Religions and Development
Research Programme

Strengthening the Voice of the Poor: Faith-based Organizations' Engagement in Policy Consultation Processes in Nigeria and Tanzania

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RaD

Religions and Development

Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics.
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies.
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan.

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

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List of acronyms

BAKWATA	Baraza Kuu La Waislamu Tanzania (National Muslim Council of Tanzania)
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi
CHAN	Christian Health Association of Nigeria
CISCOPE	Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Eradication
CRUDAN	Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria
CSO	Civil society organization
CSSC	Christian Social Services Commission
FC	Faith community
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
JDPC	Justice, Development and Peace Commission
INGO	International non-governmental organization
NASFAT	Nasiru-Ilahi Fatir Society of Nigeria
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NISER	Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research
NSGRP/ MKUKUTA	National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (in Swahili, Mkakati wa Kukuza na Kupunguza Umasikini Tanzania)
NIREC	Nigeria Inter-Religious Council
PRS	Poverty reduction strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RO	Religious organization
SEEDS	State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
TEDG	Tanzania Ecumenical Development Group
TIFF	Tanzania Inter-faith Forum
WFDD	World Faiths Development Dialogue

Summary

One of the conditions for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative is that a national Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper is prepared. This is expected to be 'locally owned', implying that its preparation is country-driven and participatory. PRSP processes are now well established in many countries. They provide opportunities for wider participation than traditional approaches to policy making and have to some extent been adapted to local circumstances and integrated with national planning and resource allocation processes.

However, there is much scepticism about them. It is said that:

- there is little scope for the content of PRSPs to depart from the economic and social policies favoured by creditor agencies, with the result that the policies they contain deal with the symptoms rather than causes of poverty
- governments treat them as hoops through which countries must jump in order to qualify for debt relief, with the result that they may have little influence, except on the social policies for which the funds released by debt relief are earmarked
- governments pay lip service to the requirement for wide stakeholder participation, but do not take it seriously and many of the priorities and approaches expressed by participants are not incorporated in the strategies
- participation has been confined to private and civil society stakeholders, bypassing the representative political system, with the result that priorities are often decided and resources allocated by the executive rather than legislative arm of government
- participatory processes do not recognize differences in the capacity and power of different stakeholders; they favour organized civil society actors and do not recognize that these often represent the voices of the urban elite

Nevertheless, in some countries, the ongoing process of PRSP monitoring and review, has widened the political space for deliberation and the scope for poor people (or civil society organizations that purport to represent their views) to influence policy and resource allocation.

Despite their organizational strength, legitimacy and grassroots membership, religious organizations in Tanzania and Nigeria have been little involved in policy consultation processes, such as those that occur during the preparation and review of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Semi-structured interviews with key informants from religious and other civil society organizations and relevant government departments identified the main reasons for their lack of involvement. These include:

- the lack of good opportunities for general civil society participation in such processes, especially in the early stages and especially in Nigeria
- the often uneasy relationships between governments and religious organizations – engagement by the latter in politics is suspect, they do not speak with a united voice, the competition between them is divisive and a source of conflict, and their attitudes to government are perceived as being critical rather than constructive.
- religious organizations lack relevant resources (skills, money, time, equipment) and have limited capacity to collect the experiences and opinions of poor communities and represent them to government in a way that commands respect.

Pilot projects carried out by the RaD programme with networks of religious organizations in Nigeria and Tanzania set out to test whether these obstacles could be overcome, by supporting collaboration between Muslim and Christian organizations. The projects aimed to develop and test 'models' for cooperation between religious organizations to systematically assemble data and analyse it. They provided operational funds, training for staff members and mentoring. The pilots demonstrated that

- Faith-based organizations can cooperate across religious and denominational divides to assemble data at the grassroots on issues central to PRSPs (and their successors), analyse findings and present them to government at appropriate entry points. However, the submission appears to have been more influential in Tanzania than Nigeria, where there have been political upheavals and a stalled policy process. In addition, relations between religious organizations and the state are more sensitive and government interest in participatory processes is more limited in Nigeria.

- In both countries, the local management arrangements worked reasonably well, data on selected issues were assembled and analysed, and reports were prepared and submitted to government. However, existing capacity was limited and the pilots alone were insufficient to overcome all the constraints:
  - Some local providers of training and support had weaknesses
  - The submissions appear to reflect the perspectives of 'the poor' in the selected locations (in addition to those of local leaders). However, care needs to be taken in future to clarify informants' understanding of categories such as 'ordinary people', 'the poor' or 'the marginalized' and to distinguish between informants with different social characteristics when presenting their views in the analysis.
  - Insufficient time has elapsed to fully assess the extent to which submissions have been followed up by the participating organizations and have influenced policy.

The pilot projects indicate that:

- There is potential for religious organizations to work together using approaches similar to those tested to contribute positively to policy consultation processes.
- Religious organizations are able to assemble and represent the views of poor and marginalized people. However, their willingness and ability to do so depend on power relationships within religious organizations and between faith communities and the state, which must be subject to critical examination.
- Similar approaches to those tested could, with appropriate support, be rolled out more widely and also sustained, if the necessary financial resources can be obtained.
- Approaches similar to those piloted could increase the capacity of religious organizations to represent the experience and priorities of poor and remote communities to government and contribute to policy-making processes. However, it may be more appropriate in some circumstances for them to work with other civil society organizations, rather than being singled out for support.

1 Introduction

Since the 1980s, the value of participation in the formulation and implementation of development policy has been stressed by analysts, development agencies and civil society organizations alike. At the end of the 1990s, the requirement for a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper to be prepared as part of the process of qualifying for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative potentially offered new opportunities for the experiences and needs of poor people to be reflected in national policies. Following the restoration of democracy in many previously authoritarian regimes a decade previously, civil society organizations had flowered and it was expected that they would take advantage of the condition that PRSPs should be prepared in a consultative way. Many assessments of the processes of PRSP preparation (and later monitoring and review) have been undertaken, revealing mixed results and coming to different conclusions about the nature and outcomes of participation. None examine whether religious organizations had engaged in the process of PRSP preparation, despite their significant organizational resources, wide reach and claim to be close to the poor. In consultations held by the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), religious organizations in most countries reported both little involvement and limits on their capacity to become involved even if an opportunity to do so had arisen.

This project aimed to build on the meetings organized by the WFDD, first by investigating more systematically whether and how religious organizations had participated in PRSP preparation in Nigeria and Tanzania, and the reasons for their level of involvement, and second by conducting a piece of action research to assess whether, with support, they would be able to play a more significant role. The initial research confirmed the conclusions of the WFDD meetings – that religious organizations have not generally been present or influential in the preparation and implementation of poverty reduction strategies since 1999 and that one of the reasons for this is, in their view, their lack of capacity. This paper reports on attempts in Nigeria and Tanzania to build the capacity of selected religious organizations to participate in policy consultation processes, by strengthening their ability to speak effectively to governments on behalf of poor and marginalized communities. Two pilot projects, one in each country, set out to foster inter-faith networks of co-operation and resource sharing, increase skills in data collection, and use the evidence gathered to put forward constructive proposals for future policy and practice. The paper asks whether a viable model emerged from these pilot projects for future engagement in policy processes by faith-based organizations and whether they can bring contributions which add value to those of CSOs (civil society organizations) in general.

2 Background

Since the late 20th century, religious organizations (ROs) in the UK and elsewhere have been much involved in efforts to secure the cancellation of the debts of the world's poorest countries. In the UK, for example, the Christian churches, as national institutions, and their members, together with Christian agencies such as Christian Aid, Cafod and Tearfund, mounted the Jubilee 2000 debt campaign. Other religious groups, including Muslims, Sikhs and Jews, as well as secular NGOs, were also involved. The campaign engaged in international networking and policy debates with governments and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. They also lobbied the G8, for example at their summit meeting in Birmingham in 1998 and then in Scotland in 2002 under the banner of the *Make Poverty History* campaign, which argued more broadly for increased aid, fair trade and debt cancellation. There is evidence that these efforts have met with a degree of success. Since 1998, for example, debt has been on the agenda at G8 summit meetings in a way it was not before and multilateral and bilateral debts have in part been cancelled under the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) initiative. The problem of the burden of debt repayment nevertheless remains.

Part of the argument for debt cancellation was that poor countries are forced to choose between servicing their debts or providing basic services, such as universal health care and education. They cannot afford to do both. In debates about conditionality there was, therefore, widespread concern that the money made available by debt cancellation should be well used to benefit the poorest and not be wasted or misappropriated by inefficient or corrupt governments. In late 1999, as part of the Enhanced HIPC, the World Bank and IMF introduced a condition that a country seeking debt relief should develop and implement a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). In some countries, PRSPs replaced existing plans and processes and in many they were to become, for a number of years, the most commonly adopted vehicle for development-related policy making. In essence, they were to set out what pro-poor policies a government intended to pursue and the budgetary provisions and procedures for implementing them. In addition, and of fundamental importance, the process of preparing them was to be participatory in character. Unlike many of the agreements which led to the debt crisis[1], PRSPs were not to be drawn up by and agreed between governments and lenders. Along with other interested parties (or stakeholders), such as the private sector and political parties, civil society was to be involved so that the needs and priorities of the wider population could be taken into account and the subsequent actions of governments closely monitored against what had been agreed.

These developments led in turn to renewed interest, amongst members of the Jubilee 2000 campaign for example, in the contribution of religious organizations not only to debt cancellation but also to the PRS processes of policy-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Much has been written about the processes of PRSP preparation and implementation and the degree to which they have benefitted the poor.[2] The extent and manner of participation have varied widely, as have conclusions about its nature and effects (see Lazarus, 2008, for a review of the reviews). Most analyses conclude that attempts to consult varied between countries. Sometimes they improved as initial PRSPs were updated, but often they were hurried, amounting to little more than a formality, rather than genuine engagement with popular opinion. Submissions from civil society apparently had little effect on the content of policy and programmes, which some critics accused of addressing the symptoms of poverty rather than the inappropriate design of macroeconomic and other policies that were exacerbating it. Understanding of the participatory process and commitment to it in government circles was lacking, although the political space for civil society involvement also varied between countries and over time. Final approval was in the hands of the donor community (especially the World Bank and IMF), which had long been criticized for imposing structural adjustment policies (SAPs), including the privatization of public services, against the wishes of CSOs. According to many, they continued to do so. Doubts were also cast on the democratic credentials of CSOs (especially non-governmental organizations: NGOs) as unelected representatives of poor communities with no clear mandate to speak on their behalf.[3]

Despite the fact that they were presumably expected to participate, little could be gleaned from evaluations of the first generation of PRSPs about the involvement of ROs in these processes, because they are scarcely mentioned.[4] Amongst the agencies, the UN Development Group was rare in instructing UN Country Teams to build strategic alliances with the full range of civil society actors, including faith-based organizations, which, it suggested, can contribute to articulating the needs of the poor and proposing policies for addressing them (UNDG, 2003). Even the FBOs amongst the northern NGOs that produced guides to participation referred to 'civil society organizations' in general.

Some preliminary efforts to learn more were made by the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) between 2001 and 2004.[5] True to the WFDD's aims and interests, the discussions focussed

especially on inter-faith co-operation. A workshop was held in Canterbury, UK in July 2002, which brought together representatives of ROs from 14 HPIC countries (including Tanzania) to share experiences of PRSP processes. It is reported that there was broad agreement that the process had encouraged both a stronger strategic focus on strategies to reduce poverty and broader public understanding of the issues involved. Marshall explains that

> … the stories also detailed missed opportunities and frustrated understanding of what engagement in national processes involved and how to use the instrument more effectively. There was a shared sense in the group that even the act of participating in the national process was positive, in that it highlighted the importance of common engagement, allowing deep reflection about values, beliefs, and advocacy for poor communities. Prophetic reflections identified the desire to tap into deeper sources of motivation, and to promote genuinely sustainable life styles. Practical discussions focused particularly on the complex linkages among service delivery mechanisms of public and private institutions, including faith institutions, which often were less engaged than others in dialogue on critical short and long term policy issues. It was striking how widely actual experience varied, not only country by country, but among faith communities. The central and enduring conclusion is that the PRSPs and similar instruments offer a fruitful avenue for continued action and exploration, but that much more effort and focus is needed if they are to fulfil their potential. Faith groups may have an important role to play in monitoring and implementing the PRSPs, and it is crucial that they have the capacity to participate in these processes. A common refrain was the need for training to offer 'economic literacy' and in this manner help voices to be heard (Marshall, 2003, p 6-7; see also Marshall and Keough, 2004, Chapter 2)

Attempts were made to follow up the findings of the 2002 workshop: in Ghana at a consultation hosted by the Ghana Council of Churches and in Tanzania at meetings organized by the Tanzania Inter-Faith Forum. The meetings were inconclusive and the process came to an end due to a lack of funding, but the question about whether and how ROs were participating in the consultations associated with the preparation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies remained.

This question was followed up by research undertaken as part of the Religions and Development research programme in two of its focus countries: Nigeria and Tanzania. Preliminary studies were carried out in 2006-7 to find out more about whether ROs had contributed to consultations associated with the countries' PRSPs and, if their involvement had been limited or prevented, the reasons why. A second phase of the research, focused on capacity building, was carried out in both countries. It

sought to test the hypothesis that ROs are uniquely well placed to represent the views of poor citizens to their governments and to develop a potential approach to assembling, analysing and presenting data that ROs would be able to sustain and replicate. The projects were regarded as pilots, which would be evaluated as part of the research, in order to assess whether they have potential for replication, thereby strengthening the voices of the poor in policy processes.

ROs are not easily defined, but most can be assigned to one of the following groups:

- the organizational expressions of faith communities, such as Christian churches organized at the local, regional and national levels, or mosques, which have less highly organized linking institutions;
- faith-based co-ordinating or umbrella bodies such as Christian churches organized in ecumenical councils, councils of Muslim affairs, or federations of faith-based NGOs; and
- faith-based NGOs (FBOs) – separately constituted organizations that have formal or informal links with their faith community, often have objectives that do not focus primarily on maintaining the spiritual lives of adherents or spreading the religion, and are held to account either by the wider faith community or their own members.

The categories, the boundaries between them and typologies by which organizations can be classified are imprecise and contested. In this paper the term RO, where left unqualified, should be understood to include all these groups of organizations, with their wide-ranging activities and varying emphases on their declared religious traditions.

The approach and findings of the first phase of the study are presented in Section 3. The capacity building exercises undertaken in the second phase are described in Section 4. They are assessed in Section 5, and the paper concludes with some conclusions and reflections.

3 Participation by religious organizations in policy consultations

In 1999, the newly elected democratic government in Nigeria inherited an enormous debt burden, the result of years of economic crisis and mismanagement. To secure debt relief, it was required to set in train far-reaching economic and governance reforms. As part of the conditions, in 2001 the federal government set about preparing an interim PRSP. A succession of national development plans and targeted poverty programmes had done little to achieve economic development and poverty reduction. For example, “the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) implemented between 1999-2001 …was marred by poor, inefficient targeting and distorted implementation leading to high incidence of unintended beneficiaries, corruption and rent-seeking practices that crowded out the intended beneficiaries” (Bboh, 2003, p 12).

In February, 2001, the preparation of the I-PRSP was initiated by the Vice-President’s Office, which set up an Inter-Agency (Technical) Guidance Committee comprised of representatives of relevant federal agencies, a National Forum (comprised of federal, state and local government and donor agency representatives, and selected private sector and civil society members) and Zonal Working Groups for each of the six geopolitical zones. The task of the Committee was to produce a comprehensive medium-term growth and development programme, initially called a PRSP but later rolled into what the government termed a home-grown version of a PRSP: the *National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy*. The process of preparing an interim paper (I-PRSP) and final strategy NEEDS 1 (covering 2004-7) became known as the NEEDS process (National Planning Commission, 2004). A draft of NEEDS 2 (covering 2008-11) was prepared in 2007 but replaced by the incoming President’s *7-Point Agenda* and is as yet (2010) unpublished. Under the federal system of government that provides for the devolution of significant resources and responsibilities, PRSP processes also took place at state level, starting in 2004. Here the policy documents were known as SEEDS (State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies). These poverty reduction strategies, which have now (after a slow start) been drawn up in most but not every state, including Oyo and Plateau States. vary in content, reflecting local conditions and party political opinions. As will be discussed below, very little room was made for the required participation at either national or state level.

In 1985 Tanzania implemented its first structural adjustment programme, but by the early 1990s, economic reform efforts were beginning to stall. The newly elected President held back on the international institutions’ demand for further reforms, corruption and borrowing increased, and in 1994

a major tax exemption scandal broke. Aid was suspended (Gould and Ojanen, 2005; Holtom, 2007). The deadlock was broken by the emergence of a policy community of like-minded economists able and willing to tackle the economic reform agenda and the utilization of the international agencies' commitment to integrating poverty reduction into the wider reform agenda as part of the HIPC process, which could built on the Tanzanian government's longstanding commitment to tackling poverty (Evans and Ngalewa, 2004; Holtom, 2007). The one-party regime had tried to decentralize government to regions in 1972 but had this had always been problematic. In 1997, following the re-establishment of multi-party democracy in 1992, a Local Government Reform Programme was launched to decentralize government to the district level, but implementation was still in its early stages at the time Tanzania sought to qualify for debt relief. There was, therefore, a single, national procedure for drawing up pro-poor policies, embodied in the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (in Swahili, Mkakati wa Kukuza na Kupunguza Umasikini Tanzania) (MKUKUTA), even though a National Poverty Eradication Strategy had been completed the previous year. The Vice President's Office enlisted economists from the University of Dar es Salaam and key independent policy research bodies to the working groups preparing the Medium Term Expenditure Framework and the Technical Committee drafting the PRSP in 1998 and 1999. An interim PRSP was submitted in 2000, followed by a PRSP round I (covering 2001-3) and a PRSP round II (covering 2005-10) (URT, 2005).[6] At the time of the research, therefore, Tanzania had had longer (and better documented) experience of the PRS process than most other countries, including Nigeria.[7] As discussed further below, participation had been limited in the first round but improved following democratic deepening and criticism from civil society.

The first phase of the research in Nigeria in 2007 involved a search for relevant literature and semi-structured interviews with 32 ROs, as well as representatives of the Planning Commission for NEEDS at the national level and officials responsible for SEEDS in the two states considered, Oyo and Plateau. Of the 32 about two thirds were Christian and one third Muslim. They comprised churches (Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Indigenous, Methodist, Reformed), umbrella organizations (such as FOMWAN, the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations, councils for Islamic affairs, and CHAN, the Christian Health Association of Nigeria, which co-ordinates Christian-sponsored health care) and NGO-type organizations involved in development (see Appendix 1). Some were involved in the research at both national and state levels. With no systematic information available on ROs engaged

in development at the time, the organizations were identified initially by way of preliminary interviews with ROs based in Ibadan. Limited resources meant that the research had to be limited to Abuja, the federal capital, Jos in Plateau State[8] and Ibadan in Oyo State[9]. Abuja was chosen because many ROs have headquarters there, Jos because of a heavy concentration of active development organizations, and Ibadan because of its proximity to NISER (Nigeria Institute for Social and Economic Research), a mainly government-funded think-tank and home to the research team. Members of the team carried out semi-structured interviews designed to elicit information about ROs' awareness of NEEDS and SEEDS; their participation or otherwise in at least four activities: policy formation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and their views on the extent to which, in their judgment, they had enabled the voices of the poor to be heard (representation) (see Appendix 2).

In Tanzania 31 semi-structured interviews were conducted, mostly in the capital, Dar es Salaam, by members of the research team based at the University of Dar es Salaam (Appendix 3). In the absence of fuller information, the list of potential respondents was compiled after consulting organizations known to the researchers, asking them to suggest which ROs and others might usefully be contacted. The ROs (21 in all) comprised churches (Adventist, Baha'i, Catholic, Lutheran), umbrella organizations and NGO-type organizations involved in development. The numbers of Christian and Muslim ROs were about equal. The Office of the Vice-President (which was responsible for MKUKUTA at the time) and a number of non-religious CSOs, such as TACOSODE (Tanzania Council for Social Development), were also consulted. The interviews had similar aims to those carried out in Nigeria (Appendix 3).

PRSPs are, in principle, expected to be country driven and owned, following broad participation by the private sector and civil society as well as relevant government agencies (see, for example, Booth, 2003a, p 7).

However, in preparing the I-PRSP and NEEDS 1, the Nigerian Federal Government failed to consult non-governmental actors. Bboh (2003, p 18) notes that, although "the PRSP process started in February 2001, the first all-stakeholders national workshop… was held in February 2002, a year later" and that there were only four forums for civil society inputs and scrutiny between February 2001 and production of the full PRSP (which became the NEEDS 2004-7) in late 2003. In his view, this process

left the roles of CSOs and private sector participants undefined and gave the PRSP Secretariat too much discretion to select which organizations were invited to attend and which of their comments to incorporate (Bboh, 2003, p 18-19). In addition, Egboh (2003, in Bboh, 2003) observes that CSOs lack the knowledge to engage in debates about economic policy, as well as being hindered by their dependence on and competition for donor finance. As a result, not only are they unable to participate effectively in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of economic policies, they cannot enable the wider public to do so.

Nevertheless, civil society organizations responded to the lack of opportunities to participate in the official policy process by organizing some parallel deliberations on the draft PRSP. For example, the Centre for Public-Private Cooperation in the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna organized a workshop (funded by OXFAM), which was attended by over 80 representatives of CSOs (including FBOs) drawn from all six geopolitical zones. Participants were critical not just of the Federal Government's failure to consult adequately with stakeholders, but also of its general failure to cooperate with civil society and the private sector on crucial issues of economic and political governance. Because a draft of the I-PRSP was not made available until it was almost complete, the CISCOPE (Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Eradication), a coalition of civil society groups formed to mobilize around the issue of poverty reduction was unable to make inputs into it (Taiwo, 2006). Despite civil society protests, the draft NEEDS 1 document was also produced by civil servants, with no wider consultation during its preparation. The government set up a 35-member committee comprised of various stakeholders to consider the draft. Dismayed at the failure to consult during its preparation, CISCOPE carried out zonal consultations, terming the government's effort a "caricature of participation" (Taiwo, 2006). Despite their efforts, there was no evidence that civil society views were incorporated into the final versions of either the I-PRSP or NEEDS 1.

Several factors account for the low participation of civil society, including faith groups, in the I-PRSP and NEEDS in Nigeria. First, the government appears to have had little choice with respect to the broad set of economic and governance policies required by the financial institutions, so it was concerned to minimally satisfy the donors' process conditions, rather than being interested in how participation might influence the content of policies. Second, political volatility and unconsolidated democratic processes deterred it from opening up the policy debate to civil society participation. Third,

there were already a plethora of policies, programmes and agencies in place, so the PRSP process did not start with a blank sheet. Fourth, civil servants were used to a top down, technocratic approach to policy making (Bboh, 2003). As a result, little publicity was given either to the policy making process or to the limited opportunities to comment on the draft documents. This was equally true during the preparation of SEEDS.

Although some of the ROs interviewed (especially those involved in education, health and HIV/AIDS-related activities) reported that they had heard about the process (sometimes through their funders) and some had had experience of being consulted by government, many of those interviewed claimed that they knew little about the process other than what they gleaned from the media, so were ill-prepared if invited to participate in a consultation meeting. According to the National Planning Commission, consultations not only started earlier in the preparatory process (assisted by various international bodies such as UNIFEM and Action Aid organizing workshops for civil society participants), but were also more influential on the draft of NEEDS II. However, respondents saw little improvement: they still considered that invitations to participate in consultations were issued to organizations selected by government or civil society umbrella bodies, with the latter sometimes ignoring ROs, and often arrived too late to prepare or to solicit views from their wider constituencies, exacerbating the tendency for participants to speak as individuals rather than representatives of wider constituencies. While some had made representations to government on sectoral policies, government programmes in which they are involved or other matters of concern, and some had been involved in monitoring exercises, they reported that their representations had not elicited responses from the government agency concerned and nor had they had been asked to monitor the NEEDS or a SEEDS as a whole. Many were sceptical about engaging with government because of their experience of a bureaucratic culture of secrecy and obfuscation, alleging that the authorities are uncomfortable with FGs, possibly because they suspect that ROs' motive is to uncover the government's "cauldron of dirty deals" (Odumosu et al, 2008). They also complained that strategy documents either do not reflect their inputs or do not appear at all.[10]

Government officials in turn, according to the respondents, see ROs as irritants that are best kept out of government business, rather than collaborators. In addition, they criticize ROs for arguing with each other, rather than speaking with a united voice, and some of their previous inputs into policy

discussions as being "devoid of rigour and substance" (Odumosu et al, 2010, p 16). Although ROs suggested that an open invitation to make inputs to the policy making process might have stimulated them to contribute, they also acknowledged that information flows within networks of FCs are poor, they face resource constraints (particularly shortages of skilled manpower and funds) and their understanding of the mechanics of development planning, implementation and monitoring is weak (Odumosu et al, 2008).

At the time of the research in Tanzania, as noted above, the 2nd round PRSP had just been prepared. Respondents' comments therefore related to opportunities for participation during the earlier and most recent rounds, including the monitoring process that was established in 2001. Preparation of the interim PRSP was rushed and non-consultative, although it was able to build on earlier policies. The process of preparing the full PRSP included a short-lived consultation phase, for which few stakeholders were prepared. According to Holtom (2007, p 239),

> Tanzania Coalition for Debt and Development was initially invited to organize the zonal workshops, designed to enable 'grassroots' participation, but was subsequently forced to withdraw, and engagement began to break down…Parts of the government remained suspicious of the legitimacy and accountability of some NGOs, and the government proceeded to organize its own consultative process, whilst TCDD established five steering groups, which prepared a joint civil society report for the PRSP.

The zonal workshops were organized by the regional authorities but they were viewed by CSOs as limited, rushed and restricted to discussion of infrastructure development and service provision. National CSOs did not participate because of the sidelining of TCDD and criticized them as tokenistic (Gould and Ojanen, 2005). Later, CSOs were invited to a consultation to provide feedback on the draft PRSP (Holtom, 2007). Primary school fees, which the consultation exercise had shown were a financial burden on poor households, were abolished (Evans and Ngalewa, 2004), but as in Nigeria, challenges to the main macroeconomic policies, adherence to which was a key condition of the World Bank and IMF, were not entertained, despite the attempt of the civil society report to do so (Cooksey, 2003; Gould and Ojanen, 2005). Finally, extensive editing of the document sent to Washington by the World Bank annoyed both the Tanzanian government and CSOs, which accused it of merely paying lip service to the principle of country ownership (Holtom, 2007). Views differ on whether the halting steps towards participation in the first PRSP laid the foundation for more extensive and meaningful

engagement, or merely reinforced an ‘iron triangle’ of the bureaucy, donors and depoliticized CSOs (especially international NGOs) (Gould and Ojanen, 2005; Holtom, 2007).

The Poverty Monitoring System (PMS) is intended to generate information for an annual report on poverty and human development as well as an annual PRS progress report. The national Steering Committee includes non-state representatives, including four national lobby networks and one INGO, and openings have been created for non-state actors to participate in two of its four working groups: Dissemination, Sensitization and Advocacy and Research and Analysis, which oversees periodic Participatory Poverty Assessments. According to Gould and Ojanen (2005), while national CSOs see the PPA as providing grassroots inputs into monitoring and review, PPA teams gathering data at community level are regarded as working for government, which may inhibit their respondents. Although Lucas et al (2004) note that CSOs face a dilemma about whether to become part of such a process or remain independent critical analysts of the data generated, Gould and Ojanen (2005) recognize that in Tanzania many civil society participants emphasize that a critical confrontational approach is unlikely to be productive, stressing the need for constructive engagement with government, although at that time (the early stages of rolling out local government reform and decentralization) they saw local government officials as being more resistant to civil society engagement than central government.

As in Nigeria, Tanzania has a long tradition of technocratic policy making, so the government’s approach to the PRS process is unsurprising (Booth, 2005). Holtom is of the view that the monitoring and review process is

> …creating new political spaces, building confidence within government about civil society participation, and helping spur civil society to acquire the skills and build the structures it needs to engage effectively. As a consequence, civil society involvement in the on-going PRSP process continues to strengthen, and new broader policy networks are slowly developing” (Holtom, 2007, p 247).[11]

In contrast, Gould and Ojanen believe that the predominant view of the PRS process is that it should be a rational technocratic process controlled by donors, their allies in the government and the non-state sector (especially INGOs). This is demonstrated, in their view, by the sidelining of parliament (as well as smaller local and critical CSOs) from policy making, resource allocation and oversight, as well

as the government's failure to challenge the neo-liberal economic policies that are the root causes of poverty. The consensual policy partnership, in their view, empowers the policy elite at the expense of popular democratic oversight and social movements, concentrates on social policy at the expense of production, abuses 'participation' to legitimize predetermined policies, and crowds out independent and critical voices. In contrast to depoliticized policy making, implementation is highly politicized, with resource allocation (especially at the local level) being patrimonial rather than policy-driven. In Booth's view, these contrasting analyses "emphasize different facets of the same reality" (p 3). Hyden and Mmuya (2008, p 103) conclude that there have been openings in the political process for civil society organizations, but that these are "incremental, [and] often tentative." Although according to them, technocratic dominance has reduced the ability of the party to steer and control decision-making, Lawson and Rakner (2005, p 29) note that CCM does step in if it identifies a risk that the government might make a political mistake.

Some of the analyses summarized above do disaggregate civil society organizations and coalitions, in particular into international and domestic NGOs, and differentiate between those primarily concerned with service delivery or development programmes and those that prioritize advocacy. However, none mention ROs specifically, with respect to their organizational structure and reach, relations with government, and whether and how they have participated in policy consultations. Of the organizations whose representatives were interviewed as part of this research, most of the larger NGOs and development-oriented FBOs and their network organizations had participated in PRSP consultation processes, although the Aga Khan Foundation reported that it had not done so despite (or because of) its existing links with government departments. However, some of the religious organizations, as well as smaller NGOs and FBOs, had not. They not only expressed a lower level of knowledge about the MKUKUTA process but in some instances claimed to have been marginalized by the government, CSOs who believed they had little to offer or the larger religious organizations. Some responded positively to enquiries about their collaboration with other ROs, especially across the Christian/Muslim divide, although the government's impatience with the difficulty of dealing with a multiplicity of religious voices is demonstrated by the earlier formation, at its instigation, of various coordinating bodies, including the Christian Social Services Commission and BAKWATA. The inadequate information and opportunities provided by the government were frequently given as reasons for not participating. In addition, although several of the organizations noted their ability to call on members of the religious

group with relevant expertise, many explained their inability to respond to opportunities in terms of their lack of financial resources, time and expertise, while some feared that they might be 'used' by government (Mallya, 2007).

Overall, therefore, the findings, which were verified by the ROs themselves, suggested that their involvement, whilst varied in both countries and stronger in Tanzania than in Nigeria, was generally weak and not obviously influential. Possible reasons put forward by those interviewed included: uneasy relations with governments; less than inclusive PRSP processes; a shortage of personnel, skills, money, time and equipment; and an inability to speak up in a way that could claim respect. It was also recognized that their involvement might have been obscured by being subsumed under the broader category of CSOs and their coalitions.

4 Building capacity to participate in policy consultations: the pilot projects

Falk and Eberlei (2002) identify some basic requirements for effective participation by CSOs. These include enabling conditions (comprehensive and timely access to relevant information; sufficient resources; time to disseminate information, critically reflect on draft policies and develop independent positions; and the material and legal prerequisites for engagement in public debate, including the right to information), political rights (freedom of speech and assembly), a mandate (legitimization through transparency and accountability) and responsive governance structures and processes. Like many others, they recognize that participation can mean many things, from the mere provision of information, to consultation of stakeholders, to joint decision making and action.

The second phase of this project did not set out to address all these requirements or all the reasons identified by the ROs for their apparently weak involvement when opportunities for making inputs into policy consultation processes had arisen, mainly because of constraints on time and funding. It focused instead on increasing ROs' ability to speak up effectively on behalf of the poor, based on a number of assumptions, some of which were discussed and examined by those concerned more than others. They included: first, that the PRSP processes, designed to ensure that monies released through debt cancellation are well spent on poverty reduction, though often criticized are nevertheless worth supporting; second, that, whilst recognizing that participation in policy processes cannot be detached from broader issues about democratization, it is important to maximize the involvement of civil society, including ROs, in policy deliberations, so widening both ownership of and responsibility for them among civil society actors, as the creators of the PRSP processes intended (see Section 1); and third, that ROs are well-placed to ensure that the easily neglected views of poor and marginalized communities are heard and taken into account when poverty reduction policies are being planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated. I will return to these assumptions in the course of the paper (see Section 6).

In 2007, initial consultations were held between the researchers and the ROs which had worked with them on the earlier investigation into the involvement of ROs in PRSP processes. As a result, it was decided to run two pilot projects to assess whether it was possible to increase the capacity of ROs to contribute to policy-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The outputs were to be carefully researched, well informed and well presented submissions to government representing the experiences and opinions of both religious leaders and members of grassroots communities where

ROs, and certainly FCs, are universally present. It was clear in both countries that, although 'training' in data collection and analysis would be necessary, it would not be sufficient to increase participants' capacity. Instead, a 'learning by doing' approach to building capacity was adopted, involving actually collecting grassroots opinion and experience on issues of importance to communities, documenting, analysing and collating it, and then submitting the findings to government in ways likely to influence the policy process. The projects therefore involved skills training, primary data collection and analysis, and the writing and presentation of submissions to relevant government agencies. They were small-scale and experimental, but were to provide a basis for assessing the potential for such an approach to be replicated in relation to ongoing and future policy processes, with more ROs and geographical areas becoming involved.

It was agreed that each pilot project would be evaluated against the following four criteria: first, whether it had enabled the ROs concerned to establish a sustainable, inter-faith network through which they could not only share scarce resources but also, it was hoped, strengthen community relations; second, whether it had modelled a way of working that could, with adjustments if necessary, be replicated in the future; third, whether the level of skills required could be achieved and then maintained when the support of the research programme ended; and fourth, whether the submissions to government were of sufficient quality to command the respect of ministers and officials and had influenced policy and practice.

4.1 Nigeria

In Nigeria, fourteen ROs chose to participate in Phase 2 of the project, almost all of which had been involved in Phase I. Six were Muslim and eight Christian. Most were NGO-type organizations working in development on the ground and some were involved in more than one location:

- CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria) Abuja
- CHAN (Christian Health Association of Nigeria) Ibadan, Jos
- COCIN (Church of Christ in Nigeria) Jos
- CRUDAN (Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria) Ibadan, Jos
- FOMWAN (Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria) Ibadan, Abuja
- JDPC (Justice, Development and Peace Commission) Ibadan, Abuja
- JNI (Jama'atu Nasril Islam) Jos

- Maratha Church, Jos
- Muslim Community of Oyo State, Ibadan
- NASFAT (Nasrul-Lahil-II-Faith Society of Nigeria) Ibadan, Abuja
- NSCIA (National Mosque Office) Abuja
- POD-ECWA (People Orientated Development, Evangelical Church of West Africa) Jos
- Total Development International Foundation, Ibadan
- Urban Ministry, Jos

A Management Group was selected from among these ROs by the researchers from NISER, mainly to advise and assist the research team:

- CHAN (Christian Health Network of Nigeria), Jos, Chair
- FOMWAN (Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria), Ibadan
- CRUDAN (Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria), Jos
- CHAN, Ibadan
- JDPC (Justice, Development and Peace Commission), Ibadan

The fourteen participating ROs agreed to answer a number of questions put to them by the Management Group. In particular they were asked about their experience of collecting data at the grassroots, their views on a topic for the proposed submission to government, and what questions should be put to grassroots respondents when eliciting their views.

The participating ROs vary widely in the scale and reach of their operations, as well as the resources available to them, although all were clear that policy influencing is compatible with their main mandate and mission. Some have local offices and programmes, and those that do not often reported collaborating with other ROs, although mostly within the same faith tradition. As expected, responses on research experience and skills gave a somewhat mixed impression. Qualitative research into reproductive health and HIV/AIDS was reported by some ROs, suggesting that they did have experience of this kind of work. But there were also repeated comments about: a 'dearth' of experience, skills that were 'below scratch', and a general weakness in data gathering and analysis (Odumosu et al, 2010). Their concern about lack of capacity led to a decision to train 30 people, selected by the ROs. In practice, 27 people participated, nine in each of the locations. There was

rough parity in each between men and women, and each group contained participants from both Christian and Muslim organizations, with the former in the majority.

The policies included in NEEDS and SEEDS were generally regarded by the ROs as acceptable, but their implementation as problematic, with many remaining paper proposals. 'Implementation' therefore became the topic for the field research and the submission, which was intended to be an input into the review of NEEDS I and preparation of NEEDS II and SEEDS II. The Management Group agreed to pay particular attention to health and agriculture, since these are the two sectors judged to be of most concern to everyone, and a variety of questions was proposed. Given the limited resources, it was agreed that a systematic qualitative approach to data collection would be adopted, based on a selection of locations and respondents that were considered to be broadly representative, and the use of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. A schedule of questions to guide the semi-structured interviewers was drafted and agreed, organized round three main concerns.

i) What is the evidence that generally acceptable policies often fail to be realized?
ii) What factors are thought to be responsible for failures in implementing policies?
iii) What can be done to improve policy implementation?

The third concern reflected a determination by the ROs to be constructive, in response to criticism from government circles that their contributions had in the past been "unnecessarily blame-gaming and accusatory" (Odumosu et al, 2010, p 16).

A training workshop, conducted by the researchers from NISER, took place on 7 and 8 July 2008 in Abuja for 27 would-be data-collectors sent by the participating ROs. Over two days they were familiarized with NEEDS and SEEDS and introduced at some length to 'qualitative' research methods, followed by role-plays of one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions. The schedule of questions to be used in the data collection was introduced, discussed and amended. Finally a programme for the fieldwork was drawn up.

Three states were involved, as in the earlier research (Oyo, Plateau and the Federal Capital Territory). Given the size of Nigeria and the enormous differences in resource endowments, economic structure, and religious and ethnic composition, research always faces a dilemma: the resources needed to ensure that all regions and groups are represented to enable comparison and generalization are

generally beyond the reach of anyone but government, but no individual state, location or group can be considered typical or representative of the whole. Any selection of locations for study is therefore illustrative: care must be taken not to generalize from the findings, which instead may suggest hypotheses for further testing. In this instance, the selection of states was influenced by both the nature of the project and the resources available. Since Oyo is the home base of NISER and its researchers, and Plateau and Abuja have high levels of FBO presence and activity, both Christian and Muslim, organizations and respondents could be contacted without excessive and expensive travel. However, it is acknowledged that the selection was somewhat unsatisfactory because two of the states are in the same geopolitical zone and none are Muslim majority Northern states.

Each of the 27 trainees conducted two interviews (one each with a man and a woman) and one focus group discussion in communities around Jos, Ibadan and Abuja, described by the research team as 'grassroots' locations and by a representative of FOMWAN as offering good samples of people from all sectors of local Nigerian society including farmers (individuals and co-operatives), traders, civil servants, traditional leaders, women (individuals and associations) and nurses.[12] How precisely the locations and people were selected, apart from through known RO contacts, is not clear from the research report submitted to government (Section of FBOs, 2009). The interviews and discussions obtained feedback on progress with implementation of policies related to agriculture and health, respondents' views on the challenges, their suggestions for government and their views on how ROs could contribute towards improving implementation. Verbatim transcripts of all 81 interviews/ discussions were to be written immediately afterwards.

The fieldwork was completed in July and August 2008 under the supervision of the researchers from NISER, who personally monitored at least one interview by each of the 27 trainees. The transcripts were analysed by the Management Group and the researchers from NISER. The submission was drafted in December 2008 at a 'writeshop' involving representatives of the ROs, and later validated by all the participating ROs at a joint workshop before being submitted (through two members of the programme's advisory group) to members of the National Assembly and the governors of six states in July 2009 (Section of FBOs, 2009). Although by that time NEEDS II had been abandoned in favour of the new President's proposed 'Seven Point Agenda', it was hoped that it could influence the 2010 budget. Several channels for bringing the report to the attention of government were adopted, including

a policy workshop in Abuja on 1st December 2009, and presenting it to senior officials, politicians and religious leaders. By the first quarter of 2010, the submission had been delivered to a wide variety of government ministers and officials at both national (federal) and state levels, including assembly members in Oyo and Plateau States, using the connections of "influential religious leaders with some leverage in government" (Odumosu et al, 2010, p 13). Issues raised by the design and implementation of the pilot project will be further discussed in Section 5.

4.2 Tanzania

In Tanzania, with the agreement of the participating ROs, responsibility for the action research pilot project was sub-contracted to the Christian Social Services Commission (CSSC) and managed by the Tanzania Ecumenical Dialogue Group (TEDG). The former is an ecumenical body established at the instigation of government by the (Catholic) Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) and the (Protestant) Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT) in 1992 to coordinate and facilitate the provision of health and education services by the churches through fostering ecumenical cooperation, capacity building and advocacy. It works closely with the Tanzania Ecumenical Dialogue Group, set up at the same time by the same two bodies as a lobby and advocacy group of the churches, and is coordinator of the Tanzania Inter-faith Forum (TIFF). The ROs concerned preferred a practice-oriented organization because of its existing links with ROs and government and a belief that it would provide a better base for future replication of the approach if it proved useful. They preferred CSSC to other possible organizations, partly because it was believed to have lower costs than private or non-governmental organizations but also because it had the confidence of both Christian and Muslim communities as, amongst other things, the co-ordinator of TIFF.

A local Management Team comprised of six representatives of the ROs and the researcher from the University of Dar es Salaam who had been responsible for the first phase of the work was set up:[13]

- BAKWATA (Muslim Council of Tanzania)
- CCT (Christian Council of Tanzania)
- TEC (Tanzania Episcopal Conference)
- TEDG (Tanzania Ecumenical Dialogue Group, Christian) (Secretary)
- PCT (Pentecostals Council of Tanzania)
- Shura ya Maimamu (Muslim).

The primary role of the Management Team was to support and oversee the work contracted out to CSSC, but at certain points it took the lead. For example, having consulted the ROs at an introductory workshop, the Management Team decided that the topic of the field research would be 'good governance', one of the three policy 'clusters' in MKUKUTA (the other two being 'income poverty' and 'social well-being') and the one in which progress was judged to have lagged well behind the specified objectives. With MKUKUTA coming up for review in 2010, the purpose of the research was to provide evidence on progress towards achieving the strategy's good governance objectives, explanations, and suggestions for ways forward that could be incorporated in the updated strategy. The Management Team also recruited sixteen participants from its own members to attend a research training workshop organized by CSSC in Dar es Salaam on 13-15 July 2009 (CSSC and TEDG, 2010).

At the workshop, conducted by two trainers hired by CSSC, the trainees, all of whom were said to have some research experience, were familiarized with the process, content and government-issued guide to the review of MKUKUTA. They were introduced at length to qualitative research methods, together with data analysis and report writing. The questions and interview guide to be used in the field, drafted by the Management Team, reflected the seven good governance goals of MKUKUTA. They were explained, discussed and amended, and separate interview guides developed for local religious leaders and ordinary people. It was agreed to make the questions available in Swahili as well as English. Towards the end of the workshop, skills were practised using role play. It was also agreed that, wherever possible, the trainees should work in pairs to complement one another's strengths and weaknesses, and that each should conduct at least one pilot interview with either a trainer or a member of the Management Team present.

The fieldwork was carried out over 20 days in two districts in each of four regions (Kilimanjaro, Coast, Dodoma and Tanga), in order to reflect differences in levels of prosperity and religious composition. The districts (one of four tiers of local government within a region: district, ward, village and hamlet) were chosen because of their relative accessibility but some difficulties were nevertheless experienced, due to the remoteness of some and the lack of readily available transport. During the workshop it was emphasized that the trainee researchers should not rely solely on information from local leaders, but should ensure that 'ordinary' people were given every opportunity to articulate their views. Two researchers were assigned to each district, where they interviewed 88 local leaders,

mostly male church and mosque leaders associated with the religious organizations represented on the Management Team, but also a few local officials. These interviews focused on the ROs' own participation in implementing MKUKUTA strategies, the challenges faced by ROs and government, and the views of respondents on what could be done to tackle the issues more effectively. In addition, 306 people from the local congregations were interviewed (roughly half men and half women), again focusing mainly on their own involvement in governance issues and processes and their suggestions for ways of tackling the issues (CSSC and TEDG, 2010).

On completion of the data collection and using reports written by the interviewers, the two trainers from the July workshop analysed the transcripts, collated the data and drafted the submission to government (Project Management Team, 2009). After approval by the Management Team, it was formally submitted (with a covering letter that explained the research process) to the Poverty Monitoring Secretariat of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning on 25 September 2009, so meeting the government's October deadline or 'entry point' for submissions and proposals relating to the next phase of MKUKUTA.

5 Capacity to engage in policy processes: an assessment of the pilot projects

In both Nigeria and Tanzania, the action research had two different but related aspects, with different aims and outputs.[14] The two pilot projects, which are the main focus of this section, set out to increase the capacity of ROs to contribute to policy making by collecting and presenting to government information and views from poor and marginalized communities, with the longer term aim of strengthening their voice and influence. In the course of the projects, two pieces of research were undertaken by the ROs involved: one into failures to implement policies related to agriculture and health contained in the NEEDS and SEEDS in Nigeria, and the other into the lack of progress on governance policies included in MKUKUTA and ROs' participation in implementation of the strategy in Tanzania. The quality of the research undertaken, as reflected in the two submissions, and their reception by the Nigerian and Tanzanian governments are relevant to this paper, since they demonstrate whether the approaches trialled were successful. The *content* of the local research teams' findings however, as set out in the two submissions, together with their proposals, are not of direct relevance to this assessment. They are well documented but are not set out here or further discussed.

What then are the findings of the action research? Can the approaches tested be considered successful? Do they suggest a possible way of strengthening the voice and influence of ROs and/or poor communities in present and future policy-making processes? The assessment presented here draws on the observations of the present writer, who was the overall coordinator, and evaluations in each of the countries, which collated the views of participants in the projects and observers. In both, the researchers involved judged that they were in the best position to carry out an evaluation and were eager to do so.[15] There must therefore, obviously, be caution with respect to the objectivity of the results, since those involved had overall responsibility for the project and were closely involved with its management. The evaluations were carried out in early 2010 (Mallya, 2010; Odumosu et al, 2010) and so do not capture any subsequent follow up activities.

5.1 The submissions

To begin at the end as it were with the two submissions. ROs had been criticized in the past by officials for making representations to government that were often anecdotal, ill-founded and negative rather than constructive. They had also been criticized for disagreeing with each other and failing to speak with a united voice. Such criticisms may have reflected government attitudes and poor relations

between governments and ROs as much as a fair assessment of RO attempts to contribute to debates. They nevertheless struck home and the ROs involved in this project set out to present 'competent, constructive and united' submissions to their governments. Did they succeed? The answer requires three inter-related factors to be considered: the quality of the documents, their reception and, above all, their impact on policy and practice.

5.1.1 Nigeria

In the case of Nigeria, the submission, drafted by RO leaders in a 'writeshop' facilitated by the researchers from NISER, is well-written and structured. Its findings are not merely anecdotal but are carefully rooted in the data collected by the trainee researchers in the field, with copious quotations from their transcripts. Its recommendations, whilst containing critical observations relating to reported failures to implement poverty reduction policies, often attributed to corrupt practices, are constructive and include offers of active co-operation from the ROs, for example by increasing awareness of government programmes and helping to implement, monitor and evaluate them in order to improve accountability. The document is therefore, in the present writer's opinion, reasonably 'competent' and 'constructive'. It is certainly 'united', having been adopted by all the ROs involved, which belong to both the Christian and Muslim traditions.

Any further assessment lies in the hands of the evaluators of the research project as a whole, the ROs who participated and the recipients of the submission. The NISER research team that carried out the evaluation were part of the Management Group when the submission was drafted. Their judgment is generally positive, as is that of the ROs interviewed by them as part of the evaluation process and quoted verbatim in their report. There is no hint of criticism or qualification. A comment from CRUDAN, an FBO in Plateau State, is not untypical: "*I believe the quality of document was okay – of international standard, it can be accepted anywhere in the world*." The third group, namely the recipients, are either religious leaders with access to government ministers and officials, or ministers and officials themselves. Many are listed in the report. They include the Head of the Muslim Community in Nigeria and Sultan of Sokoto, the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria, the Governors of Oyo, Lagos, Ogun, Delta and Rivers States, members of the relevant Houses of Assembly, Ministers of Planning, Chairmen of Committees and others. Their reaction is summed up by the evaluators as follows:

> …the reception of the document has been inspiring with all recipients expressing pleasure at the thoughtfulness of the FBOs and promising to study the contents carefully. There is nothing to suggest that these reactions are merely the usual niceness or outpouring of positive emotions or courtesy such presentations would normally invite (Odumosu et al, 2010, p 47).

Since there is nothing to suggest that these reactions were based on serious engagement by the 'recipients' with what the submission had to say, two further reactions are probably more telling.

One came from an official in the National Planning Commission who had previously been critical and somewhat dismissive of the ROs. Whilst not showering praise on the document when interviewed by the research team, she did make a number of suggestions as to how matters could be taken forward between the government and the ROs, which suggests that the submission had gained her attention and to some degree her respect.

The second reaction, or non-reaction, was less encouraging. As part of the effort to disseminate the submission's findings and influence decision-makers, a forum was planned for early December 2009, hosted by the President of NISER in Abuja, to which several government ministers and officials were invited. The invitations were officially accepted. The forum was designed as an opportunity for the ROs involved to present their findings (a power point presentation had been carefully prepared to complement and bring to life the written material) and elicit some responses, even a measure of commitment, from the participants. In the event, no government minister or official attended or even apologized for not doing so. Whether this was due to the crisis in government circles due to the illness and absence of the then President, to disruption to traffic due to a fuel shortage, or to a measure of disdain or indifference, is a matter of speculation. One RO representative described their treatment as "*shabby*"; another suggested that, having seen the submission, ministers and officials were "*jolted….out of their seats*", that is, too nervous to attend! The subsequent death of the President, in April 2010, changes to ministerial appointments, and impending elections only added to the difficulties.

Although efforts continue to ensure that the submission receives attention, there is no evidence to date that it has influenced policy and practice. In any case, it is difficult to discern direct continuities of cause and effect between inputs of this kind and subsequent actions by governments. One RO (CHAN) made what was probably a wise comment: "*our advocacy was weak*". In other words,

competent submissions need to be complemented by equally competent and persistent advocacy and lobbying. The planned forum and the careful and strategic distribution of the submission to religious leaders with access to government circles shows that initial steps were taken, but given the shortage of evidence, “the jury is out on whether the submission will make any impact in the policy arena” (Odumosu et al, 2010, p 46).[16]

5.1.2 Tanzania

Turning to Tanzania, the submission, drafted by the two trainers in qualitative research who led the training workshop and approved by the Management Team, took the form of a report and a covering letter from CSSC‘s Director addressed to the Poverty Monitoring Secretariat in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. The letter explains the concern to build the capacity of ROs to contribute to policy making processes such as MKUKUTA and describes the training and field research which had enabled the report to be written. It also summarized seven findings and four conclusions about the lack of progress in achieving the good governance aims included in MKUKUTA 2005. Many are critical of government. They also note the lack of involvement of ROs in MKUKUTA, suggesting that this represents a missed opportunity for achieving the government’s objectives, although the report is not clear as to where the responsibility for this lies: with government, the ROs or both. The report on the research itself puts forward seven groups of constructive proposals for both government and ROs, referred to as ‘additional strategies‘ and, in three appendices, gives details of the data collection, specifying the regions, districts and organizations involved, the researchers, the local religious leaders and office holders who were interviewed, as well as summarizing the basic social characteristics of the ‘ordinary people’ interviewed. This strongly supports the report’s contention that the proposals are evidence-based. The evaluator does not comment on the quality of the submission, except to say that in his view, the pilot project was a success and to suggest that, as experience grows, the quality of future submissions “is likely to increase with time” (Mallya, 2010). In the present writer’s judgment, the submission appears to pass the tests of being ‘competent‘, in drawing carefully on the field research, and ‘constructive‘ in the proposals put forward. It also appears to be ‘united‘ in that both Christians and Muslims were members of the Management Team and involved in the project through their ROs.

What of the response from government? CSSC‘s previous involvement in MKUKUTA processes, assisting with representations from the churches and liaising with government officials, ensured that the submission was made to the right department of government at the right time (in September 2009)

so enhancing its chances of being taken into consideration along with other submissions from CSOs. The evaluator, however, issues a note of caution: "it could be that the invitation by the government for civil society to give inputs is another gimmick in order that it can be seen as being democratic and inclusive – leaving the rest of the preparation to the whims of the bureaucracy" (Mallya, 2010, p 50). It is likely, he adds, that some CSOs will be listened to by government more than others, just as the earlier research revealed that some are more likely to be approached by government for their inputs.[17] In any case, as with Nigeria, a submission may not be enough by itself, and it is acknowledged that further follow up and lobbying may be required.

Such caution and scepticism should be put alongside the record of a meeting (of which the evaluator was apparently unaware at the time of writing) between the Management Team of the pilot project, including CSSC, and three members of the government's Poverty Monitoring Secretariat on 29 March 2010, when the findings and recommendations contained in the submission were again put forward and discussed. According to the minutes of this meeting, the recommendations received a positive welcome from the government officials and a commitment to incorporate them in the review of MKUKUTA. The officials also welcomed the engagement of the ROs in the process and undertook to involve them more closely in future policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Following the meeting, CSSC received a copy of the draft of the revised MKUKUTA from the same officials. In its response, CSSC noted that several of the proposals put forward by the ROs had been incorporated in the draft, went on to indicate some omissions, and suggested where further improvements could be made. The response was acknowledged in May 2010. This suggests that the submission not only won respect but also had some influence.

5.2 Networks, skills and models

Cautiously favourable assessments of the two submissions suggest that some progress might have been made with regard to the other stated aims of the pilot projects, namely:

- to create networks of ROs
- to increase appropriate skills among ROs (in data collection, analysis and presentation)
- to develop a sustainable and replicable model for future collaboration between ROs on policy making, monitoring and evaluation.

The assessments which follow are heavily reliant on the two evaluations: by Odumosu, Chete and Alonge (Nigeria) and Mallya (Tanzania). Mallya (2010) drew on reports written by the CSSC, conversations with the participating ROs and the Management Team, and his own experiences as lead researcher. Odumosu, Chete and Alonge (2010) drew on interviews with managers and trainee researchers from the participating ROs, the Management Group, Advisory Committee members and government officials, as well as their own experiences as the NISER research team. The trainee researchers in Nigeria completed evaluation sheets after the training workshop and they and others are extensively quoted in the report.

5.2.1 Tanzania

In Tanzania, at least two networks of ROs existed before the research began. One was the Tanzanian Inter-Faith Forum (TIFF), though many ROs appeared to be unaware of it. The other comprised the ROs whose representatives largely made up the Management Team for the pilot project. According to Mallya, their officials had met and co-operated on matters of mutual concern on many previous occasions. Building on these foundations, they co-operated well, both in the field and in making potentially difficult decisions, including appointing a lead agency (CSSC) which could enjoy the trust of Muslims as well as Christians. Only one organization (Muslim) withdrew its representative, though not its co-operation, from the Management Team, apparently for internal reasons of its own. The ongoing network however, effective as it was, suffered from the same problem as had come to light during earlier research into the participation of ROs in PRSP processes, namely that smaller and new ROs were underrepresented. Mallya (2010) proposes that the network should not only be more inclusive in future, but could become so by replicating itself at ‘lower‘, more grassroots levels, such as the district level, where local government could also be encouraged to engage.

The skills training in Tanzania appears to have been both fairly successful and problematic. Trainee researchers associated with the ROs did acquire additional skills and experience of collecting data in the field. The sixteen newly trained researchers apparently all agreed that: ‘they were able to carry out the research‘ and all their field reports, with one exception, were judged to be ‘good‘. Although views differ, it is less evident that their ability to analyse data and draft a submission was developed, since these tasks were largely carried out by the two trainers, though the draft analysis was subsequently approved by the Management Team.

However, some problems surrounded the training workshop. Judgments about the prior experience of the sixteen trainees vary. Mallya (2010) comments that they had some experience and knowledge of 'social research', although not of 'field research', whilst a report from CSSC suggests that they had experience of qualitative research on HIV/AIDS, although not on the chosen topic of 'governance' (CSSC and TEDG, 2010). At the workshop itself, knowledge and experience among the trainees were less than expected. Long delays in organizing the workshop had caused some, more able, recruits to withdraw. The trainers complained about a shortage of time so that important topics had to be skipped and there was scant opportunity to practise newly acquired skills before going to the field. Observers, including the present writer, judged the training to be of poor quality and non-participatory, with a hugely disproportionate amount of time spent on secondary matters, leaving only the final hour of the last day for practical work, such as role plays. In response, it was agreed that the interviewers would need to be accompanied and closely supervised in the field.

Perceptions differed on whether the data collection capacity developed was satisfactory. CSSC, maybe overlooking the fact that this was a pilot project, believed that the number of trainee researchers was far too small. Mallya observed that "numbers are not always translated to strength" in terms of producing good evidence and making an impact (2010, p 45). Suggestions for strengthening research capacity in future included a focus on `the training of trainers` (Mallya, 2010), the use of local non-university training institutions and decentralization of training and data collection to ward and village level, where more people could be involved and travel costs reduced (CSSC and TEDG, 2010).[18]

The evidence set out above suggests that the pilot project in Tanzania highlighted, if not entirely created, a model way of working by which ROs can co-operate to strengthen the voice of the local communities visited by their researchers in policy-making processes such as MKUKUTA. It involved networking and sharing resources; becoming skilled at collecting data at the grassroots; to some extent learning how to analyse, collate and present information; and finally, getting government ministers and officials to take notice of evidence and its implications for policy and practice. On this occasion, the model appears to have worked, not least because it produced a submission which commanded respect and whose recommendations about good governance and the potential contribution of ROs were, to some extent, taken on board, at least in the policy document.

The question is whether the model is sustainable and replicable, so that ROs and the communities they are supposed to represent can be influential not only in a review of MKUKUTA but in future policy-making processes. The answer depends in part on whether sufficient resources are available. The ROs certainly played their part by sharing and contributing resources of their own. CSSC adopted a participatory approach, acting, as it was commissioned to do, with the ROs and not on behalf of or instead of them. It is a significant ongoing institution that works closely with the churches and the government. The ROs involved are likely to maintain their network.[19]

Nevertheless, as in Nigeria, the pilot project which highlighted and tested the model relied on considerable resources from outside. It was funded by the UK Department for International Development through a research programme, as part of which researchers from the University of Birmingham provided leadership, co-ordination, oversight, quality control and support. In Tanzania, the lead researcher and trainers came from the University of Dar es Salaam: CSSC itself does not have the capacity to undertake the necessary training. None of these is likely to be available in the future unless other funding bodies are persuaded, as they might well be, of the importance of strengthening the voice of the poorest and rolling out and improving the model tested here as a promising way of doing so. What was achieved was, therefore, strictly speaking a 'replicable' rather than a 'sustainable' model largely independent of external resources.

The evaluators, researchers, ROs and consultants involved in the pilot project do not deny that the approach is sustainable, but they do not offer any answers with respect to where the necessary resources can be obtained. They suggest how the model might be improved, including more inclusive and locally based networks, the use of local training institutions, the appointment of RO policy officers, and extending the range of skills and activities into lobbying and advocacy (Mallya, 2010). Otherwise there are only questions. Can the skills acquired be maintained? Can the ROs continue to co-ordinate their efforts, focus their work together, identify and prioritize issues? Perhaps above all, can they find the considerable financial resources that are assumed to be needed, either by themselves or together with wider networks of CSOs, in order to utilize their acquired skills again?

5.2.2 Nigeria

In Nigeria, although there are some networks designed to foster better inter-faith relations, the participating ROs seemed to experience something genuinely new as they began to co-operate on poverty-related issues. The network that developed, and which apparently continues in the three locations included in the project, was originally open to local Christian and Muslim church or mosque congregations (faith communities), but those involved soon found themselves unable "to flow with the orientation of the assignment" (Odumosu et al, 2010, p 45), which appears to mean that they did not see it as central to their mission. The remaining ROs, Christian and Muslim, apart from a few staff changes, stayed together throughout and their co-operation was reported to be marked by "camaraderie" and "conviviality." "The enthusiasm and zeal to carry out this task by the ROs despite the challenges of combining it with their usual line of work or routine duties was extraordinary, which greatly eased the burden of the implementation team" (Odumosu et al, 2010, p 45).

If the quality of the training provided is to be judged by the quality of the data collection and the resulting transcripts, then it clearly left something to be desired. A marked difference between material produced by those who had little or no prior knowledge of qualitative research techniques and those with some experience was observed. The latter material was judged by the evaluators (who were also the trainers) to be "excellent" and to "cover the ground expertly" (Odumosu et al, 2010, p 43), but they also admit that a number of the transcripts were well below the standard required, although even this unsatisfactory material was found to contain useful data for inclusion in the submission.

The workshop itself focussed more on practical training in qualitative research than the workshop in Tanzania, and included more role play and practical exercises in interviewing and leading discussion groups. Feedback indicated universal and enthusiastic approval from trainees and their managers. However, once again, perhaps inevitably, some felt that more time is needed, especially for practical exercises, and suggestions were made as to how the training might have been improved by using tape and video recordings. As in Tanzania, the trainers monitored and supported the trainee researchers during the fieldwork.

Despite the difficulties encountered when making their submission to government, the pilot project in Nigeria, as in Tanzania, appears to have highlighted a possible way of ROs working together to share

limited resources and maximize their potential to strengthen the voice of poor and marginalized communities. Whether that potential has been realized to any extent will be discussed below. The point here is that a workable model has been tried and tested. As in Tanzania, the question remains as to whether it is replicable and sustainable. Some indications are encouraging. Many of the ROs were confident that the skills they had acquired would be retained and used again, although in some cases they seem to have a more limited use in mind, which would be confined to individual ROs and their own agendas. "*We are already repeating what we got from you*" (Odumosu et al, 2010, p 45), seems to refer to the reuse of the newly acquired qualitative research techniques for work on issues of interest to a particular RO. However, a more comprehensive model that would involve a wider sharing of skills and co-ordinated research efforts by ROs, leading to united submissions to governments, is still clearly in mind and some steps have already been taken to perpetuate the approach. For example, a coalition of ROs has been formed in Plateau State and discussions have been held with all the ROs that participated in the pilot project about one of them taking on a co-ordinating role in the future.

Sustainability is much more open to question, not in terms of interest and commitment but in terms of resources. As in Tanzania, the pilot project was not entirely one-sided. The ROs were closely involved throughout in a highly participatory process, contributing their time, enthusiasm, staff and skills, together with limited material resources. Nevertheless the project was heavily dependent on NISER. NISER brought the network together. NISER was responsible for the initial research into the involvement of ROs in NEEDS and SEEDS and, later, into what should be done to increase it. NISER conducted the training in qualitative research, facilitated the workshops, supervised the field work and drafted the submission, admittedly with good support from the Management Group and, later, the wider research programme's advisers, some of whom were instrumental in feeding the submission into influential government circles, at both Federal and State levels. NISER was also asked to organize refresher courses in qualitative research. However, NISER itself has limited and overstretched resources, and it was dependent for this work on UK government funding and on leadership, co-ordination, oversight, quality control and support from UK researchers. New funders who recognize the importance and viability of capacity building might well be persuaded, as in Tanzania, to support further capacity building, but without them the necessary resources, financial and institutional, will be unavailable in the future. To be 'sustainable', the approach developed would have to be far less costly and far more self-reliant.

6 Conclusion

Many of the reasons why religious organizations have participated little, if at all, in consultation processes related to the preparation, monitoring and review of Poverty Reduction Strategies have been identified in this paper. In addition, the project can reasonably claim to have highlighted a way of working that can (with further adaptation and refinement) increase the capacity of ROs to contribute to policy making, but it may well founder in the countries concerned for lack of resources. The model may be workable and replicable but is it sustainable? Two somewhat familiar sets of questions deserve further consideration. First, development programmes have often been expected to achieve a measure of independence and self-sufficiency from their funders in a comparatively short period of time. Even if desirable, this has often not proved to be realistic. Is there a danger that the goal of sustainability and self-reliance takes priority over the goal of strengthening the voice of the poor? Second, and perhaps more interestingly, how are these two goals related? Does greater self-reliance on the part of organizations representing or working with them increase the strength of the voices that need to be heard, and might their growing capacity to speak and be heard contribute to sustainability? Are they opposites or do they in fact go hand in hand?

To address this question, can anything be learned by comparing the work done in Nigeria with that in Tanzania? In Tanzania, the MKUKUTA process was able to build on a good deal of previous experience. Several strategy papers involving civil society participation had been produced prior to the PRSP initiative in 2000, including Vision 2025 in 1995 and the National Poverty Eradication Strategy in 1998. In 2000 and since CSOs, including CSSC, have organized workshops and made co-ordinated approaches to government. A Poverty Monitoring System was put in place in 2001, and CSOs are engaged in Public Expenditure Tracking. Despite reservations about government's desire to control wider participation in its policies, resistance to civil society scrutiny, and preference for working with only depoliticized organizations with appropriate technical skills (Gould and Ojanen, 2005), many CSOs and ROs believe that democratization and the PRS process have opened up new political spaces for civil society engagement in governance. The important contribution of ROs to education and health provision and other development activities means that there are already close working relationships between them and various government agencies. The challenges in Nigeria were greater. Relations with government were very uneasy because of the close links between political and religious competition. Political conditions were more unpredictable. Inter-faith networks had to be built up against a background of inter-religious tension. Physical conditions, including travel and

communications, were difficult and often disrupted. Both the policy arena and the civil society scene were more complex and disorganized, with less well developed channels for participation in the preparation and review of policy. Despite the disappointments, though not outright failure, with regard to engaging with government, the achievements of the project participants were, therefore, all the more notable.

There were some differences between the two countries in the organization of the project. Most obvious was the decision of the ROs and academic researcher involved to contract out responsibility for the pilot project to the CSSC/TEDG. Whether this had any real significance is not clear. CSSC brought a stronger resource base for this purpose than the university, since it is an existing network with access to some of the required skills and established working relations with government, including an important MKUKUTA-related secretariat. Delays occurred while terms of reference and funding were negotiated, although it was able to carry out the work expeditiously. There are no grounds for thinking that this arrangement affected the quality of the research and its findings one way or the other. Given the circumstances in Tanzania it seemed an acceptable (and to the lead researcher in the University of Dar es Salaam, short of resources and time, an attractive and pragmatic) way to proceed. In Nigeria contracting out was not considered and most likely would not have been possible.

As noted in Section 1, one of the assumptions behind the pilot project was that ROs are especially well-placed to ensure that the easily neglected views of poor and marginalized communities are taken into account when poverty reduction policies are being planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated. Thus it was implied, both tacitly and explicitly, that strengthening the capacity of ROs to contribute to policy making would also strengthen the voice of the poor. Is there any evidence that this occurred and that it was the voice or voices of the poor that were heard speaking through the two submissions made to governments?

There is certainly evidence that local, often referred to as ‘grassroots‘, voices have been heard. The researchers visited some remote places (districts and villages), drew on the opinions of local people and, in the case of Nigeria, quoted them verbatim and at length in the submission.

Living in a remote area does not necessarily mean that the respondents are marginalized, though many of those interviewed claimed that they are in that, for example, their complaints about the lack of medicines or passable roads go unheeded by the authorities and promised improvements in the supply of farming inputs, such as seeds and fertilizer, identified as an objective in the relevant PRSP, never occur. Neither does it necessarily follow that those interviewed are ordinary people rather than leaders, members of a local elite, or that they are the poorest members of local communities, even if the latter are relatively poor. Quite a number of those interviewed appear to be pastors, imams, sheiks, traditional leaders and leaders of women's groups and farmers' associations, whilst others are described as teachers, health professionals or civil servants. Although it is easily assumed that 'local', 'grassroots', 'marginalized', 'ordinary' and 'poor' describe all those in a remote or relatively poor community, this is not necessarily so.

Nevertheless the word associations just mentioned may not be entirely misleading and the interview transcripts and reports prepared by the researchers are full of references to the farmers, women street traders, birth attendants, 'common', 'ordinary' and 'everyday' people they interviewed, who repeatedly described their own poverty and the poverty of their communities, where food, medicines and clean water, let alone money, are in short supply and government aid in the form of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides never seems to get past the so-called 'middle-men' entrusted with its distribution. In Tanzania, as noted in Section 3, out of about 400 people interviewed by the researchers, 306 were 'ordinary' people, roughly half of them women.

Moreover, even where leaders of church congregations, mosques, women's groups and farmers' associations are speaking, 'ordinary' people appear to echo what they have to say in complementary group interviews or indicate their trust in their leaders by proposing that they, rather than the existing government appointees, should be given responsibility for monitoring and implementing poverty reduction strategies at the local level. There is plenty of room for more careful definitions of terms like 'poor', 'marginalized', 'local', 'common' and 'ordinary' and their relationship to each other in these research contexts, and for more detailed profiling of those interviewed, before any definitive answer can be given as to whether the studies did reflect the voices of the poor. However, on the basis of the evidence available, it seems reasonable to presume that, in the two submissions to governments, the opinions of poor and marginalized people found expression.

There is a further question which remains unanswered. It was raised in an earlier phase of this research and has to do with the distinctiveness of ROs, the nature of their 'added value' and how they differ from civil society in general, with which some of them are reluctant to be identified. This research project has touched on at least four areas that might merit further investigation and help to address this question (there are doubtless others such as the voluntary spirit and high motivation which faith might inspire). The first is the oft-referred-to presence of ROs at the grassroots, integral to the poor and marginalized communities whose voices are said to be weak and in need of strengthening. A concern for the grassroots is reflected, as we have seen, in the researchers' efforts to visit remote places and to quote verbatim and at length the opinions of local people. However, the ROs that worked on this project were (perhaps of necessity) the organizations involved in development and advocacy activities, many with existing links with national (or state) governments, rather than individual congregations. They were mostly the larger organizations with a national (or in Nigeria state level) presence, staff and offices. This suggests that, whilst local congregations or faith communities (FCs) are by definition present at the local level, the ROs engaged in development activities (which look more like NGOs and are those likely to be involved in national/state-level policy consultations) may not always be.[20]

The second area is the trust which marginalized communities are said to put in ROs and especially their leaders. In Nigeria, influential religious leaders with some leverage in government were trusted to make the submission of the ROs known and considered in government circles (see Sections 4.1 and 5.1.1 above). In this case, the leaders had a clear mandate. In addition, in many of the interviews trust in religious leaders was repeatedly expressed.[21] There may however be a difference between trusting religious leaders as such and trusting them to convey the views of adherents rather than their own or what their government associates prefer to hear. The possibility that local religious leaders' perspectives differ from poor people (especially women) was recognized in the pilot projects (especially in Tanzania, see Section 4.2).

A third area is the moral high ground which ROs might be expected to occupy, well placed for example to stand out against corruption and act with integrity. This high ground was certainly claimed in both submissions. For example, in Nigeria, the submission suggested that implementation will be improved not only when corrupt officials and middlemen are by-passed but when it is put into the

hands of trustworthy religious communities: a male focus group suggested that "*When FBOs are engaged, the rate of misappropriation will be reduced*" and a female group "…*an Imam as leader of his Ummah [congregation], he has the fear of Allah; he knows how to share the fertilizer, channel them to the right users, not for resale at the market*" (Section of FBOs, 2009, p 28). In Tanzania the submission proposed that RO leaders be involved in governance in order to combat corruption and to "impart knowledge on moral ethics" (Project Management Team, 2009, p 3).

The fourth area has to do with what ROs might have to say on such subjects as implementation, health, agriculture and governance arising out of the content of their faith. In neither submission is there any evidence of anything that is particularly distinctive, either in the sense that it is directly inspired by Christianity or Islam (even if the resulting opinion conforms to the general view) or in the sense that it is dictated by religious belief and is at odds with other points of view, such as can be the case with regard, for example, to HIV/AIDS or women's rights.

Even if ROs can be characterized in all these four ways, a further question remains. Are they the only organizations with these characteristics? The question must be left open here since it was not asked in this project. Many of the participants in this study distinguished between ROs and other non-state organizations, and the ROs concerned were often ambivalent about being grouped with other CSOs. However, in countries like Tanzania and Nigeria, personal religious faith is ubiquitous, in contrast, say, to the UK. In the UK personal religious faith cannot be assumed. In Tanzania and Nigeria the lack of it would be surprising. Those who work with CSOs and government, as well as with ROs, will almost certainly be people of faith. As a consequence, it may not be that only ROs have a high regard for trustworthiness, morality and policies that arise from and are consonant with their faith, and there may be little to gain from them undertaking advocacy independently from other CSOs. In these circumstances, any attempt to strengthen the voices of the poor will need to be doubly clear about the grounds for paying special attention to ROs and not subsuming them within the larger category of CSOs. While the approach to enabling ROs to assemble and contribute evidence for policy formulation and monitoring developed in this project has potential for replication, if ROs are to be singled out, those providing the necessary support must be persuaded that it will make for good use of scarce resources.

In addition, wider issues, analysis of which was beyond the scope of this research, need to be considered. These include the validity of the mode of participation being promoted in PRSP-type processes (see, for example, Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Dijkstra, 2005; Hickey and Mohan, 2008; Lazarus, 2008). In addition, consideration needs to be given to ROs' relationships on the one hand with the state, donors and the most influential non-state actors and on the other with representative politics. The former aspire to rational technocratic planning and shape policy making in aid-dependent countries, while elected representatives are often sidelined in the sort of consultation processes under discussion here even though the resources that are key to implementation are distributed through political negotiation (see, for example, Gould and Ojanen, 2005).

Appendix 1

Organizations visited in Phase I in Nigeria

1. Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Abuja
2. Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Abuja
3. Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, Abuja
4. Methodist Church, Abuja
5. Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JPDC) (Catholic), Abuja
6. Anglican Communion, Abuja
7. Nasiru-Ilahi Fatir Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), Abuja
8. Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Abuja
9. Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Eradication (CISCOPE), Abuja
10. National Planning Commission, Abuja
11. Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN), Jos
12. Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN), Jos
13. People Oriented Development of the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (POD ECWA), Jos
14. Tarayar Ekklesiyoyin Kristi a Nigeria or The Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria (TEKAN), Jos
15. Urban Ministry, Jos
16. Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), Jos
17. Plateau State Planning Commission, Jos
18. CAN, Jos
19. Jama'atu Nasril Islam (Society for the Victory of Islam) (JNI), Jos
20. JPDC, Jos
21. FOMWAN, Jos
22. Muslim Community in South West, Ibadan
23. JDPC, Ibadan
24. Anglican Church, Ibadan
25. Baptist Church, Ibadan
26. CISCOPE, Ibadan
27. SEEDS Coordinator, Oyo State, Ibadan
28. Muslim Community of Oyo State, Ibadan
29. Department of Islamic and Arabic Studies, University of Ibadan
30. Methodist Church, Ibadan
31. CHAN, Ibadan
32. NASFAT, Ibadan
33. FOMWAN, Ibadan
34. CRUDAN, Ibadan
35. Total Foundation, Ibadan

Appendix 2

Interview Guide for Phase I in Nigeria

The semi-structured interviews with respondents from FBOs focused on four main areas of questioning:

1. Level of participation
   - who participated
   - how did they get to participate
   - in what ways did they participate
   - who were they representing
   - what influence, difference or impact did it make
2. Attitudes of faith communities
   - to poverty reduction
   - to government
   - to policy processes
3. Capacity Issue (Difficulties and constraints that led to non- or unsatisfactory participation)
   - attitude
   - access
   - confidence
   - briefing/information
   - tools – budget, indicators for checking
   - resources (computer, e-mail, communication technology)
4. Interfaith Cooperation
   - extent
   - benefit

For the control interviews, the questioning modality was altered to elicit comments on the interviewee's sense of the role and activities of faith groups; their level of involvement in the NEEDS/ SEEDS policy formulation exercises; the nature of the consultation; their assessment of ROs' expectations, performance and conduct at the sessions, especially relating to their technical depth and familiarity with the issues; and their thoughts on the constraints ROs face and the capacities they lack.

SECTION A: PARTICIPATION IN THE PRSP PROCESS

1. Are you aware of NEEDS (SEEDS)?
2. How did you come to know about it?
3. What is your understanding of what it is about?
4. Were you consulted by Government on NEEDS (SEEDS)?
   a. How frequently?
      - ☐ Once
      - ☐ Twice
      - ☐ Regularly
      - ☐ Never
5. When you were consulted, how would you describe the nature & extent?
   - ☐ For information only
   - ☐ We were sensitised to the issues involved in PRSP
   - ☐ We were asked to prepare background papers from our perspective
   - ☐ We were invited for discussions on the technical submissions
   - ☐ We were involved in the dissemination of the approved PRSP document
   - ☐ We were invited to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of PRSP
   - ☐ Other
6. Who participated in such government consultations and what was their mandate, i.e. who exactly were they representing (i.e. their faith community at large, a particular FBO, themselves) and how were they briefed (consultation events with faith community, by academics etc.) ?
7. Did your faith community initiate other activities to influence the process? (possible prompts listed below, please ask respondent to expand and explain)
   - ☐ No
   - ☐ Making representation
   - ☐ Circulation of policy positions
   - ☐ Monitoring of activities
   - ☐ Workshops
   - ☐ Meetings with Official
   - ☐ Submissions
   - ☐ Shadow consultations
   - ☐ Other
8. How did your faith community provide input for any such initiatives?
9. If it did not participate, why was that?

SECTION B: CAPACITY, HINDRANCES & CAPACITY BUILDING

10. With hindsight, how would you describe your faith community's capacity to engage and participate in the PRSP process? Please explore issues starting from the mandate given by community and leaders respectively, resources allocated, activities initiated etc. and particularly in terms of:
    a. Effective representation of your 'constituency',
    b. Participation in the policy-making process,
    c. The implementation of policy decisions, and
    d. Monitoring the policy process itself?

    (Ask some probing questions to get the picture of the organization structure and concrete evidence of its capacity vis-à-vis section A).
11. Overall how would you rate your own, your organization's or community's capacity to engage in PRSP process, i.e. were you satisfied with your contribution:
    a. If you were dissatisfied with your community's capacity, what were the constraining factors?
    b. If satisfied, what factors actually facilitated your participation
12. How do your core activities as an organization or community relate to the PRSP?
13. Is there any common ground in which there can be cooperation between your organization/community and the government?
14. Has there been any change since your engagement with the process? (probe into service delivery, monitoring, advocacy, research & policy etc.)
15. What difficulties did you experience? Areas that may be mentioned, among others:
    a. access to officials,
    b. getting information (there are different types of information, e.g. about process, about budget, local opinion, etc).
    c. being conversant with the issues on the agenda, and
    d. availability of other resources like money to facilitate your participation in the processes?
    e. faith attitudes (as hindrance) [attitudes to poverty, to political involvement etc]
    f. internal organization issues
    g. general attitude of your community/organization towards the PRSP and the way the government conducts its business.
16. Has your organization/community attempted at overcoming the obstacles mentioned? How and at what levels of success?

17. How could your organization/community be assisted in order that it can better participate in:-
    a. Representation
    b. Policy development
    c. the implementation of the PRSP, and
    d. monitoring the PRSP process and activities
    e. any other activity relevant to PRSP
18. How could this assistance be provided?
    (by whom and how e.g. workshops, training, support, resources, increasing knowledge base, enhanced access to information about policy processes, specialist consultancy support & advice, development of policy analysis capacity in-house, improved IT facilities & access to the internet etc.)
19. Which area would you say is the priority area and needs immediate assistance?

SECTION C: INTER-FAITH COOPERATION

20. Are you familiar with any interfaith activities that look at poverty and development?
21. Do you think there could be any benefits accruing from the cooperation between local communities of different faiths or between the faiths at the national level in poverty reduction work? Have you any examples?
22. Has the interfaith agenda had anything to do with PRSP?

SECTION D: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

23. Name of respondent _____
24. Town/State/Geo-political zone _____
25. Name of faith community _____
    a. Please include specific denomination / sect _____
26. Position in the faith community _____
27. How big do you estimate the membership of your community to be?
28. What is your organisation's primary mandate / purpose / focus?
29. How is your organization involved in poverty and development issues?
30. Do you carry out research related to poverty and development? How?
31. Do you carry out advocacy related to poverty and development? How?
32. Do you develop public policy statements related to poverty and development? How?

ANY OTHER COMMENTS ?

Appendix 3

Phase I Interview Schedule in Tanzania

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

a. Name:
b. Organization/Community:
c. Position/Occupation:
d. How long have you been in the current position?
e. Gender:
f. Level of education:
g. Religious affiliation:
   Religion _____
   Denomination/Sect _____
h. How is your organization involved in poverty and development issues?

B. PARTICIPATION

a. Are you aware of the MKUKUTA or PRSP?
b. How did you come to know about it?
c. What is your understanding of what it is about?
d. Did your organization or community participate in any way in the process that came up with the strategy? (possible areas listed below)
   i. Representation
   ii. Policy
   iii. Implementation
   iv. Monitoring
   v. Workshops
   vi. Official Meetings
   vii. Submissions
e. If it did not participate, why was that?
f. How did you or your community participate? (Refer again to the areas listed under d above: presence in meetings? Made written submission? Report on implementation? Etc.)
g. Who was exactly being represented by the participant?
   - ☐ Who participated directly?
   - ☐ Who was represented?
   - ☐ How were they briefed?

h. Who has benefited? Any examples?
i. How far did this correspond to what you set out to achieve? (Where did it go well and where did it go wrong?)
j. How do your core activities as an organization or community relate to the MKUKUTA/PRSP? Are there any common grounds in which there can be cooperation between your organization/ community and the government?

C. CAPACITY

a. How would you assess your own, your organization's or community's capacity to participate in the PRSP process in terms of:-
   i. Effective representation of your 'constituency',
   ii. Participation in the policy-making process,
   iii. The implementation of policy decisions, and
   iv. Monitoring the policy process itself?
   (Ask some probing questions to get the picture of the organisation's structure and concrete evidence of its capacity).

D. HINDRANCES

a. What difficulties did you experience? (areas that may be mentioned, among others)
   i. access to officials,
   ii. getting information (there are different types of information, e.g. about process, about budget, local opinion, etc).
   iii. being conversant with the issues on the agenda, and
   iv. availability of other resources like money to facilitate your participation in the processes?
   v. faith attitudes (as hindrance) [attitudes to poverty, to political involvement etc]
   vi. internal organization issues
   vii. general attitude of your community/organization towards the PRSP and the way the government conducts its business.
b. Has your organization/community attempted at overcoming the obstacles mentioned? How and at what levels of success?

E. CAPACITY BUILDING

a. How could your organization/community be assisted in order that it can better participate in:-
   i. Representation
   ii. Policy making
   iii. the implementation of the MKUKUTA/PRSP, and
   iv. monitoring the MKUKUTA/PRSP process and activities
b. How could this assistance be provided? (to whom and which processes e.g. workshops, training, support, resources?)
c. Which area would you say is the priority area and needs immediate assistance?

F. INTER-FAITH COOPERATION

a. Do you think there are any benefits accruing from the cooperation between local communities of different faiths or between the faiths at the national level? Have you any examples?
b. Are you aware of the TIFF (Tanzania Inter-faith Forum)? Was your religion represented in the TIFF? How?
c. What was/has been the main agenda of the forum? Has the agenda anything to do with MKUKUTA/PRSP?

G. ANY OTHER COMMENTS

Appendix 4

List of FBOs interviewed in Phase I in Tanzania

1. Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)
2. Aga Khan Council
3. Bahai Faith
4. Baraza Kuu
5. Baraza Kuu la Waislamu Tanzania (BAKWATA)
6. CARITAS
7. Dhiruneyn
8. DYCCC
9. Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (East and Coastal Diocese)
10. Islamic Foundation
11. Muslim Hajj
12. Peace Building Initiatives of Religious Leaders
13. Shuraa ya Maimamu
14. Tanzania Christian Refugee Services (TCRS)
15. Tanzania Ecumenical Dialogue Group (TEDG)
16. Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC)
17. Tanzania Moslem Professionals (TAMPRO)
18. World and Peace Organization (WAPO)
19. World Conference on Religions for Peace (WCRP)

Notes

1 During the previous two decades loans and grants from the World Bank and the IMF had been subject to the condition that countries adopt Structural Adjustment Policies, which focused on economic liberalization and downsizing the state. These had been seriously criticized for being imposed on countries, failing to achieve their macroeconomic aims, reducing government capacity and increasing the incidence of poverty. PRSPs replaced Policy Framework Papers as the required statement of recipient government objectives for adjustment lending by the IMF and concessional credits from the World Bank, and the Enhanced HIPC (HIPC2) was accompanied by the establishment of new lending mechanisms bythe Fund and the Bank. Preparation of an Interim PRSP was a condition for reaching Decision Point and substantial debt relief. A full PRSP was, along with other triggers, a condition for HIPC completion (Booth, 2003a; Simon, 2008). Bilateral agencies supported the process as part of the aid harmonization agenda.

2 Assessments have been carried out by CSOs, the World Bank and other agencies, and independent researchers. Variously, they consider the processes of preparation and monitoring, the content and the outcomes, in general or for one or more countries. See, for example, Booth, 2003b; Craig and Porter, 2003; Dijkstra, 2005; Driscoll with Evans, 2005; Driscoll et al, 2005; Gould, 2006; McGee et al (2002); Oxfam, 2004; Piron and Evans, 2004; Possing, 2003; Sanchez and Cash, 2003; Stewart and Wang, 2003; van Staveren, 2008; Sumner, 2006; World Bank, 2003, 2004; World Bank and IMF, 2005; Zuckerman and Garrett, 2003. On individual countries, see, for example, Canagarajah and van Diesen (2006), Dube (2005), Wordofa (2004) on Uganda; Seshamani (2005), Hickey and Mohan (2008), Larmer (2005) on Zambia; Whitfield (2005, 2010) on Ghana.

3 In some cases, PRSP processes were added to and overlapped with existing national policy making processes, resulting in duplication and confusion. Over time, the template provided by the World Bank has been adapted by individual countries and the process has been integrated with other planning processes, for example, those associated with general budget support (e.g. the preparation of Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks). Although this project took place at a time when PRS processes were in full swing, and so focused on requirements and opportunities for participation during the preparation and review of PRSPs, the discussion is relevant to processes of participation in ongoing policy formulation and monitoring and democratic decision making.

4 For example, Hickey and Mohan (2008) refer in passing to the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection in Zambia as “one of the leading members” of the CSPR (Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Reduction), which publishes monthly analyses of data from the Living Conditions Survey in leading national newspapers, but do not mention the role of the Catholic Church in Bolivia. Dijkstra (2005), in an analysis of PRSPS in Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua, mentions the Catholic Church once, as one of the organizers of shadow consultations in 2000. In contrast, Morrison and Singer (2007) note the important development roles and developed organizational structure of the dominant Catholic Church and demonstrate its role in the 2000 National Dialogue and its outcomes. They highlight the power struggles between levels of government and within civil society (especially between the Church and other civil society organizations), which influenced both the nature of representation in the local, regional and national dialogues and the outcomes.

5 The WFDD was founded in 1998 by Jim Wolfensohn, then President of the World Bank, and George Carey, then Archbishop of Canterbury, to encourage inter-faith co-operation on development.

6 Responsibility was transferred from the Vice Presidents Office to the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Empowerment following elections in 2005. Zanzibar has a parallel process and policy documents.

7 It was the second country to submit an I-PRSP to the IMF and World Bank (after Uganda) and the first to qualify for debt relief.

[8] Plateau State, previously part of the Northern Region, is in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. Named after the Jos Plateau, an upland tin mining area in the north of the state, it was created from Plateau and Benue Provinces in 1967 but split up again after the civil war, while Nasarawa State was carved out of Plateau State in 1996. There are about forty indigenous ethno-linguistic groups, migrants from elsewhere in Nigeria and a population of perhaps 3.5 million. It is a religiously mixed state, in which until recently Muslims and Christians lived relatively harmoniously. However, inter-religious conflict and violence has increased in recent years, in both the capital, Jos, and surrounding rural areas.

[9] Oyo is an inland state in the southwest, with its capital in Ibadan (population 1.3 million in 2006). It was formed in 1976 from former Western State, and subdivided into Oyo and Ogun in 1991. Its population of approximately 5.6 million is largely Yoruba and Christian, and its economy mainly agricultural, but it is also one of the most urbanized states in Nigeria.

[10] For example, in Plateau State, ROs that had participated in the SEEDS summit reported that political upheavals had derailed the process (as in several other states), and that the SEEDS had not appeared several months after the meeting (Odumosu et al, 2010).

[11] Of the 174 respondents to Hyden and Mmuya's (2008) survey of officials, politicians etc, 30 per cent believed that civil society and the private sector are growing stronger and are able to check ministers, and a similar proportion that policies are participatory, that transparency and accountability are improving but not yet institutionalized, and that civil society is weak but that well-placed people can raise concerns through the media.

[12] Trainees were instructed to conduct an 'in-depth' semi-structured interview with one male and one female respondent and a focus group discussion with male or female participants from two main categories: local leaders, including traditional, community, women and religious leaders; and members of professional groups such as farmers, market women and traditional birth attendants. In total, 54 individual interviews and 27 FGDs were conducted, as planned. Of the FGDs, five were with men and four with women in Oyo and Plateau States and four with men and five with women in the FCT. The report to government does not specify the locations of the interviews and FGDs or the social characteristics of those interviewed (apart from gender), although it contains extensive quotes from both interviews and FGDs (Section of FBOs, 2009).

[13] One member later left, see Section 5.2.1.

[14] At times (for example in versions of reports from NISER, CSSC and the University of Dar es Salaam) these got confused and the relationship between them misunderstood.

[15] The advantages of independent evaluation were recognized, but also its disadvantages, for example suspicion on the part of those involved in a project and difficulty developing a thorough post-hoc understanding of the process being assessed. In the end, internal evaluations were carried out: in Nigeria by three of the NISER staff involved in the project and in Tanzania by the academic who had carried out the first phase of the research and advised and assisted during the second phase (Mallya, 2010; Odumosu et al, 2010).

[16] The experience in this project must be set within the context of the roles played by religious organizations and the public sphere in Nigeria, and the often conflictual relationships between ROs and the state, which vary over time and between faith communities and religious organizations – see for example Obadare (2007), Nolte et al (2009).

[17] As in Nigeria, engagement by CSOs and ROs in policy deliberations in Tanzania must be understood within the wider context of historical and contemporary relationships between religion and the state – see for example, Heilman and Kaiser (2002), Mukandala et al (2006).

[18] A CSSC respondent asserted that decentralized training and data collection would need less support and be more easily replicated, although the reasons for believing this were not given.

[19] TESG is planning a consultation on the content of the draft revised MKUKUTA for a number of religious organizations in February/March 2011, following a review of how the content of the 2010 submission to government is reflected in the draft revised MKUKUTA.

[20] See also Morrison and Singer's (2007) analysis of the role of the Catholic Church in the National Policy Dialogue process and its outcomes in Bolivia.

[21] See also Lawson and Rakner (2005), which showed that over 80 per cent of respondents in surveys in Dar es Salaam, Magu and Kilwa ranked ROs as the most important and best performing local institutions, unblemished by poor leadership, corruption, selfishness and lack of accountability (although it was acknowledged that they could occasionally be divisive and a source of conflict).

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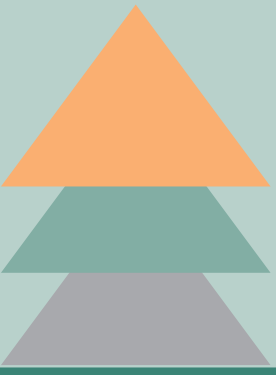

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