

# **Civil Society's Perspective on Their Involvement in PRSP Monitoring: Assessing Constraints and Potentials in Nicaragua**

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## Abbreviations

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| CBOs    | Community Based Organisations  |
| CC      | Coordinadora Civil   |
| CDD     | Comité de Desarrollo Departamental                                   |
| CDM     | Comité de Desarrollo Municipal                                       |
| CINCO   | Centro de Investigaciones de la Comunicación                         |
| CISAS   | Centro de Información y Servicios de Asesoría en Salud               |
| CONPES  | Consejo Nacional de Planificación Económica y Social                 |
| CPM     | CSO Participation Matrix   |
| CSOs    | Civil Society Organisations  |
| ERCERP  | Estrategia Reforzada de Crecimiento Económico y Reducción de Pobreza |
| HIPC    | Heavily Indebted Poor Countries                                      |
| IEN     | Instituto de Estudios Nicaragüenses                                  |
| IMF     | International Monetary Fund  |
| IPADE   | Instituto para el Desarrollo y la Democracia                         |
| JSAN    | Joint Staff Advisory Note  |
| M&E     | Monitoring and Evaluation  |
| NGO     | Non-Governmental Organisation  |
| PASE    | Programa de Apropiación, Seguimiento y Evaluación de la ERCERP       |
| PND     | Plan Nacional de Desarrollo  |
| PRS     | Poverty Reduction Strategies   |
| PRSP    | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper                                     |
| SDC     | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation                         |
| SECEP   | Secretaría de Coordinación y Estrategias de la Presidencia           |
| SECO    | State Secretariat for Economic Affairs                               |
| SETEC   | Secretaría Técnica de la Presidencia                                 |
| SINASIP | Sistema Nacional de Seguimiento de Indicadores de Pobreza            |
| SWAp    | Sector-Wide Approach   |
| UNAG    | Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos                           |

# 1. Introduction

The present study reports on the ongoing initiative to develop an analytical tool for the assessment of civil society's participation in monitoring processes of Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) from their own perspective. The initiative aims at strengthening the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in PRS monitoring. It evolved in the context of a longstanding and fruitful partnership between the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and Alliance Sud, the Swiss alliance of development NGOs. The commitment and support of SECO and SDC to enhance civil society's engagement in poverty reduction policies is an important pillar of their joint High Level Statement on PRS. The statement underlines Switzerland's commitment to the PRS approach and stresses its focus on supporting efforts to enhance ownership of the PRSP by civil society, strengthening the participation of various stakeholders including CSOs, and incorporating in the process the voices of deprived groups.

The analytical tool was developed based on a literature review on civil society participation in monitoring the implementation of national PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers). The tool has then been applied in Ghana to validate and advance the analytical approach.<sup>1</sup> The present study reports on the application of the enhanced tool in Nicaragua.

## ***Purpose and objectives***

The general purpose of the present initiative is to contribute to the advancement of PRS monitoring by strengthening CSOs' role in the monitoring process. Improved monitoring processes are considered key to the successful implementation of PRS and, ultimately, the effective reduction of poverty.

The study has two specific objectives. First, it aims at assessing constraints and potentials related to civil society's participation in the PRS monitoring process from their own perspective. The second objective is to identify fields of activity that enhance its involvement in the process. This will allow CSOs to strengthen their voice in the multi-stakeholder dialogue on PRS monitoring by providing inputs based on a sound analysis. Therefore, the identification of constraints and potentials is based on CSOs' perception.

The specific application of the tool to the Nicaragua case also intends to assess the strengths and shortcomings of the analytical approach and to identify measures to further improve the usefulness of the tool.

## ***PRS monitoring and civil society participation***

According to recent figures, some 50 countries have prepared national PRSPs. Half of these countries are in sub-Saharan Africa and a similar proportion are heavily-indebted poor countries (HIPC). On average, countries have been implementing their strategies for roughly two and a half years. Several countries have already revised their original strategies and are in the process of developing their second generation PRSPs.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Braunschweig and Stöckli 2006.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank/IMF 2005.

With a growing number of countries entering the PRS implementation stage and revising their original poverty reduction strategies, attention has increasingly turned towards the monitoring process. This focus is critical as efforts towards monitoring PRS provide the opportunity to learn what works and what does not. And learning from experience is considered particularly important for the successful implementation of novel and complex approaches such as the PRS.

Monitoring processes are assumed to serve three different functions in terms of successfully implementing PRS. First and foremost, monitoring aims at giving feedback on the progress – or lack thereof – of poverty reducing policies and programmes. It brings greater rationality to policy, budgeting, and operational management by providing an evidence-based foundation to public choices. Using timely and reliable monitoring information in policy making is expected to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of PRS implementation. The second function of monitoring is to enhance transparency and accountability to citizens and donors. Ensuring transparency and accountability, in turn, contributes to building trust and raising awareness of and interest in public policies. This is likely to foster successful implementation of poverty reduction strategies. Finally, PRS monitoring aims at strengthening ownership and commitment by providing opportunities for the participation of key stakeholders.

The brief account of the various functions of PRS monitoring suggests two things. First, the monitoring process is key to the success of the PRSP initiative, and policies to reduce poverty in general. Secondly, monitoring is far from being a purely technical exercise. Much to the contrary, it is an inherently political process since "political and institutional change lies at the heart of the PRS approach..."<sup>3</sup> Both, the central role of monitoring for the implementation of national poverty reduction strategies and the political nature of monitoring processes have also been confirmed in the latest PRS review.<sup>4</sup>

While PRSP monitoring systems are just emerging in most countries, initial experience points to important shortcomings related to an overly technical focus at the expense of attention to institutional arrangements and domestic political processes. In particular, the shortcomings concern the often donor-driven design of monitoring systems, the proliferation of lengthy lists of monitoring indicators with insufficient prioritisation, the lack of clear assignments of roles and responsibilities, the weak process orientation, barely institutionalised links between monitoring information and decision making, and limited monitoring capacity.

Civil society as a whole or broad segments of it such as the poor – who are the primary target group of poverty reduction strategies – rarely intervene directly or formally in the monitoring process.<sup>5</sup> They may participate in public meetings related to monitoring or are consulted through surveys and questionnaires but are not playing an active role in collecting and analysing data, or in the policy dialogue on monitoring outcomes and actions to be taken. However, CSOs may take up a variety of roles along all levels of the monitoring process (input, output, outcome, and impact), inside as well as outside the formal monitoring system.

In general, CSOs draw the legitimacy to engage in monitoring activities from several factors. First, they are considered to be the voice for the poor through their contacts with the grassroots. Second, their engagement promotes transparency and accountability in governance. Third, they contribute to external checks on government. Fourth, CSOs'

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<sup>3</sup> ODI 2004, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank/IMF 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Foresti et al. 2002.

participation increases country-ownership and public support for poverty reduction strategies. Fifth, CSOs bring much-needed resources and skills to the table. Sixth, they broaden the base of information. Finally, even in a representative democracy there should be space for direct citizen involvement in fundamental policy processes such as the PRS.

These factors point to the added value of civil society participation in PRS monitoring for the process itself and its policy outcome. It includes adding the perspective of deprived groups, holding government to account, providing an independent view on government's performance, strengthening ownership, complementing the monitoring process with further resources, and broadens monitoring approaches by adding other data gathering tools and more qualitative information.

For most countries, however, there is still a long way to go before those benefits are fully realised. While a few countries have made good progress in creating innovative arrangements for civil society involvement in monitoring processes and assigning substantial roles to CSOs, civil society groups in other countries face major internal and external difficulty in enhancing their role in PRS monitoring. Internal difficulty is related to poor institutional, technical, and financial capacity. Furthermore, civil society often lacks effective coordination and a powerful organisational structure to make their case. External difficulty is mainly related to the reluctance or incapacity of governments to open up space for civil society participation.

### ***Structure of the report***

The next chapter focuses on the concept and analytical framework on which the tool is based, followed by a discussion on the CSO Participation Matrix (CPM), the core of the analytical tool. Chapter 3 provides background information on the political, social, and economic context in Nicaragua, presents features of the organised civil society in the country, and summarises the Nicaraguan PRSP process. This is followed by a description of the case study procedure. In chapter 4, the constraints on civil society participation are presented, critical gaps identified, and the key challenges highlighted. Chapter 5 discusses the potentials of Nicaraguan CSOs as perceived by themselves, develops promising fields of activity for supporting CSOs' involvement in the monitoring process, and offers specific recommendations for each of the fields. Chapter 6 concludes with key findings of the case study and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the methodological approach.

## 2. Analytical Tool

### *Conceptual approach*

The rationale behind the development of an analytical tool was the perception that PRSP monitoring has serious flaws. Particularly, it was felt that in most countries the potential of civil society to contribute to monitoring is far from being fully exploited. What is needed is a more substantial role of CSOs in the monitoring process. Empowering CSOs to successfully claim more political space in the monitoring framework is considered a promising approach to enhance their participation. Therefore, the aim is to incorporate the perspective of civil society into the multi-stakeholder dialogue on PRS monitoring. This dialogue should take place at the meta level and is seen as 'monitoring of monitoring'.

The above suggests that monitoring is best performed at two separate but closely linked levels.

- The first level consists of the monitoring system proper and ensures that PRS implementation is appropriately monitored. In line with the ownership principle of the PRSP initiative, monitoring at this level is considered the country's business, with national stakeholders as responsible actors. This level provides lessons on PRS implementation.
- The second level (meta level) consists of a multi-stakeholder dialogue to oversee and guide the monitoring system. Participants of the dialogue include national as well as international stakeholders. The latter group may consist of bilateral and multilateral donors, international NGOs, and other development actors. They are expected to exchange relevant monitoring information and to engage in discussions on the processes as well as the results of the national PRS monitoring system. Discussing the monitoring results in the multi-stakeholder dialogue will also ensure that important findings related to PRS implementation reach the donor community, thereby recognizing its legitimate interest in being informed about the implementation process. This level provides lessons on PRS monitoring.

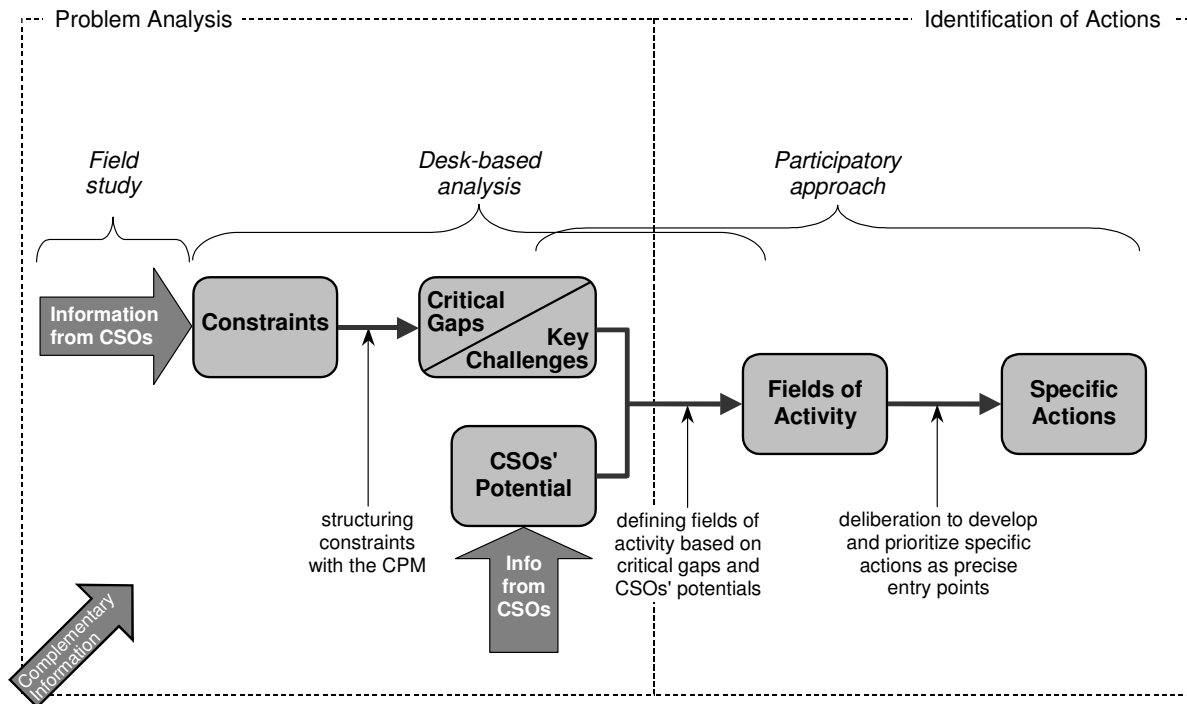
The suggested approach has the potential to lessen the tension between country ownership and monitoring requirements of donors. Moreover, it is widening the policy space for a genuine multi-stakeholder dialogue on how best to monitor national poverty reduction strategies. By widening and pooling knowledge, experience, and information of individual groups in the multi-stakeholder dialogue, important lessons learned and good practices can be fed back into the monitoring system. In addition, such insights are valuable for donors designing their support strategies and harmonizing their aid policies. To be sure, monitoring PRS monitoring systems is already taking place as does some kind of exchange among actors involved in those activities. However, what is suggested here is to explicitly recognize the need for a formal policy dialogue on PRS monitoring, to institutionalise a broad multi-stakeholder approach, and to establish systematic feedback loops between the policy dialogue on PRS monitoring and the national monitoring system.

Fully incorporating the perspective of civil society enriches the dialogue and makes sure that the voices of the poor are heard when decisions that affect their lives are made. The proposed tool is intended to assist CSOs in capturing and assessing their perspective. The next section presents the underlying framework of the tool.

## Analytical framework

The analytical framework of the tool spans over two areas, the problem analysis and the identification of actions as shown in figure 1. Three phases can be distinguished: field study, desk-based analysis, and participatory approach.

Figure 1: Analytical framework of the tool



As depicted in figure 1, the process aims at developing specific actions for strengthening CSOs' role in the monitoring process, starting with information elicited from CSOs. The field phase aims at collecting the data required for the subsequent analysis. The focus is on information from CSOs to ensure their perspective is duly represented. The present study has used face-to-face interviews with CSO leaders to elicit the constraints on civil society participation in the monitoring process (see chapter 3). Complementary information is gathered from interviews with other stakeholders and written materials. It will help to inform the analysis of differing views and relevant context variables.

The second phase covers the analysis of the information. In order to meaningfully assess the constraints, a so-called CSO Participation Matrix (CPM) has been developed. The matrix rows refer to issues essential for the participation of civil society while the matrix columns refer to various levels of the system. Details on the CPM are discussed in the next section. The process of clustering the constraints is based on the structure of the CPM and uses a two-pronged approach. In the first step, the constraints are analysed along the individual issues of the matrix, leading to a set of critical gaps in terms of major deficiencies for CSO participation in the PRS monitoring process. In the second step, the constraints are clustered along the levels of the matrix, while keeping the outcome of the first step in mind. The result is a set of key challenges to enhance CSO involvement. Applying a two-pronged approach serves several purposes. First, it helps to fully exploit the information contained in the CPM, particularly regarding the interdependencies between its elements. Second, it advances the analysis by moving from the identified gaps to challenges that should be addressed. Third,

compared to the identified gaps, the key challenges appear to be more suitable to be contrasted with the CSO potential as the clustering exercise based on the levels of the matrix introduces a focus on the actors.

In the next step, the fields of activity are developed. They are derived from analysing the key challenges and linking them to the identified potentials of the CSO community. The potentials describe existing strengths of CSOs that have to be taken into account when developing promising fields of activity. Similar to the constraints they are elicited from CSO representatives during the interviews.

It is important to note here that the critical gaps determine the relevance of the fields of activity whereas the existing potentials define their feasibility. Moreover, choosing the most promising fields of activity may involve trade-offs between activities with high relevance but low feasibility and those with low relevance and high feasibility. Evaluating such trade-offs, when done carefully and systematically, implies comparing the costs and benefits as well as involved risks of each of the available alternatives with each other.

There is an overlap between the second and third phase as shown in figure 1. Its meaning is as follows: while the desk-based analysis ranges up to the definition of the fields of activity, it is strongly suggested to use a participatory approach to review the critical gaps and challenges, discuss potentials, define the fields of activity, and develop and prioritise specific actions. These actions serve as entry point for strengthening civil society participation in the monitoring process. The third phase has not yet been initiated and thus is not part of this study.

**CSO Participation Matrix**

The CSO Participation Matrix (CPM) in table 1 represents the heart of the analytical tool. The CPM resulted from an extensive development process that took into account theoretical considerations as well as experiences from the pilot application in Ghana.<sup>6</sup>

*Table 1: CSO Participation Matrix*

| Level                                 |             | Political climate and social situation | Government leadership and attitude | Institutional arrangements | CSOs' performance |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Issue                                 |             |  |                                    |                            |                   |
| <b>Ownership</b>                      | constraints |  |                                    |                            |                   |
|                                       | potentials  |  |                                    |                            |                   |
| <b>Decentralisation</b>               | constraints |  |                                    |                            |                   |
|                                       | potentials  |  |                                    |                            |                   |
| <b>Information &amp; Transparency</b> | constraints |  |                                    |                            |                   |
|                                       | potentials  |  |                                    |                            |                   |
| <b>Dialogue</b>                       | constraints |  |                                    |                            |                   |
|                                       | potentials  |  |                                    |                            |                   |
| <b>Capacity</b>                       | constraints |  |                                    |                            |                   |
|                                       | potentials  |  |                                    |                            |                   |

<sup>6</sup> Swiss Coalition (2004) and Braunschweig and Stöckli (2006) discuss the development of key requirements for effective participatory PRS monitoring which the principles of the CPM are based on.

The matrix is an effort to map the complex system of civil society participation in monitoring. As depicted in table 1, the CPM consists of four levels and five issues. Each cell is divided to accommodate the constraints and potentials.<sup>7</sup> Based on our earlier studies, five thematic issues have been found to be critical for effective civil society involvement: ownership, decentralisation, information and transparency, dialogue, and capacity. They define the rows of the matrix. Their relevance for the present analysis is detailed below.

- **Country ownership** is one of the PRSP principles and generally considered central to the success of the PRSP approach. Ownership of poverty reduction policies and programmes, which must not be limited to government but has to include domestic stakeholders as well, is considered an important element to promote civil society's commitment to and engagement in PRS processes, including monitoring.
- **Decentralisation** of decision-making processes, state institutions and resources is key to reach the poor in rural areas and to have them participating in political processes in general and PRS monitoring in particular. It also includes the need to strengthen decentralised monitoring processes. Furthermore, given the comparative advantage of CSOs in monitoring policies and programmes at the local level, decentralisation is an important dimension to be taken into account when analysing civil society involvement.
- **Information and transparency** are seen to be preconditions for engaging in monitoring and advocacy activities. They are also central to the concept of downward accountability which, in turn, promotes citizen's interest and engagement in public policies.
- The term **dialogue** is preferred over participation in order to stress the tangible and central element that drives partnership arrangements (which is also one of the PRSP principles). The dialogue among key monitoring actors is fundamental to exploit the individual strength of the partners, to clarify roles and responsibilities, coordinate monitoring activities, and ensure information flow and feedback. Moreover, a genuine dialogue is vital for building trust among domestic stakeholders.
- Institutional, analytical and financial **capacity** in government agencies and CSOs is a prerequisite to get meaningfully involved in the monitoring process. Scant monitoring capacity in both governments and CSOs is a constant concern.

Looking at the columns of the CPM, the four levels represent key layers of the system and support the analytical division of the different issues. The levels concern the broader environment to participation, the more specific environment related to the performance of the main actor (government) in the monitoring framework, the relevant institutional arrangements, and the capability of civil society to meaningfully engage in monitoring activities. The definitions of the four levels are given below.

- The **political climate and social situation** refer to the overall setting. It can be seen as the general framework in which participatory processes take place. The level may also include legal and socio-economic characteristics. The political climate and social situation is, of course, closely related to (and partly shaped by) the second level, government's leadership and attitude. But basically, the first level refers to the more static and environment while the second focuses on the actor. The time dimension is an important feature of the first level that is, no short-term changes are to be expected.
- **Government's leadership and attitude** refers to its performance in leading the monitoring process and taking on the overall responsibility. It touches on democratic decision-making

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<sup>7</sup> In the analysis two separate matrices have been used, one each for the constraints and the potentials.

processes, considered resource allocations in the public interest, and the provision of a conducive environment. As main actor in the monitoring process, the government is expected to use monitoring as a key management tool to track progress and analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of poverty reduction policies, and to ensure transparency and accountability to its citizens and creditors.

- The **institutional arrangements** are vital for translating political intentions into action. They are to some extent shaped by the government's performance and thus closely linked to the previous level. Institutional arrangements are structuring exchange, communication, coordination, and collaboration between the actors involved in the monitoring process.
- **CSOs' performance** relates to their capacity in terms of organisational skills and resources, internal structures, management capabilities, organisational culture, and – very important – hands-on experience. It further includes networking among organisations, political sensitivity, and analytical expertise. In general terms, this level captures CSOs' potentialities to meaningfully engage in the monitoring process.

The CPM is used to analyse the information from the respondents in terms of constraints on and potentials of civil society participation in the monitoring process. The result is a clearly structured and transparent map of the complex system that shapes CSO participation.

### 3. Nicaragua Case Study

#### ***Country background***

Nicaragua has a population of 5.4 million (2004), which grows at a rate of 2%. It is among the hemisphere's poorest countries with one of the most unequal distribution of income on the globe. Also, distribution of assets, including land, is highly unequal. Nicaragua's socio-economic and political situation has been summarised in a government document as follows: "Nicaragua se encuentra en un círculo vicioso de pobreza, pérdida de valores, debilidad institucional, intereses particulares, débil representatividad, endeudamiento, derroche de recursos públicos y externos, desempleo, exclusión y más pobreza."<sup>8</sup>

A major set-back to the countries development occurred in October 1998 when hurricane Mitch hit the region and led to one of the worst disasters in Nicaragua, with enormous suffering for the Nicaraguan people,<sup>9</sup> serious damages to the country's infrastructure, and disrupted efforts to stabilise the macroeconomic situation and advance fiscal consolidation.

#### **Economic situation**

Nicaragua's economy has varied from modest to slow growth, to outright recession and shrinkage during the last 30 years. But in recent years, GDP growth rates steadily increased, from 0.8% in 2002 to 2.3% in 2003 and 5.1% in 2004.<sup>10</sup> GDP per capita was around US\$750 in 2004, inflation rose to almost 10%, and the unemployment rate is estimated to be 21%. While further progress in strengthening the macroeconomic stability has been achieved in recent years, the sharp rise in global oil prices has adversely affected the economy, with rising inflation and widening external current account deficit.

Nicaragua has an economy very open to the world market and in 2005 – despite strong opposition from the CSO community – signed the Central Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Its major export products are coffee, sea food, meat, dairy products, sugar, and gold. The USA, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Venezuela are the most important trade partners. Nicaragua imports twice as much as it exports and in spite of a robust export growth, the family remittances and international assistance remain the most important funding sources of the foreign trade deficit, which approximated 18% of GDP in 2004.<sup>11</sup> With an amount of US\$1'300 million, the two income sources are equivalent to one third of the GDP, leaving Nicaragua heavily dependent on remittances and aid receipts.

Over the last ten years, financial support from the international community on average amounted to roughly US\$550 million annually. In 2004, this figure was US\$600 million, with grants and loans contributing in equal shares. According to Guimarães and Avendaño (2006), some 40 international donors are active in Nicaragua. They can be grouped into bilateral donors (e.g. Denmark, USA, Switzerland, Sweden), multilateral donors (e.g. World Bank, IMF, ADB, UNDP), and international NGOs, which also include northern-based development

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<sup>8</sup> SECEP 2003, p.6.

<sup>9</sup> The hurricane killed over 3'000 people and displaced close to one million.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2006/pn0655.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Guimarães y Avendaño 2006.

organisations (e.g. Oxfam, ActionAid, IBIS, Swissaid). In this study, the term 'donor' only refers to the first and second group.

Following the debt reductions achieved under the HIPC Initiative (see also below), repayments of domestic debts will be higher than those of external debts for the coming years. Government's domestic debts significantly increased as a result of the resolution of a major banking crisis in 2000-2001 and will pose a major challenge for the government in the medium term. In 2005, servicing domestic debts (interest and principal) absorbed 17% of total government spending.<sup>12</sup>

### **Social situation**

The share of the population living below the national poverty line declined modestly from 50% to 46% between 1993-2001. Extreme poverty fell from 19% to 15% over the same period.<sup>13</sup> But the figures tend to hide the fact that absolute numbers have increased. It is estimated that in 2001 2'385'000 Nicaraguans have been living in poverty.<sup>14</sup> Also, poverty reduction has been uneven across regions, with poverty concentrating in rural areas, particularly in the Eastern and Northern part of the country.

With a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.690 in 2003, Nicaragua ranked 112 out of 177 countries. Nicaragua's total fertility rate (3.3 children per women, 2000-05) is twice the Latin American average and its adolescent fertility rate is the highest in the region. Adult illiteracy rate has been 23.3%. Almost 20% of the population did not have access to clean water in 2002, while 34% lacked access to improved sanitation.<sup>15</sup>

The recent country study of the World Bank and IMF (2004a) lists a range of obstacles to poverty reduction in Nicaragua: vulnerability to macroeconomic crises, inefficient health services, a high population rate, chronic malnutrition, gender bias, challenges in enhancing non-farm rural activities and in sustaining rural income growth.

### **Political situation**

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, considerable efforts have been dedicated to reform the public sector, including the better management of public budgets, improving the control over public resources, and some decentralisation of administration and budgets to municipalities. However, the key question for Cromwell and her colleagues is "how much reform is possible in a context of a state very much in the hands of the (...) few families that dominate large-scale commercial concerns in Nicaragua who have for most of the last 150 years expected the state to support their interests?"<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, since the end of the Sandinista government in 1990, the country has suffered from a fatal lack of political consensus, which impeded – and continues to impede – all efforts to build a functioning state. In 2000, the two party leaders from the PLC<sup>17</sup> and the FSLN<sup>18</sup>, Alemán and Ortega, reached an informal pact to push through a constitutional change that

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> IMF/IDA 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Linneker 2004.

<sup>15</sup> UNDP 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Cromwell et al. 2005, p.9.

<sup>17</sup> Partido Liberal Constitucionalista

<sup>18</sup> Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional

enhances their control of institutions and grants Alemán an automatic seat in the National Assembly and therefore parliamentary immunity. The pact has since widened in scope and has been critical for the political survival of the two party leaders. It also allowed the two parties to seize control over the National Assembly, with a majority of 90%. Together with the shift of power balance from the Presidency to the Legislature through the adoption of corresponding laws, the political duopoly increasingly tightened their hold over state institutions, "making it practically impossible to act against corruption."<sup>19</sup> However, the pact between the two politicians has impact far beyond the failure to fight corruption as it threatens basic democratic principles. The legal framework established by the two parties makes it difficult for opponents to compete and virtually impossible to create new parties. Furthermore, reformists within the two parties are consistently blocked due to the lack of internal party democracy.<sup>20</sup>

Corruption remains a major concern in Nicaragua. Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI)<sup>21</sup> for Nicaragua is 2.6, which means rank 107 out of 158. Even more worrying are the findings on perceived trends where Nicaraguans come out as the most pessimistic in the region. 70% of the respondents believe that corruption will increase in the next three years and three quarters think that the corruption levels have increased "a lot" over the past three years.<sup>22</sup>

Particularly relevant in the present context are the results from the budget transparency survey, which reflect the extent of public access to accurate, comprehensive, and timely information on the financial activities of the government. While improved budget transparency does not yet ensure effective CSO involvement in budget processes, access to relevant information is a precondition for meaningful engagement. Nicaragua scores very low against all the indicators used in the survey. Regarding the availability to the public of executive budget documents and the public and legislative involvement in budget processes, the country's practices are rated "negative" i.e., received scores of 19 and 20, respectively, out of 100. With respect to the third indicator – the availability of monitoring and evaluation reports – the score is 34, meaning "mostly negative" practices.<sup>23</sup>

President Bolaños' anti-corruption efforts had a promising start but, as mentioned above, the fight against corruption has since stagnated as a result of the firm control exercised by the two main parties in the National Assembly over the juridical system and their exploiting of Bolaños' weaknesses by promoting legal action for alleged campaign funding abuses. The joint front against Bolaños also intensified the tensions within the Nicaraguan State. According to a country study of the World Bank and the IMF (2004a), Nicaragua's political context has contributed to a weak institutional framework, blurred separation of state power, weak rule of law and protection of property rights, and governance problems.

Particularly the juridical power has been widely criticised for subordinating itself to political interests. This is of course incompatible with the principle of separation of power. Accordingly, the latest Joint Staff Advisory Note (JSAN) criticizes that "the absence of a

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<sup>19</sup> Transparency International 2006, p.214.

<sup>20</sup> The present governance crisis and its causes and consequences have been thoroughly analysed in Montenegro et al. 2005.

<sup>21</sup> The CPI score relates to perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people, academics and risk analysts, and ranges between 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt).

<sup>22</sup> Transparency International 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Transparency International 2006.

well-functioning judicial system undermines private sector confidence and limits the impact of efforts to reduce poverty through faster growth." And the document concludes by warning that "there is a wide rift between the Executive and the National Assembly, which continues to delay decision-making and policy implementation. The situation could deteriorate even further in the run-up to the Presidential and legislative elections in November 2006."<sup>24</sup>

In October 2005, the governance crisis led to an agreement between President Bolaños and the General Secretary of the Frente Sandinista that culminated in the approval of the law on a framework for the stability and governance of the country. It remains to be seen, however, whether the agreement will allow for restoring political stability. There are considerable risks emanating from a range of social conflicts expressed in various mass protests and strikes such as those of the victims of the pesticide 'Nemagon' used in banana plantations, the public transport union, the university students, or the doctors and nurses of public hospitals.<sup>25</sup> More fundamentally, the people of Nicaragua seems to have largely lost confidence public institutions as evidenced by various opinion surveys that consistently find the main state powers (National Assembly, Executive, Juridical system and others – but not the armed forces) as well as political parties among the least respected institutions in the country.

### ***Nicaragua's organised civil society***<sup>26</sup>

The purpose of this section is to give a brief overview of the CSO landscape in Nicaragua in order to better appreciate CSOs' perception on their constraints, potentials, and willingness to engage in PRS monitoring processes. It is not intended, however, to provide a detailed account of the structure of the organised civil society in Nicaragua or to enter into discussions on the controversial concepts of civil society.

Over the past three decades, the Nicaraguan state has gone through radical transformations and so did the organised civil society. During the Somoza regime, civil society has been very weak, with existing organisations largely controlled by the regime. The revolutionary period of the 1980's saw an upsurge of Sandinista mass movements as the FSLN government undertook great efforts to organize the Nicaraguan people. The organisational form were mainly unions of farmers, workers, and teachers with together hundred of thousands of members. These mass organisations were subordinated to the FSLN and focused their activities largely on the health, education and rural sector. The handful organisations with politically oppositional positions remained fairly isolated.

When the Sandinistas were defeated in the 1990 elections and a period of liberal governments began, the mass organisations lost their dominant position within the Nicaraguan civil society, leading to a gradual process of decoupling from the FSLN. Furthermore, internal confrontations and the political situation of the first half of the 1990s resulted in a weakening and fragmentation of the union movement and diminished its influence. Starting after the regime change in 1990, the country saw an 'explosion' of NGOs. Reasons given for this development include the availability of qualified people who lost their jobs in the state sector and were looking for new employment, the opportunity to continue idealistic work, available donor funds, or the increasing withdrawal of the state from public service delivery. Women's organisations were particularly active and also formed effective thematic networks. Over the

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<sup>24</sup> IMF/IDA 2005, p.10/11.

<sup>25</sup> Guimarães y Avendaño 2006

<sup>26</sup> This section draws heavily from a recent study on Nicaragua's civil society commissioned by NORAD, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Borchgrevink 2006).

years, a considerable part of the newly established NGOs with Sandinista roots distanced themselves from the FSLN. Among the NGOs with Sandinist origin, therefore, a certain gulf can be observed between organisations still close to the FSLN and those who have detached from the party.

When hurricane Mitch struck Nicaragua in 1998, CSOs were quick in getting coordinated to organise relief work. This was the time when the Coordinadora Civil (CC) was constituted.<sup>27</sup> CC turned into the most significant coordinating body for the Nicaraguan civil society. The efficient and successful work of CC during the disaster and the strong donor support helped to establish the principle of the right of CSOs to participate in the development process of Nicaragua and to install CC as key player of the organised civil society.

Major groups of the Nicaraguan civil society include NGOs, private sector organisations, labour movements, organized interest groups, and community-based organisations (CBOs).<sup>28</sup> The country's civil society has sometimes been characterised as NGO dominated. This does not refer to its number, which is estimated at 300-400, but is rather based on the fact that they tend to dominate the public sphere as many of them are highly professional, visible and influential. Some think-tank type of NGOs are increasingly developing their capacities for lobby and advocacy activities. Private sector organisations form an important group of the civil society. At the national level, they are well organised and represent powerful segments of the Nicaraguan society. As many of them have privileged access to the government, they might be less concerned with issues of CSO participation in policy processes. Labour movements have lost strength and are less active today, a result of the fragmentation of the union movement and political disillusion. But they still have a potential to mobilize. Organized interest groups such as professional associations, organisations of the handicapped, or consumer organisations are typically membership-based. The group has been described as rather dispersed and less powerful due to their modest visibility at the national level. However, consumer organisations (there are three national ones as well as several at the local level) are considered an exception based on their successful lobbying work at the national level. Community-based organisations – by their nature – focus on local issues, with varying success. They are in many cases promoted through development activities of national or international NGOs, but many of them struggle with scarce financial resources and limited human capacity. CBOs play an important role in the decentralisation process and increasingly have to compensate for the state's withdrawal from public service delivery.

The politically polarised situation in Nicaragua is also reflected in the CSO community. Together with the large number of organisations, this has led to a kind of fragmentation. The resulting diversity can be seen as a positive sign as it points to a good representation of a pluralistic and diverse society. On the other hand, however, the diversity also means less political influence and higher coordination costs. The CC as major coordinating body has to grapple with this situation – and has successfully done so in a number of cases. Moreover, a range of other organisations such as the women's organisations or organisations working in particular sectors have successfully established coordination structures.

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<sup>27</sup> Originally, the CC's name was "Coordinadora Civil de Emergencia y Reconstrucción" (CCER), reflecting the initial reason of its constitution.

<sup>28</sup> Faith-based organisations, academic institutions, and the mass media have not been included in the analysis of Borchgrevink. But in terms of advancing the cause of civil society in the context of the PRS process, they do not appear to play a significant role.

## **PRSP process**

In 2001 Nicaragua presented its PRSP<sup>29</sup> as one of the first countries. Since then three progress reports have been prepared.<sup>30</sup> The PRS process was led by the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency (SETEC) and took initially place under considerable time pressure. Some consultations with the civil society was reported, but overall the process has been criticised for having been "...elaborated by technocrats according to donor directives".<sup>31</sup> According to the recent World Bank/IMF case study, the Nicaraguan government "embarked on the PRSP process because it was a precondition for entering the enhanced HIPC initiative. This underlying motivation appears to have driven many subsequent processes and decisions, including the depth and scope of policy debate, which affected ownership perception across stakeholders."<sup>32</sup>

In January 2004, Nicaragua reached the completion point under the HIPC Initiative and was approved US\$4.5 Mia. in debt relief, which will reduce Nicaragua's total external debt by approximately three quarters in net present value terms. While debt reduction in the framework of the HIPC initiative and the more recent MDRI<sup>33</sup> will considerably lower Nicaragua's external debts, the JSAN warns that "debt levels remain high, despite significant progress in the context of the HIPC Initiative."<sup>34</sup>

In 2004, poverty spending was 11.7% of GDP, which represented 47.7% of the national budget. Roughly half of these expenditures was financed through grants and loans of the international community while the other half was covered by the treasury (28%) and resources from HIPC debt relief (23%). This also means a welcome increase of the share of HIPC resources in poverty expenditures from a low level of 9% in 2002. For the period 2002-2005, however, only 36% of the funds freed up through the HIPC Initiative was assigned to the PRSP, while the rest was mainly spent to pay back domestic debts. Per capita expenditures for poverty alleviation increased from US\$74 in 2002 to US\$100 in 2003 and to US\$117 in 2004.<sup>35</sup>

While assessing progress in the implementation of the PRSP is hampered by the absence of recent data on poverty trends,<sup>36</sup> Guimarães y Avendaño observed some progress in institutional strengthening during the last year of PRSP implementation: the regulation of the Supplementary Social Fund (FSS), the consolidation of the Integrated Financial and Administrative Management System (SIGFA) and the National System for Public Investments (SNIP), the expansion of the National System of Coordination for the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation (PASE) to more Departments, and the beginning of implementing the National System for Monitoring Poverty Indicators (SINASIP). Furthermore, the decentralisation process has been advanced by establishing the CDD (Departmental Development Councils) and by using the system of municipal planning as technical

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<sup>29</sup> The PRSP is known in Nicaragua as the ERCERP ('Estrategia Reforzada de Crecimiento Económico y Reducción de la Pobreza').

<sup>30</sup> PRSP-related documents are posted on the government's website <http://www.secep.gob.ni/>

<sup>31</sup> Dijkstra 2005, p.450.

<sup>32</sup> World Bank/IMF 2004, p.5.

<sup>33</sup> Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative

<sup>34</sup> IMF/IDA 2005, p. 4/5.

<sup>35</sup> Guimarães y Avendaño 2006

<sup>36</sup> The last Living Standard Measurement Survey (LSMS) dates from 2001. The new LSMS has been initiated in July 2005. This data are not yet available.

instrument in all municipalities. Also, in 2004 the central government increased the transfers to municipalities from 1.5% to 6% of tax revenues.<sup>37</sup>

Overall, however, "the PRSPs in the three countries [among them Nicaragua] have had quite limited effects on public policy. Quite simply, they have not been implemented, or have been effective only as a framework for allocating Enhanced HIPC (HIPC2) savings, with minimal effect on the rest of public policy" according to a recent study commissioned by the Latin America and Caribbean PRS Donor Network.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, the World Bank/IMF country study on Nicaragua concludes that the PRSP did not initially strengthen policy processes, while implementation has been hindered by poor public expenditure management, and coordination and overview suffered from the fragmentation of policy making. But the modest results of the PRSP in Nicaragua, it is argued, have also to be viewed in the context of political and institutional realities and the very difficult starting conditions.

Shortly after Bolaños took power in 2002, the government started a process for a second PRSP known as National Development Plan (PND). After several revisions, the document was approved as PRSP II by Nicaragua in November 2005. That is, Nicaragua produced two comprehensive PRS within five years. "For a country of five million people, this is largely overkill."<sup>39</sup>

The first draft of the PND was subsequently modified to become the Operational National Development Plan (PNDO). Latter, the government introduced various changes to the PNDO and presented it, after several cycles of discussion with the main donors, as the PRSP II of Nicaragua. The fact that the donor community accepted the document as PRSP II means a major achievement for the government. There has been a large continuity in perspectives between the PNDO and the PRSP II. As in the PNDO, economic growth replaces poverty reduction as major objective of the PRSP II. According to Guimarães and his colleagues (2004), who analysed the PNDO in detail, the relation between economic growth and poverty reduction is taken to be automatic without asking what should be the type and nature of pro-poor growth. Moreover, there are question marks as to the government's ability to execute the policies formulated in the PRSP II. The concerns are related to the lack of implementation capacity of many public institutions on the one hand and the conflicts within the government on the other.<sup>40</sup>

Chapter one of the PRSP II provides a description of the wide consultation process during the formulation and revision of the strategy. The development process is described as bottom-up approach with strategic planning at the local level and the incorporation of sectoral and territorial plans into the national document. The procedure is said to have "facilitado la apropiación y la coordinación de actores claves, sociedad civil, sector privado y gobierno."<sup>41</sup>

While observers agree that the government undertook major efforts to ensure wide consultations, particularly at the decentralised level, concerns were raised as to the absence of consultations and discussions at the *national* level during the development and revision of the

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<sup>37</sup> Guimarães y Avendaño 2006

<sup>38</sup> Booth et al. 2006, p.13.

<sup>39</sup> The Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB) 2004, p.14

<sup>40</sup> Guimarães y Avendaño 2006.

<sup>41</sup> Gobierno de Nicaragua 2005, p.10.

document. It has been argued, that the national level would have been the appropriate level to discuss and question the general orientation of the strategy or to suggest alternative visions.<sup>42</sup>

### ***PRSP monitoring system***

The monitoring process of the first PRSP has been coordinated by SECEP, the Secretariat for Coordination and Strategy of the Presidency, using SINASIP, which is based on existing government structures. The PRSP monitoring system is seen as rather ambitious and complex and its implementation has been slow. Nevertheless, already in December 2003, SECEP presented a revised M&E system for the PND, but with few changes only to the original SINASIP design.<sup>43</sup>

With funding from donors, SECEP has set up the PASE to ensure participation of the different actors and to link the national with the regional and local level. Civil society participation is provided for at each level. So far, PASE has mainly focused on the participatory development of departmental development plans, while its technical units started to monitor investment plans. According to the 2005 Annual Progress Report, "the PASE has facilitated social communication with radio programs and information bulletins about public investment and the departmental and regional development plans. Departmental and Regional Development Councils ... were established in the 14 departments and the autonomous regions with the support of international cooperation."<sup>44</sup>

Under donor pressure, the government established the National Council for Economic and Social Planning (CONPES) in 1999. Within PASE, CONPES is basically charged with coordinating the participation process. Its members include representatives from civil society, the private sector, and government.<sup>45</sup> CONPES' influence at the policy level appears rather modest. From its 43 recommendations on the pre-proposal of the 2005 budget, for instance, to date only two have been implemented by the government.<sup>46</sup> It appears to be still unclear to what extent CONPES will play a role in the PRSP monitoring process.

### ***Case study set-up***

In November 2005, 18 face-to-face interviews were carried out in Nicaragua in order to collect information on CSOs' role in the PRSP monitoring process. 10 out of the 18 interviews were carried out with representatives of national CSOs. With a few exceptions, the respondents were the leaders of the respective organisation. The remaining interviewees included three representatives each from government institutions and the donor community, one representative from an international NGO, and an independent consultant. The list of respondents, together with their designation and affiliation is given in annex I.

An important selection criterion for the interviewees from CSOs was the organisation's involvement in PRS monitoring or, more generally, in evaluating and influencing public policies. Furthermore, the time constraints of the field study put tight limits on the number of

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<sup>42</sup> Guimarães y Avendaño 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Coudouel and Regalia 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Government of Nicaragua 2005.

<sup>45</sup> The organisations represented in CONPES are listed in the respective law. Each organisation is requested to suggest a list of three representatives and three substitutes from which the President of the Republic selects the members.

<sup>46</sup> CONPES 2005.

interviews. The list has been compiled based on suggestions from the local coordinators and the country officers of Swiss Development Organisations active in Nicaragua and from experts of SDC's and SECO's headquarters. Furthermore, the list has been adjusted on discussions held with staff of the Swiss Cooperation Office in Managua and on recommendations made by a local consultant familiar with Nicaragua's CSO community.

The interviews lasted between half an hour and three hours, with an average duration of about one and a half hours. Specifically developed guidelines have been used to conduct the semi-structured interviews (see annex II). The guidelines were closely based on the CPM to ensure the collection of relevant information in an efficient way. Respondents gave generously of their time and in general demonstrated an open and frank attitude in answering the questions as evidenced by the degree of self-criticism. The respondents also made efforts to provide useful information materials.

All 18 interviews have been carefully analysed with the CPM.<sup>47</sup> Because of the focus on CSOs' perspective, however, the information from 'non-CSO' respondents has been entered into separate CPMs and only used for cross-checking purposes. Accordingly, the term 'respondents' used in the study refers to the CSO respondents only. The interviewed persons not representing Nicaraguan CSOs are collectively referred to as 'non-CSO' respondents. While being perfectly aware that the latter is a heterogeneous group, the small size of the sub-groups does not allow assigning interview responses to individual sub-groups without compromising on the anonymity of the interviewees.

Similar to the findings of the Ghana case study, there are problems of definition when it comes to PRS monitoring. On the one hand, some relevant activities of CSOs are not monitoring activities in the narrow sense but are closely associated with or considered as precondition of monitoring. Examples are training of focal groups, empowerment of local people to demand accountability from government, or the dissemination of information about the PRS as initial step of the monitoring process. On the other hand, monitoring activities are sometimes not immediately related to the PRS but are still in the spirit of holding government to account for its development policies. Monitoring of good governance or public policies in general are illustrative for that. Therefore, this report applies a broad definition of PRS monitoring in order to capture as much as possible the activities related to the spirit of the concept.

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<sup>47</sup> Two local collaborators, familiar with Nicaragua's CSO community, assisted both in organising and carrying out the interviews as well as in the first steps of the analysis.

## 4. Constraints and Critical Gaps

### *Identifying constraints*

The primary purpose of the interviews was to elicit from the respondents their perceived constraints on and potentials of civil society participation in the monitoring process. The first step of the analysis, therefore, consisted of extracting the relevant constraints from the individual interview responses. Each identified constraint has then been analysed regarding the issue it affects and the level it relates to. A separate matrix has been used for every interviewee and the constraints were entered into the corresponding cell of the personalised CPM. There is no blueprint for assigning a specific constraint to the "right" cell. However, the design of the questionnaire facilitated the task as it has been closely linked to the elements of the matrix. The detailed description of the issues and levels of the CPM were of additional help to assign individual constraints to the appropriate cell. Moreover, discussions of the answers with the assistants present at the interviews were particularly useful in that process.

The second step was to consolidate into a single matrix all of the individual CPMs and to meaningfully summarise similar constraints. Again, this analysis requires a considerable amount of practice and intuition. Thus, there is no doubt that subjective judgements in terms of the analyst's own interpretations entered the process.

Table 2 on the next page shows the result of the constraint analysis in the form of a consolidated CPM with structured constraints. As already mentioned, these constraints only represent information from CSO respondents. The constraints from 'non-CSO' respondents have been similarly analysed and filled into a separate matrix (not reproduced in this report). This CPM has been used as supplementary information and referred to in the text. The information served to confirm perceptions of CSOs or to point to diverting views of 'non-CSO' respondents.

The following reading example may illustrate the type of information contained in the CPM below. The first row of the CPM depicts the constraints related to the issue of ownership. According to the perception of the respondents, a range of factors at different levels contribute to weak ownership of the PRS process among civil society. At the level 'political climate and social situation', respondents were concerned about the lack of a social compact among political and social actors. They further pointed to serious shortcomings of the PRS process that affect the establishment of ownership and criticised some decisions by donors which are said to run against national agreements. The constraints listed under this level indicate that fundamental deficiencies of the political system lie at the root of weak ownership. Consequently, they affect ownership of the PRSP process in general, not just of the monitoring process. This is also seen at the level of 'government leadership and attitude' where three out of four constraints relates to ownership concerns of broader process issues and policies, beyond PRS monitoring. In terms of institutional arrangements (third level of the CPM), no particular constraints on ownership have been mentioned. At the level 'CSOs' performance' two constraints internal to the CSO community have been mentioned. The first one impacts on ownership of the monitoring process through increasing disengagement of many CSOs caused by frustrations and disagreement about the PRS process so far. The other constraint concerns the lack of a shared vision among CSOs, which makes it difficult to develop ownership of the PRSP process and its monitoring.

| <i>Level</i><br><i>Issue</i> | <b>Political climate and social situation</b>  | <b>Government leadership and attitude</b>  | <b>Institutional arrangements</b>  | <b>CSOs' performance</b>   |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Ownership</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low credibility of PRSP contributes to lack of ownership.</li> <li>• Donor decisions undermine minimal national agreements.</li> <li>• No social compact.</li> <li>• Municipal Development Plans are not aggregated in the PND.</li> <li>• There is never a final version of the documents.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government's approach to PRSP is unambitious.</li> <li>• Government incapable of developing its own poverty-reduction policies.</li> <li>• Government also lacks sensitivity and vision, in addition to ownership.</li> <li>• No efforts to strengthen civil society's ownership.</li> </ul>  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSOs increasingly ignore PRSP (monitoring) out of frustrations and disagreement with its orientation.</li> <li>• Fragmented vision of the CS.</li> </ul>                      |
| <b>Decentralisation</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centralistic and authoritarian political culture.</li> <li>• Partisan politics rather than commitment to accountability at local level.</li> <li>• Remote and dispersed regions with weak infrastructure increase monitoring cost.</li> <li>• Few skilled human resources in municipalities.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decentralization is a fiction.</li> <li>• Central government institutions not familiar with local reality of individual municipalities.</li> <li>• Local officials do not know the PRSP.</li> <li>• Local governments distrust CSOs' efforts and do not like to be controlled (particularly in election year).</li> <li>• Social burden passed on to local people and not to local government.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Municipal Development Plans in some regions.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of organised CS in some municipalities.</li> <li>• Need to strengthen local leadership.</li> <li>• Need to focus capacity building of local people on basics.</li> </ul> |

*Table 2: CPM of summarised constraints (continued on p.20 and p.21)*

| <i>Level</i><br><i>Issue</i>          | <b>Political climate and social situation</b>  | <b>Government leadership and attitude</b>  | <b>Institutional arrangements</b>   | <b>CSOs' performance</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Information &amp; Transparency</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No tradition of giving accountability, nor of demanding it.</li> <li>• Lack of accountability in terms of providing information.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serious deficiencies in the quality and access of information.</li> <li>• No distribution of information to the public.</li> <li>• Local officials not willing or scared to provide information.</li> <li>• Macroeconomic indicators not linked to those of PRSP.</li> <li>• The assigned institution does not consolidate data linked to budget execution.</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No statistical information system at local level.</li> <li>• Internet-based information hampers access by people.</li> <li>• No central information system.</li> <li>• Lack of real counterweight of citizens in existing control mechanisms.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information best received through informal channels.</li> <li>• Lack of resources and means to obtain information at the local level.</li> <li>• Information flow within CS and to the outside world insufficient.</li> <li>• CSOs without central data base.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Dialogue</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited capacity of negotiation: government lacks know-how, CSOs lack means of pressure.</li> <li>• Government/CSO-relationship determined by the balance of power.</li> <li>• Election year further polarises and provokes confrontations at leadership level.</li> <li>• Donors do not involve CSO in their planning and priority-setting processes.</li> <li>• Donors do not equally listen to political and social actors.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government's concept of participation is functional.</li> <li>• Lack of consensus between government and CSO.</li> <li>• Government neglects CSO contributions.</li> <li>• Government lacks political will and respect for CS.</li> <li>• "Autistic government".</li> <li>• Political arbitrariness produces a process of systematic exclusion, almost structural.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDM considered as "club de amigos".</li> <li>• CONPES considered as "dialogue of deaf".</li> <li>• Role of CONPES as participatory structure for monitoring not materialized.</li> <li>• "Hyperinflation" of space for participation, but lack of orientation, contents, and impact.</li> <li>• 'Mesas sectoriales' do not work or only at discretion of government and donors.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legitimacy of CSO representatives and proposals questioned.</li> <li>• Lack of articulation.</li> <li>• Participation in monitoring is new for civil society.</li> </ul>   |

| <i>Level</i><br><i>Issue</i> | <b>Political climate and social situation</b>   | <b>Government leadership and attitude</b>  | <b>Institutional arrangements</b>   | <b>CSOs' performance</b>   |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Capacity</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People lack basic knowledge on PRSP and related processes.</li> <li>• Lack of a culture of citizenship.</li> <li>• Low human capacity due to social and economic exclusion.</li> <li>• Power holders are discredited.</li> <li>• Abrupt changes without mediation has been tiring for people and created insecurity.</li> <li>• Policies change with changing governments.</li> <li>• Absence of a national model and lack of coordination dilutes donors' effectiveness.</li> <li>• Donors invest in their own rather than CSO's agenda.</li> <li>• Donors' support is heavily biased towards an incapable leadership.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of priorities leads to "monitoring a phantom".</li> <li>• Lack of consensus among government institutions.</li> <li>• Autistic government and cynical political class is frustrating people.</li> <li>• Government is fragile and weak.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceptual confusion between policies, strategies, and plans.</li> <li>• PASE: exists on paper, technical units for monitoring investments rather than poverty reduction.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contamination of partisan interests in CSOs.</li> <li>• Destructive competition among CSOs undermines building national alliances and work on a citizenship concept.</li> <li>• Fragmentation regarding themes and projects leads to a lack of a common vision, strategy, and collaboration.</li> <li>• Project-based approach (due to high donor dependence) results in 'depolitisation' and lack of specialization and continuity.</li> <li>• Local experience not translated into national articulation, contributes to limited impact at the national level.</li> <li>• Research and analytical capacity does not translate in concrete proposals and social control.</li> <li>• Mutual mistrust, lack of openness and willingness to share.</li> </ul> |

## ***Deriving critical gaps***

The CPM developed in the previous section provides a structured set of constraints on CSOs' involvement in PRSP monitoring. In the next step of the analysis an effort was made to meaningfully cluster the constraints into critical gaps. The most obvious structuring device appear to be the five thematic issues of the CPM as each is considered a key ingredient for the participatory process of formulating, implementing, and monitoring the PRSP. Grouping the constraints along the issues also allows for the interdependency between the individual levels of the matrix and points to the importance of addressing issue-specific constraints as a whole. Based on the analysis of the information contained in each row of the CPM and using the thematic issues as structure, five critical gaps have been defined. They are summarised in the box below. What follows is the description of each gap based on a discussion of the issue-specific constraints and the underlying interview responses.

The five critical gaps are:

- 1 Credibility of the PRS process undermined**
- 2 Devolution insufficient and weak capacity at local level**
- 3 Government accountability and information management inadequate**
- 4 Available space for participation suffers from a lack of orientation and contents**
- 5 Political situation and internal shortcomings weaken monitoring potential**

### **1. Credibility of the PRS process undermined**

There was broad agreement among the respondents that the Nicaraguan PRSP is seriously flawed. To start with, CSOs consider the PRSP as an externally imposed conditionality for debt relief under the HIPC initiative. It is seen as something for donors rather than an effective approach to fight poverty in Nicaragua. In terms of contents, respondents criticise the insufficient differentiation in the analysis of poverty and the fact that the strategy does not address the structural causes of poverty nor does it provide convincing policies for small and medium-scale farmers.<sup>48</sup> Referring to the absence of a social tax policy and the focus on assistance rather than on human development, CSOs miss a comprehensive strategy to tackle the outrageous inequality in the country. Contributing to that is the government's expenditure policy that prioritises repaying internal debts over spending on education and health. Moreover, respondents claim that government does not consider social expenditures as productive investments. At the root of all that criticism lies the lack of a social compact between civil society and the government.

CSOs also complain that development plans of municipalities have not been aggregated at national level and integrated into the PND. According to respondents, the credibility of the PRSP further suffers because government fails to come up with final versions of relevant documents. In addition, this directly affects civil society's monitoring efforts as it means 'hitting a moving target'. The low credibility of the PRSP contributes to the lack of ownership among CSOs. Another reason given by respondents refers to frustrations based on

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<sup>48</sup> The example was mentioned where government distributed seeds to one family and the silo to store the seeds to another family, leading to the impression that the government's approach is to give just everybody something without having a consistent development policy for the rural sector. More fundamentally, the orientation of the PND's cluster approach is criticised for ignoring marginal areas as well as food security concerns.

government's refusal in the past to incorporate their contributions into official documents and thus the lack of influencing public poverty reduction policies. The fragmented vision of the organised civil society further hampers the development of ownership as does the weak government leadership and its attitude towards the PRSP, which is said to be unambitious and lacking sensitivity and vision.

Lacking ownership of the PRSP applies not only to CSOs but also to the Nicaraguan government<sup>49</sup> and the ordinary citizens. Related to that, CSOs representatives miss credible efforts of the government to strengthen people's ownership. Apart from reasons given above, the large majority of Nicaraguans do not own the PRSP because they are not even aware of its existence, let alone its contents or what it may hold for them.

Without ownership of the PRSP there is obviously no ownership of the monitoring process. This explains in part why the CC and others increasingly ignore the PRSP and move away from its specific monitoring in favour of monitoring public policies more generally.

## **2. Devolution insufficient and weak capacity at local level**

Respondents strongly criticised the decentralisation process, referring to the still dominating centralistic and authoritarian culture in Nicaragua. Some called it even a fiction and insist that it is rather a deconcentration process, with weak decision power of local governments. Investments at local level, it was said, are still largely determined in the capital although central government institutions often lack familiarity with the reality at the municipal level. It was further suggested that decentralisation sometimes resulted in additional social burden for local people rather than passing it to local governments. CSO representatives complained that local officials are first and foremost party members rather than feeling accountable to their constituency. They have frequently inadequate knowledge of the PRSP, distrust monitoring efforts of CSOs, and are not used (or do not like) to be controlled, leading to difficulty in obtaining required information.

According to the respondents, remote and dispersed locations in combination with poor transport and infrastructure considerably hampers monitoring activities. Also, the often low level of education and poorly informed local people turn participatory monitoring exercises into substantial challenges. As a consequence, monitoring becomes very time consuming as trainers have first to invest in building up basic knowledge. In some municipalities monitoring has been further complicated by the lack of development plans (e.g. in the department of Boaco), the low organisational level of local civil society and the need to strengthen local leadership.

## **3. Government accountability and information management inadequate**

Many CSO representatives reported that government officials are not at the service of people. They are usually reluctant to provide information or to give account to the public. According to the respondents, the country has no culture of accountability, which also has implications on the 'demand' side. Citizens are not used to hold civil servants to account. This is partly explained by the fact that most people do not pay direct taxes<sup>50</sup> and are therefore not aware that public expenditures and civil servants are paid out of their pockets.

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<sup>49</sup> While the government has developed more ownership of the second generation PRSP (PND) as compared to the original one, respondents insisted that government ownership is still highly deficient.

<sup>50</sup> About 80% of the tax revenue, it was said, is coming from indirect taxes.

Most respondents complained about the low quality of public information and its difficult access. Information is often too technical, not consolidated, not timely and complete, or does not make sense. Government is also said to be slow in updating information and, data from different sources are frequently inconsistent or not synchronised time wise. The usefulness of information is further constraint by the failure to consolidate expenditure data linked to budget execution and to relate macroeconomic indicators to those of the PRSP. Due to the lack of rule-based information management, its provision is perceived arbitrary and accessibility largely inadequate.<sup>51</sup> Some respondents maintained that there is a tendency in government to conceal information. CSO representatives involved in monitoring activities at the local level blamed government officials for being scared or unwilling to provide the requested data.

At the level of institutional arrangements, the lack of a central information system as well as a local system of statistical data has been criticised. CSO representatives also miss a pro-active approach of the government to disseminate relevant information to the public. Given the very low percentage of Nicaraguans with access to the internet, this distribution channel is not considered suitable to provide information to a broad audience.<sup>52</sup> It was stated that existing control mechanisms do not ensure checks and balances because citizens are not in a position to represent a real counterweight.

Due to the limited access to official information channels, efforts have to be made to obtain required information through informal channels. Another problem of CSOs, particularly reported from the local level, relates to the lack of resources and means to get information. In terms of internal limitations, respondents self-critically acknowledged that the information flow between CSOs as well as to the outside world is unsatisfactory. Related to that, the lack of a central data base is considered a weakness of the CSO community.

#### **4. Available space for participation suffers from a lack of orientation and contents**

According to statements of CSO representatives, already the foundation of the dialogue between government and civil society is unfavourable since it is characterised by a deep dissent on the very idea of development (as discussed above) and determined by the balance of power. And because CSOs lack effective means of pressure, they have a very limited capacity of negotiating with the government.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, the government is lacking the skills to negotiate. The election year (2006), it is said, will further polarise the relationship between government and CSOs, also because it is expected to provoke additional confrontations at the leadership level leading to government's inability to act. In terms of the dialogue with donors, respondents blamed them for their bias in favour of listening to political actors. They also criticised that donors fail to involve CSOs in their planning and priority-setting processes.

All respondents raised some concerns regarding the government's attitude towards CSO participation. The fact that the government has so far broadly ignored CSO contributions to the PRSP process and beyond seems to have produced major frustrations among CSO leaders. Government's approach to CSO participation has been described as functional, superficial, and

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<sup>51</sup> It has to be seen to what extent the law on access of public information currently discussed in the National Assembly will improve that situation.

<sup>52</sup> According to one respondent, not more than 1-2% of Nicaraguans have access to the internet.

<sup>53</sup> In that context, it was suggested that instead of investing in a unproductive dialogue with the government, CSOs should better focus on strengthening the capacity of the people, which would provide more leverage to pressure government.

exploitative, with consultations to inform rather than genuine discussions aimed at reaching consensus, and with no interest in a pluralistic participation. Consequently, government is accused of being "autistic"<sup>54</sup> and of lacking political will and respect for the civil society.

In line with the CSO's assessment on government's stand on participation, the existing space for dialogue is said to be without substance. While respondents agree that there is even a "hyperinflation" of mechanisms for participation, their perception is that these institutional arrangements are lacking orientation, contents, and impact. CONPES was called a "dialogue of deaf", with government not taking its input and decisions into account. Contrary to its role as advisory body for economic and social policies as described in the law, it is just seen as a tool of the president who "killed CONPES through his utilitarian approach". Its mechanism of dialogue is judged as inefficient and participation considered a loss of time. Moreover, respondents suggested that while CONPES was designed as participatory structure for monitoring, this has not materialised.

Respondents with first-hand experience at the municipal level argued that some of the CDM have been converted in a "club de amigos" of the mayor. They lack information on how to act, function at the authority's discretion and not in the interest of the citizens, and their members often lack the necessary capacity. Other respondents who participated in the so-called 'mesas sectoriales' complained that they were only invited at the discretion of government and donors and that some of the 'mesas sectoriales' were just useless as the outcome did not even include minutes, let alone any follow-up activities.

Some respondents criticised exponents of CSOs, who are sitting in participatory meetings, for being unclear on whether they represent their organisation, its members, or being there in their personal capacity. Similarly, when proposals in the name of the civil society are put forward, it is not always clear whether they are backed by other CSOs or to what extent they were consulted with their members. Other internal limitations of CSO participation concern the concerted articulation and putting forward politically feasible proposals. Finally, it was suggested that the participation in PRSP monitoring is rather new for CSOs.

## **5. Political situation and internal shortcomings weaken monitoring potential**

According to the respondents, a range of broader factors related to Nicaragua's past and current situation, donor policies, and internal capacity constraints contribute to the limited monitoring role of CSOs. The high percentage of socially (e.g. lack of a culture of citizenship) and economically (illiteracy, poor health conditions, malnutrition, unemployment) excluded Nicaraguans and their low information level affects CSOs efficiency to carry out participatory monitoring activities. This is further aggravated by people getting frustrated and turning away from policy issues because of institutionalised corruption, political power struggles, and the abrupt changes of the political and economic system of the last 25 years.

Respondents also suggested that the lack of a national model and poor coordination among donors dilute their effectiveness in supporting CSO monitoring. Moreover, donors were accused of investing in their own agenda rather than those of CSOs. Their shift towards budget support is criticised on two grounds. First, it is perceived by some CSOs to support corrupt political elites and to weaken CSOs as they get less resources.

CSO representatives complained about the conceptual confusion between the various policies, strategies, plans and the lack of clear priorities in the PRS documents, resulting in "monitoring

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<sup>54</sup> Phrases in double quotes are taken from the interviews.

a phantom". The fragile and weak political leadership and the absence of a consensus among government institutions is further hampering CSOs' monitoring role. PASE, it was said, exists more on paper and its technical units have a narrow focus on input/output monitoring of public investments at the departmental level.

Numerous internal obstacles related to the monitoring capacity of CSOs have been identified by the respondents. CSOs are said to be 'contaminated' with partisan interests. It also exists a certain mistrust among them and they are lacking openness and willingness to share information, resources, and experiences. These factors lead to a fragmentation of the organised civil society and hinders the development of a common vision, strategy, and of collaborative arrangements. The destructive competition for donor funds contributes to that situation. Moreover, respondents blame CSOs' strong dependence on donor support and donors' focus on operational (rather than political) issues for contributing to the project-based approach of many CSOs. And that, in turn, contributes to 'depolitisation', a lack of specialization, and the absence of a pro-active CSO agenda. Another limitation of CSOs, as brought up by respondents, concerns the inability of translating their research and analytical capacity into concrete proposals and effective social control. Likewise, CSOs appear to largely miss the opportunity of increasing their impact at the national level by translating their local monitoring experience into national articulation.

### ***The key challenges ahead***

The previous section analysed the constraints and clustered them around the five issues considered critical for the effective participation of civil society in PRSP monitoring. In this section the analysis is advanced by looking at the constraints from a matrix-level perspective. By doing so, a focus is introduced on the different stakeholder groups of the monitoring process (civil society, government, CSOs, donors). As discussed in the section on the analytical framework, the two-pronged approach – issue-focused and actor-focused analysis – recognizes the complexity of the system under consideration, particularly in terms of the interdependencies among the elements of the CPM. Moreover, the focus on actors is an intermediate step in the process of moving from the critical gaps to the scope of activities. That is, the two approaches are not running in parallel but the second analysis builds on the first one. The resulting key challenges for CSO monitoring derived below also integrate statements of the 'non-CSO' respondents.

#### **A) Citizens with low human capacity and no trust in government**

The social and economic exclusion of a large part of the Nicaraguan people, together with their low information level leads to deficient human capacity for participatory monitoring. 'non-CSO' respondents confirmed citizens' lack of knowledge on the PRSP. And people informed about the contents of the PRSP perceive it as not relevant for improving their livelihood. The resulting lack of ownership further contributes to their lack of motivation to engage in monitoring processes, as does the low credibility of the government and its institutions. Moreover, social exclusion also means that citizens are not familiar with their rights and duties and thus do not demand nor expect accountability from the authorities. Accordingly they broadly neglect monitoring activities. The lack of people's consciousness to hold officials accountable was also stressed by 'non-CSO' respondents.

Challenges:

- ⇒ Citizens are not familiar with the concept of accountability and therefore unconcerned about PRSP monitoring.
- ⇒ Citizens are lacking capacity and sufficient information and therefore participatory monitoring exercises are time-consuming and difficult.

### **B) Government not responsive to concerns of CSOs and citizens in general**

The different perception of the reality between CSOs and the government, which has also been confirmed by 'non-CSO' respondents, results in different concepts of development and poverty reduction. The lack of government's attention to the structural causes of poverty, as perceived by CSOs, its multi-faceted nature, and concerns of small-scale farmers, in combination with government's reluctance to incorporate civil society's contributions into the PRSP design process, has caused major frustrations and contributed to the poor ownership of PRSP monitoring by CSOs. Adding to that is the government's lack of commitment to accountability, to provide easy access to relevant information, and enter in a genuine dialogue with CSOs. 'non-CSO' respondents also criticised the absence of a focus on human development in the PRSP and the difficult access to government information and its format, which often is not user-friendly. Some of them also agreed that the PRSP formulation has been mainly a process between the government and some donors, that government's concept of civil society participation is functional and that government fails to recognise its added value.

Challenges:

- ⇒ CSOs are increasingly disinterested in monitoring the PRSP because government fails to strive for a national consensus on poverty-reducing policies.
- ⇒ CSOs are frustrated and their role as key actor in the monitoring process undermined due to government's lack of political will to engage with civil society in any serious way.

### **C) Insufficient exchange and common ground between CSOs**

The CSO community is fragmented in terms of themes and projects as well as political orientation. This leads to the absence of joint concepts and shared strategies and hinders concerted articulation and the development of effective proposals, thereby weakening its role at the national level as credible and powerful actor capable of influencing the monitoring agenda. Moreover, the fragmentation, which has also been mentioned by 'non-CSO' respondents, leads to mistrust and a lack of openness as evidenced by poor information flows and deficient internal communication (also commented on by some 'non-CSO' respondents). This situation complicates the development of strategic partnerships and the execution of collaborative monitoring activities. Also, insufficient collaboration particularly between CSOs with complementary skills and activities means a forgone opportunity to turn local-level monitoring experiences into influential lobbying and advocacy tools at the national level.

Challenges:

- ⇒ CSOs lack a shared vision and common strategies and that weakens their role and influence in the monitoring process.
- ⇒ Different types of CSOs are insufficiently linked, therefore local monitoring experience is not fully exploited for policy work at national level.

#### **D) Deficient donor support to CSOs**

There was the perception that donors' assistance to Nicaragua is heavily biased towards the government. The bias has also been confirmed by recent research of CINCO (Montenegro et al. 2005). With joint frameworks for delivering budget support, CSOs expect to receive in future an even smaller slice of the cake. The uneven distribution of financial assistance and the donors' proximity to the government negatively impacts on the power balance between government and CSOs, leading to a further debilitation of civil society's role in the monitoring process. Moreover, the stiff competition among CSOs for scarce donor funds undermines collaborative arrangements, also in the area of monitoring. The uncoordinated funding policy and the focus on service-delivery projects leads to a project-based approach of many CSOs, at the expense of capacity building and political articulation. The donor-driven agenda of CSOs, also criticised by some 'non-CSO' respondents, deters CSOs from developing long-term monitoring strategies.

#### **Challenges:**

- ⇒ Donors have a project-based focus and provide relatively meagre resources to civil society that makes it difficult for CSOs to develop a long-term monitoring agenda.
- ⇒ The resulting competition for the few donor funds undermines joint monitoring activities by CSOs.

## 5. Potentials and Fields of Activity

The aim of this chapter is to identify and describe fields of activity that help strengthen CSOs' role in the monitoring process. As explained in the analytical framework, the fields of activity are shaped by the constraints (or, more specifically, by the critical gaps and key challenges developed in the previous section) and the existing potentials of Nicaraguan CSOs. The former define the relevance of the fields of activity and the latter their feasibility. While both factors are important considerations to come up with meaningful activities, it is argued here that the relevance of the activities should take preference over their feasibility. Accordingly, the potentials brought up by the respondents are discussed in the context of the identified challenges.

### ***Existing potentials of CSOs***

This section explores the existing CSO potentials based on the respondents perception. The potentials are seen as key inputs into the process of developing fields of activity as they provide valuable information on existing strengths of the CSO community on which to base interventions for enhancing civil society's involvement into the PRS monitoring process.

Table 3 depicts the CSO Participation Matrix with the potentials elicited from the interview responses. Before entering the discussion on specific potentials, three general points should be noted. First, respondents demonstrated significantly more difficulty in responding questions on existing potentials than on constraints. Second, contrary to the questions on constraints, respondents were specifically asked to comment on potentials that exist within CSOs – and not within the monitoring system in general. That also explains why the entries in the CPM on potentials are predominantly found at the level of CSOs' performance. The two remarks also underscore the importance of complementing the desk-based analysis with a participatory approach to discuss with CSO representatives the existing potentials more generally, as suggested by the analytical framework. Third, the discussion on the potentials also takes into account the results from the interviews with the 'non-CSO' respondents. The potentials brought up by this group has been entered into a specific CPM which is not reproduced in this report.

Table 3 with the CPM on potentials is shown on the next two pages, followed by a discussion on how specific potentials could help to address the identified challenges.

| <i>Level</i><br><i>Issue</i>          | Political climate and social situation | Government leadership and attitude   | Institutional arrangements  | CSOs' performance  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Ownership</b>                      |  |  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generation of a certain consciousness.</li> <li>• CSOs question impact and effectiveness of ERP and use mechanisms of monitoring.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Decentralisation</b>               |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some level of openness by local governments to work with local people.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDM puts pressure based on their knowledge of local policies to ensure investments.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences from work in pilot municipalities used for capacity building in other municipalities.</li> <li>• Some valid experience in monitoring, action and complaints of the people in the covered municipality.</li> <li>• Monitoring of local budgets.</li> <li>• Formation of facilitators in some municipalities.</li> <li>• Investment in training of local officials (but later they leave, leading to frustrations).</li> <li>• Command of focal group method (guide) in municipalities (IPADE/CC/Red Local).</li> <li>• Good presence of CSOs at local level (e.g. UNAG).</li> <li>• Strengthening local CSOs using methodological tool (School for Leaders).</li> <li>• Social Audits in 7 Municipalities (IEN, CC and Red Local).</li> <li>• Monitoring of public policies with community score cards (IEN with CC).</li> <li>• Willingness and capacity for alliances between local CSOs.</li> <li>• Base line on poverty through social audits.</li> <li>• Collaboration with local governments.</li> <li>• Capacity building programme (UNAG).</li> <li>• Pressuring within CDM and CDD (UNAG).</li> </ul> |
| <b>Information &amp; Transparency</b> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information does exist (internet), but ...</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control mechanism do exist but...</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written, spoken, and televised communication channels also cover local level (CINCO).</li> <li>• Building citizenship through democracy and HR training to internalise values (IEN).</li> </ul>   |

Table 3: CPM of summarised potentials (continued on next page)

| <i>Level</i><br><i>Issue</i> | <b>Political climate and social situation</b>  | <b>Government leadership and attitude</b>   | <b>Institutional arrangements</b>   | <b>CSOs' performance</b>  |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Dialogue</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have a tradition of participation</li> </ul>               |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanisms in place for government/ CSO-dialogue</li> <li>• CONPES: current leadership with vocation to dialogue with CS.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent space for debate.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Capacity</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaboration of a law to ensure continuity of PRORURAL.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PRORURAL: good effort, guides public investments in rural areas and avoids duplication of efforts in terms of rural policies.</li> </ul> |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated debate and articulation at the national level (laws).</li> <li>• Reports that serve to organise monitoring/control processes.</li> <li>• Some CSOs with research and analytical capacity.</li> <li>• Umbrella body and coordination between CSOs for specific projects.</li> <li>• Various thematic networks in operation (Red de Poder Local, Red de Niños, Red Agropecuaria, Foro Educación).</li> <li>• Strategy: strengthening people's capacities to pressure political level, rather than directly.</li> <li>• Comprehensive concept of poverty (gender, HR) (CISAS).</li> <li>• Consciousness that actuality has to be transformed and political institutions changed.</li> <li>• Capacity to generate public opinion with sound technical information.</li> <li>• Links to international networks (CISAS and IEN).</li> <li>• Analysing relationship between different instruments such as ERCERP, PND, TLC, Metas Milenio (CNF/MAM).</li> <li>• Governance observatory with potential to broaden its vision and focus if joint project materialises (CINCO).</li> <li>• Observatory of power holders (MAM).</li> <li>• CC initiated and carries out counter proposals related to the national budget, which also creates capacities and generates information. (e.g. internal debts/health expenditure).</li> <li>• Monitoring of health investments at national level, review of MDG compliance and annual evaluation of PRSP regarding health (CISAS).</li> <li>• Communication and formation on health as a broad concept (CISAS).</li> <li>• LA Budget Transparency Index 2003 and 2005 (CISAS).</li> </ul> |

## Capacity building experience at local level

The first set of challenges discussed in the previous chapter relates to the often low human capacity of citizens and their lack of trust in government. The specific challenges that have been identified concern the need to (i) familiarise ordinary citizens with the concept of accountability in order to generate a demand for it and to interest people in PRSP monitoring and (ii) strengthen relevant capacities and provide the necessary information to engage citizens in participatory monitoring exercises.

Based on the analysis of table 3, CSOs seem to have a comparative advantage in terms of access to primary data at the decentralised level. They also have a reasonable coverage of means of communication. The capacity to strengthening human development at the local level is among the CSO potentials most mentioned. These potentials are based on general capacity-building activities of CSOs as well as on specific monitoring exercises. The more general activities of CSOs include training on democracy and human rights, gender issues, decentralisation, and on citizens' rights and duties. CSO monitoring exercises that were by far most mentioned by the respondents concern CC's activities on monitoring public policies and the use of social audits, jointly executed by several members under the auspices of CC. The latter, it was said, also contributed to a better understanding of the poverty situation in the country and generated information useful to support advocacy activities. 'Non-CSO' respondents also praised the social audits as a new and valuable tool for social control. Related to that, they acknowledged CSOs' capacity to experiment with new approaches and, more generally, the improved professionalism of CSOs.

Various methods have been applied to strengthen the capacity of people, including training trainers, focal groups, pilot municipalities, community score cards, and schools for leaders. According to the respondents, the command of these approaches provide valuable potentials to build upon as does the presence of communication channels that also cover the local level. Additional strengths of CSOs to build citizenship at the local level concern the strong presence of CSOs and the willingness and capacity to build alliances between Community Based Organisations (CBOs).

Potentials to carry out monitoring exercises in collaboration with local governments are seen in municipalities where local government has shown some openness to work with local people. The existing tradition of participation facilitated the involvement of ordinary people into local monitoring activities. Respondents also pointed to positive experience with the Municipal Development Councils (CDMs), where CSO's participation helped to pressure local governments in order to ensure much needed investments. 'Non-CSO' respondents confirmed the local dynamics for coordinated participation in some municipalities and pointed to the potential of municipal associations ("bloque sur"). They also acknowledged CSO's capacity to organise, articulate and impact at the local level.

Finally, the rural sector strategy PRORURAL, jointly developed by the government and the donor community, has been judged as a good effort to guide public investments and coordinate rural policies although reservations have been made in terms of its focus and process of implementation. The involvement of agricultural producer organisations in the design of PRORURAL holds the potential for greater participation of farmers in agricultural policy-making and monitoring.

### **Think tanks with good research and analytical capacity**

The second set of challenges relates to the government's and CSOs' failure to jointly deal with civil society's concepts and approaches of development and to the poor incorporation of contributions from CSOs into the formulation of poverty reducing policies. In particular, the challenges concern the need to jointly work towards a national consensus on development policies and to convince government of the relevance and value of fully involving CSOs and their contributions into PRSP-related processes.

To address these challenges, investing in research and analytical capacity of CSOs appears to be a worthwhile effort to increase their credibility as political actor and to make the advocacy and lobbying work of CSOs more effective. There are already some CSOs with well-developed research and analytical capacity. Respondents (CSO and 'non-CSO') also referred to their potential in terms of links to international networks and collaborations with think tanks and universities abroad. Similarly, both groups mentioned the availability of space within the CSO community that allows for coordinated debate, and of some capacity to develop innovative proposals to support national articulation. In the case of formalising participation, this has been instrumental to successfully push for a law on citizen participation. The potential also points to the capacity to constructively engage in multi-stakeholder dialogues.

Closer to CSO's monitoring function, respondents pointed to the analysis of the national budget by CC and the current campaign on repaying internal debts versus increasing health expenditure. Another example concerns CISAS' work on the budget transparency index in the context of an internationally coordinated programme. CISAS also intensively monitors health policies and has produced in-depth analysis on the health sector regarding national investments, MDG compliance, and the PRSP. Further potentials brought up by respondents concern research activities of CINCO's governance observatory, the analysis of policy instruments and power holders by women groups, and IEN's work on the civil society sector in Nicaragua.

Contrary to the perception of CSO respondents, some 'non-CSO' respondents consider the existing dialogue mechanisms as potential for CSOs to influence public policies, facilitated by some openness of the government to listen to the civil society. While both groups acknowledge the commitment and enthusiasm of the new leadership of CONPES, CSOs are overwhelmingly sceptical regarding its potential as space to effectively pressure government.

### **Functioning umbrella organisation and emerging alliances**

The third set of challenges concerns the fragmented CSO community resulting in poor internal communication and insufficient exchange of information between CSOs. Specific challenges for the organised civil society include the need to come up with common ideas on key development issues and to embark on strategic partnerships to mutually benefit from relevant monitoring experiences.

The strongest potential in this area represents the umbrella organisation 'Coordinadora Civil' (CC), with broad membership of individual organisations as well as networks and with own research and outreach capacity. Respondents also mentioned the thematic networks such as Red Nicaragüense por la Democracia y el Desarrollo Local, Red de Niños, Red Agropecuaria, or Foro Educación. They further pointed to the potential based on successful collaboration in the past, including the independent consultation process during the formulation of the first PRSP or the social audits mentioned above. The on-going CC-led exercise on monitoring

public policies in more than 20 municipalities is another example of successful collaborative work by CSOs.

Coordination and the willingness to build alliances at the local level have been confirmed by both, CSO and 'non-CSO' respondents. They further commented on the availability of space for internal debate. Finally, the existence of experienced social movements in Nicaragua is seen as CSO potential by both groups of respondents.

The last set of challenges addresses the role of the donor community and its funding policy in Nicaragua. No specific potentials have been mentioned in this regard by the respondents. When informed about the upcoming joint donor fund to assist CSOs, however, respondents welcomed this development as a step towards more coordinated and longer-term support for civil society.

### ***Promising fields of activity and related recommendations***

Based on the identified challenges and taking into account the existing potentials of the CSO community as judged by the respondents, three fields of activity are proposed to strengthen CSOs' participation in the PRSP monitoring process. The fourth set of challenges served to formulate recommendations on conducive donor approaches. The suggested fields of activity are i) awareness raising and empowerment of local people, ii) long-term support to think tanks, and iii) internal strengthening of the CSO community. The last section discusses donors' potential role in supporting monitoring efforts of CSOs.

Each section first outlines the field of activity and then offers recommendations to be considered when developing specific activities in the respective field.

#### **Awareness raising and empowerment of local people**

The analysis demonstrated the urgent need to empower local people if they are to be involved in participatory monitoring exercises. To get them interested in and committed to monitoring public policies, they need information, capacity and, very important, to be involved from the very beginning. At this stage, activities in this field have to focus on awareness raising and empowering people in general. This implies that PRSP-related monitoring might not be the priority as long as ownership is weak.

Given the fundamental deficiencies identified in the constraint analysis and the existing CSO potential in the area of information dissemination and educating local people, the development of specific activities in this field has to be based on the following considerations:

- Major attention and sufficient resources and time have to be dedicated to general awareness raising and educating people on the concept of citizenship.
- Currently, it is not suggested to focus on PRSP monitoring due to the lack of ownership based on the insufficient participation of ordinary people in the formulation process and the weak impact of CSO's input in the final document. Rather, priority should be given to genuinely involving citizens and their organisations in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of local public policies in general.
- In any case, further emphasis should be put on providing comprehensible information. This may include investments in communication channels, popular versions of policy documents (including for the second generation PRSP), and translations into local languages.

- The identification of suitable executing agents for empowering local people has to be based on the organisations' training capacity, their strong links to the grassroots (favouring consortia between CSOs and CBOs), and their in-depth experience with the multiplier approach.
- If monitoring activities are supported, it is suggested to focus on learning and information exchange rather than outcome. This may also mean that the donor's agenda has to take a back seat.
- Activities aiming at the involvement of citizens in public decision making should focus on municipalities with conducive institutions and willing local government in order to accumulate success stories, which may provide incentives to other municipalities.

### **Long-term support to think tanks**

The lack of a constructive dialogue between government and civil society at the national level and government's reluctance to incorporate CSOs' contribution into policy-making processes points to the need to strengthen the advocacy and lobbying function of CSOs outside the existing space for civil society participation. Therefore, activities in this field have to focus on strengthening the capacity of research-based CSOs to produce and disseminate viable policy alternatives in order to enhance CSOs' role as credible actor in the political arena, contribute to shaping public opinion, and nurture evidence-based policy making.

Given the above shortcomings on the one hand and the potential of some CSOs to carry out high-quality analytical work and engage in policy-relevant research on the other, the development of specific activities in this field has to be based on the following considerations:

- Research and analytical work of think-tank type of CSOs should be fostered as they provide the groundwork for civil society's lobby and advocacy activities.
- Support should be provided in the areas of evidence-based research, its translation into policy recommendations, and its dissemination to decision makers and the general public. It is considered particularly important to provide sufficient means for the latter, including for follow-up activities.
- To disseminate research findings, alternative channels such as media, parliamentary committees or international organisations should be favoured, rather than existing dialogue mechanisms.
- It is further recommended to support research-based organisations in networking and coalition building within as well as outside the CSO community.
- Related to the previous point, collaboration with international NGOs should be encouraged as they could serve as information source, facilitators, or dissemination hub for research findings. In addition, international NGOs might serve as funding source for think tank activities.
- Research is a long-term business and so should be its support. Only sustained assistance will ensure that organisations are able to strengthen their research skills, develop a proactive agenda, and thus enhance their autonomy and institutional capacity to effectively influence government policies and programmes.

## **Internal strengthening of CSO community**

The analysis revealed that civil society's effectiveness to contribute to the development of public policies is sub-optimal due to the lack of a shared vision and common strategies. Potentials resulting from collaboration among CSOs in general and between national and local organisations in particular are insufficiently exploited. It is therefore recommended, to focus the activities in this field on encouraging CSOs to embark on collaborative arrangements and on supporting networking among CSOs that improve communication as well as information exchange in order to promote civil society's watchdog and advocacy role.

Given the fragmented CSO community and the deficient exploitation of own monitoring results at the national policy level on the one hand and taking into account the potential in terms of a broad and active umbrella organisation as well as several functioning networks on the other, the development of specific activities in this field has to be based on the following considerations:

- Collaboration between advocacy and grassroots organisations should be supported in order to encourage the utilization of local monitoring outcomes for CSOs' policy work and to feed policy insights back to the local level.
- More generally, it is recommended to strongly focus support on consortia rather than individual organisations in order to advance collaborative monitoring arrangements and mutual learning. Guiding principles for such arrangements should be the complementarities of capacities and the generation of synergies.
- To enhance the effectiveness of the organised civil society and its credibility, the networking, organisational, and communication capacity of the umbrella organisation should be further strengthened.
- The support of a central data base on CSOs' monitoring experiences might be a worthwhile effort to facilitate information sharing, organise follow-up activities, and develop good practices. CC is considered to be well placed as institutional home for such a data base.

## **Donors' potential role in strengthening monitoring efforts of CSOs**

The fields of activity discussed above are essentially relevant for all actors concerned with strengthening civil society's role in PRSP monitoring, including CSOs themselves. In this section, the specific potential role of donors in supporting efforts of CSOs is outlined.

As shown in the analysis, donors' support to CSOs has been criticised for being too little, uncoordinated, and mainly project-based. The consequence for CSOs' effective operation, according to the respondents, has been discussed in the previous chapter.

Regarding the support to civil society monitoring, donor efforts should be oriented towards the recommendations related to the three fields of activity discussed above. Moreover, donors could further enhance their role by considering the following more fundamental observations:

- **Rethink the balance between support to government and to civil society.**  
Out of the total support of donors to Nicaragua – with an increasing proportion going to general budget support – just a tiny fraction is channelled to CSOs. At the same time, the government's modest performance in poverty reduction and the institutionalised corruption call for a strong system of checks and balances. CSOs could play a more prominent role as watchdogs and thus contribute to strengthening that system. It might be more efficient, therefore, to redirect some donor funding towards supporting CSOs' capability to act.

- **Improve coordination of donor support to CSOs.**

The often uncoordinated donor support to CSOs has not been very helpful in strengthening CSOs' role in monitoring. The recent move of four bilateral donors, including Switzerland, to join forces and set up a multi-donor fund to support CSOs in promoting democratic governance is certainly a step in the right direction and they have to be commended for this initiative. Interviewed CSO respondents also welcomed this step. It is recommended that other donors join in and this model becomes the standard approach for civil society support.

- **Move from short-term project support to longer-term core funding of CSOs.**

Core funding to CSOs appear particularly important to strengthen CSOs' role as watchdog because it acknowledges the need to strengthen institutional capacities and invest in human development. Moreover, core funding allows CSOs to develop a pro-active agenda and keeps donors from imposing their own agenda. It is therefore suggested to generally use core funding as mechanism for supporting CSOs.

## 6. Key Findings

### ***Case study***

#### **General situation**

Basic conditions for a significant role of CSOs in the PRS monitoring system are not met. There is a lack of a collective culture on mutual learning. A shared programmatic vision on how to move forward in reducing poverty is not observable. The existing PRS monitoring system appears to have been emerged from external pressure rather than government's consciousness of the role of monitoring for improved management and greater accountability. And there is no multi-stakeholder dialogue on PRS monitoring. The fundamental deficiencies point to the need for a longer-term perspective on enhancing civil society's participation in the country's PRS monitoring process. There is no quick fix. Consequently, the focus on strengthening CSOs' monitoring role is not primarily seen in providing support for specific monitoring activities of CSOs but rather for initiating and fostering processes that contribute to overcome the prevailing shortcomings.

#### **National level**

Two principles of the PRSP initiative that are key to the involvement of civil society are not sufficiently followed: ownership and participation. The failure of genuinely incorporating civil society's perspective into PRS documents resulted in CSOs' weak interest in and commitment to the PRSP process and hence its monitoring. Particularly at the national level, civil society participation – in spite of abundantly available dialogue mechanisms – went hardly beyond consultations and information exchange. Government is not seen to have developed an approach that appreciates civil society as a key actor in the monitoring process and recognises its potential value added. Therefore, recommendations for the national level focus on further strengthening civil society's internal collaboration and capacity to pressure government. Based on the existing potentials in terms of networks, international links, and research and analytical skills, support should be long-term and oriented towards improving internal communication and information flows, building strategic partnerships, and translating research findings into powerful advocacy tools. Regarding the latter, support should also encourage the better involvement of universities and the media.

#### **Local level**

The strongest potential of CSOs is found at the local level. They have a good presence, undertake various efforts to empower local people, carry out training activities, and are also involved in some monitoring activities. Moreover, in several municipalities CSOs seem to be in a position to exert some influence through local dialogue structures and to team up with local authorities. On the other hand, involving local people in specific PRSP monitoring appears to be difficult because they lack relevant PRS information and have no culture of holding public officials to account. Adding to that is the generally low level of human development in rural areas. Building ownership, therefore, is considered to be key to advance participation of citizens. Recommendations point to the importance of raising awareness and empowering local people. Furthermore, successful examples of participatory processes at the local level should be copied to other municipalities. This could be fostered by promoting

collaboration among municipalities. Empowering local communities and support them in joining forces will also increase pressure to advance the decentralisation process.

### **Donor-CSO relation**

It is important to recognise the somewhat delicate relationship between CSOs and donors because the latter are seen by CSOs as allies of the government, backing it with substantial funds. And CSOs perceive their government as undermining democratic principles, incapable of leading the country, and quite corrupt. Also, donors are felt to primarily invest in their own agenda rather than the one of the CSOs they support. At the same time, CSOs have a hard time to criticise the donor community as they heavily depend on its funding. Therefore donors should prevent everything that fuels those feelings. To ease the situation it is recommended to donors to rethink the balance between support to government and CSOs, to work towards improving their coordination, and to move from project-based support to core funding. The recently established multi-donor fund for supporting CSOs points to the right direction. Moreover, the fund appears to be a good opportunity to address some of the basic shortcomings mentioned above. The analytical approach may provide the framework to develop respective efforts in a participatory and constructive manner.

### ***Methodological approach***

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the objectives of the case study in Nicaragua was to apply and assess the methodological tool. An earlier version has been applied in the Ghana case study and enhanced, based on those experiences. The current application of the revised tool has demonstrated some strengths but also shortcomings to be worked upon.

Regarding the strengths of the methodological approach the following conclusions can be drawn:

- By explicitly considering the civil society perspective, the focus is on the key target group of poverty reduction policies and hence provides an indispensable contribution to the multi-stakeholder dialogue.
- By using the structure of the CSO Participation Matrix (CPM) for the development of the interview guidelines, the data gathering process and the analysis is facilitated.
- By presenting the data in the CPM, the interdependencies among constraints as well as among potentials are highlighted and transparency of the subsequent analysis ensured.
- By keeping the analytical tool simple, no specialised skills are required, making it accessible to a wide range of actors.
- By providing CSOs the tool, they are in the position to present a comprehensive and transparent analysis of their constraints and potentials of participation, which enhances their credibility in the dialogue and facilitates efficient and effective discussions.
- By incorporating the potentials into the CPM, the analysis provides a more constructive approach that enables CSOs to emphasis their achievements and strength.
- By having a flexible design of the CPM, the tool has the potential to be applied to the perspective of different stakeholders and/or to different levels (local, regional, national) and specific sectors (e.g. agriculture, education).

- By offering a flexible and easy-to-use tool, the development of a joint framework for analysing constraints and potentials related to civil society participation is facilitated and could serve as critical prerequisites for a constructive multi-stakeholder dialogue.
- By employing the participatory approach suggested in the analytical framework of the tool, the solutions may be less straight forward but more relevant and feasible.

On the other hand, the application of the tool to the Nicaragua case has revealed the following shortcomings:

- Unambiguously assigning the specific statements of the respondents to the individual cells of the CPM has not always been straightforward. This shortcoming could be tackled by explicitly defining the individual cells, beyond the already existing definition of the levels and issues. In addition, the ambiguity may be reduced by choosing CPM levels that represent the relevant actors.
- Matching the levels to actors would also address an additional problem encountered in the current application: the many statements concerning the donor community have been placed under the level 'Political climate and social situation', out of the lack of a specific level for this actor.
- Potentials have been mainly identified under the level 'CSOs' performance' because the interview guidelines have focused on CSOs' strength due to the constraints of keeping interview time at a reasonable level. Additional potentials concerning the other levels should be elicited in all phases of the exercise (field study, desk-based analysis, participatory approach).
- Finally, the application of the tool still requires a considerable effort. However, reductions are expected from a clearer definition of the CPM cells and the increased routine in analysing the statements of the respondents. Furthermore, the effort could definitely be reduced by more narrowly guiding the respondents during the interview. But there is a trade-off as this comes at the cost of missing potentially important information provided in the case of more open questions.

At this stage of the application of the tool to Nicaragua, the fields of activity have been identified and described but not yet the specific actions. The latter was not the objective of study. According to the analytical framework presented in chapter 2, the next phase would be the involvement of CSO representatives in a participatory exercise where the findings of the present study are validated and specific actions defined.

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## Annex I: Persons interviewed

| NAME                                       | DESIGNATION                        | ORGANIZATION  |
|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Antonio Belli*                             | Director Ejecutivo                 | Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo Sostenible (CONADES)   |
| Rodolfo Delgado                            | Director Nacional                  | Instituto de Estudios Nicaragüenses (IEN), Coordinador del Programa Democracia y Derechos Humanos                         |
| Alvaro Fiallos                             | Presidente                         | Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos (UNAG)   |
| Violeta Granera*                           | Secretaria Ejecutiva               | Consejo Nacional de Planificación Económica y Social (CONPES)   |
| Josef Ising*                               | Coordinador                        | Programa de Desarrollo Local y Transparencia Fiscal (PRODELFIN) de la Cooperación Técnica Alemana (GTZ)                   |
| Ketil Karlsen*                             | Primer Secretario                  | Real Embajada de Dinamarca  |
| Alejandro Martínez Cuenca                  | Director                           | Fundación Internacional para el Desafío Económico y Global (FIDEG)  |
| Mirna Moncada*                             | Consultora independiente           | Experiencia en evaluación y monitoreo de la Estrategia Reforzada de Crecimiento Económico y Reducción de Pobreza (ERCERP) |
| Sofía Montenegro                           | Directora Ejecutiva                | Centro de Investigaciones de la Comunicación (CINCO)  |
| Lesbia-Julia Morales*                      | Coordinadora de Programas          | IBIS-Dinamarca  |
| Cirilo Otero                               | Director                           | Centro de Iniciativas de Políticas Ambientales (CIPA)   |
| Edgar Sotomayor*                           | Coordinador Nacional               | Programa de Apropiación, Seguimiento y Evaluación de la ERCERP (PASE)   |
| Ana Quirós Víquez                          | Directora                          | Centro de Información y Servicios de Asesoría en Salud (CISAS)  |
|  | Miembro                            | Ex-Enlace Nacional de la Coordinadora Civil (CC)  |
| María Rosa Renzi*                          | Asesora Económica                  | Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD)   |
| Martha Yllescas                            | Comisión Ejecutiva                 | Comité Nacional Feminista (CNF); Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres (MAM); Consultora independiente                           |
| Ricardo Zambrana                           | Miembro                            | Ex-Enlace Nacional de la Coordinadora Civil (CC)  |
| Mauricio Zúñiga                            | Director Ejecutivo                 | Instituto para el Desarrollo y la Democracia (IPADE)  |
| Luis Caldera, Jorge Granera, Reyneris Soza | Director Ejecutivo y colaboradores | Asociación de Desarrollo Municipal (ADM)  |

\* 'Non-CSO' respondents

## Annex II: Interview Guidelines

### Guía para entrevistas a OSC en Nicaragua

#### *Datos para la entrevista*

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Nombre:                |  |
| Función:               |  |
| Organización:          |  |
| Fecha, hora, duración: |  |

#### *Introducción*

Me presento. (Repartir tarjetas de visita) Presentar a la ayudante.

Muchas **gracias** por estar dispuestos a hacer esta entrevista.

**Primero les voy a contar algunas cosas sobre el proyecto**, al que ustedes contribuyen de forma importante con esta entrevista, y por último haré **algunas observaciones sobre la entrevista**.

- El proyecto, en cuyo marco los entrevisto hoy, **trata de fortalecer la participación de las Organizaciones de la sociedad civil en el seguimiento de Estrategias para la Reducción de la Pobreza**. Par ello hemos desarrollado un instrumento con el cual se pueden identificar y desarrollar acciones de seguimiento relevantes en un determinado país. Lo importante para nuestro proyecto, y para el instrumento, es que se basa sobre todo en informaciones de las OSC – es decir, también en informaciones de ustedes.
- El instrumento está ya desarrollado, pero queremos probarlo en distintos países con el fin de que realmente madure. Al fin y al cabo el instrumento debe ser utilizado por los mismos actores de la sociedad civil y debe servirles para generar conocimientos relevantes sobre el seguimiento de las ERP, a fin de que puedan ocupar una posición activa y relevante en la conformación y aplicación del seguimiento de las ERP.
- Con esta entrevista quisiera **saber cómo se implica en el seguimiento de las ERP la Organización de ustedes y la sociedad civil en su conjunto**, y qué aspectos influyen en la participación de la sociedad civil en el seguimiento de las ERP.
- También voy a realizar entrevistas como estas a miembros de otras organizaciones (OSC). Después, el conjunto permite hacerse una imagen **de los obstáculos concretos, los problemas, las necesidades y los potenciales** en relación con la participación de la sociedad civil en el seguimiento de las ERP en Nicaragua. Sobre esta base se pueden discutir y desarrollar luego actividades adecuadas, que prometen mejorar la situación para todos los participantes en el seguimiento de las ERP.
- Por supuesto **se les informará de los resultados de los análisis**. En la primavera de 2006 estará listo un borrador del informe.

- La entrevista dura en total cerca de una hora. No tienen que **contestar a todas las preguntas**. Si en una pregunta les parece que no tienen nada que responder, me lo dicen. Y en caso que no comprendan bien una pregunta deben decírmelo también.
- A lo mejor tampoco les entiendo yo inmediatamente, ya que el castellano no es mi lengua materna, por eso tal vez tenga que preguntar en algunos momentos. Les pido por favor que **hablen despacio**, para que entienda lo más posible inmediatamente.
- Lo que ustedes me cuenten **se tratará de manera confidencial**. En el informe todas las declaraciones se presentan como anónimas.
- ¿Tienen alguna pregunta sobre el modo de proceder, o quieren hacer alguna observación antes de que empecemos?

### Preguntas

| Preguntas   | Respuestas | Aspectos a considerar   |
|---|------------|---|
| <p>1. Por favor, cuénteme qué hace exactamente su Organización en el ámbito del seguimiento de las ERP.</p> <p>(¿Cuál es el potencial particular de esta OSC? ¿Qué temas trata? ¿En qué niveles interviene?)</p>                |            | <p><b>Temas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Apropiación/ implicación responsable</li> <li>b) Descentralización</li> <li>c) Información &amp; Transparencia</li> <li>d) Diálogo</li> <li>e) Capacidades</li> </ul> <p><b>Niveles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Situación política &amp; cultural</li> <li>ii) Liderazgo gubernamental y actitud</li> <li>iii) Acuerdos institucionales</li> <li>iv) Eficiencia de las OSC</li> </ul> <p><b>Ámbitos:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Obstáculos, problemas</li> <li>▪ Potenciales</li> </ul> |
| <p>2. ¿Hay obstáculos que impiden desarrollar completamente sus actividades de seguimiento?</p> <p>(¿Cuáles son los obstáculos particulares de esta OSC? ¿Qué temas/aspectos estorban? ¿En qué nivel están los obstáculos?)</p> |            |   |

| Preguntas  | Respuestas | Aspectos a considerar   |
|--|------------|---|
| <p><b>3. En resumen:</b><br/>¿Cómo definiría usted su potencial particular en el seguimiento de las ERP y cuáles son los impedimentos más importantes para desarrollar plenamente sus actividades?</p>   |            | <p><b>Temas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Apropiación/ implicación responsable</li> <li>b) Descentralización</li> <li>c) Información &amp; Transparencia</li> <li>d) Diálogo</li> <li>e) Capacidades</li> </ul> <p><b>Niveles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Situación política &amp; cultural</li> <li>ii) Liderazgo gubernamental y actitud</li> <li>iii) Acuerdos institucionales</li> <li>iv) Eficiencia de las OSC</li> </ul> <p><b>Ámbitos:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Obstáculos, problemas</li> <li>▪ Potenciales</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>4.</b> Si considera la sociedad civil en su conjunto, ¿dónde cree usted que tiene la sociedad civil nicaragüense una posición fuerte en el seguimiento de las ERP?</p> <p>Si no puede responder a esta pregunta globalmente:</p> <p>¿Conoce usted otras OSC importantes que realicen actividades de seguimiento de las ERP? ¿Y dónde están sus puntos fuertes y potenciales particulares?</p> <p>(¿Cuál es el potencial particular de las OSC en general / de las llamadas OSC? ¿Qué temas tratan? ¿En qué niveles intervienen?)</p> |            |   |

| Preguntas   | Respuestas | Aspectos a considerar   |
|---|------------|---|
| <p>5. ¿Hay obstáculos que impiden desarrollar completamente estas actividades de seguimiento?</p> <p>(¿Cuáles son los obstáculos particulares de las OSC? ¿Qué temas/aspectos estorban? ¿En qué niveles están los obstáculos?)</p>  |            | <p><b>Temas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Apropiación/ implicación responsable</li> <li>b) Descentralización</li> <li>c) Información &amp; Transparencia</li> <li>d) Diálogo</li> <li>e) Capacidades</li> </ul> <p><b>Niveles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Situación política &amp; cultural</li> <li>ii) Liderazgo gubernamental y actitud</li> <li>iii) Acuerdos institucionales</li> <li>iv) Eficiencia de las OSC</li> </ul> <p><b>Ámbitos:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Obstáculos, problemas</li> <li>▪ Potenciales</li> </ul> |
| <p>6. <b>En resumen:</b><br/>¿Cómo definiría usted el potencial particular de la sociedad nicaragüense, o de las llamadas OSC en el marco de nuestra entrevista, en el seguimiento de las ERP, y cuáles son los obstáculos más importantes que impiden el desarrollo completo de estas actividades?</p> |            |   |
| <p>7. ¿Cuál sería la <b>intervención más importante</b> para fortalecer la participación de la sociedad civil en el seguimiento de ERP?</p>   |            |   |

| Preguntas  | Respuestas | Aspectos a considerar   |
|--|------------|---|
| <p><b>Instrumento</b></p> <p>8. ¿Cómo obtiene(n) usted(es) informaciones sobre las actividades de las OSC en el seguimiento de las ERP?</p> <p>¿En qué medida se recogen estas informaciones de manera sistemática?<br/>¿Con qué propósito/objetivo?</p> |            | <p><b>Temas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Apropiación/ implicación responsable</li> <li>b) Descentralización</li> <li>c) Información &amp; Transparencia</li> <li>d) Diálogo</li> <li>e) Capacidades</li> </ul> <p><b>Niveles:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Situación política &amp; cultural</li> <li>ii) Liderazgo gubernamental y actitud</li> <li>iii) Acuerdos institucionales</li> <li>iv) Eficiencia de las OSC</li> </ul> |
| <p>9. ¿Cree usted que es necesario recoger tales informaciones de manera sistemática?</p>  |            | <p><b>Ámbitos:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Obstáculos, problemas</li> <li>▪ Potenciales</li> </ul>   |
| <p>10. En caso afirmativo, ¿par qué? ¿Quién podría recoger y elaborar esas informaciones?</p>  |            |   |

## Final

¿Quiere usted añadir alguna otra cosa que no hayamos tratado y que sería importante respecto a la participación de la sociedad civil en el seguimiento de las ERP en Nicaragua?

Con esto hemos llegado al final de la entrevista.

- En caso que más tarde se le ocurra algo que pueda ser importante en el contexto de la participación de la sociedad civil en el seguimiento de las ERP, por favor, póngase en contacto conmigo. Usted tiene mi tarjeta de visita.
- Yo también me permitiré ponerme en contacto con usted, si necesitara alguna aclaración en el momento de analizar la entrevista.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Dirección exacta,<br>posibilidades de<br>contacto: |  |
|--|--|

- En todo caso le enviaré un borrador de mi informe, y puede darme su opinión al respecto.

Le agradezco cordialmente su franqueza en la conversación.

Y le deseo mucho éxito. Hasta la vista/Adiós.

## Memo

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Documentos recibidos: |  |
|-----------------------|--|

## MPO para rellenar

| Tema                                    | Nivel        | Situación política y cultural | Liderazgo gubernamental y actitud | Eficiencia de las OSC |
|---|--------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
|   |              |                               |                                   |                       |
| Apropiación/<br>Implicación responsable | limitaciones |                               |                                   |                       |
|   | potenciales  |                               |                                   |                       |
| Descentralización                       | limitaciones |                               |                                   |                       |
|   | potenciales  |                               |                                   |                       |
| Información & Transparencia             | limitaciones |                               |                                   |                       |
|   | potenciales  |                               |                                   |                       |
| Diálogo                                 | limitaciones |                               |                                   |                       |
|   | potenciales  |                               |                                   |                       |
| Capacidad                               | limitaciones |                               |                                   |                       |
|   | potenciales  |                               |                                   |                       |