

# Contents

	Page
List of Abbreviations	4
Executive Summary	5
1. Introduction	9
1.1 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – the new Trend in Development Planning and Assistance	9
1.2 Locating PRSP from a rights perspective	10
1.3 Prioritising children and their rights in PRSPs	11
1.4 Review of Southern African PRSPs	13
2. Do Southern African PRSPs promote children’s rights and child poverty reduction?	14
2.1 Features contributing to child poverty reduction	14
2.2 Locating child poverty within demographic and poverty profiles	15
2.3 Economic policy priorities	16
2.3.1 Overall orientation	16
2.3.2 Economic growth	16
2.3.3 Liberalisation	19
2.3.4 Social sector investment	20
2.4 Priority towards child-focused social service and support programmes	21
2.5 Recognition of and support for particularly vulnerable groups of children	25
2.6 Public expenditure management reforms that support child poverty reduction	26
3. Concluding Recommendations	31
References	34
Appendix A separate volume Detailed Review of five National PRSP:s Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana and Lesotho	35

## *List of abbreviations*

BEDCO	Basotho Enterprise Development Corporation (Lesotho)
BESSIP	Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme (Zambia)
CFMP	Medium-term Fiscal Scenario (Mozambique)
CHAL	Christian Health Association of Lesotho
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EHP	Essential Healthcare Package
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country
HIV/Aids	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus/Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
IAF	Household Survey (Mozambique)
MPRSP	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PAP	Poverty Alleviation Programme (Malawi)
PARPA	Action Plan for Reduction of Absolute Poverty (Mozambique)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SMME	Small, medium-sized and micro enterprises
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
SWAP	Sector-wide Approach
TB	Tuberculosis
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States dollar
WDR	World Development Report

# *Executive summary*

## **PRSP**

Reducing poverty and improving levels of social and economic wellbeing are broadening policy and resource debates in developing and developed countries.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach forms the basis of the redefined anti-poverty framework of the international community, and is a prerequisite for access to a broader range of concessional and developmental assistance for low-income developing countries.

The PRSP is therefore a development strategy that places poverty reduction first, in the context of sustainable growth and development. It describes a country's economic and social policies and programmes over a three-year or longer horizon, integrated into a broader macro-economic framework and developed through a process of extensive consultation with national stakeholders. The latter is aimed at facilitating a PRSP that is government-led and country-owned.

## *A human rights approach*

International discourse is starting to recognise that poverty is not only of developmental concern, and that related debates are now shifting into the ambit of human rights.

More specifically, the human rights approach to poverty reduction recognises that those policies and institutions directed towards poverty reduction should be based explicitly on the norms and values set out in international human rights law. This context provides poverty reduction strategies, in particular PRSPs, with potential to empower the poor, rather than simply directing development efforts at poor people.

## *Child focus*

PRSP processes have considerable significance in low-income, developing countries where children form both the bulk of the population and the majority of those that live below the poverty line.

This means that for most low-income developing countries, children are the locus of poverty, and strategies that prioritise children's rights and target child poverty reduction ensure a bias towards pro-poor growth and development policies.

For this reason, Save the Children Sweden commissioned a review of PRSPs in the Southern Africa region in respect of their focus on child poverty and child rights, and of the role of civil society participation in formulating and implementing national PRSPs.

## Conclusions

The PRSP's contribution to reducing child poverty depends on:

- Locating children and child poverty within the demographic and poverty profiles that frame PRSPs;
- Balancing economic policy choices that stimulate higher levels of economic growth against those that focus on poverty reduction and development;
- Prioritising child-focused social service and support programmes that promote the rights of all children to development without discrimination;
- Recognising and providing support for particularly vulnerable groups of children and children who possibly suffer discrimination; and
- Implementing public expenditure management reforms that reprioritise resources towards child-focused social services and development interventions.

Locating children and child poverty within PRSP demographic and poverty profiles are critical to their prioritisation in PRSP policies and interventions.

The Southern Africa PRSP reviews present a mixed report in respect of the quality of the demographic and poverty profiles and diagnoses that preface the PRSPs.

A common feature is the absence of gender- or child-focused demographic and poverty information and analysis. This lack of gender and child-focused information at the outset does not augur well for the prioritisation and implementation of pro-poor social development policies and interventions that favour all women and children and address their rights.

In respect of overall orientation, the Southern African PRSPs follow the prescriptions set out in the World Bank 1990 World Development Report. This report recommends the prioritisation of actions to promote economic growth, health and education in particular. The importance of good governance and social protection issues are also noted, as are gender, the environment and HIV/Aids.

However, even a cursory read leaves no doubt that the Southern African PRSPs give the highest priority to economic growth as a means to reduce poverty.

The revitalisation of the agricultural sector, in particular the promotion of small and medium sized produces, is the main policy intervention to promote pro-poor growth prioritised by the PSRP.

For the most part, the Southern African PRSPs make some commitment to increased liberalisation of the economy in order to stimulate higher levels of growth. For some PRSPs, such as that of Malawi, this comes at the back of significant liberalisation through structural adjustment lending programmes in the previous decade.

For most PRSPs, increased social sector expenditure is a hallmark feature and is in the main directed towards the health, education, and water and sanitation sectors. However, it is important to note that tight fiscal policies and debt relief programmes frame most PRSPs, as the latter are often developed in compliance with conditional

lending requirements. While fiscal policy restraint is prudent in respect of medium-term affordability and sustainability purposes, it constrains the extent of social service expansion.

Limited social service provision and coverage may therefore be ineffective in addressing the poverty situation in many PRSP countries. A notable consequence is the continued reliance on user fees to finance social service provision. This tends to restrict access to services by the poor and to exacerbate poverty itself.

With regard to children, the Southern African PRSPs do not undertake a comprehensive review of child poverty. Nor do they consider the implications of child poverty for systemic poverty entrenchment, noting how specific interventions to reduce child poverty and address children's rights, such as education, can assist in breaking the poverty cycle in low-income countries.

While the strategies reviewed do not specifically prioritise children, they do discuss a limited range of interventions that are directed towards reducing child poverty and improving children's future opportunities. These include measures to promote school attendance, to improve access to basic health services and better nutrition, and to raise family incomes or livelihoods.

The PRSPs reviewed do present some recognition of and support for particularly vulnerable groups of children. This is welcome, but interventions are few and far between, indicating a limited and fragmented recognition of the needs and rights of girls and boys who suffer discrimination.

The review raises concerns about the weak linkage to public expenditure management and budget process reforms in the Southern African PRSPs.

Public expenditure management reforms are important in complementing effective PRSPs, as they ensure that the expenditure and revenue-raising choices that a government makes are both affordable and sustainable.

Public expenditure reforms ensure that a country's resources are directed towards those interventions that are considered to be strategic priorities. In the context of a PRSP, this means that resources should be directed towards policies and programmes that are aimed at reducing poverty and raising the growth potential of the economy.

Indirectly, public expenditure management and good governance reforms do benefit children as they ensure that resources are directed to high priority policies and interventions. These policies and interventions support child poverty reduction, provided that it is prioritised in economic and social policy choices, and that appropriate institutions are able to implement the intended interventions efficiently and effectively, directing resources to poor and marginalised groups of children.

## **Recommendations**

In conclusion, the review points to a significant role for child poverty research and advocacy in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Southern African PRSP processes. Child advocacy organisations and child rights actors may play a valuable role in a variety of ways. These could include partnering with local child advocacy organisations to:

- Build local capacity in economic and development literacy to raise awareness and participation, particularly child participation, in PRSP processes;
- Undertake research and analysis on the implementation, monitoring and review of PRSP processes;
- Undertake research on the prioritisation of child policies and resource allocation to child-focused interventions in the PRSP processes. This may evolve into a child-focused ‘shadow’ or ‘alternative’ PRSP – that is, a civil society version of a national PRSP prioritising policies, interventions and budget resources to reduce child poverty;
- Increase advocacy efforts concerning the importance of PRSP processes in reducing child poverty and enhancing child rights in the region.

It is clear that the PRSP approach has been embraced as the new trend in development planning and assistance in Southern Africa. It is therefore critical for child advocacy groups at international, regional and local level to become a stronger voice and an active participant in Southern African PRSP processes, so as to ensure that children’s rights are prioritised and appropriately resourced in the region’s development planning and resource allocation processes.

# *I. Introduction*

## ***1.1 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – the new trend in development planning and assistance***

Reducing poverty and improving levels of social and economic wellbeing are beginning to weave their way into policy and resource debates in developing and developed countries. Over the past few years, the debate has broadened from a sole focus on income poverty – that is, insufficient money or goods – to a multi-dimensional reality including insecurity, vulnerability, insufficient capabilities to participate meaningfully in economic activity, powerlessness, and social exclusion.

The policy debate has also matured in its appreciation of the fact that the goals of poverty reduction, in the context of equity and economic growth, are interdependent. For the most part, policy debate and direction no longer focus on achieving either equity *or* growth. Rather, governments are concerned with simultaneously achieving poverty reduction or equity, in the better-known context, *and* development.

In this sense, governments now realise that sustained growth in real output is necessary but not sufficient to reduce poverty. Complementary direct interventions that reduce poverty are necessary to improve the living standards of poor communities and enable them to participate meaningfully in social and economic activity.

Equally, focusing on equity alongside growth removes constraints that limit the potential of the economy to attain higher levels of growth in the future.

The choice is therefore not about poverty reduction (equity) *or* development, but about poverty reduction (equity) *and* development.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach forms the basis of the international community's redefined anti-poverty framework. Conceived as part of the toolkit for countries participating in the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the PRSP is today a prerequisite for access to a broader range of concessional and developmental assistance for developing countries.

National PRSPs essentially provide a framework that directs policies and resource allocation, including debt relief and international development assistance, to programmes targeted at reducing poverty and improving the economic growth prospects of low-income countries.

The PRSP is therefore a development strategy that places poverty reduction first, in the context of sustainable growth and development. PRSPs describe the country's economic and social policies and programmes over a three-year or longer horizon, integrated in a broader macro-economic framework and developed through a process of extensive consultations with national stakeholders.

Key elements of a PRSP include:

- A poverty assessment or situational analysis.
- Medium- and long-term goals for poverty reduction.
- Structural reforms, sectoral strategies and action plans.
- Setting up of strategic policy and budget priorities.
- Associated domestic and external funding needs.
- Performance indicators.

A further process element is the inclusion of civil society and private sector participation in the formulation and development of government-led PRSPs. This is a critical element as it ensures that PRSPs are government-led and country-owned.

The main benefit of the PRSP is the policy choices that a government is called on to make in balancing objectives for poverty reduction and economic growth. The focus is therefore on pro-poor growth. This mostly includes broad-based access to resources, prioritising basic education and health care, labour-intensive production and improved skills development, and the promotion of small business and gender equity, to name a few. As a country-owned process, these choices are the responsibility of government or parliament, and are not imposed by multilateral agents.

## ***1.2 Locating PRSPs in a rights perspective***

For the most part, reducing poverty is seen in a development context – that is, in terms of raising living standards in an equitable and sustainable manner.

International debate is shifting this view, placing poverty reduction in the ambit of the realisation of human rights.

Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, states that “poverty cannot be banished without the realisation of human rights”. The Human Development Report 2000 takes this statement further, declaring that “a decent standard of living, adequate nutrition, health care, education and decent work and protection against calamities are not just development goals – they are also human rights”.

The human rights approach to poverty reduction recognises that policies and institutions directed towards poverty reduction should be based explicitly on the norms and values set out in the international law of human rights. This context provides poverty reduction strategies with the potential to empower the poor, rather than simply direct development efforts towards poor people.

Empowerment is a long road. The first step requires the recognition of the existence of legal entitlements of the poor, and the legal obligation of governments and other institutions towards them.



Key aspects that inform the international human rights approach to poverty reduction include:

- The notion of accountability.
- Principles of equality and non-discrimination.
- The principle of participatory decision-making processes.
- Recognition of the interdependence of rights.

Contrary to public perception, the rights approach is focused on practicalities. It does not demand that all rights should be immediately fulfilled. Rather, it recognises that countries, particularly poor countries, face significant resource constraints, and allows for the progressive realisation of rights over a period of time. To ensure accountability, however, it calls for the setting of priorities among rights in the course of progressive realisation.<sup>1</sup>

### **1.3 Prioritising children and their rights in PRSPs**

For most, if not all developing countries, demographic profile analyses show that children are at the locus of the face of poverty. For many countries, children between 0-15 years form both the bulk of the population and the majority of those that live below the poverty line.

PRSP processes have considerable significance for poor children in low-income, developing countries. Reducing child poverty calls for development policies and interventions that:

- raise the income and improve the capabilities of targeted poor and vulnerable groupings; and
- direct targeted support to children in particular – that is, child-orientated policies that focus on improving the livelihoods, capabilities and future social and economic opportunities of poor and vulnerable children, and ensuring their rights.<sup>2</sup>

Vulnerable groups include children who are discriminated against because of their sex, disability, ethnicity, and economic or social background, among others:

- Children living in poor and chronically poor households, particularly child-headed households;
- Children infected with or affected by HIV/Aids;

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2002, *Draft Guidelines: A Human Rights Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies*, p1-5

<sup>2</sup> Marcus, R, Wilkinson J and Marshall J, *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) – fulfilling their potential for children in poverty?*, p.2.

- Children in need of protection – particularly those who have been abused or abducted, and children in emergencies;
- Street children and working children; and
- Children in institutions.

Using PRSPs as a tool to address poverty reduction requires that governments prioritise reducing child poverty as a key goal or objective of the PRSP.

In the international rights approach, this requires that PRSPs commit to:

- *Placing children first: the best interests of the child become the primary consideration.*
- *Investing in children* as a key action to break the cycle of poverty and eradicate it.
- *Leaving no child behind:* prescribing to the principles of equality and non-discrimination.
- *Caring for every child:* ensuring that its survival, protection, and growth and development in good health and with proper nutrition is the essential foundation of human development.
- *Educating every child.*
- *Protecting children from harm and exploitation.*
- *Protecting children from war.*
- *Combating HIV/Aids.*
- *Listening to children and ensuring their participation*<sup>3</sup>.

There is a belief that PRSPs should not focus on policy interventions targeted towards a specific group, but set a broad framework for poverty reduction and development policy. However, child advocacy groups, such as Save the Children UK, argue that policy detail is a necessity, as it is precisely the detail of policy choices, allocated resources and implementation that determines their impact on key vulnerable groups such as children.

For the most part, however, PRSPs take a broader strategic framework approach and do not focus on specific vulnerable groups such as children, although these groups may come to the forefront in particular anti-poverty interventions within the strategy.

This review argues that for most low-income developing countries, children are the locus of poverty demographics, and strategies that prioritise children's rights and target child poverty reduction ensure a bias towards pro-poor growth and development policies.

Placing children at the heart of poverty reduction policies requires that:

- Child-focused policies play a central role in the PRSP.

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<sup>3</sup> *Report of the United Nations General Assembly 27<sup>th</sup> Special Session, 2002, p.6.*

- Budget expenditures and international development assistance are targeted towards expenditure programmes that aim to reduce child poverty, improve the future economic opportunities for children, and ensure all children’s rights to development and adequate living standards.

The above requisites are interdependent – a recognition of the importance of child-focused policies will not in itself benefit poor children. Child-focused policies should be prioritised in resource allocation processes, and delivery programmes should spend resources efficiently and effectively to ensure that poor children receive the intended benefits.

## **1.4 Review of Southern African PRSPs**

In the past few years, the PRSP tool has found fertile ground in the Southern African region. To date, the governments of Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana have undertaken and completed a full national PRSP, and Lesotho has submitted its interim PRSP and is due to submit its full PRSP early in 2003.

(It is important to note here that Botswana has completed its own PRSP. It is not a low-income country and therefore has not had to engage with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on a PRSP basis.)

The Save the Children Sweden head office and the Southern African regional office are interested in the role that PRSPs may play in prioritising child poverty and child rights in the region. For this reason, Save the Children Sweden commissioned a review of PRSPs in the Southern African region in respect of their focus on child poverty and the role of civil society in formulating and implementing national PRSPs. The latter is critical given Save the Children Sweden’s policy of working with local partners in regional and country programmes.

The review is divided into three sections:

- An overview of regional PRSPs, broadly based on the conceptual framework set out in Marcus, R. and Wilkinson, J.<sup>4</sup> The review draws broadly on the conceptual

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<sup>4</sup> *In Whose Poverty Matters – Vulnerability, Social Protection and PRSPs, CHIP and SCF-UK, Marcus, R. and Wilkinson, J. set out a conceptual framework in their analysis of six full and 17 interim PRSPs produced in countries where SCF-UK works. The analytical report examines the ways in which PRSPs are tackling social protection issues – that is, public policy that is concerned with the livelihoods and welfare or particularly poor and vulnerable groups. Their conceptual framework sets out analysis in respect of:*

*Poverty Profiles and Diagnosis*

*Economic Policy Priorities*

*Overall orientation*

*Growth*

*Liberalisation policies*

*Privatisation and public sector reform*

framework in respect of the contribution of PRSPs to address social protection issues and child rights in the region, and to reduce child poverty.

- A concluding set of recommendations in terms of policy advocacy, and a suggested strategy for Save the Children Sweden to raise civil society partnership in the region.
- A detailed appendix that summarises each of the five Southern African PRSPs and analyses, in detail, the potential of their policy choices and interventions to contribute to reducing child poverty in the region.

## ***2. Do Southern African PRSPs promote child rights and child poverty reduction?***

### ***2.1 Features contributing towards child poverty reduction and child rights enhancement***

As noted above, while national PRSPs have the potential to make a significant impact on child poverty reduction in the region, their contribution critically depends on the following features:

- The location of children and child poverty within the demographic and poverty profiles that frame national PRSPs.
- Economic policy choices that prioritise sustainable pro-poor growth and development – that is, balancing policy choices that stimulate higher levels of economic growth with those that focus on poverty reduction and development (social service and development interventions that aim to improve family livelihoods and living circumstances in poor communities).
- Prioritising child-focused social service and support programmes that support the right to development of all children without discrimination.
- Recognition of, and support for, particularly vulnerable and discriminated groups of children; including girl children, HIV/ Aids orphans, working children, children in need of protection, and other groups of boys and girls who are deprived of their rights.

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*Equity*

*Land reform*

*Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development*

*HIV/Aids Prevention*

*Social Sector Investment*

- Prudent public expenditure management and appropriate reprioritisation of resources to child-focused social services and development interventions.

## **2.2 Locating child poverty within demographic and poverty profiles**

Ideally, PRSP demographic and poverty profiles and diagnosis should provide the critical information regarding the severity, location and characteristics of poverty in a country, which will in turn guide the appropriate policy choices and interventions set out in the PRSP.

Locating particularly vulnerable groups, such as the chronically poor, children, people with disabilities, women, and other discriminated groups within PRSP demographic and poverty profiles, is critical to their prioritisation in PRSP policies and interventions.

The message is clear – weak or broad-brush PRSP demographic and poverty profiles are less likely to raise the severity, location and characteristics of poverty, thereby diminishing the poverty reduction orientation and potential impact of PRSP policies and interventions, particularly for poor children.

The Southern African PRSPs reviewed present a mixed report in respect of the quality of the demographic and poverty profile and diagnosis that preface the PRSPs.

A common feature, however, is the absence of gender or child-focused demographic and poverty information and analysis. Lack of gender and child-focused information at the outset does not augur well for the prioritisation and implementation of pro-poor social development policies and interventions that favour all women and children without discrimination.

*Malawi* does present a comprehensive poverty analysis and profile as a preface to its PRSP. Key features highlighted include spatial features, dependency rates as well as the higher prevalence of poverty in female and child-headed households. However, this is the only gender and child-focused information that is presented.

The *Zambian* poverty profile is presented in a similar manner. It is of good quality overall, but lacks systematic focus on gender and child-focused information and analysis. Nevertheless, in posing the question “who are the poor?” the *Zambian* PRSP does note that household size, gender, and child status are among the determinants of poverty in Zambia.

Poverty measurement in the *Mozambique* PRSP is more extensive than in other PRSP poverty profiles. Three measures were used in the assessment studies on absolute poverty in Mozambique – the headcount index, the poverty gap index, and the squared poverty gap index. These measurements facilitate more extensive and in-depth analysis of the poverty demographics and changes in poverty trends over time. Despite the detail presented, the poverty profile does not directly identify the demographic profile of the population, highlighting the numbers and proportion of

the population that are under 18 years, nor does it identify the gender proportions. Children are only indirectly referred to in respect of household dependency rates and fertility rates.

The *Botswana* PRSP identifies groups vulnerable to poverty as the aged, the unemployed (mostly youth and single mothers), and women-headed households. The poverty profile also draws attention to the geographic dimension, noting that the highest prevalence is concentrated in remote rural areas.

However, the demographic and poverty information and analysis is quite limited. It does not present a gender, age, geographic, ethnic, or income population profile. Consequently, children are not drawn out as a specific vulnerable group.

Lastly, the *Lesotho* interim PRSP highlights the large regional and income inequalities in the country. Women and children feature in the human development indices analysis, specifically with regard to education. However, the limited information and analysis does not draw specific focus to child poverty concerns.

## **2.3 Economic policy priorities**

### **2.3.1 Overall orientation**

Similar to Marcus and Wilkinson's broader review of PRSPs, overall the Southern African PRSPs follow the prescripts set out in the World Bank 1990 World Development Report (WDR). The 1990 WDR recommends the prioritisation of actions to promote economic growth, health and education in particular. The importance of good governance and social protection issues are also noted, as are gender, the environment and HIV/Aids.

As a requisite tool for conditional lending policies, the Southern African PRSPs, bar that of Botswana, all follow the WDR prescript. The use of a generic structure and the lack of a singular identity point to concerns regarding the completion of strategies for compliance in terms of conditional lending requirements, rather than giving the process true country ownership and formulation. This raises further concerns in respect of successful implementation over the medium term.

The Botswana strategy is somewhat different as it has been prepared at the initiative of the Botswana government itself, and not for submission to the World Bank as part of conditional lending requirements. Of note is that Botswana does not incur substantial conditional lending at all, and is therefore in a somewhat different position to the remaining PRSPs reviewed.

Despite these shortcomings, the recommended prioritisation is aligned to the international human rights approach. The difference is that the rights approach recognises the realisation of human rights through poverty reduction as a legal obligation of governments. Hence, states may be held accountable for their actions or, as it may be, lack of action. Moreover, using a rights-based approach to poverty

reduction strategy work provides these processes with the potential to empower the poor and other discriminated groups in society.

### **2.3.2 Economic growth**

Even a cursory read through the Southern Africa PRSP strategies leaves no doubt as to the absolute priority that each gives to economic growth as a means to reduce poverty. While the strategies do recognise the need for ‘sustainable pro-poor growth’, this concept is not disaggregated and differentiated from ‘trickle-down growth’ in respect of policy choices and interventions.

Sustainable pro-poor growth refers to economic growth that is broad-based and built on sectors which direct income-earning opportunities to poor people in particular, such as agriculture. ‘Trickle-down’ growth, on the other hand, refers to economic growth that does not necessarily involve poor people at the start. Rather, this approach prioritises growth by any means, and, once wealth is created, the implementation of a range of policies that aim to ‘redistribute’ the wealth to poorer people.

The revitalisation of the agricultural sector, particularly the promotion of small and medium-sized producers, is the primary policy intervention suggested by the Southern African strategies to promote pro-poor economic growth. Given the importance of the sector to GDP and the numbers of people, particularly poor communities, that obtain their living from agricultural activities, the revitalisation of agriculture is seen as the driving force of broad-based economic growth.

#### **Malawi**

Specifically, the Malawi PRSP identifies agriculture as the key source of pro-poor growth in the medium term. Sectors identified for diversification, especially through SMMEs, include natural resources, manufacturing, tourism and small-scale mining.

The Malawi PRSP also identifies key policies and interventions that will promote poverty reduction through agriculture by providing farmers with the necessary services and conditions to increase production and consequently their income. This includes expanding and strengthening access to agricultural inputs; improving research and extension services; introducing smallholder-friendly technologies; improving access to local and international markets; reducing land shortage and degradation; increasing investment in irrigation; and developing farmer co-operatives and associations. Interventions targeting rural infrastructure and security are also prioritised.

#### **Zambia**

The Zambian strategy also identifies enhanced agricultural development as a core driver of broad-based economic growth. Zambia has abundant arable agricultural land and supportive agro-ecological areas that could contribute to a sustained increase

in agricultural output. Furthermore, poverty levels are highest among the rural poor, who are predominantly based in agriculture.

More specifically, the Zambian PRSP identifies the potential for large-scale agricultural farming in Zambia. The case for successful diversification from copper mining is considered crucial, and commercial agriculture is encouraged to play a major role.

The agricultural sector (small- and large-scale) is also being encouraged to shift to producing goods for the export market, due to the limitations on expansion in the domestic market. The list of known agricultural products where Zambia has both comparative and competitive advantage includes coffee, cotton, groundnuts, flowers, and paprika. Agricultural diversification will assist in broad-based diversification from the copper industry.

### **Mozambique**

The Mozambican PSRP is unique among those reviewed as it emphasises its first priority as the reduction of poverty in Mozambique. Notwithstanding its first priority, the strategy places its agrarian and rural development programme as a major driver of broad-based economic growth, given that rural areas hold 71% of Mozambique's population, and the incidence of poverty in rural areas is greater at 72% than in urban areas where it is 62%.

The main interventions identified focus on extension services, research, support to agricultural production, animal husbandry, forestry and wildlife, land management, irrigation, micro-finance, rural communications, and institutional development.

### **Botswana**

Three key programmes within the Botswana PRSP focus on the revitalisation of the agrarian sector. The first programme is targeted at training 500 people in horticultural production and marketing and monitoring over a four-year period.

The second programme concentrates on improving agricultural performance through mechanisation, combined with improved farm management practices and intensive extension services.

Given that many areas of Botswana are unsuited to arable farming due to the adverse climate and poor soils, the third programme focuses on improving the production, processing and marketing of goats, sheep and poultry by poor rural communities.

### **Lesotho**

While Lesotho's interim PRSP is scarce on details, it stresses that the main thrust is its growth-orientated, medium-term, macro-economic and fiscal policies. As such, a key goal is to raise export-led economic growth to boost private investment and exports in the manufacturing sector.



### 2.3.3 Liberalisation

For the most part, the Southern African PRSPs reviewed make some commitment to increased liberalisation of the economy in order to stimulate higher levels of growth. For some PRSPs, such as that of Malawi, this comes on the back of significant liberalisation through structural adjustment lending programmes in the previous decade.

Marcus et al. notes that well-designed liberalisation reforms may have positive impacts on poverty reduction. However, there may be significant trade-offs for poor people if inappropriately designed reforms result in imports which undercut the prices of local labour-intensive products, particularly agricultural products, leading to increased unemployment. Furthermore, poor communities may make use of family livelihood coping strategies such as children dropping out of school to work in order to supplement family income, child labour exploitation, increased child malnutrition through lower family incomes, etc.

This is not to say that liberalisation policies should not be implemented. Rather, it is important to take cognisance of the social and economic consequences of such strategies, and design policies to minimise their negative impact.

It is of critical note that, while emphasising the positive impact on economic trade and opportunity, only the Botswana strategy paid attention to the negative social consequences of enhanced liberalisation strategies, particularly in the agricultural sector.

*Malawi* implemented a series of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) to address structural weaknesses in the economy and adjust the economy towards higher levels of growth and poverty reduction. The main areas of focus of the SAPs included the liberalisation of the agricultural sector, parastatal sector reform, privatisation, trade liberalisation, financial sector reform, exchange rate liberalisation and budgetary reforms.

The strategy notes that the implementation of SAPs in Malawi had a mixed impact on growth and an unsatisfactory impact on poverty reduction. In agriculture in particular, the failure to encourage greater competition in both the input and product markets in response to liberalisation compromised the sector's ability to consolidate the benefits from liberalisation. This highlights the need for liberalisation to be accompanied by a set of complementary capacity-building and regulatory reforms.

The *Zambian* PRSP unashamedly prioritises the revival of economic growth as the most important element of the strategy. It views economic growth as a 'powerful' means to reduce poverty over the medium term. The strategy does acknowledge that rising inequality levels are often associated with 'trickle-down' growth and therefore opts for 'broad-based' growth, but does not differentiate the latter from the former.

Given the priority given to the revitalisation of economic growth, further liberalisation reforms are envisaged in respect of increased privatisation of state-owned assets, continued liberalisation in the agricultural sector, facilitated public-

private partnerships in the manufacturing sector, and increased commercialisation of the water and sanitation sector.

Liberalisation concerns are given lower priority in the *Mozambican* PRSP – the only specific liberalisation measure mentioned is the option to grant concessions to the private sector for the management of roads, or sections of roads, with the introduction of tolls.

The *Botswana* PRSP identifies land reform as a critical policy challenge facing the Botswana government. The strategy notes that policies to privatise parts of communal lands and demarcate areas of responsibility to individual farmers to facilitate the commercial production of beef, have had a negative impact on the poverty situation. Many of those who were deprived of access to communal grazing land were poor people whose loss of access to land limited their ability to create a livelihood for themselves. This has increased inequality in land ownership in rural areas in Botswana.

#### 2.3.4 Social sector investment

Increased social sector expenditure is a hallmark feature of most PRSPs and is in the main directed towards the health, education, and water and sanitation sectors. However, it is important to note that tight fiscal policies and debt relief programmes frame most PRSPs, as the latter are often developed in compliance with conditional lending requirements. While fiscal policy restraint is prudent in respect of medium-term affordability and sustainability purposes, it constrains social service expansion.

Limited social service provision and coverage may therefore be ineffective in addressing the poverty situation in many PRSP countries. A notable consequence is the continued reliance on user fees to finance social service provision. User fee strategies, when applied to social services that are largely provided to poor communities, tend to restrict access to services by the poor and exacerbate poverty itself.

The second pillar of *Malawi's* PRSP - investment in human capital development – aims to improve the living circumstances and future opportunities of poor communities through education; technical and entrepreneurial vocational training and education; health and family planning services; and the promotion of good nutrition.

Human development activities are prioritised in the strategy as this pillar receives the bulk of strategy resources, averaging 34% a year.

In contrast, the *Zambian* PRSP is weaker in respect of the section on social and economic services targeted towards poverty reduction, than it is in respect of the section directed towards the revitalisation of the economy. This reinforces the focus on growth orientation without due commitment to poverty reduction in the strategy.

The section on social and economic services focuses on education, health, water and sanitation, energy, and transport and communication. However, in respect of targeted interventions, only the education and health sectors receive adequate attention, and within these sectors the strategy is fragmented and incoherent.

Of key concern in the *Zambian* strategy is the reliance on cost-sharing or user fees for secondary education and for the implementation of a basic health care package. In respect of health care, there are exemptions, of which children are a key group. User fees tend to restrict access to health and education services for poor people. This contributes to lower school enrolments, and increased morbidity and mortality rates<sup>5</sup>.

The *Mozambican* strategy is built on six pillars aimed at poverty reduction, human development and rapid economic growth. A defining feature of the strategy is that poverty reduction, and not growth, is the overriding objective. This contrasts sharply with the *Zambian* strategy.

Social service priority interventions are targeted towards the education, health, and water and sanitation sectors.

The strategy commits the Mozambican government to strengthen resource allocation to the six pillars over the medium term. The weight of these sectors in total expenditure rises from 70% in 2001 to 74% in 2005. Of note here is that the share of expenditure in health and education rises to 38% by 2005.

The *Lesotho* interim PRSP presents a fragmented section on social sector interventions targeted towards poverty reduction. The section focuses on existing rather than planned government interventions. Of these, improving access to and quality of primary schooling, and the revitalisation of health care infrastructure and services delivery have been prioritised. In respect of water and sanitation, government policies are targeted towards increasing private sector participation in urban and peri-urban water supply and sewerage provision.

## **2.4 Prioritising child-focused social service and support programmes**

Concurring with the analysis of Marcus, et al, the Southern African strategies reviewed do not undertake a comprehensive review of child poverty. Nor do they consider the implications of child poverty for systemic poverty entrenchment, noting how specific interventions to reduce child poverty and enhance child rights, such as education, can assist in breaking the poverty cycle in low-income developing countries, and ensure the rights of the child.

Nevertheless, while the Southern African PRSP strategies do not specifically prioritise children, they do discuss a limited range of interventions that are directed towards reducing child poverty and improving children's future opportunities. These include measures to promote school attendance, improve access to basic health services and better nutrition, and raise family incomes or livelihoods.

It is interesting to note that the child poverty reduction interventions identified in the PRSPs reviewed seem to be needs driven, rather than rights-orientated. This confirms

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<sup>5</sup> Marcus, R. and Wilkinson, J., 2002, p33

the assessment that the PRSP framework is based in a development context rather than on the international human rights approach.

The rights approach views child poverty reduction interventions, such as adequate health care, education, nutrition programmes, etc., as legal obligations of governments, directed towards all children without discrimination. In this context, states as policy-makers should be held accountable for their actions or lack of action. Furthermore, the rights approach considers empowerment of the poor (and poor children in particular) as one of the most effective investments for combating poverty.

## **Malawi**

As noted, the Malawi PRSP aims to improve access to and quality of education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. At the primary level, free schooling has increased net enrolment rates to 78%, but declining quality and high repetition and dropout rates offsets this achievement. At the secondary level, the focus is on raising enrolment rates from levels as low as 18%.

Strategies to increase access include increased teacher training; provision of secondary schooling bursaries to girls, poor learners and learners with disabilities; and moving to double shift classes and distance learning.

Of concern in the Malawi strategy is the intent to simultaneously restructure the entire education system. Children will only benefit if resources and efforts are directed at restructuring and improving both access to and quality of primary and secondary schooling, versus tertiary education. This is not to say that tertiary education reforms are not important, but rather that the complexity of the education system and the extent of challenges facing Malawian education call for an honest appraisal of what interventions are possible within MTEF resource constraints.

At the centre of the Malawian health strategy is the design and implementation of a basic health care package. However, financing of the implementation of the health care package is not detailed in the strategy. The latter simply notes that 'operational research' will guide the government's decision whether to implement it free of charge, or subject to a user fee. It is precisely this detail that will determine poor children's access to basic health services in Malawi. Basic health care services, if subjected to user charges, reduce utilisation and therefore contribute to increased child morbidity and mortality rates.

Nutrition interventions are focused on baby-friendly initiatives to promote good infant feeding practices and community awareness campaigns focused on nutrition and food security. However, there is a worrying tendency to create institutions and bureaucracy – a Food and Nutrition Council – to co-ordinate the relevant research on food and nutrition. Given that Malawi is in the midst of famine, widespread hunger and starvation among children are dramatically raising child morbidity and mortality rates. What is needed are primary school nutrition feeding programmes, emergency food parcels, and an integrated nutrition programme, such as subsidised maize that is vitamin-fortified.

Certain elements of the above are included in welfare support interventions that are targeted at particularly vulnerable groups, including children. Interventions are targeted at malnourished children and vulnerable pregnant and lactating mothers, and at direct transfers to the chronically poor.

The targeted nutrition programme includes the provision of nutrition packs through a food voucher system, redeemable from food retailers. In remote rural areas, the procurement and delivery will be tendered out to NGOs or commercial companies.

The targeted welfare transfer programme will involve the direct transfer of cash or a retail voucher. This will be completed on a pilot basis before being rolled out.

It is important to note that the strategies identified to strengthen safety nets, particularly for children, are critical in respect of reducing child poverty. However, their efficiency and impact depend on the extent of resources – financial, systems and personnel – that are prioritised in ensuring efficient and effective delivery.

In respect of HIV/Aids interventions, the Malawi PRSP notes that the country has one of the highest HIV infection rates globally. Recent estimates indicate that infection rates among women attending antenatal clinics range from about 13 per cent in rural areas to approximately 25 per cent in urban areas.

The strategy is extremely ‘thin’ on the range and complexity of interventions that are required to address the HIV/Aids epidemic. Prevention programmes and awareness campaigns are one element. Utilising nevarapine to reduce mother-to-child transmission is a critical intervention, but its success also depends on an operational primary health infrastructure. Similarly, the expansion of condom usage and voluntary counselling and testing programmes is premised on the existence of an extensive primary health care network that is accessible and affordable to the poor.

## **Zambia**

As noted above, the Zambian PRSP presents a clear orientation towards growth enhancing rather than poverty reduction policies and interventions. This over-arching prioritisation is not good news for child poverty reduction, as there is little, if any, prioritisation of policies and associated resource allocation to interventions specifically targeted at children

In particular, while Zambia initiated Early Childhood Development programmes for children 0-5 years in 1990, enrolments only covered 8,4% of children by 1998. This average masks significant geographic disparities, with only 2,7% of rural children having access to ECD, as opposed to 23,6% of urban children. And the Basic Education programme caters only for Grades 1-7 – that is, primary rather than secondary schooling.

Specific PRSP interventions in education are therefore targeted at extending basic education to grade 9 (on the supposition that children are eligible to work by age 15); expanding the bursary scheme to girls completing basic education, and improving the quality and access to secondary schooling – that is, grades 10-12.

While the strategy focus on free primary and ECD programmes is positive for child poverty reduction, the impact of cost-sharing or user fees for secondary education is of key concern. This will restrict children's access to secondary schooling, reduce their future economic opportunities, and impede skills development over the medium- to long term.

Despite the Zambian health sector reforms implemented since 1992, health status indicators, particularly for children, are deteriorating. User fees were introduced into the health system in 1993. This led to a significant decrease in the utilisation of health services, particularly antenatal and family planning services, as well as those for children under five years. And while Zambia has prioritised delivery of free primary health care, the lack of appropriate referrals from hospitals to primary health care facilities and limited resources in the system have contributed to the retention of user fees.

The PRSP health interventions include implementing a basic health care package that is targeted at the poor. The intervention will pay specific attention to reviewing the cost-sharing mechanism by improving the current exemption scheme. This scheme exempts children under five, adults over 65 and maternal and family planning services from user fee payment. However, as noted above, user fee exemptions are difficult to enforce, and are subject to maladministration, restricting access to basic health care services. This is a key element in the trend towards deteriorating health indicators in Zambia.

The health interventions also address the HIV/Aids epidemic. Currently 20 per cent of the adult population aged 15 to 49 are living with HIV/Aids. About 8 per cent of boys and 17 per cent of girls age 15-24 are HIV positive. There are an estimated 600,000 Aids orphans, projected to reach 974,000 in 2014.

The PRSP proposes first level priority interventions focusing on prevention, and second level interventions focusing on curative care and treatment. Children in particular are prioritised as a specific group vulnerable to infection and affected by HIV/Aids.

However, while the section on HIV/Aids in the Zambian PRSP is stronger than those of the other PRSPs reviewed, the extent of the epidemic and the low level of resource commitment raises concern about the impact of the interventions proposed.

## **Mozambique**

The Mozambican PRSP does reasonably well in raising the priority of interventions targeted at children in particular. The educational strategy reforms are focused on increasing children's access to quality primary and secondary education over the short- to medium term. Specifically, the strategy targets universal access to primary education and 49% female enrolment by 2004; maintaining 75% coverage of free learner support materials (textbooks) to poor learners; training a further 1 680 teachers a year; and building 1,500 new classrooms a year to reduce regional disparities.

A note of concern, however, is the absence of interventions around ECD for children of five years, as this improves the cognitive development of young children and raises the efficiency and attainment of the schooling system.

The section on health care estimates coverage of about 50% of health care services. The primary health care strategy remains the core priority of the Mozambican PRSP health interventions, given the high rates of sickness and death in key vulnerable groups, including women and children.

A positive note is the strategy's recognition that the supply of clean and safe water and adequate sanitation facilities are also critical priorities for improving health status indicators, particularly for children.

The primary health care focus on women and children is quite specific. The strategy aims to improve access to and quality of health care services for women. The interventions target a reduction in the institutional maternal mortality rate to less than 100 per 100,000 live births, and an expansion of institutional births to 50%.

The objectives for child health care are to improve child health care and to prevent the main epidemics that affect children through increased vaccine coverage – the target is 75% over the next ten years.

Health care interventions for the youth and adolescents prioritise the training of personnel to work with adolescents in family planning and the prevention and treatment of HIV/Aids.

Nutrition interventions targeted at children include the distribution of Vitamin A capsules to children between five months and five years who attend health consultations, and promoting the availability and consumption of iodised salt.

While the interventions targeted at improving maternal and child health care are quite specific, the health section as a whole presents a rather fragmented and incoherent reform strategy for a sector that is notorious for its complexities. In practice, an efficient primary care referral system and increased access to appropriately staffed and equipped primary health care facilities free of charge may do more to raise utilisation of health services, and improve maternal and child health status indicators.

## **2.5 Recognition of, and support for, particularly vulnerable groups of children**

While child poverty reduction is not a specific focus, the Southern African strategies reviewed do present some recognition of and support for particularly vulnerable groups of children.

In *Malawi*, welfare support to particularly vulnerable groups includes support to child-headed households, children under five, street orphans, orphanages, foster homes and extended family member households.

*Zambia* intends to increase support to Aids care-based NGOs and to expand coverage and access to mother-to-child anti-transmission programmes, targeting 450,000 women over the next 4 years.

*Malawi* and *Mozambique* raise the priority of special education for learners with disabilities and intend to implement programmes to improve access to and quality of primary education for special needs learners.

As noted, support for vulnerable groups of children, where present, is a welcome recognition of children at particular risk of poverty. However, the interventions are few and far between, indicating a limited and fragmented recognition of the needs and rights of particularly marginalised and discriminated groups of children in the Southern African PRSPs.

## **2.6 Public expenditure management reforms that support child poverty reduction**

### *Affordable and sustainable*

Public expenditure management reforms are important complementary reforms of effective PRSPs as they ensure that the expenditure and revenue-raising choices that a government makes are both affordable and sustainable.

Affordability in this context means that a country should spend what it can afford in relation to its capacity to produce and its ability to pay any interest costs on borrowed monies.

Sustainability means that the choices that a government makes are affordable not only in the short term, but also in the medium term (3-5 years) and in the long term (more than five years). That is, the expenditure choices that a government makes must be maintained into the future.

Public expenditure reforms ensure that a country's resources are directed towards those interventions that are considered to be strategic priorities. In the context of a PRSP, this means that resources should be directed towards policies and programmes that are aimed at reducing poverty and raising the growth potential of the economy.

### *Setting priorities*

Effective prioritisation is a key element of reform. This means that instead of implementing all policies set out in the PRSP, resource and institutional (people, administration and information technology systems) constraints require a government to prioritise, selecting those policies and programmes that it is most likely to achieve. This facilitates realistic planning, budgeting and implementation, ensures reallocation of resources to priority areas, and constrains over-ambitious programmes.



Recent PRSP implementation experiences suggest that prioritisation depends on:

- Good ‘bottom-up’ costing of policy priorities – that is, poverty reduction programmes set out in the PRSP are well costed so that government makes expenditure choices knowing exactly how much money is required to implement a programme and what the likely impact on poverty is.
- ‘Top-down’ estimation of the aggregate resource envelope – that is, estimation of the macroeconomic and fiscal aggregates so that government is able to make informed choices about the level of resources it has available to spend on its policy priorities.
- Participatory processes that involve communities in the decisions on the services that government intends to deliver to them to improve their living circumstances and future opportunities.

Good prioritisation and costing is therefore only possible if the PRSP is linked to the budget process. In this respect, Medium Term (Expenditure Framework) or MTEF budgeting may be an important complementary reform, as it provides an appropriate platform to draw together consistent planning and budgeting processes and arrangements.

### ***Medium Term Expenditure Framework***

Medium Term Expenditure Framework is a system of three-year budgeting. The first year budget (expenditure and revenue) estimates are accompanied by forward estimates for the second and third years. This ensures that spending plans are forward-looking and affordable in the medium term (3-5 years).

However, it is important to note that MTEF budgeting is used as a complement to – rather than a substitute for – basic budgetary management reform. The latter includes:

- Budget comprehensiveness – including donor funds and other off-budget spending;
- Data classification reforms – that is, new ways of classifying data that integrate capital and recurrent budgets and undertake functional classifications;
- Budget execution that includes timely publication and reporting raising accountability of government actions;
- An independent and timely audit that is published and underpinned by sanctions against misappropriation of public resources<sup>6</sup>.

Indirectly, public expenditure management and good governance reforms do benefit children as they ensure that resources are directed to high priority policies and interventions. These support child poverty reduction, provided that the latter are prioritised in economic and social policy choices, and that appropriate institutions are

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<sup>6</sup> Klugman, 2002.

able to implement the intended interventions efficiently and effectively, directing resources to poor children.

## **Malawi**

The Malawi PRSP notes that sound public expenditure management policies are recognised as a pre-requisite for growth and development. The core of Malawi's public expenditure management reforms has been the implementation of a MTEF in 1995.

However, the MTEF implementation has not been all that successful. The reform lacks credibility due to the absence of realistic costing of activities. This has resulted in the implementation of policies that are unaffordable over the medium term, and therefore in a continuous divergence of actual, over budgeted, expenditures. This has meant a complete lack of prioritisation in the budgeting system. Resources are spread too widely and too thinly to have any impact on improving the living circumstances of the poor, including poor children.

Pressures to finance new and unbudgeted activities at the expense of identified priorities have also undermined the Malawian MTEF. This points to the lack of political will to ensure the successful implementation of public expenditure management reforms.

The Malawi PRSP therefore identifies a range of further public expenditure management interventions that include improving budget implementation by creating hard budget constraints, and improving public expenditure planning and budget preparation.

Malawi is undertaking extensive reform of the public service, including interventions to improve public sector conditions of service and work ethics, reviewing the structure of the civil services; addressing capacity constraints across government, and strengthening public policy-making.

Decentralisation reforms are also underway in favour of local government. Local governments have been created at the district level to perform functions previously performed at the central level. Key interventions include the development of appropriate institutional capacity at the local level and the appropriate transfer of functions, resources and planning to districts.

International experience shows that public expenditure management reforms, civil service reforms, and decentralisation reforms are not short-term interventions. On the contrary, they require systematic changes to the fundamentals of governing institutions and therefore should be appropriately sequenced, financed and capacitated.

## **Zambia**

The Zambian PRSP prioritises the revival of economic growth as its overarching objective. It emphasises the importance of sustainable, broad-based growth that

impacts ‘meaningfully’ on poverty reduction. The PRSP therefore has a three-year macroeconomic framework at the forefront, which is supported by the World Bank, IMF and other multilateral and bilateral supporters.

Focal areas for reviving economic growth include growth-orientated fiscal policy choices that support the targeted average real GDP growth target of 4,1 per cent. Fiscal assumptions include stronger capital expenditure, rising from 11,9% of GDP in 2000 to 12,7% in 2004, and a falling deficit trend, culminating in a balanced budget in 2004 and 2004.

This does not mean that Zambia operates MTEF budgeting. Rather, the PRSP notes that all priority interventions will have to be planned and budgeted for within the overall resource envelope, to ensure fiscal and balance of payments sustainability. It notes that, initially, donors will finance 67% of the total cost of the PRSP, with the remainder sourced from domestic resources.

The strategy promotes prudent economic and financial management and political good governance, recognising that these reforms are critical to its success. At the economic and financial level, this entails promoting accountability and public expenditure management reforms. However, these are not specified in detail.

It is precisely the detail of budgetary and financial management reforms that are a critical component to the success of the Zambian PRSP, given the tough resource constraints and limited domestic financing base. Prioritisation and costing, as noted above, is essential to ensure the appropriate allocation of resources to activities of the highest priority in an affordable manner.

## **Mozambique**

The Mozambican PRSP is credited for the linkage made between the medium-term economic outlook as the basis for the medium-term fiscal framework. The strategy is one of the notable few that have ensured the integration between planning and budgeting, highlighting that available resources determine budgetary expenditure on strategic priorities over the medium term.

The fiscal scenario projects that domestic revenue will rise to 15% of GDP by 2005 and will reach 17% by 2010. The increase in revenue will be sourced from tax reforms and administration, and increased revenue through economic growth.

Priority spending areas in the strategy are identified as education, health, infrastructure, agriculture and rural development and good governance.

Linking the medium-term macroeconomic outlook and the medium-term fiscal and expenditure framework to the expenditure priorities set out in the strategy is the hallmark of best practice in public expenditure management practice.

This credible and prudent fiscal approach augurs well for the reduction of child poverty, as it ensures that strategic priority areas are prioritised in terms of resource allocation and that budgetary expenditures are undertaken in an affordable and sustainable manner, promoting growth over the medium term.

This does not mean that prudent medium-term budgeting itself guarantees the reduction of child poverty. Rather, it is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition. That is, countries where child poverty reduction has occurred are those where prudent macroeconomic and public expenditure management policies have been followed, to enable the allocation of sufficient resources over the medium to long term to priority areas that address child poverty concerns.

### 3. Concluding recommendations

Given that the Southern African PRSPs have only just been finalised (Lesotho is due to publish its final PRSP in late 2003), it is premature to evaluate their progress with implementation, or their impact.

Marcus et al. notes that “at their best PRSP processes may be raising the profile of and commitment to poverty reduction, enhancing capacity for analysis, planning and action, creating greater space for disadvantaged people to contribute to policy development and increasing accountability to them. Elsewhere, PRSP processes are more accurately characterised as ‘business as usual’, and institutional and political pressures reduce the extent to which they represent a real opportunity for changes in the way development is planned and carried out”.

In the Southern African context, a further observation suggests that PRSP processes may be undertaken in compliance with conditional lending regulations of multi-lateral institutions. The flavour of the strategies reviewed suggests that they follow a set template and are not integrated into other national, regional and sectoral strategies. Concerns have been raised that this symptom may reflect considerable external technical input, rather than local planning expertise and formulation.

#### ***The impact of PRSP on child poverty reduction***

As noted in the second section, the potential of the PRSP process to have a significant impact on child poverty reduction in the region depends on:

- Location of children and child poverty within the demographic and poverty profiles that frame national PRSPs.
- Economic policy choices that prioritise sustainable pro-poor growth and development.
- Prioritising child-focused social service and support programmes that promote the right to development of all children.
- Recognition of, and support for, particularly vulnerable and discriminated groups of children, including girl children, poor children, HIV/ Aids orphans, working children, children in need of protection, children of ethnic minority groups, children with disabilities, and other groups of girls and boys whose rights are not ensured.
- Prudent public expenditure management and appropriate reprioritisation of resources towards child-focused social service and development interventions.

## *Advocating for children*

The conclusion from section two raises some significant concerns for policy and process advocacy for children. These are:

- An absence of gender or child rights-focused demographic and poverty information and analysis. Gender and child rights-focused demographic and poverty information can be further disaggregated into age, ethnicity and social class in order to give relevant information on ‘who are the poor?’ A lack of gender and child-focused information at the outset does not augur well for the prioritisation and implementation of pro-poor social development policies and interventions that favour women and children.
- Indications that the strategies have been completed for compliance in terms of conditional lending requirements, rather than for true country ownership and formulation. This suggests minimal integration into national, regional and sectoral development strategies, and raises concerns in respect of successful implementation over the medium term.
- A first priority and commitment is given to economic growth as a means to reduce poverty. While the strategies do recognise the need for ‘sustainable pro-poor growth’, the latter concept is not disaggregated and differentiated from ‘trickle-down growth’ in respect of policy choices and interventions.
- No attention is paid to the issues of child labour and exploitation in the interventions outlined in the promotion of economic activity, particularly the revitalisation of the agricultural sector. Child labour is a prevalent phenomenon in low-income developing countries, particularly in the agricultural sector. Sector strategies should ensure that child labour concerns are taken into consideration and interventions promote the best interests of the child.
- Limited social service provision and coverage in the face of tight fiscal policies and debt relief programmes may be ineffective in addressing the poverty situation in Southern Africa, given the extent of social and economic need. A notable consequence is the continued reliance on user fees to finance social service provision. User fee strategies, when applied to social services that are largely provided to poor communities, tend to restrict access to services by the poor and exacerbate poverty itself.
- Inadequate focus on and analysis of the implications of child poverty for systemic poverty entrenchment, noting how specific interventions to reduce child poverty, such as education, can assist in breaking the poverty cycle in low-income developing countries, and have a particular impact on children.
- However, while children are not prioritised in the Southern African PRSPs, the strategies do discuss a limited range of interventions that are directed towards reducing child poverty and improving children’s future opportunities. These include measures to promote school attendance, improve access to basic health services and better nutrition, and raise family incomes or livelihoods.

- Limited and fragmented support for particularly vulnerable groups of children such as children with disabilities, HIV/Aids orphans and other excluded groups.
- Recent PRSP implementation experiences suggest that prioritisation depends on good ‘bottom-up’ costing of policy priorities and interventions, ‘top-down’ estimation of the aggregate resource envelope, and feedback from participatory processes. Good prioritisation and costing is therefore only possible if the PRSP is linked to the budget process. In this respect, medium term (expenditure framework) or MTEF budgeting may be an important complementary reform as it provides an appropriate platform to draw together consistent planning and budgeting of institutional arrangements.

### *The role of child rights actors*

The concerns raised above point to a significant role for child poverty research and advocacy in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Southern African PRSP processes. Child advocacy organisations and child rights actors such as Save the Children Sweden may play a valuable role in a variety of ways. These could include partnering with local child advocacy organisations to:

- Build local capacity in economic and development literacy to raise awareness and participation, particularly child participation, in PRSP processes.
- Undertake research and analysis on the implementation, monitoring and review of PRSP processes.
- Undertake research on the prioritisation of child policies and resource allocation to child-focused interventions in the PRSP processes. This may evolve into a child-focused ‘shadow’ or ‘alternative’ PRSP – that is, a civil society version of a national PRSP that prioritises policies, interventions and budget resources to reduce child poverty.
- Increase advocacy efforts, and their impact, regarding the importance of PRSP processes with regard to reducing child poverty in the region.

It is clear that the PRSP approach has been taken up as the new trend in development planning and assistance in Southern Africa. It is therefore critical for child advocacy groups at the international, regional and local level to become a stronger voice and an active participant in Southern African PRSP processes, to ensure that children’s rights are prioritised and appropriately resourced in the region’s development planning and resource allocation processes.

# References

## *Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers*

Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

Zambia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

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Botswana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper

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# Appendix A

Detailed Review of five National PRSPs in the Southern Africa Region:

Malawi

Zambia

Mozambique

Botswana

Lesotho

This appendix is presented in a separate volume which is available electronically through Save the Children Sweden's website [www.rb.se](http://www.rb.se), or through Save the Children Sweden's Programme Officer for Good Governance at the Policy, Research and Development section.