



Strengthening Participation for Policy Influence

*Lessons Learned from Trócaire's
PRS Project, 2002 – 2006*

September 2006

TROCAIRE



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Cover photo: Women's Group, Lilongwe, Malawi. Photo: Alan Whelan, Trócaire.

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1. Executive Summary

• Background

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) initiative was established by the World Bank and IMF in late 1999 as a precondition for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. While Trócaire recognised the many weaknesses of the PRSP, it also recognised that it had potential to increase civil society's participation in and influence over policy-making at national and international levels. As a result, the cross-organisational Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) project was established in early 2002.

The purpose was to combine Trócaire's efforts at increasing partners' impact on policy at country level, with efforts to influence World Bank and IMF policy at an international level. A cross-organisational team, made up of programme staff at field level and policy staff in the home-based Policy & Advocacy Unit (PAU), was set up to run the project.

The aim of Trócaire's PRS project was to: *'strengthen participation in the PRSP process in selected countries in order to contribute to increased social/economic justice and space for civil society, by working with partners and other key stakeholders in participatory advocacy'*¹. Trócaire's work focused primarily on Rwanda and Honduras. Nicaragua was involved on a more limited scale, as were other countries including Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi.

An evaluation of Trócaire's PRS project was carried out in 2006. It was carried out largely internally, to institutionalise learning across the organisation. The evaluation addressed three different aspects of Trócaire's work as part of the PRS project: 1) how Trócaire supports its partners; 2) how Trócaire carries out national and international advocacy; and 3) how Trócaire works cross-organisationally.

• PRSP as a policy framework

The evaluation examined the question of whether Trócaire had chosen an appropriate policy framework to focus on and what the continued relevance of the PRSP as a framework is, going forward.

A literature review illustrated that the relevance of the PRSP as a policy framework was largely dependent on each specific country's context and

experience. In countries such as Honduras and Nicaragua, the PRSP has been effectively sidelined as a small part of overall policy making, with trade and private sector development being far more significant. However, the PRSP has taken hold in more aid-dependent countries such as Rwanda, and remains the overarching policy framework.

In general, the PRSP has left a very important legacy of participation, which has opened space for civil society participation in ways which had not existed before. However, the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and powerful élites are still making critical policy decisions behind closed doors, far removed from the processes surrounding the PRSP.

Civil society needs to be constantly wary of being sidelined from the most relevant policy and political processes. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) need to find the key entry points that will be the catalyst for the social, political and economic change they aim to achieve. This will require a high level of context-specific political analysis. It will require increased civil society capacity for participatory advocacy and improved civil society linkages at sub-national and national levels in particular.

The challenge will be in finding ways to feed the civil society mobilising and advocacy work done around the PRSP back into the political system to generate a new approach to the role of the state, accountable governance and effective implementation of public policies.

• Trócaire's Support to Partners

The approaches Trócaire took in Honduras and Rwanda were quite different, given the radically different contexts for advocacy by civil society. Nonetheless, both country offices shared one core similarity: at all times, Trócaire strove to facilitate rather than displace local civil society in advocacy work.

In Honduras, Trócaire worked with a wide range of partners, at local, sub-national and national levels, providing support for institutional development and advocacy capacity-building. Trócaire's support to partners was key in generating evidence-based advocacy strategies. These were used effectively at community and regional level to lobby government for both increased resources and greater access to decision-making processes. Trócaire was also responsible for leading a multi-donor fund to support civil society advocacy for social and economic justice.

In Rwanda, Trócaire worked very closely with a small number of partners. A limited number of partners were selected for organisational development and close accompaniment in advocacy work. The partners selected were those which were seen as having a pivotal role in rebuilding civil society in the post-genocide era. Trócaire also worked to build trust between civil society and the Rwandan Government, which tends to keep a close watch on dissent within both political and non-political spheres.

In both Honduras and Rwanda, Trócaire's work has contributed to increased capacity of and increased space for local civil society to engage with government on the national PRSP and on sector-specific strategies. These two factors have helped to contribute to increased social and economic justice.

However, the challenges remain significant. In Honduras, scaling up local level initiatives and improving alliance building, particularly between local and national levels, is key. The political transition in Honduras highlights the need to engage more fundamentally with the political system, rather than just the processes of resource delivery. In Rwanda, the control the government exerts over citizens remains a key challenge, as does working with a civil society which is quite weak and poorly organised.

• **Trócaire's Policy and Advocacy Work**

The intention behind the PRS project was to ensure international advocacy work was fed by country-based advocacy issues, and vice versa. However, the PRS project was grounded in the reality that country-based programme officers would have to respond to a local advocacy agenda, which did not necessarily have links across the organisation or at an international level. Equally, at an international level, issues arose which demanded an advocacy response but which may not have had immediate relevance to the work at country level.

The PRS project operated from an initial strategic plan, but developed organically thereafter. The lack of a clear operational process for joint planning and review undermined some of the potential of the project to deliver greater impact. Nonetheless, advocacy impact at country and international level was significant. An external evaluation found that Trócaire is regarded by IFI staff as one of the strongest NGOs engaged in IFI-related advocacy. Within Ireland, Trócaire is recognised as the development agency with the most policy capacity and impact. With this reputation, it should be possible for Trócaire to

build on the 'insider' approach it has adopted at an international level, and combine it with a more campaigns-oriented 'outsider' approach.

Trócaire's PRS-related work (including work on the PRSP process, IMF policy and aid effectiveness) is taken into account by policy-makers because it uses evidence-based arguments, offers a range of perspectives, gives useful insight into what is happening on the ground and provides alternatives. A fundamental element in this is the quality of analysis from country level. Trócaire Honduras excelled at producing regular policy analysis, which resulted in Trócaire becoming a key point of reference for donors, academics and NGOs working in Honduras.

However, a fundamental challenge also emerged for Trócaire: while its advocacy work was relevant and impactful at an international level, there is a sense that this work derived mostly from the international donor agenda, rather than the work of partners on the ground. A related question is whether Trócaire should aim for impact primarily at global or at country level. An important lesson learned is the need to decide between focusing on changing national or international structures, based on an analysis of which will have the most lasting impact on poverty eradication and social justice.

• **Working cross-organisationally**

Trócaire's PRS project was the first attempt in Trócaire to create a thematic team working across the traditional divides of the International Department and the Communications and Education Department. As Trócaire moves to a matrix management system, with four major cross-organisational teams, this experience offers invaluable lessons:

- Cross-organisational teams build impact and learning;
- Regular strategic planning and review at team level is crucial;
- Job descriptions need to be clear, reflecting an appropriate balance between programme / policy work;
- Cross-organisational management systems are important, as is the role of a central coordinator;
- Staff need space to learn, exchange experiences and develop their skills;
- Communication systems and regular, strategically targeted analysis and documentation are fundamental to team-building and advocacy success.

- **Conclusion**

Trócaire needs to build on its experience with the PRS project to develop a new strategic programme around social and economic justice advocacy, with clear policy change objectives at national and international level. The work needs to be based more firmly in country level analysis and support to partners, while maintaining a crucial link to international policy.

2. Background: Trócaire's PRS project.

The PRSP initiative was established by the World Bank and IMF in late 1999 as a precondition for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. While Trócaire recognised the many weaknesses of the PRSP, it also recognised that it had potential to increase civil society's participation in and influence over policy-making at national and World Bank / IMF levels. As a result, the cross-organisational PRS project was established in early 2002.

The purpose was to combine Trócaire's efforts at increasing partners' impact on poverty-related policy at country level with efforts to influence World Bank and IMF policy at an international level.

The project therefore aimed to integrate programme and policy work, using the PRSP as a framework, and basing this work on a limited set of countries: Honduras, Nicaragua and Rwanda.

2.1 Aim

The overall aim of the PRS project was to:

*'Strengthen participation in the PRSP process in selected countries in order to contribute to increased social / economic justice and space for civil society, by working with partners and other key stakeholders in participatory advocacy.'*²

Under this overarching aim, more specific objectives were developed:

1. 'Increase partners (including Church partners) capacity for advocacy work on social and economic justice, with the objective of influencing policy-making in the context of PRSPs, at local, national and where appropriate regional and international level.
2. Increase the capacity of Trócaire staff in most field offices and in Ireland / Northern Ireland to carry out direct advocacy and to carry out capacity-building with partners / staff on advocating on PRSPs and economic policy at national and international level.
3. Carry out advocacy on conditionalities attached to IMF and World Bank loan

agreements Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) and Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) for selected countries (e.g. Rwanda, Honduras, Nicaragua).

4. Ensure the Human Development approach to Debt Sustainability Analysis within HIPC has been promoted by the Irish Government and adopted by key influencers in the IFIs (e.g. Canadian constituency).
5. Ensure selected stakeholders (e.g. national governments, Irish Aid) include the impact of HIV / AIDS in their policy work on macro-economic formulation in selected Ireland Aid priority countries plus Rwanda, Honduras, Nicaragua.³

2.2. Staffing

The logic of the project rested on dedicated staff in three Trócaire offices: Maynooth, Honduras and Rwanda. The Maynooth-based coordinator of the Policy and Advocacy Unit (PAU) was the team leader for the project, and worked on advocacy at an international level. An intern was recruited to work on the project in Honduras in January 2002. This post was subsequently made into a Programme Officer post in late 2005. The Civil Society Programme Officer in Rwanda was given responsibility for working as part of the PRS team, along with an intern. The core team worked closely together, which allowed for much cross-regional learning.

However, there were staff working on countries outside of the focal group, such as Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi, who took a very active interest in the project. They worked closely with the PAU coordinator in building learning around civil society participation and policy influencing.

2.3 PRS evaluation

The evaluation of Trócaire's PRS project began in January 2006. The overall objective of the PRSP evaluation was to:

'Review Trócaire's cross-organisational PRS project in order to extract lessons and develop a future strategy for Trócaire's work on economic and social justice in terms of:

- (1) How we support partners;
- (2) How we carry out policy and advocacy nationally and internationally;
- (3) How we work cross-organisationally⁴.

The evaluation was conducted largely internally in order to institutionalise learning across the organisation and build consensus for future work.

² Trócaire PRSP Advocacy Project Strategic Plan 2002 -2005

³ This final aim was dropped within a year due to capacity and resource constraints.

⁴ Trócaire Internal Review Concept Note 2005

It was led by the coordinator of the PAU, who was assisted by a policy intern. External consultants were hired for elements of the evaluation where it was inappropriate for a Trócaire staff member to carry out the work.

The evaluation process included:

- Literature reviews on PRSP and related policy issues;
- Country-level evaluations: PRS team members carried out peer review field trips to Honduras and Rwanda. Independently facilitated partner workshops also took place in both countries;
- Staff workshops in Maynooth at the evaluation's mid- and end-points, involving staff from the International Department, along with policy, campaigns and education staff;
- External consultant's evaluations of staff perceptions of the PRS project and Trócaire's international advocacy and policy work in this area.

Documents produced during the PRS evaluation

Internally-produced:

- C. Healy, 2006, *The Relevance of PRSPs - Research Report*
- C. Healy, 2006, *International Policy Mapping for PRS / Economic Justice Review*
- C. Healy, 2006, *Partner Mapping Matrix*
- C. Healy, 2006, *March Workshop Report*
- C. Healy, 2006, *June Workshop Report*
- S. Hunt, 2006, *Central America Context Analysis*
- S. Hunt, 2006, *Central America PRS impact evaluation*
- P. Osodo, 2006, *Country Level Evaluation Rwanda*

Externally-produced:

- N. Gaynor, 2006, *Staff Experience and Perspectives of the PRS/Economic Justice Project*
- A. Wood, 2006, *Evaluation of Trócaire's International IFI- related Advocacy in the context of the PRSP Advocacy Project*

3. Relevance of PRSPs as a Policy Framework

As part of the PRS evaluation, Trócaire assessed whether it had chosen an appropriate policy framework to focus on, and what the continued relevance of the PRSP as a framework is, going forward.

A literature review was carried out to ‘assess the relevance of the PRSP as a model of engagement for participatory advocacy and policy work, through a review of international literature and in respect of 8 key countries’⁵. The countries were Bolivia, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leona, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

A brief explanation of PRSPs and the conclusions of the literature review are summarised below.

3.1 Background to PRSPs

PRSPs were established in 1999 by the World Bank as a framework for countries to achieve debt relief under the HIPC initiative. Producing a participatory PRSP was to be one of a series of conditions for reaching ‘Completion Point’ under HIPC, at which point debt relief would be delivered to the country. In addition, donors were to commit to aligning their assistance to the country-owned PRSP.

PRSPs were based on five underlying principles. They were to be: country-driven and participatory; results oriented; based on a long-term perspective for poverty reduction; comprehensive in their approach to poverty; and partnership-oriented, including all stakeholders⁶.

3.2 Literature review of PRSPs: findings

The literature on PRSPs in their first five years highlighted many weaknesses:

- Ownership of the process was weak, particularly at lower levels of government.
- There was often a lack of emphasis on productive sector policy, compared to the emphasis on social sectors.
- There was little analysis of macro-economic policies, and they were not open to public consultation. Where it was present, macro-economic content closely reflected IFI

preferences for a continuation of structural adjustment policies.

- The technocratic nature of the PRSP, and its inability to withstand political change, was a critical problem.
- Donor alignment remained superficial, with the majority of funds remaining ad hoc and project based.
- CSOs’ participation in the policy process remained problematic, due to capacity weaknesses among civil society and lack of genuine engagement by governments and donors.
- Policy frameworks with greater political traction among élites, or which had greater donor impact, remained more important for policy-setting and implementation in many countries. The donor frameworks included the IMF’s Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) loan agreement and the World Bank’s Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) and Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA).

3.3 Conclusions on PRSP as a Policy Framework

The literature review illustrated that the relevance of the PRSP as a policy framework was largely dependent on each specific country’s context and experience. In countries such as Honduras and Nicaragua, the PRSP has been sidelined to be a small part of overall policy making, with trade and private sector development being far more significant drivers of policy. However, the PRSP has taken hold in more aid-dependent countries such as Rwanda, and remains the overarching policy framework.

In general, the PRSP has left a very important legacy of participation, which has opened space for civil society participation in ways which had not existed before. This highlights the fact that the principles behind the PRSP are important ones. However, the rhetoric of the PRSP has not become reality. Indeed, in some cases, the PRSP has left civil society more disillusioned with government and donor commitments to incorporate their views. The International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and powerful élites are still making critical decisions behind closed doors, far removed from the processes surrounding the PRSP.

Furthermore, critics such as David Booth from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) question a fundamental assumption underpinning the PRSP approach. That is, that increased participation

⁵ PRS Research Report Terms of Reference, 2006

⁶ Craig and Porter, 2003: 53

automatically leads to policy that is more broadly owned and more poverty focused. This was not borne out by his research, which found that the domestic political processes, formal and informal, often weighed heavily against this assumption. This illustrates a need for civil society to engage more robustly with political processes at country level.

A key finding therefore is that civil society needs to be constantly wary of being sidelined from the real issues and policy processes. CSOs need to find the key entry point that will be the catalyst for social, political and economic change. This will require a high level of context-specific political analysis to identify the most relevant policy frameworks and political processes at country level. It will require increased civil society capacity for participatory advocacy and improved civil society linkages at sub-national and national levels in particular. The skills that CSOs have developed in engaging with the PRSP need to be used to also advocate outside of the PRS model, and to develop additional mechanisms for political dialogue.

4. Country Analysis

4.1 Honduras

4.1.1 General Context

After Hurricane Mitch, both Honduras and Nicaragua qualified for HIPC debt relief. The association of this poverty-focused mechanism with a future flow of funds under HIPC meant that poverty became part of the public policy discourse in Honduras for the first time.

Initially, the PRS was viewed merely as a procedure required by the World Bank and IMF to secure debt relief and it did not achieve broad political ownership. However, some political commitment to the PRS eventually developed: a law governing HIPC debt relief was passed, which created a Consultative Council for the PRS (the CCERP). This national body included civil society representation and powers of oversight over the use of HIPC funds. It represented important progress in the institutionalisation of civil society participation at a national level.

A new PRGF was signed in February 2005, which reinvigorated commitment to the PRS. Government resources started to finance some elements of the PRS – in particular health and education. Honduras reached HIPC Completion Point in April 2005. The PRS thus became an issue for public discussion, a process for participation and negotiation, a system for collecting demands and assigning some public resources, and a point of coordination between different actors.

However, problems with the PRS process persisted: while there were many mechanisms for channelling PRS demands into government, coherence between these channels was lacking. There was tension over the PRS between local and central government due to lack of information, control of budgets and mechanisms for implementation. Issues around donor alignment were also prevalent. While many donors did align themselves to the PRSP, the Inter American Development Bank (IADB) and United States followed their own regional agendas. Where donor harmonisation did occur, it was limited mainly to dialogue and shared discourse,

while in practice donors operated separate lending mechanisms and programmes.

The Liberal Party successfully challenged the ruling National Party in general elections in December 2005. Post election, however, capacity to govern has been undermined by the replacement of the majority of the civil service, leaving the government seriously short of experienced officials⁷. Political commitment to the PRSP in Honduras has diminished, which may undermine the work that civil society has done to date.

4.1.2 Civil Society and the PRS in Honduras

Unlike its Central American neighbours, Honduras did not experience overt civil conflict in the 1980s. However, there was significant repression and curtailment of activities of CSOs up until the late 1990s. A turning point came in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, as the reconstruction efforts allowed for a degree of association and a sense of solidarity.

The PRS has been extremely important for civil society in Honduras. Key civil society actors engaged with the PRS concept from the start, which has led to activity around PRS and transparency issues at many levels: community, municipal, sectoral and national. It has lessened tolerance for political manipulation of democratic spaces, and has been an important tool for the development and democratisation of civil society in Honduras.

The ‘network of civil society networks’, Interforos developed inputs for the initial PRS consultation process. However, this work was not included in the PRS document, leaving many civil society actors very disillusioned. FOSDEH⁸, ASONOG⁹ and other Interforos members subsequently started work on regional CSO-led poverty reduction strategies in five different sub-national regions.

However, in 2004 the CCERP started focusing on civil society engagement around the operational plans for implementing the PRSP. This gave actors such as ASONOG, FOSDEH and other CSOs the opportunity to present the regional PRSPs.

Throughout 2005, official donors became increasingly concerned with the electoral transition process, and focused on facilitating a role for civil society in ensuring continuity and monitoring of government policy. Through the network of International NGOs, Agencias de Cooperación Internacional (ACI), a multi-donor fund was created to support and strengthen the capacity of civil society to engage in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the PRS

⁷ Honduras Update, July 2006

⁸ FOSDEH is the Foro Social de la Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras. It is a network-based NGO working on debt and economic justice from a macro-perspective

⁹ ASONOG is the Asociación de Organizaciones no-Gubernamentales. It is a Honduran NGO network with a focus on Western Honduras

and all public policies. The ACI Fund is jointly managed by local and international NGOs, and is funded by official donors and international NGOs.

Civil society now plays an important role in monitoring procedures, but needs to increase its work on addressing the content of public policies and decision-making within the political systems. Furthermore, with a new government in power, the PRS is at risk of slipping off the radar and undermining much of the positive impact to date such as empowerment, knowledge, alliances and space.

4.2 Nicaragua

4.2.1 General Context

Nicaragua produced its interim PRSP in December 2000, after a limited consultation process. It was perceived that the PRSP did not represent a national development plan and tended to respond to donor interests rather than national ones. This may be partly due to the aid dependence of Nicaragua: in 2003, Official Development Assistance (ODA) accounted for over 20% of GDP in Nicaragua, compared to 5% in Honduras.

Issues such as lack of ownership continued throughout the course of the administration of President Aleman of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party. A high level of donor involvement in the process undermined the PRS content, as it attempted to meet a wide variety of donor interests. Furthermore, there were major issues of incoherence, as different parts of government responded to different donors.

In 2002, the final PRS, the “Strengthened Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy” (SGPRS) was produced. However, it did not reflect the extensive civil society consultative process which had been carried out. The first progress report on the PRS at the end of 2002 showed that few gains had been made, and that further progress was dependant on achieving HIPC Completion Point and having access to debt relief.

Issues around the PRS improved under President Bolanos of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party in 2003, as he constructed a National Development Plan (NDP), which met the requirements for a PRS while addressing other important development issues. The aim was to incorporate the SGPRS and NDP into one document, representing a second generation PRSP. However, civil society was sceptical about the NDP, viewing it merely as a consultative sign-off process.

The final version of the NDP, in 2005, is a matrix that attempts to bring together all of the donor

interventions in a single matrix, aligned with government priorities. However, in reality it seems to be following existing plans and agreements with donors, rather than representing a set of new policies aimed at achieving development goals such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Civil society in Nicaragua views the PRSP as a process purely to facilitate debt relief. Nicaragua reached HIPC Completion Point in 2004, and received a significant amount of debt relief. However, since achieving this, poverty has largely disappeared from government discourse. The NDP has focused on foreign investment and big business. Other serious crises are now being highlighted such as the energy crisis, governance problems and a political crisis which arose in 2005, with problems between the Bolanos administration, parliament and main political parties. There is now widespread discontent in Nicaragua and a feeling that the Bolanos government responds primarily to a donor mandate. The PRS is only being kept alive by the donors in Nicaragua, and this is mainly in technical terms.

4.2.2 Civil Society and the PRS in Nicaragua

There has been a history of political activism and social movements in Nicaragua, which has stemmed from oppression both prior to and during the Sandinista era. After Hurricane Mitch, a national level umbrella NGO, Coordinadora Civil para la Emergencia y la Reconstrucción, (CCER)¹⁰, was created, comprising over 320 civil society organisations. CCER initiated a PRS consultation process to address some of the participatory failures of government. Numerous workshops were organised throughout the country to bring the PRSP to a local level. Over one thousand people participated and CCER published a document based on the findings.

However, this input was not incorporated into the SGPRS, which led to serious disillusionment among civil society actors. Furthermore, the donor context and the mistrust of government in Nicaragua were such that the PRS presented much less of an opportunity for civil society actors to continue to engage at this level.

Despite the disillusionment and lack of access to government, there remained much activity at the local level, most notably the “PRSPcito” – a mini PRSP that was drawn up between civil society and local government actors in the north of the Department of Leon. This had some impact, which generated hope that the decentralisation process offered opportunities for engagement around

¹⁰ CCER was formed in 1998 to coordinate the post-Mitch emergency and rehabilitation efforts. It is now the coordinating body for civil society participation in the PRSP process.

planning, poverty monitoring and investment decisions.

International NGOs supported civil society at a national level, mainly through Grupo Incidencia Sur Norte (GISN) – a South-North NGO advocacy group. However, other events such as the prevalent corruption issues, the approval of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), and the political crisis undermined the PRS process, and it faded in importance. The unifying force generated in Honduras around budgets, corruption, and policy coherence, was neutralised in Nicaragua by great instability in the political system. Thus, civil society in Nicaragua has not been able to engage in the PRSP to the same extent as their Honduran counterparts.

4.3 Rwanda

4.3.1 General Context

The post-genocide state under the leadership of President Paul Kagame has made remarkable strides in securing internal stability, overseeing reconstruction and establishing the institutional basis for a peaceful and democratic future. However, building on these gains and moving forward remains an enormous challenge. Society is still deeply fractured and a pervasive sense of trauma and mistrust continues to shape institutional, organisational and individual relations in the country.

Aside from the social consequences of recent conflict and genocide, the events of the early 1990s severely diminished the country's human resource capacity and impoverished its people. Rwanda is heavily aid dependent, with ODA comprising 25% of Rwanda's GNI in 2004. In an effort to maximise the effectiveness of this aid, the government has pursued a range of donor harmonisation and alignment measures in recent years.

Rwanda's interim PRSP was prepared in 2000 by the National Poverty Reduction Programme in the Ministry of Finance and Economic planning. The final PRSP was completed in July 2002. A second PRS is planned for early 2007. There is a clear linkage between the Rwandan PRSP and the government's longer-term national vision document, Vision 2020. The PRSP is seen as the key instrument for realising that vision.

The original PRSP placed an emphasis on social sector spending at the expense of the productive sector. The second PRSP has been named the EDPRS (Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy), and it is already apparent that a greater emphasis will be placed on growth.

The EDPRS is set to remain the key organising framework for development in Rwanda. It is also viewed by the Rwandan government as the framework for aligning and coordinating development assistance.

Despite these positive elements, there were some issues related to civil society participation in the design and implementation of the country's first PRSP. Though a significant emphasis was placed on direct citizen engagement during the planning phases (including participatory poverty assessments), there were few attempts to disseminate the PRSP once it was complete. The initial consultation draft was only available in English – versions in French and Kinyarwanda were only made available once the full PRSP process had begun.

In terms of implementation, concerns remain about the extent of pro-poor spending, in particular education¹¹. While donor alignment has been reasonable, with one third of all support now given as budget support, many donor programmes continue to be fragmented in several sectors. Though capacity at central government level was and remains relatively high (albeit stretched), the decentralisation process highlighted issues around local level government capacity. However, the territorial and public sector reform of 2005, including rationalisation of staff at central government level, might contribute to strengthened EDPRS planning and implementation. However, the fast-paced roll out of these reforms has been criticised, as consultation with donors and civil society was minimal.

Overall, there is a general sense of government ownership of the PRS policy framework. For civil society, the PRSP has helped to improve transparency in the use of public resources and decision-making processes.

4.3.2 Civil Society and the PRS

The events of the early 1990s, and 1994 in particular, had a significant impact on Rwanda's then fledgling civil society. The social fabric was damaged at the same time as poverty increased. This left the sector with many problems to contend with, both internally and in terms of programming. A number of CSO leaders were implicated in genocide crimes in the 1994 period – a factor which harmed the reputation of certain organisations and damaged the credibility of the sector as a whole. In addition, the civil society sector in Rwanda has served as an attractive channel for donor funding in recent years, which has contributed to the emergence of a new generation of 'post '94' CSOs, many of whom now

¹¹ A. Evans, L.H. Piron, Z. Curran, R. Driscoll (2005) 'Independent Evaluation of Rwanda's Poverty Reduction Strategy 2002-2005', ODI, UK.

face fresh credibility crises related to issues such as legitimacy, representation and commitment.

In the aftermath of a genocide, it was inevitable that there would be a deep level of mistrust in any society. The post-genocide context, therefore, considerably constrained the space for civil society advocacy on social and economic justice, with the Government generally preferring to keep a close watch on dissent within both political and non-political spheres. The mistrust and tension which continues to permeate wider society also heightens the sensitivity and delicacy of civil society interventions. On the whole, civil society is quite weak and poorly organised, but gaining in capacity gradually.

In spite of these challenges, by early 2003 several CSOs had started organising themselves into sectoral interest areas. The government created a 'cluster system' which gave CSOs the opportunity to participate in the elaboration of some sector policies. CSOs did not penetrate these spaces to any great effect however and their involvement in policy discussions consequently remained ad hoc. Recent analysis (conducted for the EDPRS drafting process) has indicated that the cluster systems failed to operate effectively even for donors/government. Although NGO umbrella organisations such as CCOAIB¹², CESTRAR¹³ and Pro-femmes¹⁴ were recognised as targets for consultation by government, such 'thematic' alliances appear to have had little success when it came to engaging with government on concrete policy issues. However, some sector interest groups, such as the Rwanda Micro-Finance Forum did enjoy gains through participation in specific policy development processes, well-researched position papers and subsequent advocacy work.

While the PRSP process enabled the creation of some long-term partnerships between civil society, government and development partners, the context described above has necessitated slow, careful steps. This has especially been the case for organisations whose mandate includes promoting and protecting social and economic rights. While the Government favours a civil society that sees itself as a partner in service delivery, as opposed to a watchdog, it does seem willing to engage in constructive dialogue. In cases where strategic relations were built, progress has been possible.

4.4 Conclusion: PRSP experience in the three focal countries

In examining the PRS process in each of the three focal countries, it is clear that the experiences of each country in terms of the underlying PRSP principles have differed.

Country ownership seems to have been achieved to a greater degree in Rwanda than in Honduras and Nicaragua. In all three countries, the interim and full PRSPs were conducted by a small group of civil servants and government ministers, working with World Bank staff. However, in Rwanda there was a clear link with the national vision as a result of government leadership.

Broad-based **participation** was never fully achieved, despite the commitment of civil society to engage in and prepare for the process. While momentum was maintained in Honduras, in Nicaragua disillusionment with the political process led to the PRS sliding off their agenda. In Rwanda, low capacity of local CSOs and local government, weighty donor demands at centralised level and the autocratic leanings of government were all factors which limited the scope for and impact of civil society's participation.

The PRS has delivered very little in terms of **results** in Nicaragua and Honduras. In Honduras, while many PRSP targets seem to have been reached on paper, overall poverty levels and the structures underpinning poverty remain unchanged. This has undermined the credibility of the commitment to a **comprehensive approach** to tackling poverty. Instead, in all three countries, there has been a focus on trickle down investment strategies, with some elements of a social safety net.

While the idea of **partnership** has not been adequately put into effect, the PRS has offered many opportunities for civil society. In Honduras, civil society post-Hurricane Mitch organised around the PRS, which offered a point of cohesion among diverse actors on a wide set of issues. In Rwanda, the PRSP has been the fundamental factor in opening some space for civil society engagement with government. It has given civil society the opportunity to have a seat at the table in some fora and has therefore left an important legacy. However, in Nicaragua, activity was not sustained, and problems in the political system limited the development of further opportunities.

¹² Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux initiatives de Base. CCOAIB is an umbrella organisation drawing together 29 Rwanda NGOs working in rural areas and at the grass roots level.

¹³ Centrale des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Rwanda. CESTRAR is a Confederation of Trade Unions in Rwanda.

¹⁴ Pro-femmes is a women's umbrella group, which draws together over 40 women's groups working in the country to promote the rights of women, peace and development.

The PRS approach allowed for work on donor **harmonisation and coordination** in terms of discourse, and some actual improvements in aid effectiveness in Rwanda. However, in practice, there has been little agreement on principles of ownership, on alignment to respond to government priorities and on the content of public policies that can satisfy human development, transformation and poverty reduction aims.

In terms of a **long-term perspective** for poverty reduction, new benchmarks for human development outcomes have been established in Honduras and Nicaragua. These dominate analysis and tracking by external and internal actors. In Rwanda, the marrying of Vision 2020 with the PRS facilitates a long-term approach to policy and planning.

The PRS offered a framework for engaging with government and promoting democracy and accountability to a limited extent in Nicaragua, and to a broader degree in Honduras and Rwanda. However, the politics of each country suggest against reliance on the PRS as the main avenue for achieving social and economic justice. The challenge will be in finding ways to feed the civil society mobilising and advocacy work done around the PRSP back into the political system to generate a new approach to the role of the state, accountable government and effective implementation of public policies.

5. Trócaire's Support to Partners – Outline

As has been highlighted in Section 2, the overall objective of Trócaire's PRS strategic plan was to 'increase partners' capacity for advocacy work on social and economic justice in order to influence policy-making in the context of PRSPs, at local, national and where appropriate regional and international level'¹⁵.

In this section, an outline of Trócaire's support to partners in Honduras, Nicaragua and Rwanda is followed by an analysis of the impact this support has had.

5.1 Trócaire's support to partners in Honduras

Support to civil society was crucial in rebuilding basic infrastructure after Hurricane Mitch but also in creating the structures to allow the poorest and most marginalised to challenge the intensely unequal systems of policy making and implementation in Honduras. Trócaire saw the PRSP project as an opportunity to create a civil society programme focused on participatory advocacy, using the PRSP as a framework.

In Honduras Trócaire focused its support to partners on organisational and institutional development, advocacy capacity building, participatory poverty assessments (PPAs), and regional poverty reduction strategies. The multi-donor ACI PRSP fund¹⁶ was set up to support this work. The support given within each of these components is outlined below:

5.1.1 Organisational and institutional development

The first area of support involved strengthening CSOs to enable engagement around the PRS process. This support focused on internal organisational capacity building, as well as network development and alliance building. Partners in this area focused on the local level, while seeking linkages with national level policy. Partners receiving this type of support included: national NGO networks such as Interforos Nacional; regional NGO networks such as Interforos La Paz, ASONOG and Popol Nah Tun¹⁷; Church-based CSOs such as Caritas; and CSOs focused on building accountability at local level, such as CIPRODEH¹⁸.

5.1.2 Advocacy capacity building

Support was given to organisations to integrate advocacy into their existing operations. This support was given through training programmes, some of which were jointly funded with other INGOs. Organisations such as Popol Nah Tun, FONAMIH¹⁹, CDM²⁰, and CIARH/Handicap Honduras²¹ benefited from this type of support.

Trócaire also supported national level advocacy initiatives to support organisations undertaking high level tracking of government interactions with the IMF and World Bank. These partners included national networks including Interforos Nacional, FOSDEH and COFEMUN²².

5.1.3 Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs)

Trócaire supported various groups of communities in Southern and Northern Honduras in completing PPAs, which were used as the basis for community advocacy with local authorities. A staff member was recruited to work exclusively on this process in 2004 - 2005, providing technical assistance in the elaboration and documentation of the PPA methodologies used.

5.1.4 Regional Poverty Reduction Strategies

Trócaire and DFID co-financed FOSDEH and ASONOG to develop CSO-led regional poverty reduction strategies in the Centre, South, West of Honduras and the Sula Valley. Trócaire also funded Popol Nah Tun to carry out a PRS in the Aguan Valley. Common elements of the various methodologies included: supporting local NGOs to direct the process, training local technical teams, creating local planning capacity, establishing a mandate for lobbying based on local needs and participation, contributing to decentralisation processes, influencing content and processes of national PRSPs and encouraging CSO engagement with local state bodies.

¹⁵ Trócaire PRSP Advocacy Project Strategic Plan 2002 - 2005

¹⁶ See Section 4.1.2 and 5.1.5

¹⁷ Popol Nah Tun is a regional civil society platform for the Aguan Valley in the North of Honduras

¹⁸ Centro de Investigacion y Promocion de los Derechos Humanos - a human rights organisation

¹⁹ Foro Nacional de Migrantes Honduras - National Migrants Forum

²⁰ Centro de Derechos de la Mujer -women's rights organisation in Honduras

²¹ Centro de Integracion y Rehabilitacion de Honduras - disabled people's platform

²² Colectiva Feminista de Mujeres Universitarias de Honduras - women's rights organisation in Honduras

5.1.5 ACI PRSP Fund

In 2003 and 2004, Trócaire led a process to create a multi-donor fund to support civil society in the context of the implementation of the PRSP in Honduras. The aim of the ACI fund is to make political processes more transparent, democratic, participative and accountable, to relate the PRSP to the National Budget and accountability, to increase participation of civil society in national structures for PRSP implementation, and to enable the inclusion and participation of groups excluded from the process to date. Capacity building has been fundamental to the operational structure of ACI, as it involves members of ACI and representatives of local civil society in the political and executive operations. The Fund has been very successful, allowing access to resources and capacity building for scores of CSOs, many of whom are making the transition from service-delivery only, to programmes including advocacy work.

5.2 Trócaire's support to partners in Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, Trócaire's intervention with partners around the PRS process was at a much lower level. From 2003, Trócaire formed part of Grupo Incidencia Sur Norte (GISN), which was the umbrella organisation that worked with the national civil society coordination body (CCER) in developing an advocacy strategy around PRS and related issues. Work was also done with the Catholic University (UCA)'s Poverty Observatory to organise and coordinate the PPA in four communities in Matagalpa, which was used to complement the PPA study in Honduras. Staff capacity constraints meant that it was not possible to extend support beyond such interventions.

5.3 Trócaire's support to partners in Rwanda

When Trócaire established its work on the PRS process in 2002, Rwandan civil society's work in the area of economic justice was at an embryonic stage. There was little substantive or consistent

input into the content of the PRSP by CSOs or discussion on policy options. There was no civil society forum to seek out the views of their constituents and represent them collectively.

Trócaire's advocacy programme in Rwanda began in full in 2003, with the aim of developing a strong advocacy agenda within the on-going work of at least 20 Rwandan partners and to strengthen Trócaire Rwanda's own internal capacity to incorporate and mainstream advocacy in all its programmes. A three-year civil society programme was launched in 2003, targeting four long-term (e.g. 3 year) projects and a number of short term (e.g. 6 to 8 month) projects with partners.

The four long-term partners were chosen on the basis of their strategic role in Rwandan society and their commitment to developing advocacy and policy work. At the outset, the long-term projects involved CAURWA²³, CESTRAR²⁴, Haguruka²⁵ and ARTC/ARTCF²⁶.

Due to its unique circumstance as a post-genocide state, the PRSP project in Rwanda attempted, as an initial step, to broaden national level spaces for civic engagement, and strengthen and deepen civil society's capacities for socio-economic advocacy. In order to achieve this, close accompaniment of partners was required, which is why only four long-term partners were initially chosen.

Trócaire's support to partners in Rwanda was more 'hands on' and direct than in many cases in Honduras and Nicaragua. It involved: support for basic organisational development; accompaniment and technical support for service delivery, strategic planning and advocacy; hiring of external resource persons or subject matter specialists through short-term consultancies; and facilitating regional exposure visits.

5.3.1 Organisational Development

While organisational development in Honduras focused on building organisational strategy, notably for advocacy, in Rwanda there was a focus on the level below this. Trócaire supported capacity building in fundamental skills such as planning and financial management, for example. Supporting organisations to become well-functioning entities, with a sound management structure and accounting systems, was fundamental to Trócaire's approach. Not only was it seen as a foundation for all further work on capacity building and advocacy by an individual CSO, it was also seen as key to building overall capacity and institutional space for civil society.

²³ CAURWA works with the Batwa of Rwanda in helping them to push for equal rights as Rwandese citizen and to lobby for government recognition as an official indigenous minority.

²⁴ See Section 4.3.2

²⁵ Haguruka protects and promotes women's and children's rights throughout Rwanda by providing legal and paralegal assistance, promoting school human rights clubs, raising human rights awareness amongst local authorities, and conducting research and policy/legislative advocacy work.

²⁶ ARTC/ARTF are sister organisations and work with street vendors in the city of Kigali encouraging dialogue between street vendors and authorities. This particular advocacy project never got off the ground however due to an eruption of internal conflict between the two organizations and serious internal management problems.

5.3.2 Accompaniment for strategic planning and implementation

Trócaire worked with partners to improve strategic thinking, generate sound projects and operational plans and focus interventions around clear results. Accompaniment also involved very close monitoring of implementation processes, resulting in real time adjustments of partner projects. This approach involved regular reviews including external strategic reviews, retreats, group brainstorming and targeted meetings. These have been used to analyse partner strategies and activities and have enabled joint strategic responses by Trócaire and its partners, particularly around policy.

5.3.3 External resource persons

External consultants were hired for specific areas of work, targeted at individual or small groups of CSOs. For example, a regional expert and lawyer on indigenous rights worked with CAURWA to devise strategies and generate well-researched positions. These were used in discussions with government and in national and international advocacy work on the rights of the Batwa indigenous community.

5.3.4 Exposure visits

Trócaire facilitated numerous exposure and exchange visits to challenge and promote new thinking among Rwandan CSOs. For example, Trócaire facilitated exposure for staff and volunteers from the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace body to similar organizations in Zambia and Uganda. Trócaire also facilitated exposure for network leaders to Tanzania, to learn from experiences of building CSO networks for policy influencing.

5.3.5 Research

Trócaire supported partners to undertake research to enhance evidence-based analysis and advocacy. The research process has improved CSOs' capacity to conduct research and analysis. It has also provided a key basis for advocacy and improved their credibility with policy-makers. Moreover, it has improved their capacity to carry out internal organisational reviews and implement organisational change. However, the translation of research results into concrete advocacy and action agendas remains a key challenge for a number of partners.

Key Points: Trócaire's support to partners – Mechanisms

- Facilitating rather than displacing local partners must be central to any INGO approach to advocacy at country level.
- Context is key: this will determine whether support to civil society can be broad-based, using local resource institutions to build capacity for evidence-based advocacy, or whether a closer level of support to fewer CSOs is necessary.
- Where civil society is very weak, ongoing accompaniment in basic organisational development is often fundamental to achieving progress in CSO advocacy work.
- Where civil society is more vibrant, the key challenges may centre around supporting programmes which specifically empower the poor to participate directly in CSO activity and the building of networks to link local and national level activity.
- In a post-conflict situation, building strong, representative civil society alliances is very important, but extremely difficult, requiring sensitivity and patience by INGOs.

6. Trócaire's support to Partners - Impact

This section examines the impact of Trócaire's support to partners in terms of: capacity building, increased space for civil society and contribution to social and economic justice (Sections 6.1 – 6.3). It also examines Trócaire's support to partners in terms of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability (Section 6.4).

It is difficult to assess the impact that advocacy and support to partners has had on people's lives and livelihoods. One main reason for this difficulty is that change is a very long-term process. In the staff survey completed for the PRS evaluation, Gaynor (2006) points out that while many partners have brought an advocacy approach into their work and started to open up the policy making process, they have achieved only the first steps, and it may be some time before these efforts translate into tangible impacts in terms of poverty reduction. Another measurement difficulty, outlined by Gaynor, is that the PRS project evolved organically and at different levels (country and global), with no measurable indicators and monitoring system.

There is evidence however, that Trócaire has helped build capacity and open space for civil society, which is beginning to contribute to increased economic and social justice. This is outlined below for Honduras and Rwanda. Evaluating the impact of Trócaire's support to partners in Nicaragua on CSO capacity, space for civil society and social and economic justice is not possible however, given the lower level of work carried out.

6.1 Capacity building

6.1.1 Honduras

Giving organisational and institutional development support has had multiplier effects with local level partners in Honduras. For example, support to ASONOG, Interforos La Paz²⁷ and UNICORASS²⁸ has increased the voice and participation of grassroots groups. The poorest of the poor have been empowered as their demands at grassroots level have been formulated into concrete proposals around the use of public resources at local level.

Through these capacity building initiatives, information about the PRSP has been disseminated by civil society in two-thirds of Honduras' regions. This widespread dissemination has mobilised the population around the use of public funds and generated discussion around public policy. The participatory methodologies for drawing up the regional PRSPs and PPAs have had an impact on CSO capacity in terms of planning, negotiation, awareness and learning. These methodologies facilitated the development of regional and sectoral agendas and contributed to CSO alliance building. Furthermore, the capacity to take on a multi-dimensional approach to advocacy has increased, as civil society actors have learnt how to relate and position themselves relative to government.

However, challenges remain, especially at the local level. While there are interesting initiatives at the local level, and lessons are being shared across different municipalities, these initiatives have been difficult to scale up. Alliance-building to tackle issues of inclusion and collective action is still very sporadic, short-term, and is often divisive.

6.1.2 Rwanda

During the country level evaluation in Rwanda, partners reported improved capacity on many different levels. These included improved project development and management skills and improved capacity for negotiation with both decision makers and target groups. Partners also highlighted increased awareness of national programs and policies and the crucial and democratising role that civil society plays in these processes. There has also been improved capacity in research and analysis.

Trócaire's approach to partner capacity development, based on close and dedicated accompaniment and a flexible funding relationship, encouraged by its strong social justice mission, were singled out as key drivers behind the identified improvements in partner capacity.

6.2 Increased space for civil society

6.2.1 Honduras

Trócaire's contribution to CSO advocacy capacity building has resulted in increased space for civil society at a range of levels:

- Local level processes have led to increased lobbying for the right to participate, and engagement with legal structures and political

²⁷ Interforos La Paz is a civil society organisation representing the department of La Paz in Honduras

²⁸ A regional NGO in the department of Colon, Honduras.

processes as a means to secure this. The participatory processes in the PPAs have been important in securing new spaces at the community level.

- At municipal level, space has been secured by establishing common interests between local and civil society actors and the municipal authorities.
- The CSO-led regional PRSPs have increased space at municipal, departmental and regional level, allowing for interaction with relevant government and state institutions at each level. These strategies have also become the key reference point for civil society participation. The existence of concrete documents, proposals and projects has given civil society the opportunity to have a place in discussions with donors and some government ministries.
- At a national level, the role of the CCERP has been broadened, with twelve representatives from civil society. Civil society now holds the majority of the space in the CCERP. This is significant because CCERP has a legal role in the oversight of HIPC debt relief spending.

However, consolidating space during the political transition remains a challenge. If the legal framework is strengthened, space at the local level may be maintained. However space at other levels remains uncertain, in particular gaining space with political parties, parliament and the powerful interests that dominate public policy making processes.

6.2.2 Rwanda

The EDPRS and the renewed focus on rural development through decentralisation have created multi-stakeholder and multi-level spaces for development dialogue. Trócaire has contributed through its capacity-building and support to partners to developing strategies for increasing and making use of space for policy dialogue. Encouragement of and support to the emergence of a national civil society platform has also been important, as has support to partners involved in specific sectoral policy discussions.

Partners have highlighted increased capacity and expanding space in many areas. Examples include the establishment of the civil society platform, the increased inclusion of civil society in various national commissions set up to direct public policy and oversee effective management of public assets, civil society's invitation to participate in key national policy development and policy management processes, and its increasingly concrete and organised contributions in policy discussions.

Trócaire has also been directly instrumental in creating space, by acting in an informal liaison role with certain government institutions, notably the unit responsible for the EDPRS in the Ministry of Finance. One official in this unit noted that if Trócaire was to shut down its work in this area, the government would be left without a means to engage with civil society. This highlights Trócaire's important role, but also raises a question around sustainability (see below).

Overall however, the government views the role of civil society as one of service delivery only, thus the full potential of civil society in national development remains untapped. Trócaire has supported its partners to take an approach of strategic engagement with government – seizing available opportunities while always seeking more space. Future challenges will revolve around making this space sustainable given civil society's weak organisation levels, internal fractures resulting from the genocide, a lack of strategic focus and the government's reluctance to accommodate civil society in an advocacy role.

6.3 Contribution to increased social and economic justice

6.3.1 Honduras

Trócaire's partners in Honduras have contributed to increased social and economic justice at a local, regional and national level:

- At local level, partners have influenced planning processes, and have monitored plans drawn up in participative fora. This has resulted in mobilisation and empowerment of the poor to advocate for change.
- The regional strategies offered a framework for bringing participation and accountability from the grassroots level up to the national stage. This allowed for the incorporation of civil society demands in allocating poverty reduction resources. The PPAs helped to achieve increased PRS spending in areas identified by the poor, where these fed into a regional PRS. Having a strategic aim of the use of PPAs was important for their success. Furthermore, evidence from the PPAs was used to influence government, leading to the recognition of regional migration issues, and the need to develop policies to address wide pockets of poverty in relatively wealthier regions.
- At a national level, FOSDEH have produced useful information on debt, the national budget and processes around these issues. This has served to inform donors, who then influence policy decisions.

Overall, an important precedent has been set in terms of acceptance of the validity of civil society demands and exploring how to incorporate them technically into the budget. The PPAs in particular ensured that poverty as lived by the poor was recognised in public policy discourse. However, challenges remain around consolidating efforts. While there has been much activity at the micro-level for generating pro-poor projects, there needs to be clear linkages to analysis and tracking of national budgets and policies that can feed into the political system.

6.3.2 Rwanda

The work of Trócaire in Rwanda has also contributed to social and economic justice at a local and national level:

- At the local level, Trócaire's partner Haguruka has been successful in increasing awareness of rights among vulnerable groups, a number of whom are beginning to claim their rights from local administration and through local courts. As the rapid decentralisation process takes root in Rwanda the increase in powers of local government will bring both opportunities and challenges for CSOs.
- At the national level, Trócaire Rwanda has had some notable impact. One example has been the success of CAURWA's national lobby for governmental recognition of Batwa as both marginalised and indigenous. The recent introduction of targeted assistance to Batwa by government can be seen as a direct outcome of months of negotiation and exchange and furthermore is indicative of improved relations between this famously vocal CSO and government. Other successes include the work of CESTRAR who have lobbied for and achieved compensation for some retrenched workers under the government's public sector reform programme.

However, there are many challenges. The general challenges include scaling up impact among CSOs in a constrained political environment. A specific challenge is the effect of decentralisation. As this process takes root in Rwanda, it may bring greater authority to the local government, which will be of benefit to organisations with strong local operations such as Haguruka.

However, the decentralisation transition period will pose many challenges. Decentralisation has been carried out rapidly, without consultation with key stakeholders, including government officials, civil society and many donors. There is a lack of clarity on the levels of authority to be transferred and on the processes for engagement between civil society and decentralised government. Most

CSOs at local level are not yet ready for such engagement. Therefore Trócaire may need to alter some of its advocacy approaches, helping to build local CSO capacity to engage with local government and feed evidence-based research in at this level, as has happened in Honduras.

Overall, the different order of intervention and success in Honduras and Rwanda illustrates the context-specific approach needed to building advocacy capacity for social and economic justice. A notable point is that in a constrained political environment such as exists in Rwanda, success for one CSO at a local or national level is seen as a success for all of civil society. Every breakthrough with government on a specific topic builds trust and creates more overall space for government – civil society dialogue.

6.4 Relevant, effective, efficient, sustainable

The evaluation looked at whether or not the PRS work in Honduras and Rwanda was relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable. The findings are outlined below.

6.4.1 Relevant

The PRS has been relevant in terms of providing a framework for civil society participation. However, ensuring that civil society participation is now embedded in national processes will be a major challenge in the coming years. The key challenge in Honduras will be to ensure that the opportunities offered by the PRS and the important impacts to date remain relevant in the current context where the new government has not prioritised the PRS, where trade policies such as CAFTA are now dominant and do not involve civil society participation, and where inequality, social fracturing and violence are on the rise. In Rwanda, the challenge will be in ensuring Trócaire's work remains relevant in the context of rapid decentralisation and the continued fragility of government – civil society relations.

6.4.2 Effective

Trócaire has helped improve relationships between civil society actors, and encouraged alliances and collective action. To remain effective, Trócaire in Honduras needs to help partners engage with the changing political and policy context. In Rwanda, Trócaire needs to help partners consolidate gains made so far at national level and engage appropriately in relation to the decentralisation process.

6.4.3 Efficient

Both in Honduras and Rwanda, having full time staff dedicated to the issue allowed for specific

expertise to be developed, tailored support to partners, and opportunities for co-financing. Gaynor (2006) highlighted the fact that staff spend more time than money supporting partners within this project. This is true for Rwanda in particular. Therefore to increase impact, adequate personnel is more important than an increase in financial resources.

6.4.4 Sustainable

A key challenge will be scaling up alliance and capacity building in order to achieve effective and sustainable engagement with public policy processes. However, this must be achieved without creating increased dependency on Trócaire. In both countries, but notably in Rwanda, the challenge of reducing local civil society's reliance on Trócaire remains important. Trócaire Rwanda has recognised this issue and

has facilitated exposure visits for other INGOs who have a high proportion of national staff, as this will help to broaden the support base of local NGOs. This has proven successful, with a small core group of INGOs now developing and taking ownership of some of the functions previously fulfilled only by Trócaire (for example developing statements and responses to key government documents; mobilising national as well as INGOS at important times etc).

Gaynor (2006) highlighted another sustainability issue: making time for learning and development within Trócaire. Programme Officers do not have much time for reading and learning, which hampers their skills in building capacity among partners. This is despite the fact that partners use Programme staff as a resource on recent thinking and other partner experiences in this area.

Key Points: Trócaire's support to partners – Impact

- In a post-conflict environment, civil society advocacy work on sectors can be more acceptable to government and can help build overall institutional space for improving government-civil society relations.
- Supporting participatory, evidence-based advocacy processes which develop clear recommendations for change at local levels is an effective means to expand space for participation and deliver concrete outcomes.
- In particular, it is possible to empower the very poor and marginalised, by resourcing and providing technical accompaniment to CSOs involved in participatory work at a local level.
- Civil society needs support to focus on increasing impact on policy content at national level. This implies increasing engagement on an organised basis with the political processes which govern policy-making and implementation at a national level.
- To make a significant contribution, INGO staff capacity must be sufficient both to provide close accompaniment to partners where necessary and to maintain a thorough analysis of the social and political context.
- Building in mechanisms to avoid or reduce partners' dependency on INGOs such as Trócaire is crucial.

7. Trócaire's National and International Policy and Advocacy work

This section analyses the advocacy work carried out directly by Trócaire, from a country level and from Maynooth, within the remit of the PRS project.

Section 7.1 will outline the type of direct advocacy carried out at national level in Rwanda and Honduras, as well as advocacy work in other countries that got involved in the project. It will address the strengths and weaknesses of linkages between PRS team members in terms of a common advocacy agenda.

Section 7.2 will provide a substantive analysis of Trócaire's international policy and advocacy work and highlight lessons learnt around local / international focus and maximising impact.

7.1 National level advocacy and international links

The core members of the PRS team – in Maynooth, Rwanda and Honduras – were expected to fulfil policy and advocacy roles for Trócaire, along with providing support to partners in their policy and advocacy work. The policy objectives were set out in the original Strategic Plan for the project (Section 2.1) and emphasised influencing World Bank and IMF conditionality and influencing debt cancellation strategies.

However, the parameters of this advocacy agenda and the specific workplans for each individual developed organically as the project progressed, rather than through a formal planning and review process. This was both a strength of the cross-organisational project, given its experimental nature, and a weakness, as will be illustrated below.

7.1.1 Approach to direct advocacy at national level

Firstly however, it is notable that despite the significant differences in country contexts, Trócaire staff approached their own direct advocacy role in similar ways. In both countries, Trócaire was seen

by key government departments and by donors as having a specific expertise in PRS-related issues and as having the potential to mobilise local and international civil society.

There was a risk that this would lead Trócaire to carry out its own advocacy in isolation from partners. However, Trócaire took pains to facilitate rather than displace local CSOs, while developing its own direct advocacy work. For example, staff in both countries would bring partners with them to meetings with government officials.

7.1.2 Advocacy at national level and links across the organisation

The intention behind the project was to work in a manner which, to the greatest extent possible, allowed international advocacy work to be fed by country-based advocacy issues and vice versa. However, the PRS project was grounded in the reality that country-based programme officers would have to respond to a local advocacy agenda, which did not necessarily have links for Trócaire across the organisation or at an international level.

• Rwanda

This was particularly notable in Rwanda, where the primary issue for Trócaire was helping to create and maintain space for civil society dialogue with government. As a result, the advocacy issues and objectives taken up by Trócaire Rwanda tended to be very specific to the Rwandan context. While some advocacy work was carried out on debt cancellation and the role of the IMF, accompanied by the PAU coordinator, by and large Trócaire Rwanda did not contribute much to a broader Trócaire advocacy agenda. This was partly because the Government of Rwanda was seen as the main advocacy target, unlike Honduras where external donors and IFIs were also seen as strongly influential.

• Honduras

In Honduras, the national policy agenda was also the primary element in determining the direct policy and advocacy work carried out by Trócaire. Trócaire worked alongside partners to influence the PRS process and outcomes, in order to maximise civil society's role and impact. Trócaire used its position as an international agency to influence donors in particular, raising critical issues and presenting the perspective of civil society on them. Academics were also included as advocacy targets, as their influence on donor policy in particular was seen as significant.

Trócaire in Honduras regularly documented the policy context in Honduras and related it to

international issues insofar as possible. Regular 'PRSP Updates' analysed the local political and economic context. As well as identifying key trends in national government and civil society debate, the role of external actors such as bilateral and multilateral donors was always included in the analysis.

As a result of this systematic documentation, Trócaire Honduras became a point of reference for other NGOs, donors and academics within and outside the country. It was also easier for the Honduras-based officer and the Maynooth-based project coordinator to identify and work on joint advocacy agendas, e.g. with respect to the IMF and World Bank. Advocacy carried out by Trócaire Honduras at country and Washington level had greater impact as a result of this consistent, evidence-based analysis from a country perspective.

However, results of research in the PRS Evaluation show that despite the widespread interest in these policy updates, Trócaire does not have a clear strategy around their objectives, content and target audience. A clear terms of reference is needed for this analytic and documentation work, and it should also be carried out in other key countries, especially in Africa.

- **Mozambique**

Along with Honduras, several other countries adopted advocacy strategies that combined local and international policy agendas as a result of the PRS project. The most direct example is Mozambique. Trócaire has developed expertise in capacity building for participation over the course of the PRS project, drawing on experiences from other countries where Trócaire is present (e.g. Zambia, Malawi and Honduras in particular).

This expertise helped Trócaire gain space in the joint donor-government Budget Support management processes, where Trócaire plays a very significant role in keeping both donors and government focused on and responsive to local civil society's needs and inputs. Trócaire contributed significantly to advocacy oriented at encouraging the Government of Mozambique to develop a strategic plan for communication around the second PRSP and to ensure its assessment was included in the Government's annual performance targets for PRSP implementation. Trócaire's aim is to ensure that local people have access to the information that is guiding national development. Trócaire Mozambique also uses the analysis it can draw from its engagement with the Government and donors in Mozambique to inform an international

policy agenda on aid effectiveness and accountability. This relationship however, is not based on a formalised strategy. The lack of a clear operational plan means that Maynooth-Mozambique engagement remains strong but without a clear sense of objectives and direction.

Clearly, there is a need for stronger processes of strategic planning and review around the objectives of achieving greater social and economic justice, with identification of common aims and agreed mechanisms for reaching these.

This point surfaces in more detail in the following section, which summarises the findings from an external evaluation of Trócaire's international level advocacy work as part of the PRS project.

7.2 Trocaire's International Policy and Advocacy Work

7.2.1 *Trócaire's work at an international level*

There have been three phases to Trócaire's international policy work as it related to the PRS project. These phases are described briefly below, and are followed by an analysis of the impact Trócaire has had at this level.

7.2.1.1 *The initial PRSP period (mid 2002 – mid 2004).*

In the initial period of the project, Trócaire focused its international policy and advocacy work on the fulfilment by the IFIs of their obligations under the PRSP approach. Specifically, Trócaire analysed IMF and World Bank activities at country level against the five PRSP principles (see Section 3). Trócaire produced numerous documents in this period (see Box 2). Both Honduras and Rwanda helped inform these documents, which added to their credibility at Washington level.

7.2.1.2 *IMF in LICs (Oct 2003 – Sept 2005)*

In 2003, the IMF started reviewing its work in Low Income Countries (LICs). Trócaire identified this as an opportunity to build on the first phase of work, but to look more substantially at IMF operations. Research from Honduras and Rwanda, as well as Zambia, helped inform and give credibility to reports written. IMF-related advocacy was carried out in these countries, amongst others, but was most systematically sustained in Honduras.

7.2.1.3 Aid Quantity and Effectiveness (November 2004 – ongoing)

By late 2004, aid policy had become a highly significant issue on the Irish and international agenda. In this period, Trócaire's international advocacy focused on: Ireland's commitment to 0.7%; Ireland's aid policy and general budget support; donor harmonisation and alignment to nationally owned policies; and IMF and World Bank conditionality. Mozambique was the country most closely involved in this work. The issue was least relevant in Honduras, due largely to lower aid dependence.

7.2.2 Debt advocacy

Even though the fourth advocacy objective in Trócaire's strategic plan was to carry out advocacy on debt, it was felt that it would be more worthwhile to use Trócaire's limited resources on other pressing issues. At an international level, Trócaire felt that the debt agenda was well covered by the Debt and Development Coalition Ireland (DDCI) and EURODAD and so took a back seat in policy work on this issue. In Honduras, FOSDEH was one of the main Southern organisations working on debt at a policy level, and already had high level access in Honduras. In Rwanda, limited advocacy was carried out with the IMF / World Bank at country and Washington levels on Rwanda's case for debt cancellation.

7.3 Evaluation of Trócaire's international policy and advocacy work

This section examines Trócaire's international policy work in terms of its impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. It draws in particular on findings from the external evaluation by Angela Wood (2006) of Trócaire's

policy and advocacy work at an international level. Wood (2006) interviewed staff in the IMF, World Bank and Irish Aid, along with key policy staff in Northern and Southern NGOs.

Overall, the evaluation found that Trócaire is regarded as one of the strongest NGOs engaged in IFI-related advocacy, with a unanimous perception that Trócaire is 'head and shoulders above other NGOs' (Wood, 2006, p. 3). Within Ireland, Trócaire is recognised as the development agency with the most policy capacity and the leading advocacy agency in Ireland that has the most impact. However, Trócaire faces important choices in how it operates, if it is to have maximum impact.

7.3.1 Impact

Trócaire's reports are described by staff in the IFIs as 'hard hitting', but they are well received because they are well researched, constructive, offer a range of perspectives, give useful insight into what is happening on the ground and provide helpful alternatives. As a consequence, Trócaire's reports are consistently and widely read by many of those targeted in the IFIs. The reports are taken into consideration because they illustrate a solid understanding of IFI processes, used evidence-based arguments and make realistic recommendations.

The evaluation report found that, in general, it is hard to identify NGOs impact on IFIs policies and processes. However, it was noted that NGO pressure does force the IFIs and other donors to give greater attention to certain issues. For example, Trócaire's criticism of the IMF's fiscal policy approach, combined with lobbying by other NGOs, UN organisations and bilateral donors appears to have made a significant impact²⁹. This is witnessed in the recent flurry of reports from the IMF concerning fiscal space and the

Policy Publications

The PRSP Approach:

- C. De Barra, J Cornally, (April 2004), "PRSP: Lessons Learnt", Trócaire
- C. De Barra (April 2004) "PRSP: Are the World Bank and IMF Delivering on their Promises?": CIDSE
- J Cornally (August 2004) "Are PRSPs combating rural poverty in Honduras and Nicaragua?" Trócaire.

The Role of the IMF

- C. De Barra (September 2004) "The other side of the coin... An alternative perspective on the role of the International Monetary Fund in Low Income Countries" Trócaire

Aid Effectiveness

- C. De Barra (2005) "Addressing Aid Effectiveness: A key Challenge in Meeting the MDGs" in Trócaire Development Review, Trócaire

opportunities for using more aid to generate fiscal space for increased pro-poor government expenditure.

Like many other NGOs, Trócaire has focused more on IFI process issues rather than policies. For Trócaire, this is linked to staff and partner capacity for analysis of hard-edged policy content, including macroeconomic analysis in particular. Thus, although it is hard to quantify, NGOs including Trócaire may have had more success at influencing policy formulation processes and to a certain extent internal IFI processes, rather than actual policy content.

However, the external evaluation did find that Trócaire's work had been helpful to advocacy targets in formulating policy positions in the IFIs and bilateral agencies. They were particularly useful for reformers inside the IFIs, in pushing for changes where their agendas overlapped with Trócaire's. By contrast, interviewees noted that NGO reports which used inflammatory language or which consistently criticised the IFIs without offering alternatives tended to reinforce the hard-liners who are anti-reform.

Finally, a crucial issue also arises for Trócaire as a result of this evaluation. This is the question of whether to aim for impact primarily at global or at country level. The evaluation found that: *'it may be more productive to focus on influencing change in policies and processes at the national level than it is to try to influence those at the global level'* (Wood, 2006, p. 4). This is based on the assessment that IFI and Irish Aid staff most value analysis of experiences at country level and that this informs thinking and potentially has a greater impact than engagement on the details of IFI processes at a global level. This important question is further elaborated in the next sub-section.

7.3.2 Relevant

Trócaire's advocacy work is considered by the IFIs and Irish Aid to be well focused on the key issues of the moment, and is seen as being ahead of the curve. For example, Trócaire has been involved in key emerging issues such as governance and in influencing IMF thinking about how it should engage with poorly performing countries. IMF staff members have found Trócaire's recommendations relevant because they fit within their frame of reference and because recommendations are by and large grounded in reality.

Both Northern and Southern NGOs have found Trócaire's reports, particularly the background information they provide on technical IFI issues,

informative and a useful source of analysis. Trócaire's reports have often been used to feed other NGO advocacy and analysis.

However, one of Trócaire's key weaknesses is that, while its advocacy work was relevant at an international level, there is a sense that the content and thrust of the international policy materials derived from the international donor agenda, rather than the work of partners on the ground. A southern partner mentioned that there is a need for more consultation with partners when identifying advocacy issues and that the definition of priorities needs to be two-way.

This relates closely to the above issue of whether to focus on impact primarily at country or global level. If Trócaire is to continue to aim to effect change on IFI policy and operations, it seems clear that basing this work 'in-country' and carrying it out alongside partners is key. However, for this to have impact there is a need for Trócaire to maintain its understanding of the overall institutions, and to help deepen both its own staffs' and partners' capacity to analyse policy content, as well as process issues. The same is probably true for other institutions with whom Trócaire would hope to have a significant policy impact, e.g. bilateral donors, EU etc.

While the evaluation report highlighted the danger of working outside of the frame of reference of partners in country contexts, there are difficulties with country-based advocacy also.

- Firstly, the global picture and potential for impact across as well as within countries can get lost unless strands of analysis are drawn together from country contexts.
- Secondly, as identified above, many of the most pressing issues at local level may not bear clear relation to issues that can be worked on at an international level.
- Finally, Trócaire needs to avoid imposing an agenda on local partners through its own enthusiasm for certain global policy issues.

However, while these issues are complex to address, it must be borne in mind that Trócaire's credibility derives from its representation on the ground.

Therefore, to remain relevant and effective in this field, Trócaire needs to build a strategic programme around social and economic justice advocacy, with clear policy change objectives at national and international level. The work needs to be based more firmly in country level analysis and support to partners, while maintaining a crucial link to international policy.

²⁹ A Trócaire report - 'The other side of the Coin' - was fundamental to its advocacy approach on this matter and was among the most widely read of Trócaire reports.

7.3.3 Effective

Trócaire is seen as an effective advocate for the reasons outlined under 'Impact' above. While Trócaire's strategy has been an 'insider' one, it has built the reputation within the IFIs of being a challenging but constructive critic. Trócaire's willingness to listen to the IFI point of view has been effective in maintaining a constructive dialogue. IFI staff members are willing to engage with Trócaire even if they do not necessarily agree with Trócaire's analysis or the alternatives proposed because they believe Trócaire treats them fairly.

Furthermore, having a dedicated advocacy officer in the Honduras office, with the capacity to carry out country-specific analysis related to the IFIs, has been very effective. This is true in relation to influencing the IFIs on policy related to Honduras and for generating illustrative evidence to back up global arguments.

Trócaire's insider approach is seen to be strategic given its small size and that it is based in a country which does not wield a lot of influence in the IFIs. However, it was observed that this role could be more effective if combined with a campaigns strategy which also mobilised 'outsider' pressure. Furthermore, it was noted that some Southern CSOs can be uncomfortable with an insider role and that this can compromise partnerships.

Trócaire was viewed as having found a niche for itself in terms of the level of analysis it produces and the issues it focuses on, and was encouraged to maintain this focus by respondents. This specialisation and the fact that Trócaire's reports are well-written has led to the above-mentioned situation where Trócaire is ranked alongside Oxfam, as an agency whose reports are considered important. However, the distribution of Trócaire's reports has not been very effective and

a clearer strategy around targeting and distribution of policy documents is needed.

7.3.4 Efficient

Trócaire's efficiency has to be questioned because of the organic nature of the determination of the policy agenda at international and national levels. It is clear that efficiency as well as impact gains could be made through better and more regular strategic planning and review.

However, at a specific project level, policy work was often efficiently carried out in that resources were used well when targeted work was carried out. For example, interviews around the IMF in LICs were carried out efficiently and in a manner which built the analytic capacity of both PAU and national PRS team members, as well as partners.

However, there was arguably an 'underspend' of analytic capacity in Rwanda, in that the policy potential of the Rwandan situation was not fully developed. In Central America, there was an efficiency constraint in terms of staff time. Officers were expected to cover very significant programme and policy work, and the most appropriate balance between these two pieces of work was unclear. Clarity in job descriptions is critical.

7.3.5 Sustainable

There are sustainability issues around the handful of Trócaire staff engaged in international policy and advocacy. If the PAU coordinator were to leave, it would greatly reduce Trócaire's in-depth knowledge of how the IFIs function and who the key contacts are. Maintaining an institutional memory of the work done by the advocacy staff is key. Options for increasing capacity include enabling more staff to engage in face-to-face advocacy with key targets at country and international level. This has been effective in Honduras, Mozambique and Washington, for example.

Key Points: Trócaire's national and international policy and advocacy work

- International advocacy needs to be firmly embedded in the concerns and agendas of Southern partners, without losing sight of the changing international context.
- This requires dedicated staff with a policy and advocacy mandate in-country, who are closely linked to head office policy and advocacy staff.
- It also requires improved dialogue with partners on agenda-setting for collaborative advocacy work.
- Strong, evidence-based analysis at country and international levels is extremely important for effective advocacy. There is a need for a clear team-based strategy on the aims and dissemination of such analysis however.
- A lack of capacity for analysis of policy content in both Trócaire and Southern CSOs needs to be addressed through targeted capacity building and links to academic institutions. Increasing capacity for macro-economic analysis is particularly pertinent.
- Trócaire's impact as a respected advocacy 'insider' at the IFIs could be increased through combining this with a more political, campaigns-oriented 'outsider' approach.

8. Working cross-organisationally

Trócaire's PRS project was the first attempt in Trócaire to create a thematic team working across the traditional divides of the International Department and the Communications and Education Department (where the PAU sits). The members of the team were line managed by: (a) the Head of COMED, in the case of the project coordinator, and (b) the Regional Representatives, in the case of the field-based staff. The project coordinator was also responsible for managing the overall PAU in Maynooth.

As Trócaire moves to a matrix management system for the organisation, with four major cross-organisational teams, this experience offers invaluable lessons:

- Cross-organisational teams build impact and learning and reduce the sense of isolation of staff working in disparate locations.
- Strategic planning at team level is crucial. Joint objectives and monitoring mechanisms should be put in place at an early stage. This work should be taken forward within the context of the 'Mobilising for Justice' section of the new Strategic Plan.
- There should be an annual cross-organisational team meeting, focused on reviewing, planning, exchanging, learning and forward planning.
- 'Dips' in coordinated work in the PRS project happened in the six months following staff changes at field level. This could be avoided by building structured time in Maynooth into new staff members' programme of work before taking up the post.
- There is a need for more formalised management systems for cross-organisational approaches than was present in the PRS project, allowing for expansion of cross-organisational teams as appropriate.
- The role of a central coordinator is important. Gaynor (2006) maintains that the coordinator was key in drawing many more people into the work, besides the core team, and in facilitating the exchange of information and thinking between Honduras and Rwanda.

- Job descriptions for roles at Maynooth and country level need clarification, particularly in light of the new Strategic Plan and Civil Society policy. This should also address an appropriate balance between policy and programme work for staff based in-country.

Space for staff to learn and develop their own capacity to support partners or carry out effective analysis and advocacy roles is key.

Exposure visits have been very useful in terms of team building and learning. Some of the exposure visits in the PRS project involved partners as well as Trócaire staff. This was very valuable for exchange and integration among staff and partners.

- Collaboration with other like-minded organisations has often proved to be very useful. Examples include collaboration at HQ and field office level with CAFOD and Christian Aid. This offers not just the opportunity to exchange experiences and learning, but also to share resources and achieve more with less. This has been the case with joint funding of accompaniers in Ethiopia, joint workshops at field level and joint field trips and policy work.
- Communication and documentation are very important and were uneven throughout the PRS project.
 - Outside of the core PRS team, communication tended to be ad-hoc (Gaynor, 2006). Communication norms need to be established, with systematic information circulation flows put in place to ensure all field offices are aware of Trócaire's wider international advocacy work.
 - The Updates from Honduras have been essential in providing a continuity of communication between Maynooth and Honduras. As noted above, a strategy around analysis and documentation at country and international levels needs to be developed, based on clear aims and target audiences.
 - Core documents need to be produced in French, Spanish and Portuguese and made more accessible to partners, possibly through summary or simplified versions.

Key Points: working cross-organisationally

- Dedicated staff at country level are critical to integration between programme, policy and advocacy work.
- Regular strategic planning and review at team level, using measurable indicators, is crucial.
- Job descriptions need to be clear as does the overall cross-organisational management systems.
- Staff need space to learn, exchange experiences and develop their skills.
- Communication systems and regular, strategically targeted analysis and documentation are fundamental to team-building and advocacy success.
- Collaboration with other like-minded civil society organisations is useful for sharing resources, building learning and maximising impact.

9. Conclusions

The cross-organisational approach to work on participation and social and economic justice has been innovative and has had significant successes. The structure through which the PRS team worked has been effective in building learning and feeding national level analysis into international advocacy, although a more structured approach to planning is required. Trócaire's evaluation method has also been innovative in that it has been highly participatory and has ensured institutional learning.

The support Trócaire has given to its partners has helped to generate a rapid growth in civil society capacity and activity around pro-poor, evidence based advocacy in Honduras. It has been fundamental to building trust with the government in Rwanda and achieving important gains in a constrained environment.

Trócaire now needs to build on its experience with the PRS project to develop a new strategic programme around participatory advocacy for social and economic justice, with clear policy change objectives at national and international level. The work needs to be based more firmly in country level analysis and support to partners, while maintaining a crucial link to international policy.

The lessons from this model of working should also be taken into account in the development of cross-organisational thematic teams under Trócaire's 2006 – 2015 Strategic Plan.

Key conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation of the PRS project are summarised below.

• **Engaging with the PRSP as a policy framework**

The PRSP experience differs from country to country, but in some, it has become embedded in national policy. In these countries, it is important for civil society to engage in the process while at the same time understand the political context and ensure that civil society engages with the most relevant and important policy issues and processes. In countries where the PRSP has not taken hold, civil society needs to have the capacity to analyse the political environment in order to find alternative entry points to catalyse social, economic and political change.

• **Support to partners**

Working with partners to identify the political structures that underpin inequality, and to develop strategies for tackling these and deepening accountable governance, is crucial. Trócaire and partners should be wary of being sidetracked into lesser policy or process debates which may have limited structural impact.

Supporting partners to link local civil society analysis and initiatives with broader, national level policies and political processes is an important work area in countries such as Honduras where civil society is very active.

Continuing to work with partners in post-conflict countries such as Rwanda to build their basic organisational competence, their capacity for evidence-based advocacy and their confidence in dealing with government is crucial.

• **National and International policy and advocacy**

While Trócaire's international advocacy is seen by IFIs and bilateral donors as highly relevant and credible, Trócaire needs to root its international work more firmly in the concerns and advocacy agendas of its partners.

Having field-based staff with a mandate to work on building partner capacity for advocacy capacity, as well as having a policy and advocacy remit, is critical for deeper implementation of such an approach.

There is a need for stronger team processes of strategic planning, review and learning around the objectives of achieving greater social and economic justice, with identification of common aims and agreed mechanisms for reaching these.

Building staff and partner capacity to produce and use evidence-based analysis for national and international advocacy is key.

As Trócaire is now trusted and respected by the IFIs and bilateral donors it should be possible to build on the 'insider' approach it has adopted at an international level, and combine it with a more campaigns-oriented 'outsider' approach.

• **Working cross-organisationally**

The evaluation found that the model of working in a cross-organisational team offers great potential to build impact and learning. As Trócaire moves towards a wider implementation of cross-organisational team work, the following lessons can be drawn from the PRS project experience:

- Dedicated staff at country level are critical to integration between programme, policy and advocacy work;
- Regular strategic planning and review at team level, using measureable indicators, is crucial;
- Job descriptions need to be clear as does the overall cross-organisational management systems;
- Staff need space to learn, exchange experiences and develop their skills;
- Communication systems and regular, strategically targeted analysis and documentation are fundamental to team-building and advocacy success.
- Collaboration with other like-minded civil society organisations is useful for sharing resources, building learning and maximising impact.

Annex I Abbreviations

ACI	Agencias de Cooperacion Internacional
ARTC/ARTCF	ARTC/ARTF are sister organisations and work with street vendors in the city of Kigali encouraging dialogue between street vendors and authorities
ASONOG	Asociacion de Organizaciones no-Gubernamentales. It is a Honduran NGO network with a focus on Western Honduras
CAFTA	Central American Fair Trade Agreement
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CAURWA	CAURWA works with the Batwa of Rwanda to helping them to achieve equal rights as Rwandese citizen and to lobby for government recognition as an official indigenous minority.
CCERP	Consultative Council for the PRS in Honduras
CCER	Coordinadora Civil para la Emergencia y la Reconstrucción. CCER is a network of 320 local NGOs in Nicaragua and the coordinating body for civil society participation in the PRSP process.
CCOAI B	Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base. CCOAI B is an umbrella organisation drawing together 29 Rwanda NGOs working in rural areas and at the grass roots level
CDM	Centro de Derechos de la Mujer. Women's rights organisation in Honduras
CESTRAR	Centrale des Syndicats des travailleurs du Rwanda. CESTRAR is a Confederation of Trade Unions in Rwanda.
CIARH/Handicap	Centro de Integracion y Rehabilitacion de Honduras. Disabled People's platform
CIPRODEH	Centro de Investigacion y Promocion de los Derechos Humanos. Human rights organisation in Honduras
COFEMUN	Colectiva Feminista de Mujeres Universitarias de Honduras. Women's rights organisation in Honduras
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DCU	Dublin City University
DDCI	Debt and Development Coalition
DFID	Department for International Development UK
EDPRS	Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (Rwanda)
EU	European Union
FONAMIH	Foro Nacional de Migrantes Honduras. National Migrants Forum
FOSDEH	Foro Social de la Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras. A network-based NGO working on debt and economic justice from a macro-perspective
GISN	Grupo Incidencia Sur Norte. South-North NGO advocacy group in Nicaragua
GNI	Gross National Income
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
HIPC II	The Second Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office

IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
ISS	Institute for Social Studies
LICs	Low-Income Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NDP	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PAU	Policy and Advocacy Unit
PO	Programme Officer
PPAs	Participatory Poverty Assessments
PRGF	Poverty Reduction Growth Facility
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSC	Poverty Reduction Support Credit
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RMF	Rwanda Micro-Finance
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Policies
SGPRS	Strengthened Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (Nicaragua)
SNGOs	Southern Non Governmental Organisations
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICORASS	A regional NGO in the Department of Colon, Honduras

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