



Operationalizing Human Rights-Based Approaches to Poverty Reduction

Interim Pilot Project Report

Executive Summary

The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) is the practice of applying the norms and standards set out in international human rights law to policies and practices related to development. It is based on the observation that sustainable human development relies upon and contributes to the joint exercise of social, economic, civil, political and cultural rights. The core principles of the approach are universality, accountability and participation.

The present interim report is a documentation of recent field experience from the UNDP pilot project "Operationalizing Human Rights Approaches to Poverty Reduction." The report consists of three Parts. [Part 1](#) presents the background and context of the Human Rights-Based Approach to Poverty Reduction. It describes poverty as both a cause and a consequence of the non-fulfillment of human rights. It outlines the key principles of the Approach: universality, non-discrimination, and attention to vulnerable groups; participation, empowerment, transparency and accountability; and indivisibility and interdependence of rights.

[Part 2](#) describes how the pilot teams prepared and implemented the pilot projects at the national and local levels. At the national level, most efforts have been directed toward influencing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process. These efforts have included both desk-based and participatory analyses of PRSPs from a human rights perspective, as well as sensitization and advocacy toward government officials to the end of incorporating the resulting observations. The PRSP process is long, and the pilot teams are still in the process of monitoring and assessing the direct impact of their efforts. Activities at the municipal level have been more varied. One interesting approach involves a series of workshops at which civil society, local government officials, and thematic experts met to discuss the links between Human Rights and the Millennium Development Goals. Another innovative activity has been the creation and deployment of qualitative surveys and focus groups designed to locate vulnerable and marginalized people, understand their needs, and determine what is being done to improve

their enjoyment of human rights and human development. In both cases the results will be used to guide Local Development Strategies. This part of the report also includes lessons-learned from the Country Office perspective, such as the observation that civil society organizations are more likely to have "internalized" the human-rights discourse than that of the MDGs, and that, consequently, the MDGs are benefited in terms of status and awareness by being linked to human rights. Another lesson is that for future work the identification and assessment of CSO partners should also be based on their ability to involve vulnerable and marginalized people in policy development processes, given the difficulty several country teams have faced in reaching those groups.

[Part 3](#) presents the lessons learned from the perspective of the Global Project Team – that is, project staff based mainly at Headquarters. This set of observations includes the following: that better efforts must be made to ensure that human rights-based projects are designed in synergy with existing related activities within and outside of a Country Office; that project proposals in the future should include a clear strategy for engaging government and civil society effectively in project activities; and that analyses of national frameworks should be conducted by local stakeholders rather than international consultants as much as possible in order to ensure the resonance of this analytical information among local actors. These lessons are meant by way of constructive self-criticism, and it is hoped that they will be broadly useful to the community of practice as human rights-based projects become more central to cooperation frameworks.

The report is therefore intended as a contribution to the wider community of practitioners working with a HRBA. The target audience includes UNDP Country Offices and UN Country Teams interested in applying an HRBA to poverty reduction, as well as practitioners and advocates at all levels interested in learning more about the different applications of the HRBA to poverty reduction on the ground thus far.

List of Acronyms

APM	Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of May Square)
BDP	Bureau for Development Policy
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BIM	Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CISMIL	Centro de Investigaciones Sociales y del Milenio (Center for Social and Millennium Research)
CO	Country Office
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EPPU	Economic Policy and Planning Unit
FLACSO	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Latin American Faculty for Social Sciences)
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
HURIST	The Human Rights Strengthening Programme
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MTDS	Midterm Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RMAP	Rights-Based Municipal Development Programme
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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Introduction

As a compilation of recent field experience from the pilot project "Operationalizing Human Rights Approaches (HRBA) to Poverty Reduction," this interim report is intended as a contribution to the wider community of practitioners working with an HRBA. The target audience includes UNDP Country Offices (COs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) interested in applying an HRBA to poverty reduction, as well as practitioners and advocates at the regional and corporate levels who are interested in learning more about the different applications of the HRBA on the ground thus far.

The pilot project involves eight COs – in Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America – that have begun to apply an HRBA in different ways. Funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and launched in 2004, the project is a joint initiative of the Poverty Group and Democratic Governance Group, each of the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, and The Human Rights Strengthening Programme (HURIST), a joint programme of the Bureau for Development Policy and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The project's objective is to strengthen UNDP and UNCT capacity to support governments and other stakeholders in integrating an HRBA into poverty reduction policy and strategies.

Some of the Country Offices have focused their activities on the national level, working with national counterparts and civil society to undertake activities such as PRSP reviews from a human rights perspective, analysis of national legal human rights frameworks, and sensitization of government counterparts. Others have concentrated on the local level, supporting activities including civil society-government workshops, qualitative surveys and media training. Each of the approaches has shown strengths and weaknesses that can provide lessons for future programming. This report briefly describes the variety of approaches taken, the component activities and the lessons learned.

Most of the information in this publication was gathered during three Cluster Workshops – held in Cotonou (Benin), Sarajevo (Bosnia & Herzegovina) and Quito (Ecuador) between November 2005 and June 2006 – at which persons involved with the pilot project at the country level came together to share experiences and develop capacity. This publication is in part an effort to add value to those interactions by more broadly disseminating the findings they facilitated.

The structure of the document is as follows:

Part 1 contextualizes the HRBA;

Part 2 describes the activities and experiences of the pilot project at the country level, including lessons learned from that perspective;

Part 3 closes with lessons learned from the perspective of the Global Project Team.

Throughout the document, illustrative or supplementary information appears in boxes. This information comprises theoretical or normative background, anecdotal programming snapshots, and the lessons learned from the Country Office perspective.

Part 1:

Background and Context of the Human Rights-Based Approach to Poverty Reduction

1.1: Human Rights and Poverty Reduction: Analytical Linkages

“Wherever we lift one soul from a life of poverty, we are defending human rights. And whenever we fail in this mission, we are failing human rights.”

- Kofi Annan, Former United Nations Secretary-General

The discussion of a Human Rights-Based Approach necessarily begins with an examination of the relationship between human rights and poverty. Poverty is always associated with a lack of means – without resources, it is extremely difficult to satisfy even the most basic needs. But this view alone does not account for the range of cultural, social and political dimensions of the phenomenon. Poverty is not only the lack of income, but also a lack of physical and social goods, such as employment; health; physical integrity; freedom from intimidation and violence; participation in social, political and cultural dynamics; and the ability to live life in respect and dignity.

Human rights, for their part, are universal legal guarantees protecting individuals and groups against actions and inactions that interfere with fundamental freedoms, entitlements and human dignity. As codified in international, regional and national legal systems, human rights comprise civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. While individual rights are usually distinguishable one from the other, they are interdependent – the exercise of one right can depend on and contribute to the enjoyment of another. Denial of the right to education, for example, curtails the likelihood of one’s enjoyment of the right to decent employment.

Poverty is at the nexus of this interdependence – it is both a cause and a consequence of the non-fulfillment of all categories of human rights. On the one hand, without a minimum amount of material resources and physical and social goods, it is impossible to enjoy civil, political, economic, social or cultural rights. For example, if a girl’s family cannot afford the fees or a uniform for her to go to school, she will not be able to exercise her right to education. On the other hand, the non-fulfillment of human rights prevents people from escaping poverty – if she does not enjoy her right to education, she is less likely to have the capacities necessary to find decent work that enables her to transcend poverty.



The poverty definition adopted for the BiH Medium-Term Development Strategy (PRSP) is an example of how the conceptualization of poverty has evolved to take in multiple dimensions – it even draws links between poverty and human rights.

"Poverty is the state when basic preconditions for a dignified life are lacking. It is recognizable that poverty is manifested in different ways, among which are: lack of income and resources sufficient to ensure viable existence; hunger and malnutrition, poor health, limited or no access to education and other fundamental services; increased mortality, including mortality from disease; homelessness and inadequate housing conditions; unsafe environment, social discrimination and isolation."

The MTDS stresses further that: *"Multidimensionality of poverty as a phenomenon permits us to view it as a condition characterized by a lasting or chronic shortage of resources, abilities, choices, security and power required for an adequate standard of living and attainment of other civic, economic, political, cultural and social rights."*

This view of poverty reduction and human rights as interrelated has taken salience in recent years. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, was an important early step, linking the two concepts by stating that *"extreme poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity and ... urgent steps are necessary to achieve better knowledge of extreme poverty and its causes, including those related to the problem of development, in order to promote the human rights of the poorest."*¹

The Human Development Report 2000 went one step further, advancing the idea that poverty is an infringement on freedom, and that the elimination of poverty should be addressed as a basic entitlement and a human right.²

The 2003 UNDP Practice Note on Poverty Reduction and Human Rights makes an even stronger assertion, placing as the opening line a quote from Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002), who states, *"I am often asked what is the most serious form of human rights violations in the world today, and my reply is consistent: extreme poverty."*

Despite this growing conceptual convergence of human rights and poverty, much remains to be done to gain broad programmatic acceptance of the link between the two areas. By locating poverty reduction efforts within the human rights framework, the HRBA represents a vital step toward realization of the synergies between the two disciplines, and toward the achievement of the objectives of each.

1 General Assembly of the United Nations (1993). *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. World Conference on Human Rights.

2 UNDP (2000). *Human Development Report: Human Rights and Human Development*. New York.

Poverty reduction is a central element of a broader goal – development. Similarly, the linking of poverty reduction efforts and human rights concerns can be located as part of the broader linking of human rights and development in international normative and legal frameworks – an association that took explicit form only quite recently.

The modern concept of human rights was born in the aftermath of the Second World War, when, in response to the atrocities committed during that war, including widespread murder of civilians, states decided to undertake the related projects of creating the United Nations and codifying human rights principles into an agreed political, moral and legal framework.

The Cold War, however, with its intractable ideological and political divides, put a freeze on efforts to create a common framework for all human rights. At the United Nations and in international politics in general, "Western" countries tended to emphasize political and civil rights, and "Eastern" countries prioritized economic, social and cultural rights, with an emphasis on development. Neither side acknowledged the validity of the other's view, and the General Assembly accepted the schism in 1966, agreeing on a separate covenant for each of the two spheres.³ A politically-driven division between political and civil rights on the one hand and social and economic rights on the other had solidified – and would remain for decades.

The thawing of the Cold War allowed for a long-awaited opportunity to reconsider old divisions. In 1986 the General Assembly made a declaration asserting the human right to development, and a series of international efforts over the 1990s eroded the conceptual and political barrier segregating different categories of rights.⁴ At the core of these efforts was a series of legally-binding international treaties, in particular the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, which reasserted the obligations that states have toward citizens, and dealt with different types of rights within a common framework.

Developments at the international level were mirrored at the national level, as countries toward the end of the century increasingly enshrined human rights and development issues in constitutions. Moreover, many ratified the UN Charter or UN human rights treaties as constituent elements of national law – even superseding it in many cases. To date, each UN member state has ratified at least one of the seven core United Nations human rights treaties, and eight out of ten states have ratified four or more (see next page).

3 The two covenants are:
General Assembly of the United Nations (1966). *International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights*.
General Assembly of the United Nations (1966). *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.

4 General Assembly of the United Nations (1986). *The Declaration on the Right to Development*.

The Seven “Core” United Nations International Human Rights Treaties

Treaty	Adopted	States parties	Monitoring body
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	1966	155	Human Rights Committee
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	1966	152	Committee on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)	1965	170	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	1979	181	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)	1984	141	Committee against Torture
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	1989	192	Committee on the Rights of the Child
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (MWC)	1990	34	Committee on Migrant Workers

Source: United Nations Treaties Database, <http://untreaty.un.org/English/access.asp> (accessed 21 February 2006).

All countries have ratified at least one of the seven core United Nations human rights treaties, and 80 per cent have ratified four or more.

The Millennium Declaration summarized the emerging consensus by defining development and human rights as intertwined and mutually reinforcing, and placing efforts toward the attainment of both at the center of the international agenda. Signed by 189 UN Member States at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, the Declaration restates and formalizes an international commitment to the core values of freedom, equality, solidarity, peace, security and the rule of law.

In recognition of the need to translate this commitment into action, a broad interagency consultation agreed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are eight concrete, time-bound, quantifiable goals and 18 targets, supported by 48 indicators, to be used for monitoring progress. The MDGs define cumulative outcomes, which serve as proxy indicators, measuring the results of complex actions or processes which are in themselves difficult or impossible to standardize and accurately quantify. The goals and targets were chosen to be clear and concrete, and the indicators were selected based on data that were routinely collected by developing countries to avoid imposing additional burdens on already stretched institutional capacity. The MDGs overlap significantly with human rights in that they both aim to promote and track the progressive realization of certain human rights – especially the often neglected economic and social rights.

In his 2005 "In Larger Freedom" report, Kofi Annan reinforced the link between development – including the MDGs initiative – and human rights. The report asserts that the challenges of human rights, development and security are so closely entwined that none can be addressed effectively in isolation from the others.⁵

5 Secretary-General of the United Nations (2005). *In Larger Freedom – Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*. New York.

1.2: What is a Human Rights-Based Approach to poverty reduction?

A Human Rights-Based Approach uses human rights law as a framework for the achievement of poverty reduction. It does this by applying the intrinsic values (e.g. dignity, non-discrimination and participation) and the basic principles of human rights (e.g. indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, the roles of duty bearers and rights holders) in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction programs and projects. The meanings of these values and principles for human rights-based practice are described below:

1.2.1: Universality, non-discrimination, and attention to vulnerable groups

Individuals are born with human rights and are entitled to them solely by virtue of being human. Universality and non-discrimination mean for an HRBA that all individuals, regardless of personal attributes such as ethnicity or area of residence, must be provided with access to the processes and benefits of development assistance and public goods and policies. Programming cannot be directed only at those who are easiest to reach. This means that HRBA processes must involve special efforts to identify vulnerable and marginalized groups.

1.2.2: Participation, empowerment, transparency and accountability

The international human rights framework upholds every person's and all peoples' entitlement to participate in any civil, economic, social, cultural and political process in which decisions or actions will be taken that affect their life. This is of vital importance in the realm of poverty reduction. Development practitioners agree that the most vulnerable and marginalized groups are frequently missed by poverty reduction efforts. Often this is due to difficulties in recognizing the needs of the poor; in many cases it is also due to discriminatory barriers preventing access to otherwise-available social goods. The HRBA involves supporting efforts to bring these groups into the policy process, from needs assessment to policy design to impact monitoring. It recognizes that citizens should be empowered to be agents of poverty reduction, not passive recipients.

Participation adds transparency to the policy process, increasing awareness as to the commitments a government makes – and those that it does not. This transparency is a tool that can be used to hold governments accountable. Accountability is strengthened through an HRBA by the explicit identification of "duty-bearers" and "rights-holders" for each right – and the links of accountability between the two groups. Duty-bearers are the stakeholders who have the main responsibility to take measures to ensure that human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled for all. These measures include positive actions that the duty-bearer should take, such as passing legislation and allocating funds to increase access to potable water, as well as negative actions that the duty-bearer must avoid, like denying access to education on the basis of race or gender (see Box 3). On the other hand, individuals and communities are rights-holders. Within the process of realizing people's rights, rights-holders have the right as well as the responsibility to participate in the decision-making processes that will affect their situation, and to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the same.

States' obligations according to international human rights law are generally of three kinds:

to respect, to protect and to fulfill human rights:

- To **respect** human rights means simply not to interfere with their enjoyment. For instance, States should refrain from carrying out forced evictions and not arbitrarily restrict the right to vote or the freedom of association.
- To **protect** human rights means to take steps to ensure that third parties do not interfere with their enjoyment. For example, States must protect the accessibility of education by ensuring that parents and employers do not stop girls from going to school.
- To **fulfill** human rights means to take steps progressively to realize the right in question. This obligation is sometimes subdivided into obligations to facilitate and to provide for realization. The former refers to the obligation of the State to engage proactively in activities that would strengthen people's ability to meet their own needs – for instance, creating conditions in which the market can supply the healthcare services that they demand. The obligation to "provide" goes one step further, involving direct provision of services if the right(s) concerned cannot be realized otherwise, for example to compensate for market failure or to help groups that are unable to provide for themselves.

Human rights law recognizes that a lack of resources can impede the realization of human rights. Accordingly, some human rights obligations are of a progressive kind, while others are immediate. For economic, social and cultural rights, States have a core obligation to satisfy the minimum essential level of each right. This level cannot be determined in the abstract; it is a national task, to be undertaken in accordance with human rights principles. However, in any situation where a significant number of people are being deprived of their right to health, housing, food and so forth, the State has a duty to show that all its available resources—including through requests for international assistance, as needed – are being called upon to fulfill these rights. For socio-economic rights, the following obligations are of **immediate effect**:

- The obligation not to **discriminate** between different groups of people in the realization of the rights in question;
- The obligation to **take steps** (including devising specific strategies and programmes) targeted deliberately towards the full realization of the rights in question; and
- The obligation to **monitor** progress in the realization of human rights. Accessible mechanisms of redress should be available where rights are violated.

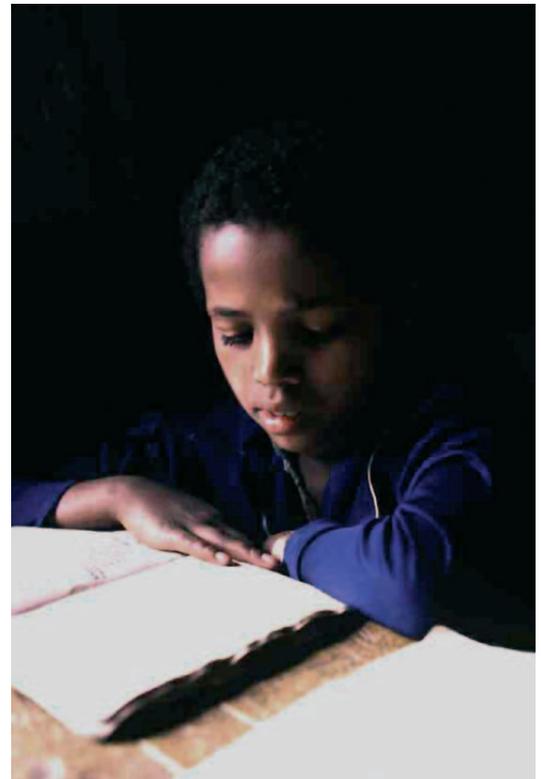
**Excerpt from OHCHR (2006). Frequently Asked Questions on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation.*

The notion of accountability obviously raises the question of mechanisms of enforcement. At the international level, there is no general judicial remedy for human rights violations to individuals (there are only regional systems and courts such as the European Court of Human Rights). At the national level, however, many countries have legislation in place that provides legal recourse for human rights violations. Indeed, there are numerous cases in which citizens have sought and gained legal redress in the domestic judicial system against the national or local government for violations against rights such as the right to adequate housing.⁶ India is often cited as a country in which public interest litigation has been instrumental in defending rights.⁷

It is important to note, however, that accountability in the context of an HRBA goes beyond the purely legal sphere. An HRBA to poverty reduction can help generate political pressure for governments to investigate and act on the needs of the poor, and to create a sense of responsibility of all actors involved in the development process, from government agencies to civil society organizations to the impoverished themselves. In addition to this constructive use of advocacy there are other potential measures to enhance duty bearers' accountability, such as the monitoring of human rights or the development of organizational performance standards for government agencies. Along with meaningful empowerment and participation, these measures can create a culture of compliance that can lead to significant changes that do not always require or rely on the provisions and effectiveness of justice administration systems.

1.2.3: Indivisibility and interdependence

The principle of indivisibility of human rights acknowledges that no category of rights takes precedence over any other. Economic, social and cultural rights must be treated with equal priority as civil and political rights. The principle of the interdependence of rights recognizes that the realization of one right depends on or contributes to the fulfillment of another. For example, fulfilling the right to primary education contributes to the enjoyment of the right to a decent standard of living. For an HRBA, these principles together mean that efforts should be made to fulfill different types of human rights at the same time.



- 6 See Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (2003), *Litigating Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Achievements, Challenges and Strategies*. Geneva.
- 7 See Steiner, Henry J. and Alston, Philip (2000), *International Human Rights In Context: Law, Politics, Morals*, 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Part 2:

Applying the Human Rights-Based Approach to Poverty Reduction at the National or Sub-National Level

2.1: Programmatic background

The conceptual development of HRBAs has led to concrete changes in the work of UN agencies. The United Nations Programme for Reform launched in 1997 included a call for all UN agencies to support the strengthening of human rights through all their activities and programmes. UNDP and OHCHR responded the following year with a Memorandum of Understanding providing the basis for a significant increase in human rights programming, most notably through the HURIST programme, which was established in order to make funds and expertise available to UNDP country offices for a variety of activities to strengthen human rights in general and to apply a human rights-based approach to development programming.

Other agencies began to mainstream human rights as well, and in 2003 UN agencies came together to build a system-wide consensus. The resulting United Nations Common Understanding laid out the essential principles of the Human Rights-Based Approach for all UN agencies.⁸ These were subsequently integrated into the guidelines for the CCA/UNDAF procedures.

Box

4

The UN Common Understanding of a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation

The UN Common Understanding emphasizes that the "United Nations is founded on the principles of peace, justice, freedom and human rights," and that "democracy, development, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing." Accordingly, all UN agencies should adhere to the following guidelines:

- 1) All programmes of development cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.
- 2) Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process.
- 3) Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of "duty-bearers" to meet their obligations and of "rights-holders" to claim their rights.

⁸ United Nations (2003). *The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation. Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies*. New York.

Moreover, the Common Understanding stipulates that human rights principles guide all programming in all phases of the programming process, including assessment and analysis, programme planning and design (including setting of goals, objectives and strategies), implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These principles include the following:

- **Universality and inalienability:** Human rights are universal and inalienable. All people everywhere in the world are entitled to them. The human person in whom they inhere cannot voluntarily give them up. Nor can others take them away from him or her. As stated in Article 1 of the UDHR, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."
- **Indivisibility:** Human rights are indivisible. Whether of a civil, cultural, economic, political or social nature, they are all inherent to the dignity of every human person. Consequently, they all have equal status as rights, and cannot be ranked, a priori, in a hierarchical order.
- **Inter-dependence and Inter-relatedness:** The realization of one right often depends, wholly or in part, upon the realization of others. For instance, realization of the right to health may depend, in certain circumstances, on realization of the right to education or of the right to information.
- **Equality and Non-discrimination:** All individuals are equal as human beings and by virtue of the inherent dignity of each human person. All human beings are entitled to their human rights without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, ethnicity, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status as explained by the human rights treaty bodies.
- **Participation and Inclusion:** Every person and all peoples are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of civil, economic, social, cultural and political development in which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized.
- **Accountability and Rule of Law:** States and other duty-bearers are answerable for the observance of human rights. In this regard, they have to comply with the legal norms and standards enshrined in human rights instruments. Where they fail to do so, aggrieved rights-holders are entitled to institute proceedings for appropriate redress before a competent court or other adjudicator in accordance with the rules and procedures provided by law.

The pilot project described in this report is an application of the UN Common Understanding to poverty reduction programming. In this way, it is one of the many "next steps" emanating from that agreement – the beginning of the explicit mainstreaming of human rights principles into poverty reduction strategies at the national and sub-national levels.

Even within the framework of the UN Common Understanding, the tools and activities that make up an HRBA are varied and need to be selected in accordance with circumstances and goals of UN agencies, government counterparts and other stakeholders. Most of the remainder of this report is dedicated to presenting the activities that pilot Country Offices have undertaken in preparing and beginning to implement their HRBA projects. Section 2.2 provides a brief overview of each project; section 2.3 deals with project preparation; and section 2.4 describes project implementation.

2.2: Pilot Projects Overview:

Projects are presented here in two categories: those focused on the national level, and those working at the local level.

2.2.1: National level – influencing the PRSP

One of the main components of this pilot project is the attempt to influence the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process. PRSPs, which were conceived by the World Bank and IMF to serve as a framework for lending, describe a country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated external financing needs. The declared objective of the initiative is to promote poverty reduction strategies that are:⁹

- **Country-driven**, involving broad-based participation
- **Comprehensive** in recognizing the multi-dimensional nature of poverty
- **Results-oriented** and focused on outcomes that benefit the poor
- **Partnership-oriented**, involving coordinated participation of development partners
- Based on a **long-term** perspective for poverty reduction

Due to its growing weight in the processes of planning and resource mobilization for development, the PRSP is of strategic importance to efforts toward global poverty reduction – and the work of UNDP. A UNDP evaluation of UNDP participation in the PRSP process, conducted in 2003, found that too little progress had been made toward the above objectives, and recommended that UNDP find ways to be more involved. This recommendation gave way to a series of initiatives designed to increase UNDP's role in the PRSP process, and to better align PRSPs with the MDGs.¹⁰ This pilot project follows on that recommendation as well – a significant part of the project activity is related to the analysis of PRSPs through the human-rights lens, and to efforts to bring the PRSP process in line with human rights and human development principles. Here are overviews of the country pilots so doing:

Comoros:

The government of Comoros submitted an Interim PRSP in October 2005, and the pilot team in that country identified an opportunity within the scope of this pilot project to provide feedback to the authorities as they move toward creating a full PRSP. To do so, the team has convened workshops with the goals of training and sensitizing relevant government counterparts on the HRBA, and of analyzing the Interim PRSP to determine how the HRBA could be integrated in the full PRSP and in forthcoming planning exercises. As a result, the team recommended for the PRSP to include plans for intervention in each socio-economic sector, as well as the areas of governance and justice. In parallel, the team is working on the formulation of a methodology aimed at increasing vulnerable groups' participation in the planning processes supposed to have an impact on their own lives. Next, the Comoros team will liaise with the government to ensure that the findings of the PRSP review are incorporated into the final PRSP and the methodology effectively applied. Finally, they will work as well to support the integration of an HRBA into the 2008-2012 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

⁹ World Bank (2004). *The Poverty Reduction Strategy Initiative. An Independent Evaluation of the World Bank's Support through 2003*. Washington.
¹⁰ See, for example: UNDP (2006), *How-to-Guide for MDG-based National Development Strategies*, <http://www.undp.org/mdg/guide>; UN Millennium Project (2005), *Preparing National Strategies to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals – A Handbook*, <http://www.undp.org/poverty/tools.htm>

Ecuador:

The Ecuador pilot team convened a seminar with thematic experts, civil society representatives and government counterparts to discuss the HRBA and evaluate current approaches to development, including the PRSP, from the human rights perspective. They are also conducting qualitative interviews to assess citizens' perspectives on poverty and development.

Cape Verde:

The government of Cape Verde recently completed a Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Document (GPRSP) for the national level, and the pilot team decided to advocate for the integration of an HRBA into the next GPRSP by developing a set of human rights guidelines; sensitizing government, civil society and the UN Country Team as to the HRBA; and performing a cost assessment for the integration of an HRBA.

2.2.2: Local level – focus on municipal development strategies

Localization of the MDG-based development strategies is another important human development process. While creating these tailored strategies at the national level is an important first step in this process, it is equally important for municipalities and other sub-national entities to develop strategies that meet their particular situation and needs. The pilot project in part seeks to incorporate an HRBA into these processes at the municipal level, as exemplified in the following countries:

Argentina:

Owing to the strong fiscal and political autonomy at the local level in Argentina, the pilot team there decided to focus on municipalities. Working with a well-known NGO as the implementation partner, the pilot brought government counterparts and civil society organizations together for three participatory workshops in each of three municipalities in order to qualitatively assess citizens' priorities and debate policy approaches. The second phase of the project is underway now – holding participatory workshops to debate and define local poverty reduction strategies for these cities. At the same time, the implementation partner NGO is planning to make a presentation on its experiences to Mercociudades, a regional group of municipal governments and civil society organizations.

Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH):

The BiH team decided to locate their pilot in the broader context of their human rights-based municipal planning program underway since 2002. The program involves the following components: assessment and planning, implementation, and policy development – with capacity-building cutting across all three components. The Rights-Based Municipal Development Program (RMAP) has to-date conducted assessments for 21 municipalities and facilitated the creation of 15 human rights-based local development strategies, which all contain specific action plans with concrete projects and measures. In addition, technical assistance and seed funds are provided to the municipalities for the implementation of their priority projects from the human rights-based development strategies. The BiH team is using this pilot project to focus on refining and diffusing the RMAP methodology. They will also develop a plan for using focus groups to expand their qualitative understanding of poverty at the municipal level.



One of the five local-level HRBA working groups in Gorazde, Bosnia and Herzegovina, undertaking a SWOT analysis in the process of developing a human rights-based municipal strategy. Represented are civil society and the municipal government.

Benin:

The Benin pilot team observed that one of the most intractable challenges to sustainable poverty reduction has been the difficulty in operationalizing development plans at the local level; they proposed to use the pilot project to face that challenge. In two cities the team convened participatory workshops in which civil society and government stakeholders discussed the impact of the PRSP at the local level, and debated whether the PRSP in design and execution properly reflected human rights principles. As preparations are underway to begin the PRSP II process, the team will combine the observations made in the workshops with further analysis in order to issue a study proposing improvements to be made in the second PRSP. This study will then be used to spearhead an advocacy campaign for the linking of human rights and poverty reduction strategies.

Macedonia:

Macedonia's 2004 MDG Report was focused on the benefits of decentralization for human development, and the pilot team there decided to follow through on that theme. They chose to work in three municipalities where participation had been assessed as weak, and gender disparities accentuated. They collaborated with the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute to develop a baseline questionnaire, and used it to poll 150 vulnerable / marginalized families in each of the three municipalities. The results will be used to identify priorities from an HRBA perspective during planning workshops involving Local Leadership Groups comprising government officials and civil society organizations. The team is also conducting a study of the national and international legal framework to use as a background to the planning process.

Armenia:

As the MDG localization process is currently underway in Armenia, the pilot team there decided to develop a questionnaire for use at the local level. The questionnaire is intended to identify the conditions and needs of marginalized population groups. Representative samples of each of the ten Marzes (provinces) and Yerevan (the capital) will be produced in order to yield data that can be used to assist the Armenian government in its development of localized targets for the national MDGs.

Below, we describe in more detail some of the main activities of these local and national-level pilots, categorized by activity type. For each activity type, we briefly present the experiences of the most relevant pilot teams. The variety of the activities defies easy categorization, but we attempt to roughly separate them into two phases: "Project Preparation" and "Project Implementation." Given the interdependence of the activities, it is natural that there will be some overlap.

2.3: Project Preparation

2.3.1: Leveraging the normative and legal framework

As outlined above, the HRBA is grounded on the norms contained in international declarations and, in most cases, national constitutions. This framework is not merely conceptual; in practice it offers a number of instrumental benefits for poverty reduction strategies, such as:

- **Added value and credibility to the MDGs**
 - by ensuring that the MDGs are interpreted as part of a broader, over-arching framework including fundamental human-rights principles (see Box 5)
- **Increased legitimacy to the demand for making poverty reduction a primary goal of policy**
 - by highlighting the legal obligations that states have taken on as signatories to international and national instruments (see Box 6)
- **Enhanced advocacy**
 - through engagement with civil society groups that have legitimacy in the rights discourse, but have not yet focused on poverty reduction as part of their mission (see Box 8)

The pilot projects consistently reference the normative and legal framework in their project documents. Take the following example from the Ecuador project document:

"The Ecuadorian Constitution (1998) is considered among the most comprehensive and advanced in the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights of Latin America. In Article 16 the Constitution states that it is the highest duty of the state to respect and enforce all human rights contained in it. At the international level Ecuador has ratified all principal international and regional human rights treaties without reservations.... The state created as well, in December 2002, by decree-law the Public Coordination Commission for Human Rights within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

As will be shown below, the normative and legal framework is an essential reference and tool for many HRBA project activities.

While enthusiastically embraced in many quarters, the MDGs have also generated a measure of criticism. Critiques run the gamut from concern that the MDGs are too ambitious to worry that they are not demanding enough, to concerns that they seem to be imposed from outside, and, most relevantly, that they do not fully reflect human rights concepts.

An HRBA implies a more productive reading of the MDGs. Its participatory processes and mechanisms allow for governments and civil society to work together to tailor the MDGs to their needs and cultural context. This process can deepen support for the MDGs in concept and practice.

Luca Renda, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Ecuador, explained this phenomenon as played out in that country:

"Ecuador has made important progress in incorporating the MDGs in the public agenda. There remains, however, at all levels a certain sense of dissatisfaction with the MDGs framework, as it is perceived to be too restrictive and excessively focused on quantitative targets and indicators. Many governmental and non-governmental representatives have complained that the MDGs represent an insufficient answer to the development challenges faced by the Ecuadorian people, pointing in particular to the absence of any indicator related to inequality, exclusion and democratic governance, and to the lack of consideration of the vision of the indigenous peoples. Part of the problem lies in the fact that most people focus only on the eight goals, ignoring the much richer content of the Millennium Declaration. However, the UN agencies in Ecuador – led in particular by UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA – have agreed that the concerns expressed by our local partners are legitimate and require a conceptually broad and technically solid response. That is why we have undertaken a joint effort to endorse the HRBA as the overarching framework in which to insert our work on the MDGs, believing that the two approaches are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Human rights, as defined and protected by international and national instruments, provide a much more powerful cap to the MDGs, broadening their scope and making them legally binding, enforceable and demandable. The Ecuadorian Constitution, for example, explicitly defines the protection of human rights and the eradication of poverty as the primary duties of the State (art. 3 and 16), and contains specific provisions to protect the social, economic and cultural rights (Chapter IV) as well as the collective rights of the indigenous people (Chapter V). The MDG approach adds concrete goals, targets and a timeframe to rights and duties that may otherwise be seen as too abstract, significantly reinforcing the dimension of accountability. Also, through the lens of the HRBA, we will propose an "MDG plus" approach which incorporates additional goals and indicators, tailored to the needs and aspirations of the Ecuadorian people. When we first presented this new approach to government representatives and civil society groups we received an enthusiastic response. Our challenge now is to fulfill the expectations."

All UN Member States have ratified at least one of the seven core United Nations human rights treaties, and 80 percent have ratified four or more. Moreover, the constitutions of most states enshrine human rights and development concerns. Here, selections from the constitutions of the pilot project countries:

Ecuador (1998): "The highest duty of the state is to respect and make respect the human rights guaranteed by this constitution ... The right to a quality of life that assures health, food and nutrition, drinkable water, environmental sanitation, education, work, employment, recreation, housing, clothing and other necessary social services."

Argentina (1994 reform): "Treaties and concordats have a higher hierarchy than laws. The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the American Convention on Human Rights; the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights and its empowering Protocol; the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide; the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatments or Punishments; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; in the full force of their provisions, they have constitutional hierarchy, do not repeal any section of the First Part of this Constitution and are to be understood as complementing the rights and guarantees recognized herein."

Macedonia (1992): "[The Constitution guarantees] the basic freedoms and rights of the individual and citizen, recognized in international law and set down in the Constitution ... The Republic of Macedonia stimulates economic progress and provides for a more balanced spatial and regional development, as well as for the more rapid development of economically underdeveloped regions."

Comoros (2002): "[The citizens of Comoros] note their attachment to the fundamental principles and rights defined by the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the Pact of the League of Arab States, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights, as well as international conventions, notably those related to children and women's rights."

Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995): "... Guided by the Purposes and Principles of the Charter of the United Nations... citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina hereby determine that the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina ... Bosnia and Herzegovina and both Entities shall ensure the highest level of internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. To that end, there shall be a Human Rights Commission for Bosnia and Herzegovina as provided for in Annex 6 to the General Framework Agreement."

Armenia (1995): "The State guarantees the protection of human rights and freedoms based on the Constitution and the laws, in accordance with the principles and norms of international law."

Benin (1990): "We reaffirm our attachment to the principles of Democracy and the human rights which have been defined by the United Nations Charter (1945) and the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man (1948), by the African Charter on Human Rights and People's Rights, adopted in 1981 by the Organization of African Unity..."

2.3.2: Selecting the intervention area – local or national

As the country teams prepared to make proposals for participation in the pilot project, they assessed their context to determine whether to work at the local or national level. Five teams decided to work at the local level, and three at the national level.

2.3.2.1: Local level

Argentina, BiH, Macedonia, Armenia and Benin decided to work at the local level. For Argentina, this level seemed appropriate because the federal system there defers a great deal of autonomy and resources to sub-national policy makers. According to the Argentina Project Document, this has been even more pointed since the crisis of 1999-2002, which led to municipalities' assuming a greater role in social, economic, environmental and security policy.

The BiH country team made a similar decision to focus on working with municipal counterparts based on what UNDP BiH Programme Manager Christian Hainzl describes as the country's "highly complex and fragmented administrative structure, where the major responsibility for service delivery is put on the shoulders of municipalities, who, however, not only lack financial resources, but often simply capacities."

Once decided to work at the local level, pilot teams selected municipalities with which to work. This decision involves weighing a variety of factors – including population count, needs of vulnerable groups, local government capacity, and civil society awareness, among others. The Macedonia pilot team decided that their list of selected municipalities must:

- Comprise municipalities from different statistical regions (of 8 statistical regions in Macedonia), and cover the western, eastern and central part of the country;
- include rural and urban municipalities;
- include at least one municipality with a highly mixed ethnic composition;
- include municipalities with significant numbers of Roma inhabitants;
- include at least one municipality that has significantly changed due to the decentralization process in 2004 in terms of territory, ethnic composition, etc;
- include at least one "large" (over 60,000 inhabitants), "medium" (30,000-60,000), and "small" municipality (under 30,000);
- include municipalities with high unemployment;
- include municipalities that have satisfactory technical, material and human capacities;
- include municipalities that are collaborating with neighboring municipalities in Macedonia; and
- include municipalities with well-developed civil society sectors.

Furthermore, when making the selection, the team decided to:

- Take into account needs for improving the position of women; and
- take into account synergy with existing UNDP projects – avoiding municipalities that have already undertaken participatory planning processes and have developed strategic documents.

Argentina's criteria were broader and fewer in number:

- The municipal population must be at least 400,000;
- civil society must be reasonably developed and organized in the municipality;
- the municipality must be able to provide basic information on its activities and functions; and
- the municipality must show interest in participating in the initiative.

2.3.2.2: National level

Ecuador, Comoros and Cape Verde decided to focus on the national level. Ecuador decided to do so because at the time of the proposal there was a great deal of momentum surrounding poverty reduction at the national level. The Ecuadorian government had recently established the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) framework and process, emphasizing that the PRSP policy framework would directly target the achievement of the MDGs, particularly Goal 1. An MDG Secretariat was established to guarantee the process and to lead MDG reporting, and a national MDG Report had just been published, establishing a baseline against which to track progress. With so much attention given to the poverty reduction and the MDGs at the national level, it was clear to the project that this was the appropriate area of intervention.

The Comoros team decided to work on the national level because a PRSP review had just been initiated at the time of the proposal. Accordingly, working with civil society and the government to analyze the PRSP from a human rights perspective has been the main activity thus far. Next steps include consolidating the observations and ensuring their incorporation into the full PRSP review process.

The distinction between working at the national and local levels should not be exaggerated, however. It is natural that a project focused on one level will involve activity at the other. For example, the Argentina team noted during the workshop in Quito that, although their project is "local," since so many of the government's social programs are implemented at the national level, "liaising with the national government is of paramount importance."



In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP and four HRBA partner municipalities sign a Memorandum of Understanding to work together on the RMAP project

One of the main challenges facing development programming is the selection of government counterparts. Political environments vary vastly, as does the organizational location of the best partners. Ecuador has had nine presidents since February 1997, and a greater number of cabinet reshuffles. This makes it imperative for the Ecuador team to find partners further downstream in ministries – civil servants directly involved in implementation, and relatively shielded from the instability around the executive branch. For the same reason, the Ecuador team strives to build strong relationships at the provincial and local levels, where stability has been notably greater.

The Argentines are no strangers to instability at the executive level, but currently the most pressing challenge that faces the pilot is to cope with the labyrinthine mix of policies that reach the local level. "There are 23 food programs – 10 national, 7 provincial and 6 municipal," says Gustavo Hurtado, Secretary of Health and Social Development, Municipality of Morón, "and this has to be coordinated." According to Ana Vivori, of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, discovering the variety of projects underway has been one of the unforeseen positive results of the pilot.

The Macedonia team singles out the lack of state capacity at the local level as the main obstacle to implementation of the HRBA project. Since the early 90s, according to a case study prepared by the project, the civil-society sector has been targeted by many international agencies and has boosted its technical, financial and human capacities. "That was not the case with the public and business sectors," the case study says, "which are, accordingly, in a weaker position." The effects of this lack of capacity include low awareness and low commitment among government counterparts at the local level, which means that participation is generally given a low priority. There, then, it is vital to sensitize and train at the local level: "The impression is that local officials don't have enough information about the situation of vulnerable groups," the study says.

2.3.3: Creating technical teams and working with external experts

In recognition of capacity constraints within the government and/or the UN Country Team, several of the pilots established technical teams that include external experts. These teams can take the lead in preparing analysis, workshops, surveys, and more. In Argentina, there were three such groups, one for each municipality. Called Municipal Technical Teams, each comprised municipal officials and technical consultants, and was responsible for analyzing existing development data and compiling, analyzing and presenting information on existing government policies in the municipality. These products were then used to inform discussion in the participatory workshops (see 2.4.2.2).

Country Office Perspective

Lesson Learned: Sensitization and involvement of government officials is key to sustainability – and to date, there has not been sufficient government involvement. External technical teams were used because the municipalities do not have human resources to dedicate exclusively to the project. There is a risk here of missing an opportunity to build capacity in a sustainable way. As the project moves forward, the work of these external teams should be internalized as much as possible to local government and CSOs. In the meanwhile, task forces should be "mixed," bringing in as much government involvement as possible. -Argentina project report

The Ecuador team counted on the participation of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociales y del Milenio (Center of Social and Millennium Research, CISMIL). CISMIL is part of FLACSO, the Latin America Faculty for the Social Sciences, in Quito, and was established in 2005 to serve as a convergence point for academic institutions, different levels of government, and international cooperation agencies such as UNDP. At the inception of this pilot, CISMIL was already at work on several provincial and municipal MDG reports; the pilot decided to leverage that work at the national level as well. CISMIL has supported the project thus far by analyzing data, developing new indicators (see Box 13), and contributing to methodological debates at the pilot team’s national-level workshops.

Other pilot teams have worked with international agencies. The Macedonia pilot worked with the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights (BIM), a Vienna-based human rights research institute. Consultants from BIM helped the project to select municipalities, to develop an HRBA toolkit, and to analyze and disseminate information about the international and national human rights normative framework. BIM also created for the project a pair of qualitative diagnostic surveys – one for municipal functionaries, the other for vulnerable families (see section 2.4.2.3 and Box 11).

2.3.4: Selecting implementation agencies

The sustained participation of civil-society organizations (CSOs) is essential to an effective HRBA, and perhaps the most effective way to ensure broad CSO representation is to work directly with one or more in designing, implementing and monitoring the project.

The Argentina project chose to work with Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Grandmothers of May Square; APM). Founded in 1977, APM is an NGO that has for the most part focused on civil and political rights – specifically, locating and identifying individuals who were born in captivity to mothers imprisoned for political reasons during Argentina’s most recent military dictatorship. APM enjoys wide support among Argentine civil society. This support in turn reflects well on the project, and helps ensure broad attendance at workshops (see Box 8).

Country Office Perspective

Lesson Learned: A targeted assessment via human rights analysis of those discriminated against or marginalized does not necessarily prevent elite capture. Tasked to establish sustainable processes and support local ownership, one has often to rely on local champions, which will not always properly represent the most disadvantaged since they are often a part of the elite. – BiH project update

The Argentina project benefits from the presence, reputation and substantive involvement of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (APM), a human rights organization that acts as implementation partner and guarantor of the project's processes. The partnership is an example of how NGOs that enjoy strong notoriety and legitimacy for supporting civil and political rights can help expand the human rights dialogue and generate support and momentum for the MDGs and the HRBA.

APM has been advocating for human rights since its founding in 1977, when it took up the cause of locating children who had been taken prisoner for political reasons, or born in captivity to women taken prisoner while pregnant. These children were often sold, kept by military families, left without identification at institutions, or simply cast out and left to fend for themselves. By monitoring orphanages, soliciting information, and liaising with public institutions, the organization – made up of doctors, lawyers, psychologists, geneticists and others – has returned 83 children to their rightful families.

Over the years, APM began to take on a broader role, continuing to search for these children, but also advocating for the rights of all children, focusing on issues such as child trafficking and the rights of the undocumented. As its activities broadened, and it began to implement a wider portfolio of projects, APM was in more frequent contact with diverse communities, and became sensitized to the multiplicity of their unmet needs. The HRBA pilot project gives APM a chance to work to develop solutions for those needs. In turn, the project benefits from APM's competencies and legitimacy.

"APM...was the best institution for the task, in view of their work in human rights and their reputation in that area," says Milena Lievi, Project Manager with UNDP Argentina, adding that they are one of the most prestigious and respected organizations in the country. "The presence of APM in the project brings visibility, allowing for a broader approach to the CSOs present in the three participating municipalities."

APM's evolving orientation underscores an important challenge in working together with civil society to link human rights and development. Most organizations that advocate for human rights are focused on political, civil or cultural rights – not economic and social rights. This focus can usually be traced back to the inception of these organizations, and the pressing concerns of that period. "Argentine society is very sensitive to political and civil rights, having suffered under brutal aggressions against fundamental rights during the military dictatorship of 76-83 and after earlier military coups," says Ana Vivori of APM, noting that the most recognized NGOs and CSOs are "those that are linked to the struggle for human rights understood as fundamental, civil and political rights." Indeed, other civil-and-political rights organizations focused on human rights abuses during the military dictatorship – including the well-known Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of May Square) – enjoy broad notoriety and esteem. The present challenge is to get them to take up the cause of human development as a human right.

According to Ms. Vivori, such a shift is underway in Argentina. Besides APM, other traditional human rights organizations have started to take up human development concerns. Mothers of May Square have recently established a "Popular University," offering free vocational courses and classes in journalism, law, human rights and other subjects. Serpai (Servicio de Paz y Justicia), an organization traditionally focused on political and civil rights, is now offering health, education and nutrition programs for homeless children. Moreover, traditional human rights organizations are "permanently accompanying the struggles of the new social movements," says Ms. Vivori, "the groups that advocate for the most vulnerable sectors of society and focus their activity on improving quality of life through health, housing, work, education and other programs."

2.4: Project implementation

This section covers selected experiences, categorized by activity type, of the pilot teams as they progress from preparation to the implementation stage.

2.4.1: Advocacy, information and sensitization

An HRBA can only be effective if it is built on the foundation of a broad consensus among stakeholders on its core concepts and applicability. Information, sensitization and advocacy activities are vital to this end.

One of the most common methods for explaining and promoting an HRBA is through workshops, where a variety of activities can be conducted to foster a common understanding of an HRBA among civil society, government officials and other stakeholders. The Ecuador pilot, for example, held a national workshop to discuss issues related to the Human Rights-Based Approach to the PRSP process and the achievement of the MDGs. Specifically, the civil society, government, academic and development-cooperation participants were asked to discuss the following: the need to construct a national development plan; the concepts and foundations of the HRBA, and its link with the MDGs; and the need to add a human rights focus to the PRSP and MDG-related activities. The workshop began with a series of expert presentations on various aspects of the HRBA: background concepts, practical implications, monitoring, integration into national development strategies, and the relationship with the MDGs. Then the workshop broke down into three "discussion tables," addressing the following:

- **Table 1:** How do policies, programs and projects related to achieving the MDGs reflect the principles of the HRBA?
- **Table 2:** How to integrate an HRBA into the MDGs and associated indicators and monitoring activities?
- **Table 3:** How to improve participation in the design of national human development strategies?

Country Office Perspective

Lesson Learned: Awareness of local officials about the needs of different groups of citizens (minorities, vulnerable and marginalized groups) is low. In Gostivar, for example, the first draft of the Local Leadership Group (LLG) list didn't include proportionately women and ethnic Macedonians (which are a minority at 19% of total population). The first draft of the LLG list in Strumica included no representatives of the private sector. These weaknesses were overcome easily, which shows the readiness of local government authorities to start changing their attitude.

– Macedonia case study

Additionally, to increase civil society participation the BiH team is providing support to municipal information officers interested in producing public relations materials to promote awareness of local development processes and strategies.

2.4.2: Conducting human rights-based assessment / diagnostic

One of the key instrumental features of an HRBA is the effort to identify the rights and needs of all citizens, including vulnerable groups, and the ways these are being addressed by development policy and programmes. The pilot projects took at least four different approaches to this objective: data collection and analysis, policy review, workshops and surveys.

2.4.2.1: Data collection and policy review

In Argentina, the Municipal Technical Teams collected data from local, national and international sources, and gathered information on government plans, programs and actions at the national, provincial and municipal levels. The data allowed them a broad overview of development conditions in the municipalities, and the policy analysis revealed that one of the main problems was a lack of coordination across levels of government.

Box

9

Local paper: "UN goals to be debated"

In Argentina the pilot process got a boost from local media when a major Rosario newspaper reported positively on the project – and even told readers how to get involved. The day before a workshop, *La Capital* ran a story describing it as a forum for NGOs and civil servants to debate "which local policies will be necessary to reach, within ten years, the goals promoted by the United Nations with respect to health, education, gender, environment and poverty reduction." The article described the project as an opportunity to create "a space for reflection on local policy experiences... and promote initiatives that strengthen citizens' rights by generating strategies that stimulate participation and commitment." The story mentioned a few of the themes that would be discussed at the workshop, and included logistical information for those interested in participating. To what did the team owe this attention? Simple, says Milena Leivi, Programme Manager of UNDP Argentina, "we made a press release and sent it to the press." The release spelled out the general framework of the program, the activities already completed, and the goal and format of the workshop. The article showed a hint of pride that Rosario had been selected for the project, noting that "only three municipalities in the country participate in this experience."

In Comoros, Benin and Ecuador, the policy review was focused on the PRSP. The Comoros project has undertaken a major review of the PRSP and Action Plan from the human rights perspective. The objective is to produce a report and distribute it to PRSP stakeholders in order to influence the ongoing development of the full PRSP and Action Plan. The review incorporated the following: observations made by civil society, academics and local government during workshops held on three of the country's four islands; evaluation by UNDP experts; and evaluation by the Orientation Committees, which are groups comprising civil society and the private sector that are involved in the design of the PRSP.



Representatives of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo facilitating an HRBA workshop in Rosário, Argentina

The review found that the Comoros Interim PRSP does not clearly reflect the interdependency of human rights, poverty reduction and development. Neither does it identify vulnerable groups, nor include indicators that would effectively capture the conditions or progress of these groups. The review also included a series of recommendations on how to integrate human rights concepts into each PRSP area – governance, justice, health, education, etc. With respect to governance, for example, the review made the following recommendations:

- Effective application of the principle of transparency and accountability in the activities of the central government and the governments of each island;
- incorporation of data on the number of women in local and national government
- incorporation of data and descriptions reflecting civil society participation in the design of development policy;
- incorporation of data reflecting the participation of vulnerable groups in the design of development policy;
- involvement of parliamentarians in the work of Orientation Committees; and
- reinforcement of parliamentarians' oversight and analysis of public finance.

The next step for the team in Comoros is to follow up on these recommendations with the Orientation Committees and government counterparts involved in the development of the full PRSP. The team feels confident that it will be able to successfully advocate for a stronger focus on vulnerable groups and an identification of duty-bearers and rights-holders in the situation analysis. Moreover, they expect to be able to include human rights-based interventions and indicators in the PRSP Action Plan. Specifically, they foresee a greater emphasis on strengthening statistical capacity in order to make a wider range of disaggregated and human rights-based indicators available.

The Comoros team will incorporate the findings from the PRSP review into the 2008-2012 UNDAF, planning for which is already underway.

2.4.2.2: Diagnostic Workshops

Workshops can be instrumental in assessing civil society's view of its own needs, and determining how these relate to the MDGs and poverty reduction strategies. Moreover, workshops can be instrumental in bringing to light the "invisible needs" of individuals and groups so often obscured or even missed by aggregate data. For reasons familiar to all international development practitioners – poor survey or administrative data, language or other cultural barriers, security-related disincentives to report, etc. – the needs of vulnerable groups are often misunderstood and not reflected in policy. Under an HRBA, participatory diagnostic workshops involving civil society and government officials are intended to provide a platform through which these needs can be brought to light.

Country Office Perspective

Lesson Learned: Workshops and other participatory activities are most effective when they are based on pre-existing social structures and dynamics. – Argentina project report

In Argentina, diagnostic workshops were prepared by each Municipal Technical Team, with the support of APM and UNDP. Each team developed its own method for the workshops, using tailor-made instruments to coordinate the discussions. In the first workshop in Morón, for example, the participants broke down into mixed groups and focused on two activities: prioritizing the MDGs, then relating them with human rights.



UNDP Administrator Kemal Dervis (right) participating in an HRBA workshop in Morón, Argentina

First, the participants were asked to form groups and prioritize the MDGs. The results are as follows:¹¹

MDGs ¹²	Groups							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VII
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	5
Achieve universal primary education	2	2	2	2	2	6	1	2
Promote decent employment	3	4	4	6	7	7	3	1
Reduce infant mortality	8	3	8	4	4	2	5	3
Improve maternal health	7	7	5	3	3	4	6	4
Ensure environmental sustainability	4	6	3	7	6	5	4	6
Promote gender equality	5	5	6	8	8	3	8	8
Combat AIDS, tuberculosis and other diseases	6	8	7	5	5	8	7	7

The groups then shared and debated rankings.

¹¹ Note: These results are not consistent with states' obligations under international law. They are included not as an endorsement, but rather to show the way the group at this particular workshop envisioned the links between MDGs and human rights.

¹² Note: In tailoring the MDGs to the national level, Argentina added the goal "promote decent employment."

Next, groups linked the MDGs to a range of Human Rights, as follows:

Relationship between MDGs and Human Rights. Group work 7-10-05		POVERTY	EDUCATION	EMPLOY;MENT	GENDER	INFANT MORTALIT'	MATERNAL HEALTH	AIDS, TB, OTHER	ENVIRONMENT
Civil and political rights	- to life	X	X			X	X	X	X
	- to personal integrity – physical, psychological and moral	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	- to personal liberty	X					X		
	- to petition authorities	X	X	X					X
	- to freedom of expression		X						
	- to freedom of conscience and religion		X						
	- to association and free assembly			X				X	
	- to identity and nationality		X			X			
	- to private property								
	- to reside in the territory of a state								
	- to a free trial within a reasonable timeframe and before an on objective and independent tribunal								
	- to the presumption of innocence								
	- to defense								X
	- to non-discrimination	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Economic, social and cultural rights	- to work	X	X		X			X	X
	- to health		X			X	X	X	X
	- to culture		X			X		X	X
	- to family protection and assistance	X		X		X	X	X	
	- to the assistance of children and adolescents	X				X	X	X	
	- to protection and assistance during pregnancy and childbirth					X	X		
	- to adequate clothing, food and housing	X	X			X	X	X	
	- to free, public education at all levels.		X			X			X
Collective and third-generation rights	- to a healthy and balanced environment		X	X		X			X
	- to the self-determination of peoples		X						
	- to consume and use goods and services								
	- to live in peace					X			X
	- to sustainable human and social development	X	X	X		X			X

Country Office Perspective

Lesson Learned: In the workshops, it was evident that most CSOs and unaffiliated individuals had "internalized" human-rights concepts, but that the MDGs were new and strange to many. Human rights is a broad area with much wider appeal in certain civil society environments. The MDGs can benefit by being attached to human rights.

-Argentina project report

In the second diagnostic workshop in Morón, participants formed groups again and proposed policy areas that would help the population achieve the MDGs. These proposals were then compared with the municipality's list of ongoing public programs and policies for each MDG. In this way, the participants learned which of these priorities were already being addressed, and which were not, and the government received preliminary input from civil society as to what policy areas they would like to see addressed in the local development strategy. The government was also able to learn that its programmes were not well known – the civil society participants had not heard of 29% of them.

The workshop cycle in Morón

Box

10

A series of workshops in Morón – one of the three municipalities in which the Argentina pilot is active – brought civil society and government officials together with the goal of establishing a mechanism for interaction between the two so as to increase the reach and relevance of poverty reduction strategies and programs. To do this, UNDP and APM organized with the Municipality of Morón four workshops, with the following objectives:

Workshop 1

- Sensitize the citizens of Morón with respect to the MDGs
- Articulate a view of the MDGs from a human rights perspective
- Arrive at conclusions as to if and why the participants would link the MDGs with human rights

Workshop 2

- Reflect on the MDGs and link them to local public policy
- Consider the local government's attempts at trying to achieve the MDGs, and confront these with the public imagination
- Evaluate actions by their visibility, impact, and awareness levels

Workshop 3

- Evaluate the activities that the participants, as individuals or within institutions, carry out toward the end of achieving the MDGs

Workshop 4

- Create a space that facilitates the continued debate of concepts raised in the first three workshops

The interactions and conceptual advances established through this series of workshops will form the basis for subsequent workshops at which the local development strategy will be debated.

2.4.2.3: Qualitative Surveys

An effective HRBA requires reliable data that is illustrative of the conditions and needs of all groups, especially the most vulnerable. Most existing national and local data in program countries are not up to the task. In recognition of this limitation, several of the pilots developed surveys to better understand development conditions and dynamics.

The approach in Macedonia is a good example. The team there worked with the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Vienna to develop two surveys – one for the identification of the poor, and the other to assess the awareness and activities of local government. The first survey, covering 450 families, and conducted with the help of local NGOs, covers family finances, health, nutrition, education, community relations, political participation, gender, ethnic exclusion and more. It also seeks to gauge awareness and coverage of interventions by asking if respondents know of any public or NGO activities to "help or protect the poor." The second survey, directed at municipal officials, inquires as to ethnic and gender representation in official bodies and political processes. It also asks about the number and quality of education and health institutions. Finally, the survey asks officials to define excluded and at-risk groups, where these groups live and whether they benefit from any programmes. Together, the surveys should illustrate the particular needs of different groups while showing how NGOs and the government have addressed these needs to date.

From survey given to community residents:

94) Do you know of any activity in the municipality to help and protect the poor?

no yes

95) If, yes, which ones? _____

96) Do you know any NGOs working for the protection of the poor?

no yes

97) If yes, which ones? _____

98) Have you received help from such activities, or do you know anybody who did so?

no yes, I know someone yes, I received help

99) Have you been engaged in any activities aiming to help and protect the poor?

no yes

From survey given to municipal officials:

10) Which social groups who live in this municipality are the most socially excluded, and why are they considered to be so?

- Women
- Single parents
- National minorities, ethnicities, which?
- People with special needs
- Homosexuals
- Displaced persons / returnees / refugees
- Children
- Victims of trafficking
- Old people
- Immigrant workers
- Redundant workers
- Extremely poor / homeless people

Are there certain regions, inhabited places, territory where these people live?

Which groups in the municipality are considered as most exposed to poverty and are exposed to the highest risk to become even poorer?

Why do you find these groups of the population to be at highest risk?

Are measures taken at the local level to provide direct political participation of the vulnerable groups (which measures)?

11) Which forms of social protection and care exist in the municipality (center for social protection, day centers, etc.). For which groups? Where are they placed, and how is protection/ care provided on the whole territory of the municipality?

12) Which initiatives exist or are planned to improve the situation/conditions?

The Armenia project involves a survey as well, with the objectives of learning "what the Armenian people believe are the most important targets for improvement in their regions," and "the Armenian public's knowledge on human rights and attitudes toward government policies in areas such as poverty and the PRSP, attitudes toward public services, and perceptions about various policy options regarding the MDGs and basic human rights."

An analysis of available data in BiH led as well to a decision to seek new and more relevant data. Rather than a municipal survey, however, the RMAP team designed a focus group methodology in order to qualitatively assess vulnerability and poverty at the local level. It is a two-step process. First, the team will meet with local representatives – presidents and other representatives of the *mjesne zajednice* (MZ), the local representative bodies of which there are at least 20 in each pilot municipality – and ask them to define who the poor are and where they live. Then the team will arrange to meet with these groups and ask them to define for themselves what poverty is, and whether and to what extent they suffer from it.

In a nutshell: Human Rights-Based Municipal Development Program, RMAP_2006, UNDP BiH
www.rmap.undp.ba

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, pilot activities supported by HURIST are being conducted within the broader context of the RMAP programme. RMAP is a joint initiative of UNDP and the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, which responds to social exclusion and to the lack of planning, project development and implementation capacities at the municipal level in BiH. RMAP is composed of three interrelated components: assessment and planning, implementation, and policy development, with capacity-building cutting across these three components.

An HRBA, as used by RMAP, is understood as a development framework that uses the analytical strength of human rights and their underlying principles (participation, non-discrimination, accountability) for deepening and broadening existing approaches to local development. This is set in practice in RMAP by combining human rights with more standard, local development analysis related to the assessment of local needs and potentials and within a participatory and accountable local planning and implementation process.

RMAP coaches BiH municipalities in adopting a multi-sectoral approach to municipal assessment that includes but goes beyond local economic development. The assessment and planning is highly participatory (involving on average 100-150 people per municipality) with a focus on the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups in the whole process. The present programme framework uses a series of workshops and training to focus on local capacity building for planning, project formulation and implementation that promotes local development and the enjoyment of human rights. In 2006, RMAP established an implementation component with a seed funding facility of approximately US \$50,000 per partner municipality. Technical assistance is provided to the implementation process in order to link the participatory planning with concrete project development and change for local communities that contributes to fighting local poverty.

At the end of 2005 the RMAP methodological approach underwent a review and several operational tools were developed relating to combined local development and human rights analysis, facilitation of a participatory and transparent planning process, and capacity development for policy, planning and project skills at the local level.

The next step (planned for 2007) is to scale up the methodology pioneered by RMAP and to further institutionalize the approach locally and at the national level. Against a background where almost half of BiH municipalities are lacking valid or updated local plans it is foreseen to extend the direct support to municipalities beyond the present partners (local institutionalization) as well as to anchor the methodology and approach nationally through the building up of efficient national support structures. The program approach will be supplemented by the drafting of a "manual/primer for community leaders on Rights-Based local development planning" to ensure broad transferability.

Apart from scaling up at the national level in BiH, the RMAP methodology has further potential to be replicated in other country environments; this is already being explored in regional workshops jointly with the UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre.

2.4.3: Monitoring

The pilots are planning to add additional components to the monitoring that has been undertaken for MDG Reports and other national purposes.

The pilot team in **Armenia** plans to use the data gathered from the public opinion polls as a baseline for future surveys monitoring the progress from the human rights perspective of the MDGs and PRSP. In the future, they plan to mainstream these measures into regular monitoring efforts so as to be able to conduct trend analyses.

In **BiH**, the project will enhance monitoring at the local level by linking municipalities to the Economic Policy and Planning Unit (EPPU). The EPPU is the national body responsible for PRSP monitoring, and it is currently set up only to monitor at the national and provincial levels. This project represents the first time the EPPU will be involved at the municipal level.

In **BiH**, the project will strengthen the capacity of local media (radios and newspapers) in understanding and monitoring municipal development priorities. Through training sessions and roundtables, the local media will be informed of the Municipal Development Strategies (see above). The hope is that this exposure will inspire the local media to report more frequently and in greater depth on local development issues, in turn informing citizens and encouraging them to advocate for improved development programming.

In **Macedonia**, the team is preparing along with BIM a manual on methods and tools for monitoring with the Human Rights-Based Approach. The methods and tools will be based on the following principles:

- All vulnerable groups must be identified during the data collection and situation and problem analysis;
- initiatives must be established to ensure social mobilization and participation with focused actions targeting those groups which are usually excluded and not actively participating in policy development processes;
- a specific set of targets and indicators concerning the realization of human rights throughout the process must be established, with short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives; and
- effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms must be created to ensure that duty-bearers can be held accountable, especially in case of misuse of allocation of resources.

These methods and tools for monitoring are to be integrated into local development plans, and will be discussed in participatory workshops.



A working group on gender and education discussing implementation challenges at a human rights workshop in Macedonia

Traditional socio-economic indicators shed limited light on the state of human rights; the HRBA acknowledges this and encourages a reconsideration of the selection and use of indicators for benchmarking and monitoring. To this end, UNDP published in March 2006 a guide to using indicators in the HRBA. The guide reviews the main existing human-rights indicators, and suggests through examples how they can be applied along with traditional indicators as part of an HRBA. Three types of human-rights indicators are defined:

- 1) **Human rights in principle.** This type of indicator shows whether the country is a signatory to international declarations, and if and how it has codified human rights in national law. These indicators are the easiest to collect, and are important for accountability and advocacy, but they reveal nothing about human rights as actually experienced by the population.
- 2) **Human rights in practice.** These indicators are intended to show the extent to which human rights are fulfilled, neglected or violated. There are three types:
 - a. **Events-based data.** These track reported violations against groups and individuals by state and non-state actors. Events-based data describe what happened, when it happened, and who was involved, and then include descriptive and numerical summaries of the events. These data can come from reports made by international or national NGOs, and/or national human rights institutions, the media, and other sources.
 - b. **Data based on expert judgment.** A handful of human-rights experts occasionally analyze the frequency and severity of human-rights violations, and assign a judgment in the form of quantitative scales that are designed for comparison across countries. The Freedom House scale of civil and political liberties is a well-known example.
 - c. **Survey-based data.** These ask population samples a series of standard questions on their perception of rights protection. Notable examples include the World Values Survey, parts of the Latinobarómetro surveys, and the World Governance Assessment project.
- 3) **Official statistics.** These are statistics that state agencies collect based on standardized definitions and methodologies. Traditional socio-economic indicators can be used to approximate the enjoyment of certain human rights. For example, the right to primary education is gauged traditionally by enrollment and completion rates. Also, in some cases governments collect information that is directly relevant for human rights assessment. An example is a pilot activity carried out as part of the OECD/Metagora project, in which the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, together with research institutions and NGOs, is reinforcing capacity for large-scale monitoring of participatory democracy and human rights in Palestine, with particular emphasis on the right to education.

The pilot project experiences show that there are other options as well: qualitative indicators, process indicators and disaggregation have been seen as useful as these teams design and implement an HRBA to poverty reduction.

Qualitative indicators

Several of the pilot projects are planning a qualitative approach. The nine sub-national MDG reports planned in Ecuador will incorporate the results of qualitative interviews conducted at participatory workshops and through door-to-door canvassing. Moreover, the HRBA has prompted the Ecuador team to reconsider which indicators are used to track progress toward the MDGs. They will continue to use the standard, global indicators, but they will include in MDG Reports a range of complimentary indicators that they feel better reflect that country's situation and its citizens' aspirations. One such indicator is for "subjective poverty," the data for which is collected in interviews. Interviewers ask respondents how much income they think they need to satisfy basic needs. Then they ask how much the respondent earns. If the former is greater than the latter, the respondent is "subjectively poor." The pilot team feels that this is more illustrative of well-being than the dollar-per-day framework. The Armenia and Macedonia pilot teams have developed qualitative surveys for the local level, and the BiH team has developed a focus group methodology (see 2.4.2.3).

Disaggregation

Disaggregation can be a key component of an HRBA approach as well. Data for entire populations do not reveal the differences in living conditions across groups delineated by personal characteristics such as ethnicity, language, income, area of residence, sex or educational attainment. Taking human rights principles into account, UNDP Malaysia, for one, disaggregated MDG indicators by sex, age and ethnicity. The results shed light on the magnitude of disparities across groups, and identifying these issues led to a more participatory development plan, the setting of ambitious equity targets, and an emphasis on measures to reduce disparities. Of course, the ability to disaggregate depends on the quality and type of available data.

Process indicators

Process indicators can be helpful as well, especially when gauging participation. The number and attendance of participatory workshops, for example, sheds light on the extent to which government, cooperation agencies and civil society are working together to define and address development needs.



Part 3:

Lessons Learned from the Global Project Team Perspective

This report shows that a variety of activities fall within the scope of an HRBA. As none of the targeted policy processes have reached decisive junctures, it is not yet possible to measure impact or to arrive at sweeping conclusions as to which activities add the most value to poverty reduction efforts. Nonetheless, the evaluations conducted thus far have generated a batch of lessons-learned of use to ongoing and future design of human rights-based poverty reduction projects, as well as the process of selecting COs to work with, and global programme management in general. These include the following:

- Political instability or elections pose obstacles to the implementation of the HRBA. Two of the pilots found it difficult to work effectively with the national level government because of frequent changes of government or preparations for elections. Project proposals should include a political assessment and a clear strategy for engaging the right government partner.
- Some pilots have had a hard time finding civil society partners to work with on the HRBA. Proposals should in future always name the CSO partners, and these partners must be assessed for their ability to bring other CSO partners to the table, involve vulnerable citizens, and influence the government to recognize and act on its duties before international and national legal and normative frameworks.
- The international normative and legal HRBA framework has been analyzed and written on extensively. Repeating this exercise from scratch can be wasteful. A centralized repository of such analyses should be created and should include documentation in several languages.
- Analyzing the national framework still does add value, but background material from existing analyses should be incorporated to save resources for higher-impact work, such as workshops bringing together civil society and local government to identify marginalized groups or debate development strategies.
- Where possible, analyses of national frameworks should be conducted by national or local NGOs that have continuous contact with civil society, rather than exclusively by outside experts. This increases the likelihood that the analytical information deemed valuable will resonate through civil society long after an international consultant would be off to his or her next assignment.
- Many of the HRBA activities conducted in a given country may be applicable in other country contexts. The HRBA community must gain an appreciation of the barriers to information and experience-sharing across COs. The HRBA community must then promote information sharing in light of this appreciation.
- Better efforts must be made to ensure that HRBA projects are designed in synergy with existing related activities. Where applicable, such synergies should be presented clearly in project proposals.





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