

Involving Civil Society in PRS Monitoring: An Analysis of Critical Gaps in Ghana

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Abbreviations

AA	ActionAid
APR	Annual Progress Report
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DA	District Assembly
DACF	District Assembly Common Funds
DCE	District Chief Executive
DFID	Department for International Development
DHMC	District HIPC Monitoring Committees
EBPM	Evidence-Based Policy Making
GHW	Ghana HIPC Watch
GoG	Government of Ghana
GPRS	Ghanaian Poverty Reduction Strategy
G-RAP	Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IDEG	Institute of Democratic Governance
IFI	International Finance Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KR	Key Requirement
MDBS	Multi-Donor Budget Support
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDF	Pooled Donor Fund
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategies
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RAVI	Rights and Voice Initiative
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
seco	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SEND	Social Enterprise Development Foundation
TC	Technical Committee
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WiLDAF	Women in Law and Development in Africa

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). 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 alliance of Swiss development NGOs.

The analytical tool has been developed based on a literature review on CSOs' role in monitoring the implementation of national PRSPs (Swiss Coalition, 2004).¹ The Ghana case study is the first application of the tool and also served to validate and advance the approach.

Background on PRS monitoring

According to recent figures, a total of 49 countries have prepared national PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers). 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. Burkina Faso, Tanzania, and Uganda have already revised their original strategies and several other countries, among them Ghana, are in the process of developing their second generation PRSPs. In addition, eleven countries have prepared interim PRSPs, and ten have initiated processes that may result in full-grown PRSPs (World Bank/IMF, 2005).

With a growing number of countries entering the implementation stage of poverty reduction strategies, attention is increasingly turning towards PRS monitoring. This focus is critical as efforts towards monitoring PRS provide the opportunity to learn what works and what does not. 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 policy. And 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. And, 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..." (ODI, 2004, p. 1). Both, the central role of monitoring for the implementation of national poverty reduction strategies and the political nature of

¹ In 2005 Swiss Coalition changed its name to Alliance Sud.

monitoring processes have also been confirmed in the latest PRS review (World Bank/IMF, 2005).

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 participation in PRS monitoring

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 (Foresti et al. 2002). 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 of the poor as they are often firmly rooted in the grassroots. Second, their engagement promotes transparency and accountability in governance. Third, they contribute to external checks on government. Fourth, CSOs' 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 potential 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 the above added value is 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 and incapacity of governments to open up space for civil society participation.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the overall initiative is to advance PRS monitoring by enhancing the participation of CSOs in the entire monitoring process. Using the analytical tool to assess CSOs' current monitoring role will help design suitable options to strengthen the involvement of civil society.

The present study has two objectives. First, it aims at identifying and analysing critical gaps in the participation of the Ghanaian civil society in PRS monitoring. It is important to note that the analysis draws on the perspective of CSOs. That is, the perception of the civil society itself as regards the constraints to participation provides the key source of information for the analysis. Apart from serving as basis for developing activities to improve civil society's participation, informing CSOs about the outcome of the analysis is expected to strengthen their voice in the multi-stakeholder dialogue on PRS monitoring (see next chapter).

Secondly, the study aims at putting the analytical tool to the test. Its application in Ghana is a pilot case study to validate the feasibility and efficiency of the tool. Based on the findings, suggestions are made on how to revise the tool.

Structure of the report

The next chapter details the conceptual framework on which the analytical tool is based. The chapter also describes the procedure of developing and applying the tool and points to some limitations of the study.

Chapter 3 presents the application of the tool to Ghana. It starts with the set-up of the case study, followed by a detailed constraint analysis and clustering exercise. The last section is dedicated to the identified gaps in the participatory arrangement of the monitoring process of the Ghanaian Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS).

Chapter 4 reviews the experience of the pilot application and discusses required modifications of the analytical tool. The chapter outlines the key features of the revised tool and presents the way forward regarding the application of the suggested approach.

Chapter 5 offers some concluding remarks on the major findings as well as on the pilot application of the analytical tool.

2. Development of the Analytical Tool

Conceptual framework

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 by incorporating the perspective of the civil society in the multi-stakeholder dialogue on PRS monitoring at the meta level ('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.
- 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 include 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.

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, which is the key target group of poverty reduction policies, is essential to this dialogue. The analytical tool has the potential to assist CSOs in shaping their position on deficiencies of civil society participation in PRS monitoring and in formulating remedial actions, as the analysis is based on their own perception of the issue.

Procedure and outputs

This section presents the steps and outputs of the procedure used in developing the analytical tool and in applying it in the pilot case in Ghana. The steps are summarised in Table 1 and discussed below.

Table 1: Individual steps of the procedure

Step	Input	Output
1) conceptualising the approach	knowledge and information on CSOs' participation in PRS monitoring	conceptual framework
2) literature review	documented country experiences and synthesis reports	challenges of PRS monitoring systems
3) identifying key requirements for effective monitoring	identified challenges of PRS monitoring systems	set of key requirements
4) grouping key requirements	relevance of individual key requirements to the participation of civil society	core set of key requirements
5) preparing data collection	core set of key requirements	interview guidelines
6) identifying information sources	contacts in Ghana	interview partners and Ghana specific monitoring documents
7) collecting information in Ghana	semi-structured face-to-face interviews	primary information from key stakeholders
8) constraint analysis	primary information	structured constraints and their cause-effect relationships
9) clustering constraints	structured constraints and their cause-effect relationships	matrix of clustered constraints
10) deriving critical gaps	structured and clustered constraints	critical gaps of CSOs' participation
11) revising analytical tool	case study experience from applying the tool in Ghana	revised tool
12) next steps	procedure based on the revised tool	participatory process derived from the suggested approach

- 1) *Conceptualising the approach.* Starting point of developing the analytical tool was the perception that CSOs' participation in PRSP monitoring is generally weak but would be central as also emphasised in the principles of the PRSP initiative. This led to the conceptual framework outlined in the previous section.
- 2) *Literature review.* The review of monitoring experiences focused on selected PRSP countries² and additional documents on the issue. This step aimed at identifying major

² The review included the experiences in seven countries: Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Tanzania, Uganda, and Vietnam. The countries were selected based on a) the duration of PRSP implementation, b) the availability and relevance of monitoring experience, and c) their relevance to Swiss development cooperation.

challenges of PRSP monitoring systems in general. The analysis of monitoring experiences was structured along the main elements of PRSP monitoring systems: institutional framework, actors, monitoring levels, indicators and data, and feedback. It focused on good practice and lessons learned in order to identify critical challenges in setting up and running an effective monitoring system.

- 3) *Identifying key requirements.* The identified challenges served to derive a set of so-called Key Requirements (KR) for PRSP monitoring systems.³ There are 26 KR in total, seven concerning the institutional arrangements, six concerning the actors, five each on the monitoring levels and the indicators and data, and three related to feedback. The KR are listed in annex I.
- 4) *Grouping key requirements.* Out of the 26 KR, a group of five were selected based on their specific relevance to civil society involvement. Table 2 depicts that core set of KR, together with the category they belong to.

Table 2: Key requirements with strong relevance to civil society actors

No.	Key Requirement	Element of PRSP monitoring system
KR 1	Roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in the monitoring process are clarified and accurately described in the terms of reference, which also include key linkages between individual institutions.	Institutional Framework
KR 5	Particular efforts are made to strengthen the monitoring capacity at the sub-national level by, among others, scaling up and institutionalising local monitoring initiatives of CSOs.	Institutional Framework
KR 7	To the extent that formal and informal monitoring systems exist in parallel, they are seen as complementary. To reap the benefits of synergies, productive partnerships based on the comparative advantage of the individual partners are encouraged, with the ultimate goal of merging the two systems into one comprehensive monitoring system.	Institutional Framework
KR 9	To tap available monitoring resources outside the government system and to exploit the potential of a well-coordinated multi-stakeholder approach to PRSP monitoring, close links are established between key actors, particularly from civil society and the donor community.	Actors
KR 11	Civil society organisations have already been involved in the design of the monitoring system. Their comparative advantage is consistently exploited to add value to the monitoring system through their activities at all monitoring levels, including in the area of awareness rising and dissemination of monitoring outcomes.	Actors

- 5) *Preparing data collection.* Information was collected through interviews in Ghana. Interview guidelines were developed based on the KR. The interviews consisted of one to three open questions on each of the KR included in the core set.
- 6) *Identifying information sources.* In order to get first-hand information on CSOs' participation in the monitoring process, the analysis is to be informed by the perspective of

³ Details on the literature review and the development of the key requirements have been documented in the study "Towards assessing PRSP monitoring systems" (Swiss Coalition 2004). Copies of the study are available from the authors.

CSOs themselves. Therefore, knowledgeable representatives of CSOs were the primary source of information. They have been identified based on existing country contacts and through CSO networks. In addition, further information sources were tapped, including from relevant monitoring documents and through interviews with donor and government representatives.

- 7) *Collecting information in Ghana.* Information was collected using semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the selected key stakeholders. Details on the process are given in the first section of chapter 3.
- 8) *Constraint analysis.* Responses from the interviews were analysed to identify important constraints to CSOs' participation. An effort was then made to determine cause-effect relationships between individual constraints. Details are discussed in the second section of chapter 3.
- 9) *Clustering constraints.* A matrix was developed to meaningfully cluster the constraints. Details are discussed in the third section of chapter 3.
- 10) *Deriving critical gaps.* The critical gaps were identified based on the analysis of the clustered constraints. Details are discussed in the fourth section of chapter 3.
- 11) *Revising analytical tool.* Based on the experience of the pilot application, modifications are suggested to enhance the validity of the tool. Details are discussed in chapter 4.
- 12) *Next steps.* Suggestions are made on how to apply the approach in a participatory process. Details are discussed in the last section of chapter 4.

Limitations

For the better appreciation of the remaining part of the study, it is important to take note of the following limitations of the analysis. First, the primary purpose of the analysis (and consequently the collection of information) has been to identify gaps to CSOs' participation. As a result, the focus of the report is on shortcomings, failures, and constraints of the monitoring system, rather than on its strength and successes. In addition, a systematic account of CSO activities and capacities does not exist in Ghana. Second, the analysis is about the involvement of CSOs in the monitoring process. Other aspects of the monitoring system in Ghana or a general appraisal of the system is not systematically included in the study. Third, the analysis is first and foremost based on information that reflects the perception of CSO representatives in Ghana. The focus on this specific perspective is by purpose as detailed above but may conflict with other perspectives. Fourth, data collection took place in early 2005. Recent developments are not included in the analysis. Finally, it should be kept in mind that the development of the tool is work in progress.

3. Gap Analysis

Ghana case study

The government of Ghana initiated the process of formulating a PRSP in the year 2000. The full Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS)⁴ 2003-2005 is entitled "An Agenda for Growth and Prosperity" and was approved by the Boards of the World Bank and the IMF at the beginning of 2003. The Monitoring and Evaluation Plan of the GPRS was published as stand-alone document (Government of Ghana, 2003). In July 2004, Ghana reached the HIPC Completion Point.⁵ The revision process of the GPRS started shortly after and will lead to the GPRS II, the poverty reduction strategy for the coming four years (2006-2009).⁶

Ghana was selected as case study country out of several reasons. First, the country has already been implementing its GPRS for two years. Thus the monitoring system was expected to be up and running. Second, good contacts to CSO representatives have already been established in the context of an earlier study on civil society participation in the formulation of the GPRS (Swiss Coalition, 2003). Third, seco as one of the sponsors of the initiative is an active member of the Multi-Donor Budget Support group (MDBS) in Ghana and therefore highly interested in effective GPRS monitoring and enhancing civil society's participation in the process.

First-hand data were collected through 16 face-to-face interviews, primarily with representatives from CSOs. But one government representative and two donor representatives were also interviewed. They have been selected on the basis of contacts from the earlier study mentioned above and recommendations from people familiar with the Ghanaian civil society. The interviewed organisations included faith-based and women groups, national and local NGOs, grassroots organisations, regional and national NGO networks, and think tanks. The interviewed government representative is in charge of decentralised monitoring in the M&E Unit of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC). Among the donor community present in Ghana, representatives from UNDP and the European Commission were interviewed. The interviewed persons and their affiliations are listed in annex II. Apart from the targeted interviews, the consultant had several other meetings to gather additional information and exchange views on issues related to GPRS monitoring.

The interviews lasted between one and three hours, with an average duration of about two hours. Respondents gave generously of their time and demonstrated great flexibility to adjust to the consultant's tight schedule. Guidelines were used to conduct the semi-structured interviews. They turned out to be useful to structure the discussion, to follow up on responses, and to direct the conversation towards relevant key requirements. The guidelines were also sufficiently flexible to adjust the interviews to the specific expertise of individual respondents. Since the point of departure for the data collection was the set of key requirements relevant to civil society participation, the responses from the interviews yielded a wealth of information on constraints to expanding CSOs' role in the GPRS monitoring process.

⁴ See http://poverty2.forumone.com/files/Ghana_PRSP.pdf

⁵ For details on debt relief granted under the HIPC initiative see the Completion Point Document: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDEBTDEPT/CompletionPointDocuments/20250952/Ghana-E-Compl.pdf>

⁶ In the meantime, the revision process has been finalised and the GPRS II adopted by parliament. The new PRSP document is now called "Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy: The Coordinated Program for the Economic and Social Development of Ghana", see <http://www.ndpc.gov.gh/pdf/Final%20GPRS%20II%202006.pdf>

There are three general observations related to issues of definition. First, the question of who legitimately represents civil society is a concern mentioned by several donors. Consequently, efforts are under way to systematically look at this issue in order to "separate the wheat from the chaff" as one respondent put it. Several CSO representatives also complained about NGOs being founded or co-opted by government. The specially coined term 'GONGO' for 'Government NGOs' is illustrative for that. A related issue is the employment of local consultants who are affiliated with CSOs. When asked about the involvement of civil society in the design of the GPRS M&E system, for instance, opinions differed due partly to the fact that government's M&E Plan was mainly written by such consultants. Equally, the last Annual Progress Report (APR) was mainly prepared by a group of local consultants, making it difficult to assess how far civil society's voice is represented therein.

Second, monitoring defined in the narrow sense misses out a range of relevant activities closely associated with or considered as preconditions of monitoring. A good example is the recent initiative for a pooled donor fund, which has been discussed in the donors M&E working group. In fact, the initiative is a much broader effort under the label 'Evidence-Based Policy Making' (EBPM). Similarly, CSOs have been involved in training activities related to the use of community score cards or in workshops aimed at strengthening the voice of citizens. Should this kind of activities be taken into account when analysing CSOs' role in monitoring?

Third, monitoring often is not immediately related to the GPRS but might still be seen to be in the spirit of the GRPS i.e., holding government accountable for its poverty reduction policies and calling for more transparency in the allocation and disbursement of budgetary resources. Another example concerns the activity of a group of CSOs to monitor the District Assembly Common Funds (DACF). These funds have been established in the context of decentralization efforts and, therefore, are not directly linked to the GPRS. On the other hand, the purpose of DACF is definitely in line with the GPRS objectives. The following statement of a CSO representative underscores this point. "I feel that while PRSP is important as a policy driver for development, it is rather restrictive as a space for civil society engagement in development and poverty reduction".

Constraint analysis

The focus of the analysis is on assessing the extent to which Ghana's GPRS monitoring system meets the five key requirements relevant to the involvement of civil society (see Table 2) and, in particular, on identifying the obstacles to enhance civil society's role in the monitoring process. Accordingly, the analysis of the interviews centred on the constraints brought up by the interlocutors.

As a first exercise, interview responses were analysed and synthesised in order to extract critical constraints. The resulting list includes 56 constraints. It should be noted that the naming of the constraints is sometimes accentuated to make the point and keep the formulation short. For instance, the constraint "no monitoring tools" does not mean that there are no monitoring tools at all but that respondents felt that the CSO community does not sufficiently have them at hand. The 56 constraints are external to CSOs as well as internal. Some are directly linked to the involvement of civil society while the influence of others is in a more indirect way.

Next, an effort was made to relate the constraints to the individual key requirements and to establish cause-effect relationships among the constraints. These relationships are mainly based on the interviews where "why"-questions were used to elicit underlying causes of constraints (which are the more indirect constraints to participation) and to relate them to each

other. A plausibility check helped to verify the cause-effect relationships and also revealed further relationships between the various constraints.

The next step consisted of isolating the constraints considered to directly affect the key requirements under discussion. Table 3 lists the core set of key requirements and the directly associated constraints.

Table 3 Direct constraints affecting the key requirements relevant to civil society

No	Key requirements	No	Direct Constraints
1	Roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in the monitoring process are clarified and accurately described in the terms of reference, which also include key linkages between individual institutions.	1 2 3 5 13	CSOs have not been substantially involved in the design and set-up of the MS No systematic and functioning institutional arrangement for CSO involvement Government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited Lack of effective CSO coordination Lack of formal and institutionalised multi-stakeholder dialogue
5	Particular efforts are made to strengthen the monitoring capacity at the sub-national level by, among others, scaling up and institutionalising local monitoring initiatives of CSOs.	2 3 4 5 6 7 8	No systematic and functioning institutional arrangement for CSO involvement Government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited Lack of interest and demand for local monitoring activities from local government Lack of effective CSO coordination No proactive agenda-setting and continuity by CSOs Formal and informal monitoring are not linked No demand for local monitoring activities from local people
7	To the extent that formal and informal monitoring systems exist in parallel, they are seen as complementary. To reap the benefits of synergies, productive partnerships based on the comparative advantage of the individual partners are encouraged, with the ultimate goal of merging the two systems into one comprehensive monitoring system.	2 3 4 9 10 11 12 13	No systematic and functioning institutional arrangement for CSO involvement Government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited Lack of interest and demand for local monitoring activities from local government No joint framework for formal and informal monitoring activities No culture of accountability No clearing house for monitoring information Analytical capacity of CSOs is weak Lack of formal and institutionalised multi-stakeholder dialogue
9	To tap available monitoring resources outside the government system and to exploit the potential of a well-coordinated multi-stakeholder approach to PRSP monitoring, close links are established between key actors, particularly from civil society and the donor community.	3 5 10 14 15	Government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited Lack of effective CSO coordination No culture of accountability Weak internal government coordination Weak government commitment to monitoring
11	Civil society organisations have already been involved in the design of the monitoring system. Their comparative advantage is consistently exploited to add value to the monitoring system through their activities at all monitoring levels, including in the area of awareness rising and dissemination of monitoring outcomes.	1 4 12 16 17 18 19 20	CSOs have not been substantially involved in the design and set-up of the MS Lack of interest and demand for local monitoring activities from local government Analytical capacity of CSOs is weak Few CSO monitoring activities CSOs face serious financial constraints Poor access to information CSOs are usually weak to engage in policy dialogue Deficient leadership and internal organisation of some CSOs

Table 3 shows that in total 20 direct constraints have been identified. Each of the five key requirements is affected by five to eight constraints. For the key requirement regarding clearly defined roles and responsibilities for CSOs, for instance, the direct constraints include the failure of involving CSOs in the initial process of designing and setting-up the monitoring system (C1), the lack of a systematic and functioning institutional framework (C2), government's reluctance to involve CSOs (C3), the lack of effective CSO coordination (C5), and the absence of a sustained multi-stakeholder dialogue on GPRS monitoring (C13). Some of the constraints are very fundamental such as 'no culture of accountability' (C10) while others are more specific e.g., 'no clearing house for monitoring information' (C11). It can also be observed that several constraints impact on more than one key requirement. Moreover, as the further analysis will demonstrate, constraints may at the same time directly impact on one key requirement and indirectly (through other constraints) on others.

For a more thorough and systematic analysis of the constraints and their underlying causes, the cause-effect relationships among the set of constraints and their implications on the key requirements and beyond have been structured around the 20 direct constraints. The outcome is presented in Table 4. Explanations are given following the table.

Table 4 Cause-effect relationships between identified constraints

No	Direct constraint	Causes (1 st degree: ❶ 2 nd degree: ❷ ❸ 3 rd degree: ❹)	Effect on ...		other constraints (1 st level: ⇨ 2 nd level: ⇨ 3 rd level: ⇨)
			main KR	other KR	
C1	CSOs have not been substantially involved in the design and set-up of the MS	❶ government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited (C3)	1 11	16 17 23 24 26	⇨ no ownership of MS by civil society (U1) ⇨ No demand for local monitoring activities from local people (C8)
C2	No systematic and functioning institutional arrangement for CSO involvement	❶ government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited (C3) ❶ early stage of monitoring process (U2)	1 5 7	16 17 23 24 26	
C3	Government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited	❶ fears of public scrutiny (U3) ❷ no culture of accountability (C10) ❶ weak government commitment to monitoring (C15)	1 5 7 9	17 23 24 26	⇨ CSOs have not been substantially involved in the design and set-up of the MS (C1) ⇨ no feedback to influence policy (KR24) ⇨ informal activities not in APR (U4) ⇨ poor access to information (C18) ⇨ No systematic and functioning institutional arrangement for CSO involvement (C2)

continued on next page

No	Direct constraint	Causes	Effect on ...		
			main KR	other KR	other constraints
C4	Lack of interest and demand for local monitoring activities from local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ low skills and few resources of local government (U5) ❷ flawed decentralisation process (U6) ❸ early stage of democratisation (U7) ❶ local governments feel threatened (U8) ❷ early stage of democratisation (U7) ❶ no incentives for local government (U9) ❷ flawed decentralisation process (U6) ❸ early stage of democratisation (U7) ❷ insufficient monitoring resources (U10) ❸ weak government commitment to monitoring (C15) ❷ No demand for local monitoring activities from local people (C8) ❶ agenda setting takes place at national level (U11) ❷ flawed decentralisation process (U6) ❸ early stage of democratisation (U7) 	5 7 11	14 15 16 17 23 24 26	
C5	Lack of effective CSO coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ umbrella organisation is weak (U12) ❶ CSOs face serious financial constraints (C17) 	1 5 9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ lack of vertical integration (U13) ⇒ information and experience not shared among CSOs (U14) ⇒ nat. and local activities not linked (U15)
C6	No proactive agenda-setting and continuity by CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ analytical capacity of CSOs is weak (C12) ❶ no core funding (U16) ❷ CSOs face serious financial constraints (C17) ❶ deficient leadership and internal organisation of some CSOs (C20) ❶ no demand for local monitoring activities from local people (C8) 	5	15 16 17 23 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ missing follow-up (U17) ⇒ no feedback to influence policy (KR24) ⇒ informal activities not in APR (U4) ⇒ official monitoring documents not challenged (U18)
C7	Formal and informal monitoring systems run in parallel (KR7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ no systematic and functioning institutional arrangement for CSO involvement (C2) ❶ no joint framework for formal and informal monitoring activities (C9) ❶ no culture of accountability (C10) ❶ no clearing house for monitoring information (C11) 	5	24 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ no feedback to influence policy (KR24) ⇒ informal activities not in APR (U4)

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No	Direct constraint	Causes	Effect on ...		other constraints
			main KR	other KR	
C8	No demand for local monitoring activities from local people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ no ownership of MS by civil society (U1) ❷ flawed political framework of GPRS (U19) ❷ CSOs have not been substantially involved in the design and set-up of the MS (C1) ❶ social and economic exclusion (U20) 	5	6 14 15 17 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ no proactive agenda-setting and continuity by CSOs (C6) ⇒ no incentives for local government (U9) ⇒ lack of interest and demand for local monitoring activities from local government (C4)
C9	No joint framework for formal and informal monitoring activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited (C3) ❶ lack of formal and institutionalised multi-stakeholder dialogue (C13) 	7		
C10	No culture of accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ early stage of democratisation (U7) 	7 9	6 10 13 20 21 23 24 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ fears of public scrutiny (U3) ⇒ Government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited (C3) ⇒ Weak government commitment to monitoring (C15)
C11	No clearing house for monitoring information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ insufficient monitoring resources (U10) ❷ Weak government commitment to monitoring (C15) 	7	6 24 26	⇒ lack of transparency (U21)
C12	Analytical capacity of CSOs is weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ no monitoring tools (U22) ❷ new domain for CSOs (U23) ❸ typically service-driven (U24) ❶ no skills to manage information (U25) 	7 11	14 15 16 17 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ weak advocacy role (U26) ⇒ no proactive agenda-setting and continuity by CSOs (C6)
C13	Lack of formal and institutionalised multi-stakeholder dialogue (KR9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ weak internal government coordination (C14) ❷ weak government commitment to monitoring (C15) ❶ no culture of accountability (C10) ❶ Lack of effective CSO coordination (C5) ❶ government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited (C3) 	1 7	3 12 14 15 16 17 18 23 24 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ no feedback to influence policy (KR24) ⇒ informal activities not in APR (U4)
C14	Weak internal government coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ weak government commitment to monitoring (C15) 	9	24 26	

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No	Direct constraint	Causes	Effect on ...		
			main KR	other KR	other constraints
C15	Weak government commitment to monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ no culture of accountability (C10) 	9	3 6 8 10 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 23 24 25 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited (C3) ⇒ weak motivation of NDPC staff (U27) ⇒ insufficient monitoring resources (U10) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ key monitoring institution (NDPC) is weak (U28) ⇒ lack of transparency (U21) ⇒ No clearing house for monitoring information (C11) ⇒ weak motivation of NDPC staff (U27) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ key monitoring institution (NDPC) is weak (U28) ⇒ weak internal government coordination (C14)
C16	Few CSO monitoring activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ early stage of monitoring process (U2) ❶ new domain for CSOs (U23) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❷ typically service-driven (U24) ❶ CSOs face serious financial constraints (C17) 	11	13 14 15 16 17 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ focus on training and awareness raising (U29)
C17	CSOs face serious financial constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ skills lack to generate internal resources (U30) ❶ skills lack to access external funding (U31) 	11	14 15 16 17 24 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ lack of effective CSO coordination (C5) ⇒ donor dependency (U32) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ agenda donor-driven (U33) ⇒ no core funding (U16) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ weak advocacy role (U26) ⇒ no proactive agenda-setting and continuity by CSOs (C6) ⇒ information and experience not shared among CSOs (U14) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ national and local activities not linked (U15) ⇒ Few CSO monitoring activities (C16)
C18	Poor access to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited (C3) 	11	13 14 24 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ lack of transparency (U21) ⇒ weak advocacy role (U26)
C19	CSOs are usually weak to engage in policy dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❶ political polarisation (U34) ❶ scared of dialogue (U35) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❷ political polarisation (U34) ❶ CSOs lack know-how to engage in dialogue (U36) 	11	13 16 17 20 24 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ no feedback to influence policy (KR24) ⇒ political polarisation (U34)

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No	Direct constraint	Causes	Effect on ...		
			main KR	other KR	other constraints
C20	Deficient leadership and internal organisation of some CSOs		11	24 26	⇒ no proactive agenda-setting and continuity by CSOs (C6)

The logic of Table 4 is as follows. Each row represents the chain of the cause-effect relationships related to one of the direct constraints. These constraints are the starting point and are labelled C1 to C20. The third column consists of the underlying causes. They are numbered from ❶ to ❸ to indicate the sequence from the more direct to the more indirect and fundamental causes. The causes of a particular constraint can be identical with direct constraints from other rows (labelled with 'C' in the third column) or stem from the set of the remaining, more indirect constraints derived from the interview responses. They are labelled with 'U'. The last column deals with the effects of the direct constraints and is split up into three sub-columns. The first sub-column concerns key requirements of the core set (those considered relevant for civil society). The second sub-column concerns key requirements from the remaining group. The third sub-column includes effects of the respective constraint on other constraints (C and U). Three levels (indicated by the intended arrows) are differentiated in this sub-column to specify the cause-effect relationships among the effects.

The information included in Table 4 can be illustrated by the following example. Constraint C3 (Government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited) is considered to have two immediate causes, i) government fears public scrutiny (U3) and ii) its commitment to monitoring appears to be weak (C15). Furthermore, the first cause is rooted in the lack of a culture of accountability (C10). To dig for even deeper causes, the row that contains C10 in the first column has to be analysed. Here the cause of 'no culture of accountability' is considered to be the 'early stage of democratisation' (U7). In terms of effects of constraint C3, government's limited willingness to involve CSOs is negatively influencing all but the last key requirement of the core set (first sub-column). Furthermore, the constraint affects other key requirements (second sub-column) such as the use of light monitoring instruments and participatory approaches (KR 23) and, thus, the need to monitor poverty dimensions beyond per capita income (KR 17), and the requirement for institutionalised and iterative feedback mechanisms to demonstrate accountability to key stakeholders (KR 24). The third sub-column shows effects on other constraints such as the failure to substantially involve CSOs in the design and set-up of the monitoring system (C1), the absence of informal monitoring activities in the annual progress report (U4) – as a consequence of not meeting KR 24, CSOs' poor access to relevant information (C18), and the lack of a systematic and functioning institutional arrangement for their involvement (C2).

Some general lessons can be drawn from analysing Table 4. First, obvious constraints are often rooted in deeper political and cultural challenges i.e., focusing on the direct constraint of identified shortcomings may not lead to a sustained solution of the problem. Second, to overcome constraints, a linear approach by looking at the immediate cause-effect relationships might not be sufficient as the multiple and indirect causes point to a network structure of the underlying reasons of the problem. Third, constraints to one monitoring function may impact on a range of less obvious dimensions, including on constraints to other monitoring functions.

The way of presenting the constraints in the above table is an effort to deal with a complex system of interdependent elements. It offers a clearer and more systematic structure of the cause-effect relationships of individual constraints. However, the structure comes at the

expense of losing both the view of the overall picture and, more importantly, the focus on the individual key requirement.

The analysis of constraints related to the involvement of CSOs in the monitoring process would considerably benefit from clustering them around suitable issues. This challenge has been taken up in the next section.

Clustering

The most obvious clustering structure of the constraints would be around the individual key requirements of the core set. The effort failed, however, due to the overlaps and broad formulation of the key requirements that does not allow accommodating the multifaceted nature of the constraints.

Based on the combination of a deductive and an inductive approach, four levels have been identified along which the constraints are to be arranged. Taking the overall monitoring framework as starting point, a promising attempt to determine the levels has been to think about areas considered important to successful civil society involvement. They concern the broader environment to participation in terms of societal traditions, the more specific environment related to the main actor (government) in the monitoring framework, the relevant institutional setting, and the capability of civil society to meaningfully engage in monitoring activities. The definition of the levels has been further informed by both, the concept of Eberlei (2002, 2005) who used a set of systematic aspects of effective participation and reflections on the structure developed for the categorisation of the key requirements (see chapter 2). The inductive approach analysed the types of constraints and their position within the chains of cause-effect relationships. The resulting levels are 1) the political and cultural climate, 2) government's leadership and attitude, 3) institutional arrangements, and 4) CSOs' performance. Definitions of the four levels are given below.

- The *political and cultural climate* refers 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 and cultural climate 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 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 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 provide the structure for communication, exchange, coordination, and collaboration between the actors involved in the monitoring process.
- *CSOs' performance* relates to their potential in terms of organisational skills and resources, internal structures, management capabilities, experiences, and the organisation's culture. It further includes networking among organisations, political sensitivity, and analytical

expertise. In general terms, this level captures constraints to CSOs' potential to meaningfully engage in the monitoring process.

While the delineation between the levels may not always be entirely clear-cut, no major problems were encountered in assigning all of the 56 constraints to the individual levels. Next, an effort was made to identify a thematic structure that would cut across the four levels and help to refine the clustering of the constraints. Five issues have been found to be critical for meaningful civil society involvement: ownership, decentralisation, information and transparency, dialogue, and capacity. Similar to the approach used to define the levels, a combination of deductive and inductive thinking was employed to arrive at those issues. From the deductive perspective, the identification of the issues benefited from the PRSP principles and the set of key requirements for effective monitoring systems. The inductive perspective included reflecting on the thematic orientation of the constraints to help derive the five issues. Their relevance for the present analysis is detailed below.

- Country *ownership* is one of the PRSP principles and generally regarded as 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. 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 accountability, which in turn promotes citizens' interest and engagement in public policies.
- The term *dialogue* is preferred 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 strengths of the partners, to clarify roles and responsibilities, coordinate monitoring activities, and ensure information flow and feedback. Also, 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.

The levels as well as the issues have been arranged from the more general to the more specific. As shown below, this sequencing facilitates the discussion of critical gaps. Table 5 presents the matrix with the constraints arranged vertically along the levels and horizontally along the issues. Whenever possible, the constraints in the individual cells have also been arranged from the more general to the more specific. The labelling at the end of each constraint corresponds to the one introduced in Table 4.

Table 5 Matrix of clustered constraints

Level Issue	Political and cultural climate	Government leadership and attitude	Institutional arrangements	CSOs' performance
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No demand for local monitoring activities from local people-C8 • Early stage of monitoring process-U2 • Social and economic exclusion-U20 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSOs have not been substantially involved in the design and set-up of the MS-C1 • No ownership of MS by civil society-U1 • Flawed political framework of GPRS-U19 		
Decentralisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flawed decentralisation process-U6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of interest and demand for local monitoring activities from local government-C4 • Low skills and few resources of local government-U5 • Agenda setting takes place at national level-U11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No incentives for local government-U9 	
Information & Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No culture of accountability-C10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak government commitment to monitoring-C15 • Informal activities not in APR-U4 • Lack of transparency-U21 • Poor access to information-C18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clearing house for monitoring information-C11 • Weak internal government coordination-C14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No skills to manage information-U25 • Weak advocacy role-U26 • Lack of effective CSO coordination-C5 • Lack of vertical integration-U13 • Information and experience not shared among CSOs-U14 • Missing follow-up-U17 • Official monitoring documents not challenged-U18 • National and local activities not linked-U15
Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early stage of democratisation-U7 • Political polarisation-U34 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government's willingness to involve CSOs is very limited-C3 • Formal and informal monitoring are not linked (KR7)-C7 • Fears of public scrutiny-U3 • Local governments feel threatened-U8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No systematic and functioning institutional arrangement for CSO involvement-C2 • No joint framework for formal and informal monitoring activities-C9 • Lack of formal and institutionalised multi-stakeholder dialogue (KR9)-C13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSOs are usually weak to engage in policy dialogue-C19 • Scared of dialogue-U35 • CSOs lack know-how to engage in dialogue-U36 • Umbrella organisation is weak-U12

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Level Issue	Political and cultural climate	Government leadership and attitude	Institutional arrangements	CSOs' performance
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New domain for CSOs-U23 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient monitoring resources-U10 • Weak motivation of NDPC staff-U27 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key monitoring institution (NDPC) is weak-U28 • Donor dependency-U32 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No proactive agenda-setting and continuity by CSOs-C6 • Analytical capacity of CSOs is weak-C12 • Few CSO monitoring activities-C16 • CSOs face serious financial constraints-C17 • Deficient leadership and internal organisation of some CSOs-C20 • No core funding-U16 • No monitoring tools-U22 • Typically service-driven-U24 • Focus on training and awareness raising – U29 • Skills lack to generate internal resources-U30 • Skills lack to access external funding-U31 • Agenda donor-driven-U33

Critical gaps and their determinants

Generally speaking, moving towards the upper left-hand corner in Table 5 points to more fundamental constraints while moving towards the lower right-hand corner suggests constraints linked to more operational problems. Concerns related to institutional matters are located in the area between the two extremes. However, the in-depth analysis of the gaps has to take into account the cause-effect relationships presented in Table 4 and partly reflected by moving from left to right in Table 5.

Based on the five issues defined in Table 5, the following critical gaps are identified (see Box 1). They are discussed below, drawing on the analysis of cause-effect relationships (Table 4), the clustering of the constraints (Table 5), and further information provided by the respondents or included in written materials.

Box 1 Critical gaps related to civil society involvement in GPRS monitoring

1. Lack of ownership by civil society
2. Government's neglect of local level
3. Monitoring information not put to full use
4. Effective dialogue structures hampered by mutual mistrust
5. Deficient capacity limits monitoring activities

1. Lack of ownership by civil society

Ownership is intrinsically political as also evidenced by the concentration of the constraints at the levels 'political and cultural climate' and 'government leadership and attitude' in Table 5. Ownership of PRSP monitoring, of course, requires that stakeholders have established

ownership of the PRS process in general. As has been found in an earlier study on the GPRS (Swiss Coalition, 2003), however, a large majority of Ghanaians do not own the GPRS partly because they have not even been aware of its existence. To be sure, much effort has been made in the meantime – both by government and CSOs – to publicize the strategy, including through regional consultations and a popular version of the document. But the flawed political framework of the GPRS, it was argued, has not allowed local people to get much involved in the formulation of district development plans. Also, the monitoring agenda is largely defined at the national level, leading to a lack of interest and commitment to monitoring. The basic obstacle to real participation of deprived people is attributed to their social and economic exclusion, pointing to the long-term nature of strengthening ownership by this group. As a result, they have no capacity to get interested or to generate a demand for monitoring. The lack of availability or access to relevant information and the absence of a culture of accountability contributes to that situation and also points to the close link to the issue of information and transparency.

What about CSOs who are supposed to represent the vulnerable groups of society? Their involvement in GPRS monitoring, it was suggested, is based on their having been pushed by donors and northern NGOs rather than on strong ownership. Another reason explaining the weak ownership by CSOs is related to the fact that the monitoring system is not yet firmly established. Key to achieve strong ownership among CSOs would have been their participation in the design and set-up of the GPRS monitoring plan. Apparently that did not happen and some CSOs were not even aware of the process to develop a monitoring plan. The repercussion of the lacking ownership of the monitoring process by CSOs and civil society at large also translates in an inadequate demand on local governments to monitor and report on the implementation and effectiveness of poverty reduction policies and programmes.

2. Government's neglect of local level

Many donors and governments in sub-Saharan Africa consider decentralisation as "a strategy that will bring service delivery closer to consumers, improve the responsiveness of the central government to public demands and thereby reduce poverty, improve the efficiency and quality of public services and empower lower units to feel more involved and in control." (Asante and Ayee, 2004, p.1). In Ghana, the decentralisation process started in 1988. Decentralisation is also included in the 1992 Constitution and is the subject of a range of subsequent legislations. Each of the roughly 140 districts is governed by a District Chief Executive (DCE) and the District Assembly (DA).

In spite of progress in decentralising governance functions and public services, respondents consider the decentralisation process as seriously flawed in terms of its key functions of devolving political power and fiscal decentralisation. The DCE as well as one third of the DA members are appointed by the President rather than elected by the local population, partisan politics dominate DAs, and line ministries are reluctant to integrate their departments and agencies into the local government system. The District Assembly Common Fund (DACF), a major source of development funding is sometimes delayed and spending decisions restricted by instructions from the central government.

In terms of monitoring, major concerns relate to the weak capacities and performance of local governments. In the respondents' judgements DAs are seriously under resourced, poorly skilled, and often feel threatened by monitoring activities of CSOs. It was also mentioned that allocated monitoring budgets at the local level are not always disbursed. These deficiencies are seen as major reasons for the general lack of DAs' interest in and recognition of local

monitoring activities of CSOs. The monitoring system is further considered to represent a top-down approach with power too much centralised, restricting local government's freedom to use and act on monitoring outcomes. There appears to be no incentive structure at the district level that would help to generate a demand from local governments for replicating monitoring activities carried out by CSOs in other districts.

3. Monitoring information not put to full use

There are two dimensions to this gap: i) CSOs' difficulty to access government information required for their own monitoring activities and ii) information on monitoring outcomes and experiences generated by CSOs that are not fully exploited – neither by CSOs themselves nor by the government. The latter is illustrated by the fact that informal monitoring activities are not documented in the Annual Progress Report (APR). Also, one CSO representative mentioned that they sent the report of a major monitoring exercise to several ministries and MPs and asked for a meeting to discuss the findings. But nobody replied to this communication.

The lack of an accountability culture, partly based on the relatively short history of the democratic state in Ghana, is seen as a major cause for the weak government commitment to monitoring, resulting in the poor information management among others. The poorly resourced and staffed monitoring coordination unit (NDPC) and the preparation of the APR, which was funded by donors and written by consultants, has been used to illustrate government's lack of commitment to monitoring. It was further suggested that the major purpose of the APR was to meet World Bank and IMF requirements rather than providing accountability to Ghanaians or using it as management tool to keep track on progress in implementing the GPRS and enhancing evidence-based policy making. The poor access to information was mentioned as the major constraint to enhance CSOs' involvement in monitoring. The difficulty in accessing information – and its timely availability – also undermines the effective participation of CSO actors in meetings and workshops related to monitoring.

To make most out of available information, from governments sources as well as from own monitoring activities, CSOs need to work much closer together and learn to better manage information. Working closer together implies in the first place, to link grassroots organisations with more advocacy-type of organisations (vertical integration of local-level and national-level monitoring) in order to share findings and experiences and, second, to come up with stronger coordination structures for the CSO community to ensure efficient information flows and enhance political influence. CSO's poor information management (and generally weak analytical skills) means a missed opportunity to use available information for advocacy purposes or to challenge official reports. Moreover, scarce resources and the resulting lack of proactive agenda setting implies that monitoring activities of CSOs are often not followed through and consolidated, therefore, feedback is barely given to improve performance and decision-making processes of the government.

To institutionalise exchange of information and ensure enhanced transparency, a clearing house for monitoring information has been suggested. Its relevance in terms of the availability of complete and timely information would depend on the improved internal coordination of planning units, the empowerment of NDPC, and sufficient monitoring resources (particularly for local governments) on the one hand and CSOs capacity to properly assemble, document, and package their monitoring outcomes on the other.

4. Effective dialogue structures hampered by mutual mistrust

There is an uneasy relationship between government and CSOs, which is shaped by mutual mistrust. Politics play a dominant role and government (national and local) feels threatened by CSOs as the "state sector is not used to be watched"⁷. The relationship is characterised by confrontation rather than constructive exchange and cooperation. This is partly explained by the early stage of the democratisation process and reinforced by the prevalence of partisan politics. There appears to be a vicious cycle in this context: government is not willing to involve CSOs and ignores voices from civil society because it feels criticised and threatened. As a result, CSOs make a lot of noise through media to get heard. Government, in turn, sees its feelings confirmed and, thus, continues to ignore CSOs, which forces the latter to be even more outspoken. Confidence-building measures with third-party moderation might be required to overcome the presently observed polarisation. However, one has to keep in mind that CSOs also have a watchdog role that – by definition – implies a certain tension between state and non-state actors.

Many CSOs seem also to feel uncomfortable to enter in a policy dialogue with government, partly because they lack the experience and know-how and partly because they are scared due to the political polarisation. In turn, the weakness of CSOs to engage in a policy dialogue adds to the polarised situation.

While some institutional arrangements for CSOs' participation do exist in the monitoring plan, they are either not suitable to bring CSOs fully on board (focus on technical issues, low frequency) or not yet functioning. The limited willingness of the government to systematically involve CSOs in the monitoring process has been mentioned several times. The expression "reluctant commitment" was used by one of the respondents to describe the view that CSOs' involvement is the result of external (donor) pressure rather than a conscious effort by the government. Government's reluctance to involve CSOs has also been attributed to its weak commitment to monitoring. Government's stance towards CSOs also meant that civil society was not adequately represented in the development of the monitoring plan. This had implications on the ownership of the monitoring system, as mentioned above, but also prevented CSOs from lobbying for more effective institutional arrangements for engagement and a genuine partnership among monitoring actors.

No institutionalised framework exists to bring formal and informal monitoring activities and outcomes together i.e., the two systems run in parallel. As a consequence, government is not always aware of CSOs' monitoring efforts – and vice versa. This situation bears the risk of duplication and of other inefficiencies based on ignoring potential synergies.

What is missing is a multi-stakeholder dialogue on political and institutional issues related to monitoring. This was also felt by several respondents. Such a dialogue would have to involve key monitoring actors, i.e. government, CSOs, and donors. The Technical Committee (TC) foreseen in the monitoring plan could have served as forum to bring the key actors together. Considered as a key element of the M&E plan, it is supposed to "give strategic direction on all aspects of GPRS M&E" (Government of Ghana, 2003, p.18) and, its intended composition is broad. However, even two years after the publication of the monitoring plan, the TC was not established. Some doubts were raised as to whether government is really committed to set up the committee. Regarding CSOs, there is an urgent need for a strong and sufficiently representative coordination body in order to successfully enter into a dialogue with

⁷ Quotes that are not sourced have been taken from the interviews.

government and donors. GAPVOD, the umbrella organisation of Ghanaian NGOs is widely considered weak and, in its current constitution, does not appear to be up to the task.

5. Deficient capacity limits monitoring activities

Capacity constraints of government agencies, particularly of local governments and NDPC, also affects CSOs monitoring activities as it limits opportunities to join forces and reap synergies. Moreover, low capacity and poor motivation of government institutions involved in monitoring compromises the availability of required information and the demand and absorption potential for CSOs' monitoring findings.

The observed focus of many CSOs on training activities and awareness rising (as opposed to monitoring in the narrow sense) can be explained by i) their relative strength in service provision, ii) the need to train and rise awareness as a precondition to get people involved in monitoring, and iii) the easier access to funding.

Scant analytical and institutional monitoring capacity of CSOs is due partly to the fact that it is a new domain for them as they traditionally focused on service provision. The poor analytical capacity particularly concerns the lack of (participatory) monitoring tools, skills to manage information, and expertise to turn monitoring outcomes into reports that could serve as powerful advocacy instruments. Deficient institutional capacity relates to networking skills, leadership and organisational management, and know-how to engage in the policy dialogue.

The major capacity constraint, however, is the weak financial basis of most CSOs. Both the lack of ability and opportunity to generate internal resources and insufficient skills to access external funding are put forward as explanations. The negative impact of the financial constraints on shaping poverty reduction policies through feedback has already been mentioned above. However, the low financial potential has severe implications beyond limited monitoring activities. The proper functioning of the organisation is affected as core funding to cover fixed costs and investments (e.g. for capacity building) is lacking. Coordination and cooperation among CSOs is undermined by the stiff competition for available funding. Many CSOs, it was said, are first and foremost busy with their institutional survival, leaving little room to engage in activities that are not funded. Also, proactive agenda setting and operational continuity becomes an illusion and – as a consequence – the organisations' agenda is to a large extent determined by funding agencies. Donor dependency, in turn, has potentially negative consequences in terms of CSOs freedom to criticise donors or to use the results of funded activities early on and without restrictions.

Summarising the gaps

Based on the analysis of constraints put forward by the respondents, five critical gaps related to civil society's participation in GPRS monitoring have been identified. They can be summarised as follows. First, the large majority of the Ghanaian civil society does not feel *ownership* of the GPRS. And without ownership of the GPRS in general, efforts to establish ownership of the corresponding monitoring process is futile. Lack of information, deficient involvement in processes related to the GPRS, and the generally centralistic approach of government are considered the main reasons for that situation. Moreover, the weak ownership by CSOs is also related to the fact that the development of the GPRS monitoring system was not a participatory process.

Second, slow progress in *decentralisation* and the often insufficient capacities, resources, and performance of local governments undermine their commitment to monitoring and lead to a lack of incentives to support and replicate CSO monitoring activities.

Third, the lack of an accountability culture and the poorly resourced and staffed monitoring coordination unit is blamed for the insufficient access to relevant government *information*. Furthermore, the government is criticised for paying little attention to monitoring activities of CSOs. On the other hand, collaboration and information sharing among CSOs appear to be deficient and – together with the lack of proactive agenda setting – lead to monitoring activities of civil society that are not followed through or not consolidated.

Fourth, the relationship between CSOs and government seems to be confrontational rather than cooperative due partly to the early stage of democratisation and the prevalence of partisan politics. Contributing to that is the weak commitment of the government to fully involve civil society in GPRS-related processes, including monitoring. The resulting lack of an institutionalised framework for a constructive *dialogue* means that formal and informal monitoring activities are running in parallel rather than complementing one another to produce synergies.

Fifth, civil society's monitoring potential is also restricted by the weak analytical and institutional *capacity* of many CSOs and – more indirectly – the capacity constraints of government agencies. The most serious limitation, however, is the weak financial basis of CSOs. The resulting donor dependency makes it difficult for CSOs to develop their own monitoring agenda and the stiff competition for available funds undermines effective collaboration among CSOs.

Some general conclusions can be drawn from the discussion of the critical gaps. First, they all have a major political dimension, which calls for political and institutional changes to effectively tackle them. Second, and related to that, the structural causes of the gaps and the novelty of participatory bottom-up monitoring require approaches that pay due attention to the long-term nature of the gaps. Third, the gaps are built on constraints that display important interdependencies. Trying to tackle individual gaps, therefore, needs to keep track of these linkages.

The critical gaps provide the basis for developing potential fields of activities that can help to overcome the gaps. However, before looking at how to move forward from here, necessary methodological modifications are discussed.

4. The Way Forward

The analytical tool is intended in the first place to support civil society actors in successfully participating in the multi-stakeholder dialogue on PRS monitoring. It is doing so by strengthening CSOs capacity to identify, analyse, and articulate the constraints facing their participation in the monitoring process.

The development of the tool is work in progress. After an initial desk-based phase to develop the conceptual framework of the tool and the procedure for the field study, a pilot case was carried out in Ghana where the tool guided the process of information collection. The analytical phase of the case study applied the tool to assess the information and to identify critical gaps related to CSOs' participation in the monitoring process. The application of the tool – both to gather information and analyse it – revealed several challenges that have to be addressed in order to advance the usefulness and validity of the tool. Once the iterative process of applying and revising the tool is concluded, it will be handed over to interested CSOs as a contribution to civil society empowerment.

The empowerment is envisaged to take place at various levels. First, and in line with the main purpose mentioned above, the tool will strengthen civil society's voice in the multi-stakeholder dialogue on PRS monitoring by enhancing its credibility and reputation as competent partner. Second, and based on the findings of the Ghana case, it will assist CSOs in preparing an inventory on their different functions and activities in the monitoring process. Third, CSOs can use the tool to develop their funding applications. Finally, dominating the tool contributes to strengthening CSOs' analytical capacity.

Experiences and required modifications

Valuable experiences have been gained in applying the analytical tool to Ghana. They are used to identify necessary modifications and to come up with a revised version of the tool for future applications.

The core set of key requirements turned out to be helpful for preparing interview guidelines that allowed the effective collection of information on important constraints to CSOs' participation in the monitoring process. But the key requirements were less suitable for structuring the identified constraints as they are too broad to serve as structuring device (they rather represent important principles). The way out was the development of a matrix to structure the constraints and subsequently derive a set of critical gaps that are clearly defined in terms of constraints at different levels (Table 5).

The analysis – using the matrix of clustered constraints in combination with the table on the cause-effect relationships (Table 4) – is complex and time consuming. Moreover, the suggested deliberation with stakeholders on specific activities would become rather cumbersome, and the present version of the tool is not suitable to be handed over to CSOs. To simplify the analysis and the discussion of the outcome, therefore, it is suggested to replace the combined consideration of the table on cause-effect relationships and the matrix by a thorough reading of the matrix as a system of interdependent issues with levels linked to each other.

The major shortcoming relates to the focus of the tool on constraints and gaps. As a result, the outcome of the analysis (the matrix of clustered constraints) only presents limitations and deficiencies of CSOs' participation. What is not shown, however, are all the encouraging

monitoring activities and the existing capacity of Ghanaian CSOs. Capturing that potential is fundamental to identify specific activities that will provide promising entry points to tackle the critical gaps. In addition, putting the potentials on the agenda is more in line with the empowerment approach.

To include the potentials in the analysis, systematic information is required on existing CSO activities and their capacity to contribute to monitoring. Additional information on the specific strength of the monitoring system as related to the levels defined in the matrix is to be collected. Consequently the matrix of clustered constraints has to be complemented with clustered potentials.

Revised tool

The original tool was based on the core set of key requirements. However, the experience of applying that tool in the Ghana case revealed the limitations of the key requirements for the analytical phase. The tool has therefore been modified. The revised tool is called the 'CSO Participation Matrix' and is presented below.

Table 6 CSO Participation Matrix

Level Issue		Political and cultural climate	Government leadership and attitude	Institutional arrangements	CSOs' performance
Ownership	constraints				
	potentials				
Decentrali- sation	constraints				
	potentials				
Information & Transparency	constraints				
	potentials				
Dialogue	constraints				
	potentials				
Capacity	constraints				
	potentials				

The CSO Participation Matrix is adapted from the matrix of clustered constraints used in the present analysis. The lines consist of the same issues since they are considered the key drivers of participation in the monitoring process, beyond specific country cases. Similarly, the levels in the columns have been kept as they are considered to reflect the structure of a general PRS monitoring framework. However, in order to systematically analyse the potentials of the monitoring system – in addition to the constraints – each row of the matrix is separated into two lines, one for the constraints and the other for the potentials.

The matrix will be employed to prepare the interview guidelines, to analyse the collected information, to identify the critical gaps and related potentials, and to define future monitoring activities.

- *Preparing the interview guidelines* involves the formulation of questions on the constraints to and the potentials of participation in the monitoring process, structured along the issues and levels of the matrix. The matrix will further help to prepare comments for the interviewer on follow-up questions and the general set-up of the interviews as well as to identify respondents with specific expertise in individual subjects covered in the matrix.
- *Analysing the collected information* focuses on isolating from the responses important constraints to CSOs' participation in the monitoring process and on existing activities and capacities that are useful to enhance CSOs' monitoring role. The matrix serves as structuring device to cluster these elements.
- *Identifying the critical gaps and related potentials* is based on the completed matrix. The detailed description of the gaps and potentials requires careful reflection on links and interdependencies among the constraints and among the existing activities/capacity of the same line but also between elements linked to an individual gaps and those of the remaining ones.
- *Defining monitoring activities* to tackle the identified gaps requires a participatory approach that involves CSO actors with a stake in PRSP monitoring. The group setting first serves to deliberate on the identified gaps and potentials in order to verify and prioritise them. The matrix will be used as critical source of information and will also help to structure and focus the discussion process. Based on the outcome of the deliberation, participants will have to define promising entry points in terms of monitoring activities to effectively tackle the critical gaps.

It is further expected that the completed matrix and its outcome provide participants in the multi-stakeholder dialogue a useful foundation to discuss roles and responsibilities of different monitoring actors, bottlenecks of the system and approaches to overcome them.

Next steps

This section outlines the next steps in advancing the application of the analytical tool in Ghana. The effort aims at strengthening CSOs' monitoring role in the GPRS process.

A remarkable lack has been observed of systematic and detailed information about civil society's existing monitoring activities and capacity. CSOs do not have a full picture on their engagement in the monitoring process nor on relevant monitoring capacities available in individual organisations. Similarly, the donor community does not appear to have a complete record of donor-supported monitoring activities of CSOs. The need to improve the documentation on CSOs' role in the monitoring process has also been confirmed by several interview respondents. As has been argued in the previous sections, the analysis would substantially benefit from incorporating the existing monitoring potential of CSOs in order to identify entry points to tackle the critical gaps.

As next step, therefore, it is suggested to carry out a study on civil society's monitoring activities and capacity. There are definitely some competent Ghanaian CSOs who could take up this task. The compilation of a systematic inventory would then provide the basis, together with the critical gaps, for developing monitoring activities in a participatory approach. A workshop with broad participation of interested CSOs is considered the suitable format to implement such an approach. As mentioned above, workshop activities would be guided by the outcome of the analysis and should include the validation of the critical gaps and identified potentials, the discussion on potential entry points to strengthen CSOs' monitoring role, and the prioritisation of specific activities.

Efforts to advance the application of the analytical tool in Ghana would also address some of the critical gaps identified above. First, exposing workshop participants to the tool and its application contributes to strengthening the analytical capacity of CSOs (gap 5). Second, it helps prepare CSOs for the multi-stakeholder dialogue (gap 4) by producing the basis for constructive discussions about the existing CSO potential to perform specific monitoring functions. Third, the compilation of the inventory of CSOs' activities and capacity targets poor information sharing among CSOs (gap 3).

For illustrative purposes only, annex III lists five options that have the potential to tackle some of the critical gaps and thus support CSOs' role in GPRS monitoring. After a brief description of each option, the specific gaps addressed by the individual options are highlighted.

5. Concluding Remarks

The conclusions summarize the principle findings of the study and are structured into general remarks, the application of the tool in Ghana, and the need for methodological consolidation.

General remarks

- The notion of PRS monitoring being a highly political process has been confirmed. Consequently, efforts to improve the monitoring system have to pay more attention to the political setting when identifying participatory strategies and designing specific actions to support CSO activities.
- The systematic and institutionalised participation of CSOs at the meta level would help enhance national ownership in Ghana. But it would go beyond that by enriching the analysis of the monitoring system through a broader foundation of experiences and information. The proposed tool has the potential to contribute to that process.
- Designing effective actions in support of monitoring actors has to be based on a thorough diagnosis of problems followed by the analysis of existing potentials and the feasibility in terms of real institutional and organizational capacities.

Application of the tool in Ghana

- Strengthening the analytical potential of CSOs beyond Accra-based think tanks is a critical condition for civil society's involvement in monitoring in general and its recognition and influence in the multi-stakeholder dialogue on monitoring in particular.
- The application of the analytical tool in Ghana enabled the systematic determination of five critical gaps in the participatory arrangement of the monitoring process. The critical gaps are based on the analysis of constraints that were put forward by CSO representatives.
- The application further points to the importance of CSOs documenting their potential in terms of existing monitoring activities and their capacity to contribute to GPRS monitoring.
- Further progress in defining entry points for strengthening CSOs' participation requires closing the identified gap regarding information on CSOs' potential to effectively contribute to monitoring, and determining specific activities in a participatory approach.
- The extent of critical gaps reflects the early stage of the monitoring process in Ghana, weak government commitment to involve civil society, poor institutional arrangements, and the inadequate coordination and capacity of the organised civil society.

Need for methodological consolidation

- PRS monitoring is a complex system of interdependent processes. The effort supported by the analytical tool to pinpoint the cause-effect relationships of identified constraints is therefore going into the right direction.
- The process of systematically clustering the multifaceted set of constraints is fundamental for progress towards the definition of specific activities that will strengthen civil society's role in the monitoring process.

- The pilot application supported the methodological advancement of the tool and pointed to the need to further analyse CSOs' existing potential in order to identify entry points in supporting CSOs' monitoring role.
- The validity of the matrix used for the analysis of constraints and potentials, and the suggested methodological extensions, have to be verified in future applications.

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Annex I: Key requirements

Institutional arrangements:

1. **Roles and responsibilities** of institutions involved in the monitoring process are clarified and accurately described in the terms of reference, which also include key linkages between individual institutions.
2. The PRSP monitoring system builds on **existing monitoring structures**, where useful, and firmly incorporates them. They are adapted to the specific needs of PRSP monitoring. The need to set up a new monitoring institution is credibly justified and its role, responsibilities, and links to relevant institutions are explained in detail.
3. **Leadership and coordination** functions are carefully planned. If a centralised structure is chosen, the lead unit receives particular attention in order to ensure a strategic location, adequate political authority, and sufficient resources in terms of finance as well as skilled staff. At the same time, care is taken to avoid excessive accumulation of power and a burden too heavy in terms of workload and responsibility of the lead unit. Finally, the question of ownership in the other monitoring institutions is carefully addressed. If a network-type of structure is favoured, functions of individual institutions are clear-cut to avoid overlaps, a vacuum of political responsibility, and lack of coordination. Also, communication channels and information flows are well specified and agreed upon by all stakeholders of the monitoring system.
4. The **local-level monitoring** structure is organised in combination with or by narrowly following the institutional system envisaged in the decentralisation process.
5. Particular efforts are made to strengthen the monitoring capacity at the sub-national level by, among others, scaling up and institutionalising **local monitoring initiatives of CSOs**.
6. In order to address weak reporting systems of the local administration, emphasis is also put on the **incentive problem** through the dissemination of centrally available monitoring results to local offices.
7. To the extent that **formal and informal monitoring** systems exist in parallel, they are seen as complementary. To reap the benefits of synergies, productive partnerships based on the comparative advantage of the individual partners are encouraged, with the ultimate goal of merging the two systems into one comprehensive monitoring system.

Actors:

8. **Within government, functions of agencies** involved in monitoring are redefined and channels of communication enhanced to address the challenges of intra-governmental coordination and the institutionalisation of linkages between different government levels, brought about by the specific requirements of PRSP monitoring. In particular, efforts of the central government demonstrate its commitment to fully involve line ministries into monitoring activities.
9. To tap available monitoring resources outside the government system and to exploit the potential of a **well-coordinated multi-stakeholder approach** to PRSP monitoring, close links are established between key actors, particularly from civil society and the donor community.
10. Progress is made in strengthening **monitoring capacity at all government levels**. Capacity building efforts are deliberate and continuous, include the development of appropriate

statistical and analytical skills as well as capabilities to manage organisational transformation and institutional change, and focus on line ministries and the local level in particular.

11. **Civil society organisations** have already been involved in the design of the monitoring system. Their comparative advantage is consistently exploited to add value to the monitoring system through their activities at all monitoring levels, including in the area of awareness rising and dissemination of monitoring outcomes.
12. **Donors provide well-coordinated technical and financial support** to address capacity constraints of the main actors involved in PRSP monitoring. By doing so, they carefully balance the assistance to strengthening capacities required for their own legitimate monitoring needs and those emanating more specifically from PRSP monitoring.
13. **Parliament** is kept regularly informed about monitoring activities and outcomes. It coordinates activities in public expenditure tracking with civil society organisations to provide a check on government dominance in the budget process.

Monitoring levels:

14. At the **input level**, monitoring activities cover the budget formulation and analysis process as well as monitoring public expenditures to their final destination. Also included are efforts to monitor the attainment of revenue targets and key non-financial inputs.
15. **Outputs and outcomes** are systematically monitored to build up a chain of causes and effects that demonstrates the process of moving from inputs to impacts.
16. Efforts to advance the understanding of the **process dynamics** include monitoring activities that focus on institutional and political changes, organisational development, and, most importantly, the empowerment of people. Attention to the latter is evidenced by investments to track progress in strengthening ownership and participation in the implementation of the PRSP.
17. Monitoring impacts includes **poverty dimensions beyond per capita income** and, this is shown by the collection of qualitative information through participative approaches and its employment for constructing a comprehensive poverty measure.
18. **Impacts are not excessively monitored** at the expense of other monitoring dimensions. Particularly at the initial stage of implementing the monitoring system, the main focus of monitoring is on dimensions others than impact as they contribute more to learning for policy design and implementation.

Indicators and data:

19. **Monitoring indicators** are based on objectives and related activities and resources, all clearly spelled out in the PRSP. The final list of indicators reflects attention given to clear prioritisation in terms of what most matters, the availability and reliability of data, and the cost of sustainable tracking them.
20. **Reforms in national and sectoral budgets and the public expenditure management system** reflect efforts to transparency, activity-based costing, and inclusiveness of all poverty-related expenditures to allow resources to be tracked to their final destination.
21. **Adequate capacity** in terms of resources and skilled staff is in place to collect and report routine data, particularly in sectoral ministries and at the local government level.
22. The monitoring system can draw on **capabilities to combine quantitative and qualitative data** as well as data of different quality and from different sources.

23. The value of using *light instruments and participatory approaches* to collect monitoring-related information is well recognised and strongly encouraged.

Feedback:

24. *Feedback mechanisms* are institutionalised and iterative to encourage learning from experience for continuously improving poverty reduction policies and to demonstrate results as part of accountability to key stakeholders.
25. Effective *incentive structures* are in place to promote the use of monitoring results in target institutions.
26. *Monitoring results* are timely reported to key users, disseminated in a user-friendly format, and tailored to the specific needs of individual target groups.

Annex II: Persons interviewed

NAME	DESIGNATION	ORGANIZATION
Alhaji S.A. Wahab	Executive Director	Muslim Relief Association of Ghana (MURAG)
Bernice Sam	National Programme Co-ordinator	Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)
Bruno B. Dery ^{a)}	Deputy Director	National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)
Charles Abbey	Chairman and Executive Manager	Ghanaian Association of Private Voluntary Organizations in Development (GAPVOD) African Development Programme
Delasi Amable	Programme Officer	IBIS-Ghana
Donkris Mevuta	Chairman and Executive Director	Regional Network of NGOs in the Western Region Friends of the Nation (FoN)
Emmanuel Gyimah- Boadi	Executive Director	Center for Democratic Development (CDD)
Gloria Ofori-Boadu	President	Women Assistance & Business Association (W.A.B.A.)
Ismail Lansah	Executive Secretary	Northern Ghana Network for Development (The NetWork)
Joe L.S. Abbey	Executive Director	Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA)
Nii Moi Thompson	Research Fellow	Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG)
Paul Derigubaa ^{b)}	Programme Officer	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Rudolf Amenga-Etego	Executive Director	Foundation for Grassroots Initiatives in Africa (GrassrootsAfrica)
Sadaf Lakhani ^{b)}	Programme Officer	Delegation of the European Commission in Ghana
Siapha Kamara	Chief Executive Officer	Social Enterprise Development Foundation (SEND)
Vitus A. Azeem	Programme Co-ordinator	Centre for Budget Advocacy/ Integrated Social Development Centre (CBA/ISODEC)

a) Government representative

b) Donor representatives

Annex III: Illustrative options to support CSOs' monitoring role

For illustrative purposes only, five options with good potential to strengthen civil society's participation in PRS monitoring are presented below. Each of the option is briefly described, followed by a rough assessment of their focus in terms of tackling individual gaps.

A) **SEND's Ghana HIPC Watch (GHW II) project.** The objective of the Ghana HIPC Watch project is the participatory monitoring and evaluation of HIPC-funded projects using District HIPC Monitoring Committees (DHMCs). The first phase of GHW was launched in 2002 with support of CORDAID Netherlands, Oxfam-UK, and Christian Aid-UK/Ireland. After a range of GPRS training and educational workshop, the GHW carried out local-level monitoring in 24 Districts in the Northern Region between July 2003 and June 2004. The external evaluation of the project concluded that GHW has empowered communities to demand good governance, accountability, and equity; has successfully put in place structures for monitoring HIPC funds and projects; has enhanced gender equality; has increased the capacity of CSOs to engage with the GPRS; and has developed an effective communication and feedback system. The evaluation further recommended to institutionalise the approach. GHW II, therefore, intends to expand the activities to cover all districts that have more than 50 percent of their population in extreme poverty i.e. to include 34 districts in northern Ghana and 39 districts in southern Ghana. The overall goal of GHW II is to "enhance the impact of the GPRS on the resource-poor people by strengthening the capacity of CSOs to plan and carry out participatory monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction projects and programmes". Planned activities include the institutionalisation of the focal NGOs and the DHMCs, enhancing the capacity of women groups, promoting the rights of persons with disability, conducting educational and training workshops, participatory monitoring of HIPC-funded programmes at district level, promoting pro-poor advocacy through active networking, and strengthening SEND's research, training, and advocacy capacity. SEND has prepared a detailed proposal for the three-year programme and is in the process of looking for funding arrangements for the various components of the project.

The project mainly addresses the critical gaps 1 and 2. It strengthens ownership by civil society and CSOs, contributes to generate a demand at the local level, and an interest of district officials by actively involving them in the programme. The project further contributes to the critical gap 5 as it enhances the analytical capacity of local NGOs and of the executing CSO.

B) **IDEG's Governance Issues Forum.** IDEG analysed the reasons for the weak involvement of citizens in discussions on public policies. It found that there is a lack of space for dialogue and problems with an appropriate methodology for constructive engagement. Based on the findings, IDEG developed and tested a mechanism for public deliberation, called the Governance Issues Forum. Several workshops were organised to train trainers on the approach and pilot cases were carried out with support from Danida and UNDP. IDEG is currently developing a programme to carry out Governance Issues Forum in 22 districts. The role of IDEG is to prepare and present 'issue papers' on, for instance, the GPRS revision process or development needs of the people in the targeted region. The issue paper frame the problem, analyse the situation, and detail the needs and what has been done (or not) about it. Furthermore, IDEG will analyse and document the process, act as information source, and feed the information back to the participants of the forum. The idea is that the forums become permanent and that local people are increasingly taking the initiative to organise them. The goal of the project is to encourage the dialogue between ordinary citizens and governmental officials in order to enhance the poverty focus of

government's development policies and to strengthen the capacity of the local population to demand transparency and hold government officials accountable.

The project has a clear focus on the critical gap 1 by empowering people to hold governments officials to account. But it also addresses constraints related to gap 2 and 4 by engaging local government in a dialogue with citizen. Empowering people and developing a dialogue culture is seen as a precondition to involve people in public policy making.

C) WiLDAF-Ghana's assessment of the government's micro-finance policy for women.

WiLDAF's mission is to "uproot the factors that inhibit the development of women in Ghana through rights awareness programmes". It is engaged in research, training, and advocacy activities aimed at influencing government policies for the improvement of women's welfare in Ghana. The proposed project focuses on the Women Development Fund which was established by the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs. The fund had an initial capital of USD 3 million and claims to have reached 150'000 women with micro credit, with plans to support 450'000 women in 2004. The project takes a broad approach and seeks to undertake research on the government's micro-credit policies over the past 15 years; to use the research as a platform to influence micro-credit policy for women through advocacy, dialogue, and lobbying; to build the information base to assist network members; and to enhance the institutional capacity of WiLDAF. Activities include the assessment of the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of past micro-credit policies, recommending and lobbying for improved monitoring systems and policy modifications, enhancing the integration of gender analysis into government programmes and policies, and promoting the institutional development of WiLDAF.

The project is expected to impact on gap 1, but also addresses CSO capacity constraints (gap 5) by enhancing the research skills of WiLDAF. The project's focus on public expenditures and gender issues is considered an central activity in the context of GPRS monitoring.

D) Rights and Voice Initiative (RAVI). The RAVI was initiated in October 2004. The first batch of grant recipients have recently been selected. DFID is the only agency funding RAVI at the moment (GBP 4.7 Million over 5 years). But USAID and the Norwegians have shown interest to participate and other donors are invited to join by pooling funds. Also, efforts are made to bring smaller funds such as the forestry sector civil society fund and the land redistribution project under RAVI. It is further intended to ensure coordination with similar initiative such as the Social Accountability Initiative and the G-RAP. Adopting a right-based approach, RAVI aims at enhancing "citizens engagement with the state in relation to the respect, protection and fulfilment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights". Its focus is on strengthening the capacity of vulnerable groups to exercise voice and demand their rights as well as on enhancing the capacity of CSOs to engage with public institutions and articulate the interests of the poor. The holistic approach around people-centred advocacy will also includes activities related to GPRS monitoring. In fact, the RAVI will focus on GPRS priorities and is interested to strengthen micro-macro linkages in terms of its beneficiaries. The RAVI is managed by a consortium of four organisations with ActionAid (AA) Ghana having the lead. A secretariat has been set up at AA and a steering committee of eminent thinkers is overseeing the initiative. AA will provide quarterly reports to DIFD. The grants are divided in three groups: GBP 0-5'000, GBP 5'000-25'000, GBP 25'000-100'000. For the smaller amounts, RAVI will work with intermediate organisations in order to reach out to small organisations.

The need to empower vulnerable groups to claim their rights is consistent with the critical gap 1. The initiative further aims at strengthening the capacity of CSOs to engage in dialogue with government officials and service delivery institutions, thereby contributing to gap 5. By linking

community-based organisation to more upstream located CSOs, the initiative also touches on gap 4 although the focus is not primarily on GPRS monitoring.

E) **Pooled Donor Fund for EBPM (Evidence-Based Policy Making).** The proposal of a pooled donor fund (PDF) for EBPM resulted from a review on evidence-based policy making in Ghana, jointly conducted by DFID and the World Bank, in coordination with other development partners. The review evaluated existing support and future requirements for effective implementation of the GPRS M&E Plan and EBPM. It found a risk of overlap due to the large number of discrete and disparate donor projects related to M&E and also identified the need to move beyond a narrow definition of M&E. Consequently, the overall goal of the PDF-EBPM is "to help develop the capacity of the Government of Ghana (GoG) to make evidence-based policy making, especially concerning the reduction of poverty in Ghana". In particular, the PDF-EBPM aims at improving collaboration and harmonisation of M&E activities within GoG. It intends to provide funds to implement government's M&E Plan and to employ a full-time facilitator as well as lead technical assistants in each agency. The PDF proposal consists of four elements, i) a pooled donor funding agreement, ii) a multi-stakeholder committee providing a governance mechanism (the so-called Technical Committee), iii) a specialist M&E support unit, and iv) individual grant agreements between the PDF and specific agencies. While the PDF focuses on the GoG, support to strengthen CSOs' participation in the monitoring process is to be included as well, according to DFID. Initial discussions on the proposal in a M&E working group meeting was rather controversial among donors. The actual status of development of the PDF is not known.

Once the PDF proposal has materialised, it would particularly contribute to the critical gap 4 by establishing the dearly needed institutional framework for the multi-stakeholder dialogue on GPRS monitoring i.e. the Technical Committee, which is an important component of the M&E plan not implemented yet. The PDF would further address the weak internal government coordination, a concern related to gap 3 and the need to strengthen the performance of NDPC, which is a constraint of gap 5.