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The Open University



PRARI poverty reduction and regional integration
RePIR reducción de la pobreza e integración regional

Poverty Reduction and Regional Integration (PRARI) Information Brief 2 – December 2014

In this second Information Brief of the *Poverty Reduction and Regional Integration* project we report on the progress and achievements of the project during 2014, and look ahead to 2015.

What is PRARI about?

PRARI asks to what extent regionalist policies and programmes of action on health are instituting an embedded *pro-poor* focus. Focusing on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), we are looking at the regional integration-poverty nexus in relation to access to medicines and health care. Health is emerging as a distinctive focus of attention by SADC and UNASUR, although their policy development methods and practices take quite different forms. Understanding better the reasons why *pro-poor* approaches emerge as they do will enable us, and to contribute to debates about the potential of stronger North-South and South-South dialogue and cooperation around poverty reduction goals, and the role of political and social actors within these two regions and beyond in supporting the development of regional *pro-poor* health policies. You can read more about the project's aims and methods on our project website <http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/prari>

Brief PRARI progress update

We proudly launched our project website early in April 2014. It is available in English and Spanish language versions, and incorporates our bespoke project logo which is designed to work in both Spanish and English. We are regularly updating the website to include new features about the project and upload key project documents and resources on different aspects of regional social policy. We welcome contributions to developing the website materials so if you have ideas for materials and features of relevance to the project get in touch with us (PRARI@open.ac.uk).

Having 'road tested' our research with key stakeholders in South America and Southern Africa in May and refined our research strategy over the summer, we have now completed the initial phase of our fieldwork in both regions. Over the coming months we will be reviewing and analysing the data.

The PRARI *Research and Policy Methodologies of Poverty Reduction and Regional Integration* takes place 28-30 April 2015, and will bring international scholars already

working on regional social policy in dialogue with the project team. The workshop will be hosted by the United Nations University Institute for Comparative Regional Integration Studies in Bruges, Belgium. We will make further information about this available on our website and via our mailouts in due course.

Generating and shaping debate about the potential of regional organisations in achieving poverty reduction and fostering inclusive development

Discussion about the shape of the 'post-2015' development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals is taking place alongside rejuvenated global social protection and health agendas. The issues addressed by these agendas have a direct relevance for PRARI, and this gives us opportunities to argue that there is a clear potential for a sharper, stronger focus on regional organisations like SADC and UNASUR and their role in poverty reduction in the new development round.

To this end, we have been actively generating discussion about the potential to harness regional cooperation in support of poverty reduction and inclusive development. Check out our recent **PRARI Blogs** - and join in the debate.

- **Come together, right now: countries are working with neighbours like never before**
<https://theconversation.com/ebola-regional-fund-shows-growing-solidarity-in-west-africa-32715>
- **SADC-EU EPA and pro-poor health policies in Southern Africa**
<http://www.saiia.org.za/opinion-analysis/global-eradication-of-poverty-day-what-can-regional-associations-do>
- **Fixing the weakest link in global health governance**
<http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/fixing-the-weakest-link-in-global-health-governance>
- **Enhancing Rights and Equity in Health: What Difference Can South American Regional Diplomacy Make?**
<http://sotonpolitics.org/2014/09/15/enhancing-rights-and-equity-in-health-what-difference-can-south-american-regional-diplomacy-make/>
- **Share in the politics of poor health**
<http://www.saiia.org.za/opinion-analysis/share-in-the-politics-of-poor-health>
- **Africa: the Economics of Pro-Poor Health**
<http://allafrica.com/stories/201412012305.html>
- **Seeking Answers About Health on Day for the Eradication of Poverty**
<http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/seeking-answers-about-health-on-day-for-the-eradication-of-poverty>
- **Ebola and Cultures of engagement**
http://www.cfr.org/councilofcouncils/global_memos/p33560
- **Ebola Regional Fund shows growing solidarity in West Africa**
<http://theconversation.com/ebola-regional-fund-shows-growing-solidarity-in-west-africa-32715>

All of these can be accessed from the PRARI website

<http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/prari/>

Our **PRARI Policy Briefs** (available in English and Spanish) explore key perspectives on regional integration, pro-poor policy and inclusive development.

Spotlight Global poverty reduction: What can regional organisations do?

http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/prari/files/policy_brief_3_en.pdf

This Policy Brief argues regional organisations are neglected partner in the development of prompt, committed, coordinated and effective action on poverty. They have the potential to play an important role in strengthening global and national action to achieve pro-poor inclusive development. Their achievements in developing region-wide health, education, social protection and other public goods and services provide a platform that need to be recognised and built on. Regional organisations can mobilise a wide range of development partners within and beyond their regions, support poverty reduction strategies, monitor achievements, and facilitate the sharing of good practice within and beyond the regions concerned. Regional social investment programmes across health, education, income security and livelihoods can prevent poverty and mitigate its devastating effects on present and future generations. Comprehensive regional social funds and regional social rights can support national Social Protection Floor strategies. Better understanding of how regional organisations are pursuing pro-poor policies can ensure that existing good practice is identified, shared and incorporated into programmes of concerted social action on poverty.

*See also **Poverty reduction and health in Southern Africa***

http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/prari/files/policy_brief_1_en.pdf

and **Poverty reduction and health in South America**

for context-specific analyses of key challenges facing SADC and UNASUR

http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/prari/files/policy_brief_2_en.pdf

Further Policy Briefs on selected aspects of regionalism will be available from our project website in February:

- **Strengthening rights and social equity through regional health diplomacy**
- **Regional perspectives on human rights**
- **Regional indicators of policy success and change**

Put a note in your diary to come back to our website to check our progress and resources.

Spotlight Participatory Action Research

Participatory research is widely used as a research strategy across social and health research, and its plays a central role in our project's aims to develop regional indicators of pro-poor policy success and change in collaboration with key stakeholders in South America and Southern Africa.

In September 2014 we took part in the ESRC-DfiD Conference on Global Poverty Reduction, where we ran a lively and well-attended session exploring the opportunities, tensions, dilemmas and challenges of using PAR methodology in relation to research uptake and

impact. We argued that participatory research affirms stakeholders as agents bringing diverse knowledge and techniques, and a commitment to and ownership of research findings and outputs in ways that are more likely to be translated into action. However, whether seen as a strategy for producing 'information' or 'impact', participatory research raises a number of challenges -- personal, professional, political. These take on additional dimensions in international development contexts. Follow this link to find out more: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/international-funding/esrc-dfid/joint-fund-grantholder-conference-2014.aspx>.

Who we are

We are a multi-disciplinary team of established researchers based at five universities and research institutes in Europe, Africa and South America You can find out more about us at <http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/prari/our-team/>

We welcome hearing from and collaborating with similarly-minded people, so please get in touch with us. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Contact us on email at PRARI@open.ac.uk

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