

ACTION LEARNING PROGRAM ON
PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES FOR POVERTY
REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Case Study 1: Bolivia
Process Document of the Country Experience
Draft for Discussion



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BOLIVIA PROCESS CASE STUDY

Executive Summary

In Bolivia, the requirement of preparing a PRSP for the purpose of accessing debt relief under the Enhanced HIPC Initiative triggered a multitude of participatory processes across the country, involving a wide range of stakeholders. Both the processes organized by Civil Society Organizations and the Government's own "official" participatory process were markedly influenced by the 'lessons learned' from earlier experiences in participatory policy-making processes, including the passage of the 1994 Popular Participation Law and the first National Dialogue organized by the newly-elected Government in 1997.

Following the national elections in June 1997, the Government invited various stakeholders to a national workshop to discuss the new administration's economic and social policy framework. The Government and some donors considered the Dialogue a success, but Civil Society Organizations were disappointed with the event, as well as the lack of follow-up to the Dialogue in spite of Government assurances that they would continue to be involved. What follow-up did take place remained largely within the realm of Government-Donor relations, where the four "pillar" structure of the national workshop became the basis for a framework of Government – Donor cooperation. Nudged by Donors, the Government attempted to involve CSOs in some discussions on development policy (mainly in the context of the Comprehensive Development Framework) but CSOs viewed these efforts as half-hearted at best and insincere at worst.

After it became clear that Bolivia was eligible for HIPC 2, the Government initiated discussions with key Civil Society actors on their participation in a Second National Dialogue, which would provide the "civil society" inputs into the PRSP. Conscious of international attention on the PRSP process, and lacking confidence in the Government's intentions to conduct a genuinely participatory process, several groups began organizing their own consultative processes. The official announcement of the Dialogue was postponed, pending outcome of negotiations with CSOs as well as the results of the municipal elections (December 1999). Meanwhile, the Interim PRSP was prepared by Government with support from World Bank and IMF staff, and submitted to the Boards in January 2000 without consultation with other stakeholders.

With financial support from abroad and the Donor community, a series of CSO processes bloomed across the country. These processes attempted to outline their own interpretation of a poverty reduction strategy, with a particular emphasis on how the HIPC resources could effectively be used. The announcement of the Second National Dialogue, expected in April, is again postponed following civil unrest which the Government tries to contain by imposing a State of Emergency. In the face of widespread criticism, the President announces that the answers to the country's socio-economic problems should be sought through the Second National Dialogue.

The Second National Dialogue is officially launched in May, and take the form of three separate "Agendas": Social, Economic and Political. After several postponements, thought to be due to discussions within the Government and between the Government and the opposition, the Social and Economic Agendas conclude at a National Table held in the last week of August, 2000. The Political Summit involving all political parties, where the political consensus needed to enact some of the recommendations of the Social and Economic Agendas was expected to be built, was postponed from September due to another outbreak of civil unrest which racks the country. The Government struggles to address the demands of all protesting groups, engaging in what one official called the third dialogue process. Meanwhile work on the PRSP continues, but without the optimism which characterized the National Table at the beginning of September.

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Each section closes with an examination of some of the enabling factors which facilitated the processes, as well as some of the outstanding challenges. A summary timeline is given in Annex I.

Box 1. Major Stakeholders in Poverty-related policy debates

Government

- **Central Government:** Office of the Presidency, Office of the Vice-Presidency, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Health and Social Provision, Vice-ministry of Public Investment and External Finance, Political, Social and Economic Analysis Unit (UDAPE) of the Ministry of Finance.
- **Departmental Government:** Departmental officials (prefects)
- **Municipal Government:** Mayors, municipal councils

Civil Society:

- **Social Organizations:** including COB (main labor confederation); CSUTCB (indigenous farmers' organization); CIBOB, CONAMAQ and several other confederations of indigenous groups; *Federacion de Juntas de Vecinos* (federation of neighborhood committees); *Federacion de Mujeres* (federation of women's groups). Under the Popular Participation Law, passed in 1994, the neighborhood organizations (in urban areas) and the agrarian syndicates and tribal bodies (in rural areas) were officially recognized as *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base (OTBs)*, from which members of the *Comites de Vigilancia* (Vigilance Committees) are chosen or elected (Annex II).
- **Vigilance Committees:** Each municipality has a Vigilance Committee, whose members are chosen from the OTBs to represent individual cantons and districts (in rural and urban areas respectively). The role of the Vigilance Committees is to help municipal governments to plan annual municipal expenditures in health, education and recreation, to oversee the accountability of funds allocated to the municipal governments, and to file complaints of municipal malfeasance to the Central government.
- **NGOs (or Private Development Institutions):** The NGO Sector is principally organised through seven major NGO networks: UNITAS and AIPE (development networks), ERBOL (communications network), LIDEMA (environment network), Coordinadora de la Mujer (women's network), and FINRURAL and Secretariado Rural (rural sector networks). These are mostly intermediary NGOs who offer research programs and/or provide services to CBOs.
- **International NGOs:** Several international development NGOs operate in Bolivia, including Oxfam, Catholic Relief Services, CARE and Medicos Mundio, a Spanish NGO.
- **Catholic Church:** The Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church is the Bolivian agency of CARITAS Internationalis, the development wing of the Catholic Church. While other religious organizations exist in Bolivia, the Church has played a distinctive role in human rights and debt relief campaigns.
- **Academic and research institutes:** Several prominent research centers and institutes participate regularly in the public debate on poverty, such as the Center of Studies for Labor and Agrarian Development (CEDLA), Center of Studies for Urban and Rural Development (CEDURE), and the Center for Social and Economic Development (DESEC).

Official Donors: World Bank, IMF, Inter-American Development Bank, Development Agencies of U.K., Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, U.S.A.

Other Donors:

- **Inter-American Foundation:** independent agency of US federal government
- **Church groups:** Church groups based in Germany and the United States provide funding support to Jubilee 2000 process
- **International NGOs:** Bread for the World, Catholic Relief Services, and other groups based in Washington D.C. provide informational and funding support to various groups in Bolivia

1. *Bolivia Towards the 21st Century: the first National Dialogue (October 1997)*

Several months after the national elections in June 1997, representatives from the Church, trade union associations, several NGO networks, academic institutions, Donors and the private sector were invited by the newly elected Government to a “National Dialogue” workshop entitled “Bolivia Towards the 21st Century”. The objective of the dialogue was to discuss and develop the new administration’s economic and social policy framework. Seeking a neutral “space”, the new Vice President, who was in charge of coordinating the Dialogue, asked UNDP for its assistance to administer and implement the workshop. The World Bank also worked closely with the Government to plan the workshop as well as to assist in developing a “participatory framework” to involve civil society. The Inter-American Development Bank and several bilateral donors contributed financial support and the loan of resource persons, as well as resources to hire consultants to prepare background documents.

As they had received the invitation to the Dialogue workshop only three weeks before the event, and the background documents even later, many CSOs felt disadvantaged in their capacity to participate. The short preparation time made it impossible to consult their own counterparts and ‘constituencies’, and as a result, some chose not to participate at all. Nevertheless, over 60 % of the total participants were from CSOs.

The workshop took place in October 1997. Participants were organized into four working groups which were tasked with discussing issues relating to thematic “pillars”:

- **“opportunity”**: economic development and improving the distribution of income within a framework of stability, increasing domestic savings, and improving economic infrastructure in order to increase competitiveness;
- **“equity”**: actions for poverty reduction through policies and programs directed at education, health, housing, the provision of basic services, and projects aimed at raising productivity in rural areas;
- **“dignity”**: the elimination of coca growing and drug trafficking, through the creation of alternative development strategies;
- **“institutionality”**: how to generate conditions required for transparent relations between the Government and Civil Society in order to ensure that policies are sustainable, through modernization of the state and elimination of corruption.¹

Each working group met for three days, during which the Government presented its proposed policies, followed by a discussion.² Many issues were raised during the discussions on which consensus was not reached, but a set of recommendations were agreed upon, which the Government went on to incorporate into its medium-term development strategy. In December 1997, the Dialogue officially concluded with the adoption of a five-year National Action Plan (1997-2002). A major conclusion was that poverty reduction should be the overriding objective of this Action Plan.

Enabling factors

¹ Government of Bolivia (2000a)

² Many of the proposals were drawn from Banzer’s campaign platform in the national elections.

- **Four “pillar” approach provides basis for framework:** The four “Pillar” approach provided a cross-sectoral conceptual framework on which the Government could develop its national development strategies.

Outstanding challenges

- ***Differing views of participants:*** As a first attempt at involving domestic stakeholders in a discussion on public policy, the **Government** considered the Dialogue to be a success. The Workshop had provided an unprecedented opportunity to Civil Society Organizations and other groups to give their inputs to a national development strategy. Meanwhile many **CSOs** left the event dissatisfied. The short preparation time, and the brevity of each session (3 days) did not allow the kind of in-depth discussion which the CSOs were ready to engage in. They were also critical of the fact that the Government had selected the participants without any consultation. **Donor** reactions were more varied. Some eyebrows were raised on how the money for the Dialogue was actually spent, and were doubtful whether there was enough support across Government to develop and implement the Plan. On the other hand, the World Bank was very positive about the outcome of the Dialogue, and recognized that the four “pillars” offered a potential framework for developing its own program of work.

2. Government – Donors develop framework for cooperation (1997 – 1999)

2.1. DAC strategy document provokes new thinking on development co-operation

A 1996 strategy document published by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) provided the mandate to some bilateral donors to explore ways of improving Government-Donor coordination.³ This led to the creation of a number of sectoral Government – Donor Working Groups, which met periodically to review the ongoing work within specific sectors. Initially, the World Bank was not closely involved in these Working Groups.

2.2. CAS paves way for donor support to “Government’s” framework (November 1997 – April 1998)

The World Bank initiated work on a new Country Assistance Strategy around the time the National Dialogue was held. It decided that it would be too expensive to conduct an extensive consultation; furthermore, it suggested that because the National Action Plan was broadly based on the campaign platform of the Banzer Government, it could be considered as having the popular mandate of the general public. Consequently, the CAS was structured around three of the four “pillars” within the National Action Plan.⁴

³ OECD DAC, *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation*, May 1996.

⁴ The Government and the World Bank agreed that the Bank did not have a comparative advantage in the eradication of coca production, which was the focus of the dignity pillar. World Bank (1999). While its primary focus was on poverty reduction, the CAS also included a comprehensive private-sector development strategy, as it was undertaken jointly with the IFC.

Work to develop the CAS followed several distinct phases, through which Government and Donor support for the Bank-proposed framework was garnered. Initially, some of the other donors were suspicious of the World Bank's proposal to develop its CAS in consultation with them, and questioned why the Bank "did not just tell them what its strategy would be so that they could get on with their own planning."⁵ After several joint Government – Donor meetings between December 1997 and April 1998, some Donors agreed that the CAS matrix could serve as a planning framework. At the June 1998 Consultative Group meeting, the CAS was presented with a matrix of both the Bank Group's activities and the complementary activities of other donors working in Bolivia. The Bank's recognized the usefulness of the Government-Donor Working Groups as a donor coordination mechanism. Several new Groups were established, and these groups began to try to identify relevant performance benchmarks for both the National Action Plan and the CAS.

2.3. CDF, "New Framework for Government-International Cooperation Relationship" strengthens Government –Donor framework but fails to attract support of other stakeholders (January 1999 onwards)

Soon after the announcement of the Comprehensive Development Framework initiative, Bolivia volunteered to become a CDF pilot country. Using the CAS matrix as the basis, the CDF was developed through workshops involving the Government officials and the World Bank, starting with a "business meeting" in January 1999 attended by the Vice-President, Minister of Finance, several other senior government officials, one of the facilitators of the National Dialogue, and the UN Resident Coordinator. The meetings helped to align the Government and the Bank's objectives, thereby enhancing their mutual sense of "ownership". At a later stage donors were invited to support the CDF through the "Pillar" Working Groups. At the June 1999 Consultative Group meeting, the first to be chaired by the Government and held in La Paz, the Government presented a document entitled "Establishing a New Framework for the Government-International Cooperation Relationship", which Donors broadly endorsed.

Meanwhile, the Government attempted to engage CSOs on the CDF with lesser success. In February 1999, the Government invited CSOs to a meeting on the CDF, but as in the case of the National Dialogue, invitations were received very shortly before the meeting (in some cases, one week before), while many of the documents were in English.⁶ For most, it was the first time they had heard of the CDF, and thus many again left feeling that the meeting had been largely unproductive. At the launching ceremony for the "new strategy", held in June 1999, the Government publicly stated its commitment "to re-establishing communication with representatives from civil society organizations, including indigenous groups, to exchange information on key national issues".⁷ But some CSOs continued to feel excluded, despite both Government and Donor attempts to involve them (**Box 2**).

⁵ Tikare and Shah (1999)

⁶ At a subsequent meeting held in Washington D.C. in March, World Bank staff accepted these criticisms, and agreed that papers will at least be translated into Spanish (but not into the indigenous languages) and that more lead time will be given before future meetings. Hartnell.

⁷ World Bank News Release No. 99/2262/LAC, "Bolivia and World Bank Launch Pilot Initiative to Fight Poverty", June 18, 1999.

Box 2. CDF not comprehensive in consultative approach

Shortly before the Consultative Group meeting in June 1999, the Government invited a number of CSOs, including UNITAS, AIPE, COB, CIDOP, CEDLA and the Catholic Church, to a meeting to discuss how CSOs could participate in public policy discussions and debates. According to one report, civil society participants found that the meeting was poorly prepared, with no proposals from the government on which to base the discussions. Furthermore, it is said that the Government admitted it had called the meeting in response to donor pressure (Coventry, 1999).

On the other hand, CSOs were also critical of Donors when they invited NGOs to a separate 'consultation' where they presented the positions they planned to put to the government at the CG. "In the view of CSOs, this move was fundamentally flawed: it came too late in the process for donor plans to be open to change; it was an information-giving occasion rather than a consultation to hear the CSOs' views; and it by-passed the government." (Gomez and Arauco, cited in Richmond and McGee (1999).

"Local NGOs" were included in the CDF matrix as one of the implementing partners, and a Bank document on implementing the CDF referred several times to Government and Donor intentions to include NGOs and other CSOs in the CDF itself, for example, in the working groups which would review the progress made towards reaching the performance targets. But at the time of the CDF launch, they had clearly not been consulted on the role which they were expected to play.

Enabling factors

- ***Government – Donor relations strengthened:*** Donor support for "home-grown" National Action Plan was an important factor in strengthening Government – Donor relations. By basing both the CAS and the CDF on the NAP "pillars", the World Bank boosted the Government's efforts to further this Plan. Furthermore, the preparatory work for the CDF greatly enhanced the cooperative spirit between World Bank staff and Government officials. Statements by other donors at the June 1998 Consultative Group meeting also reflect support for a more harmonized, results-oriented approach to donor and government coordination, to the extent that some Donors begin trying to link the results of their own projects to the performance indicators of each "pillar".⁸

Outstanding challenges

- ***Limited reach of the Framework:*** A mid-1999 World Bank report on the plan for the implementation of the CDF reveal that in future, the Government was expected to bring other stakeholders into the process. However, as later accounts revealed, most Civil Society actors considered the lack of follow-up to the National Dialogue as one of its most serious shortcomings.⁹ Several were involved in Government discussions on the CDF, but were not in agreement with the role they had been cast to play: some NGOs, for example, questioned why they were only mentioned in the "Equity"

⁸ The World Bank's country team even aligned its staff and its lending programme around the three pillars.

⁹ Coventry, Vera and McCollim cite this issue, as does the Government's Interim PRSP document.

pillar.¹⁰ Knowledge about the CDF and the Government's "New Strategy" was largely confined to Government – Donor circles, without any efforts involving even lower levels of government.

3. “Negotiating” participation (end of 1999 - beginning of 2000)¹¹

3.1. Government and Donors begin preparatory work on Interim PRSP

In October 1999, the Bank and Fund fielded a mission to Bolivia to explain the PRSP to the Government, while a senior Bank poverty specialist worked with the Political, Social and Economic Analysis Unit of the Ministry of Finance (UDAPE) to support its poverty analysis work for the Interim PRSP. The deadlines set for the decision and completion points of the HIPC 2 were January and June/July 2000 respectively, which meant that an Interim PRSP needed to be drafted by the end of the year. The idea of holding a Second National Dialogue was reported to have been considered by the Government for some time, but Government support of the idea was weak until it became clear that the Dialogue was a kind of 'precondition' for receiving the funds.¹²

The President appointed the Vice-President to once again oversee the Dialogue process. Meanwhile around this time, a Government-Donor Working Group on a fifth "Pillar" on Poverty was established, co-chaired by UDAPE and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which took the responsibility of coordinating and communicating the development of the PRSP to other donors.

At a donors meeting held on December 7, the Minister of Economic Development outlined the Government's intention to establish a Steering Committee consisting not only of senior Government officials but also representatives from six 'types' of Civil Society organizations. A separate Technical Committee consisting of the Vice-President, Minister of Finance, three moderators who had been involved in the first Dialogue, a Church Representative and a Dialogue Project Manager, which would be in charge of operational matters.¹³ At a second meeting initiated by donors on December 17th, Donors agreed to fund both the Government's Dialogue process as well as preparatory activities of CSOs. At the same meeting, the Government announced that a parallel process of consultation on "Strategies for Economic Growth" would be organized, building on a consultative process which was already taking place with the private sector, and that the two processes would converge at the concluding session of the National Dialogue.

3.2. Civil Society Reactions to news of a Second National Dialogue

¹⁰ One article quotes a Bolivian NGO worker as describing the involvement of civil society as "It's like you're walking down the street and someone you know asks you to go along for a ride. You don't know what's going on but you might as well go if you've got nothing better to do." Hartnell (1999).

¹¹ This section draws heavily on a report by Coventry (1999).

¹² A World Bank report published in May 1999 on the implementation of the CDF notes that the Government would need to take steps towards institutionalizing the National Dialogue, so it seems that the idea had been discussed. World Bank (1999).

¹³ These were representatives of the Catholic Church, the private sector, the Bolivian Workers' Confederation (COB), social organizations, and NGOs.

3.2.1. *Independent group of “professionals”*

Following the first National Dialogue, a small group of “professionals”, including the facilitators of the first Dialogue, had continued to meet irregularly to discuss ways in which public policy could better target poverty. In October 1998, they had produced a report outlining public policy responses to poverty called “*Propuesta Contra la Pobreza*” (Proposals against Poverty), which was subsequently published by the Vicepresidency.¹⁴ When they heard about the HIPC 2, some members of this informal group met with the Vice-President to discuss ways in which the Dialogue could be organized. Their main concerns were firstly, whether the Government intended to make a genuine effort or whether it was only a gesture to meet the conditions set by its creditors; and secondly, that even if some parts of Government were sincere, their endeavor could easily be thwarted by political resistance from opposition parties, as well as from within Banzer’s coalition government. The group began to meet regularly with the Vice-President to discuss, among other things, how to create a political environment which would be conducive to a sustainable and substantive process.

3.2.2. *Catholic Church*

Around October 1999, the Pastoral Commission of the Catholic Church, which had led the debt relief campaign, began developing the idea of organizing a consultative process on the use of HIPC 2 resources. In December, the Church, together with several social organizations such as the COB (trade unions association) and the CSUTCB (Confederation of Campesino Workers in Bolivia) issued an open letter to the Government, outlining their own concerns about the Government’s intent and announcing its intention to realize its own National Jubilee 2000 consultative process. Among letter outlined the concerns of the CSOs, including:

- the right of civil society to have timely access to the same information as other actors (such as donors)
- the right of civil society to participate in the design of the methodology of the Dialogue and in defining its focus and content
- the right of civil society to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of policies agreed in the Dialogue
- the lack of information on the Dialogue process to date, and
- the need for the new PRGF, being negotiated with the IMF, to take into account macroeconomic policy recommendations from civil society.

The Government recognized the importance of including the Church in its own Dialogue, and conducted extensive discussions with Church representatives to try to appease their concerns. However, on December 21 the Church wrote to the Minister of Finance affirming their commitment to the Government’s Dialogue, but declining to join the steering bodies.

3.2.3. *NGO Networks*

¹⁴ The impact of this report was thought to have limited impact because it did not have significant bearing on Government policy. Coventry (1999)

Meanwhile, UNITAS, one of the leading NGO networks, had received a letter from the Minister of Finance which asked them to propose a mechanism of participation of NGOs in the Dialogue. From their experiences of the first Dialogue, UNITAS had decided that NGOs should cooperate to present a joint front to the Government, as well as have a clear set of conditions for their participation so that the exercise did not become a mere formality. They therefore prepared a document which outlined the minimum conditions for participation, many of which overlapped with the concerns expressed by Jubilee 2000, namely, that civil society be given an equal status as other stakeholders. At a meeting held on December 7, the Minister accepted these conditions, as well as their demand that civil society proposals in the Dialogue be given equal status to any others. The NGOs decided to try to prepare a brief document, designed to stimulate debate and discussion, and conduct focus groups in each department to develop perspectives on the key issues relating to poverty reduction.

3.2.4. Associations of “Productive” groups

The Inter-American Foundation (IAF), which worked with civil society groups at the grassroots level in Bolivia, became interested in the discussions on the Dialogue when they were contacted by the U.S. Government’s General Accounting Office for contacts for a study they were conducting on debt relief.¹⁵ When they contacted *Fundacion Inti Raymi* (FIR), an association representing miners, its response was of skepticism of the Government’s intentions. However, they knew of the Church’s plans to lead a consultative process, and began developing ideas for a process of their own, which could focus on the “productive sectors”. After initial consultations with mining cooperatives, rural enterprises, and the federation of small industries, a “Nacional Comite de Enlace” was created, which decided to try to organize a process based on the views of their own sectors at the grassroots level, which would feed directly into the Government’s Dialogue. Other associations, including a human rights group, associations of artisans, and other civil society organizations expressed their interest in joining the *Consulta Nacional* (National Consultation).

3.3. Government changes strategy

3.3.1. New plans announced with focus on municipal level

The Government had intended to announce the Dialogue as soon as the Steering Committee had been confirmed and the timeframe agreed upon, but was forced to reconsider its plan in light of the position taken by the Church. The official announcement was also delayed by political negotiations over the results of the municipal elections, which had left the mayor’s seats of several major cities undecided.

The Government decided that the formal Steering Committee and the Technical Committee would be reconstituted into an independent Technical Secretariat, funded by

¹⁵ United States General Accounting Office, “Developing Countries – Debt Relief Initiative for Poor Countries Faces Challenges”, Report to Congressional Committees (2000).

Donors and housed in the UNDP office.¹⁶ Acutely aware of the limitations of the first Dialogue, the Coordinator of the Secretariat, Carlos Toranzo, began thinking about how to design a process which took territorial actors into account, rather than along 'functional' (sectoral) lines. The organizational team was therefore formed of individuals who had had substantive experience in decentralization and working at the municipal level.¹⁷

The revised proposals, which were presented to donors on 21 and 24 January 2000, reflected this shift in the emphasis of the Dialogue. The focus was now on consultations at the municipal level, with no direct reference to the nationally organized civil society groups, such as the Church, NGOs and social organizations. This raised some fears amongst these groups of being excluded from the Dialogue, but as they developed their plans further, members of the Secretariat informally met with them to discuss and exchange ideas.

3.3.2. Interim PRSP sent to Washington D.C.

Meanwhile, work on the Interim PRSP by Government staff had been ongoing, and in mid-January the Government submitted it to the World Bank and IMF for consideration by their Boards. It is said that the Government did not circulate the draft to other groups because of the time constraint. Through their contacts abroad, many CSOs were aware that the Interim PRSP had been submitted to Washington, but are reported to have had difficulty in obtaining a copy themselves. This lack of transparency on the part of the Government added to their suspicions, despite the fact that the Interim PRSP explicitly assigned a major role to all participants of the Dialogue, including, presumably, CSOs.¹⁸

Enabling factors

- ***Civil Society takes matters into own hands:*** Most observers outside of Government viewed it with great suspicion, but at the same time recognized that this was an opportunity to have their voices heard in the national debates about poverty. A key turning point was the Church's decision to conduct its own Jubilee 2000 process, which stimulated discussions among other groups. Their plans were later boosted by the announcement by Donors of a Special Fund in support of civil society contributions to the Dialogue.¹⁹

¹⁶ The Donor community is thought to have been influential in ensuring that the Secretariat be an independent entity.

¹⁷ Several of these individuals were seconded or took leave from the Danish and American aid agencies, as well as from the Human Development team of UNDP.

¹⁸ "It is expected that, through open discussion, participants in the dialogue will determine the procedures of the dialogue itself, modify the initial conceptual framework, propose which specific actions will receive priority, suggest budgetary allocations within a sustainable macroeconomic program, and develop a system of monitoring progress in reducing poverty. This poverty reduction strategy will continue to evolve over the years through an extended participatory process." Government of Bolivia (2000a), paragraph 1.

¹⁹ Proposals to this fund were invited in March 2000. UNDP and the Governments of Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the UK provided the funding, which was initially planned to be about \$100,000 but was later expanded to \$400,000.

- **Independent Secretariat lends credibility:** The independent status of the Secretariat was an important point for building the trust of Civil Society actors. The presence of several key individuals, including political scientists and others outside of Government, added legitimacy to the exercise in the eyes of Civil Society. Interestingly, several of these individuals were active members of the informal group which had prepared the “Proposals against poverty.”

Outstanding challenges

- **Interim PRSP submitted without transparency:** Although some CSOs knew that the Interim PRSP was not “required” to be created in a participatory way, the *secrecy* with which the document was prepared, and their perception that it had been prepared closely with the World Bank and IMF to the exclusion of the Bolivian people, made them question how the Government would ‘behave’ when it came to the Dialogue itself. Meanwhile the Government had to work under tremendous pressure to finish it by January, so that Bolivia could reach the Decision Point which would allow it to qualify for HIPC II.

4. Parallel processes unfold while Government struggles to address crisis (December 1999 – June 2000)

4.1 CSO processes “bloom” across Bolivia

From December 1999 until the middle of August 2000, a series of CSO initiatives of unprecedented scale and regional breadth began to take place. Some consisted of a diverse range of organizations united behind a common goal, while others focussed on their own political and social agendas. Common themes which they addressed were:

- How the HIPC resources would be used
- Identification of the poorest groups in society
- Effective strategies for poverty reduction, which addressed structural problems
- Issues of governance, especially corruption, weaknesses of the electoral system, and the “problems” with party politics.

An example of the tremendous diversity of representation is given in Table 1, which lists the main *organizers* (not participants) of two of the largest processes, the Jubilee 2000 and the National Committee of Enlace.

Table 1. Organizers of two Civil Society processes

Jubilee 2000	National Committee of Enlace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Episcopal Conference of Bolivia • Bolivia's Workers Union • Private Enterprises Confederation of Bolivia • National Pensioners' Confederation • Rural Workers' Syndicate Confederation • Bolivian Journalist Association • Colonialists' Syndicate Confederation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of Small Industries • 8 Civic Committees • National Handicraft Association • National Ecologist Producers Association • National Mining Cooperative Federation • Fundacion Inti Raymi (FIR) • National Confederation of Neighborhood Associations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Committee of Bolivian Universities • Bolivian Universities Confederation • Integrating Committee for Rural Economic Organizations of Bolivia • National Union for Social Work Institutions • Rural Secretariat • Women's Coordinating Committee • ERBOL (Bolivian Radio Education) • LIDEMA (Environmental Defense League) • Association of Promotional and Educational Institutions • Rural Aim • Human Rights Permanent Assembly • FOBOMADE (Bolivian Environment and Development Forum) • Micro-Industry Federation • National Mining Cooperative Federation • Old People's Defense • Special Needs Friends and Parents Association • National Handicap Committee • Easter Bolivia's Indigenous Confederation • National Ecologist Producers Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights Permanent Assembly • Other NGOs
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There was not always agreement within the CSO community on the ways in which they should organize themselves. For example, the announcement of the separate *Consulta Nacional*, created some tension between the organizers and the organizers of the Jubileo 2000, while there was also speculation that some groups were organizing consultations so that they could access the Special Fund and/or have a say in the allocation of the HIPC resources. At the same time, many groups participated in several processes concurrently, allowing for some cross-fertilization between the processes. By the end of August, 2000, the Special Fund had provided resources to **14 processes** involving an estimated **10,000 people**, while international NGOs also contributed money towards the preparation of documents and studies such as the NGO report (see Annex III for summary table). Some of the major processes are described below.

4.1.1. Foro Jubileo 2000 (Jubilee 2000) (December 1999 – April 2000)

Under the slogan of “Constructing a Human Development for All”, the organizers of the Jubilee 2000 developed a proposal which envisaged a “grass-roots upwards process”.²⁰ After conducting a training workshop for departmental representatives at the end of February and a series of explanatory workshops outlining the objectives and methodology of the Jubilee 2000 Forum, from mid-March to mid-April Departmental Forums were held in each of the nine Departments of the Country, each lasting for 3 days. Each Forum was broken into Working Groups which were divided along the themes of:

- Macroeconomic policies and structural adjustment

²⁰ Jubilee 2000 “Constructing a Human Development For All”.

- Civil participation and human rights
- Rural / urban education
- Rural / urban health
- Income and employment
- Land and productivity.

In addition to the many institutions and organizations which participated, some 350 individuals also volunteered as consultants to help structure as well as guide the campaign. Several academics served as advisors, providing, for example, their analysis of the failures of structural adjustment reforms to reduce poverty. While Government was not invited to the deliberations, the organizers invited the President and all fifteen cabinet ministers to participate in the closing plenary in April. Four attended, including the Minister of the Treasury.

More than any other of the processes, Jubilee 2000 highlighted the issue of how the debt relief funds should be used and how this usage could be monitored. The Foro produced a concrete proposal, in the form of a “Social Control Mechanism” for the PRSP, which became a major input into the departmental and national roundtables of the Government’s Dialogue.

4.1.2. Consulta Nacional of the Comité Nacional de Enlace (June – August 2000)

As a forum for small- and medium-sized producers, the *Consulta Nacional* focussed on increasing productivity as a way of addressing poverty. A tremendous effort was made on the part of the various associations to organize communal, regional as well as national tables with their own constituents. For example, the National Federation of Mining Cooperatives organized 8 regional and one national event in which 574 participants from mining cooperatives from all of the main mining areas attended. Issues around improving the external competitiveness of the Bolivian economy, food security, sustainable local development, problems facing poor women, and others, were analysed in background documents and used as the basis of the discussions. This process provided these producers with the opportunity to develop national strategies for small-scale industries, small and medium-sized agricultural producers, and small and medium-sized mining producers. These proposals were later brought into both the Social and the Economic Agendas of the Second National Dialogue.

4.1.3. CIDOB and CONAMAQ (May – July 2000)

Representing the concerns of the indigenous populations of “lowlands” and the “highlands” respectively, CIDOB (Confederacion de Pueblos Indigenas del Oriente, or Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Eastern Region, the Chaco and the Bolivian Amazon Region) and CONAMAQ (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu) conducted regional assemblies with the participation of indigenous groups. After consolidating the outcomes of the regional assemblies at a national meeting, CIDOB convened a “Great National Assembly of Indigenous Villages”, the highest institution in the decision-making and representative processes of their people. This process thus made use of an existing representative structure to give the consultations the highest level of

approval. Different sectors of society, including the Government, were invited to this National Assembly, and several new agreements were signed between CIDOB and the Government.

4.1.4. University of Nur

As the coordinator of the Working Group of Participatory Methods in Bolivia, which had conducted the World Bank's study on the "Voices of the Poor", the University of Nur was approached by DFID with the idea of exploring alternative, more creative approaches to participation than the one being put forward by the Government.²¹ They called a meeting with their members to discuss ideas, and those which had time developed proposals. A notable feature of one of the three exercises was its links to ongoing capacity building activities at the municipal government level (**Box 3**).

Box 3. Alternative approaches to participation

Despite the very limited time for preparation, three NGOs agreed to work with the Department of Investigation and Development, University of Nur, to try to develop an 'alternative' approach to the Government's proposed Dialogue process. The three groups came up with their own proposals, each designed to the specific characteristics of their localities.

Tarija: In the Department of Tarija, the group decided to follow-up on the previous work which had been done as part of the "Consultations with the Poor" by conducting a participatory poverty assessment which looked more closely at the stratification between families. The results of the exercise showed that poverty reduction strategies at the local level have to be sensitive to the subtle differences of needs between different groups of the "poor".

Potosi: In Potosi, Medicos Mundi, a Spanish NGO, wanted to use the opportunity to work with the municipal authorities in creating more feasible municipal development plans. In this exercise, they tried to develop a methodology which could be used to identify priorities which went beyond a "shopping list", in a fairly short period of time. Three separate workshops were held with municipal authorities, local NGOs, and members of the Vigilance Committees, while a fourth workshop brought all three groups together. The exercise helped the groups to identify and discuss their respective roles and responsibilities in addressing issues of poverty. Several participants used the results of the exercise when they attended the Municipal Table of Potosi.

Santa Cruz: The local NGO in Santa Cruz was interested in reaching a large number of people, so it decided to network with teacher training schools. After receiving training in participatory techniques, the teachers went to rural communities to gather their views on different aspects of poverty. The group had more time to prepare and train because Santa Cruz was one of the last Municipal Tables to be held.

Source: Adam Behrendt and Fernando Dick, University of Nur.

4.1.5. Private Development Institutions

Although they were involved in the other processes, the NGO Networks decided to develop a joint policy paper on strategies to address poverty in Bolivia. Through discussions, meetings and seminars, they critically assessed the Interim PRSP and drafted

²¹ This is a loose network of 26 institutions which promote participatory methodologies in Bolivia. In 1999, this group conducted the "Voices of the Poor" study for Bolivia.

“All Debt Relief for Sustainable Local Development”, which was presented both at the Jubilee 2000 and the National Dialogue. The document highlighted what the NGOs saw as the deficiencies and flaws in the analysis of the I-PRSP, and contained concrete proposals, such as the need to create links between the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the national development strategy so that additional resources coming from debt relief would complement regular public investment.

4.2. Official launch again postponed due to problems of social unrest

While the CSOs were conducting their consultations, the Government struggled to contain a series of political and social crises, postponing, yet again, the official launch of the Dialogue from the date planned in April. In early February and again at the beginning of April, thousands of protestors marched through the city of Cochabamba to express their opposition to a controversial increase in water rates²². Demonstrations sprung up all over the country, as a number of other groups, each with their own demands, launched protests against the Government.

The Government’s reaction was to bring the military forces in and impose a national State of Emergency, but continued clashes resulted in five deaths. The Government’s use of force contributed to even wider and more vocal criticism of the Banzer Government, even from within its own ranks, leading to the resignation of the government and the appointment of a new cabinet.²³ The Government lifted its State of Emergency after only 13 days (instead of the 90 days mandated by the Constitution) when the Catholic Church and trade unions stepped up pressure on the Government, and, it is reported, when it appeared that the HIPC 2 program would be jeopardized.²⁴

Enabling factors

- ***CSO processes prepare ground for “official” Dialogue:*** It is indisputable that the experience resulted in a great sense of achievement, at least amongst the organizers of the CSO processes. For many, it was a demonstration of how a national consultative process could be carried out, if only the Government were willing. The various processes created a platform from which the representatives of the groups could confidently present their positions when they participated in the “official” government Dialogue. In some cases, such as the Jubilee 2000, the objective of moving Civil Society lobbying from a stance of *protesta* (“protest”) to a *propuesta* (“proposal”) was realized.²⁵ Meanwhile groups representing the more marginalized

²² In October 1999, the international consortium Aguas del Tunari agreed to build the Multiple Misicuni Project. In several years’ advance of supplying water to Cochabamba, the company raised water rates by 35 to 200 percent, both to fund the project’s construction and to finance the state-owned firm’s outstanding debt. The leap in prices, as well as the perceptions by the public that the Government had ‘sold out’ to foreign investors, brought consumers into the streets. The vehement protests led the Government to revoke AdT’s contract in April. *Bolivian Times*, July 27, 2000.

²³ Though it was acknowledged by several sources that the root cause of the protests, namely the difficult economic period facing Bolivia due to the vagaries of global markets, most blamed the government for introducing ill-conceived measures which were bound to worsen the plight of the general public.

²⁴ “Politics-Bolivia: Banzer, the Siege and the Market”, *InterPress Service*, April 21, 2000.

²⁵ see project proposal

sectors of society, such as poor children, were able to draw attention to their specific needs, while the NGO Report highlights the need for much more thorough analysis of poverty across region and vulnerable groups.

- ***Donor funds enable widespread CSO processes to take place:*** The availability of funds was a critical factor enabling CSOs to plan and implement their consultative processes.

Outstanding challenges

- ***Faith in Government hits all time low:*** The President’s decision to impose a State of Emergency increased the tension between the Government and Civil Society groups. Prospects for a constructive official Dialogue were threatened, especially when the Coordinator of the Technical Secretariat resigned over the Government’s handling of the crisis. However, the longer-term effects of the crisis in the Dialogue may have been to give it even greater political prominence that it had had previously. The protests are believed to have not only seriously shaken the Government’s confidence, but also drove home the point that no political parties, including the opposition, could afford to ignore the complaints of the population.

5. Second National Dialogue unfolds

In May, the President went on national television to announce the Dialogue. The Dialogue would take the form of three separate ‘dialogues’ which would come together in a final National Roundtable, as shown in Figure 1. The three were:

- Social Agenda: Municipal and Departmental Roundtables
- Development Agenda (10 Sectoral Policy and 7 “Productive Chain” workshops)
- Political Agenda.²⁶

5.1 The Social Agenda

5.1.1. Municipal Tables

While the various CSO processes were taking place, the Technical Secretariat was busy planning the Municipal and Departmental Tables. It had to grapple with several questions:

Who should be invited to the Municipal Table? From the start, the Secretariat was determined to invite all of the Municipalities.²⁷ However, they faced the difficult task of

²⁶ The announcement of a Political Dialogue caused some consternation among CSOs, especially as was expected to involve proposals to change the Constitution, which would require more time for discussion and debate. It is possible that following the critical political crisis in April, the President decided to use the opportunity presented by the Dialogue to engage all of his critics, especially the opposition parties, in a public, formal process.

²⁷ The Government’s original plan had been to invite selected municipalities, for example, the poorest, to participate in the Municipal Tables, but when the independent Secretariat was formed one of the conditions it set to the Government was that representatives from *all* 310 municipalities be invited. This was because

identifying individuals from both the Local Government and Civil Society who were representative of the Municipality. There was much discussion within the Secretariat (**Box 4**), until it finally decided on four principal representatives:

- the mayor
- the Vice President from the Municipal Council
- the President of the Vigilance Committee (VC), representing Civil Society; and
- a female member of the VC.

In addition, several other government officials, including *diputados uninominales* (elected parliamentary representatives), Departmental Councilors, and representatives of the Association of Municipal Governments were to be invited.

How to capture views in a systematic manner which would assess priorities and allow comparability across municipalities? Over two and a half months, the team prepared the ‘themes’ of the discussions. Many of these ‘themes’ drew on work which had previously been done for the National Human Development Report for Bolivia, 2000, involving many types of surveys and analytical methodologies. These ‘themes’ formed the basis for a questionnaire, which was presented in four sections:

- Part A: Poverty in Municipalities and Regions (identification of poor and actions to address their poverty)
- Part B: Mechanisms for the allocation of resources for poverty reduction (identification of institutions which should handle HIPC resources and criteria for allocation)
- Part C: Citizen participation in the control of management of these resources (identification of institutional mechanism to “control” and evaluate use of resources, and type of civil society involvement in it)
- Part D: Institutionalization and continuation of the Dialogue (desirability of institutionalization and ways to implement).

Each nominee received an information package about the Dialogue, including a briefing paper and a ‘comic’ explaining the process, the questionnaire, and what the HIPC resources were.²⁸ Each team was also asked to consult with their constituency on the answers to the questionnaire. About 60 % of the municipalities are thought to have conducted some kind of consultations within their municipality.²⁹

The Tables were held over two days in each of the capitals of the nine Departments. Members of the Technical Secretariat participated in the Tables as facilitators. In some cases representatives from Central Government opened the meetings, while other interested groups, such as members of Jubilee 2000, occasionally attended as observers. After breaking into smaller working groups, the representatives tried to develop common answers to the questions. Then the different regions presented their conclusions at a plenary session and deliberated until consensus was reached. The fact that all

of the concern that without representation across the country, the legitimacy of the results could be called into question.

²⁸ One person commented that the questionnaire was not distributed widely.

²⁹ Although it is not clear how these consultations were conducted, one of the organizers considered it to be a significant number in view of the fact that the municipal level authorities had not had experience with this kind of exercise before.

municipalities came to the Tables prepared with their questionnaires filled in facilitated the actual proceedings of the meeting.

As the results came in, the Secretariat compiled the data into a synthesis report, which would serve as the basis for discussion at the next ‘round’ of consultations. Of particular interest were the findings that:

- All municipalities wanted to implement the Strategy themselves;
- Seven out of nine Tables wanted resources to be allocated on the basis of poverty indicators;
- Six out of nine Tables wanted a national and departmental institution to control and evaluate the use of resources, with the Church participation in both;
- All agreed that the Dialogue should be carried out periodically.³⁰

Box 4. Thoughts behind the selection process of the Municipal Tables

Much thought was put into the selection process for the various Tables of the Dialogue. For the Municipal Table, the original plan had been to invite 2 people from each municipality: the mayor and the president of the municipality’s *Comite de Vigilancia* (Vigilance Committee). Vigilance Committee members are elected (or chosen through traditional mechanisms) from the *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base*, or OTB (Territorial Basis Organizations), which comprise of territorial organizations, indigenous organizations, peasant organizations and neighborhood councils. The mayor and the president of the VC thus represented Government and Civil Society, respectively. However, there were two concerns:

- In view of the timeframe for the disbursement of HIPC resources (estimated 15 years), it was essential to involve members of the opposition, to prevent them from blocking or reversing the decisions taken at present. This was solved by inviting the Vice President from the Municipal Council, who by law was from the opposition.
- The second was the need to ensure the representation of women. They therefore decided that a female representative on the Vigilance Committee should also be invited, bringing the total from each Municipality to four persons.

This process of ‘dictated’ selection did not always result in “representative representatives”: for example, one person noted (perhaps jokingly) that there may have been a few cases where the (male) VC president brought his wife as the “female representative”. However, in total 1,215 people, coming from every municipality, participated, and the requirement to have a female representative resulted in 373 women attending. The fact that the travel costs and per diem of most participants was paid for by the organizers was probably an important factor influencing the high level of participation.

Each Municipal Table elected representatives from amongst those attending, to go on to the Departmental Tables. One criteria was that one half of these representatives should be from Civil Society, while the other half should be from the Municipal Government. Of the total 130 elected, therefore, 65 were from Civil Society and 65 were from Government.

5.1.2. Departmental Tables

The Departmental Tables were open to a wider range of participants: Representatives elected at the Municipal Tables, Jubilee 2000, producers’ associations, syndicates, federations, NGOs, universities, national and departmental CSOs, representatives from

³⁰ Oscar Antezana; Government of Bolivia (2000b) Results of the Municipal and Departmental Tables.

the Departmental Councils, the Central Government, Congress and prefectural representatives. As in the case of the Municipal Tables, each Table lasted for two days.

The meetings were usually opened with several speeches, and the organizers invited the representatives of the Jubilee 2000 and the *Consulta Nacional* to present the conclusions of their own processes. Then the group was broken up into working groups of about 30 – 35 people. Taking into account the results of the Municipal Tables, they were asked to prioritize concrete actions and identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as the groups/institutions responsible for the action. The main outcomes were:

- all but one department agreed that an institution at the national and departmental level should control and evaluate the resources
- the Church should be involved in such an institution, although the degree of consensus was somewhat lower than that at the Municipal Tables
- there was unanimous agreement that the Dialogue should be institutionalized.

The Departmental Tables allowed a broader discussion as they were less structured than the Municipal Tables. Among the major topics which emerged were issues relating to the problems of the current electoral system, and corruption at all levels of government. In a similar manner as the Municipal Tables, each Departmental Table elected representatives to go to the National Table.

5.2 Economic Agenda: Sectoral and “Productive Chain” workshops

The Economic Tables, in which the “Development Strategy Agenda” was discussed, was overseen by a separate Technical Committee which comprised of representatives from the Vice-ministry of Industry and Commerce and other Government ministries, National Chamber of Industry, several producers’ associations, private sector institutions, and political parties. The Agenda was organized along two lines: sectoral workshops and “productive chains” (Table 2). A team from the Catholic University was contracted to organize and facilitate the sectoral workshops, while four “experts” were hired to help conduct the productive chains. Both Tables were given the following basic guidelines:

- the Strategy must be prepared jointly between the Government, economic agents and the political leadership;
- the economic sectors should emphasize microeconomic factors; and
- special attention should be given to activities that generate employment and value added, that do not require large investments, and that generate foreign exchange.³¹

Notably, participants from the *Consulta Nacional*, as well as several NGO networks, participated in the various sessions, allowing them to bring the results of their own processes to the discussion. In total, some 670 persons are estimated to have participated in the sectoral workshops, while 391 persons participated in the “productive chains”. The Sectoral workshops elected 2 – 3 representatives from each sector to attend the National Table, including representatives from both the private sector and Civil society (workers’ associations, association of small industries, and Jubileo 2000).

³¹ Oscar Antezana.

Table 2. Economic Tables

Activity	Duration	Location	Notable features
Sectoral workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • industry • exports • microenterprise • agriculture • hydrocarbons • energy • tourism • transportation • communications • mining 	1 – 2 days each	Major cities (La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Sucre, Potosi)	The methodology was to fill in ‘problem matrices’ for each sector, which covered the questions of what the main problems were, who was responsible to take action, how they would do that, when, and using what instruments. The results indicate what areas there was consensus, some agreement, little agreement, and ‘singular positions’ taken by one or the other party.
“Productive chains”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forestry – wood – wood manufacturing • wheat – flour – manufacturers of bread, pasta and baked products • textile fibres – yarns – knitting and other fabrics • quinoa • grapes – wine and other liquors • grains – ‘balanced food’ – poultry • livestock / cattle – leather – leather manufacturing 	2 days each	Held in the cities where the sector was most important (for example, the forestry chain was held in Santa Cruz)	The different “chains” were asked to identify problems at the macro, ‘meso’ and micro levels. These were then arranged according to short term and medium term importance. Each “chain” formulated their own vision for the industry.

5.3 Political Table

The preparatory seminars for the Political Agenda took place in June and July, and were centered around three broad topics:

- Democracy
- Participation
- Transparency.

These seminars opened with presentations by representatives of Jubilee 2000 and *Consulta Nacional*. The deliberations tried to systematically identify problems and solutions under various sub-topics related to the three main topics. Several key proposals were put forward, such as the idea that independent candidates (not belonging to any of the political parties) should be allowed to run for mayors of municipalities.

These issues would require Constitutional reform and the agreement of the heads of all major political parties. This, it seems, was to prove a challenge for the Government,

itself undecided on these proposals, and was thought to be the principal cause of the delay of the final announcement of the National Table.³²

Enabling factors

- ***Results provide basis for next level of discussions, many significant conclusions:*** From the viewpoint of the organizers, many of their main objectives were met. For example, the results of the Tables provided a great deal of information which could be then consolidated in a statistically significant way, for use at the National Table. Another observation was that the results included several concrete suggestions for political change, such as the election of regional governors (instead of the current system of appointment by the President), as well as the strengthening of municipal level government structures.
- ***Broad-based participation with large number of people:*** Both the Social and Economic Agendas involved a large number of participants representing a diverse and geographically wide range of organizations, associations, and communities. The Municipal Tables had an estimated 1,315 participants, some of whom went on to the Departmental Tables which had an estimated 944 participants, while the Sectoral Workshops and the Productive Chains of the Economic Agenda had 670 and 391 participants respectively.

Outstanding challenges

- ***Lack of time to discuss:*** Given the expectation that the final National Table was to start on August 6, Bolivia's National Day, there was tremendous pressure to get through the Municipal and Departmental Tables in time. The two days allocated for these Tables was not enough to engage in very extended discussions on the issues (although this may have helped in keeping the discussions focussed).
- ***Structure of Dialogue criticized:*** Several criticisms pertaining to the structure of the Dialogue were made. The first was that the model which formed the basis of the Social Agenda was the 'standard' social welfare/basic needs model. This model was not only reflected in the questionnaire, but also influenced the way the Dialogue was structured. The fact that there were three separate Tables, in spite of the potential overlap between issues, caused some concern as there was a danger that the poverty would be "compartmentalized" into social sectors, rather than seen holistically. However, it is notable that despite this division, one conclusion which was shared by both Tables was that poverty reduction efforts should not be viewed in isolation of the larger economic systems, but rather as part of an overall strategy for economic development.
- ***Weakness of questionnaire:*** Some observers also pointed out that the questionnaire was inherently biased, for example, with its 'yes-no' questions and issues 'hidden' in

³² The expected date had been August 6, Bolivia's national day, but the National Table was postponed until August 28.

footnotes.³³ On the other hand, it is clear that the questionnaire was deliberately designed to bring certain sensitive issues to the discussion, as well as to solicit definite answers from all participants. It could be partly as a result of this that issues such as corruption, “politization”, nepotism, and excessive bureaucracy featured prominently in the discussions.

- ***Widespread publicity but information limited:*** A significant sum of money was spent on publicity, through the radio and television, to advertise the Dialogue. The spread of information to the municipalities was of the greatest concern, given their wide and sometimes poorly connected spread across the country. Indeed, it was reported that not all information packs reached their intended recipients, or that they arrived very shortly before the Tables. Another observer noted that the issue was not *how much* information, but *what kind* of information: for example, the information pack sent to participants in the municipal tables did not touch upon external trade and capital flows, which were underlying the debt crisis. Without understanding the context of the Dialogue, he argued, the participants of the Municipalities could not have provided informed opinions on their main priorities.

6. National Table³⁴ (August 28 – September 2, 2000)

The National Table was divided into two segments, with the first half dedicated to the outcome of the Social Agenda and the second half to the Economic Agenda. The debate on the Political Agenda was postponed to the final “Political Summit”, involving all political parties, which was expected to take place in September.

6.1. Social Agenda (August 28 – 30)

For both the Social and Economic Agendas, the National Table was to serve as the place where the representatives from the previous Tables would meet the Central Government to present their conclusions and come to an agreement on actions to be taken by the State. As such, there was much anticipation about what the results of the National Table would be, with all participants having high stakes in the outcome. Perhaps for this reason, the representatives from the Departmental Tables came to the two-day preparatory meeting (26 – 27 August) with the attitude, as one observer put it, of “getting something from the Government”. Friction was also created by the perception that the Technical Secretariat represented the Government.

6.1.1. Two day preparatory meeting (August 26 – 27)

The Secretariat had originally planned the two-day meeting as a forum for the departmental representatives to consolidate their positions before meeting with Central Government officials. But they soon realized the potential danger that when the representatives presented these positions to the Government, the Government may turn

³³ McCollim (2000) for example notes that the issue of land reform was listed under the option of “other” areas of actions necessary for poverty reduction.

³⁴ This section draws on the brief report and analysis of Oscar Antezana, “The Social Agenda: Summary of Conclusions”.

around and say “we’re already doing that, that and that”, and let the issues fall. They therefore decided to invite representatives from all of the Ministries to make presentations at the start of the meeting. According to one account, there was a very positive response from the Ministries, with all wanting to present their policies and activities. This led, however, to most of the two days spent listening to presentations, which were sometimes useful but often very long.

On the second day, the participants (without the Government) got to work on developing their common position. They were fully aware of the positions they represented, and were therefore well-versed in the issues. In most areas, such as in basic social services, there was already a high degree of consensus. However, the departments were clearly divided on what criteria should be used as the basis for allocating HIPC resources between departments. While the working group on the allocation issue tried to agree on one criteria, there were three proposals which were backed by three regional ‘blocks’:

- to distribute 100% of the resources based on poverty indicators (La Paz, Cochabamba, and Potasi)
- to distribute the resources equally among the nine departments, which would then distribute to municipalities according to poverty indicators, population and the number of municipalities (Beni, Pando, Tarija, Chuquisaca and Oruro)
- to distribute 50% according to the population and 50% according to the number of municipalities (Santa Cruz, one of the wealthiest departments).

As the debate raged late into the night, it was decided that all three proposals would be presented to the Government.

6.1.2. Official launch

The National Table was officially opened on 28 August by the President, with much media coverage in the national press. It was attended by municipal and departmental representatives from the nine departments, the Church, political parties, representatives from indigenous people’s organizations, and key Central Government officials (including Ministers, Vice-ministers, and Directors). Three topics dominated the agenda:

- **Criteria for the distribution of resources from HIPC 2:** The Working Group on the Distribution of resources had before them the three proposals. The Government, Church and political party representatives had not participated in the original discussions between the departments, so did not have a well-defined position regarding the criteria, but all agreed that poverty should be at least included as one of the criteria. After hours of discussions, a consensus was reached that 70% of the resources would be distributed according to poverty indicators, while 30% would be distributed equally among the nine departments.
- **Mechanisms for the distribution of resources:** There was widespread agreement that municipal governments should be responsible for the administration of funds. A law and corresponding regulations to this effect would be prepared and approved by Congress in November.

- ***Civil Society control over resources:*** The Working Group agreed on establishing “social control” mechanisms at the municipal, departmental and national levels. At the municipal level, the Vigilance Committees, in coordination with Consultative Councils comprised of CSOs such as producer associations and mothers clubs, would be responsible for controlling the resources. To this end, the existing Municipal Law and other regulations would be modified. At the departmental level, committees would be established, which in turn would be under a National Social Control Committee, under the auspices of the Catholic Church. A mixed Government – NGO Committee would begin preparing the legal framework for the Social Control Committee. The Church requested the government to have this ready within 90 days so that the resources could be channeled by the beginning of 2001.
- ***Institutionalization of the National Dialogue:*** Another important conclusion to the Table was that the National Secretariat would be institutionalized as a permanent body, and the National Dialogues would take place every three years.

6.2. Economic Agenda

The Economic Agenda was also discussed over two days, with more ‘technical’ discussions on sector specific issues. Several agreements were made between the sector representatives and the Government.

Enabling factors

- ***‘Consensus system’ new experience for participants:*** Despite the difficulty in reaching consensus on every decision, the system forced the participants to give and take on their positions. The fact that the preparatory meetings between the Departments had resulted in three proposals on the allocation of HIPC resources, rather than only one, may have introduced greater flexibility on the part of the Departmental representatives than would have been the case had they decided on one to present to the Central Government. In the end, the real battle which emerged was over the allocation of HIPC resources, which was divided along regional lines rather than between different types of stakeholders.
- ***Government officials take cooperative approach:*** It is said that at the National Table, the Central Government representatives came with a more cooperative attitude than had been expected, and participated in the discussions without interfering in the decisions.
- ***Strengthening of municipal level of governments:*** A clear result of the National Table was that the roles of Municipal Governments and the Vigilance Committees would be strengthened through their responsibility in administering the HIPC resources. This is expected to re-ignite interest in the Popular Participation Law. Transfer of authority will take place gradually, according to the municipalities’ ability of administration, rather than immediately, thus ensuring greater accountability by municipal authorities.

- **Civil Society participation in monitoring resources assured:** The biggest “winner”, it is said, was the Catholic Church in securing a role for itself, and for civil society in general, in the Social Control mechanism. Though it will not necessarily manage the mechanism which is eventually established, it will no doubt play a large role in the design and supervision of the mechanism.

Outstanding challenges

- **Translating proposals into a strategic plan:** The government’s Dialogue process, and all of the parallel and related CSO processes, gave rise to many clearly expressed, concrete proposals. But some CSOs and observers feared that when it came to drafting the PRSP, the Government would resort to its usual habit of secrecy, and that the efforts of the past year would go to waste.
- **Tight deadline:** The Government intended to submit a draft PRSP to the Consultative Group meeting in October, but had very little time to do it.

7. Translating the Dialogue into the PRSP

7.1. Work begins on the PRSP

In view of the very limited time frame, UDAPE, which was responsible for preparing the PRSP, intended to present the results of the National Dialogue *as* the PRSP. The Inter-American Development Bank and other Donors tried to persuade them that rather than submit the Dialogue results as the PRSP, there was a need to go back to the diagnostics and *interpret* them in light of the outcome of the Dialogue, so that the Government’s proposed policies could be *strengthened* based on the views of the people. In other words, the Dialogue should be treated as only one component of the PRSP. In order to facilitate the process, the Minister of Finance assigned a “manager” to the UDAPE team, who assisted it in developing a timetable for the drafting as well as a kind of annotated outline which indicated how the PRSP would take shape.³⁵ The Minister also created a smaller coordinating group, consisting of this manager, several other government officials and Donors, which simplified the drafting process. At the Government–Donor meetings, it was agreed that rather than a draft PRSP, the Government would prepare a shorter document describing the Dialogue process and the Government’s next steps. Although CSOs had been told that they would be consulted when a fuller draft was ready, some complained at the complete lack of transparency.³⁶

7.2. Civil unrest steals ‘spotlight’

Despite the optimism which characterized the closing ceremony of the National Table, the participants did not have much time to reflect on the remarkable outcome. The media’s attention was focussed on another series of discussions which had been taking

³⁵ This person had had experience in both the private and the public sectors, and was not part of UDAPE.

³⁶ In an email correspondence dated 5 October, one of the coordinators complained “We have made at least ten different attempts to have some contact with the people working on PRSP, but there is absolutely no cooperation.”

place between the Government, opposition parties, businesses and representatives of small producers on an anti-crisis plan to counter the ongoing stagnation of the economy. Meanwhile, tensions between several social groups and the Government erupted at the beginning of September, beginning with a student protest but soon encompassing the teachers unions, peasant and workers' unions, and coca-leaf growers, each with a separate set of demands. Roadblocks around the country began to be mounted, obstructing the transport of consumer goods, food, exports and people between cities and regions. When the army was brought in, three farmers were killed, bringing even more protestors on the streets and the country to a standstill.

With some eight separate groups in protest, and a multitude of issues to discuss with them, Government officials were engaged on all fronts to try to negotiate agreements with the protestors. While some demonstrators called for the resignation of the Government, other groups were more concerned about solving the country's immediate economic problems.³⁷ The possibility of holding the concluding session of the Political Table, where the political consensus to translate the results of the Social and Economic Agendas into laws had been expected to be negotiated, grew more and more remote.

8. Concluding comments

- ***Political dimensions of national policy-making:*** The idea of involving various stakeholders in a national policy-making process is inevitably going to involve political factors. As the case of Bolivia shows, the process was threatened several times by the instability of the Government. The Vice President was a staunch supporter of the Dialogue, but even his influence was largely dependent on the position of the President and "his" government. A number of politicians were said to be aggrieved about the Dialogue, which they viewed as a judgement of the international community that democracy is not working, and one commentator noted that although the opposition participated, they did not "believe" in it. Furthermore, according to one Government official, many politicians distrust Civil Society representatives, and view them as being aggressive and anti-systemic. Several people observed that the opposition parties are taking advantage of the Government's situation as part of their longer term campaign for the 2002 national elections.
- ***Crisis of credibility in political system:*** To many Civil Society groups, the persistence of poverty in Bolivia is due to the inability of various Governments, including the previous one, to govern. For them, the blame is spread across all political parties: instead of solving the problems of the country, politicians continue to joust for power. Others blame the small political elite representing the urban, professional, mestizo-society (as opposed to the rural, indigenous peasant society). The enthusiasm with which the various CSOs organized themselves to conduct "their

³⁷ The head of the Coordinator for the Defence of Water and Life, an influential NGO in Cochabamba, was quoted in an article as saying "The idea that this could end in a change of government worries us, because what would come later?... What we want is not directly a change of government, but a change in the people's economy. We cannot continue to live in the conditions we are bearing." Inter Press Service, September 25, 2000.

own” consultative processes was, in many ways, an expression of their great frustration with the governing structures.

- ***Backdrop of poor economic conditions:*** It should be remembered that the various processes which unfolded over the last year have taken place against a backdrop of continuing economic stagnation for many groups in society. This is partly due to the after-effects of the 1998 *El Nino*, the regional economic downturn, and other external factors, but the effects of these factors have been most acutely felt by those groups affected by the Government’s structural adjustment policies. According to one researcher, the “poor” in Bolivia have always been, and may continue to be “poor”, but the middle classes who lost their jobs through retrenchment of state enterprises and government investment, and workers in mining and other privatized sectors, are tired of struggling to cope and therefore have turned to more drastic means. Many viewed the Dialogue process as an opportunity for them to put their own demands on the table, but have little faith that the Government will address them.
- ***Positive outcomes despite skepticism:*** Although several groups expressed fear that the Dialogue will become another “anecdotal” event, without the political will to be implemented, on the whole, Civil Society groups were impressed with their own capacities to organize complex, participatory processes involving such large and geographically widespread parts of the population.³⁸ In addition to the decision made at the National Table that the Dialogue process would be institutionalized, such that similar Tables would be held every three years, the CSO processes have also given birth to many ideas for follow-up. Furthermore, the tremendous effort of cooperation between different groups strengthened their sense of solidarity and created many new alliances.
- ***Role of donors:*** The role of both governmental and non-governmental donors is difficult to assess, but they have undoubtedly influenced the process at critical points over the last few years. It would probably not be an exaggeration to say that the National Dialogue would not have taken place without donor pressure. However it is also important to note that despite agreement on some issues, Donors are very divided on others. Some provided direct support to CSOs to organize their participatory processes, while others were concerned of the risks involved in raising expectations and undermining the political system.

[Figure 1, Annex I. with Summary Timeline to be added]

³⁸ A director of one NGO noted that “probably we are before a castle of artificial fires, beautiful but ephemeral...”

Annex II. Background to the Popular Participation Law

The Popular Participation Law, passed during the Government of Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada in 1994, aimed to address some of the major weaknesses of the country's democratic system: the exclusion of citizens from public-level decisions (apart from periodic elections); lack of administrative capacity of the Executive (especially in reaching the large proportion of the population living in remote areas); and the concentration of resources in the three main urban centers. Under the Law, a number of radical measures were introduced which partly decentralized administrative authority to the municipal level:

- The nine Departments of the country were further divided into 311 municipalities (median size of 8,400 persons), many of which were created 'from scratch';
- Citizens in each municipality elected a mayor and members of the municipal council, who were to be responsible for public investment in basic services such as health, education, culture, sports, local streets and local irrigation efforts;
- 20% of national tax revenues would be allocated to the municipal governments on a per capita basis;
- Within each municipality, "traditional" groups, such as neighborhood organizations in urban areas and agricultural syndicates and tribal bodies in the rural areas, were chosen to represent, in a sense, civil society. These groups were called *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (OTBs), and were given specific rights and obligations within their municipalities, such as some municipal level planning functions.
- Every two years, OTBs elect members of the *Comites de Vigilancia*, or Vigilance Committees (VCs). VCs were given the responsibility of assisting the municipal government in planning annual municipal expenditures in health, education and recreation; with overseeing accountability of funds; and with filing complaints (*denuncias*) from members of the public on misuse of funds by municipal government.

This model, in which local Civil Society Organizations were given an "official" role in monitoring local government expenditures, was one of the first of its kind in the world. Several Donors, such as the World Bank and USAID, viewed the Law as a progressive step towards containing corruption at the local level, and began supporting its implementation through capacity-building and other projects. President Banzer's administration, which took office in 1997, was said to be less enthusiastic about the above-said reforms, but Donors continued to support the decentralization process.

Sources: World Bank (1999); Inter-American Development Bank (no date); Blair (1997, 2000)

Annex III. Special Fund for Participation of Civil Society (UNDP, UK, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands)

<i>Consultative process</i>	<i>Summary of activities</i>	<i>Issues discussed</i>	<i>Approx. no. of people</i>
Foro Jubileo 2000 (Jubilee 2000) – Bolivian Episcopal Conference, NGO networks, Bolivian Universities Confederation, Bolivia Workers' Union, journalists' associations, Environmental Defense League, Micro-Industry Federation, many more groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Workshop (12/99) • Training Workshop for Facilitators of planned Departmental Forums (2 – 3/00) • Information Workshops in 9 Departments • Pre-Forums and actual Departmental Forums in all Departments (3 – 4/00) • Final National Forum (4/00) 	Macroeconomic policies, Participation and Social Control mechanism for debt funds, Education, Health, Human Rights, Employment, Land and Rural Development	over 3,600
Comite Nacional de Enlace de Consulta de la Sociedad Civil (National Committee of Enlace) – Associations of Small Rural and Urban producers, 8 civic Committees, National Handicraft Association, National Ecologist Producers Association, miners' cooperative, NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings of industry workers in all departments and 2 national events organized by FEBOPI (Bolivian Federation of Small Industry Workers) • CIDECA organized 12 sectoral summits (<i>cumbres</i>) of agrarian producers (6/5-6/6), 2 departmental summits, 8 regional events gathering together mining workers, and 1 national event • COFECAY organized 8 communal events 1 regional. • 2 national cumbres of Small Agro-Producers (5-6 June and 9-11 August) 	Commercial aspects of external competition, the Bolivian economy, proposal of financial use of HIPC II resources, sustainable local development, productive municipality, nutrition, food security and agenda of political institutions in Tarija	2,900
Confederacion de Pueblos Indigenas del Oriente (CIDOB) – confederation of indigenous groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 assemblies of 2-3 days with regional organizations of indigenous groups • National Commission of Indigenous Peoples (June 19-21) • Great National Assembly of Indigenous Villages (July) • Signing of the Agreement Act between the Great Assembly of Indigenous villages and the National government 	Indigenous identity and development, health, education, territory and natural resources, reform of the Constitution and other laws, institutional strengthening and political participation	1,750
Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu (CONAMAQ) – another confederation of indigenous groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 regional Assemblies lasting 3 days 	Cultural politics, territory and natural resources, development of Ayllu people, indigenous rights, reforms of political and Constitutional reforms	369
Confederacion Sindical Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) – agricultural workers and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 forums in 8 regions (May-June) • Proposes to do forums in 10 more regions 	Health, professional development, support for artisans, financing agricultural development, legalizing	308

small farmers		land tenency, land titles, small business, roads and electricity and sub-terranean water	
Federacion Departamental Unica de Trabajadores Campesinos de La Paz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-course forum • Six meetings on participatory investigation 	The farming sector, laws of biodiversity, laws of water, laws of INRA, characteristics of Dialogue 200 and HIPC II program, education, health, agriculture and infrastructure	232
Federacion Departamental de Trabajadores Campesinos de Santa Cruz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent commissions to various cities 	Farming sector, small business, health, land and credit	
Federacion Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas de Bolivia Bartolina Sisa – national federation of rural women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultative tables with local leaders of rural women’s associations in 9 departments 	Identification and prioritization of issues of concern to rural women.	
Federacion Departmental de Mujeres Campesinas La Paz Bartolina Sisa – departmental federation of rural women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forums in 17 provinces of the department of La Paz 	Women’s rights and fighting poverty	
Confederacion Nacional de Juntas Vecinales de Bolivia (CONALJUVE) – national confederation of neighborhood associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood gatherings • Regional assemblies of consultants from neighborhood associations (FEJUVES) • National Assembly of regional consultants of neighborhood associations 	No report yet with details of discussions.	
CERES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis panels in each municipality • Regional forum 	Civil society, healthcare, education, agriculture and revenue.	
El Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo Urbano y Regional (CEDURE) – research institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum (June 21) 	Poverty, equitable development, strategic planning for Santa Cruz, education, territorial decentralization and generating revenue	97
HACER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 403 investigations • 6 panel discussions 	Impoverished children, children’s rights and education	209
University of Nur – National Working Group on Participatory Methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated National Dialogue • Organization of events where “learning” from the National Dialogue will be shared with the government, international cooperation, and other members of the National Working Group on Participatory Methodologies. 	Three projects in Santa Cruz, Tarija and Potosi which aimed to Generating local capacity for participation in the National Dialogue.	

Source: “Fondo Especial para Apoyar la Participacion de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil”, Preliminary report on the Special Fund for the Participation of Civil Society Organizations, UNDP, 15 August 2000.

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