

**CHRISTIAN RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
(CRDA)**

Brief COMMENTS on Annual Progress Report (APR) of the SDPRP

The NGO PRSP Task Force Secretariat

November 2003

1. General

- 1.1 The NGO PRSP Task Force and NGO community very much welcome the opportunity offered to comment on the draft APR. The recognition by MOFED of the participation of the Task Force also gives a room for the increased engagement of the NGO sector in the SDPRP process. The Task Force's participation in the comment of the APR is believed to mark a positive relationship between the government and civil society on the ongoing implementation and monitoring of the SDPRP. In this regard the comments of the Task Force are designed to be constructive aimed at sharing with the Government the commitment to the reduction of poverty in Ethiopia.
- 1.2 Our comments are mainly based on the five basic principles of the PRSP trying to be fair and unbiased in examining the SDPRP's adherence to these principles as expressed in the APR and check whether or not the APR has a clear focus on poverty reduction strategies as stated in the SDPRP.
- 1.3 We also attempted to see how the APR addressed/approached vulnerability of the poor, taking the diversity of livelihood in Ethiopia into account.
- 1.4 We also closely viewed the APR in terms of external financing needs. To this effect we attempted to examine the general performance of bilateral and multilateral donors in terms of the quality, quantity, timeliness and coordination of financing.
- 1.5 Since the APR is the first such effort, there is no bench mark to compare achievements and failures. In addition, the first year has been a year of preparation and also of a "learning by doing" exercise. So it is hard to expect concrete achievements. This point should have been emphasized in the Report. On the other hand, the APR should have laid down a methodology and bench mark for future monitoring of the progress of the SDPRP.

2. Specific

- 2.1 The involvement of NGOs in the PRSP consultation process and now in commenting the APR are welcome events. However, the adequacy of the engagement of stakeholders (private and CSOs/NGOs) in general, outside of government and donors, is questionable. Therefore, it is concluded that participation in all the process of the SDPRP is neither broad based nor coordinated.
- 2.2 The NGO experience indicates that, it is not only the involvement of civil society and the private sector, but also involvement at the lower levels of government structure and the public at large is very limited.
- 2.3 Since the credibility and legitimacy of the report depends largely on who are involved (stakeholders participated) and how (methodology) it is prepared, the report should have said something on those. Sources (where) of the information/ data along with its limitations of preparation of the APR should have also been indicated. Because diversity in sources of information contributes highly in the credibility of the APR.

- 2.4 Given the importance of the SDPRP to Ethiopia, the role of civil society should have been specifically planned and the ownership should have been as broad as possible. The APR itself should have benefited from this.
- 2.5 Transparency in the implementation of the SDPRP and preparation of the APR is not encouraging. This can be seen from the data contained within the APR itself (most tables have no reference to track them back). This also might hinder monitoring of future progress of the program.
- 2.6 The APR is not differentiated between regions. Given the great variety of livelihoods in Ethiopia, and also Ethiopia being a federal state (with increased decentralization process), a regional breakdown of progress would have been more helpful to track changes over time. This will also allow for informed poverty focused resource allocation decisions to be made.
- 2.7 Given their centrality in the SDPRP, it is not clear why "low" attention seems to have been given to ADLI and capacity building measures in the APR. Is it a reflection for a change of policy regarding ADLI?
- 2.8 The APR does not indicate how the process of implementation of the SDPRP is arranged (with a clear indication of stakeholders' role). Resource allocation across sectors and regions over time using disaggregated information on cross cutting issues, etc., is also not sufficient. How these (i.e. implementation, resource allocation across sectors and regions regarding poverty reduction) are going to be approached in the coming years are also gloomy from the report.
- 2.9 The woreda level decentralization program is a welcome development. The APR is also right in pointing that its success is crucial to the successful implementation of the SDPRP and achievement of the MDGs. However, the APR is weaker in tracking progress of this crucial area. It has listed procedural developments (legislation, transfer of functional assignments, etc) and various capacity building activities but omits to show its levels and effectiveness so far.
- 2.10 One of the objectives of the APR is providing feedback (learning process) for better action in the future. There is only very little reflection of this objective in the APR. For instance, Government has been taking several reforms (e.g. civil service, judiciary reforms, etc) and changes in many sectors. These changes obviously will have their own influence on the implementation of the SDPRP. But these implications have not been indicated in the APR.
- 2.11 Progress in the area of the decentralization process should have been predicted by identifying capacity gaps that have appeared and outlining how they can be addressed. For instance, the report notes that "there are short and long term challenges in moving decision making closer to the people", but fails to state what these challenges are in adequate detail, nor how they can be addressed. This section would benefit greatly from desegregations of progress between the different Regions and cities. For example, the challenge of Woreda Level Decentralization can be addressed by Regional proclamation No 1995.
- 2.12 Much of the Agriculture and Food Security issues relate to the New Coalition on Food Security. The formation of the Coalition for Food Security is most welcome.

- 2.13 The APR highlighted the food security initiatives produced by the New Coalition on Food Security. The APR says that there are innovative approaches incorporated in the new strategy. What significant impact could these new innovative approaches bring to food security concerns? That should have been clearly indicated. The strategy in fact is primarily based on the government's existing policies of rural development and the SDPRP itself. The Coalition approach regarding food security is new and to be appreciated. There is one important omission in the new strategy though, namely the land issue. The document is silent on this issue and yet it is a critical one.
- 2.14 Regarding resettlement: the way the resettlement program has been devised and formulated is a cause for grave concern. There is no adequate preparation for settlers and many of the settlement sites contain serious health hazards. Moreover, the sites are those which do not receive sufficient rainfall. Irrigation potential is not in abundance either. From available reports we gather that settlers have been given on the average one hectare of land for farming. This is amazing because the whole justification for the program was based on the argument that there is severe shortage of land in the sending areas which would be solved in the receiving areas because land was plentiful there. But it appears that land for settlers is proving to be a precious commodity.
- 2.15 The section on pastoralism must be expanded. Within pastoralist communities and those working with pastoralists, there is no consensus that sedentarisation is the correct approach. The PRSP consultation outcomes also rejected sedentarisation. The APR merely gives a list of complete projects in pastoralist areas with no analysis of their appropriateness or effectiveness. Even though other developments in various policy arenas regarding pastoralism have been ignored, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Pastoralism and the Oromia Pastoralist Commission are welcome steps.
- 2.16 The section on Gender and Development is not treated well. The statement that activities "in the areas of education, health, water, access to road and agriculture and food security do positively impact on improving the benefits of development to women" betray the cause and creates the misunderstanding of gender issues. Important issues raised in the SDPRP itself are not addressed. These include *inter alia*:
- Women's inadequate access to extension services;
 - Expansion of non-formal education (not mentioned in the section of the APR dealing with education);
 - Improved access to reproductive health services (not dealt with in the health section either);
 - Increased political participation at the local level;
 - Strengthening the legal environment in terms of harmonizing rights and subordination legislation, access to legal aid services, training of legal officers and police on gender issues.
- 2.17 Considering the shocks that tormented the country such as the border conflict, drought, HIV / AIDS, declining terms of trade, the APR is not expected to be an all round success story of the SDPRP implementation and monitoring. However, activities directed at poverty reduction and at sector development

programs should have been indicated separately with the clear budget allocation to each. It is very hard to separate the poverty reduction actions and Sector Development Program (SOP) actions in the report.

- 2.18 We are not sure if the progress noted in the Report is specifically a product of the implementation of the SDPRP or not. For instance, the figures given for education are those for the years 1996/97 to 2002/03. Moreover, these figures talk about enrolment only but we know that there is a considerable rate of drop-out every year which reduces the sizes of student staying in school. We should have been given the drop-out figures which are available from the Ministry of Education. The figures for higher education refer to the years 1997/98 to 2002/03. This makes comparability difficult.
- 2.19 The idea that emergency support by donors be shifted to development support is a welcome idea. However, the recurrent budget that counts up to 66% and the difficulty in efficiency to absorb available assistance from donors are critical issues that need closer scrutiny.
- 2.20 The APR states that in some areas the experience so far obtained on the implementation might have "suggested the need for adjustment" in the details of the programs. Acknowledging such findings is a welcome beginning. However, the government seems to have overlooked the experience viewing examination of program goals and strategies as premature. We believe programs that need adjustment must be detected early and measures be taken because future engagement will be seriously affected.
- 2.21 Capacity building in public service such as training has been mentioned. The notion all resources obtained through aid should go to public sector capacity building requires innovative thinking from the government side. Improving incentive system to public service and building commitment to the service are extremely relevant. But the Capacity Building should include the private sector and CSOs (citizens assume that all resources obtained in the name of this country belong to them as well, irrespective of which sector they are serving).
- 2.22 The figures shown for water development are not convincing. To begin with, what is given is only the number of wells, etc. that were constructed. There is no measure indicating how many of them are actually working and how many people have benefited as a result. Also, the figures on clean water supply do not show how these figures were arrived at.
- 2.23 The macro economic performance during the 2002/2003 has not shown positive results: GDP declined by 3.8%, Agricultural value added declined by 12%, increase in inflation by 15%, and a decline in domestic revenue by 2% compared to 2001/02. The APR also states that the 4% increase of government revenue compared to 2001/02 is mainly as a result of external budget support. Measures to overcome these unfavourable situations should have been dealt in detail.
- 2.24 The part on reform of government structures and new efficiency measures taken by the government takes a good section of the APR. Unfortunately, there is neither a criteria for measuring the effect of these reforms nor their contribution to poverty reduction.

2.25 Undertaking Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) by the Welfare Monitoring Unit (WMU) to include the voices of the poor is a positive development. Measures that would be taken by CSOs and Government in this regard need to be synchronized for better results, and the role of CSOs in the survey need to be planned in consultation. Strengthening partnership in the implementation and monitoring of the SDPRP will help advance programs designed for poverty reduction in greater efficiency.

3. Conclusion

The increase in spending to poverty related sectors compared to the previous years is a welcome step.

Participation in all the process of the SDPRP (except to some extent during the consultation) is neither broad based nor coordinated. In this regard, NGOs' experience indicates that, it is not only the involvement of civil society and the private sector, but also involvement at the lower levels of government structures and the public at large is very limited and awareness on the SDPRP is low.

Given the importance of the SDPRP to Ethiopia the role of civil society in the implementation and monitoring of SDPRP should have been specifically planned and the ownership should have been as broad as possible. The APR itself should have benefited from this.

Emphasis should be given to the participation of the poor and other stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring process, and specific measures should be taken through improved engagement (enhanced partnership) with civil society as well as with enhanced decentralization and greater accountability at woreda level. The APR in this regard should have reflected the views of the poor, civil society, the challenges and the way forward in addition to its reporting on deliverables.

Considering the shocks that have thwarted the country, the NGO PRSP Task Force Secretariat takes the APR as first experience and attempts not to concentrate heavily on its weaknesses. However, it is very important that poverty reduction measures and SOP actions be distinct in the report to show the added value of the implementation of the SOPRP to the overall development programs of the country.