communities); (d) to all relevant stakeholders of the forestry sector to build capacity; (e) as part of a staff development programme in ‘water resource management, irrigation and drainage’ in a wide range of areas such as irrigation and drainage planning, financial management, administration of water use and other licenses, law enforcement, and provision of community support; (f) to increase agricultural processing capacity and handicraft production; (g) in the form of ‘learning by doing’ to provide knowledge to the poor in practices in the tourism sector; (h) to promote private sector development in industry; (i) to enhance local economic potential (especially as regards women) by developing vocational and business skills; (j) to promote pro-poor decentralization by emphasizing informal on-the-job training; (k) to facilitators of village development committees (VDCs), district officials and NGOs so as to contribute to empowerment at the grass-roots level.
<i>Guinea</i>	Training is to be provided: (a) to contribute to capacity-building for entities administering mining with a view to help local governments and grass-roots communities to gain more control

over the payment of local taxes and achieve better co-ordination between local development plans and those of the mining sector; (b) in entrepreneurship and management for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and small and medium-sized industries (SMIs) to foster self-promotion and innovation; (c) to develop basic services with the aim of increasing agricultural productivity and the revenue of farmers and fishermen as part of the objective of the PRS ‘rural development’; (d) to health staff assigned at grass-roots level to “improve the health of the general public”; (e) to marginal and socially excluded groups with the aim of “guaranteeing the minimum means of livelihood for the entire population”; (f) to women in order to ensure their “full economic and social development”.

Source: Respective countries’ PRSPs.

3.3 Links to the agenda of the ministries of education

The links between PRSPs and the agendas of MoEs are strong. In most countries, the preparation of the PRSP has basically relied on the contributions of the education sector – existing sector work, education sector strategy and mid- or long-term plans – channelled through the ministry of education at different levels of the organizational structure of the preparation of the PRS: cabinet, inter-ministerial committee, and thematic/sector working group. With very few exceptions (when no sector work was available at the time of the preparation of the PRS), the education chapter of the PRSP is a ‘copy summary’ – sometimes a carbon copy – of the relevant document of the ministry of education, with a concern for sector-wide issues and challenges more than with the specific aim of poverty reduction, even if reference is sometimes made to supporting economic growth. An overview is given below.

Level and type of education

Table 3.2 shows that:

1. In 12 countries the PRSPs include direct references to higher education, addressing the sector-wide agenda and, in general, making no specific reference to the fight against poverty, e.g. the need to promote the financing of higher education by the private sector, to address regional disparities in access to higher education, or to enhance capacity and improve the quality of teacher training, or to address the need for an economic growth strategy.
2. Explicit objectives relate to secondary and technical education in countries with low levels of enrolment at primary level (such as Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Gambia, Mauritania, Niger, Mozambique and Zambia). This suggests again that the sub-sector objectives receive more support due to particular concerns of quality, efficiency and equity within the education sector – even if their impacts are much broader and extend much further – than priorities given to pro-poor development of the sector. Indeed in some countries the PRSPs refer to structured reform of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) with no specific reference to the challenge of poverty reduction. In general, however, the proposed reforms and changes in TVET are guided by economic growth concerns, i.e. to produce the required trained manpower, and arguably this can lead to poverty reduction.
3. Objectives for primary education are included in all PRSPs, yet it is assumed that expansion of primary education automatically favours the poor in some PRSPs. However, no specific references are made to a need to change the teaching/learning approaches to adapt them to their needs. In some cases, targets related to primary education are justified by more general arguments: development, the international agenda, low efficiency, etc.

4. The very big differences in the enrolment rates during the base year 2000 – ranging from 38 per cent in Niger to about 100 per cent in Guyana – should hopefully be narrowed down with the convergence of targets to 100 per cent. But the prospect for some countries of achieving EFA seems to be remote. As a matter of fact, as it is well described in some PRSPs, there are wide disparities in enrolment rates according to gender and region linked to the level of poverty of the population. Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of low enrolment rates, therefore the achievement of the enrolment targets will ultimately be linked to the success of the PRSP.
5. Quantitative targets for completion rates are not given in many PRSPs in spite of the significance of this indicator in the international agenda.
6. More generally, no reference is made to the main assumption of the theory of human capital on the links between education and productivity, and to the objectives of growth and the reduction of poverty.

Table 3.2 Level and type of education included in the PRSPs

Country	Pre-school	Primary enrolment rates (%)*/ completion rates	Secondary	Vocational	Technical	Higher	Private
Albania		90-94/82	J	J			
Benin		84-91**/52-57	J	J	J	J	J
Bolivia	J	100/	J		J	J	J
Burkina Faso	J	41-/60- 75	J	J		J	
Cambodia		78- 100 /33-90		J	J		J
Gambia		-91%/	J	J	J		
Guinea	J	56-70- 100		J	J	J	
Guyana		100-100/83-	J				
Honduras	J	87-95/60-85	J		J	J	J
Mauritania	J	86-100/55-67	J			J	J
Mozambique		91-100/	J	J	J	J	
Nicaragua	J	75-83/		J	J		
Niger		38-48/24-44	J	J	J	J	
Uganda		J	J			J	J
United Republic of Tanzania		78-85/20-50	J				J
Viet Nam		95-97/- 85	J	J	J	J	J
Yemen		62-69/		J	J	J	
Zambia	J	J		J	J	J	

* Rates around 2000, and targets for around the year 2004; in **bold** = targets for around 2010.

** GER; otherwise NER.

References to education policies

In addition to the enrolment and completion rates presented in *Table 3.2*, *Table 3.3* includes a selected number of issues raised in the PRSPs that are of relevance to the links between education and poverty reduction. Some comments can be made in this regard.

Some dominant concerns, which are almost always included in education plans and strategies today, receive attention in the PRSPs even though they are not treated as part of a structured strategy to reduce poverty. This is the case, for example, of the “improvement of educational efficiency and effectiveness” in some PRSPs, and of the explicit references to quality improvement in most PRSPs. In these PRSPs, for example, there are measures dealing with:

1. Improving examination and testing services, upgrading the qualifications of teachers, and using ICT. But in no PRSP is there any reference to the need to take into account the conditions of the poor when designing tests that would facilitate their mobility in the system, and/or to training teachers so as to make them more effective in addressing the specific needs of disadvantaged groups, and/or to improve the coverage of ICTs so that remote areas and marginal groups are included. Zambia may be an exception in this respect, as ICT is meant to “increase access of out-of-school youth and adults”.
2. Reform of the curricula. Interestingly enough, several PRSPs address the question of curriculum reforms, and some also consider the issue of the relevance of curricula. This is the case in Mozambique, where the reform of primary school curricula is meant to give it a more practical character and emphasize knowledge of how to do something with the introduction of subjects like basic arts and crafts. The PRSP is not explicit, but it suggests that curriculum reforms – contents and methods – need to take into consideration, among other things, the challenge of

poverty reduction. Another example is in the Burkina Faso paper, which proposes the “organization of initial activities by priority in the 20 provinces with the lowest enrolment rates ... by testing an integrated approach to education (early childhood development, and NFE utilizing the ‘*faire faire*’ approach for literacy work)”.

3. Provision of textbooks and educational materials. This measure is meant to improve the conditions of schooling and, hence, the quality of education. But it is not always linked to the need to subsidize the costs of education supported by the poor and contribute to achieving the PRSP goal of increasing their participation in education.

But there is no innovative teaching/learning reform proposed in the PRSPs⁹ that could be regarded as having been designed to address the specific needs of the poor while at the same time seeking quality improvement, relevance and meeting the target of integrating them in the development process.

However, a number of PRSPs do include education objectives, plans and measures that are linked to the poverty reduction agenda. In almost all the PRSPs, there are references to pro-poor plans and programmes and/or indications of measures taken to address the need to promote both the demand for education from the poor (incentives, scholarships, free access, school meals) and the supply by expanding delivery (traditional means – i.e. providing free textbooks/materials, as in Albania, Guyana, Mozambique and Zambia, and ICT, including radio). In addition, the rather general trend of decentralization of education, which is accompanied by measures of community participation and empowerment (see *Table 3.3* on empowerment), can be regarded as consistent, both with the prevailing views on the need for a broad-based and participatory approach in the PRS and with the convergent trend of teaching/learning theories referred to in *Chapter 1*.

9. Learner-focused, pro-active and integrating the findings of the research carried out during the past decades and promoted by some agencies – UNICEF for example.

At the same time, even references to equity concerns and girls' education are not generally explicitly linked to poverty reduction. Indeed, that is the case when the objectives and measures are targeted at post basic education (secondary, technical and higher education). However, a number of arguments could be made on the basis of research findings that more equity, particularly in favour of girls and women at post basic education, may be regarded as crucial in a PRSP. These objectives are consistent with broader aims linked to a cross-cutting issue (gender), as discussed below.

Finally, very little reference is made to financial management issues. More broadly, references to financial concerns are very seldom made in the education chapter, as these concerns are dealt with in the chapters on implementation. This issue will be discussed below.

Table 3.3 References to education policies and measures

Country	Quality – Textbooks	Effective management	Financial management	Pro-poor plan – Incentives	Decentralized management – Community participation	Equity – Girls	School meals
Albania	J	J	J	–J	J		J
Benin	J –J	J		–J		J –J	J
Bolivia	J				J –J		
Burkina Faso	J –J	J			J –	J –J	
Cambodia	J –J		J	J –J		–√	
Gambia	J –J		J	J –J		J –J	
Guinea	J –J				J	J –J	
Guyana	J			–J			
Honduras	J –J	J		–J	–J	J –J	
Mauritania	J –J	J		–J		J –J	J
Mozambique	J –J			–J		J –	
Nicaragua	–J			–J	J –J		
Niger		J			J –J		
Uganda	J –J			J –J	J –J		
United Republic of Tanzania	J –J	J		–J	J –		
Viet Nam	J –J	J		J –J	J –J	J –J	J
Yemen	J			–J		–J	
Zambia	J –J			J –J	J –J	J –J	

3.4 Cross-cutting areas involving education and other sectors

The rationale behind the elaboration of the PRS is that the approach is based on the principle and merits of the integration of different sectors, in particular of the education sector with other sectors. To some extent the education sector as a whole is a cross-cutting sector. However, the review shows that training, more than education, is mentioned and is included in support to different sectors (agriculture, rural development, building infrastructure, enhancing social services including health nutrition, industry, public service management including at local and community levels, improving governance, combating corruption ...). Indeed, some PRSPs provide detailed measures to address these needs. Thus training and skill development as a critical element of capacity-building are *par excellence* a cross-cutting area.

But there are many other cross-cutting areas, and each PRSP selects its own: some refer to the environment, others to decentralization, and others again to institutional development, etc. For example Bolivia's PRSP includes the following four cross-cutting issues: ethnicity, gender, environment and natural resources. In most cases, the areas selected do have, to some extent, 'cross concerns' with the education sector. In order to illustrate the argument, and perhaps to test its validity, three cross-cutting areas have been selected for review in this section: empowerment, gender and HIV/AIDS.

Empowerment

Two observations should be made at the outset:

1. In the diagnosis of poverty, both in the strategic vision and in the goals identified for the PRSPs, there are concerns which stem from the definition of poverty referred to earlier: (a) material needs and lack of capacity and opportunities; and (b) important features covering two interlinked and

complementary basic dimensions of poverty, namely vulnerability and empowerment.

2. The participatory process is promoted to prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate the PRSPs. Broad stakeholder involvement will guarantee greater transparency in decision-making and empowerment of the players – particularly the most vulnerable, i.e. the poor – which will help instil in the people a sense of ownership regarding the strategy.

A few PRSPs make explicit reference to empowerment. It can be regarded as a major cross-cutting concern in the PRS. The various examples below provide illustrations:

1. Two PRSPs use an empowerment index in their diagnosis of poverty: Honduras refers to the Index of Gender Empowerment (IGE) and points out that even the human development indicator disaggregated by gender shows that women are in a better position compared to men (using an overall enrolment rate in primary and secondary education). The IGE shows some considerable disparities in the composition of the National Congress and in decision-making positions in the public and private sectors. Yemen refers to the IGE in contrast to the Gender Development Index (GDI), which shows that the percentage of positions in professional and technical fields occupied by women is still low (the totally negligible percentage of women in parliamentary representation is less than 1 per cent). The experiences of these two countries suggest that in order to achieve empowerment of women, education is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition – a number of other measures should be taken.
2. In Guyana, protecting fundamental human rights is part of the PRS. A commission of human rights is in charge of promoting the empowerment of indigenous peoples, especially with regard to the village council in the local government system.
3. The PRSP of Mozambique regards empowerment as a basic feature of its strategy. The special emphasis on health and education, it is stated,

“has a direct bearing on the empowerment of the poor”. Other features of the programme that contribute to empowerment include “the development of farmers’ associations, the decentralization of public administration, a commitment to increasing transparency and deepening the process of participation, and a fundamental commitment to consolidate democracy and respect for human rights”.

4. In Viet Nam, one of the major policies to develop agriculture and rural economy in order to achieve rapid poverty reduction is to empower participants of co-operatives and provide regularly economic information to poor communes and households, as well as guidance “to help them to select and identify products that are marketable and which yield high return”. The Vietnamese paper includes an implementation mechanism for the PRS, which recommends that the following measures be taken: to “identify and establish concrete mechanisms to mobilize participation of the people in the tasks of project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and ensure the principle of empowerment in selecting project objectives, resource allocation, implementation and monitoring ... and maintain capacity and ownership of beneficiaries”. Clearly the role of education is critical to the success of these measures.
5. In Yemen, the PRSP includes empowerment as an aim to be achieved in two instances: (a) the reinforcement of environmental management of natural resources through “institutional empowerment of local community organizations that are engaged in environmental conservation and assisting them in preparing their procedures and in registering them”; and (b) enhancing co-operation and community participation by activating the role of pro-poor CSOs, especially those that empower the poor to achieve their objectives.
6. Another interesting example of the fact that empowerment is a cross-cutting area is given in the PRSP of Zambia. First, in the diagnosis of poverty, the Zambian report considers that deprivation of human dignity is a feature of poverty, and such deprivation occurs “through discrimination, disempowerment, and exclusion”. Secondly, one of the

priority goals of the strategy is rural development, and the general PRSP interventions in rural development are roads (and canals), education, health, water, sanitation and HIV/AIDS, as well as economic empowerment. To achieve economic empowerment, the strategy proposes quality investment to exploit rural resources. Thirdly, the health sector is a priority of the PRS, and the *Zambian paper*, in diagnosing the weaknesses of this sector, indicates that there are “problems of access for poorly served groups, poor physical infrastructure and equipment, poor participation and empowerment”. Fourthly, a number of pro-poor/pro-environment principles have been established as a basis upon which to formulate programmes in the strategy. In this respect the following specific intervention can be quoted: “Human Resource Development: people’s participation, reorientation, empowerment, and confidence-building in local institutions through participatory micro-planning, equitable benefit-sharing and gender-sensitive programmes will be imperative aspects of poverty reduction”.

7. Cambodia is yet another illustrative case. Three target groups (which are inter-linked) are considered for empowerment: women, local communities and the poor. The PRSP includes the following goals and measures: (a) promoting gender equity with the following priorities to reduce gender-based disparities and improve gender equity in health, education, control over agricultural resources, socio-economic and political empowerment and legal protection. The *Cambodian paper* recognizes that education and empowerment of women have a positive correlation with better nutrition, birth spacing, better education and health of children, and the income of the household; (b) empowering the poor with the following priorities: special programmes for education, training and rehabilitation; social safety nets; improved access to government health and education services; appointment of women and ethnic minorities to key decision-making positions; and expanded coverage of VDCs to ensure empowerment at the grass-roots level (*Box 6*).

8. In summary

The review of PRSPs shows that: (a) empowerment is targeted towards the poor; it is also targeted towards women and ethnic groups; (b) empowerment is meant for individuals, communities, CSOs and other stakeholders who may have a critical role in economic, social and institutional development and/or in poverty reduction; (c) education is regarded as a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for empowerment; other measures are required, such as information sharing, development of infrastructures, political mobilization, legal protection, etc.; (d) empowerment is inter-linked to other cross-cutting areas, i.e. capacity-building, decentralization, institutional development, gender, etc.; (e) empowerment is critical to effective participation and ownership in the process of monitoring preparation and evaluation of PRSPs, and is therefore a crucial determinant for its success; yet (f) in spite of the above, not all PRSPs address the challenge of empowerment.

Box 6. Village development committees and empowerment at the grass-roots level

The rural community, particularly the VDCs, have a key role as local institutions to ensure sustainable rural development. The VDC is an independent local rural development institution working in the direction, administration and management of village development activities. Each VDC is created through democratic, anonymous and free election by the villagers themselves. The VDC is the main agent of the commune council at the village level. It is also part of the planning and budget committee of the commune councils where two representatives sit, one of each gender.

Under the new decentralized structure of government, VDCs are directly responsible to commune councils for the identification and implementation of the sub-project at the village level. VDCs seek to promote sustainable rural development through the participation of the population in needs assessments, planning design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and community

development management in the village. The participation of VDCs in the maintenance of village roads, wells, small-scale irrigation structures and schools helps ensure the sustainable development of rural development programmes and projects.

There are about 8,000 VDCs among 13,694 villages throughout Cambodia. According to the 1999 survey conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) however, the VDCs are still weak in terms of competent human resources, management capacity and financial resources for village development. This is being tackled through orientation training for VDC members in community leadership and management, social mobilization, and in the roles and responsibilities of VDCs. Facilitators are also being trained.

Source: PRSP Cambodia.

Promotion of gender equality

Poverty and gender are inextricably intertwined. But even if women have similar concerns to those of men (bad nutrition, lack of rural roads or water supply, access to land, etc.), they also have specific ones, such as heavy workloads due to their dual role in society and related to family care and income-generation, inappropriate health services, domestic violence, vulnerability to many forms of exploitation in the workplace, and discriminatory traditions related to culture and interpretations of religious precepts. This leads observers to declare that in many societies poverty has a woman's face. As a matter of fact, the problem of gender inequality is reflected in the disparities between men and women in terms of capabilities, access to opportunities, economic and social participation, and other areas. All are directly linked to empowerment. In the preceding section, a number of examples of the links between the two cross-cutting areas of gender and empowerment were given. In this section, the emphasis is placed on the need to incorporate the gender

agenda in other strategic components of the PRS, in particular that of education.

The diagnosis of gender inequality varies among PRSPs. In some, it is limited to a very general statement with little or no quantified indicators. In others, results of consultations with stakeholders are provided. In others again, one can find very comprehensive definitions and analyses of the different facets of women and poverty (see *Box 7*).

In Zambia, statistics show that, in general, female-headed households are in fact poorer than male-headed households, and that women are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In Albania, unemployment is higher among women than among men. In Cambodia, women occupy low-paid, unskilled positions and are vulnerable in terms of employment. In Guinea, Viet Nam and Yemen, jobs with long working hours, mostly in agriculture, are done by women. In Gambia, only 35 per cent of women are wage earners, and 78 per cent of women work in agriculture. In Honduras, women work mostly in the informal sector. In Nicaragua, one third of extremely poor women receive no prenatal health care, and 29 per cent have suffered some kind of physical or sexual abuse. In Viet Nam, women are given fewer opportunities of access to credit and training, and there is a higher rate of HIV/AIDS among women. Finally in Guinea, female poverty is a societal phenomenon and not simply a gender issue; the problem requires a new approach, both in terms of perceptions and the solutions sought.

Box 7. Gender inequalities

“We women are the most backward; it is we who suffer most from poverty”

(Salomé Pereira, ICLA delegate)

In the National Dialogue, civil society expressed the need for greater opportunities for women to participate.

The process and mechanisms that create gender discrimination and inequality are reflected in some areas more than others, depending on time, place and culture. Reducing the gaps and inequities between men and women, in other words 'achieving greater equity', is not only an ethical imperative and a matter of justice, it is also a profitable investment in the development of society.

In urban areas, part of the income differentials between men and women can be explained by differences in human capital endowments, and another part can be attributed to discrimination. On average, women earn 66 per cent of what men with the same education earn. This reflects women's position in the labour market, which is characterized by low-ranking service sector jobs with limited opportunities for improving their productivity and raising their income.

If social equity is to be meaningful, it must include gender equity. This means that women must have equal access to education, training and instruction to that of men, as well as opportunities to use and reflect their acquired capacities in gender equity.

The challenges seem clear: full citizenship with gender equality must be established. This means improving living conditions, access to decision-making positions, and equitable participation in all spheres.

Source: PRSP Bolivia.

More specifically with regard to education, one can note the following references in the PRSPs: higher drop-out in Viet Nam and Gambia (because of early marriage and pregnancy), and also enrolment ratios are lower and failure rates are higher among females in the latter. In Uganda, poor hygienic facilities are the cause of absenteeism and drop-out among girls.

Table 3.4 provides a summary of a comparative review of the diagnosis of the gender issue with an emphasis on education. The following comments can be made: (a) only a few papers provide information on the magnitude of gender disparity; (b) there are significant gaps between the income and employment rates of men and women due to the variety of factors referred to

above; and (c) with very few exceptions (Albania and Nicaragua), there are significant gaps with regard to the education and literacy rates of men and women.

Table 3.4 Gender diagnosis

Country	Index – gender poverty gap	Income gap	Employment gap M-F	Enrolment (primary) M-F gap	Enrolment (technical) gap	Enrolment (secondary) M-F gap	Literacy (rates) targets F
Albania			16-21	95-97		3.3-3.7	
Benin				86-64 (rural)	Policy		20-40-60 01-05-06
Bolivia	Yes	Yes 66%					
Cambodia			Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
Gambia		Yes	Yes	77-71			(27-44.5)
Guinea		Yes	Yes	70-44		Yes	(37–15)
Honduras		Yes 5%	Yes				
Mauritania				88-81			
Nicaragua		Yes 20%	Yes	Equal			
Niger	Yes	Yes 25%		Yes			
Viet Nam	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		
Yemen	Yes		Yes	77-44	Yes	Yes	(69-27)
Zambia	Yes	Yes	Yes				(76-71)

Table 3.5 Gender strategy in PRSPs

Country	Legal protection	Access to resources	Capacity building	Access to social services	Employment – Employment in senior positions	Gender incentives for education
Bolivia	J	J	J	Education and Health	J	
Cambodia		J		J	J –J	J
Gambia				J		J
Guinea	J	J	J	J	–J	
Honduras	J	J			J	
Niger				J		
United Republic of Tanzania	J					
Viet Nam	J	J			J –J	
Yemen				J		J

The strategy to address the goal of promotion of gender equality

It is interesting to note at the outset that while promoting gender equality is regarded as a major feature of the international development agenda and is recognized as being a critical goal in the strategy for reducing poverty, in actual fact only very few PRSPs selected this goal and presented an integrated strategy to achieve it (see *Table 3.5*).

Some PRSPs (Burkina Faso and Niger) indicate – often in general terms – the magnitude of the gender issue, but do not make proposals to address it. Several others make general policy statements without specifying how these will be implemented. In a number of PRSPs, piecemeal measures are proposed that often have no obvious links to the diagnosis.

A few illustrative examples of the measures suggested in the PRSPs include: in Honduras, to increase coverage of maternal child assistance, introduce reproductive health and perinatal issues, including prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, prevention of violence against women and support for female micro entrepreneurs; in Viet Nam and Guinea, the prevention of HIV/AIDS contraction among women ought to be addressed; in Benin, efforts should be made to integrate women into traditionally male-dominated occupations; in Cambodia, access of women to decision-making and professional jobs needs to be increased; in Gambia, community awareness of the need for adequate nutrition for pregnant women should be heightened; in Guinea, greater consideration of gender issues in the promotion of craft industry is required, and measures are proposed to increase awareness and incentives to promote changes in social and cultural practices that hinder the development of women. *Table 3.5* summarizes the strategies followed by different countries.

More specifically with regard to education, a set of interesting policy measures can be listed from different PRSPs, but no comprehensive strategy is suggested to address the causes and determinant factors of the educational disparities between males and females. According to a recent review of PRSPs conducted by UNESCO, “targets for elimination of gender disparities are expressed almost entirely in terms of enrolment, with the occasional reference to time-bound targets for increasing the number of female teachers, for example, in Ethiopia and Guinea Bissau. Cambodia, Guinea, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen have 2005 targets for lessening gender disparities, but there is little direct reference to the MDG of eliminating gender disparities or to the EFA gender related goals” (UNESCO, 2002). The following examples extracted from different PRSPs illustrate the partial nature of the measures adopted: in Yemen, the construction of 200 girls’ schools, training institutions and centres for girls; in Gambia, the Scholarship Trust Fund to provide more scholarships for girls; in Cambodia, the provision of scholarships and the construction of dormitories; in Zambia and Guinea, campaigns to mobilize parent-teacher associations and NGOs to enrol girls;

in Mozambique, ensuring at least a 45 per cent intake of women in teacher training courses; in Zambia, improving the living conditions of single female teachers; in Benin, ensuring that 48 per cent of all new intake in primary schools are girls, providing a subsidy for free enrolment and promotion in education for girls, and giving support to communities to achieve continued attendance of girls; in the United Republic of Tanzania, increasing enrolment in tertiary education, including 40 per cent female enrolment.

Box 8. Four strategies for gender equality

Bolivia: To develop and implement actions and policies designed to improve opportunities for women; to create skills and exercise the citizenship of women; to protect and promote women's rights; to incorporate gender approaches in primary education.

Guinea: To provide access to education, training, jobs, productive assets, protection; to give women decision-making power at community and national levels.

Honduras: To assist in the integrated development of poor women by assisting their full and effective participation in social, political, cultural and economic life; empowering their capacities through exercising their rights and equal opportunities in access to healthcare, education and adequate incomes.

Viet Nam: To improve the quality of women's spiritual and material lives; to improve their professional skills; to create conditions in which women can participate equally in all aspects of life: political, economic, cultural and social; to eliminate the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005; to ensure the rights of women to benefit from household assets; to reduce domestic violence towards women and girls at family and society levels.

HIV/AIDS

Many of the countries which have prepared a PRSP are seriously threatened by HIV/AIDS. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa – where most PRSPs have been formulated – are by far the worst-affected countries in the world. In many other countries outside Africa, low national prevalence rates conceal serious localized epidemics in some areas or in certain groups, as in Cambodia, Viet Nam or Central America. For many years, HIV/AIDS was considered as purely a health issue, but it is increasingly recognized that the epidemic is undermining the functioning of the whole economy and society. It is therefore a concern for all sectors.

Several PRSPs mention that HIV/AIDS is a major issue that threatens all social progress and the PRSPs themselves. This is particularly so among African countries, and the Zambian paper expresses it well: “There is no aspect of life that has not directly or indirectly been negatively influenced by the AIDS epidemic. AIDS has become the major cause of illness and death among young and middle-aged adults, depriving households and society of a critical human resource and thereby reversing the social and economic gains made since independence.” Yet not all PRSPs of African countries mention the problem, except in passing, and many of them have not included HIV/AIDS as a cross-cutting issue.

The interrelationship between HIV/AIDS and poverty is complex: HIV/AIDS leads to poverty and vulnerability, both nationally and individually, but poverty also increases the chances of being infected as poor people – poor women in particular (Niger)¹⁰ – are either less likely to know how to protect themselves or cannot afford to, cannot take care of the infected, and are more likely to engage in risky activities. HIV/AIDS leads to poverty and

10. In Niger, 69 per cent of the poorest women have heard of AIDS and only 37 per cent have heard of protective measures. But 91 per cent of the wealthiest women have heard of AIDS and 58 per cent – still a low proportion – know of protective measures.

vulnerability on a national level in different ways: it eliminates the productive sector of society (the 15-59 age group); it reduces workers' productivity and overall production – 20 per cent of rural families in Burkina Faso have reduced or abandoned their farms; it endangers the quality of food; it diverts important resources to replace those who have died and those who are sick; taking care of the sick and of orphans increases the burden on society; reduced production leads to reduced spending on education and health, which in turn reduces the capacity to fight the epidemic. At the family level, it exhausts the meagre resources, and any savings the poor may possess may have to go towards taking care of infected members of the family (Cambodia, Zambia). The loss of a parent, sometimes of both, leads to the loss of the breadwinner, who is consequently replaced by the oldest child of the family. Thus some children drop out of school, some are forced into prostitution, others become street children (6 per cent in Zambia), and few live in orphanages.

It is commonly acknowledged that gender inequalities and discriminatory practices and traditions (Niger), the taboo of prostitution and the denial of its existence – particularly when it is clandestine – fuel the spread of HIV/AIDS, as do internal and external migrations and large movements of populations (Rwanda and Burkina Faso), conflicts, and civil wars, where rape is used as a weapon (Rwanda).

The impact of HIV/AIDS on the functioning of the government in general and on the education sector in particular is rarely stressed. It is mentioned in the *Zambian paper*, where it has taken alarming proportions: according to the document, some 1,600 teachers are dying every year from causes related to HIV/AIDS. The *Burkina Faso paper* mentions that the rate of teacher absenteeism has increased and that sick teachers need to be replaced, but no concrete figures are given and no specific actions are proposed. The effect of the pandemic on enrolment and drop out is rarely documented either: the *Burkina Faso paper*, nevertheless, stresses that children with only one parent have less than a 50 per cent chance of being enrolled, and those who have lost both parents only have a 10 per cent chance of attending school.

Interventions against HIV/AIDS appear essentially in the chapter on health (Burkina Faso, Niger) and it is rarely mentioned in other chapters – those on education, employment, rural development, and gender issues. Some countries mention the need to mainstream HIV/AIDS prevention activities in all sectors (Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia) or to develop a national HIV/AIDS policy. Uganda has developed an AIDS strategic plan that is monitored by the Ugandan AIDS commission. This commission, funded under the health sector, involves the health, social development and education sectors. In Niger, the PRS helped initiate the preparation of such a strategy. Benin has developed a National Strategic Framework which defines the general objectives, strategies and priority actions for a five-year period with a view to reducing the rate of prevalence through a multi-sectoral campaign. In the absence of a medical solution (no vaccine exists and drugs are still unaffordable), prevention is essential. Advocacy, communication, media campaign (Uganda) and preventive education are given some importance, but not all countries concerned actually mention it. Governments also organize campaigns against discrimination (Cambodia).

Education can play a very important role in reducing the spread of HIV, providing support to the infected and affected, fighting against discrimination, and empowering girls, women and children to refuse and avoid risky behaviours. Some PRSPs mention that the curriculum has been (or will be) revised to introduce HIV/AIDS education. Materials and information kits are (or will be) distributed in schools to pupils, students and teachers, as well as in the workplace (Mozambique, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia). Beyond introducing formal courses on HIV/AIDS, some countries stress the need to organize sessions outside school hours, such as peer education (the United Republic of Tanzania), anti-AIDS clubs for youth (Rwanda), or to sensitize adults and groups at risk through the use of radio or with the support of NGOs and community-based organizations.

Few PRSPs, mention activities to protect orphans and allow them to continue going to school, but no specific activities are planned (the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia). Similarly, some PRSPs mention that studies have to be conducted to measure the impact of HIV/AIDS on their education system (Mozambique and Rwanda), but no particular intervention is mentioned with a view to protecting the education system and its functioning, except for the production and dissemination of informative material on HIV/AIDS to students and teachers (Mozambique). The Zambian paper is the only one which indicates that two teachers are to be trained in order to ensure that at least one of them will teach.

In summary

The challenge posed by HIV/AIDS is enormous in Africa, and increasingly in Asia. It is still considered in most PRSPs as a health issue, although it undermines the functioning of the economy and has direct consequences on several sectors. Education in particular can play an important role in curbing the epidemic through preventive education, although this role is being weakened by the effect of the disease on teachers and administrators. Several PRSPs in concerned countries mention HIV/AIDS, but too few suggest concrete measures to attack it. This could be due to the fact that although the experiences of several countries show that the epidemic can be curbed (e.g. Uganda), many countries feel largely powerless. The Tanzanian PRSP progress report expresses the following general feeling: "HIV/AIDS activities have been mainstreamed in the budget of all sectors, but due to low institutional capacity, a good proportion of these funds could not be utilized." The lack of easy solutions and of capacities to handle the problem is indeed a challenge. Since the PRSPs under review were written, awareness has arisen in the international community. One would hope that the updated versions of PRSPs will address this issue more forcefully.

Chapter 4

Implementation

PRSPs are supposed to (a) contain a detailed costing of the various measures proposed and (b) indicate how these can be financed and integrated in the yearly budget or in the medium-term programme. PRSPs specify further their strategy for implementation, starting with the institutional structure, which will be in charge of co-ordinating and monitoring implementation and, more generally, of the monitoring mechanisms. We shall review the kind of costing exercises undertaken for education, the seriousness of which can guarantee – or not – that the proposed measures will indeed be included in the regular budget. We shall also examine the monitoring mechanisms, the institutional arrangements, and the performance indicators chosen to monitor the exercise, as it can be quite illustrative of the importance attached to different strategies and the process followed to monitor their implementation. In certain cases, the targets set were extremely ambitious, and some of them had to be revised later on; certain mechanisms and strategies have been refined. The PRSP is, to a large extent, a rolling plan and an ongoing process; it is to be regularly updated and improved. This is the sign of a useful instrument. But how flexible is this instrument? And how flexible can it be without losing its credibility?

4.1 Costing of policy measures in PRSPs

In principle, all of the costs of the proposed measures for at least three years should be estimated and the source of finance indicated. The reality is quite varied though.

In certain PRSPs, a matrix of all policy measures is given, where the programme, the objective, the targets, the policy measures and the expected

results are given together with a yearly costing of the different measures (Cambodia, Niger, Yemen and Zambia). In this case, it is relatively easy to see the link between the objective of poverty reduction, the intermediate objective, the specific target, the measures proposed and the funds to be allocated. In other PRSPs, the matrix of policy measures is given, but no specific costing is made of each measure (Nicaragua, Honduras and Bolivia). The costing is presented separately according to the individual programmes with more or less detail on a yearly basis, and recurrent costs are separated from development ones (the United Republic of Tanzania). In other cases, costing is very rudimentary, and only rough figures are indicated for education for the three-year periods, generally not separating development from recurrent expenditures (Viet Nam).

There are intermediate cases: countries that have only been able to cost certain measures (Albania) or certain levels only (Guinea). Some countries simply reproduced the total costing of their ten-year education development plan for recurrent and development expenditures (Burkina Faso or Guinea).

Costing of education and training outside the education sector

In the first case mentioned above, where country teams list the different policy measures and indicate their cost, it is possible to identify other education and training initiatives (NFE, skill development and training) proposed under different sector headings or pillars. These can be quite numerous and varied as we have seen above. In most cases, however, this is not done, and little is known regarding the costing of such training and skill-development programmes, including whether or not they have been taken into consideration and costed. An interesting exception is Uganda, which includes tertiary education activities under the pillar 'Framework for economic growth and transformation', and vocational education programmes under 'Increase the ability of the poor to raise their income', and costs them.

Basis on which costing has been prepared

Some countries indicate the basis on which they have prepared their costing (generally unit costs or using specific studies that were done when projects were prepared), others do not, and others even mention that the estimates are indicative only until further work has been done.

Countries that already have a costed education development plan (Cambodia, Mauritania, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania) had a better base upon which to elaborate their cost estimates. Many of these countries already had a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) – at least in education – that provided the necessary information for the costing exercise. The MTEF specifies what the budgetary expenditures will be for the next three years, covering all sources of funding. Several PRSPs mention that the country is in the process of developing such a mid-term budget (see *Table 4.1*).

Costing of recurrent expenditures

Several PRSPs focus on assessing additional development expenditures, and a detailed assessment of recurrent educational costs that may subsequently be incurred is rarely done. New measures that have consequences on recurrent costs are nevertheless costed depending on the country, as discussed above. When the Tanzanian PRSP mentions that fees in primary schools will be suppressed, this had been costed. The distribution of teaching materials, however, is not always costed, depending on the case.

A crucial element in recurrent costs is the treatment of teacher salaries. Education is a very labour-intensive activity. The assumption made regarding the evolution of teachers' salaries has important consequences on the recurrent costs of the programmes and can determine whether or not a country will be able to finance the expansion of its education. At the same time, the possibility

of implementing UPE and enrolling children from poor families depends on the availability of teachers and the quality of the education that they impart, factors which themselves depend on teachers' skills and their level of motivation. Very low salaries are likely to jeopardize the policy if teachers are either difficult to recruit, de-motivated and frequently absent, or if they charge extra fees to deliver the programme. In some other countries, on the other hand, salaries are high¹¹ compared to the GDP per capita and to the fiscal revenue per capita – an indicator of a government's capacity to finance education expansion. The issue of teacher salaries is raised in several PRSPs.

Low teacher salaries seem to be a problem in Albania, Cambodia, Nicaragua and Uganda. One of the first measures taken in Nicaragua and Albania was to increase teachers' salaries quite substantially. These measures were not costed, but it was mentioned that they would appear in the revised version of the PRSP. In Cambodia, teachers' salaries are expected to double between 2000 and 2005. The cost of this measure is listed in the PRSP and is by far the most expensive measure envisaged in education. In Uganda, teachers receive a low salary, but so do other civil servants. Raising only teachers' salaries would be difficult without jeopardizing the cohesiveness which exists in the civil service. In order to overcome this problem, other incentives are provided, such as allowances for teaching in rural areas and training, but the measure is costly and there is no evidence that it succeeds in motivating or retaining teachers. At the same time it is recognized that they are better paid than volunteers and other teachers working in NGOs, many of whom teach the poorest segments of the population. As a result, the issue remains unresolved.

In Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Niger, the issue is the contrary: teachers' salaries are relatively high, and expanding with the present level of unit costs would not be affordable. Structural adjustment programmes in the past have often restricted the possibility of recruiting new civil servants,

11 . If not in absolute terms, at least in relative terms.

teachers included. In countries such as Niger, the reform of the public service included in the PRSP requires that government contain staffing and wages in the public sector. The recruitment of poorly paid volunteer teachers in basic education has been made a condition for reaching completion point of the HIPC initiative. The PRSP in Burkina Faso mentions that the policy has been, and will continue to be, to recruit assistant teachers in order to reduce average salary costs. The intention is also to decentralize the hiring of primary school teachers on terms comparable to those of community teachers in satellite schools. Benin has announced that it will continue to recruit contractual teachers who are paid much less than civil servants. The cost of expanding primary and secondary education has been estimated on that basis. Whether these decisions have been discussed with teachers and teacher unions is not known, neither are the consequences for education quality. How it will be implemented in the long run also remains to be seen: is it a sustainable policy?

In summary

The cost estimates of the proposed measures are a rather weak aspect of many PRSPs. Many are not fully costed. Even when the costing exercise has been done, it is often not possible to link the priority measures outlined and the costing made. Quite often also, only overall figures are given and it is not possible to make a judgement on how realistic the costing is or how poverty-focused the allocations are. Furthermore, the cost implications of some capital expenditures are rarely assessed. Finally, the cost of some crucial measures – such as the impact of an increase in salaries – has not always been assessed, and this may have significant consequences on the recurrent budget and future financial stability of the public sector. In other countries, cost estimates have been done on the basis of reduced salaries, but the measure has not necessarily been discussed with the parties concerned. Thus it is not sure that it will be easily implemented.

What does this mean for the credibility of the PRS? How can we be sure that it will be sustainable? The situation is generally better in those countries where donors and governments have been working extensively to produce a sector development programme, be it within the framework of a SWAp or not.

Of course, PRSPs are a rolling plan and several papers mention that the updated versions will include better cost estimates. The PRSP of Honduras states frankly: “The inclusion in the documents of programmes and projects for each programmatic area of the PRS is not intended to define their precise cost, or to establish a definitive overall cost of the PRS. The precise measurement of cost will be a continuous task, based on priorities and available resources” (Honduras PRSP, 2001). This comment applies to several PRSPs in countries which did not have an education plan. PRSPs are therefore forcing many countries to start preparing an education plan or a detailed strategy and collecting the necessary data.

4.2 Financing prospects in the PRSPs

Sources of finance for education expenditures are sometimes – though rarely – highlighted, but when this is the case, it is essentially to specify funds that would come under the HIPC framework or under previously approved, externally-funded projects. Ethiopia identifies the resources that would be allocated from the HIPC debt-relief initiative, the remainder having to be covered by government fiscal revenues and other domestic resources, such as communities. The PRSPs of Burkina Faso and Gambia also specify the funds expected for education under the HIPC initiative from external donors, as well as the financing gaps. Cambodia specifies, in the operational matrix, the different measures envisaged, their costs, possible financing sources (different donors and/or government budget) and the financing gap. Guyana similarly indicates the source of finance for different priority measures (HIPC, funding agency, etc.). Honduras indicates that most of the measures foreseen

in the PRSP would be financed through existing projects of different agencies or from funds freed by the debt relief in the framework of the HIPC initiative.

Most PRSPs in fact estimate the resources at the global level. Several country teams warn that the estimation of the overall financing envelope is uncertain, and there are several reasons for this: their economy is either in crisis or characterized by great uncertainties, and the price of their major export commodity can be quite fluctuating (oil in Yemen, copper in Zambia). The impact of several measures aiming to improve their system of tax enforcement and administration may be quite limited: several countries are planning a devolution of responsibilities to districts and regions and are quite uncertain on the amount of resources that decentralized levels will be able to mobilize on their own; others are counting on a partnership with the private sector and cost sharing, and assessing resources that can be made available this way is also fraught with uncertainties. Thus, all in all, it is difficult to assess the amount of domestic resources that can be available. External funding may also be problematic as various agencies have often kept a different conditionality and the time required to release funds can be quite long.

Given the uncertainty in the flow of resources, whether budgetary or from donor funding, several countries have developed two or three scenarios showing what could be achieved with different levels of funding. Benin has developed two scenarios: a baseline scenario, and a second scenario which assumes an increase in the level of investments to accelerate growth. Investment in education would be substantially higher in the latter than in the former. Ethiopia and Niger also developed two or three scenarios based on different assumptions on the rate of economic growth: there would be more resources available in education in the high scenario than in the baseline one, even though education remains a priority sector. In Viet Nam, the high scenario assumes a higher level of cost sharing and involvement of the private sector and of households, which may be contradictory to the objective of poverty reduction if the poor are obliged to pay more.

Certain objectives are quite ambitious, but available resources may restrain the poverty reduction programmes quite substantially, hence the importance of correctly assessing resources and prioritizing programmes and measures. It is interesting in this respect to note that different countries will essentially rely on domestic resources to finance their PRS, although external funding remains critical, and that others will essentially rely on external funding. This raises the question of sustainability, which will be discussed below.

In summary

Many countries have to make projections in a context of high uncertainty concerning both the future economic growth and the expected flow of resources from external donors and funders. To face such uncertainties, several PRSPs have developed several scenarios. Again they are to be considered as rolling plans, and there should be enough flexibility to allow countries to readjust their estimates.

4.3 Link with the budget and financial decentralization

To ensure implementation, the policy actions outlined in the PRSPs have to be included in the budget and in the investment programmes. Budgetary reform and the preparation of a MTEF, which follows the priorities set in the PRS, are a key step towards translating the decisions made into recurrent and development funding.¹²

Some countries already have an MTEF, others are either preparing one or are considering doing so based on the work of different sectoral working groups. In these working groups, line ministries play a leading role and donors may in some cases participate (Cambodia, Uganda and the United Republic

12. The MTEF plans public expenditure in a fairly detailed way over several years. It is prepared by the ministry of finance with inputs from other ministries. It is supposed to link inputs (planned funds) to outputs (specific measure to be implemented) and outcomes (objectives to be achieved).

of Tanzania). Certain conditions are obviously required for the introduction and implementation of such frameworks, such as a reform of budgetary techniques, good co-operation between the ministry of finance and other ministries, and predictability of funds, including on-time disbursements of donors' funds. It may therefore take time before all countries actually have a full and reliable MTEF.

Financial decentralization

Implementation of the different policy actions is the responsibility of the different line ministries, and where decentralization is introduced it is also the responsibility of the local authorities. Decentralization of the implementation is a principle that is considered by most PRSPs, but few are fully applying it.

In Honduras, the process of decentralization to municipalities started in the early 1990s, but the process is slow as many municipalities have not developed the technical capacities to assume their responsibilities. The tracking of funds is another issue. In Mozambique, part of the educational expenditures is meant to be planned and financed at the provincial and municipal levels. But the progress report notes that expenditures at that level remain far below expected levels and that budgetary execution is low. This is due to the much reduced capacities of some provinces and municipalities to generate resources locally and to their low capacity to plan and implement projects. Financially, the central government had to step in. In Guyana, the reforms of the local government are expected to allow elected officials to play a key role in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the projects within their communities. As in many other countries, a lack of local capacity and limited local sources of financial resources hamper the decentralization process.

Financial decentralization is handled in different ways and may mean very different things. Some countries were quite optimistic, hoping that local government could raise local taxes. But this capacity is very limited, and it could lead to serious regional inequalities. Other countries are considering

allocating block sums to allow communities to implement their programmes (Guyana), but the question raised is on what basis should funds be allocated, and what should be the margin of manoeuvre for local governments?

Even in countries relatively advanced in terms of decentralization, funds are put at the disposal of the local government, but they have very little to say on the way in which the funds are spent. In Uganda, 66 per cent of spending under the poverty alleviation funds is undertaken at district level, but on the basis of priorities defined at central level (conditional grants). In the United Republic of Tanzania, 20 per cent of basket funds are transferred to districts as block grants. Both countries transfer funds under strict conditions (work plans, budget, performance targets, and technical guidelines). In Bolivia, debt relief funds are transferred to municipal governments through the banking system to be deposited in a special poverty reduction account with a prescribed disbursement schedule.¹³ There is a certain resistance of line ministries to entirely release responsibilities and funds when the sector budget is linked to performance indicators.

Another problem may be the rigidities, delays and leakages in the normal budget execution process. The Royal Government of Cambodia has had to put in place some mechanisms to bypass such rigidities: the Priority Action Programme (PAP) and the poverty targeted programme. The PAP allows the delivery of funds to educational activities in selected provinces and for selected spending units in a much faster way (for example to finance remedial teaching or school construction). The poverty targeted programme uses a similar financial procedure as was applied to the PAP to provide block grants to Cambodia's poorest provinces and to improve, among other things, the delivery of educational services, scholarship schemes, school allowances for teachers in remote areas, and the provision of more support for running costs in rural areas.

13. Allocation to different departments and municipalities is done on the basis of poverty indicators.

In many other countries, decentralization is yet to be implemented, and steps to go in that direction in terms of capacity-building and financing mechanisms are outlined (Mauritania, Niger). It will take time before the policy can be implemented and work successfully, for reasons related to both a lack of resources at local levels and a lack of technical capacity.

4.4 Financing the implementation of the PRSPs

Many of the countries that have prepared a PRSP are eligible for debt relief under the HIPC initiative and for concessional lending.

Once an I-PRSP has been approved, and sometimes even prior to approval, countries may have access to concessional lending from the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) administered by the IMF under the PRGF trust funds and the PRGF-HIPC Trusts. Targets and policy conditions in PRGF-supported programmes are, in principle, drawn from the country's PRSP. More parsimonious than in the previous Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, the PRGF's conditionalities of the IMF are limited to measures that have a direct impact on macroeconomic objectives.

A satisfactory review of the PRGF and a good rate of implementation of the measures taken under the I-PRSP allow countries to access debt relief under the HIPC initiative. The approval of the full PRSP and the satisfaction of a certain number of conditions give them access to further debt relief under the enhanced HIPC initiative. For some countries, funds thus available are quite significant. With the funds available through the budget, they can finance recurrent or development expenditures. When completion point is reached, payment of a debt service is cancelled. There is no further monitoring of implementation. But these funds are not renewable for ever.

Countries can have access to concessional loans. Social sector programmes can thus be financed through a poverty reduction support credit

(PRSC) prepared by national governments and the World Bank, with inputs from other donors interested in budgetary support. For a PRSC to be established, a detailed and much more realistic costing of the different measures has to be prepared. Some guarantees should also exist regarding the reliability and transparency of the government budgetary process. Hopefully, once a PRSP, and later on a PRSC, have been approved, other agencies can join and finance the PRSP implementation through a budgetary support approach.

Transparency in the budgetary process is a condition for more budgetary funding, and this should hopefully be achieved thanks to budgetary reforms and the preparation of an MTEF. To ensure transparency, some countries have created a fund in which all resources to cover poverty-focused actions are allocated. Uganda is one of those countries: it has established a Poverty Action Fund (PAF) to ensure that the budgetary savings from the HIPC multilateral debt relief initiative is really spent on poverty reduction activities. The budget is thus divided into PAF and non-PAF activities. Government has committed itself to reviewing carefully the measures to be financed by the PAF with respect to their incidence on poverty reduction, and to protect PAF items from yearly cuts. The objective is clearly to encourage development partners to provide budgetary support through the PAF mechanisms, and to demonstrate that donor resources are really spent on priority projects (and that there is no fungibility). Honduras has created a poverty reduction fund to co-ordinate the administration of resources directed towards financing the activities of PRS (funds freed by external debt-service relief and other domestic sources). The resources are allocated on the basis of the guidelines established by the social cabinet in consultation with the consultative council. Gambia is also planning to establish a poverty social fund based on its previous experience of a poverty reduction social fund set up by UNDP with funds from the African Development Bank (AFDB) group.

No detailed figures exist on the extent to which the different educational programmes are actually financed by government funds, HIPC funds, and

PRSC, and how these compare to the amounts committed by donors through projects and other initiatives (programme aid or budgetary aid). As mentioned above, some countries rely more than others on external financing, and within this, traditional project funding as well as HIPC funds can be quite significant. In a few countries, some donors have joined the PRSC and finance measures of the PRSP either through general budgetary support (for example DFID, the European Union (EU), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Netherlands, Sweden) or through earmarked support (for example Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, the EU, Denmark, Ireland).

But without a detailed analysis at country level it is impossible to assess to what an extent the preparation of PRSPs has allowed the mobilization of more funds than is planned under the HIPC initiative and under previously agreed projects, and to establish how important the PRSP approach is in changing donors' practices. In some countries, the programme approach (SWAp) has started to change the relations between donors and recipient countries. Will the approval of a PRSP encourage more agencies to opt for budgetary support rather than projects? Whether it will induce them to increase their support beyond that which they commit in the SWAp remains to be studied. It may also not be so easy to isolate the effect of one initiative from that of another. The approval of a PRSP is a condition for being considered in the EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI). This new initiative should have a major influence on funds for education. But how much of the FTI will itself be financed and supported by large numbers of agencies through a 'catalytic fund'¹⁴ or through existing donor channels is yet to be seen.

The impact of PRSPs on the modalities of donors' assistance will depend also on the way they are implemented at country level.

14. Launched and financed by four donors (Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway).

4.5 Monitoring

Monitoring the implementation of the PRS is essential in order to keep the national authorities, the agencies supporting the process, and other stakeholders informed of the progress made towards achieving the different objectives, to identify issues that may arise from inappropriate strategies and implementation processes, and to draw lessons for future actions and efforts. Monitoring and evaluation strategies are an integral part of PRSPs, and an entire chapter is devoted to it in this review. We have reviewed broadly the institutional arrangements as stated in the PRSPs, the processes set in place, and the indicators selected to guide the monitoring exercise. Every year countries are supposed to prepare a progress report that is submitted to the IFI. The PRSP is supposed to be revised every three years. For those countries which have started implementing their PRS, we have reviewed changes that have been introduced in their targets or in their strategy.

Institutional structure for monitoring

In most countries, the institution co-ordinating the monitoring remained the same as that which co-ordinated the preparation of the PRSP: it is often linked to the ministry of finance, the president's office or the ministry of planning (see *Table 4.1*). In some cases, a new structure has absorbed the previous structure. It is not always firmly established at the time when the PRSP is approved, but it becomes so during the course of implementation. In some cases it is the result of some consultations among different stakeholders (Mozambique). In the end, the institutional monitoring structure may be quite complex, with political and consultative sides and a technical dimension.

The process is often led by an overall poverty-monitoring steering committee at the highest level, composed of government members (line ministries) under the chairmanship of the ministry of finance or planning, or the vice-president. The steering committee may or may not also include

representatives of the private sector, NGOs and civil society. A technical secretariat co-ordinates the monitoring activities; it relies on the work done by the institution in charge of collecting national statistics and by the different working groups – or technical committees – in the line ministries. The ministry of finance has, naturally, a central role to play in monitoring the execution of the budget. It is also the focal point for activities conducted by local government and other stakeholders (NGOs, donors, civil society). The role of the steering committee and of the technical secretariat is often mentioned in a very general way in the PRSP, but becomes clearer in the progress reports.

More specifically, the secretariat has to co-ordinate across line ministries, different public agencies and decentralized administration, donor agencies and the private sector to prepare the annual progress report. To complete this document, the secretariat has to collate and interpret data from:

1. The ministry of finance – on the disbursement of funds and the tracking of poverty reduction expenditures.
2. The central statistics offices, which are in charge of organizing household surveys and collecting data on the level of poverty (to evaluate the incidence of certain measures or the impact of the policy followed).
3. Sector ministries. Sector working groups are established in all line ministries and particularly in the four or five ministries primarily concerned (Uganda, Cambodia). In the ministry of education, it is often the planning unit which is made responsible for collecting the necessary data and for acting as a secretariat for the sector working group (Uganda). It monitors the sector results and processes them according to the operational matrix. But where several monitoring exercises are taking place in parallel (education development plan, HIPC initiative, EFA plan), attempts are made to co-ordinate efforts.
4. Different stakeholders: donors, regions and districts, communities and NGOs, academic institutions, private sector organizations. The data collected is both qualitative and quantitative.

Policy guidance and final monitoring are also carried out by the highest authorities (president's office and/or prime minister's office) who review the progress report. Parliament may also be asked to review the implementation of the strategy and the progress report.

A genuine concern is expressed in a number of papers (Cambodia, Mozambique) about the duplication of efforts arising from the high number of reports that have to be written for different programmes and initiatives. In education, the number of initiatives has indeed increased recently, while the number of traditional projects and programmes is still high. This leads to the multiplication of reports to be written and a concern that ministries may end up spending more time preparing reports than taking action. So as to avoid this and not to overburden institutions, in Mozambique the PRSP/Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA) monitoring mechanism is integrated into the mechanisms for monitoring existing planning systems and government programmes. In Mozambique, three types of report are envisaged: monthly reports to monitor sectoral activities; annual reports to present the annual indicators and the annual monitoring matrix and to reformulate annual PARPA objectives for the following year; and annual impact reports. The process involves local and foreign partners in a series of sectoral, provincial and participatory district planning. Similar arrangements have been put in place in Uganda.

The monitoring of PRSPs is relatively light compared to other initiatives. So as to avoid overburdening the countries, only one progress report is supposed to be prepared every year by the nationals, and the PRSP is expected to be revised and updated every three years. Because of the multiplication of initiatives, the process remains lengthy, and this explains why so many countries still rely on external assistance for the preparation of their reports.

As indicated above, monitoring is done centrally. In several countries, the decentralization of monitoring activities is planned, but is not yet effective,

e.g. in Zambia: “the process of planning will eventually be decentralized to the provincial and district level after the decentralization policy is approved”, or in Guyana: “the government will encourage the establishment of committees within communities to monitor the implementation of programs”.

Table 4.1 Implementation: costing, institutional structure and planned process

	Focal point co-ordination	Monitoring	Involvement of decentralized bodies	Participation	Costing and budgeting
Albania	Technical secretariat under Ministry of Finance	Monitoring and evaluation unit (poverty quality evaluation)	Announced	National civil society advisory group	Partial
Benin	National Commission for Development and Fight Against Poverty	Social change observatory	Monitoring committee at local, departmental and regional level	Yes	Yes, global figures
Bolivia	Secretariat under National Economic Policy Council		Yes, at dept and municipal level	Dissemination	No detailed costing for education
Burkina Faso					Cost of 10-year development plan, additional development costs MTEF
Cambodia	Council for Social Development chaired by the Minister of Planning	General secretariat (GSCSD)	Commune councils	Planned	Yes, MTEF gradually introduced in education
Gambia	High level Economic Committee	Strategy for poverty alleviation co-ordination office (SPACO) Stakeholder monitoring group to be established	To be implemented at divisional and local levels	To be implemented	Yes

Table 4.1 (continued)

	Focal point co-ordination	Monitoring	Involvement of decentralized bodies	Participation	Costing and budgeting
Guinea	N/A		Started	Through community councils and NGOs	Some measures only 2001/03 Partial MTEF
Guyana	Poverty Reduction Strategy Secretariat (President's Office)	PRSS	Yes	Planned	Yes
Honduras	Social Cabinet co-ordinated by the President: Consultative Council for Poverty Reduction technical support unit	Technical support Unit National System of Public Management Evaluation Ministry of Finance INE	Municipal decentralization being implemented	Yes	Yes, costing of education measures
Mauritania	Inter-Ministerial Committee for Poverty Reduction negotiating committee		Announced	Announced	Yes MTEF
Mozambique		Existing planning system Poverty observatory	...	Planned	Yes MTEF
Nicaragua	Technical secretariat under the presidency (SETEC)	National council for social and economic planning (CONPES)	Yes	Through CONPES or in local councils	Very rough estimate
Niger	Permanent Secretariat under Prime Minister	Poverty reduction information system	Yet to be implemented	..	Detailed estimates for priority and non-priority sector
Uganda					Yes MTEF

Table 4.1 (continued)

	Focal point co-ordination	Monitoring	Involvement of decentralized bodies	Participation	Costing and budgeting
United Republic of Tanzania		Under Vice-President's Office, National Poverty Monitoring Steering Committee		Planned but not explicit	Yes, but not detailed MTEF
Viet Nam	Ministry of Planning and Investment Inter-ministerial WG		Yes, all levels	Yes	Rough estimates 2 scenarios
Yemen	PRSP preparation committee, chaired by the Ministry of Planning and Development	PRSP Committee; Programme of information and follow up in the Ministry of Planning			Yes MTEF
Zambia	Ministry of Finance and National/Planning Economic Management Department	Planning Economic Dept./Poverty Reduction and Analysis Unit Technical committee	Provincial and district development co-ordinating committees Planning unit	Private sector NGOs CSOs	Yes, costing of policy actions over 3 years

Participation of decentralized authorities and other stakeholders in the monitoring process

The monitoring process is meant to be fairly participatory. The PRSPs announce the intention of several governments to involve local governments and other stakeholders, like local communities and NGOs: “Commune councils and civil society are expected to play a key role in providing feedback and information for monitoring and for providing a warning system” (Cambodian PRSP). A Stakeholder monitoring group will be established in Gambia, which will be constituted of major representatives of stakeholders: donors, CSOs,

researchers, media, parliamentarians, central and local governments, and representatives of the poor. Setting up sub-national administrative structures at the local government level that would facilitate a bottom-up approach is unlikely, due to serious capacity constraints. In Uganda, the use of funds in the PAF is subject to stringent monitoring, which involves participants from the civil society. In Honduras, the municipality is the basic territorial unit that co-ordinates, implements and follows up measures. It is expected to promote the participation of the civil society through meetings in the town hall and community education associations. NGOs and the private sector are also to be involved. In Nicaragua, consultative and monitoring bodies will be set up at the local level based on existing structures, and efforts will be made to include representatives of beneficiaries.

The intentions are there, but nowhere is the strategy to be implemented clearly elaborated. The participatory nature of the monitoring process is better analyzed by looking at the progress reports in those countries where one has been prepared.

Some countries, such as Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, have organized consultations on a large scale. The Tanzanian PRSP indicates the government's intention to involve stakeholders and the civil society in the implementation and monitoring of the PRSP, but the arrangements for such participatory monitoring were unclear. The first progress report, however, mentions that the process set up for education, but also for agriculture, health and rural development, has entailed wide consultation, including zonal and national workshops. A national consultative workshop was also held with a broad range of stakeholders involving the civil society, the private sector, NGOs and donors. A wide range of stakeholders also reviewed the finished report, which was then endorsed through a joint statement by the donor community.

The organization of the participatory process can be quite a heavy undertaking. Some countries have chosen to introduce it gradually (e.g. Albania mentions the risk of including too many participants before the process's instruments have fully ripened and before any experience has been gained) or not to cover all sectors at once.

A good number of issues remain pending in terms of the participatory process. Who should speak in the name of the civil society? Will the consultations be done on an ad hoc or on a regular basis? Through the organization of various workshops, or will it be institutionalized through the creation of different structures at central level as planned in Gambia (but how are the different representatives chosen?) and at local level (but are the resources there)? How transparent will the process be? What information will be made available as input to public debate? What sort of capacity-building needs to be carried out? What will be the role of the media?

An additional problem is the degree of fatigue that may arise if consultations are too frequent, not well organized, and if people do not perceive any real change. In Mozambique, it was made clear that priority should rather be given to implementation and the delivery of action by the State.

Indicators for monitoring

Different indicators are chosen to measure the progress made towards reaching the goals. The resource book on PRSPs separates different kinds of indicators on inputs (measuring the availability of resources which will contribute to reaching the goal), outputs (the number of services or goods generated that will help to reach the goal), outcomes and impact. As the distinction is not always clear, indicators have been regrouped into two broad categories: intermediate indicators (factors necessary to achieve the goal – for example the number of teachers trained and classrooms constructed) and final indicators (to measure the extent to which the goal – of literacy, gender

parity – has been achieved). The resource book recommends closely monitoring both intermediate and final indicators, as changes in the former are more quickly visible than changes in the latter. Intermediate indicators are also more likely to be influenced by the investments of public authorities, while changes in the outcomes are far from being under the sole control of educational policy-makers.

The education chapter of the resource book identifies four key education outcomes related to poverty reduction: primary education completion rate, gender disparity in education enrolments, learning outcomes, and adult literacy rates. Suggested proxy indicators, strangely also called intermediate indicators, include primary intake ratios by gender, gross enrolment ratios by gender, net enrolment ratios, survival rates, repetition rates, drop-out rates, teacher:student ratios, the number of pupils per classroom, the number of adults in literacy programmes in NFE programmes, and pass rates of adult basic education courses, school leaving examinations, and secondary school entrance examinations. The resource books suggest that a balance of input and outcome indicators be included: inputs are not an objective in themselves, but if they have not been delivered, policy implementation will be difficult and corrective measure will have to be taken. On the other hand, if the inputs have been delivered and the outcome indicators do not change, there may be some problems with the programme design, taking due consideration of the necessary time lag in reaching the outcome.

In practice, few PRSPs specify what they consider to be an intermediate or a final indicator. The definition also varies from one country to another. Some countries give a long list of indicators and/or give different lists in different parts of the documents under different headings: education policy targets, key outcome indicators, quantitative targets for poverty reduction, core set of performance indicators for monitoring PRSPs, etc. Targets are not always specified for each indicator. Finally, the list of indicators monitored in the progress report is sometimes changed and simplified, as will be discussed below.

Box 9. Indicators for monitoring implementation

Albania

Outcome

Gross enrolment rate by groups and regions to increase from 90 per cent to 94 per cent in 2004 and 100 per cent in 2015

Secondary education attendance to increase from 40 per cent to 50 per cent in 2004

Average schooling period to increase from 9.5 years to 10 years in 2004

Intermediate indicators

Share of education expenditure in GDP

Proportion of unqualified teachers in basic and secondary education

Pupil:teacher ratio

Source: Albania PRSP, 2002.

Honduras

Net pre-school enrolment

Pre-school completion rate

Net enrolment rate in primary, lower and upper secondary

Completion rate in primary, lower and upper secondary

Proportion of the emerging workforce which completes secondary

Education sector law approved

Completion rate in 9th Grade

Percentage of youth that complete 9th Grade

Drop-out rate and repetition rates

Percentage of 5-year-olds in pre-school

Illiteracy rate

Number of students with scholarships

Number of evaluations of teacher performance

Percentage cost recovery in higher education

Academic average

The indicators in italics have a target attached to them.

Source: Honduras PRSP, 2001.

Uganda

Monitoring indicators and *performance indicators* identified in PEAP

Primary net enrolment ratio
Primary gross enrolment ratio
Pupil:teacher ratio
Pupil:textbook ratio
Pupil:classroom ratio
P7 net enrolment rate
Estimates of quality from Nape
Transition ratio to secondary
Secondary enrolment ratio
Secondary gross enrolment ratio
Access of the poorest 20 per cent in secondary
Literacy rates by gender
Total enrolment in tertiary education
Enrolment by SES and district (tertiary education)
Completion rates (tertiary education)
Post qualification employment (tertiary education)
Enrolment in vocational education
Employment of vocational education graduates

The performance indicators for education in italics (under the pillar of quality of life) are a sub-set of the monitoring indicators with a target. They appear in the progress report.

Source: Uganda PRSP, 2000.

United Republic of Tanzania

Outcome indicators

Eradicate illiteracy by 2010
Achieve gender equality in primary and secondary by 2005
Increase the proportion passing the standard 7 examination at specified marks

Intermediate indicators

Gross primary enrolment rate to increase to 85% in 2003

Net primary enrolment rate to increase to 70%

Drop-out rate to reduce from 6.6% to 3%

Proportion of children completing primary education

Proportion passing the standard 7 examination at specified marks to increase from 20 to 50%

Transition rate to secondary to increase from 15% to 21% in 2002/3

Increased secondary enrolment

The indicators in italics also appear in the progress report.

Sources: United Republic of Tanzania PRSP, 2000.

Yemen

Enrolment rate in basic education: total males and females

Increase the share of education spending

Share of graduates in technical faculties

Raise the share of female students in higher education

Source: Yemen PRSP, 2002

Tables 4.2 and 4.3 summarize the set of performance indicators that have been selected for monitoring purposes in the different countries. The following comments can be made:

Almost all countries (16 out of 18) have included an indicator on the enrolment rates in primary education, generally the gross enrolment rates (GER). Two countries have not done so, presumably because attendance at primary level is no longer an issue: they have chosen to take only one indicator on the completion rate. Six countries have added the net enrolment ratio (NER) – a more precise but more difficult indicator to obtain.

Thirteen countries have an indicator to measure gender parity: enrolment ratios by gender, or proportion of girls enrolled at primary level. Five countries

do not have such an indicator, and 11 do not include any indicator on the proportion of girls at secondary level, in spite of the fact that gender parity is a specific objective of EFA and of the millennium goals.

Other indicators measure disparities between urban and rural areas (five countries), between regions, specifying attention to be paid to remote areas and to certain regions and/or ethnic groups (two countries), or even between income groups (one country).

Twelve countries have included an indicator on repetition or drop-out rates; 11 add the completion rate at the end of primary or basic education (or the retention rate).

Countries having included an indicator on learning achievements based on examination results are much fewer (4 out of 18).

Thirteen countries only have included an indicator to measure the literacy rate overall or by gender. This is surprising again as it is a key objective of the Dakar Framework for Action. While most countries have specified that action will be taken in this area, the latest indicators may show that it is not such a high priority, or in the best case that they do not believe that it is easy to change such an indicator.

Twelve countries have at least one indicator on inputs at primary level, generally the pupil : teacher ratio or the proportion of trained teachers on the one hand and/or the proportion of the budget (GNP) devoted to education on the other. The number of countries that have included an indicator on the resources to be allocated to education is in fact limited (six out of 18), and this may be a worrying sign for the future implementation of EFA. Three French-speaking African countries have an indicator on the unit cost which has to be reduced, and this works as real conditionality.

Six countries only have an indicator on early childhood development. But ten countries have an indicator on secondary education (GER2, percentage

finishing ninth grade, transition rate to secondary education) and six have included an indicator on skill-development programmes. Few countries have an indicator on higher education.

On the whole, indicators that have been selected measure access and increases in enrolment. Few measure achievements (learning achievement, pass rates in examinations, literacy rates). This is not really surprising, as it is more difficult to have an impact on achievements than on enrolments, but the limited number of indicators on inputs to measure efforts made to raise quality is more surprising.

No detailed indicator, i.e. with a specific target, appears to monitor the implementation of education or training programmes mentioned under other sectors (with the notable exception of gender, which is also an objective of the education sector).

The monitoring exercise leads to an appraisal of performance, and the fulfilment of the target set for that indicator may or may not determine the release of funds. Obviously, the more limited the set of performance indicators and the more realistic they are, the more limited the risk of downside failure. Because of this connection with the release of funds, the choice of appropriate indicators is crucial. As the experiences of certain countries show, the choice of certain indicators can have a perverse effect.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the number of districts covered by the school map was one of the indicators selected to trigger the release of HIPC funds. It therefore became extremely difficult to challenge the methods used in such exercises. In Uganda, it was found that the inclusion of capital items amongst the indicators of performance caused the administration to focus on capital construction rather than on maintenance, and this could end up distorting the original policy.

After their first experience, Uganda drew a certain number of lessons concerning the choice of indicators which may be relevant to other countries (National planning framework on which to develop detailed sector strategies [PEAP], Vol. 3, 2001: 64):

Performance indicators need to be consistent with the MTEF and realistic; performance indicators need to be small in number. They should monitor recurrent indicators rather than development ones; Where a ratio is used (such as pupil:teacher ratio), projection of absolute numbers should also be given, so that it is clearer whether the distortion comes from fewer pupils or fewer teachers. Performance targets should be set for indicators where there is a monitoring mechanism already in place giving accurate and comparable data.

Table 4.2 Performance indicators for monitoring primary education (outcomes)

	GERI	GER girls J – % girls J J	Reduction other disparities	Learning achievements	Retention rate – Completion rate	Repetition rate – Drop-out rate
Albania	J		Regional Different groups			
Benin	J	J J J			J	J J
Bolivia				Proportion of education with 8 years of schooling Learning outcomes in maths and language	Grade 4 completion rate by gender	J J J
Burkina Faso	J Intake rate	J	Gender. Least privileged areas. Rural area			

Table 4.2 (continued)

	GER1	GER girls J – % girls J J	Reduction other disparities	Learning achievements	Retention rate – Completion rate	Repetition rate – Drop-out rate
Cambodia	J NER	J NER J J	Ethnic groups Remote areas		J J	Promotion repetition rate
Gambia	J	J J J				
Guinea	J	J	Rural urban Regions			J
Guyana	J			Number of CSEC passes	J	
Honduras					J J J 9 year basic education	J J J
Mauritania	J	J J J			J by gender	
Mozambique	J				J	J J
Nicaragua	NER	J	Rural areas Multi-grade classes offering G6	J put a system in place	J	Promotion rate
Niger	J	J J J	Urban rural Region		J	J
Uganda	NER	NER	Income group	Pass rate		
United Republic of Tanzania	J NER	J	Gender rural/urban	Pass rate grade 7 at specified mark	J	J
Viet Nam	NER	J	Ethnic groups		J J	J J J
Yemen	J	J				
Zambia	J NER	J NER			J Proportion of population with 7 years' basic education	J

Table 4.3 Indicators on primary education (inputs)

	Textbooks	No. of classrooms built/rehabilitated	P/T	P/classroom	Share of budget on basic education	Unit cost
Albania			J			
Benin			J			
Bolivia		No. of complete schools			J Share of budget on schools over total education expenditure	
Burkina Faso						J
Cambodia	Spending on textbook per pupil. Student:book ratio		J Share of non-teaching staff		Share of education in recurrent budget. Share of basic education in education budget	
Gambia						
Guinea		J J J	J Teachers required	J		J
Guyana			Pupils per trained teacher % trained teachers			
Honduras						
Mauritania					Education as a % of GDP	J
Mozambique						
Nicaragua		J		J		
Niger			J		Education budget as a % of GDP	J
Uganda		J Teacher houses	J Trained teachers	J Pupils/ textbook		

Table 4.3 (continued)

	Textbooks	No. of classrooms built/ rehabilitated	P/T	P/classroom	Share of budget on basic education	Unit cost
United Republic of Tanzania						
Viet Nam						
Yemen					J	
Zambia	Pupils/ textbook No. of scholarships given to the poor		J	J	J Expenditure on basic education	

From this point of view, the choice of indicators in the tables appears to be realistic: almost all the indicators can be computed on the basis of data collected through the routine system of the ministry of education. It would seem, however, that too few indicators concern inputs and mechanisms of implementation, and possibly too many concern outcomes.

This becomes problematic if the targets set for each indicator are not realistic. In several instances, the targets set appear unrealistic. Examples of unrealistic targets are given below:

Benin's PRSP wants to increase retention from 45 to 57 per cent over three years when the drop-out rate is unlikely to fall very rapidly.

Niger is hoping to increase its primary enrolment from 37 per cent in 2000 to 48 per cent in 2005. Even more optimistic is the proposed increase in the proportion of students completing primary education from 24.5 per cent in 2000 to 44 per cent in 2005.

Table 4.4 Indicators monitoring other levels than primary

GER2	GER2 girls – % girls in secondary	Transition primary/secondary	P/T	Proportion trained teachers	Repetition rate secondary	Manuals/ students	Literacy rate – Total among 15-24 year olds	Early childhood education	Other levels
Albania	J								
Benin						(Refurbished classroom)	J – female literacy rate		
Bolivia		Access of women to technical training					Access of women to literacy		
Burkina Faso							J – by gender – poorest provinces		
Cambodia	NER	J – J – ethnic minorities	J				J – J J	J	TVET students
Gambia	GER lower secondary	– J J					J by gender		
Guinea	J	Reduce disparities		J	J	J	J – No. of NAFA centres built	J	Capacity-building in the education system
Guyana	J			J	J			GER	

Table 4.4 (continued)

GER2	GER2 girls – % girls in secondary	Transition primary/secondary	P/T	Proportion trained teachers	Repetition rate secondary	Manuals/ students	Literacy rate – Total among 15-24 year olds	Early childhood education	Other levels
Honduras	% pupils finishing 9th grade						J	J – % of 5 year olds in pre-school	No. of vocational centres/ % graduating from technical schools/ % cost recovery higher ed/ No. of scholarships
Mauritania		J	J						
Mozambique	J – Upper primary	J							Adult & rural women literacy rate
Nicaragua							J	J	
Niger							J	J	
Uganda	NER	NER by gender	J	J		J	J	J	Technical vocational
United Republic of Tanzania	J – Average schooling period. Increased secondary enrolment	J							

Table 4.4 (continued)

	GER2	GER2 girls – % girls in secondary	Transition primary/secondary	P/T	Proportion trained teachers	Repetition rate secondary	Manuals/students	Literacy rate—Total among 15-24 year olds	Early childhood education	Other levels
VietNam	NER	NER						J – J		
Yemen										Increase % of girls in higher education & sciences studies
Zambia	% pupils finishing 9th grade							J – Female literacy rate/ Literacy rate in the poorest province		Increase in enrolment in skills training; university

In cases where the objectives and targets are very unrealistic, it is expected that the first progress report will propose their revision.

Implementing and updating the PRSPs in education

Once the PRSP is approved, the government is expected to prepare every year a PRSP progress report, which outlines the progress made in implementing the PRS and updates the PRSP. It describes new developments, as well as measures which have been taken to address the remarks made and the gaps identified by the previous JSA. The progress report is assessed by staff of the IMF and IDA (JSA) and endorsed by the boards of the IFIs.

Analysis of progress reports shows that in the limited number of cases available, quantitative targets have been achieved. However, some countries have had difficulties in implementing their policy actions for different reasons. These have to do with: (a) the lack of capacity to implement the measures as they were planned; (b) a shortage of funds; and (c) structural problems.

In Uganda, for example, the slow process of teacher recruitment by the Ministry of Public Services slowed down the implementation of UPE and the country failed to achieve some target performance indicators. Upon identification of the problem, two measures were taken subsequently: (a) a revision of the administrative procedures – new performance indicators state that new staff should be hired on a government pay roll within 30 calendar days; and (b) the decentralization of payroll management. This latter measure created another problem, which made it necessary to start a tracking study on payroll management.

In Burkina Faso, most of the indicators on enrolment ratios have been reached, except in the poorest regions. The progress report indicates that this was not due to a lack of funds, and that there was apparently enough space in existing schools. The problem is more a question of inappropriate location of schools and/or a lack of demand. In the latter case, this may require a different

policy and a change in the organization of education provision and/or content, an issue that has not been raised in the strategy.

The progress reports illustrate a number of problems that countries face when implementing their policy: absenteeism of teachers, difficulty in sending teachers to hardship areas (making it necessary to introduce incentives, such as teacher houses, hardship allowance), low quality of education (expansion took place at the expense of quality), increased demand for further studies and post primary education (stressing the need to develop a strategy for the development of learning opportunities at post primary levels).

The United Republic of Tanzania is an illustration of this case. Most of the indicators for primary education increased as hoped. Only one benchmark (that of a 50 per cent pass rate at standard 7) will not be met and will be revised downward. The development of a comprehensive development plan allowed the fine-tuning of certain measures and a re-assessment of the resource requirements. The institutional framework for PRSP monitoring was also put in place and refined. The report notes that the rapid quantitative expansion following the abolition of fees was accompanied by a decrease in quality and learning achievements. The second progress report emphasizes issues of teacher education and training, teacher development, and programmes to increase textbook availability so as to improve quality. It also raises the issue of post primary education – secondary education and non-formal educational opportunities – for which a policy will have to be designed.

These examples show that the PRSPs are fairly flexible and can be considered as work in progress. Through an iterative process, governments are able to adjust and improve their strategy. Several governments announce their intentions to review the progress made and update the original targets set, policy measures and financial envelopes (Mauritania, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania). Of course, progress reports do not outline very detailed strategies, and it is difficult to judge how serious and profound the

revisions will be. A thorough joint review only takes place every three years, during which countries can come up with a new PRSP. It will be necessary to analyze more closely the changes proposed in the new PRSPs before drawing conclusions. Hopefully, thanks to close monitoring, PRSPs will become an effective instrument to guide national poverty reduction efforts in consultation with a wide range of domestic stakeholders and development partners. This has a cost and the preparation and the monitoring of PRSPs generally mobilize a lot of resources: (a) to organize meetings; (b) to collect big surveys on poverty levels, when the current systems of data collection and statistics are still weak (including in education); and (c) to prepare reports, etc. Whether this has led to a real improvement in the decision-making process in all sectors, and in education in particular, still remains to be seen. This brings us to raise a number of critical issues with respect to the effectiveness of PRSPs.

Chapter 5

Critical issues and prospects

Are PRSPs credible? Are they likely to transform the international assistance paradigm and achieve that which they promise? A number of critical issues emerge from the analysis of PRSPs in this respect. They have to do with the credibility of the education strategy proposed, the financing prospects, and the absorption and implementation capacity of different countries. Credibility is a legitimate question when reviewing the experiences of the PRSP approach, because of its widespread acceptance (in more than 60 countries) and its potential impact – if it is successful – on the international agenda of EFA and the MDGs, and on poverty alleviation.

At the outset, it is recognized that the soundness, feasibility and likelihood of success vary widely among countries, reflecting the quality of the PRSPs and, in particular, of the education sector strategy. It is therefore difficult to draw general conclusions. It is with this caveat in mind that the following observations are made.

5.1 Credibility of education policies in the PRSPs

Because EFA goals are regarded as being among the crucial dimensions of PRSPs, it may be useful to relate some of the conditions accepted by different agencies (UNESCO in particular) to review the EFA action plan:

1. *The importance of broad participation and country ownership:* Indeed the PRSP approach requires that this condition be met, as can be seen from a review of JSA reports. Most of them include a section devoted to this condition. Many studies of countries' experiences and the international review of the PRSP approach conclude with criticism of the inadequate participation of some stakeholders – especially from

the non-organized civil society – as well the excessive role played by the IFIs, notably the IMF/IDA. Of course, more can – and should – be done, particularly in monitoring, to increase social accountability. None the less, as the international review indicates: “there is widespread agreement on four key achievements of the PRSP approach to date: a growing sense of ownership ...; a more open dialogue ...; a more prominent place for poverty reduction in policy debates, and an acceptance by the donor community of the principles of the PRSP approach” (IMF, 2002).

2. *Gender strategy*: One of the greatest single stumbling blocks to the achievement of EFA, and certainly of PRSPs, is gender discrimination, both in education and in other social, economic and political sectors. The evidence gathered from the PRSP review and by UNESCO do not yet suggest that gender strategy is widespread, and even in the very small number of countries where it is, it does not seem to be the case that the gender strategies have always received adequate resources and that “gender planning and budgeting have been central to planning for EFA so far” (UNESCO, 2002). Failure to achieve a drastic reduction of gender disparities is likely to have very negative consequences on the achievement of the PRSP goals.
3. *Education chapters in PRSPs tend to reflect to a large extent education plans and strategies*: As the UNESCO review of EFA indicates: “too many education plans have been broad statements of intent with many objectives lacking prioritization”. A similar observation can be made in other sectors and in PRSPs in general. Because of resource constraints – budgetary and external funding – but also because of structural constraints and lack of appropriate strategies, actual disbursements may in the end not address the crucial dimensions of a PRSP, but rather those of the most organized stakeholders competing for funds. Higher education, for example, could in the end very well receive preferential treatment over the provision of basic education in rural remote areas and in literacy programmes, with negative consequences for the achievement of poverty

reduction targets. At the same time, very little higher education resources are generally addressing the research needs required to tackle poverty alleviation.

Thus there is no reason to believe that the education policies proposed are not adequate, but there is no strong evidence that they are either. Too often targets are fixed or measures proposed without any mention to how they will be implemented and how they will specifically address the needs of the poor and the most disadvantaged. Not enough consideration seems to be given to the time needed to change well-established attitudes and long-standing behaviours and the way to go about it.

5.2 Financial credibility of the PRS

Economic growth

Macroeconomic frameworks presented in the PRSPs aim at enhancing pro-poor growth and promoting macroeconomic stability. For this reason, all PRSPs devote a great deal of attention to producing an analysis of the economy's sources of growth, both from a macroeconomic perspective (national and international) and taking into account structural and institutional constraints and challenges. A basic premise of all PRSPs is that rapid, sustained and broad-based growth is essential for poverty reduction. There is therefore a package of both financial and economic policies and measures (fiscal, rate of exchange, public sector management, inflation, balance of payment, external resources, etc.) included in the PRSPs. As a matter of fact, this cluster is part of what is required and often prepared with direct support from the IMF. At the risk of over simplifying the argument, economic growth affects the capacity to finance social sectors, pro-poor measures, and sustainability of the PRS in the long run, for example until 2015. Hence, because of the critical importance of economic growth for the credibility of the PRS, there seems to be a tendency to adopt rather ambitious growth targets well above demographic growth, so that any increase in income per capita will be significant enough to determine

the rates of poverty reduction consistently with the MDGs. Some countries – although these are exceptions – have included two scenarios (low and high) to take into account the weaknesses of their economies and manifest commitments to bring about radical changes. But a number of countries have recognized that they have included optimistic GDP growth rates, assuming improved prospects for their exports (mining, energy, etc.) and the terms of trade, stronger capacity to control inflation, predictable and significant increases in external funding, etc.

Although it is too early to test the credibility of the GDP growth rates adopted in the PRSPs – as only a very small number of countries have completed full PRSP, and even they only very recently – *Table 5.1*, which compares past achievement and projected growth rates, provides some useful indications:

1. In almost all countries, projected growth rates are higher than recent trends suggest. A review of the arguments provided by the PRSPs recognizes the risks of not meeting the targets. In each country the factors determining the likelihood of attaining the growth targets are different: Some are linked very strongly to external conditions, others to variables beyond the control of governments (for example the large size of the informal sector, weather conditions, foreign investments).
2. For those countries with revised assumptions on growth rates (Albania, Bolivia, Guinea, Mauritania), the revised figures are lower than those anticipated (except in Bolivia).
3. In some countries (represented here by Niger), none the less, the rather low growth rate assumed, combined with a rather high level of demographic growth, suggests that the chances of a substantial reduction of poverty is unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Needless to say that even if high rates of growth are achieved, it is not in any way a guarantee that they will translate into a significant reduction in

poverty. As the JSA report (28 August 2001) put it after reviewing the PRSP of one country which assumes a growth rate of 8 per cent over the period 2001-2025: “the overall objective of the PRSP is to reduce poverty by about 30 per cent over 19 years, from 70 per cent in 1997 to below 60 per cent in 2005 and 50 per cent by 2010. The basis for these figures is not given, although they appear to be drawn from computer simulations of the poverty impact of different growth scenarii ...”. This could be regarded as an understatement.

Altogether, the close links between the education sector and PRS goals led to the conclusion that unless the optimistic growth and revenue projections in the PRSPs are met, the pro-poor policies and measures, as well as the education goals, will be difficult to finance. “The few progress reports that have been produced point to these potential difficulties (for example Uganda’s progress report shows several of the education goals to be unrealistic within the original time frame and budget plans)” (UNESCO, 2002: 111).

Relationships with other donor initiatives in education financing

If the domestic resources are not available as planned, could external funding possibly complement their absence? It is not possible to answer this question in this paper, but a review will be made of the complementarities of the PRSP approach with other external financing initiatives.

In an increasing number of countries, a SWAp has been adopted in education, whereby donors and governments work jointly on the preparation of the diagnosis of the sector and of a medium-term plan, with detailed costing and financing proposals. The movement from project aid to programme financing and the preparation of SWApS started before the creation of PRSPs. Nowadays, more countries have prepared a PRSP than have a fully fledged SWAp. What is the relation between the two? To what an extent do they reinforce each other?

Table 5.1 GDP growth indicators

Country	Past (average)							Forecasts (revised rates)			
	1990	1995	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	04/05	2010	2015
Albania						6.5	7(6.0)				7
Benin			(5.2)	(5.2)	(5.2)	(5.2)	5.3	5.8	6.8/7		
Bolivia	5.3	4.7	5.5	0.6	2.5			5.0		(5.5)	(5.5)
Burkina Faso			(5.6)	(5.6)			4-5	4-5	7	7	7
Cambodia					5.4 4.5	6.3	4.5	5.0	6.0		
Gambia							(6.0)	(6.0)	6.2	10.0	10.0
Guinea		(4.4)	(4.4)	(4.4)	2.0		(5.0)		(5.0)		
Guyana	(7.4)	(7.4)	(7.4)		-0.7	1.3	3.5	3.8	4.8	(7.0)	
Honduras	(3.2)	(3.2)	(3.2)	-1.9	5.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.1		5.6
Mauritania rev. 2	(4.4)	(4.4)	(4.4)	4.1	5.2 5.0	5.5 4.6	6.0 5.1	6.5 5.5	7.0 6.1		7.0 6.5
Mozambique		3.3	11.3	7.3	2.1	10.0	9.6	9.8	9.3	7.9	(8.0)
Niger		2.6	3.3	-0.6	0.1	(4.0)			(4.0)		
Nicaragua		(4.8)	(4.8)	(4.8) 7.4	(4.8) 4.3	3.0			5.0		
Uganda				7.7	4.5	(7) 5.0	(7) 5.5	(7) 6.3	(7) 6.5		
United Republic of Tanzania			4.0	4.7	5.2	5.6	6.0				
Viet Nam	(7.5)	(7.5)	(7.5)	(7.5)	6.8	6.8		7.0	7.5		
Yemen	(3.5)	(3.5)	(3.5)		5.1	3.3	4.1	3.6	(5.3)		

There seems to be an interesting interaction between PRSPs and SWApS. On the one hand, PRSPs seem to have introduced a concern for decentralization and participation in SWApS. SWApS are essentially aid co-ordination mechanisms: They are, by definition, more focused on one particular sector and more concerned with service delivery, swift implementation and

good reporting. In spite of the similarities in procedures, they do not originally share the PRSP philosophy of emphasizing broad-based participation. In many countries, SWAp are prepared by experts in the ministries with the help of donor-supported technical assistants. As more and more countries develop their own PRSPs, however, a gradual evolution of SWAp practice toward more inclusive processes can be noted, as in the United Republic of Tanzania (ECDPM, 2003).

On the other hand, SWAp have largely contributed to PRSP preparation and implementation. Where plans exist that have been developed within the framework of a SWAp, it is usually regarded as the central source of information for the preparation of the PRSP; hence it determines to a large extent what is actually included in the PRSP. The education administration and donors tend to rely entirely on the diagnosis made in the SWAp and on its recommendations regarding education policies and priorities. In certain cases, one can observe a direct import of the objectives of the development plan supported by the SWAp without clear specification of the link between the objectives chosen and the poverty reduction objective (e.g. in higher education). However, the CSOs – especially the representatives of the poor – do not necessarily feel aligned with the SWAp, and in the working groups or during the consultative process of the PRS, they have made recommendations – introducing, in particular, pro-poor measures – that could not be regarded as outcomes of the SWAp. In this respect, the elaboration of the PRS has been an opportunity to improve the SWAp method by widening its scope, generating more participation and ownership in the education sector.

SWAp also largely contribute to financing the objectives of the PRSPs. Although the SWAp are more concerned with financing the education ministries, the implementation of PRSPs has allowed some of the SWAp funds to be transferred to local governments, as in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.¹⁵

15. In the United Republic of Tanzania, 20 per cent of basket funds are transferred to districts as block grant: this represents 75 per cent of local government funds (ECDPM, 2003).

In terms of finance, it is impossible to state at this stage which source is the largest provider of external funds – projects and programme funds under SWAp, HIPC or PRSC – or whether PRSPs have increased these funds. It depends on the country. Projects and programme funds probably remain the largest provider of funds. Governments and IFIs hope that the PRSPs will encourage more donors to join in budgetary funding through the PRSC. Uganda, for example, projected the share of budgetary support in all its international assistance to increase significantly from 37.4 per cent in 1997/98 to 43.7 per cent in 99/00 and 50.6 per cent in 2003. SWAps have opened the way to budgetary support in education, but few actually implement full budgetary support. Several donors still apply within the programme approach a basket funding approach, whereby funds are earmarked for particular sub-sectors, activities or regions. Even budgetary support can be earmarked for particular sectors or sub-sectors. One of the agencies' conditions for providing more budgetary support is the existence of a clear macroeconomic framework and transparency in budgetary procedures. The preparation of MTEF and budgetary reforms as envisaged in the PRSPs should help.

Within the framework of the EFA commitment, a new initiative has emerged which aims at helping countries attain their objective of universal primary education by 2015. The EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) has been established as a global partnership to accelerate progress towards the goal of universal primary school completion, for boys and girls alike, by 2015. To be eligible for this initiative, countries need to have an approved PRSP and a credible education plan. According to official documents, the PRS is what guarantees that the countries are committed to poverty reduction, that the education strategy is country owned and focused on improving the education of the poor, and that government is committed to education financing in an overall medium-term expenditure framework. This new facility is envisaged as a flexible funding instrument, which should promote a co-ordinated and coherent approach among donors. It encourages the financing of recurrent expenditures through budgetary support and the use of PRSCs. Conditions

are tighter than in the PRSPs, as countries are strongly advised to respect a certain number of norms or benchmarks listed in the indicative framework. This concerns some 14 indicators covering resource mobilization (e.g. recurrent spending on primary education as a percentage of total recurrent spending on education), student flow indicators (e.g. percentage of repeaters, percentage of an age group that completes the last grade of primary education) and service delivery indicators (e.g. instructional hours of pupils, average annual remuneration of primary school teachers as a multiple of GDP per capita).

How will this new initiative develop? How well will it articulate with other approaches? How many countries will be concerned? How much will be required from countries before funds can actually be disbursed? Several of these questions are all pending, although the latest developments seem to indicate that all low-income countries will be eligible for FTI. What will that mean in terms of the projects and reports that are required from countries? In the end, the most important constraint might not be financing, but the lack of implementation capacity.

5.3 Lack of implementation capacity and capacity-building

“Not all activities planned in the participation action plan have been implemented for a variety of reasons, including limited time and lack of financial resources and capacity constraints.” This comment is found in several progress reports.

As much as a lack of finance, a lack of capacities to design, plan, negotiate, manage funds, and co-ordinate different actions and actors at ground level is a reason behind the low implementation of policies and objectives. Lack of implementation capacity has been a recurrent problem in many developing countries. Low implementation at central level is one of the reasons why decentralization has been forced on countries and introduced so rapidly in some cases. This was only to find out that there was even less capacity to

implement at local levels or that opportunities for corruption and evaporation of funds would increase as the number of people concerned increased.

Training programmes have been and are still being organized: projects and programmes involving a great deal of technical assistance have been implemented. In spite of these, the lack of managerial capacity remains. The PRSPs raise this issue in several instances, and numerous training programmes are mentioned and planned for ministerial staff, regional staff, local staff, NGOs, CSOs and communities. Will that be enough? Who will organize all these courses? Who will provide the training, and how? What will be the follow-up to these training courses? These are all crucial questions. A few training courses here and there will not be enough. Training institutions have to be created and strengthened, and universities and NGOs should have a role to play there. Local support also has to be provided on the job.

But training itself is not enough. It has to be encapsulated in an overall strategy of capacity-building, which goes way beyond training to tackle such issues: (a) lack of strong institutions: in government and in civil society; in management, training and research; (b) high turnover of key personnel (for political reasons or because of a lack of incentives at individual and institutional levels); (c) remarkable differences in the salaries of managers and those of project staff (the best national staff leave to go and work within project units or for different international agencies abroad); (d) differences in the salaries of civil servants and private sector employees; (e) managerial difficulties (difficulties in recruiting and keeping full teams; administrative blockage and rigidity, which are such that trained people do not use their skills); and (f) extraordinary complexity of the procedures.

This lack of capacity is evident in certain countries where a large proportion of the budget is spent on consultants and technical assistance while people have been trained. In Uganda, the amount spent on consultants is equivalent to more than 25 per cent of the government's own wage bill.

Cambodia is another case where technical assistance is absorbing a large amount of funds.

The training needs of the education and training sector are enormous and cover different levels, targeting not only individuals, but also teams, and covering many different skills: technical (in economics, financial management, staff management, legal aspects, and statistics); social (negotiation skills, communication skills); analytical; pedagogical; etc. Audits of training needs at central, regional and local levels have to be made, and comprehensive strategies have to be elaborated. Professional development schemes have to be set up. Institutions have to be strengthened: ministries, regional offices, offices in districts and municipalities, schools and communities. Clear rules of the game have to be established, specifying the roles of the different actors, particularly at the central and decentralized levels. Monitoring capacities have to be strengthened, as should the means to react rapidly to the problems identified. Budgetary and reporting procedures have to be simplified and made more transparent, and means to improve communication between the different stakeholders have to be found between economists in the ministry of finance, decision-makers and managers in the ministry of education, politicians and all the actors in the education system.

Unless some co-ordinated measures are taken to implement a more enabling environment with a minimum of financial incentives and to tackle in an integral and co-ordinated way the issue of institutional capacity constraints, the PRS will not be implemented.

5.4 Policy issues

As a recently published ODI paper stresses, three important policy-related aspects are linked to the introduction of the PRSP process: political dialogue, institutionalization of the PRSP process, and accountability (ODI, 2004).

There are two ways of considering PRSPs: as a technocratic means of channelling aid and as a political means of serving what is essentially a political agenda (reducing poverty) – at country level and possibly at donor level. It is not easy to say whether PRSPs have played the first role or the second one. It would appear that the first perception is triggered by the fact that, more often than not, in order to maintain good working relations, aid agencies and IFIs prefer to leave aside the aspect of political dialogue, which is frequently a contentious issue. Political dialogue remains problematic both in terms of issues that are tackled (e.g. redistribution of wealth, corruption, government and governance reforms) and in terms of good timing. Political systems are a key component, determining the success or failure of PRSPs. This very link to the political situation implies that PRSPs are the image products of the context from which they are derived. Although this hypothesis would benefit from more systematic testing, three determining factors can be isolated:

- the political saliency of poverty;
- the political capital credit to poverty reduction efforts;
- the nation building process and associated ideologies.

Engaging in political dialogue increasingly means widening the scope of collaboration within the donor community, and even more with local actors. There are indications that the PRSP approach will involve a recasting of relationships and work methods at all levels, as partnership is most effective when projects coincide.

The paper further states that the effective and long-term impact of PRSPs at country level depends on the institutionalization of the PRSP process. Two of the means of achieving this are through a public service reform (PRS) or public expenditure management (PEM). PRS and PEM require a degree of government interest and commitment, a stable political system, and a degree of government transparency in its actions, especially as far as planning and the budget formulation processes go. Not all countries, however, are equipped/

willing to embark on this venture. Indeed, institutionalization is linked to some form of governance reform, which is a sensitive matter. Open systems of resource management are liable to run counter to political interests.

Donors are increasingly demanding accountability from domestic actors. There is little evidence, however, that PRSPs have impacted on domestic accountability structures. This confirms the importance of the iterative aspect of the PRSP approach, which would allow for improvement over time. When improvements have occurred so far, they were brought in mostly through donor budget support (e.g. SWAps). Though this is a step towards financial accountability, donors are now also looking into accountability at the political level. It is hoped that domestic accountability will come through the increased demand for accountability towards donors.

Chapter 6

Concluding remarks

This paper has reviewed some 18 PRSPs which were approved by the end of 2002, and has attempted to assess how education is being handled in such papers. It has reviewed in particular the extent to which education policies may have been modified to take into account the needs of the poorest segments of the population.

PRSPs represent a formidable work which has been undertaken at country level to diagnose poverty and to identify the main lines of a strategy for addressing such poverty. Education, with its emphasis on building skills and capacities and its role in people empowerment, is given major importance in such papers, and a series of priority actions are outlined. The processes by which strategies and priority action are defined emphasize participation, partnership and ownership. Large surveys and consultations have been conducted. For the first time in many countries, the poor and the disadvantaged were consulted and had a chance to express their needs and priorities. This in itself is a major achievement. A large amount of data has also been collected, which can be analyzed to further refine some of the strategies proposed.

Naturally, the various papers are unequal: some are extremely elaborate, while others have been prepared more rapidly and have relied on lower quality information. PRSPs are, to a large extent, work in progress, and it can be expected that in the coming years new versions will appear, which will be more elaborate and specific. Lessons will also be drawn from the first experiences, which will allow corrections to be made to future approaches. A number of remaining issues and uncertainties should be addressed. We have listed below those that seem the most important.

6.1 Economic and financial uncertainty

A basic premise of all PRSPs is that economic growth and development is essential to poverty reduction. On the one hand, more employment opportunities will allow the integration of more people in the process of development; on the other, more resources will be available to spend on social programmes and on specific projects targeting the poor. Estimates of the domestic resources available are particularly sensitive to the assumptions made concerning future economic growth. As was shown, such projections are largely on the optimistic side. What will happen if such projections are not realized? Will external assistance be able to provide the necessary funds to support the implementation of the strategy? And even if this is the case, what will the sustainability of such policies be in the long run? What will happen when all HIPC funds will have been exhausted? Will bilateral aid and concessional lending through PRSCs be able to guarantee continuity? Given the predominance of the World Bank in the process, it remains to be seen how many agencies will join the PRSP process. What will the importance of funds provided under the sector-wide approach, the traditional projects approach and the PRSC be? Also, a certain number of countries are already highly dependent on external aid, including to pay teacher salaries. But how dependent should they be? What will happen if sudden changes occur in the political or economic context of either donor or recipient countries?

These are critical questions that require urgent attention from both the IFIs and the international co-operation agencies. In education, a certain number of initiatives (FTI) exist that will help finance education in a limited number of countries. Here again the same question of sustainability arises, to which a question on the fungibility of funds may be added. Can we be sure that the funds raised from the social sector will be used for the social sector, including education?

While observers of the trends and instruments used by external agencies to finance education can only welcome the growing interest for budgetary support, leading to more ownership by governments, formulae will have to be worked out to avoid education resources being passed to non-social and non-productive sectors (e.g. armaments).

More funds could be made available to the poor through a policy of wealth and income redistribution, and this question is not raised. Could it be raised in future PRSPs?

6.2 Conceptual uncertainty on the best education strategies to eradicate poverty, and the importance to be given to different educational levels

It is taken for granted that the best strategies to eradicate poverty are those that target the poor. But it is not clearly spelt out how this should be done, and post primary levels, which could support the development of productive sectors and/or facilitate the adoption of another, more pro-poor development strategy, are not considered. The best strategies are assumed to be those that try to integrate and retain the poor and the disadvantaged in the education system. Several targets are set, but they are rarely put into operation. It is not clear how countries hope to implement them. Strategies are proposed, such as opening more schools in rural areas, recruiting more teachers, lowering the cost of education for families (through the abolition of fees) and for government (through programmes of volunteer teachers in some countries), through nutrition programmes to sustain demand . . . But experience shows that it may not be enough, and that it is not by giving more of the same that the learning achievements of the poor will increase. Different learning strategies and different approaches to train teachers are needed. At present, this aspect is conspicuously absent from the PRSPs. It should be high on the agenda when it comes to revising PRSPs.

At the same time, NFE is not being given much attention. Non-formal programmes and alternative education strategies might very well be the only ways of enrolling the poorest of the poor, working children, or young adolescents who have never been to school. The PRSPs give priority to primary education, and somewhat neglect literacy and early childhood development. Experience shows, however, that formal schooling often lacks flexibility to adjust to the needs of the poorest children. Literacy campaigns, in particular those aimed at female youngsters and adults, ought to be given more prominence, as it is well known that female literacy is highly correlated with the education and achievement of their children. The fact that literacy is not one of the monitoring indicators in several PRSPs is, from this point of view, worrying.

Skill-development programmes, however, are included, and it is interesting to note that most of the time they are mentioned in support of other sectoral programmes. Strategies for higher education, on the other hand, and the potential role of that level of education in the elaboration of pro-poor strategies of development, are not adequately covered. No capacity-building strategy, no research strategy and no reorientation of a country's development approach can take place without a reform of higher education.

6.3 The challenge of integrated development and inter-sectorality

One of the most interesting features of PRS is their emphasis on inter-sectorality and the way they integrate in one coherent strategy the macroeconomic framework, investment in productive sectors, human development and governance issues. From the point of view of the education sector, however, the integrated approach remains superficial and abstract. Several actions are proposed to expand basic education, giving particular attention to facilitating access for children from disadvantaged groups and those living in remote rural areas. But the education chapter is developed very much independently from the other chapters and from what is proposed in

other sectors. No particular attempt is made to synchronize actions with those in other sectors. Neither is any such synchronization advocated. The exceptions are the skill-development programmes mentioned above, which are generally proposed by other ministries to support strategies of rural development, micro credit schemes, infrastructure development, etc., and not by the ministry of education. Even proposals on technical and vocational education make little or insufficient reference to employment opportunities. Other attempts to integrate inter-sectorality come under cross-cutting issues – education being an empowerment tool, but the need to integrate actions is not addressed as an issue *per se*. The approach adopted is a pragmatic one in the hope that things will, in the end, fit together, and that the educated poor will find a way of making a living. Generally, integration is easier at the local and regional levels. Hopefully the decentralization that is advocated will facilitate such integrated approaches.

6.4 The challenge of capacity building

Institutional development and capacity-building are a strong preoccupation of the PRSPs, but it is also an enormous challenge. It is being addressed in an integrated approach combining training courses, the promotion of a conducive economic environment, institutional changes, good governance and transparency, as well as the fight against corrupt practices. The decentralization strategies and the training programmes for local leaders are part of the same objective of capacity building and empowerment of communities. But the challenge is enormous and will take time, much more time than is considered in the document, before the measures and actions will bear fruit.

Decentralization is a case in point. Most PRS advertise decentralization as a way to overcome the rigidities of the central level administration and to promote democracy and empowerment of the population. But such measures are proposed without knowing what the human and financial resources are at the local level and without taking into account the time needed to build such

resources. In fact, very few decentralization policies have been successful in the absence of a central level capable of orienting and monitoring the actions taken at the local level. Rapid and unguided decentralization could very well lead to more inequalities, concentration of the decision-making power in the hands of a few groups, vote-catching and corruption.

6.5 The contrast between the participatory approach and the central role of the ministry of finance

There is a contrast between on the one hand the proposed participatory process and the iterative approach proposed, allowing different stakeholders to influence the strategy, the choice of operational actions and the monitoring, and on the other hand the overwhelming prominence of the ministry of finance in the whole process. Is this a contradiction? Not necessarily. A strong leadership is required to advance a coherent strategy of poverty reduction, and funds have to be mobilized and released in a timely manner if the most innovative actions are to succeed. But the end results may nevertheless be that the line ministries – and within the line ministries, the administration – feel less concerned by the policy, and that in the end not much will happen at the ground level. Schools may be opened, but the various actions necessary to improve quality may not be taken when and where needed.

A certain parallel can be made with the fact that although several donors and financing agencies may be involved at different moments in the preparation and implementation of PRSPs, some of them feel that the PRSPs are dominated by the IFIs in general and the World Bank in particular. Within the donor agencies – and within the Bank – a similar concern was occasionally expressed that the process was dominated by the economists, while the educational specialists are neglected. The argument of the first group is that even if the strategy proposed is not very elaborate, costing is not very precise and implementation is not well planned, as long as it is proposed and owned by the nationals it has a greater chance of being implemented and targeted

towards the poor than does a perfect strategy elaborated by non-nationals. The process, the ownership and the priorities of those directly concerned are the three elements that matter. The second group, on the other hand, argues that education may not necessarily be given due attention, that there is a danger that the funds may be used for other purposes, particularly – due to the fungibility of funds under budgetary support – if actions are not well and swiftly planned. Another danger is that more attention will be paid to numbers (access) rather than to quality.

Is this tension serious? It is a fact that economists are given much importance in countries and in agencies, and that financial matters and procedures tend to predominate over social and pedagogical considerations. It is a fact also that procedures tend to be so complex that countries are obliged to recruit international consultants to prepare the necessary documents, and in spite of that, the funds are not released on time (a concern expressed by a number of ministers on different occasions, such as during ADEA meetings).¹⁶ The PRSPs have considerably simplified the procedures and made reporting relatively light compared to many other initiatives. But monitoring procedures are not that light *vis-à-vis* their emphasis on collecting household surveys instead of stressing the need to improve existing mechanisms of data collection. The multiplication of initiatives, each one with separate reporting needs, may soon be another issue. On the one hand, these procedures could be simplified so as not to overburden countries, speeding up disbursements and facilitating greater involvement of nationals, and thus ownership. On the other hand, educational planners and managers have to become more familiar with the financial procedures.

It is a fact also that in countries where an education plan exists and has been prepared, be it within a SWAp framework or not, the education chapter of PRSPs is of much higher quality and generally more realistic. The PRSP

16. ADEA Steering Committee meeting, Chantilly (France), 23-25 October 2002.

team has drawn on existing work, and the education specialists have contributed to the process. The PRSP approach and its deliberate focus on the poor has also helped sharpen or correct some of the strategies proposed to the extent that the two processes have been mutually beneficial. One should hope that in the future, economists and education professionals will work better together. This last remark is valid both in the countries and among and within the international financial and technical partners: the IFIs and specialized agencies of the United Nations, as well as bi-lateral co-operation agencies.

In this respect, one of the most striking outcomes of the review is the spectacular and rapid influence that PRSPs have already had on the culture of international co-operation:

1. The impact at country level is well illustrated by the importance attached to the need for more participation and ownership, granted that during the 1990s, several agencies – in particular the World Bank – emphasized the requirement that “the governments be in the driver’s seat” when preparing policies, plans and programmes – in particular in the education sector. None the less, to a large extent,¹⁷ very little progress in countries’ ownership could be recorded. With the introduction of PRSPs, the role of agencies seems to become clearly less dominant during both preparation and implementation. The interviews conducted at the IMF and the World Bank suggest that the role of IFIs remains crucial, but at the same time governments’ involvement at the different stages of the process of preparing and implementing a PRSP was so broad, that ownership did increase significantly within a very short period.
2. The impact on the agencies’ mode of doing business is also very significant, to cite but three illustrative examples: (a) the division of labour between the IMF and the World Bank, relying on the World Bank on

17. With few exceptions, such as Ghana.

issues such as the increase of teachers' salaries, can be interpreted as an encouraging sign (more attention would, in principle, be given to educational dimensions); (b) the question of absorptive capacity being given less attention when review and approval of a PRSP is undertaken by the managing authorities of the IFI; and (c) more internally at the World Bank, by necessity, the increased attention to be paid by the country economists to education, and the pressure (implicit) on the education task managers to take a more inter-sectoral view when dealing with the education and training sector.

While there is still a long way to go in improving the PRSP process and the challenges for both governments and agencies remain daunting, what has been achieved in the past four years is encouraging and seems to open the way for a more optimistic outlook.

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Appendix 1

HIPC Initiative, PRSP and Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF)

Summaries on the developments

In 1996, the World Bank, together with the IMF, launched the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC): “ it is an agreement among official creditors designed to help the poorest, most heavily indebted countries escape from unsustainable debt. It enables poor countries to focus their energies on building the policy and institutional foundation for sustainable development and poverty reduction.”¹⁸ “The Initiative entails coordinated action by the international financial community, including multilateral organizations and governments, to reduce to sustainable levels the external debt burdens of the most heavily indebted poor countries.”¹⁹

In 1999, the HIPC initiative “was significantly expanded”²⁰ and became the enhanced HIPC initiative. “A number of modifications were approved to provide faster, deeper and broader debt relief and to strengthen the links between debt relief, poverty reduction and social policies.”²¹

One of the modifications made is the link between the initiative and poverty reduction strategies: “at the September 1999 Annual Meetings of the World Bank and IMF, Ministers endorsed that country-owned poverty reduction strategies should provide the basis of all World Bank and IMF concessional lending, and should give the use of resources freed by debt relief

18. <http://www.worldbank.org/hipc/faq/faq.html>
19. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/hipc.htm>
20. <http://www.worldbank.org/hipc/faq/faq.html>
21. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/hipc.htm>

under the enhanced HIPC initiative. This strategy will be reflected in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) prepared by country authorities with broad participation of civil society.”²² Within this new framework, “relief is based on a country’s ability to pay within a total context of poverty reduction and economic growth.”²³

The criteria for eligibility under the enhanced HIPC initiative are thus the following: “to be considered for HIPC initiative assistance, a country must:

- Face an unsustainable debt burden, beyond traditionally available debt-relief mechanisms.
- Establish a track record of reform and sound policies through IMF (The Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), which is the IMF’s low-interest lending facility for poor countries)²⁴ and World Bank supported programmes (the International Development Association (IDA) concessional lending).²⁵
- Have developed a PRSP through a broad-based participatory process (an interim strategy is sufficient to begin the process).²⁶

“The first step is to carry out a debt sustainability analysis to determine the debt relief needs of the country. If a country’s external debt ratio after traditional debt relief mechanisms is above a threshold for the value of debt to exports (or, in special cases, the value of debt to fiscal revenues), it qualifies for assistance under the Initiative. Once a country has made sufficient progress in meeting the criteria for debt relief, the Executive Boards of the IMF and World Bank formally decide on a country’s eligibility, and the international

22. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/pdf/prspbroc.pdf>

23. <http://www.worldbank.org/hipc/faq/faq.html>

24. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prgf.htm>

25. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/overview.htm>

26. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/hipc.htm>

community commits to reducing debt to the sustainability threshold. This is called the decision point²⁷ (“it is determined whether the country’s debt is sustainable or not”).²⁸

Moreover, “countries seeking assistance under the HIPC initiative should have a poverty reduction strategy in place at the decision point (the point at which debt relief is committed by participating creditors)”.²⁹ And we saw that “an interim strategy is sufficient to begin the process”³⁰. Indeed, “to avoid delays for countries that have been working toward their decision point, but have not had time to prepare a final strategy, there will be a transition period that will allow a country to reach its decision point if it can demonstrate a commitment to poverty reduction. A country can show this commitment through an interim PRSP.”³¹

“An I-PRSP is meant to outline a country’s existing poverty reduction strategy and to provide a road-map for the development of the full PRSP (a timeline for poverty diagnostics, recognition of policy areas that need evaluation and reform, envisaged participatory process, etc). It is expected that a full PRSP should be completed within about 12 months of an I-PRSP, though more time can be taken if needed. If a country requires more than a year between its I-PRSP and the full PRSP, reports on progress toward PRSP preparation need to be submitted for continued assistance.”³²

“Once a country reaches its decision point, it may immediately begin receiving interim relief on its debt service falling due. In order to receive the full and irrevocable reduction in debt available under the HIPC Initiative, however, the country must establish a further track record of good performance

27. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/hipc.htm>

28. <http://www.worldbank.org/hipc/faq/faq.html>

29. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/pdf/prspbroc.pdf>

30. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/hipc.htm>

31. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/pdf/prspbroc.pdf>

32. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/overview.htm>

under IMF- and World Bank-supported programs. The length of this second period depends on (i) the satisfactory implementation of key policy reforms agreed at the decision point, (ii) the maintenance of macroeconomic stability, and (iii) the adoption and implementation for at least one year of the PRSP. Once a country has met these criteria, it can reach its completion point, at which time lenders are expected to provide the full relief committed at the decision point.”³³

This new framework is linked to the adoption of the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) by the World Bank, a new approach of the co-operation for development “by which countries can achieve more effective poverty reduction”.³⁴ It lies in four basic principles: “Long-term, holistic development; Results orientation; Country ownership; Country-led partnership.”³⁵

PRSPs rely on the same principle as the CDF. Indeed, “both envision development that is : country-driven; comprehensive; long-term; results-oriented; coordinated with partners.”³⁶ Thus, “poverty reduction strategies transform the principles underlying the CDF into a plan of action for poor countries.”³⁷

“There is no blueprint for building a country’s poverty reduction strategy. Rather, the process should reflect a country’s individual circumstances and characteristics. Nevertheless, the core principles underlying the PRSP approach suggest that PRSPs should have”:³⁸

33. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/hipc.htm>

34. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/STRATEGIES/CDF/0,,contentMDK:20072662~isCURL:Y~menuPK:60746~pagePK:139301~piPK:139306~print:Y~theSitePK:140576,00.html>

35. [http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/FB8DF9F47EEA556485256D3B00736667/\\$file/CDF_Reach.pdf](http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/FB8DF9F47EEA556485256D3B00736667/$file/CDF_Reach.pdf)

36. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/pdf/prspbroc.pdf>

37. <http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/pdf/prspbroc.pdf>

38. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/overview.htm>

- “A description of the participatory process that was used: A PRSP will describe the format, frequency, and location of consultations; a summary of the main issues raised and the views of participants; an account of the impact of the consultations on the design of the strategy; and a discussion of the role of civil society in future monitoring and implementation.
- Comprehensive poverty diagnostics: A good understanding of the poor and where they live allows the PRSP to analyze the macroeconomic, social, structural and institutional constraints to faster growth and poverty reduction.
- Clearly presented and costed priorities for macroeconomic, structural, and social policies: In light of a deeper understanding of poverty and its causes, the PRSP sets out the macroeconomic, structural, and social policies that together comprise a comprehensive strategy for achieving poverty reducing outcomes. It is important that policies are costed and prioritized as far as possible so that they do not become a ‘wish list’.
- Appropriate targets, indicators, and systems for monitoring and evaluating progress: A PRSP will define medium- and long-term goals for poverty reduction outcomes (monetary and non-monetary), establish indicators of progress, and set annual and medium-term targets. The indicators and targets should be consistent with the assessment of poverty and the institutional capacity to monitor, and the policy choices in the strategy.

While PRSPs are expected to provide an adequate overall treatment of each of these areas, the specifics with regard to content and focus will obviously differ substantially across countries.”³⁹

39. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/qanda.htm>

Evaluation of PRSPs:

“A Joint Staff Assessment (JSA) evaluates the soundness of each PRSP, and accompanies the PRSP to the Boards of Executive Directors of the World Bank and IMF. This document is an assessment of whether or not the strategy presented in the PRSP constitutes a sound basis for concessional assistance and debt relief from the IFIs. ...

It should be noted that a positive JSA does not signify agreement with all the analysis, targets, or public actions included in the PRSP or that the PRSP represents the best possible strategy for the country. Rather, it indicates that the PRSP is a credible framework which the World Bank and IMF will support.”⁴⁰

Moreover, Annual Progress Reports “are prepared each year to inform the society and the international community about changes in key poverty indicators and key developments on the policy front, and will be submitted to the Boards of the World Bank and IMF.”⁴¹

Moreover, “a PRSP, I-PRSP, or annual progress report supported by the Boards of the Bank and the Fund within the preceding 12 months is a condition for:

- HIPC countries to reach a decision or completion point;
- Approval of the IMF’s PRGF arrangements or reviews;
- IDA (World Bank) concessional lending.”⁴²

40. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/qanda.htm>

41. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/qanda.htm>

42. <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/overview.htm>

Appendix 2

Chronology of the PRSPs' implementation process in the selected countries

Country	I-PRSP	Assessment I-PRSP	PRSP preparation status report	Assessment of the PRSP preparation status report	PRSP JSA ^{4,5}	PRSP JSA ^{4,5} n°1	Progress Report n°1 JSA	Progress Report n°1 JSA	Progress Report n°2 JSA	Progress Report n°2 JSA	Progress Report n°3 JSA	Progress Report n°3 JSA	Decision point	Completion point
Albania	2000				2001 + supplement to the PRSP in May 2002	2002	2003	2003					m	m
Bolivia	2000				2001	2001							2000	2001
Burkina Faso					2000	2001	2001	2001	2002	2002			2000	2002
Cambodia	2000	2000	2001	2002	2002	2003							m	m
Gambia	2000	2000	2001	2001	2002	2002							2000	Expected 2 nd quarter 2004
Guinea	2000				2002	2002							2000	Expected late 2004
Guyana	2000				2002	2002							2000	Expected 4 th quarter 2003
Honduras	2000	2000			2001	2001							2000	Expected end of June 2004

43. Joint Staff Assessment.

Appendix 2 (continued)

Country	I-PRSP	Assessment I-PRSP	PRSP preparation status report	Assessment of the PRSP preparation status report	PRSP ISA	Progress Report n°1	Progress Report n°1 ISA	Progress Report n°2 ISA	Progress Report n°3 ISA	Decision point	Completion point
Mali	2000		2001	2001	2002	2003				2000	2003
Mauritania					2000	2001	2002	2003	2003	2000	2002
Mozambique	2000	2000		2001	2001	2003	2003			2000	2001
Niger	2000			2002	2002	2003	2003			2000	Expected 4th quarter 2003
Rwanda	2000			2002	2002					2000	Expected 4 th quarter 2003
Uganda				2000 ⁴⁴		2001	2001	2002	2003	2000	2000
United Republic of Tanzania	2000			2000	2000	2001	2001	2003	2003	2000	2001
Viet Nam	2001	2001		2002	2002						
Yemen	2000			2002	2002						
Zambia	2000	2000	2001	2002	2002					2000	Expected mid-2004

44. PRSP not available on the Internet.

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