



## **Brief Review of PRSP Collaborations by Country September 2007**

From 2001 to 2005, Gender Action conducted seven in-country capacity building workshops to help civil society groups and governments in the global South promote gender sensitive Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), national strategies written by countries to meet World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) specifications.<sup>1</sup> Although PRSPs in countries where Gender Action has worked tend to be more gender sensitive, it has become crystal clear that PRSPs are instruments for rich countries that dominate the World Bank and IMF to force poor countries to embrace reforms which reduce government economic interventions in favor of free-market approaches. Beginning in 2006, Gender Action officially withdrew from PRSP processes.<sup>2</sup> Below is a brief recap of the PRSP consultations Gender Action participated in highlighting lessons learned.<sup>3</sup>

### **Bangladesh**

In 2005 Bangladesh produced one of the most gender-sensitive PRSPs to date worldwide. Local groups are largely responsible for this outcome.

In 2003 Gender Action conducted a deep gender analysis of Bangladesh's Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper with local partners. There we collaborated with a large range of citizen groups to establish the groundwork for developing a strategy to ensure that Bangladesh's PRSP will be thoroughly engendered. Our special focus was on macroeconomic issues. The 2005 PRSP's macroeconomic sections were expected to address gender issues with the aim of empowering disadvantaged women, and a cursory review indicates they have achieved this goal.

Following up on our Bangladesh fieldwork, Gender Action invited local partner Nasreen Khundker, an economist and gender expert at the University of Dhaka with whom we collaborated in engendering the PRSP, to analyze the impacts of World Bank loans in her country. Khundker presented her findings at a 2004 Gender Action-Bank

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<sup>1</sup> For a gender analysis of PRSPs, see Zuckerman, Elaine and Ashley Garrett. 2003. [Do Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers Address Gender Issues? A Gender Audit of 2002 PRSPs](http://www.genderaction.org/images/2002PRSP&Gender.pdf). Published by Gender Action.

<sup>2</sup> To learn more about why, please see: <http://www.genderaction.org/engendering.html>.

<sup>3</sup> To request copies of Gender Action's assessments of the documents described below, please email: [info@genderaction.org](mailto:info@genderaction.org).

Information Center-Heinrich Boell Foundation co-sponsored forum held at Washington DC's Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.<sup>4</sup>

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

In 2005 Gender Action worked with Bosnians to address the gender impacts of PRSP macroeconomic reforms at a workshop for PRSP macroeconomics and gender team members and other PRSP stakeholders. Elaine Zuckerman facilitated the discussion on how macroeconomics often ignore women's work in the unpaid care economy; gender differences in paid employment and in policies affecting consumption, savings and investment; macrostability and social needs; revenue sources including taxation; PRSPs and related structural adjustment measures; and the gender impacts of trade. Elaine also conducted a training on Gender Budget Initiatives to help the former socialist transition country engender and maintain social safety nets in the face of IFI-imposed economic reforms. For example, local organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina oppose the IFI-mandated value added tax, which places a relatively higher burden on poorer women and men.<sup>5</sup>

### **Eritrea**

In Eritrea in 2003, Gender Action partnered closely with the umbrella National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) to impact and change IFI and government policies nationally and locally by ensuring they address gender issues thoroughly in food security and poverty eradication initiatives. To facilitate this, Gender Action provided significant capacity building and mentoring to NUEW to strengthen its gender integration skills. Gender Action conducted a comprehensive gender analysis of Eritrea's Interim Poverty Reduction and Draft Food Security Strategy (FSS) strategies. In the field, we participated with NUEW in a series of key stakeholder interviews that were advocacy efforts to increase understanding of the importance of gender mainstreaming and its critical role in the PRSP and FSS. Together with NUEW we led a key stakeholder workshop that trained participants in gender integration. Stakeholders developed important recommendations for engendering Eritrea's forthcoming PRSP and final FSS.

### **Malawi**

Gender Action deeply analyzed Malawi's PRSP (MPRSP) for its treatment of gender issues, concluding that it insufficiently promoted women's empowerment. For example, the health section has little to say about gender issues and the macroeconomic sections neglect gender considerations completely, including the repeated discussions about structural adjustment measures such as state owned enterprise privatization. Despite the creation of an MPRSP Gender and Empowerment Thematic Working Group (GETWG) that submitted strong gender inputs for the MPRSP, the MPRSP gender content was remarkably thin. GETWG's civil society organizations (CSOs) explained to

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<sup>4</sup> See Nasreen Khundker's publication entitled, "A Gentle Touch? Gender and the World Bank — A Critical Assessment" at <http://www.genderaction.org/images/Khundker%202004-A%20gentle%20touch.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See Elaine Zuckerman's presentations "An Introduction to Gender Budget Initiatives" at [http://www.genderaction.org/images/Intro\\_to\\_Gender\\_Budget\\_InitiativesFINAL.pdf](http://www.genderaction.org/images/Intro_to_Gender_Budget_InitiativesFINAL.pdf) and her related presentation on Engendering Macroeconomics in PRSPs at: [http://www.genderaction.org/images/2005-9\\_EngenderingMacronomics.pdf](http://www.genderaction.org/images/2005-9_EngenderingMacronomics.pdf).

Gender Action that the MPRSP Drafting Team contained no gender-sensitive members and neglected GETWG inputs. MPRSP writers told Gender Action that gender got lost as a cross-cutting issue. One author stated that “gender was squeezed out of the MPRSP by lack of space”.

Gender Action partnered with a Malawian gender task force comprising CSO, donor and government members to identify entry points for engendering MPRSP implementation and monitoring indicators -- to track the extent to which implementation made progress in reducing gender gaps. With the task force in 2003 Gender Action organized a workshop for a broad range of MPRSP stakeholders where participants began the process of creating an Action Plan to engender MPRSP implementation. The workshop also proposed institutionalizing the MPRSP gender task force to prevent evaporation of the workshop proposals and to maintain the pressure.

### **Mozambique**

Mozambique's first Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty 2003-2006 (PARPA) hardly addressed significant gender gaps nor linked them to poverty reduction. It often failed to integrate sex-disaggregated data that are readily available, for example from the UNDP Human Development Reports, the World Bank Genderstats, and UNAIDS country profiles. Like most other PRSPs, the PARPA does address gender gaps in one or two sectors but neglected to do so in other important national issues. PARPA minimally examined the gender dimensions of health, agriculture and rural development but did not at all address them in important areas like HIV/AIDS, governance, employment, business development and macroeconomic policies. In 2003 the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) invited Gender Action to identify areas where the PARPA could be strengthened by identifying and addressing gender issues. Gender Action's analysis acknowledged where the PARPA included gender in its analysis and strategies, identified areas where it fell short and made suggestions as to how gender could be incorporated including relevant impact monitoring indicators. Local citizen groups used Gender Action's analysis for south-to-south country training on maximizing PRSP engendering.

In 2005, Gender Action worked closely with PRSP stakeholders in Mozambique to increase their capacity for engendering Mozambique's second national action plan, PARPA 2006-2010, with a particular focus on the harmful impacts of macroeconomic policies on low-income women.

### **Namibia**

Namibia, another southern African country hit by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, produced a Poverty Reduction Strategy and a National Poverty Reduction Action Programme (NPRAP). Neither successfully integrates gender, HIV/AIDS, nor the gender-HIV/AIDS nexus.

Gender Action's 2004 analysis demonstrates where the NPRAP falls short on gender and HIV/AIDS, suggests entry points to integrate gender and HIV/AIDS, and recommends select corresponding indicators to monitor implementation progress in reducing gender gaps.

After meeting with numerous stakeholders, Gender Action contributed to a capacity building workshop for civil society and government participants from every corner of the country where we practiced integrating gender and addressing HIV/AIDS in poverty reduction strategies and plans.

## **Rwanda**

Rwanda's 2000 Interim PRSP, among the first IPRSPs prepared, hardly addressed gender issues. But many stakeholders in this country, where women compose some 60-70 percent of the post-genocide population, were keen to ensure that the PRSP would address women's needs and narrow gender gaps.

In 2001 Gender Action partnered with women's groups under the Pro-Femmes Tsesse-Hamne umbrella and the Ministry of Gender and for Women and Development (MIGEPROFE) to conduct advocacy to engender the PRSP contents including government expenditures. As in many other countries, Gender Action undertook field visits to rural and urban communities far from the capital to interview a broad range of stakeholders. Then we played a key role at a stakeholders workshop that the ministries of Gender and Finance and Economics co-sponsored. The workshop provided capacity building to a large number of citizen groups and officials in mainstreaming gender into the PRSP and identifying monitoring indicators.

When Rwanda's PRSP appeared in 2002, it was among the most gender sensitive produced to date. Gender Action's description of the Rwandan PRSP engendering process can be read in Elaine Zuckerman's paper, "Why Engendering PRSPs Reduces Poverty, and the Case of Rwanda" published by the World Institute for Development Economics in 2001.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://www.genderaction.org/images/dp2001-112.pdf>.