

***Participatory Regional Poverty  
Diagnoses, Strategies, Plans,  
Programmes and Projects for the  
Reduction of Poverty in Honduras***

***DFID – TRÓCAIRE – FOSDEH / ASONOG***

**REPORT:**

**The Strategic Impact of the Regional Strategies for  
Combating Poverty**

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## **I. Overview**

### **Background**

In March 2000 the Honduran government began drawing up a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in the context of the HIPC II initiative. Honduras reached decision point in July 2000 and the then government embarked on the construction of the official PSRSP. This was completed in July 2001. In parallel, Interforos Nacional, a national level umbrella civil society organisation comprising over 320 members began to carry out an intensive consultation process that involved the consolidation of civil society proposals in a document that served as an input for the general strategy. FOSDEH, a national level NGO and then member of Interforos, and ASONOG, a sister organisation in the Western region of Honduras, were heavily involved in this initiative. This document, called the

“Alternative General Strategy for Combating Poverty”, was presented to the then President of the Republic on 7 December 2000.<sup>1</sup>

This document was not taken into account in the elaboration of the national PRSP document, and many civil society organisations felt that the consultation process that the government undertook was not participative or representative and neither did it involve any commitment to include civil society input. The exclusion of civil society proposals was evidence of this, and furthermore civil society felt that the concept of participation had been emptied and that they had been manipulated to facilitate government compliance with a procedural condition of the PRSP process.

#### Civil society proposals for greater participation

At the end of 2001, the government changed and the new administration was slow to accept the PRSP as a national document. Then, the failure to negotiate and economic agreement with the IMF in the context of the HIPC II meant that the entire PRSP process was officially “off-track” for in 2002 and 2003. The deficit of information and participation in the elaboration of the original PRSP document in 2001 led to civil society proposals to put in place participatory processes towards developing alternative proposals for poverty reduction and for lobbying the government to keep the poverty reduction agenda central and active in national policy decisions. The logic of regional organisation was selected. Through negotiations with DFID and Trocaire in the first half of 2002, DFID agreed to fund FOSDEH and ASONOG in undertaking participatory processes towards producing regional diagnoses, strategies, programmes and projects for combating poverty in Honduras. The contribution was worth 300,000 pounds sterling over two years. Trocaire, an Irish NGO, agreed to channel the funds to FOSDEH and ASONOG and undertake the monitoring, accompaniment and reporting associated with the project.

#### Overview of Outputs to Date

The overall aim of the project was to contribute to poverty reduction in Honduras, not only through the production of the regional strategies and accompanying documents but also, via the participatory processes, to increase awareness about the PRSP, to empower civil society organisations to become involved in PRSP process and to work towards the inclusion of the poor in official poverty reduction policy processes.

With DFID support, from July 2002 FOSDEH and ASONOG began to implement participative processes for the construction of Diagnoses and Strategies for Combating Poverty in four regions: the Sula Valley, the West, the Centre and the South. At the end of two years work in two of these four regions (Sula Valley and

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<sup>1</sup> FOSDEH, 2001: *Macro proposal for the participatory elaboration of diagnoses, strategies, plans, programmes and projects for combating poverty in Honduras, page 4*

the West), five of the eight original principal outputs envisaged in the project sponsored by DFID have been achieved:

- (i) Participatory diagnosis for combating poverty
- (ii) Participatory regional strategy for combating poverty
- (iii) Programmes and projects for combating poverty for each region through participatory methods, and in addition some project profiles have been constructed
- (iv) Civil society organisational structures have been strengthened in each region
- (v) Advocacy and dissemination plans have been agreed in each region

There have been significant advances made in terms of the remaining three outputs. However the particular dynamics of the processes in each region has meant that the outputs have not been fully completed. The following remain:

- (vi) Participative plans for combating poverty in every region
- (vii) Proposals governing the operation of regional funds for combating poverty
- (viii) Minimum criteria to prioritise the demand for programs and projects in every region

Currently, in the two remaining regions (the Centre and the South) the processes are advanced in the intermediate phase:

- (i) Field work being completed
- (ii) The processing and consolidation of the information obtained
- (iii) Civil society organisational structures have been established at regional level

The processes did not begin at the same time in all of the regions, and this explains the different levels of progress. ASONOG have implemented an extremely thorough methodology in the Western region from the start of the project that is currently in the consolidation and documentation stages. The methodology is described in greater detail in the third section below. FOSDEH is covering the three remaining regions: the Sula Valley, Central and Southern regions. Institutional limitations in terms of human resources and logistics meant that the processes were sequenced to begin in three regions at different points over the two years. The processes began in July 2002 in the Sula Valley at the same time as ASONOG began in the Western region. The idea was that once the Sula Valley was at the stage of finalising processes, the implementation could continue in the Centre and the South. Planning activities began in the Central region in January 2003 and for the Southern region in October 2003.

## **II. Criteria for determining regions and the implementation of processes for the construction of diagnoses and regional strategies for combating poverty**

The rationale for undertaking regional processes for combating poverty emerged from the desire to create an alternative vision to the conception of poverty in development presented by the Honduran government in the national PRSP. The government perspective of poverty and development is characterised by a centralised and homogenous vision of the country. It does not take into account existing geographical differences, and thus ignores the territorial, demographic, socio-economic and cultural dynamics within each region and in their linkages with each other. An alternative vision of a heterogeneous country, differentiated in these dimensions was sought. It sought to generate poverty reduction processes that were linked to diagnoses and proposals made by the poor themselves. The strategies would then be connected with the dynamics and particularities of each region with the aim of bringing about real impact in improving the quality of life for the poor.

From this starting point FOSDEH and ASONOG embarked on the devising methodology for the regional processes and selected four regions to put it into practice. These regions were selected by looking at poverty context in each, at the internal dynamics and at the pre-existing linkages within regions. These linkages included shared watersheds, environmental vulnerabilities, territorial proximity, migratory flows and economic relations. The poverty indices and other statistical information derived from the official data available allowed comparative and relational analyses that constituted a baseline criterion for selecting regions.

In addition, the regional perspective was also based on the relationships between zones of the country. The methodology drew on official studies of the past that identified the individual regions as economic and social systems with their own characteristics and potential. Interaction of rural and urban areas within these zones created the economic and social systems and interaction with neighbouring zones established key national trends such as migration, trade, remittances and administrative and political relationships. Watersheds were a fundamental basis for establishing the limits of the regions. The geographical pattern of highlands and waterways determines the situation of the communications and transportation networks, and these in turn determine the patterns of social and economic systems and their relations between each other. In order to physically delimit the regions and to make them compatible with the political divisions within the country, municipal units were used as the basic territorial element. In two regions, the Centre and the West, the regional boundaries also coincided with departmental boundaries. The Sula Valley and Southern regions incorporate entire departments but also additional municipalities from neighbouring departments. Finally, another selection criterion related to the existence of organisations with a presence in the regions, which either belonged to Interforos, had relations with FOSDEH or simply shared the aim of promoting poverty reduction processes.

### *General Facts about the Sula Valley*

- Situation:** The valley is in the North of the country and encompasses all of the municipalities in the department of Cortés (12), 2 from the department of Santa Barbara and 3 from the department of Yoro.
- Population:** Approximately 1,315,158 people, or 20% of the national population
- Poverty:** 47% of the population in the Sula Valley is classified as poor, with 20.5% living in extreme poverty. It is a region of contrasts since despite the visible wealth there are some municipalities as poor as those found in the poorest departments – for example San Antonio in Cortés and Santa Cruz in Yojoa have the same levels of poverty as the municipalities of Cololaca or Piraera in Lempira.

### *General Facts about the Western Region*

- Situation:** The region encompasses the departments of Copán, Ocotepeque and Lempira which are together made up of 67 municipalities.
- Population:** Approximately 622,230 people, which is a little over 10% of the national population
- Poverty:** 72% of the population is living in poverty, 46% in extreme poverty.

### *General Facts about the Central Region*

- Situation:** The region encompasses the departments of Comayagua, La Paz and Intibucá which together comprise 57 municipalities grouped into 14 “mancomunidades”
- Population:** Approximately 651,717 people, 12% of the national population
- Poverty:** 71% of the population lives in poverty, 43% in extreme poverty. Only 7 of the municipalities have Human Development Indicators that are acceptable in comparison to the national average

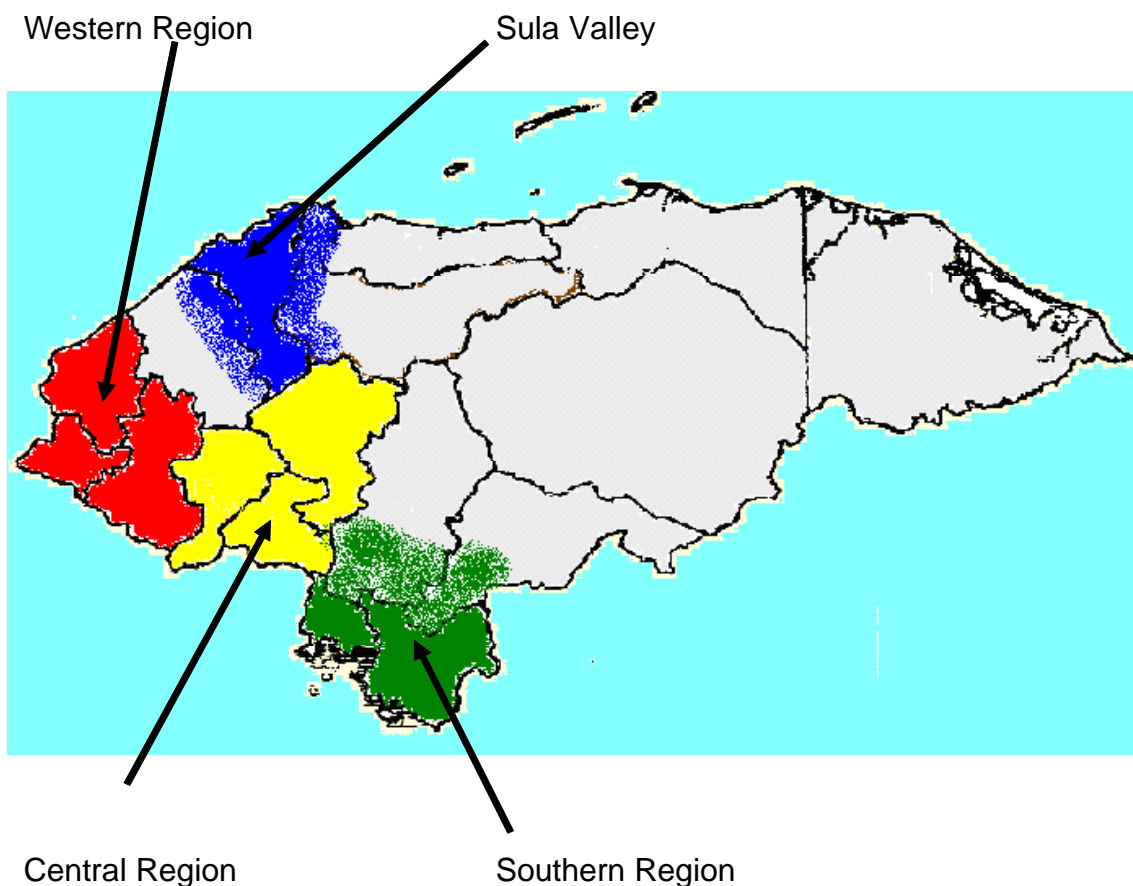
*General Facts about the Southern Region*

Situation: The region includes 5 municipalities in the south of the department of Francisco Morazan, 10 municipalities in the department of El Paraiso, the whole department of Valle (9 municipalities) and the whole department of Choluteca (16 municipalities)

Population: Approximately 610,078 people, around 10% of the national population

Poverty: 76% of the population lives in poverty, 45% in extreme poverty

The location of the four regions in Honduras is as follows:



### **III Methodology employed for the construction of diagnoses and regional strategies for combating poverty**

#### *The methodology for the Sula Valley, Central and Southern Regions*


FOSDEH initiated a participative research process for the construction of the regional diagnosis and strategy for combating poverty in the Sula Valley. In the context of the national initiatives around the PRSP, the processes in the Sula Valley served as a methodological model that was replicated with modifications to in the Central and Southern regions. This was achieved using an innovative methodology that focussed its attention on the voices of the poor and facilitated the promotion of social participation in the ambit of poverty reduction processes. The poor themselves were enabled to reflect on their own reality and on this basis constructed proposals for confronting poverty that were based on the conditions found at local, regional and national levels.

The methodological process illustrated in the graph on the next page permitted:

- The strengthening of the organisational, proposal formulation and advocacy capacities of the organisations within the regions
- The construction of regional poverty reduction strategies from civil society in the regions, as a collaborative output of all the participating organisations

In sum, the methodology involves the facilitating qualitative responses to the quantitative data describing the municipalities, sectors and regions. This new evidence then serves to enrich and complement the statistical data and in some cases to invalidate it. Participation in this way empowers communities and regions to develop ownership of the data that describes their situations and use it as a basis for constructing the technical diagnosis, strategy and later plan the corresponding programmes, projects and budgets. Beyond the documents and the PRSP initiative themselves, organisational, advocacy, and planning capacity skills are strengthened and participants are empowered to track government budgets and initiatives is realized.

**Methodology for the participatory construction of regional diagnoses and strategies in the Sula Valley, Central and Southern regions**

What are the proposals about:	Who makes the proposals:	How is it done:
<p>1. Poverty, how we see it, if it has increased or decreased, how many poor people in the region</p> <p>2. What is done in the region to combat poverty?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central government</li> <li>• Civil society</li> <li>• Local governments</li> </ul> <p>3. How is civil society organised in the region, strengths and weaknesses</p> <p>4. The resources the region has to combat poverty that should be used by the poor</p> <p>5. What do we the poor propose to combat poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economic model</li> <li>• projects</li> </ul> <p>6. What follow-up actions and advocacy do we propose</p>	<p><i>Civil Society:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grassroots organisations in the municipalities of the region</li> <li>• The unorganised population</li> <li>• Members of NGOs</li> <li>• People in the region who have thought about poverty</li> </ul> <p><i>Government:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local government</li> <li>• Institutions involved in implementing the PRSP</li> </ul>	<p><i>Techniques:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops in each municipality with the people, local government and institutions; working with organisations and a technical team</li> <li>• Regional workshops in each sector: women, young people, children, special needs, indigenous and ethnic minorities, farmers, workers, citizens, micro-business, cooperative sector</li> <li>• Discussion groups</li> <li>• Short survey for organisations, NGOs and government bodies</li> <li>• Summary analysis of all the documentation that exists in the region</li> <li>• Diagnoses and strategies produced</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">  </div> <p>FOSDEH facilitates and assists the methodological process through support of a technical team that accompanies and coordinates the field work along with the organisations. The technical team works in constant contact with FOSDEH and the Regional Coordinating Committee and in communication with the assembly. The process is as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The methodology and participation is discussed with each sector before the workshop</li> <li>2. Proposals are made during the workshops, discussion groups and survey questionnaires</li> <li>3. Follow-up and advocacy actions are devised in each workshop</li> <li>4. All the proposals are recorded and documented</li> <li>5. the proposals are presented to the participants in an assembly and are improved and this empowers participants also</li> <li>6. A document is drawn up consolidating:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional Poverty Diagnosis</li> <li>• Regional PRSP with proposals</li> </ul> </li> <li>7. These are discussed, modified and approved by the regional assembly</li> </ol>

The methodology used in the Western Region

In the Western region ASONOG employed a different methodological model, with the same objectives for promoting regional processes for combating poverty. This methodology differs in time-frame, level of consultation (sub-regional level) and in detail of information gathered through the various processes involved.

As a first step coordination and agreement with the principal actors involved in the Departmental Development Commissions was sought, including the Governors, Mayors and civil society representatives. These were designed to inform people about the process, get feedback and to look for support from the political actors. The principal agreements coming out of these meetings ensured the real participation of the population in all stages; the development of a process that worked as closely as possible with the communities; and finally the organisation of the technical teams. The government Developmental Departmental Commissions agreed to participate with ASONOG in finalising the methodology and in convening key actors to participate at a sub-regional level.

The second phase involved determining the sub-regions or micro-regions. The term is “mancomunidad” which literally means a collection of communities. In Honduras the country is divided up in 298 municipalities, the legal organising unit of the state, each with a mayor and council. In many areas however, a number of neighbouring municipalities come together over issues of common interest to form a “mancomunidad”. In the Western region illustrated above all the municipalities are organised into eleven sub-regional units. Each sub-region comprises around six municipalities. One of the sub-regions straddles the borders of the department of Copan and Lempira. Common interests generally relate to watershed management, roadways and communications networks and also education and health issues.

The process in the Western region sought to create a poverty diagnosis and strategy for each sub-region, using highly participatory tools. In each sub-region an assembly was called to:

- (i) Increase awareness about the PRSP process
- (ii) Obtain the participants perception of poverty
- (iii) Elect the members of the sub-regional voluntary technical support team

The voluntary technical support teams were composed of two voluntary members from each of the municipalities in the sub-region, a minimum of six in total. They were elected by the assembly and proposed by the municipal mayors. They represent grass-roots organizations and include members of community development committees, water committees, peasant groups and teachers.

A further workshop was held to train the voluntary technical teams for their involvement in the future stages of the process, which included:

- Facilitating further sub-regional workshops to obtain the qualitative information and consolidating information obtained into matrices
- Presenting the information for approval and analysis to the sub-region

- Formulation of the poverty reduction strategy
- Serving as a link between the communities and the local governments, and between the local governments and ASONOG.
- Later to be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the poverty reduction strategy.

Each voluntary technical support team attended an individual workshop to analyse the poverty situation in their own sub-region and consider existing proposals to combat poverty and how they respond to the socio-political situation of the country. These proposals included the official PRSP and the original proposals drawn up by civil society in an effort to influence the official document at the time of writing. The functions of the team, the training needs and an activity timetable were drawn up. Follow-up workshops were held with ASONOG and the sub-regional technical support teams to draw up the questionnaires to be used in the qualitative and quantitative poverty diagnoses.

Within each sub-region the following processes were undertaken. In each municipality workshops were held by the voluntary technical teams. In these traditional community leaders, members of community and municipal development committees and teachers analysed levels of poverty in the municipality and the existing proposals for combating poverty in terms of how they respond to the current socio-political situation of the country, with the objective of assessing their relevance to the current situation and whether they need to be changed and improved. Community support groups with two or three members, which would be involved in the quantitative diagnosis at community level were also elected by the participants. This support group is made up of 2/3 people and includes community leaders and in some cases teachers.

Then a second sub-regional assembly was called for all the member municipalities in order to obtain qualitative information: the participants' definition of poverty; the causes and effects of poverty; and proposals to combat poverty. Thematic workgroups were organised to obtain the information. Later, a third sub-regional workshops took place in each with the participation of women only in order to obtain information relating to women's poverty in rural and urban areas. Ten women from each municipality in the sub-region participated in these workshops, 70% of whom are from rural areas and 30% from urban areas. The same poverty information is sought as but with the objective of ensuring a gender perspective in the final sub-regional documents.

The community support groups formed earlier in the process carried out the quantitative community poverty diagnoses. ASONOG provided these group with guides and methodological tools to carry out this work. Members of the sub-regional technical support team replicated their new skills, training the community support groups in how to use these tools and providing support to those who have less capacity to gather the information alone. Once the information was gathered in each community, it was consolidated at municipal level and then at sub-regional level by the sub-regional technical support team.

Using all of this information, the voluntary technical teams worked with ASONOG to draw up the diagnosis document, and then a fourth sub-regional assembly was called to revise, discuss and approve the document and agree on future activities. On the basis of the outcomes the strategy documents were drawn up. Once this stage was completed, further assemblies at workshops were held at sub-regional level to define projects and programmes that corresponded with the strategy, again subject to validation by assemblies and support from local government figures.

Of the eleven sub-regions, ten have completed the strategy documents, and the corresponding processes. In the department of Lempira, the three sub-regions have come together and agreed a departmental strategy, with defined programmes and projects that has been approved at a departmental assembly. The two other departments are involved in the process of working as sub-regions together to formulate departmental strategies. Once completed, the basis for beginning a full regional strategy will be in place, with a strong organisational and participatory mandate to support it.

## **IV The Impact of the Regional Processes for Combating Poverty**

### **IV.A Methodology:**

- (i) Two distinct and innovative methodologies have been put into practice that have made possible:
  - a. The transfer and acquisition of information and knowledge about the poverty situation at local, regional and national level
  - b. The stimulation and fostering of social energy and facilitating its transformation into concrete organised action.
- (ii) The methodology employed has allowed a restricted quantitative approach to poverty to be transcended, replacing it with a qualified vision that has given greater understanding of the dimensions of poverty as experienced by the poor in Honduras.
- (iii) Spontaneous qualitative expressions have been generated by the processes, coming from diverse sectors, groups and individuals. These commentaries have enriched the characterisation of the realities of different communities and sector groups. Such a space to participate is important in itself and in addition the inputs give a human face to the measurement of poverty and serve both to reinforce and in some cases invalidate the statistical measurements.

**IV.B Participation and the social fabric at local and regional levels:**

- (i) Participation and empowerment of the actors involved
  - a. Over 2,500 organisations were stimulated at local and regional level to participate in the efforts to design poverty reduction strategies in the regions. This is reflected in the creation of organisational links between municipalities and sectors at regional level to follow-up on the PRSP and the regional strategy
  - b. In general, the form and type of organisational structure has been determined by the participants themselves, and as a result there are variations from region to region. Slowly but surely these organisations have begun to start taking decisions about how to move towards self- sustainability with a concrete vision.
  - c. Participants at grassroots level within the regions, sub regions and municipalities have begun to take decisions regarding accountability of the local authorities and elected representatives for pro poor policies. Positions are being taken towards local, departmental and national government policies and actions. At the same time the coordination and exchange taking place between the regions defines agreed positions. FOSDEH has played the role of facilitator and capacity-builder in these processes enabling individuals and organisations to acquire skills to influence public policies.
  
- (ii) Strengthening the organisation of civil society and the social fabric in the regions
  - a. In regions characterised by social organisation that was both atomised and dispersed before the processes began, an integral part of the methodology was to foster the creation of regional social assembly platforms to serve as democratic and legitimate spaces for the promotion of poverty reduction processes
  - b. Exchanges between the regions have been facilitated to allow the sharing of experiences. This both strengthens solidarity links and facilitates a unified approach when coordinating at national level to lobby central government and international cooperation to recognise and support the regional initiatives.
  - c. In the regions that had more consolidated organisational structures, capacity-building was provided in terms of instruments for participatory construction and technical skills for producing well-prepared documents and plans. These capacities are particularly strengthened in terms of negotiation and advocacy activities around the regional diagnosis, the strategy and the projects and

programmes proposed, with the government, international NGOs and international development cooperation.

- d. Alliances have been established between different regional organisations that have reinforced the basis supporting the demands of the regions and for undertaking coordinated advocacy activities. Through these alliances the regions secured a space for presenting their perspective and their demands at the Consultative Group meeting for Honduras in June 2004.
- e. New coordination mechanisms have been created within the regions and at sub-regional level for follow-up in areas such as social audit, transparency and anti-corruption.

(iii) Sub-products and the value-added of the process

- a. A variety of structures have emerged from the processes including tracking commissions for the SWAs; municipal budget tracking; transparency and anti-corruption commissions; and bodies for influencing the Municipal Development Plans (MDPs). The MDPs are part of a central government decentralisation drive, and the government is now seeking to align with the regional civil society PRSPs that already exist, in large part due to this project.
- b. Three regions managed to bring their proposals to the SWAs before the donors Consultative Group meeting took place in Honduras in June 2004.
- c. There is now greater understanding and knowledge about the government policies, programmes and projects. In addition there is greater social awareness about the reality in Honduras. This will hopefully contribute to changes during the next general elections for President and deputies in 2005. This would be step towards making National Congress more representative and responsive to the needs of the people, including those identified and documented in the regional strategies. Thus, the process may impact on national level democratic political practice.
- d. The regional strategies processes have also meant the initiation and promotion of a discussion within the country about the problems at national level. People not only understand the official PRSP but also that there are alternative sources of information about the national context and situation on which a vision for the future may be based.

**IV.C National Level:**

- (i) The comments and inputs from civil society made during the regional processes were incorporated in the documents for the Consultative Group meeting for Honduras.
- (ii) Representatives participating in regional strategy processes were invited to participate in the Consultative Group meeting as part of the representation of civil society in the official Consultative Council for the PRSP.
- (iii) The recognition by the Minister of Education of the regional processes during the sessions of the Consultative Council for the PRSP resulted in the formation of the sub-commission for education. This is made up of representatives of the five regions that currently are involved in regional poverty reduction processes, four of which pertain to this programme. This education sub-commission of the Consultative Council has become operational with a series of meetings and an observation trip to see how the EDUCO education system in El Salvador works took place. A report has been completed with the observations and commentaries of the participants.
- (iv) Recognising the projects prioritised in the regional strategies, the government, through the Consultative Council, has agreed to seek a methodology, in consultation with civil society, of making these programmes and projects compatible with the decentralisation process being promoted by the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs through an initiative known as PRODEL.
- (v) Financing:
  - a. The existence of this project facilitated additional funding for FOSDEH and ASONOG for activities relating to citizen participation, poverty reduction and advocacy. Funds have been received from EICP (the Advocacy Space for Reducing Poverty project), a project co-funded by IBIS, Diakonia and DanChurchAid to aid in the production of promotional materials for the Consultative Group. The World Bank financed a workshop on national budget monitoring for regional civil society organisations. There have been expressions of interest made by other donors to support related activities in the future.
  - b. Within the regions, civil society organisations have managed to secure financing for their participatory project proposals formulated as part of the regional processes in Sula Valley and other applications are being considered from this and other regions.

- c. All of the regions are currently working together to prioritise their programme and project proposals with the UNAT, and looking for a methodology to link their financing with the official PRSP budget and the SWAps.
- (vi) Integration in the context of the implementation of the PRSP
- a. As a result of coordinated lobbying, the modification of the Law Governing the PRSP fund was achieved to incorporate the regions. The government did not want this but faced with delegates who attended presentations as part of the Consultative Council activities, the processes were recognised and the regional concept was included.
  - b. The inclusion of the Aguan Valley in the coordination and lobbying activities of the regions has been achieved even though it is not a region supported by this DFID/Trocaire project, or in which FOSDEH or ASONOG have a presence.
  - c. The Minister of the Presidency and the Minister of Finance have both formally recognised the strategic development and poverty reduction plan drawn up by the Department of Lempira, which forms part of the regional PRSP in the Western Region. The recognition came with an offer of support from these Ministers, and the elected politicians from all parties in this department have also expressed their support for the plan. Copies of the official letters are included in the Annex to this report.
  - d. In a meeting of the Consultative Council the Minister of Justice and Home Affairs (Gobernacion) agreed to hold a meeting with delegates from the five regions to look for means of making the regional poverty reduction strategies compatible with the Municipal Development Plans.
  - e. In various meetings with the Ministry of the Presidency, represented by the UNAT (the technical unit of that ministry) a process for defining a methodology and criteria for the incorporation of the projects that are part of the regional strategies in the National Budget is underway. This will be achieved via the participation of regional delegates in the planning and budgetary process for the PRSP in order to incorporate the projects there.
- (vii) On the basis of the evidence from the regional strategies, there very strong arguments can be made that the theme of poverty reduction in Honduras cannot be limited to one strategy and the numerical indicators represented in it. The regional processes have illustrated that in order to discuss poverty seriously, issues of social justice and inequality must be included. This is in line with the position that

FOSDEH and ASONOG have held from the outset, that the PRSP should become state social policy, not simply become a technical procedure imposed by the IMF.

- (viii) At the Consultative Group meeting, civil society activities were a factor stimulating the following pronouncements:
  - a. The PRSP should be converted into the state social policy
  - b. The economic growth accompanying the PRSP should be more “human” and pro-poor
- (ix) These regional processes have meant that FOSDEH and ASONOG a key reference point for the government on issues relating to poverty reduction and development, and as such have become the official negotiators, representing the regional participants, with the government in this area. This has allowed FOSDEH to undertake, with authority, analysis of a national social audit nature on the policies, the programmes and the projects encompassed in the official PRSP. Having the organisational reference points of FOSDEH and ASONOG has increased the weight of the regional strategies. By channelling civil society demands, the government now has a real counterweight and it has become increasingly difficult to ignore civil society inputs and this helps secure greater transparency in assigning resources in the future.
- (x) The regional processes have promoted citizen participation on many issues of collective interest that go beyond the particular interests of sector groups.
- (xi) On the basis of knowledge about the official PRSP, civil society has begun to take a greater interest in becoming familiar with the national budget and to discuss it. This is the basis for stronger advocacy and input in the future.
- (xii) The regional processes have opened the discussion about governability and about how viable and sustainable the PRSP is as it stands in a country, like Honduras, that is in crisis.

## **V. CIVIL SOCIETY PERCEPTIONS OF DFID SUPPORT FOR POVERTY REDUCTION IN HONDURAS**

DFID funding for this project has contributed to a high degree of visibility among civil society of DFID's role in the overall PRSP process within Honduras. As well as contributing funding to the project DFID staff have always displayed openness towards incorporating civil society perspectives in their policies and DFID has been a major – and some times the only – source of information on donor activities. This role dates back to UK coordination of the G-15 donor structure and the communication strategy for keeping civil society informed of important events and policies continued during 2003 and 2004. There is a perception that DFID has played a quiet role as “honest broker” to lower some of the tensions that existed in the past between government officials, civil servants and civil society representatives. DFID's robust position on the legitimate role that civil society should play within PRSP processes has given greater credibility to civil society proposals for deeper levels of consultation and participation. Moreover there is a strong appreciation, by the project implementers as well as other civil society organisations, of the opportunities to participate in other DFID sponsored capacity building initiatives. Events organised by DFID around improving statistical collection and dissemination, comparative analysis of PRSP implementation in other regions of the world, have given civil society representatives the opportunity to broaden their horizons and to see their own work within a wider perspective.