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The Impact of Rights-based Approaches to Development

Evaluation / Learning Process
Bangladesh, Malawi and Peru

UK Interagency Group on Human Rights Based Approaches

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Acknowledgements

The views expressed in this paper are those of the lead researcher (an independent consultant). These views were informed by participatory research activities, but do not necessarily reflect the views of these people or their organisations.

Finally, we hope that this report will go some way to answering a number of our questions about the relative impact of rights-based versus non-rights-based approaches on ensuring that we can increase human security and gain greater justice, equity and dignity for all people.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AARLE	Student Mayors, Councillors and Leaders Association (Peru)
A-LIFH	Advocating for Local Initiatives for Health
BESP	Basic Education Support Project (CARE Malawi)
BOND	British Overseas NGOs for Development
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRLSP	Central Region Livelihood Security Project (CARE Malawi)
CSCQBE	Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (Malawi)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DCDEL	Building Capacities for Local and Education Democratisation (Tarea, Peru)
DCP	Democracy Consolidation Programme (Malawi)
DEO	District Education Office
DEST	District Education Support Team
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
DHO	District Health Office/Officer
DHMT	District Health Management Team
DIP	District Implementation Plan
EDPE	Democratisation of Education and Student Participation (Tarea, Peru)
ESSP	Education Sector Support Programme (Malawi)
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FONCODES	National Cooperation Fund for Social Development (Peru)
GBK	Gram Bikash Kendra (Bangladesh)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGI	Good Governance Index
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GVH	Group Village Headman
HAI	HelpAge International
HCC	Health Centre Committee
HDI	Human Development Index
HLS	Household Livelihood Security
HMIS	Health Management Information Systems
IAG	Interagency Group on RBAs
IDT	International Development Target
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPDP	Indigenous People's Development Project (Bangladesh)
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
JAAP	Rural Water Board (Peru)
JASS	Association of Water and Sanitation Boards (Peru)
LIFH	Local Initiatives for Health (CARE Malawi)
MASPA	Malawi School Parents Association
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoED	Ministry of Education (Peru)
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Malawi)

MoH	Ministry of Health
MoHCS	Ministry of Housing, Construction and Sanitation (Peru)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OCMP	Older Citizens' Monitoring Project (RIC, Bangladesh)
OPI	Older People's Inclusion (RIC, Bangladesh)
OPR	Output-to-Purpose Review
PACE	Partnership in Capacity Building in Education (CARE, Malawi)
PEI	Institutional Education Plan (Peru)
PIF	Policy Investment Framework
PIGD	Participatory Interest Group Discussion
PN23	Rural Drinking Water and Community Health (CARE Peru)
PRAMs	Participatory Rural Assessment Methodologies
PRAss	Participatory Rights Assessment
PRONASAR	National Rural Water and Sanitation Program
PROPILAS	Rural Water and Sanitation Pilot Project (CARE Peru)
PRS(P)	Poverty Reduction Strategy (Paper)
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PWC	Poverty and Working Children (Save the Children Bangladesh)
RBA	Rights-based Approach
RBD	Rights-based Development
RIC	Resource Integration Centre (Bangladesh)
RP	River Project (Save the Children Bangladesh)
SABEC	Support and Awareness for Behavioural Change (Bangladesh)
SCUK	Save the Children UK
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SIS	Sectoral Water and Sanitation Information System
SMC	School Management Committee
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SSI	Semi-structured Interview
SWAp	Sector-wide Approach
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
TSP	Target Strategy Paper
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VDC	Village Development Committee
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
VGF	Vulnerable Group Feeding
VHC	Village Health Committee
VSL	Village Savings and Loans Group
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

Executive Summary

In integrating human rights, various actors have uncovered numerous questions about the conceptual and practical application of explicit rights-based approaches (RBAs). While many have accepted the added value of RBAs, others remain to be convinced. Donors have questioned the value of RBAs, especially as there has been little work done to evaluate their true value. To address these concerns, the UK Interagency Group (IAG) on RBA initiated a two-year Evaluation/Learning Process to examine the impact of rights-based and non-rights-based approaches to development (RBAs and non-RBAs) on the multidimensional experience of poverty and the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The learning process framework is based on the three underlying principles of participation, inclusion and the fulfilment of obligation.

The broad objectives of the RBA Learning Process were to:
• Generate substantive and meaningful comparison, between selected non-RBAs and RBAs to development;
• Assess the relative impact of the approaches and determine why difference in impact exists, if it does;
• Assess, where possible, factors which have led to successes or challenges, and which can inform development of future projects.

The Learning Process took, as a sample, three countries: Bangladesh, Malawi and Peru. Seven case studies were developed, covering seven RBA and seven non-RBA projects, representing a number of different sectors/issues. Six NGOs, with their local partners, were involved. The aim was to cover a wide geographical, social, political and cultural spread to assess whether successes in particular circumstances were also replicated across a wide range of RBA and non-RBA work.

Implementer	Approach	Project	Sectors/issues	Dates
Bangladesh				
GBK (VSO)	RBA	IPDP	Rights of ethnic minorities	2004-
	Non-RBA	SABEC	Welfare of ethnic minorities	2004
RIC (HAI)	RBA	OCMP	Older people's rights	2002-6
	Non-RBA	OPI	Older people's welfare	1990-9
SCUK	RBA	PWC	Children's rights/work	2000-
	Non-RBA	River Project	Humanitarian assistance	1975-96
Malawi				
CARE Malawi	RBA	PACE	Education	2001-5
	Non-RBA	BESP	Education	2001-4
CARE Malawi	RBA	LIFH	Institutional development: health	2002-5
	Non-RBA	CRLSP	Institutional development: livelihoods	2002-5
Peru				
CARE Peru	RBA	PROPILAS	Water	2002-5
	Non-RBA	PN23	Water	1995-8
Tarea (SCUK)	RBA	DCDEL	Education	2001-3
	Non-RBA	EDPE	Education	1998-2000

Impact of RBA and non-RBA projects compared

Both non-RBAs and RBAs lead to immediate impacts which benefit stakeholders. However, findings suggest that RBA projects are having considerably more success than non-RBA projects in attaining impacts that will lead to *sustained*

positive change. RBAs tackle the underlying causes of poverty and disadvantage, and work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to address these causes. They link citizens and state in new ways and create systems and mechanisms that ensure that all actors can be part of accountable development processes.

The projects assessed had both direct and indirect relations with assets and reduction of vulnerabilities. This is because RBA projects are working directly to reduce vulnerability so that assets can increase, whereas the non-RBA projects are concerned more obviously with accumulation of assets and may, or may not, address issues around vulnerability.

The key message is that: *non-rights-based and rights-based projects all demonstrate positive impacts. However, rights-based projects show a greater range and depth of positive impacts, and these are more likely to be sustained over time.*

Asset accumulation

All the projects, RBA and non-RBA, showed significant improvements in people's lives, directly related to the work of the project in terms of the capacity of constituent groups to accumulate assets (economic, environmental, physical etc.) Specifically, both RBA and non-RBA projects led to increased and improved access to:

• Education and retention in primary school, especially for girls and marginalised children;
• Healthcare, including access to maternal and neo-natal services;
• Money through accumulative savings and livelihood opportunities;
• Water and sanitation;
• Productive resources, e.g. land.

With limitations, both RBA and non-RBA projects had some impact in increasing protection against HIV/AIDS and communicable diseases and in increasing gender equity. However, both RBA and non-RBA projects have not done enough to ensure that HIV issues are understood by staff and constituents. The focus on women's income-generating activities and savings and loans schemes do not always tackle relational and structural dimensions of inequality.

In fact, there is far less difference, in terms of *immediate* asset accumulation impacts, between non-RBA and RBA projects than there is in terms of reduction of vulnerability, inclusion or obligation and accountability. However, there is often marked difference between RBA and non-RBA projects in terms of the **quality of assets** and *retention* of assets gained. In non-RBA projects, asset accumulation occurs during the lifetime of the project and their long-term sustainability is not guaranteed. In some of the projects, constituents are able to sustain these benefits over time; in others, they are not.

Reduction of vulnerability

All RBA projects could demonstrate significant impacts in terms of reduction of vulnerability for their constituent groups. In RBA projects, vulnerability was seen as a *structural* issue, both deriving from, and resulting in, inequitable power relations in society. Involvement with the RBA projects and implementing organisations gave poor and marginalised people support in the development of more diverse social networks of partnerships and alliances. These networks are key to reducing poverty and strengthening human security. The attention given to reducing vulnerability in the non-RBA projects is very different. In non-RBAs, vulnerability is addressed as a *symptom* of poverty: the aim is to alleviate the symptoms of vulnerability, but little or no attention is given to its structural causes and effects.

Issue-based alliances reducing social exclusion and vulnerability

In the RBA projects, there was a trend towards establishing different types of partnership and alliance from those found in the non-RBAs. In non-RBA projects, partnership usually took the form of an NGO/CSO liaising and mediating between citizens and official organisations. In RBA projects, there was more effort to link citizens and state (voice and response) directly.

In PROPILAS, Peru, the JASS water management committee became a partnership mechanism through which citizens could participate with government in the management of water resources. Citizens could decide whether they wished

to participate or not, and could choose from a range of water service models. In the non-RBA PN23, communities could not choose whether to participate and had no choice of which water management model to follow.

Improved access to justice

The RBA PWC in Bangladesh was the only project directly concerned with access to formal/legal justice systems.

PWC protected the rights of children and their families working in the shrimp industry, securing greater justice from employers. Equally, it improved the circumstances of children in care centres. These children, deprived of liberty for petty theft from the shrimp factories owing to low wages, now have better legal representation, shelter and access to education.

However, through their work to ensure that poor people had access to their rights, resources and appropriate services, all the RBA projects contributed to improving access to justice (and protection from injustice) for their constituents. The way that RBAs challenge traditional, social and cultural norms means that poor and marginalised people have greater access to justice within the power structures of their own communities, and in the wider mainstream society.

In RBA PACE, Malawi, there is now social redress for girls abused by teachers and by peers as well as greater awareness of how to access official forms of redress through courts.

In contrast, in the non-RBA projects, increase in justice may be a by-product of meeting people's needs. It is achieved in the short term without challenging existing power structures and norms and is, therefore, unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term.

Livelihood security and diversification

Although both RBA and non-RBA projects contribute towards increasing livelihood-related assets, RBA projects make a stronger contribution to ensuring livelihood diversification. Also, because there is a trend in the RBAs towards social disaggregation, these have looked at livelihood issues beyond the household level and given special attention to individual needs within the household.

In the RBA PWC in Bangladesh, children working in the shrimp industry had opportunities to continue learning a job skill and gain education. In contrast, in both the non-RBA RP in Bangladesh and the non-RBA CRLSP in Malawi, there was a high degree of likelihood that new livelihood strategies adopted through the project would not be sustainable in the longer term.

Increased knowledge and skills

While all the projects, non-RBA and RBA, led to increased knowledge and skills, the skills acquired through RBA projects appeared to be having a wider-reaching effect. There is a trend in all the RBA projects to see skills capacity building as about acquiring not only particular practical skills, but also the ability to transfer those skills outside of project and manage them in ways that will give citizens greater access to decision-making fora.

In PROPILAS, Peru, women as well as men gained skills in management which were used beyond the context of water provision. In contrast, skills learned in the non-RBA RP in Bangladesh were not transferred and, in some cases, were not kept up.

Increased protection against gender-based and other social discrimination

The RBA projects had begun to challenge the social norms and practices underpinning discrimination on the grounds of gender, social background, ethnicity and age, although more could be done.

In the RBAs PROPILAS and DCDEL in Peru, girls and women had taken on leadership roles within committees and were taken seriously when voicing concerns. In DCDEL, attention was given to ensuring that young people from indigenous communities were able to go to school and take part in decision making.

In contrast, the non-RBAs tended to work with the symptoms of discrimination, rather than the causes. In the non-RBAs RP, SABEC and OPI in Bangladesh and BESP in Malawi, women were encouraged to be part of groups where decisions were made, but they were not actually able, or encouraged, to voice opinions and take part in decision making. Furthermore, *no attention was given to ensuring that the more marginalised people were able to participate*. However, some of the RBA projects could also do more with regard to addressing multiple levels of discrimination. In addition to increasing indigenous and older peoples' participation in decision making, projects need to tackle the gender biases that subordinate women in such communities and restrict their meaningful representation and participation (IPDP and OCMP in Bangladesh).

Increased protection against social and work-based exploitation

RBA projects worked with a range of stakeholders to identify and counteract deliberate exploitation of poorer and more marginalised people in the workplace and in wider society.

In PACE, Malawi, this led to a decrease in sexual abuse by teachers and in their use of schoolgirls as unpaid domestic servants. In PWC, Bangladesh, this led to better working conditions for children and their families in the shrimp industry.

The non-RBA projects did not directly address this issue.

Increased social and political capital improving ability to manage risk

In all the RBA projects, there was a marked change in people's confidence in their ability to act and make changes in their lives and wellbeing. The RBA projects focused on addressing the structural causes of poverty and disadvantage. As changes in power relations occur, people seem to be better able to make use of new skills and knowledge and to diversify their livelihood strategies. People have a sense that fundamental changes have occurred and that it is worth bearing opportunity costs for future gains.

In the PACE project in Malawi, poor parents in school communities felt that they had been able to influence teachers and officials and be part of planning for school improvements. This made them more confident that time and effort invested would have positive outcomes. In previous non-RBA projects, they had participated in making bricks for new schoolrooms, but then nothing had happened.

Inclusion

RBA projects had considerable impact in the area of improving social inclusion of poor and marginalised people compared with the non-RBA projects. RBAs address inclusion issues by opening up spaces where people who are normally excluded can take an active part in decision making and action to improve their wellbeing. This is not only internally, within marginalised groups, but in wider fora which link voice and response. In the best instances, systems to ensure inclusion of poorer and more marginalised people are systematised and embedded (DCDEL and PROPILAS, Peru; PACE, Malawi; and (beginning) IPDP, Bangladesh). In contrast, non-RBAs tended to see inclusion as only meaning giving particular attention to meeting the basic needs of normally excluded groups of people.

The more developed RBAs employed a systematic approach to understanding social differentiation which allowed them to understand how power works in society and to challenge social norms perpetuating social exclusion. Nevertheless, despite successes, there is still considerable work to be done in RBA projects to ensure that attention to inclusion issues is fully translated into sustained, equitable resource allocation. Not enough attention is yet given to ensuring that social disaggregation is considered *within* poor communities. Also, more effort is needed to ensure that principles of inclusion are fully embedded within communities and do not become evident just when the project is in action.

Representation of poor people's voice

All projects increased representation of poor people's voice. However, in non-RBAs, this tended to be the voice of community leaders, not of more marginalised people.

In the RBA OCMP in Bangladesh, older people said they were becoming visible in society. Their representatives were able to negotiate at high levels. Although representation is still largely by natural leaders in the community, there are now more opportunities to ensure a wider range of opinions and concerns. In contrast, poorer people in the non-RBA RP in Bangladesh had no fora where they could raise their voice. In OPI, also in Bangladesh, while older people met together in clubs, it was for their own social welfare rather than for increasing their voice in decision making.

Opening space for meaningful inclusion

All RBA projects opened up spaces for meaningful inclusion of marginalised people such as the poor, rural people, poor women, ethnic minorities and orphaned children.

In building the social contracts in the RBA PACE, Malawi, the project socially disaggregated communities so as to understand power relations and identify who was normally excluded from development initiatives. In doing so, they were able to ensure that young people (girls and boys), older people and disabled people were able to join meetings and take part in decisions.

In the non-RBAs, little or no attention was given to identifying marginalised people and no efforts were made to facilitate inclusion of people normally excluded from development processes.

Challenging social norms

Most RBAs successfully challenged social norms which excluded and discriminated. However, in both non-RBAs and RBAs, a deepened understanding is required of why people discriminate against others in particular contexts and how this discrimination is manifested in social relations.

The RBA IPDP in Bangladesh realised that many people held strong prejudices against the Santal community, openly criticising them for drunkenness and laziness. The project, by opening up spaces in which Santal community representatives could meet and discuss with officials, was beginning to challenge these norms. However, the project could do more to understand and address the reasons why Santal people were using alcohol and felt unwilling to participate in some development initiatives.

RBAs addressed these issues in some ways; the majority of non-RBAs did not.

Representation in decision making fora
All RBAs systematically increased representation of poor and marginalised peoples on committees and in decision-making bodies. Systems and mechanisms are necessary to ensure that poor and marginalised people are routinely included.

In Peru, the establishment of the students' committee, AARLE, as a functioning mechanism for participation in decision making (DCDEL) ensured a sustained platform for young people's voice. In PACE, communities embedded the inclusion principles introduced by PACE and now ensure that older and disabled people are helped to attend village meetings, with particular people responsible for fetching them.

Shifting power relations
All RBA projects had some favourable impact on shifting power relations. Non-RBAs did not engage with power issues. In working for the rights of the poor and marginalised, RBA projects inevitably engage with power issues. Projects work to find ways to ensure that the shifts in power towards people who have traditionally been powerless can be made safely, and for the benefit of all. People are not easily willing to give up power. But, when they can see that power sharing means that they are more able to fulfil their own obligations and that, for example, citizens will share in the responsibility in running services, they may be willing to change.

Accountability and obligation
RBA projects gave far more attention to accountability and obligation fulfilment than non-RBAs. Although non-RBA projects often emphasised participation, this was not linked to issues of inclusion and fulfilment of obligations. People were consulted about their problems and were able to join in with project activities, but did not take an active role in monitoring progress. Little effort was made to challenge accepted social norms and power relations, which meant that some people's voices would never count for much. In contrast, RBAs actively engaged with issues of power and had success in making poor and marginalised people's participation meaningful. There were changes so that even those who had traditionally been voiceless could challenge authority and expect a degree of accountability.

Linking voice and response
All RBA projects showed positive trends towards linking voice and response by breaking the traditional mould of CSO engagement. In RBA projects, it is now possible to say that there is a shared vision between citizens and state offices about what needs to be achieved. This does not mean that there is always complete accord between citizens and state, but the spaces opened for greater citizen-state engagement ensure that common goals can be identified and strategies agreed on.

In Peru, PROPILAS and DCDEL created opportunities for citizens and state to work together in management of services (water and education). Links and influence with local government have now extended through to middle and central levels.

Willing obligation

All RBA projects forced changes in organisations and institutions previously unwilling to fulfil obligations and to be accountable. Linking voice and response ensured that there were fora for stakeholders to demand action and become more accountable to each other. The PACE project worked to ensure that all stakeholders in the SIP, part of the Malawi Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP), were more transparent in their actions and were accountable both 'up' and 'down' the line. In non-RBA projects, accountability was only in terms of funded agencies reporting to donors. Action taken was to meet the welfare needs of beneficiaries, not to fulfil the obligation of officers of state and other agencies.

Increasing political agency and redefining citizenship

All RBA projects were increasing political agency, redefining citizenship (the potential range of active roles within political processes for poor and marginalised people), questioning norms and redefining whose voice counts. Before PACE, in Malawi, communities did not consider it necessary to include young people, women or older people in decision-making processes. Now, community leaders and other adult men have realised that everyone can have important things to contribute, even young girls. Non-RBA projects did not make a contribution in this area.

Conflict prevention

As noted, RBA projects placed far more emphasis on opening up direct channels of communication between citizens and state and on voice and response than non-RBAs. By opening up space for expressing demands and multi-way communication among stakeholders, RBAs created possibilities in conflict prevention. Grievances simmering beneath the surface were brought into open debate and negotiation.

In the RBA IPDP in Bangladesh, indigenous people were able to claim their rights from land office officials and negotiate directly on these claims, leading to improved relations between citizens and state. In the earlier non-RBA SABEC, land rights were dealt with through the NGO rather than directly between citizens and state offices.

Added value of RBA

The Learning Process showed that using a RBA adds value to the development process and is crucial to all work for improved governance and increased human, national and global security.

RBAs and governance

1. **RBAs are successful in encouraging people's political agency**

   Agency in RBAs is built up through the development of systems that institutionalise participation, inclusion and fulfilment of obligation. Through a focus on the relations of power, on rights *and* responsibilities, and on the way that different stakeholders relate to each other, RBAs promote agency for all stakeholders and, particularly, for those people who are usually marginalised in decision-making processes. RBAs seek to identify where tensions and conflicts may occur between stakeholders and, in contrast with non-RBAs, which seek to avoid conflict, RBAs intentionally engage with tension and conflict where it occurs and seek to reduce it.

2. **RBAs are increasing all actors' willingness and ability to fulfil their obligations and be more accountable to each other**

   RBAs encourage greater take-up of responsibilities by all stakeholders. Several of the RBA projects had, as a key component, the establishment of multi-stakeholder fora. These fora opened up spaces in which different actors – in communities, from different organisations and from state offices – could learn more about each others' expectations and formal obligations. The increased understanding, gained by all parties, also opened possibilities for negotiation on roles and responsibilities (within legal parameters) and establishment of a more mutual system of accountability.

3. **RBAs encourage greater autonomy and ownership of development processes, by citizens and state**

   In RBAs, there is a great focus on building capacity and competency to understand, implement and oversee development processes. This focus is lacking in non-RBAs. RBAs encourage local ownership of development and, because of the way that state and citizens are all encouraged to take up rights *and* responsibilities, dependency on state patronage decreases. Increased ownership means that there is greater flexibility in development models and that they tend to be demand-driven.

4. **RBAs can provide the means through which decentralisation can be realised**

   RBAs and processes of decentralisation are mutually dependent. For decentralisation to work, power has to devolve away from the centre. However, without efforts to build capacity at middle and local levels (and at national level) to deal with changes in the way that power and authority operates, it is not possible for decentralised government to function. The RBA projects are working, in some way, to ensure that a wide range of local and middle-level actors are involved in decision-making processes. RBAs can therefore create the mechanisms and systems of accountability that support decentralisation processes, and help to reduce the possibilities of decentralisation reinforcing new structures of exclusion, dominated by local elites.

5. **RBAs increase the chances of achieving sustained positive change**

   Both non-RBAs and RBAs led to positive results and improvements in life circumstances, in the short term. However, the focus of RBAs on underlying causes of poverty, and the obligations of different actors, helps to establish and institutionalise capacities, systems and mechanisms that are vital to ensuring that positive change is embedded and sustained. In RBAs, skills learned and mechanisms established are used and replicated beyond the project remit.

6. **By engaging with power inequity, RBAs can be successful in removing underlying causes of poverty**

   Stakeholders in all RBA projects are benefiting from the realisation that greater, and sustainable, equity cannot be achieved without changes in the power relations that produce and maintain social, political, economic and cultural inequity and disadvantage. RBA projects are attempting to understand the full context of poverty and disadvantage for different people to enable them to address multidimensional aspects of poverty rather than just focusing on symptoms.

7. **RBAs add value to efforts to reduce social exclusion and create more inclusive societies**

   RBAs focus on ensuring that the poorest and most marginalised people (the poorest quintile of the population) can have equitable access to development processes and can participate in decision making that affects their lives. The most successful and developed of the RBA projects are ensuring that they have a full understanding of the heterogeneity of their constituents, and of who are the poorest and most marginalised people within poor communities. They then work to ensure that these people are actively encouraged to participate. Because RBA projects seek to combine the elements of participation, inclusion and obligation, rather than focusing on one of these elements, RBA projects have better success in addressing inclusion issues.

8. **RBAs build sustaining and enabling environments and influence policy agendas so that successful models can be brought to scale**

   Because there is a focus in RBAs on linking voice and response, there is also a tendency for projects to concentrate on finding strategies to make this link possible. These strategies involve forming and improving relationships between and across different levels in society and stretching from communities through to central government. The ability to do this often requires civil society to work together with government in ways it has not previously. In the RBA projects reviewed, there is still some way to go before the mechanisms linking voice and response are fully institutionalised. However, there is evidence to suggest that this is well underway in Malawi and Peru.

   RBAs and human security

9. **RBAs can create environments necessary for the MDGs to be met**

   There is evidence to show that RBAs can develop partnerships and issue-based alliances that go beyond the types of partnership established by non-RBAs. Links and networks established mean that RBAs are better positioned to

contribute to the establishment of an environment that can support ongoing work towards the achievement of the MDGs. Through active working for participation of a wide range of stakeholders, from different 'levels' (local, middle, national and, where relevant, international), RBAs establish environments that, while directed towards meeting the objectives of the particular project, also support wider efforts and national-level policy change towards meeting PRS and other development goals.

10. **RBAs increase the chances that people will be able to withstand shocks, and they encourage positive risk management**

    RBAs place emphasis on ensuring ownership of project processes and products by project constituents. When people have greater ownership, they appear also to be better able to embed skills and capacities gained through the project. As structural causes of human insecurity are addressed, poor people involved in RBA projects are gaining the ability to take and assess risks. They are more able to use diversified strategies to cope with shocks. They also develop and rely on community safety nets.

11. **RBAs add value to the quality of assets attained, and the ways in which vulnerability is reduced**

    In RBAs, there is more emphasis on the achievement of benchmarks and of working to standards that ensure greater access to quality services. The RBA projects concentrate on changing attitudes of people in power towards those who are relatively powerless. This change in understanding and behaviour brings greater mutual respect and creates an environment in which improvements in services can have most benefit. Vulnerability is also reduced more greatly in RBA projects. RBA projects challenge deeply held cultural attitudes and behaviours which add to discrimination. They make this challenge by actively bringing different stakeholders together in dialogue and action.

RBAs: addressing underlying problems, building security

Working with RBAs, which are likely to be sustained, enhances the possibility of achieving improved governance, which includes the voice and concerns of poor people and can reach out to the poorest and most marginalised. The strategies employed promote recognition and fulfilment of obligations by both citizens and state. The ways in which voice and response are beginning to be linked are strengthening the chances that services will be appropriate, adequate and accessible. This also strengthens the chances that investments made into technical improvements in services will be sustained, protected and used over time.

The RBA projects reviewed in the study are still 'young'. Not all of them have employed strategies which explicitly aim to understand, and challenge, inequities in power relationships. RBA projects are, in some way, shifting power and opening new spaces for dialogue between people who have power and those who are usually considered powerless. In addressing the underlying causes of inequity, fostering communication between different actors, and promoting action that tackles inequity, RBAs have huge potential to contribute to the current development agenda and to support efforts for human, national and global security.

1. Introduction

This is the final synthesis report of a process of assessment of 14 rights-based and non-rights-based development projects, or project phases, supported by international NGO members of the Interagency Group (IAG) on Human Rights Based Approaches. The IAG is a loosely based UK network made up of around 30 NGOs and representatives of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and international affiliates. All members have an interest in, and are in some way actively involved in, the use of rights-based approaches (RBAs) in development practice and/or policy development. This assessment was designed to provide a comparison between RBAs and non-RBAs. The aim was to explore whether the recent move towards more rights-based ways of working in development was adding value. Are RBAs more effective, and do they lead to greater benefits for all development participants?

1.1 - Background to the report

Some agencies have been operationalising RBAs for a while (Save the Children UK, Oxfam), whereas others began to adopt a more RBA to their work only after publication of the 1997 White Paper. At this time, agencies were encouraged by donors to move away from straightforward service delivery towards a more rights-based and process-orientated approach, with strong emphasis on capacity building of local actors.

At first, this caused a deal of confusion among the agencies, many of which had seen themselves as promoters of model services, albeit to very restricted numbers of people. Since they could no longer obtain funding for service delivery per se, many felt that they were being encouraged to give up any concern with services whatsoever. However, understanding soon grew surrounding the role of international NGOs and partner civil society organisations (CSOs) in the development of national capacity and autonomy to run services locally. In the process, the relationship between governments and NGOs began, in numerous cases, to change. Some NGOs, by the nature of their existence as lobbying organisations, remained in conflict or tension with government. In other cases, NGOs and governments became more willing to work together in planning, implementation and evaluation of development initiatives. Through practical experience, the NGO members of the IAG were increasingly convinced of the value of RBAs.

By the beginning of 2005, IAG members were expressing a growing concern that RBAs were losing favour with donor decision makers. The larger development players, such as the World Bank and UN agencies, were exploring how RBAs could work in practice. However, other actors, such as DFID, on paper committed to rights-based development, were in practice veering towards a more hard-line, economics-based approach.[1] Demand had increased for strong and tangible evidence of cost benefit, effectiveness and returns, in the form of measurable positive change.

Arguments against RBAs took several forms. There was concern that RBAs, which always involve a social development approach, take too long and cost too much in the process of promoting change. Some people also misunderstood RBAs and believed that a focus on rights-based development meant overlooking the obligation to fulfil needs. A return to the thinking of an earlier period saw the belief that long-term sustained change might be achieved more cheaply and effectively without the need for so much attention on the empowerment issues (economic, social, political and civil) fundamental to RBAs. Sceptics were worried that it would never be possible to bring RBAs to scale, because of the resources (human, financial, time, etc.) needed to put them into practice. Governments would not be able to take over and use the approaches on a national level.

As such, while many people – development practitioners, partners and donors – accept the logic behind RBAs, not everyone is convinced that they add value to development. Furthermore, those who are convinced of the added value have not been able to articulate this and offer evidence to convince sceptics and, particularly, donors. There has been no evaluation of the relative impacts of either RBA or non-RBA projects, to see which have greater impacts on the multidimensional experiences of poverty and the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

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1 See DFID's White Paper (1997) and its 2000 TST 'Realising Human Rights for Poor People' (http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/tsphuman.pdf).

1.2   The RBA Learning Process

If RBA initiatives are to continue to gain support, it is crucial to be able to prove that development money is being spent in ways which will bring about immediate and long-lasting improvements in people's lives, and which will directly contribute to the reduction of poverty and achievement of the MDGs. IAG members accepted the fact that it was essential to test objectively the assumptions they held on the impact of RBAs.

At the time that the current Learning Process was being developed, very little monitoring and evaluation work had been carried out on RBAs (largely because most explicitly rights-based projects were still in their infancy). Only two notable attempts had been made to evaluate RBA processes and to compare RBAs with non-RBAs. One was a CARE study in Rwanda, the other a study carried out in Guatemala, Ethiopia and Bangladesh by CARE and OXFAM America. Neither study had been truly successful in drawing a comparison between the two development approaches or in identifying the particular added value of using a RBA. The Rwanda study did, however, produce a list of evaluation questions which helped in designing the current Learning Process.

Although some organisations, such as the ILO and Save the Children, had been working on rights issues for a long time, they had not necessarily been implementing projects in a rights-based way, or using a rights-based planning or evaluation framework.[2] In the main, rights-based indicators had not been set, and there was no real concept of exactly what it was that was being monitored in terms of rights-based development (see Section 2).

The RBA Learning Process took three countries as a sample: Bangladesh, Malawi and Peru. The aim was to cover a wide geographical, social, political and cultural spread, which would help to show whether successes in particular circumstances were replicated across a wide range of RBA work. In the three countries, 14 projects were covered. Overall, these addressed several different themes, which covered a number of different sectors/issues (fuller descriptions are given in later sections).

An international consultancy team (CR2 Social Development) was contracted to develop the technical approach. One lead consultant prepared teams for work in the three countries, facilitated national, multi-stakeholder workshops in Malawi and Bangladesh for presentation of findings, and compiled the synthesis report. In each country, two national consultants were contracted to carry out the Learning Process, along with staff and partners of the NGOs concerned. They also compiled country case study reports and attended national workshops and the London-based lesson learning, held in January 2006. In September 2006, a dissemination workshop was held in Lima, Peru and conclusions of the study were presented. It was initially suggested that the whole process could be completed in the first three months of 2005. In the event, it took almost two years to complete the study.

1.3 - Layout of the report

Section 2 of this report describes the evaluation framework and methods used during the Learning Process. Section 3 gives brief summary descriptions of all of the projects involved in the case studies. In Section 4, the findings from the case studies are presented. This section is an analytical summary of the three country reports and looks at impacts under four main headings: asset accumulation; reduction in vulnerability; inclusion; and accountability and obligation. Section 5 elaborates the main conclusions regarding RBAs as drawn by the Learning Process. Background information, thematic areas of enquiry under the framework and other data are contained in the annexes.

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2 *Just because a project addresses a rights issue does not mean that it will be rights-based. In rights-based development, how things are done is as important as what is done.*

2. Evaluation Framework and Method

2.1 - Making a comparison: RBA and non-RBA

In order to be able to compare non-RBA and RBA projects, it is necessary to be aware of the common ground between the two approaches. All approaches to development are concerned, in some way, with wealth creation, and with ensuring that people have the ability to meet their basic needs. For needs to be met, people have to be able to be sure of security and good governance, to have access to adequate services, to have increased opportunities in life, and to be able to use their potential to make use of such opportunities.

From this perspective, there are far more similarities between RBAs and non-RBAs than there are differences. In practical terms, both are working towards achieving the MDGs, although there are many different ways of approaching both rights-based and non-rights-based development. However, as the research findings will reveal, major differences arise in terms of how the two different approaches seek to achieve positive change and to ensure that positive change is sustained.

Box 1: What are rights-based and non-rights-based development?[3]

Rights-based development, grounded in the International Human Rights Framework,[4] is value-based development which works for the ethical inclusion of all people, without discrimination, in building a fair, just and non-discriminatory society. To do this, it is necessary to understand the full context of people's lives – that is, their geographical, social, political, cultural and economic circumstances. With this understanding, rights-based development works to increase people's access to, and power in, decision making which affects their lives and their work. It also works to strengthen the willingness and readiness of all people – both as 'rights holders' (individuals and groups with valid claims) and as 'duty bearers' (state and non-state actors with correlative obligations) to take up their responsibilities and to fulfil their obligations towards each other.

While different agencies have different interpretations of exactly what a RBA means in practice, most would agree with the main elements outlined in the UN Common Understanding,[5] which include the three main elements of DFID's own RBA, of:[6]

- *Participation:* enabling people to realise their rights to participate in, and access information relating to, the decision-making processes which affect their lives.
- *Inclusion:* building socially inclusive societies, based on the values of equality and non-discrimination, through development which promotes all human rights for all people.
- *Fulfilling obligation:* strengthening institutions and policies which ensure that obligations to protect and promote the realisation of all human rights are fulfilled by states and other duty bearers.

For the purpose of this study, *non-rights-based development* can be seen in traditional development projects which have not deliberately or explicitly adopted RBAs. They are often described as adopting needs-based approaches – focusing on fulfilling people's immediate needs. Many non-RBA projects do, however, implement processes such as participation, and have achieved positive impacts that are widely accepted as good development practice.

The framework for this study focuses on issues surrounding participation, inclusion and obligation – concepts which, to some degree, are common to both RBA and non-RBA projects. However, drawing a comparison between a number of non-RBA and RBA projects is complex. All projects may have a different perspective on development even though

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3 For more detail, please see Annex 2.

4 Rights as defined by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and thereafter in covenants and treaties known as the International Framework for Human Rights.

5 See The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies. http://www. unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/appeal/human_rights/UN_Common_understanding_RBA.pdf

6 As outlined in the 2000 DFID TST.

their stated approach may be similar. Meanwhile, in general, organisations working towards rights-based development share a common focus in working to address the root causes of poverty. Yet, principles of participation, inclusion and fulfilment of obligation, fundamental to rights-based development, may not be recognised or interpreted in the same way by all organisations working with a RBA. Also, different organisations, and their local partners, are at very different stages in building their rights-based work, and they take different approaches to 'making rights real'.

The Learning Process involves a broad comparison of RBA and non-RBA approaches, and is not designed to evaluate which non-RBA or RBA approaches are most likely to have a long-term positive effect. Nor is this an evaluation of the individual projects that make up the case studies. In the Learning Process, it was possible to draw some conclusions about which aspects of the various approaches were most likely to meet with success and to make recommendations for how approaches might be modified in different contexts. However, overall, the study aimed to identify the *relative* potential/impact of RBAs and non-RBAs, and to test assumptions about the added *value* of using RBAs.

2.2 - Assumptions, objectives and indicators

The Learning Process set out to test the assumption that: *implementing RBAs increases our programme impact, and we can demonstrate this increase*. The broad objectives of the RBA Learning Process were to:

• Generate substantive and meaningful *comparison*, between selected RBAs and non-RBAs to development, in first and second phase projects in a single selected sector and implemented by a single agency, or in different phases of related projects.
• Assess the relative *impact* of the approaches and determine why difference in impact exists, if it does.
• Assess, where possible, factors which have led to *successes or challenges*, and which can inform development of future projects.
In relation to poverty reduction and human security, the indicator of impact used during the study was:
multidimensional change in people's lives (positive and negative, intended and unintended) brought about directly and indirectly as a result of the project. These multidimensional changes relate to the current understanding of poverty which has led to agreement on the MDGs. While there continues to be ongoing debate about whether the MDGs actually cover all issues at the core of development in the current climate of global insecurity, they constitute a globally accepted baseline and standard for achieving human life with dignity, and are generally accepted by organisations working for rights-based development and those engaged in more traditional approaches.

Furthermore, although the MDGs themselves are simply targets, the Millennium Declaration, on which they are based, is concerned more directly with the process of making rights real and ensuring that all people have the chance to realise them.

2.3 - The Learning Process framework

To make a meaningful comparison between the RBAs and non-RBAs involved in the Learning Process, it was necessary to develop an assessment framework, encompassing and describing the work of the various approaches. This would also allow for comparison between RBAs and non-RBAs in relation to impacts and outcomes of projects. The framework also had to be able to offer spaces where the added value (if any) of RBAs could be assessed.

CR2 has been involved in developing and piloting a framework for monitoring and evaluating rights-based work over the past three years. The RBA Learning Process provided a great push to this development and enabled the building of a framework suitable for assessment not only of rights-based projects but also of non-rights-based projects. In developing the framework, invaluable inputs were made by all team members in all countries, as well as by the consultants and IAG members. Community members, local, regional and national governments and organisations all made vital contributions. The framework has now also been used in different initiatives in Bangladesh, Malawi, Indonesia and Yemen.

Although the framework was originally developed for RBA interventions, it is suitable for assessment of non-RBA projects as well, because:

• It looks at processes and impacts which have been accepted as good practice in development since the 1990s,

that is: participation; poverty targeting; and working with institutions to promote more adequate and appropriate services and sustained change.

- It works with the contention that non-rights-based, or needs-based, approaches are a subset of rights-based ones. That is, to fulfil rights, needs must be met. However, needs can be met without fulfilment of rights.
- It is overarching, geared towards assessing impact and outcomes.

Furthermore, while the framework allows for assessment of progress towards tangible impacts and outcomes contained in the MDGs, in DFID's previous International Development Targets (IDTs) and in the Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs), it also assesses progress towards the wider goal of sustained change. Beyond this, it looks at progress made towards the ultimate goal, of increased justice, equity and dignity for all, as contained within the Millennium Declaration.

Overall, the framework is focused on showing whether and how interventions are achieving impacts and outcomes in relation to poverty reduction and human security through:

- Asset accumulation (economic, environmental, physical, etc.);
- Decreased vulnerability to social exclusion and extreme poverty (political and social capital, confidence and competency etc.);
- Increased equity and inclusion in decision making; and
- Fulfilment of obligations for equity in resource allocation (increased equity between the powerful and powerless).

The framework is a generic and comprehensive tool. Before it could be used by the individual projects involved in the Learning Process, it had to be adapted to the particular goals of the organisation and tailored to particular needs. For example, while the main areas of the framework are relevant to all interventions (policy, project etc.), the thematic questions (see Annex 1) needed to be selected for each organisation, or project, and phrased relevantly for the work of the organisation in question.

2.4 - Components of the framework[7]

The framework is based on the three underlying principles as outlined above (participation, inclusion and the fulfilment of obligation). Under the framework, all work stemming from these three principles can be categorised into three, interlinked components, each one centred on assessing a different aspect of programme implementation. These components are as follows:

1. *Voice, participation and accountability:* This component looks at the extent to which people are able to use their voice, share their opinions and participate in development. It looks at the form that participation takes, and what participation leads to. It is important to gain an understanding not only of what participation looks like and appears to lead to, but also of what people feel about their participation and the goals which they set for it. Linked to voice is the issue of accountability. Questions on who is accountable to whom and for what are considered. Particular attention needs to be paid to the direction of accountability. Is accountability only upwards? Or do systems for mutual transparency and accountability exist?

2. *Transformation of power: relationships and linkages:*[8] This component examines whether and how individuals, groups and organisations form links to work together in partnership. Questions are also asked on how roles and responsibilities are decided and carried out. The component examines trends in relationships among individuals, groups and institutions and looks at whether power relations are changing in ways that lead to greater access to services, assets, justice and equity. The component has a strong focus on issues of discrimination, inclusiveness and intra-household relationships, as well as on the structural relationships formed between institutions and groups.

3. *Institutional response:* Questions cover how organisations respond to issues raised by their constituencies (human security, asset acquirement and vulnerability). This component addresses systems that organisations use, how they ensure accountable and equitable resource allocation, whether and how they address inclusion systematically, and how they measure their success. The component looks for trends in identification of vulnerabilities and at how these vulnerabilities are addressed.

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7 The generic questions developed for each of these components are attached as Annex 1.

8 Institutions here are not just institutions of the state but are taken to be representative of any type of organisation promoting particular cultural or social norms, e.g., the family, school, traditional leadership, etc.

While there are inevitable overlaps among the components, the framework provides an organisational structure by means of which analysis can be made and allows for meaningful comparison between different projects and differing types of intervention. The framework recognises that the MDGs are concrete, tangible representations of what the Millennium Declaration principles will look like in the real world, in relation to increased human security, decreased vulnerability and reduced poverty. Yet, it is also recognised that achievement of the MDGs and targets will not, by itself, be enough to ensure sustained positive change which benefits all people, including those who are most marginalised. Nor do the goals themselves, or achievement of sustained change for poverty reduction, entirely ensure that the principles of justice, equity and dignity for all will be fulfilled.

Successful work in the three areas of rights-based development leads to achievements in terms of the following:

1. *Tangible evidence of impacts*, such as increased assets and decreased vulnerabilities (concretely recognised through the MDGs and other targets). This component looks at the data available regarding impacts as measured against concrete targets and goals (contained in PRSs, MDGs etc.), which point to increased assets and decreased vulnerability, etc.

2. *Sustained positive change,* which may not be recognisable as part of a set of targets and goals, but which contributes to the achievement of sustained justice, equity and dignity for all and is a prerequisite for these. The framework recognises all these types of achievement and aims to explain why and how they contribute to possibilities for sustained positive change and poverty reduction. This component assesses whether gains made by the project are likely to have lasting impact (positive) which will extend beyond the designed remit of the intervention. It looks to see whether changes made have been institutionalised in the given context, and whether skills and other benefits are being transferred into other aspects of human security and development and poverty reduction. The component also considers whether increases in human security and development are leading to greater political (local, national and global) security.

The framework model also represents the fact that, while there will be immediate and short-term gains and tangible impacts, work for achievement of the principles of the Millennium Declaration is a long and ongoing process. Sustained positive changes might be made, but there is a continuing and longer-term need to work for rights-based developmental change, for participation, inclusion and fulfilment of obligation, if it is to be possible to move closer to justice, dignity and equity for all. Figure 1 gives a visual representation of the framework.

Figure 1: The Learning Process framework

**Millenium Declaration -
Justice, equity, dignity for all**
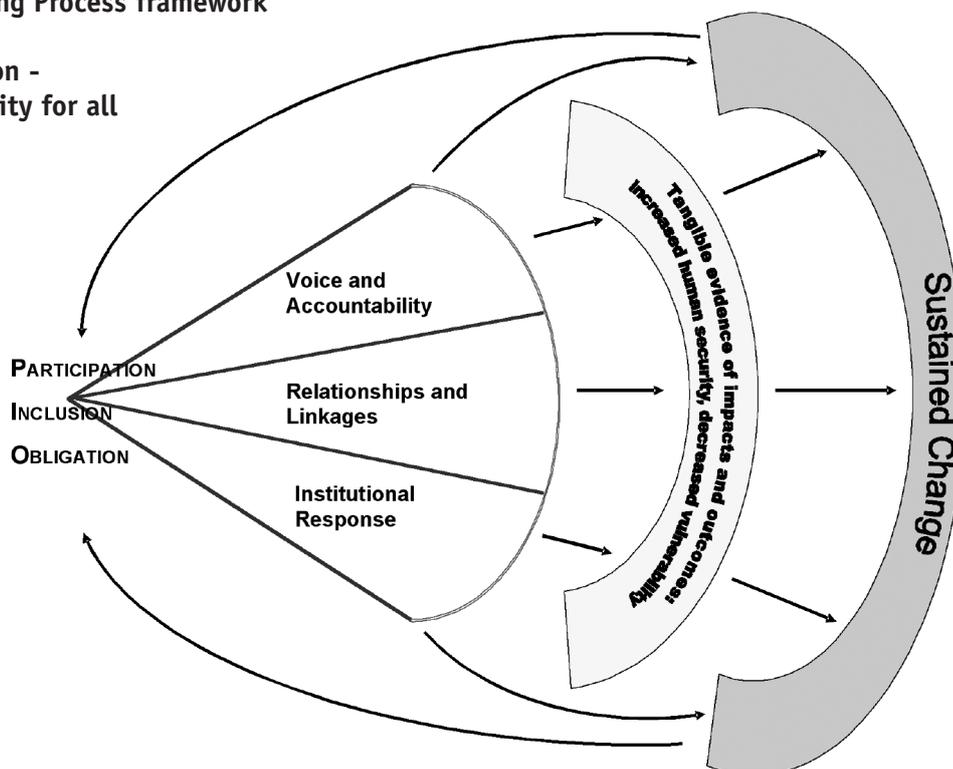
2.5 - The assessment process

The basic process in each country, following framework design and selection of consultants and projects, was as follows.

Eight-day capacity-building process

This took place in Malawi and Bangladesh (Peru consultants joined the process in Malawi). Teams were drawn from staff of participating projects. Attention was paid to gender balance (where possible) and building big enough teams to carry out participatory assessment with different interest groups in communities. The process covered discussion of common understandings of rights-based development and introduction to the Learning Process framework.

In addition, it saw the planning of a pilot process in one area; elaboration of pilot questions from the thematic question areas; selection of pilot field teams and sub-teams; and the actual carrying out of pilots.

Findings were collected under the Learning Process framework and initial analysis was carried out. Meanwhile, the reporting format was agreed and next steps, for roll-out of the Learning Process, were discussed and responsibilities elaborated.

Fieldwork in-country

The fieldwork was carried out in at least two areas per project or project phase. Findings were collected and organised under the Learning Process framework. The basic methods used in each country were:

• Literature review (relevant project, local and national documents);

• Participatory interest group discussions (PIGDs), using a set of participatory tools;

• Semi-structured interviews with project staff and other relevant personnel;

• Reflection workshops.

Initial feedback workshops

In Malawi and Bangladesh, the coordinating consultant joined country teams for national-level feedback workshops of initial findings. In these, teams worked with the coordinating consultant to prepare findings and presentations in relation to the framework. A comparative analysis was begun and a timetable for country study reporting was agreed. In Peru, feedback workshops were held in the two regions and at national level.

London feedback workshops

In January 2006, a national-level feedback workshop was held in London, hosted by DFID. Country consultants and representatives from the projects attended. Participants also came from interested organisations from the UK and Europe. During the workshop, sessions were held to elaborate findings and extend the analysis (see workshop report).[9] Following this, a three-day intensive workshop was held with country teams to push the analysis and assist in report writing.

Reporting and dissemination

Reports were received from Bangladesh and Peru by March 2006. By June 2006, it became clear that a full report would not be available from Malawi (see below). Draft conclusions of the study were also presented and discussed in a workshop in Peru in October 2006.

2.6 - Limitations of the Learning Process

The Learning Process provided sufficient evidence to allow for conclusions to be drawn. Nevertheless, huge barriers had to be overcome. At the same time, opportunities were lost. For a fuller description of the limitations, see Annex 3.

9 IAG (17-18 January 2006) 'Does Implementing a Rights-based Approach Increase Impact on Poverty Reduction?' Analysis Workshop Report for Evaluation/Learning Process. Available from Magdalene Lagu (CARE UK) at lagu@careinternational.org or the IAG egroup at http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/HRBA/

Difficulties of comparison

Because of the range of RBAs, and because projects are at very different stages of implementation, it has not always been possible to compare 'like with like', or even, at times, 'like with highly similar'. In addition, the Learning Process did not focus, necessarily, on the best or most successful examples, rather on those which could be identified as comparable within the time available for selection.

Social and political environment

Different social and political environments had deep impacts on how implementers were able to develop as CSOs. This affected design and implementation of RBAs and non-RBAs, and degree to which projects actually presented a RBA. The Learning Process accepted definitions made by organisations as to whether their projects were rights-based or non-rights-based provided that, in rights-based projects, a reasonable number of RBA characteristics could be demonstrated.

Inadequacies in baselines

None of the organisations had enough of the right kind of baseline statistics to allow full confidence in measuring statistical change. Proxy data (from local government statistics etc.) are often used to supplement baseline data, but the quality of these data is often suspect. There is, as would be expected in working with NGOs, a bias towards qualitative rather than quantitative data. However, project documentation and the current Learning Process fieldwork studies have provided a basis on which to make the comparative analysis.

Scope, scale and capacity of projects

Projects were very different in scope and scale, with different quality of impact. However, for each comparison, the scope and scale of the two projects are similar. In addition, implementing agencies in the different countries have widely different capacities to implement their work. This is true for both RBAs and non-RBAs.

Time and preparation

Because of time constraints, there were problems with attendance for the initial start-up workshop, capacity building and piloting of the field method. In addition, time was not granted for mentoring of field teams, in-country. This led to different ways of working and differences in reporting styles (although a format was set) and methods of analysis.

Understanding impact

Despite early discussions on what would constitute 'impact' (see above), confusion remained among researchers over whether tangible impacts would be identifiable in rights-based projects. This was because many of the country coordinators felt that the rights-based projects would not demonstrate impact in terms of the MDGs; instead, they were thought to focus on improved processes. NGOs were more comfortable analysing processes than impacts, mainly owing to gaps in data. However, the country studies would have benefited from greater concentration on the connection between process and product. Where no internal data are available, proxy data have been used to measure change.

Missing data

The most serious constraint has been the loss of primary data from Malawi: data from the two RBA projects appear to have been mislaid and were never written up. Reports on the non-RBA projects were prepared by the other country consultant, and a comparison document on education was produced. No overall analysis was made for Malawi. The coordinating consultants (CR2) felt that the Learning Process was not viable if it only involved two countries rather than three. For this reason, every effort has been made to compensate by making use of data from other sources.

3. Summary of the Case Study Projects

This section gives a brief description of the projects involved in the Learning Process and outlines the major point of comparison to be made between them. As discussed in Section 2, the projects were of very different scopes and scales, some highly localised (e.g. IPDP, implemented by GBK Bangladesh) and some providing models capable of being brought to scale (e.g. PACE, implemented by CARE Malawi). In some projects, even if the original geographical focus was quite restricted (e.g. OCMP, implemented by RIC Bangladesh), the focus on lobbying and influencing policy change at wider levels meant that they were capable of greater impact. Overall, the projects covered a wide enough range of themes and provided a significant variety of approaches with which to test the Learning Process assumption.

3.1 - Bangladesh case studies

In Bangladesh, three case studies were carried out. In two of these, the differences between a RBA and a non-RBA were examined in different phases of work by one organisation. The organisations involved here were: Gram Bikash Kendra (GBK), which works with indigenous ethnic communities and is supported by VSO and Oxfam; and the Resource Integration Centre (RIC), which works with older people and is supported by HelpAge. The third case study involved two projects implemented by Save the Children Bangladesh, supported by Save the Children UK. The non-RBA phase was a development programme which grew out of humanitarian efforts to promote nutrition, health and education in a post-disaster situation. The RBA phase was a programme with two components: protection of working children and children in conflict with the law. These two components have now been included in two separate programmes.

GBK case studies

Table 1: SABEC and IPDP

Project	Approach	Duration	Brief overview of activities
Support and Awareness for Behavioural Change (SABEC)	Non-RBA	2004	• Provision of health and sanitation services • Basic education • (Lasted only one year because formulated to disburse unused funds)
Indigenous People's Development Project (IPDP	RBA	Ongoing since 2004	• Reaching indigenous minority communities in Dinajpur • Strengthening traditional people's institutions • Legal aid for addressing land issues • Basic and culturally appropriate pre-school education • Local-level advocacy and raising of public awareness

GBK is a local-level non-profit organisation. It grew out of a youth organisation formed by a group of socially motivated young people who felt strongly about the high levels of social exclusion from economic and social development in post-liberation Bangladesh. GBK is now a fully accredited NGO, working as an enabling force for vulnerable sections of the community, particularly women, children and indigenous people, in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Nilphamari and Joypurhat districts. In these areas, the organisation reaches some 3,800 families from indigenous communities.

The comparison made in GBK was between an earlier one-year project, SABEC, and the later IPDP. Although the one-year project, being of such short duration, did not provide much information for comparison with IPDP, it was a fixed-time initiative fully representative of the approach taken by GBK in general up until 2004 (see the Bangladesh Country Report). In its work up to 2004, GBK did not focus much on opening up opportunities for indigenous people to become active in 'mainstream' society. The concentration was on welfare issues, health and education, and on

acting as an advocate representing the needs of indigenous communities to service providers and decision makers. With the inception of IPDP in 2004, the emphasis changed. While still seeking to address the particular needs of the indigenous population, GBK began to give a greater focus to opening up spaces for members of the indigenous communities to meet and discuss with officials of state and other service provision organisations. The emphasis shifted away from indigenous people's welfare to fulfilment of indigenous people's rights.

RIC case studies

Table 2: OPI and OCMP

Project	Approach	Duration	Brief overview of activities
Older People's Inclusion (OPI)	Non-RBA	1990-9; now downsized, no external funding	Purpose: to expand opportunities for older people • Formation of clubs and groups • Provision of pensions • Healthcare and recreation
Older Citizen's Monitoring Project (OCMP)	RBA	Since 2002; project funding ends 2006	Purpose: to increase older people's access to government poverty alleviation services: old-age allowance and vulnerable group development programme • Participatory identification of major issues • Lobbying nationally • Mobilisation of elderly into federated organisational structure • Lobbying and networking with key stakeholders • Working with media • Reaching older people in Pubail Union in Gazipur, Sriramkathi Union in Pirojpur

RIC was founded in 1981 and works mainly in rural areas of Bangladesh on the themes of human resource development, health and family planning (women), disaster management, formal and non-formal primary education, and income generation through micro-credit. Its focus is on community-based development, involving men, women and children. In addition, RIC is one of the few NGOs in Bangladesh working on the social issue of age, from a developmental, and now human rights, perspective.

RIC's work with older people has gone through several phases since 1989, when it first launched the Integrated Development for Older People project in Narshingdi district. This project began with 150 people in three villages. Subsequently, the programme was expanded to three other districts. The focus of early work with older people was entirely around welfare. The aim was to ensure that older people became visible in society and regained opportunities to have their needs met, particularly in terms of food and nutrition. This approach has now changed. OCMP is part of a global programme piloted by HelpAge International. As part of the new approach, RIC seeks to empower older people so that they can lobby for their rights in the fields of food, shelter, physical and mental health, secure income and recreational facilities. RIC works to enhance older people's participation, changing negative social attitudes and practices which exclude the elderly and deny them opportunities to help themselves. RIC also aims to influence decision makers and effect policy change so as to create an enabling environment for older people.

Currently, RIC reaches around 3,500 older people directly but, through national-level advocacy and policy influence, reaches a far wider constituency. The organisation now focuses entirely on a political strategy of organisation and empowerment (through advocacy, capacity building and securing services to which older people have a right) of older men and women. It has moved away entirely from direct provision of health, nutrition and income. In the process, the older citizens' committees are evolving into independent entities in their own right. They are now a democratically elected older people's federated organisation, negotiating for basic rights with all key stakeholders.

Some activities are common to both the RBA and non-RBA phases of RIC's work. These include the celebration of the Probeen Dibash, or International Day of Older People (1 October), participation in rallies and meetings where older people are listened to, and occasional trips and outings.

The Learning Process aimed to assess differences in impact between the earlier direct client welfare approach and the current broader-scale advocacy and lobbying approach. The assessment looked at whether the new approach, which aims to empower older people to come into contact with decision makers and voice claims, was leading to greater improvements in older people's lives and wellbeing than did the previous welfare approach. It also examined whether older people were becoming less socially vulnerable because of the more politicised approach taken.

Save the Children Bangladesh case studies

Table 3: River Project and PWC

Project	Approach	Duration	Brief overview of activities
River Project	Non-RBA	1975-96; after phase-out, project area handed over to partner	Original (post-disaster 1980s) immediate objective: to save malnourished children at risk 1990s objectives: 1. To alleviate sufferings of people after natural disasters 2. To improve health conditions of village communities with mother and child health first priority 3. To promote/assist children's education through material incentives and motivation 4. To enhance livelihood opportunities for poor people (credit and income generation) • Reaching disaster-prone rural communities in Dewanganj • Provision of emergency relief • Community development through health services • Supplementary nutrition • Income generation • Basic education
Poverty and Working Children (PWC) programme i: Child labour in shrimp industry ii: Children in conflict with law	RBA	Since 2000; continues after redesign in 2005	• Improving working conditions of children in the shrimp industry by negotiating and collaborating with employers and other key stakeholders, and promoting children's participation • Improving conditions of correctional homes so that they become child development centres by working with different stakeholders and promoting children's participation The two components of the PWC programme have since been included in two separate programmes: Violence at the Workplace, under the Child Protection programme, and Preventing Child Labour, under the Household Economic Security programme

Save the Children UK began working in Bangladesh in 1970. Its early work was entirely focused on post-disaster relief and rehabilitation. After the Liberation War in 1971, Save the Children opened an office in Khulna to provide emergency medical aid and food. The transition to a people-centred participatory approach, and later to a rights-oriented child-centred participatory approach, has taken a few decades.

The projects involved in the Save the Children case study are very different from each other. The non-RBA River Project began in the early 1970s and continued, in various different forms, until 1996, surviving natural calamities and difficult development experiences. The RBA Poverty and Working Children programme began in 2000. The two components under consideration are: i) child labour in the shrimp industry and ii) children in conflict with the law. The theme which runs through both the non-RBA and the RBA projects is that of child protection – in its widest form.

The non-RBA River Project, in Dewanganj, began in response to an emergency arising out of severe floods and subsequent famine for three consecutive years (1973-5). The project scope and objectives were not very well defined.

The immediate objective was to save malnourished children at risk. Subsequently, as project activities went on, objectives were reformulated.

The RBA Poverty and Working Children (PWC) programme in Jessore and Khulna began in 2000. Unlike the River Project which, even outside times of disaster, tackled child protection from the perspective of whole community development, the PWC was child-focused, working on the issue of child protection from the perspective of fulfilment of child rights. In the shrimp industry, work involved tackling difficult issues around labour rights, engaging with children, families and employers to ensure fair employment conditions and that children leaving labour were not left worse off than they had been before. The children in conflict with the law component first tried to get authorities to recognise the fact that, under the law, children were not to be treated as 'criminals'. So, the 'juvenile correctional centres', which were, in practical terms, jails for young boys allegedly involved in criminal activities, were transformed into 'child development centres'. Besides working for the release of unfairly incarcerated children, the project also tried to promote more humane approaches towards treating the children in the centres and introduced activities which helped children return to normal social and family life more easily when they were released.

The Learning Process aimed to assess whether a needs-based, community development approach to child protection was more or less likely to secure children's wellbeing than a RBA geared towards ensuring children's participation in decision making and acknowledging their role as active citizens.

3.2 - Malawi case studies

All four projects in Malawi were implemented by CARE Malawi, for the government of Malawi, with inputs from local state and civil society partners. The two education sector projects were designed to support the government's Policy Investment Framework (PIF) for the education sector. As such, they were civil society support projects operating within the wider context of a sector-wide approach (SWAp).

The second case study in Malawi involved two projects working on institutional strengthening, one in the field of rural livelihoods and development, the other in health. Both projects sought to improve the infrastructure of services and activities in their sector by building capacity of officials and citizens. The livelihoods project also invested in direct improvement in services. In contrast, the health project focused on changing the relationship between service providers and service users to increase opportunities for voice and dialogue and improve accountability within services.

CARE Malawi case studies: education

Table 4: BESP and PACE

Project	Approach	Duration	Brief overview of activities
Civil Society Basic Education Support Project (BESP)	Non-RBA	2001-4	Purpose: to contribute towards improving access to, and quality of, basic education for all in Malawi through supporting the activities of CSOs, with focus on Lilongwe and Zomba districts • Institutional capacity building of indigenous CSOs: skills development; improving systems and structures; strengthening governance; building external relations • Enhance collective representation of CSOs, e.g. in government budget monitoring exercises
Partnership in Capacity Building in Education (PACE)	RBA	2001-5	Purpose: to develop, implement and monitor district support partnership programme in the six districts that addresses the action set out in MoEST's PIF • Strengthening partnerships with different stakeholders at different levels (obligation and responsibility): government, MoEST, district assemblies, civil society (local and international NGOs; SMC; PTA) • Social inclusion: participation of local communities in management of primary schools; access of poor and marginalised people to quality education • Participation of women in school governing boards (SMC; PTA) • Networking and liaising with civil society partners • Promoting policy change

Both BESP and PACE were designed to contribute to sector-wide work for quality education. The BESP project began at a time when one phase of funding for infrastructural improvements in schools was ending and a new phase was beginning. The BESP approach was to strengthen the capacity of civil society to act in support of the Ministry of Science, Education and Technology's (MoEST) overall work for school improvement.

The project provides capacity building and support and small grants for CSOs to carry out projects that aim to improve access to, and quality of, basic education in the country. BESP focuses on four major outputs, namely:

• Strengthened capacity of CSOs to plan, implement and evaluate activities designed to improve access to, and quality of, basic education;
• Supported collective representation of CSOs in the education sector;
• Developed capacity of CSOs to complete targeted research on key education issues and ongoing monitoring of government expenditures and activities in the education sector; and
• Developed system and practices that foster learning, communication and information sharing.

Through BESP, CARE Malawi worked in partnership with three CSOs; one of these is the larger organisation, Malawi Schools Parents Association (MASPA), in its work in Zomba district.

In 2001, DFID began investing £70 million into the Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP). This supported all areas of the PIF, and included heavy investment in building and refurbishing primary schools in six chosen districts.[10] In 2002, CARE was contracted to support the ESSP. Part of the PACE work was to support this infrastructural development through capacity building for local CSOs, so as to better link voice and response, and through piloting model RBAs to citizen-service cooperation for school management (the participatory rights assessment – PRAss – approach).[11]

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10 *Mzimba South, Ntchisi, Ntcheu, Mangochi, Chikwawa and Phalombe.*

11 *PRAss is an approach which works to bring together a wide range of stakeholders, from central government through to community level, in assessing rights issues and agreeing roles, responsibilities and mutual obligations for ensuring that the rights situation can improve. The approach was developed through PACE (see project documentation).*

PACE education activities focus on the following four key outputs:

- Enhanced quality of education by strengthening the institutional capacity of CSOs and local authorities to be effective education service providers;
- Increased basic education attainment by strengthening the capacity of community and civil society to support the provision of basic education;
- Improved social inclusion through a RBA to ensure gender equity and mitigation of the impact of HIV/AIDS in basic education by sensitising populations to, and focusing CSO basic education programming on, these crosscutting issues; and
- Coordination and management mechanisms in place at the district and central levels for PACE and linkages with other ESSP initiatives.

As in the Peru education case study (see below), a major difference between BESP and PACE lay in the focus in PACE on ensuring citizens' active role in decision making and encouraging stakeholders at different social levels to work together towards identification of roles and responsibilities. PACE worked to develop social contracts, which elaborated these negotiated obligations and provided tools for participatory monitoring of progress towards agreed goals.

The Learning Process aimed to assess whether the two different approaches led to different impacts in relation to securing access to quality accessible and appropriate education. Because of the high levels of social vulnerability caused by HIV/AIDS in Malawi, the Learning Process also focused on assessing the extent to which highly marginalised people were included within the development process.

CARE Malawi projects: institutional strengthening
Table 5: CRLSP and LIFH

Project	Approach	Duration	Brief overview of activities
Central Region Livelihood Security Project (CRLSP)	Non-RBA	2002-5	Purpose: to improve food and livelihood security for selected households in central Malawi by developing and strengthening capacity of individuals, representative CBOs and partner organisations Objectives: 1. To develop and strengthen organisational capacities and partnerships with 80 VDCs managing and sustaining food security activities 2. Train government agricultural field staff partners (40) to support village community partners in agricultural activities 3. Increase smallholder agricultural productivity by 40% through crop diversification and sustainable utilisation of wetland areas 4. Increase income of participating households by 30% through village-based savings and loans groups and improved market opportunities • Reaching 165,000 people from 30,000 rural households • Promoting food security (access to inputs and effective utilisation of natural resources) • Village-level institutional development/capacity building (link with local governance structures – decentralisation) • Enhancing/diversifying household income sources (small enterprise activity development: promoting savings)
Local Initiatives for Health (LIFH)	RBA	2002-5	Purpose: to improve ability of rural households in central region of Malawi to address their basic rights to health Objectives: 1. Partnerships established with appropriate health service organisations 2. Participatory rights-based assessment developed to allow communities, and particularly women and disadvantaged groups to pilot initiatives that address priority health-related issues

3. Developed organisation so rural healthcare consumers working with service providers for better services
4. Methods of addressing community-identified health priorities developed and tested and lessons learned to feed into the SWAp
• Development of partnerships among service providers and users; linking voice and response
• Capacity building of communities to demand their right to health (quality and equitable services)
• Enhanced capacity of service to provide quality and equitable services
• Establishment of community health service monitoring systems
• Use of monitoring in joint planning
• Capacity building for community organisations on health
• Sharing learning with other organisations
• Documentation

The CARE CRLSP is a food security programme in the central region of Malawi. Since 1999, it has been operating under the household livelihood security (HLS) framework. An expanded follow-on phase started in October 2002 and ran until late 2005. CRLSP targets 165,000 people from 30,000 rural households in two districts, Lilongwe and Dowa. The project approach is non-RBA with a focus on institutional capacity building. The CRLSP had three strategic areas of focus:

• Strengthening the capacity of representative community-based organisations (village development committees – VDCs, village savings and loans groups – VSLs, seed committees and others) to take responsibility for mobilising communities to work collectively in addressing their food and livelihood priorities;
• Addressing lack of access to agricultural inputs for high agricultural productivity, by promoting improved seed variety and root crop promotion for crop diversification;
• Building capacity of Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation field assistants as partners, so as to give better support to development initiatives of local farmers.

CARE started the LIFH project in May 2002. Through a RBA, this aimed to develop innovative and sustainable models to resolve issues of poor health services and access among rural communities. The project focus was on institutional development in the health sector. LIFH was implemented in Lilongwe and Ntchisi districts. In Lilongwe, the project worked in four government health centres and their surrounding catchment areas; in Ntchisi district, it worked with seven health centres. The project set out to develop innovative and participatory rights-based assessment methodologies that would enable rural consumers of healthcare to address, articulate and manage their basic health rights, by holding themselves and the duty bearers/service providers mutually accountable.

The LIFH project works to empower individuals and the institutions that support them in their communities to analyse their situation and take decisions about their lives, rather than being passive objects of choices made on their behalf. The LIFH project is working at community and district level to see how service providers can best meet the needs of communities, with respect to the provision of preventive and curative services designed to meet the most critical health needs and rights of rural communities, especially women and disadvantaged groups.

The Learning Process aimed to assess whether the specifically RBA to institutional development taken by LIFH led to greater benefits than the more traditional approach taken by CRLSP. In CRLSP, it was assumed that institutional development would result from training and capacity building accompanied by encouragement of technical improvements in agriculture. In LIFH, the aim was to encourage institutional development by changing the relationship between citizens and service providers and developing systems for mutual accountability, so as ensure that improved services were developed.

3.3 - Peru case studies

In Peru, the projects involved were in the fields of water and sanitation in the Cajamarca region and public education in the Ayacucho region. Both of the water and sanitation project phases were implemented through CARE Peru. The education project phases were implemented through the organisation Tarea, with support from Save the Children UK. In both case studies, the projects demonstrated a progression from a non-rights-based to a rights-based phase, as designated by the implementing NGO. It must be noted, though, that all phases of the projects in Peru demonstrated some characteristics of rights-based development. The contention of the participating organisations is that the projects only become rights-based in the second phase, because this is when they begin to adopt an integrated approach to participation, inclusion and encouragement of the willingness to fulfil obligations.

All the project phases involved in the Learning Process showed some aspects of RBAs. In all the phases, the concentration on participation was high – although in the earlier, non-RBA phases, the focus was much more on community participation than on encouraging communities and governments to work together.

CARE Peru projects
Table 6: PN23 and PROPILAS

Project	Approach	Duration	Brief overview of activities
Rural Drinking Water and Community Health (PN23)	Non-RBA	1995-8	• Reaching 6,345 people in 24 communities in four districts of two provinces • Provision of safe drinking water and sanitation services • Strengthening communities to maintain systems • Basic hygiene and sanitation education
Rural Water and Sanitation Pilot Project (PROPILAS)	RBA	2002-5	• Reaching 7,906 people in 21 communities in six districts of three provinces • Promotion of fulfilment of government obligations through strengthening multi-stakeholder management capacities • Participatory management by local communities for sustainable access to W&S • Learning lessons for scale-up

PN23 was a classic water and sanitation project, with the difference that a strong focus was placed on ensuring community ownership of all improvements. The project reached 6,345 people in 24 communities in four districts of two provinces. PROPILAS placed a higher emphasis on ensuring that a wider range of community stakeholders would be able to benefit from improved water and sanitation services, and on promoting multi-stakeholder processes which would strengthen combined government-citizen management of water services. PROPILAS reached 7,906 people in 21 communities in six districts of three provinces,

The two projects had four strategies in common. These were:

• Construction of domestic infrastructure for drinking water and basic health;
• Organisation of communities into water and sanitation administration boards (JASS) and building capacity for administration, operation and maintenance of the health and water systems;
• Environmental health education to promote change in health practices;
• As projects: responding to the interests of the communities.

In addition, PROPILAS employed a number of new strategies. Although the project was not originally designed to be explicitly rights-based, it did incorporate specific rights-based strategies:

• Providing communities with information and understanding so that they could make informed choices about whether to participate in the project;
• Strengthening community organisation so that communities could be active in multi-stakeholder processes and have greater voice in decision making, at community and local government levels;
• Identification of financial and other responsibilities of different actors and systems to encourage fulfilment of obligation;

- Using experience in the local project area to influence national policy, and in particular the design of a new World Bank-funded rural water and sanitation programme (PRONASAR).

The Learning Process aimed to determine whether or not the increased attention to linking voice and response (citizens and state, etc.) through the three additional strategies added value to the development process, led to further impacts and showed indications of achieving sustained positive change.

Tarea projects

Table 7: EDPE and DCDEL

Project	Approach	Duration	Brief overview of activities
Democratisation of Education and Student Participation (EDPE)	Non-RBA	1998-2000	• Reaching 40 public schools (primary and secondary) • Promotion of student participation in public schools – in management and decision-making processes
Building Capacity for Local and Education Democratisation (DCDEL)	RBA	2001-3	• Reaching 24 education centres (17 in Huamanga; seven in Huanta), 5,409 students, 179 teachers and 24 directors • Multi-stakeholder processes for school management • Encouraging institutional change for democratisation of public education • Establishing multi-stakeholder fora involving regional and local governments, educational authorities, school authorities, parents and students

The two projects represent two phases of Tarea's established approach to education. Tarea was formed in 1974 with the aim of working together with local actors to transform education. As an organisation, it aims to promote education which is democratic, that is, quality education which is inclusive and equitable and which fulfils the four internationally agreed requirements of being available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable. 'Tarea works with public schools, local government and citizens, so as to promote social change that will make conditions for education favourable.

Because of its organisational vision and methodology, both the Tarea project phases had a focus on fulfilment of the right to education. The two phases showed a design and operational progression from promotion of student participation in decision making, to opening multi-stakeholder fora; working to increase transparency in decision making; ensuring that a wider range of stakeholders could be part of the education management process; and developing systems for accountability for all actors. So, whereas the first phase project focused heavily on the participation principle of rights fulfilment, the second phase worked in an integrated way with all three principles of rights-based development: participation, inclusion and encouraging the willing fulfilment of obligation.

The Learning Process assessed whether there was added value in working to integrate the three principles of rights-based development in terms of improved education statistics, and in the quality and fairness of education. It also considered whether the second phase approach ensured that the state was more able to fulfil its obligations in terms of providing available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable education.

4. Findings: Comparing RBA and Non-RBA Projects

This section outlines the programme/project impacts identified during the Learning Process. Impacts have been defined in terms of both *product* and *process* gains in relation to poverty reduction and human security. As discussed in Section 2, product and process indicators of impact were found through examination of project work under the three categories of voice, participation and accountability; transformation of power: relationships and linkages; and institutional response. Results from these three categories have then been combined and are discussed under the four areas of concern necessary for poverty reduction and improved human security (asset accumulation; decreased vulnerability; increased equity and inclusion; and fulfilment of obligations). There are also impacts which relate directly to sustained positive change. Most importantly, these include increased willingness, by all actors, to fulfil obligations and responsibilities, leading to embedded change in state, private sector and citizen response.

The projects assessed had both *direct* and *indirect* relations with assets and reduction of vulnerabilities. The RBA projects, as discussed in Section 2, are working directly to reduce vulnerability so that assets can increase; the non-RBA projects are concerned more obviously with accumulation of assets and may, or may not, address issues around vulnerability.

The key message is that: *non-rights-based and rights-based projects all demonstrate positive impacts. However, rights-based projects show a greater range and depth of positive impacts and these are more likely to be sustained over time.*

Table 8 gives an overview of the projects as detailed in Section 3, so as to enable a point of reference for the following sections. In addition, for clarity, **RBA** projects are in bold, whereas **non-RBA** projects are **bold** and **underlined**.

Table 8: Project index

Implementer	Approach	Project	Sectors/issues	Dates
Bangladesh				
GBK (VSO)	RBA	IPDP	Rights of ethnic minorities	2004-
	Non-RBA	SABEC	Welfare of ethnic minorities	2004
RIC (HAI)	RBA	OCMP	Older people's rights	2002-6
	Non-RBA	OPI	Older people's welfare	1990-9
SCUK	RBA	PWC	Children's rights/work	2000-
	Non-RBA	River Project	Humanitarian assistance	1975-96
Malawi				
CARE Malawi	RBA	PACE	Education	2001-5
	Non-RBA	BESP	Education	2001-4
CARE Malawi	RBA	LIFH	Institutional development: health	2002-5
	Non-RBA	CRLSP	Institutional development: livelihoods	2002-5
Peru				
CARE Peru	RBA	PROPILAS	Water	2002-5
	Non-RBA	PN23	Water	1995-8
Tarea (SCUK)	RBA	DCDEL	Education	2001-3
	Non-RBA	EDPE	Education	1998-2000

4.1 Asset accumulation

All the projects, RBA and non-RBA, have shown significant improvements in their constituent groups' capacities to accumulate assets directly related to the work of the project.[12] There is far less difference, in terms of *immediate* asset accumulation impacts, between non-RBA and RBA projects than there is in terms of reduction of vulnerability, inclusion or obligation and accountability. However, there is often a marked difference between RBA and non-RBA projects in terms of the *quality of assets and retention of assets gained*. In this section, some examples are given of how different projects have contributed to asset accumulation. Box 2 gives a summary of the information below.

Box 2: Asset accumulation: RBA and non-RBA

RBA projects are showing significant improvements in their constituent groups' capacities to accumulate assets in the following areas:

- Increased access to education and retention in primary school, especially for girls and marginalised children (PACE, DCDEL, PWC)
- Increased access to healthcare, including access to maternal and neo-natal services (LIFH)
- Increased access to cash/money through accumulative savings and diversified livelihood opportunities (OCMP, PWC)
- Increased and improved access to water and sanitation (PROPILAS)
- Increased access to productive resources, e.g. land (IPDP)
- Increased protection against HIV and other communicable diseases (LIFH, PACE)
- Increased gender equity (PROPILAS, PACE, DCDEL, LIFH, IPDP, OCMP, PWC)
- Increased and improved range of partnerships (all)

Non-RBA projects show significant improvements for constituent groups' capacities to accumulate assets in the following areas, during the lifetime of the project. In some of the projects, these benefits have been sustained over time, in some they have not.

- Increased enrolment in primary school (BESP, EDPE)
- Increased access to cash/money through accumulative savings and diversified livelihood opportunities (CRLSP)
- Increased access to water and sanitation (PN23)
- Increased access to productive resources (RP, CRLSP)
- Limited increase in gender equity (all)

Increased access to education and retention in primary school, especially for girls and marginalised children

In Bangladesh, both the non-RBA **RP** and the RBA **PWC** opened up opportunities for poor children to access schooling. However, as with the RBA projects in Malawi and Peru, the focus in **PWC** on ensuring that education met the needs of more marginalised children meant that more of this group could attend school.

In Malawi, in the non-RBA **BESP**, there was an increase in the number of children enrolling in school. However, it is unclear how sustainable this increase has been over time, and whether children are remaining in school.

Regarding **PACE**, respondents felt that everyone had been aware of the problems keeping children, particularly girls, out of education, but had been unwilling to face them. Many girls were unable to attend school because they were kept at home to do household chores, or because of the high instances of teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil rape. **PACE** led to an increase in numbers of children attending school, even in schools where no assistance was given with infrastructural development.

Box 3: PACE, Malawi: increased enrolment and teacher retention in schools

The average percentage change in total pupil enrolment across the six districts of PACE ranged from an increase of 6% in Mangochi District to an increase of 41% in Mzimba South District. Across the six districts, the overall average increase in pupil enrolment was 18%. Statistics for girls were far greater than those for boys: the overall average increase for boys was 15%, whereas for girls it was 20%. In comparison, for Malawi as a whole, Education Management Information System (EMIS) statistics show only a 2% increase in total pupil enrolment over the period 2004/05.

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[12] *'Constituents' and 'constituencies' are used to refer to people who fall within the project remit (whether they are active participants in the project or not) and the areas which the project covers.*

The PACE process also influenced the retention of teachers in schools: the average percentage change in the total number of teachers across the six districts ranged from an increase of 17% in Phalombe and Ntcheu District to 75% in Mzimba South District (Mzimba South District also shows the greatest increase in total pupil enrolment). There has also been a significant increase in the average number of voluntary teachers per school recruited by communities. This provides a good basis for working towards sustainability in education and the supply of qualified teachers has enabled PACE to build a stronger relationship with the district education manager's office.

Source: PACE reports, CARE Malawi.

In Malawi, the social contract defining rights and responsibilities between all interest groups (education officials, parents, teachers, schoolgirls and schoolboys, older people etc.) monitors whether children are able to access school (are not kept home for work etc.), are treated properly in school (girls, particularly, are not abused by teachers or fellow pupils), whether communities are helping to provide latrines etc. This encouraged greater numbers into school and better attendance throughout the schooling year. Furthermore, the spontaneous efforts of some school management committees (SMCs), revitalised through **PACE**, ensured that greater numbers of orphan children were able to attend school.

Also in Malawi, the use of the 'busometer' tool by PACE to monitor issues raised by communities showed there had been a marked improvement over the six-month period after the School Improvement Plan (SIP) process. Every issue showed considerable improvement (reduction in teacher/pupil sexual abuse, child-to-child sexual abuse, child labour, corporal punishment, early marriages).

In Peru, there was little increase in recorded enrolment rates when the RBA phase began. However, in the RBA **DCDEL**, the emphasis on ensuring culturally appropriate education (language, times etc.) meant that many more students from minority groups were able to attend school. Processes in school, and in the communities from which the students came, ensured that discrimination-based barriers to education were being dealt with.

Overall, while non-RBA projects have led to increased enrolment in primary school, with questionable sustainability (**BESP, EDPE**), RBA projects have led to a significant increase in access to education and retention in primary school, especially for girls and marginalised children (**PACE, DCDEL, PWC**).

Increased access to healthcare, including access to maternal and neo-natal services

In Bangladesh, the non-RBA **RP** gave health assistance that was initially humanitarian. Later, it focused on provision of services, and more people had access. However, little sense of responsibility for health was developed among the project constituents. In the RBA **OCMP**, older people were able to organise so as to demand better care. This occurred as a result of the project focus on mobilising older people (through federated older citizens' committees) to come into contact with decision makers and voice claims. Older women reported that they felt more able to access health services because they went with women friends who could offer them support.

The approach taken by the RBA **LIFH** in Malawi ensured that people had not only greater awareness of health issues but also better relations with health officials. This changed relationship meant that people felt much better about accessing health services and were more likely to go because they did not expect to be badly treated by staff.

Box 4: LIFH, Malawi: improvements in maternal health services

There has been an increase in the utilisation of maternal health services at Chileka Rural Health Centre in Lilongwe. Before the LIFH project, 70% of deliveries were being carried out in the community by traditional birth attendants (TBAs). Currently, 90% of births are delivered at the health centre as a result of the various processes and improvements initiated through the LIFH project ... Before the project, it was reported that only 30% of cases of illnesses were treated at the rural health centres. This figure has increased to 70% ... By the end of the project, 80% of health committees (health centre committees and village health committees) were fully functional. In contrast, at the beginning of the project, 90% of committees had been dormant or non-existent.

'At first, the medical assistant would not even look up and listen to a patient when you were explaining your ailment, and, before you finished explaining, he would have already finished scribbling in your notebook [health passport]

and given you drugs. But now he faces you, listens to you while you explain, and asks you if you have finished explaining. He then writes something in the notebook and directs you to the dispenser for drugs' (man from Kaziputa village).

Source: LIFH, Final Evaluation.

Overall, it was mostly the RBA **LIFH** project in Malawi which showed considerable gains under this indicator. However, in Peru, both the non-RBA and RBA phases of the water and sanitation projects (**PN23** and **PROPILAS**) reported reductions in the prevalence of diarrhoeal diseases in under-fives. The non-RBA **PN23** saw a decrease of 18.8% and the RBA **PROPILAS** showed a decrease of 24.2%. Respondents felt that the real difference would be seen over time: communities are now better able to maintain and manage water and sanitation and to continue to work together for health.

Increased access to money through accumulative savings and livelihood opportunities

Through RBAs, **OCMP** in Bangladesh has succeeded in achieving greater access for older people to allowances and pensions. It has institutionalised this access at central level and has secured a pension rise (although respondents say that the level is still too low to be a living wage).

Box 5: OCMP, Bangladesh: increased access to money for older people

Through older people's associations, OCMP has increased the number of older people receiving the old-age allowance in Pubail from 85 to 243. In 2005, lobbying ensured that the old-age allowance increased from US$2.50 to US$2.60 per month and extended from one million to 1.32 million over the year. Local banks have streamlined the distribution of the allowance and allocated specific times for its collection, which makes it easier for older people.

Source: www.helpage.org and Learning Process reports.

By challenging malpractice and working with employers as well as employees, **PWC** in Bangladesh succeeded in ensuring that workers received the money that was owed to them. In contrast, the non-RBA **OPI** in Bangladesh had no focus on ensuring sustainable access to state resources and, instead, gave handouts and welfare assistance. **RP** focused on income generation in its later phases, but gains made do not appear to have been sustained (no figures available).

Despite drawbacks in the approach (see below on gender equity), the non-RBA **CRLSP** in Malawi had significant impacts on the livelihoods of its constituents:

Box 6: CRLSP, Malawi: impacts on the livelihoods of constituents

People were able to eat three times a day, even during the lean periods. This meant that malnutrition in children and malnutrition-related diseases reduced. Through economic empowerment of women (income generation, savings etc.), money was circulating in the village in savings and loans in 2005. The culture of savings was new even to men who traditionally grew burley tobacco and other cash crops. Women brought income into their families and savings were secured by setting a draw-down limit (which prevented men from forcing their wives to take out money).

Source: Malawi Learning Process report.

RBA projects (**OCMP, PWC**) and the non-RBA **CRLSP** have significantly increased their constituent groups' access to cash/money through accumulative savings and diversified livelihood opportunities. Other non-RBA projects (**OPI** and **RP**) have increased the constituent's ability to accumulate cash but only during the lifetime of the project.

Increased and improved access to water and sanitation

As reported, there was little change in the rate at which the two water and sanitation projects in Peru (the non-RBA **PN23** and RBA **PROPILAS**) were able to install safe water services. However, the difference in the way that

management and maintenance are carried out will, according to respondents, make a big difference in the future. Both projects placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that water management committees (JASS) were functioning properly and fully included the voice of constituents. The RBA **PROPILAS** also strengthened local government's ability to coordinate and manage water and sanitation services. The creation of different types of model for service introduction also meant that the services were more attractive to a greater number of people and there was greater community ownership of the final results, as they were involved, together with local government, in selecting and overseeing the contractor who installed the system.

Increased access to productive resources, e.g. land

Land rights are the main development and rights issue for indigenous people in northwest Bangladesh. **IPDP** has changed the relationship between indigenous people and land office officials so that claims for land are heard and acted upon (no figures available). In addition, the RBA **PWC** in Bangladesh was able to secure better working conditions for adults and children. The non-RBA projects of **RP** and **CRLSP** have also enabled constituents to obtain increased access to productive resources but have not addressed rights to these resources as a long-term issue.

Increased protection against HIV and communicable diseases

In Malawi, **LIFH** developed a focus on raising awareness on HIV/AIDS in terms of protection from infection and of social/health protection for those affected by the virus. Training on HIV issues was given to health service personnel and to health committees. **PACE**, by bringing the issue of sexual abuse of school girls into the open, which led to a decrease in abuse (according to project constituents and stakeholders), obtained increased protection against HIV/ AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. In **PACE** areas, around 22% of school children are orphans (one or both parents having died), many because of HIV/AIDS. Many are in the care of grandparents and many are themselves heads of households. The work done by **PACE** to encourage school communities to be more inclusive has led to some communities establishing orphan care schemes.

Non-RBA projects demonstrated no impact in this area. In all countries, however, all projects (both RBA and non-RBA) have not done enough to ensure that awareness on HIV/AIDS, which must be a crosscutting issue in development work, is raised and that HIV/AIDS issues are understood by staff and constituents. Even in **PACE**, where HIV/AIDS is mentioned in the project framework, it took time during implementation before HIV/AIDS was addressed directly with constituents.

Increased gender equity

All the projects have focused, in some way, on increasing gender equity. In the non-RBA projects and in some of the RBA projects (**IPDP, PWC**) this has been through 'women's empowerment': initiatives to increase women's economic power through income generation, savings and loans schemes. These have had both expected and unexpected outcomes (see Box 7).

Box 7: CRLSP, Malawi: unexpected gender outcomes

The income generation, savings and loans schemes in the non-RBA CRLSP led to significant increase in income in the communities. However, since the schemes were directed solely at women, and insufficient work was done with men to ensure they 'bought in' to the approach, there were some drawbacks. Some men said that now that women had more money, they no longer knew their place and were ungovernable. Also, some men saw no need to work now that their wives were bringing in money. Women, on the other hand, ended up triple-shifting: looking after the home, working in income generation schemes and working on the land.

Source: Malawi Learning Process report.

In RBA projects, there has been more emphasis on ensuring that women have equal access to health and education and to representation in positions of authority. This has led to more women been included on committees and in management and, increasingly, to attention to ensuring that women's participation in these fora is meaningful (see Section 4.2 below). Nevertheless, all projects could be doing more to ensure that social norms which perpetuate gender inequity are challenged and reworked (see also Section 4.3 on inclusion).

4.2 - Reduction of vulnerability

All the RBA projects were able to demonstrate significant impacts in terms of reduction of vulnerability for their constituent groups. In RBA projects, vulnerability was seen as a *structural* issue, both deriving from and resulting in inequitable power relations in society. Involvement with the RBA projects and implementing organisations gave poor and marginalised people support in the development of more diverse social networks of partnerships and alliances. These networks are key to reducing poverty and strengthening human security. The attention given to reducing vulnerability in the non-RBA projects is very different. In non-RBAs, vulnerability is addressed as a *symptom* of poverty: the aim is to improve the symptoms but little or no attention is given to its structural causes and effects.

Box 8: Reduction in vulnerability: RBA and non-RBA

All the RBA projects were able to demonstrate reduced vulnerability to extreme poverty for their constituent groups. Involvement with the organisations supported poor and marginalised people in developing more diverse social networks – a key element in reducing poverty and strengthening human security. Impacts included:
- Issue-based alliances reducing social exclusion and vulnerability (all)
- Improved access to justice (most)
- Livelihood security and diversification, both in the household and for individual household members (PWC, OCMP)
- Increased knowledge and skills with trends towards transfer of acquired skills and knowledge to non-project based issues and actions (all)
- Increased gender equity (most)
- Increased protection against social and work-based exploitation (OCMP, SC, PACE, DCDEL)
- Increased ability to negotiate, take and manage risk (all)

The attention given to reducing vulnerability is different in non-RBA projects. These aim to reduce vulnerability by alleviation of immediate symptoms and do not deal with underlying causes.
- Increased welfare for older people (OPI)
- Livelihood skills (RP)
- Some impact on increased gender equity (all)

Issue-based alliances reducing social exclusion and vulnerability

All RBA projects showed impacts in this area. There is a trend towards establishing different types of partnership and alliance from those found in the non-RBAs. In non-RBA projects, partnership usually takes the form of an NGO/CSO liaising and mediating between citizens and official organisations. In RBA projects, there are more attempts to link citizens and state (voice and response) directly.

In the **IPDP** in Bangladesh, representatives of the Santal communities are now able to meet directly with government officials, in multi-stakeholder meetings, government offices and communities. This is changing the way that Santal people are seen by mainstream society and discrimination against them is reducing.

In **PACE**, Malawi, the PRAss process brought local government offices into a different sort of partnership with citizens. The district education support teams (DESTs) combined people from a range of relevant government offices and went out to the communities to develop social contracts with school communities. This involved working with all different interest groups in the communities, not just with leaders. The multi-disciplinary nature of the DESTs ensured that a holistic approach was taken to education. In contrast, the non-RBA **BESP** in Malawi developed individual (funding) partnerships with local NGOs working to promote education. However, it did not use partnership to ensure established, networked mechanisms linking a wide range of stakeholders for education management.

In **LIFH**, Malawi, the rejuvenated health committees opened up spaces for citizens and service providers to develop mutual trust and share in the development of improved services (see also Section 4.4).

In **DCDEL**, Peru, stakeholders – students, teachers and officials – went through their own process of strengthening the AARLE committee (Student Mayors, Councillors and Leaders Association). This committee developed into an improved and established mechanism for school management and discussion of wider issues relevant to education.
In **PROPILAS**, Peru, the JASS water management committee became a partnership mechanism by means of which

citizens could participate with government in the management of water resources. It also became a forum through which citizens could decide whether they wished to participate or not, and could choose from a range of water service models. In the non-RBA **PN23** phase, communities could not choose whether to participate and had no choice of which water management model to follow.

Improved access to justice

Most RBA projects showed impacts in this area. Through their work to ensure that poor people had access to their rights, resources and appropriate services, all the RBA projects contributed to improving access to justice for their constituents. Also, as most RBA projects worked to integrate participation, inclusion and obligation, they increased the chances that constituents would be protected against injustice. Only one of the projects (**PWC**, Bangladesh) had components directly concerned with access to formal/legal justice systems. However, the way that RBAs work actively to challenge traditional, social and cultural norms means that poor and marginalised people have greater access to justice within the power structures of their own communities, and in the wider mainstream society.

The RBA **PWC** in Bangladesh is protecting the rights of children and their families working in the shrimp industry, and has secured greater justice from employers. Equally, it has improved the circumstances of children in care centres. These children, mostly accused of petty offences such as pilfering (wages in the shrimp industry are very low), now have better representation (legal etc.), shelter and access to education. **IPDP** and **OCMP** in Bangladesh have seen greater respect for the rights of indigenous people and older people and mechanisms are being institutionalised to respect these rights.

In RBA **PACE**, Malawi, there is now social redress for girls abused by teachers and by peers. There is also now greater awareness of how to access official forms of redress (through courts etc.) In contrast, non-RBA project increases in justice may be by-products of meeting people's needs: this is achieved in the short term without challenging existing power structures and norms and it may be, therefore, that this will not be sustainable in the longer term.

Livelihood security and diversification, both within the household and for individual members

As we have seen, all projects made some contribution towards increasing livelihood-related assets. However, RBA projects made a stronger contribution towards ensuring possibilities for livelihood diversification. In addition, because there is a trend in the RBAs towards social disaggregation (see Section 4.3), livelihood issues have been looked at beyond the household level, with special attention given to individual needs within the household.

In the RBA **PWC** in Bangladesh, children working in the shrimp industry accessed opportunities to continue learning a job skill as well as gaining education. Moreover, ensuring that children in care centres (incarcerated for petty thefts etc. from the shrimp factories) could access schooling increased their chances of securing gainful employment in the future. In the non-RBA **RP** in Bangladesh and **CRLSP** in Malawi, research suggested that there was a high degree of likelihood that new livelihood strategies adopted through the project would not be sustainable in the longer term (see community reports).

Increased knowledge and skills with trends towards transfer of acquired skills and knowledge to non-project based issues and actions

All RBA projects showed impacts in this area. While all the projects, non-RBA and RBA, included components through which skills and knowledge were transferred, the skills acquired through RBA projects appeared to be having a wider-reaching effect than those gained through the non-RBAs. There was a trend in all the RBA projects to see skills capacity building as about not only the transfer of particular practical skills, but also the ability to manage those skills and use them in ways which would give citizens greater access to decision-making fora.

In the RBA **OCMP** in Bangladesh, older people learned skills in negotiation, lobbying and management. They were then able to lobby at local, middle and central levels and to organise to get claims met. This ability allowed them to lobby for improved conditions in many aspects of their lives: income, shelter, health etc. Skills learned in the non-RBA **RP** in Bangladesh were not transferred and, in some cases, were not kept up.

In the RBA **PACE** and in **LIFH** in Malawi, respondents said that the skills of negotiation and management they were learning had affected other aspects of their lives positively. Knowledge and skills learned had encouraged parents and

SMCs to develop systems to sanction parents who did not send their children to school, and to set up schemes to care for orphans and ensure that older people were included in development activities.

In **PROPILAS**, in Peru, women as well as men gained skills in management, which were used beyond the context of water provision. In the RBA **DCDEL**, student participation in school management fora encouraged student participation in other decision making outside school and increased their sense of citizenship.

Increased protection against gender-based and other social discrimination

All RBA projects showed impacts in this area, although there were some limitations. There was less evidence of impact in non-RBAs. RBA projects had begun to challenge the social norms and practices underpinning discrimination on the grounds of gender, social background, ethnicity, age etc. The non-RBAs tended to work with the symptoms of discrimination rather than the causes. None of the projects had gone far enough in dealing with discrimination (see Section 4.3) and there were, in some instances, disappointing results in terms of gender, given how long gender equity has been on the development agenda.

In the RBA **IPDP** in Bangladesh, there was considerable focus on changing perceptions that 'mainstream' society held about indigenous people, and changing indigenous people's perceptions of themselves. The result was that representatives of indigenous people were able to join in decision making and had themselves begun to work in their own community to address the practice of excessive drinking and violence against women. The project needed to give stronger attention to issues of gender equity, and to ensuring that women had more opportunities to participate meaningfully in decision making. The RBA **OCMP** significantly changed local opinion on the 'worth' of older people. Older citizens reported that they had become visible and that they now felt confident to deal with others in society. However, while women did join together in the older women's association, few were active in wider decision-making fora. There is a high likelihood that gender biases will be strongly entrenched among older people.

In the non-RBA <u>RP</u>, <u>SABEC</u> and <u>OPI</u> in Bangladesh (and <u>BESP</u> in Malawi), less attention was given to ensuring meaningful women's participation. On many occasions, women were encouraged to be part of groups where decisions were made, but they were not actually able, or encouraged, to voice opinions and take part. No attention was given to ensuring that the more marginalised people were able to participate (see Section 4.3).

In the RBA **PACE**, Malawi, girls had the opportunity to speak in public and to take part in decision making for the first time. Only with project support were girls, and women, able to bring their concerns to public fora and ensure that they were not only heard but included in planning. Girls reported a change in attitudes and practices in society: according to project constituents interviewed, including girls themselves, other community members and educationalists there is a perception that there is less abuse and girls have a greater chance to go to school at the same time as their brothers rather than being kept at home to do housework. Equally, women who were part of the SMCs and PTAs were able to take leadership roles and to initiate new programmes of development activity, such as the orphan support schemes. Effort was also made to ensure that older people were included in discussions on village development.

In the RBA **PROPILAS** and **DCDEL**, in Peru, girls and women took on leadership roles within committees and were taken seriously when voicing the concerns of their peers. In **DCDEL**, attention was given to ensuring that young people from indigenous communities were able to go to school and take part in decision making. The most recent phase of **PROPILAS** also focused on developing models for 'dispersed rural communities', which had the lowest levels of access to improved water supplies in Peru and were marginalised from most major interventions in the sector (including PRONASAR, the World Bank-funded Rural Water and Sanitation Program, which does not work with communities with less than 200 inhabitants).

Increased protection against social and work-based exploitation

An extension of the issue of discrimination covers the extent to which poorer and more marginalised people have been deliberately exploited – in the workplace and in wider society. The non-RBA projects did not directly address this issue. In the RBA projects, attention was given to working with a range of stakeholders to identify and counteract exploitation. This has led to, for example:

• Proper payment of old-age allowances in Bangladesh (**OCMP**);

- Decrease in sexual abuse by teachers and decrease in their use of schoolgirls as unpaid domestic servants in Malawi (PACE);
- Better working conditions for children and their families in the shrimp industry in the PWC project in Bangladesh.

Increased social and political capital leading to increased ability to take, negotiate and manage risk

In all the RBA projects, there had been a marked change in people's confidence in their ability to act and make changes to their life and wellbeing. RBA projects focused on addressing the structural causes of poverty and disadvantage. As changes in power relations occurred, people seemed better able to make use of new skills and knowledge and to diversify their livelihood strategies. People had a sense that fundamental changes had occurred and it is worth bearing opportunity costs for future gains.

In **OCMP** in Bangladesh, older women were willing to risk going to the health centres or going to the bank because they felt that, by being organised and going with friends, they had greater social standing and could take the risk of going into the public arena. In **PWC**, children's participation in councils increased their communication skills and enabled them to negotiate with adult stakeholders. This changed adults' opinions of children and meant that both children and adults had taken risks in working together in different ways.

In the **PACE** project in Malawi, poor parents in school communities felt that they had been able to influence teachers and officials and to be part of planning for school improvements. They said that, before, their opinions had not been taken seriously. In previous projects, they had participated in making bricks for new school rooms, but then nothing had happened. In **PACE**, parents were willing to let their children go to school and to help with immediate school improvements. They felt that there was now a sense in which the community was really involved and could talk to the authorities as equals. This made them more confident that time and effort they invested would have positive outcomes.

In **PROPILAS** in Peru, communities were more willing to risk participation in new water schemes because they had access to far more information and choice. In the past, communities could not choose whether to participate, or what type of system they would get, based on their decisions about what economic and time contribution they were willing to make (the different options involved different levels of commitment from the community). Increased information enabled them to make informed choices about whether and how to join in.

Non-RBA projects did not have any impact in this area as the aim was to reduce vulnerability by alleviating immediate symptoms and not dealing with underlying causes.

4.3 - Inclusion

RBAs in principle must reach poorer and more marginalised people and reduce social exclusion. The RBA projects had considerable impact in the area of improving social inclusion of poor and marginalised people, compared with the non-RBAs. RBAs addressed inclusion issues by opening spaces in which people who were normally excluded could take an active part in decision making and action to improve their wellbeing. This was not only internally, within marginalised groups, but also in wider fora (linking voice and response). In the best instances, systems to ensure that poorer and more marginalised people were included, systematised and embedded (**DCDEL** and **PROPILAS**, Peru, **PACE**, Malawi, and (beginning) **IPDP**, Bangladesh). Non-RBAs tended to see inclusion as meaning only giving particular attention to meeting the basic needs of normally excluded groups.

The more developed RBAs employed a systematic approach to understanding social differentiation, which allowed them to understand how power worked in society and to challenge social norms that perpetuate social exclusion. There is still considerable work to be done in RBA projects to ensure that attention to inclusion issues is fully translated into sustained, equitable resource allocation. Not enough attention is yet given to ensuring that social disaggregation is considered *within* poor communities. Also, more effort is needed to ensure that the principles of inclusion are fully embedded within communities and not only evident when the project is in action.

Box 9: Inclusion: RBA and non-RBA

RBA projects had considerable impact in this area, compared with non-RBA projects. However, there is still much room for improvement. Trends are positive but progress is slow, and appears to be hindered by insufficient capacity within implementing organisations to focus on inclusion issues. With limitations, the following impacts were identified:

- All RBA projects have opened up spaces for inclusion of marginalised people – e.g. poor rural people, poor women, ethnic minorities, children
- All have successfully challenged social norms which exclude and discriminate
- All have increased representation of poor and marginalised peoples e.g. committees, decision-making bodies, etc.
- All have had some impact on favourably shifting power relations

Inclusion issues are not fully taken up by non-RBA projects. Non-RBAs deal with 'target groups' but do not focus much on changing the relationship between such groups and society. There is little attempt to differentiate between members of an identified 'group'.

- Representation of poor people's voice increased, although this tends to be the voice of community leaders, not of the more marginalised people (all)
- There is no analysis of who the most marginalised people are (all)
- It is not clear that project objectives are designed to access poorer and more marginalised people (all)
- No attention is given to the workings of power relations (all)

Increased representation of poor people's voice

All projects made impacts in this area. However, in non-RBAs this tends to be the voice of community leaders, not of more marginalised people.

In the RBA **PWC** in Bangladesh, working children were included as active stakeholders. They were encouraged to organise and, with support, to negotiate directly with employers and officials. In the RBA **OCMP**, older people said that they were becoming visible in society. Their representatives were able to negotiate at high levels. Although representation was still largely by natural leaders in the community, there were more opportunities to ensure that there was representation of a wider range of opinions and concerns. In the RBA **IPDP**, people at all levels of the community were beginning to have voice. Young women were being included in multi-stakeholder fora and were able to represent the voices of women and girls. However, there is still work to be done in this project to challenge inter-community norms and to ensure that women and younger people have voice in the public arena.

Poorer people in the non-RBA **RP** in Bangladesh had no fora in which they could raise their voice. In the non-RBA **OPI**, also in Bangladesh, while older people met together in clubs, it was more for their own social welfare than for any idea of increasing their voice in decision making.

Opened up spaces for meaningful inclusion of marginalised people

All RBA projects made impacts in terms of meaningful inclusion of marginalised people, e.g. poor rural people, poor women, ethnic minorities, orphaned children etc.

The RBA **LIFH** project in Malawi recognised that it was difficult to identify the really marginalised people in society, because marginalisation makes people difficult to contact. Nevertheless, the project reached marginalised communities and ensured that more marginal people had access to health services. In building the social contracts, the RBA **PACE** project socially disaggregated communities so as to understand power relations and identify who was normally excluded from development initiatives. In doing so, it was able to ensure that young people (girls and boys), older people and disabled people were able to join meetings and take part in decisions.

The inclusion of poor community representatives in managing water resources with local government in the RBA **PROPILAS**, Peru, was innovative. Women were represented on the committees (though it is unclear to what extent yet other interest groups are).

In the non-RBAs, little attention was given to identifying marginalised people and no efforts were made to facilitate inclusion of people normally excluded from development processes.

Challenge of social norms which exclude and discriminate

Most RBAs made an impact in this area. In both non-RBAs and RBAs there is a real need for further development of understanding of why people discriminate against others in particular contexts and how this discrimination is manifested in social relations. The RBAs addressed these issues in some ways, whereas the non-RBAs (with the possible exception of EDPE in Peru, which focused on the promotion of student participation in decision making) did not.

In Bangladesh, mainstream society, and particularly people with power, did not consider older poor people or children to be capable of having opinions which could be of use. The work of the RBA **OCMP** and **PWC** was changing these perceptions and improving the social status of marginalised people. The RBA **IPDP** realised that many people held strong prejudices against the Santal community and openly criticised them for drunkenness and laziness. By opening spaces in which Santal community representatives could meet and discuss with officials, the project was beginning to challenge these norms. However, **IPDP** could have done more to understand and address the reasons why Santal people were using alcohol and felt unwilling to participate in some development initiatives.

In **DCDEL** in Peru, efforts made to ensure that young people from indigenous communities could attend school and gain education were changing social attitudes towards these people.

Increased representation of poor and marginalised people

All RBAs systematically increased the representation of poor and marginalised peoples, e.g. on committees and decision-making bodies etc. Systems and mechanisms are necessary to ensure that poor and marginalised people are routinely included.

In Bangladesh, organisation of older people in **OCMP** ensured that they had routine meetings and opportunities to voice concerns to a wider audience. The councils of working children in **PWC** were established and provided a systematic way for working children to negotiate with officials.

In **PACE**, Malawi, communities had embedded inclusion principles introduced by **PACE** and then made sure that older and disabled people were helped to attend all kinds of village meetings, with particular people responsible for going to fetch them. In **LIFH** and **PACE** (also in **PROPILAS**, Peru), management mechanisms ensured that poor people were included within planning and monitoring processes.

In Peru, the establishment of AARLE (**DCDEL**) as a functioning mechanism for participation in decision making ensured a sustained platform for young people's voice.

Favourable shifting of power relations

All RBAs made some impact in this area. Non-RBAs did not engage with power issues. In working for the rights of poor and marginalised people, the RBA projects inevitably engaged with power issues. In the ways described above, and in Section 4.4, positive changes were being made which were beginning to rebalance power – shifting more power towards people who had, traditionally, been powerless. The projects were working to find ways that this shift could be made safely, and for the benefit of as many as possible of the people concerned. People are not easily willing to give up power. However, when they see that power sharing can mean that they are more able to fulfil their own obligations and that, for example, citizens will share in responsibilities for running services, they may be willing to change. This has been the case in all the RBA projects assessed. As a district education manager in Malawi said: 'No, I don't feel threatened by this because everyone is able to talk freely and meet challenges. I feel relieved that there is communication and trust. I sleep better at night!'

4.4 - Accountability and obligation

RBA projects give more attention to issues of accountability and fulfilment of obligations. Although non-RBA often emphasised securing participation, this was not linked to issues of inclusion and fulfilment of obligations. People were consulted about their problems and were able to join project activities, but did not take an active role in monitoring progress or how things were done. Little effort was made to challenge accepted social norms and power relations, which meant that some people's voices did not count. In contrast, RBAs engaged with issues of power and

had success in making poor and marginalised people's participation meaningful. Changes meant that even those who had traditionally been voiceless could challenge authority and expect a degree of accountability.

Box 10: Obligation and accountability: RBA and non-RBA

RBA projects showed different levels of success in embedding improved accountability and willingness to fulfil obligations by power holders and by citizens. There was considerable progress throughout the projects. Where there was greater engagement with power holders, improvements were most marked (DCDEL, PROPILAS, PACE, LIFH, RIC).

- All forced changes in organisations and institutions unwilling to fulfil obligations and accountability; this contributes to reducing corruption
- All showed positive trends towards linking voice and response, by breaking the traditional mould of CSO engagement which only focused on the voice side of the equation.
- All were, in some way, increasing people's political agency and were contributing to redefining citizenship: the potential range of active roles within political processes for poor and marginal people, questioning norms, redefining whose voice counts etc.
- Some were contributing to conflict resolution (IPDP, PACE, LIFH)

In non-RBA projects, where there was a focus on accountability, this tended to be one-way: that those with relatively less power should account to the more powerful.

- Little or no effort was made to link voice and response (all, although more is done in both projects in Peru – PN23 and EDPE)
- In some instances, spaces were opened up where people's claims could be heard. Yet, this did not lead to systems for ongoing dialogue and negotiation (PN23, OPI, SABEC)
- People's voice was listened to but there was little/no increase in political agency (all)

Linking voice and response

All RBA projects showed positive trends towards linking voice and response by breaking the traditional mould of CSO engagement. In RBA projects, it is now possible to say that there is a shared vision between citizens and state offices about what needs to be achieved. This does not mean that there is always complete accord between citizens and state, but the spaces opened for greater citizen-state engagement ensure that common goals can be identified and strategies agreed on.

In Bangladesh, older people who are part of **OCMP** are influencing government and securing changes which will benefit older people on a much wider scale. In **PWC**, a multi-stakeholder forum was established, charged with protecting the rights of children in conflict with the law. The taskforce is headed by the district commissioner and has magistrates, lawyers, NGOs and CSOs as members. In Khulna shrimp market, local government authorities (ward commissioners), officials from a range of public services and NGOs were all working together to fulfil obligations to disadvantaged children. In IPDP in Bangladesh, fora in which indigenous people's representatives could talk openly with government officials increased public awareness of indigenous people's rights and led to more appropriate development planning.

In Malawi, the **PACE** project, through its DESTs, succeeded in getting local government officials out of their offices and into school communities in a meaningful way. Instead of just going for very occasional visits, officials formed part of teams actively researching conditions in communities and working with citizens to plan for the future. Decisions made were incorporated in district development plans. The **LIFH** project in Malawi ensured that citizen voice was recognised through the democratic running of health councils at health centre and village levels. Citizens were able to take part in district health planning.

In Peru, **PROPILAS** and **DCDEL** created opportunities for citizens and state to work together in management of services (water and education). Links with local government have now extended through to middle and central levels. This has led to opportunities at local level to influence development of central-level policy and to produce plans of action.

Changes to organisations and institutions unwilling to fulfil obligations and be accountable

All RBA projects made impacts in this area. This can also lead to reduction in corruption. The ways in which voice and response were linked in the RBAs ensured that there were established fora through which demands for action could be made and stakeholders, at all levels, could become more accountable to each other. In non-RBA projects, accountability only worked in terms of funded agencies reporting to donors. There was little sense of fulfilment of obligation by offices of state and other agencies; rather, action taken was to meet the welfare needs of beneficiaries (**EDPE** in Peru operated in a more rights-based way).

In **LIFH** in Malawi there was a marked increase in transparency. 100% of village health committees and health centre committees are now elected democratically and responding to a diverse range of health issues in the community – including representation, advocacy and lobbying. The **PACE** project worked to ensure that all stakeholders in the SIP, part of the ESSP, were more transparent in their actions and were accountable both 'up' and 'down' the line.

Box 11: School construction with accountability through PACE (Malawi)

Before PACE, school construction, part of the ESSP which PACE supported, was done without adequate consultation with either district education offices (DEOs) or citizens. Contractors would turn up and talk only with village leaders. Sometimes, they would bypass the DEO altogether. DEOs and people in school communities were angered by this. DEOs had a right to control what was going on in the district, and citizens felt angry that they were never told what was going on, when the school would be built, why there were delays, where the money was going, etc. Through PACE, it was decided that the contractor should do nothing without informing the DEO, and that a regular briefing meeting would be held in the school community to update on work progress and consider citizen concerns. A committee comprising community leaders, teachers, SMC members and boy and girl student representatives was formed to attend meetings and report back to the community.

Source: Personal communication.

In Peru, AARLE, formed by students during the **DCDEL**, and the inclusion of students in the management committees, ensured that students had freedom of expression and were included in meetings where they could demand accountability and action from teachers and officials.

Increased political agency and redefined citizenship

All RBAs made an impact here. This includes the potential range of active roles within political processes for poor and marginal people, questioning norms, redefining whose voice counts, etc.

In **PWC** in Bangladesh, children's views are now being taken seriously and working children are able to voice claims for themselves and negotiate, with support, with a range of stakeholders.

LIFH, Malawi, ensured that there are now open channels of communication between health service providers and citizens. For example, community health institutions post drug availability information on drug utilisation boards for service users to monitor. Planning is now a joint concern between health service providers and users. Before **PACE**, communities did not consider it necessary to include young people, women or older people in decision-making processes. Now, community leaders and other adult men have realised that everyone can have important things to contribute, even young girls.

In **DCDEL**, Peru, the ability of students to take active part in decision making was extended from levels achieved during **EDPE**. Students now use skills and knowledge attained through rights education in the curriculum in other fora. Students from mainstream society and from indigenous communities now have the skills necessary to take on future leadership roles in the wider community.

Channels of communication opened and voice and response linked

This leads to prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. As stated above, RBA projects placed greater emphasis on opening up channels of direct communication between citizens and state than non-RBAs. Participation, for non-RBAs, usually meant that citizens were consulted about their priorities for action and encouraged to participate in activities. It did not mean, as it did in several of the RBAs, that citizens were directly supported in

identifying legitimate claims and bringing these claims to duty bearers to demand response. By opening spaces for expression of demands and multi-way communication among stakeholders, RBAs created possibilities for prevention of conflict. Grievances simmering beneath the surface were brought into open debate and negotiation.

In the RBA **IPDP** in Bangladesh, indigenous people were able to claim their rights from land office officials and negotiate directly on these claims. This led to improved relations between citizens and state. In the earlier non-RBA **SABEC**, land rights were an issue, but one more often dealt with through the NGO than directly between citizens and state offices.

Citizen participation in decision-making fora in several projects (**PROPILAS**, Peru; **LIFH** and **PACE**, Malawi) raised levels of trust between citizens and state and facilitated development processes. In **PACE**, people said that they were now able to talk directly to education officials and challenge them about unmet demands.

Box 12: PACE, Malawi: communication between community and officials

During discussions with one school community, the local community leaders (male and female) met together as an interest group. The two facilitators for the group were two district education managers (DEMs). Discussions became quite heated, as the leaders were not happy with the time it was taking for construction of the new school blocks to get started. They said they were afraid that this ... process would be just like all the others: a lot of promises, none of which were fulfilled ... One of the chiefs, not recognising the DEM in front of him said: 'I wish that DEM were here right now! Then we'd tell him what we think! We've been to his office and all he does is pick up the phone and say "Hello? Lilongwe? Is that Lilongwe?" But he never gives us a sensible answer on where our school's got to!' The DEM burst out laughing and said: 'But that's me! And you're quite right, I didn't give any sensible answers, I'm sorry!' The chiefs were really surprised and happy – they had not recognised the DEM outside his office and wearing a T-shirt and baseball cap rather than a shirt and tie! But, because they were all able to sit together and discuss all the issues during the participatory exercise, the chiefs felt much better about everything and very reassured that they could discuss with the DEM as equals. The DEM promised to make sure that they, and all the community, were better informed in future. Afterwards, the DEMs said that they feel much more confident in doing their jobs now that they can communicate openly with citizens and understand their concerns much better.

Source: abstracted from PACE Lesson Learning Exercise, (Crawford, 2004).

4.5 - Summary

Both non-RBAs and RBAs attain immediate impacts benefiting project stakeholders. However, findings suggest that RBA projects are having considerably more success than non-RBA ones in attaining impacts that will lead to *sustained positive change*. RBAs tackle the underlying causes of poverty and disadvantage, and work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to address these causes. They link citizens and state in new ways and create systems and mechanisms that ensure that all actors can be part of accountable development processes. Conclusions on what this means for development are drawn in the next section.

5. The Added Value of Rights-based Approaches

5.1 - RBAs add value

The Learning Process has shown that using a RBA adds value to the development process. The conclusions elaborated here point not only to this added value, but also to why rights-based development is crucial to all work surrounding improved governance and increased human, national and global security. Conclusions have been drawn from the findings of the Learning Process, from discussions during the various dissemination workshops in London and Peru, and from ongoing debates among development practitioners on the opportunities and challenges that RBAs to development may offer. These conclusions are grouped below under the broad headings of governance, human security and poverty reduction (where particular projects show especially good examples of the conclusion drawn, they are noted in brackets).

Non-RBAs tend to focus on changing the immediate negative circumstances of poverty, so as to produce positive benefits. They do not give much focus to trying to change the underlying causes of poverty. In contrast, RBAs are based on the belief that sustainable development will not be possible unless the conditions of international human rights instruments are fulfilled. The standards set by these instruments form the scaffolding supporting all rights-based work. Because RBAs work to achieve human rights, they necessarily address the underlying causes of poverty. This means that rights-based development directly challenges the causes of disadvantage, injustice and inequity. It links citizens and state in systems of mutual accountability. In terms of state-citizen relations, not only are state offices obliged to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and to be accountable to their constituents, but also citizens themselves must act on their own responsibilities – to each other and to the state. Within these systems of obligation, however, there are many different ways of approaching rights-based development, just as there are many ways to approach non-rights-based development.

The IAG Learning Process was underway for two years. There have been changes in the development agenda in response to dynamically changing global concerns. The emphasis is increasingly on *improving systems of governance* and working to ensure that states are *fully accountable to their citizens*. In line with this, there is increasing focus on *all aspects of human security* – not just on working to *alleviate poverty*, but also on working to *ensure that all people can have access to appropriate and adequate services*. Crucially, the focus is now strongly on ensuring that states can promote the peace and security that is vital if poor people are going to be able to access services and gain the benefits of improved governance.[13]

States have sometimes been wary of work that aims to improve governance and human security by increasing accountability, increasing people's voice and claims, and that focuses on realising rights. The fear has been that this may lead to social conflict and a breakdown in state control. In fact, the conclusions of the Learning Process suggest that rights-based development, in focusing on changing relationships between powerful and less powerful people, engages directly with moments of potential conflict and can make valuable contributions to increasing global and human security. Rights-based development not only adds value to efforts to meet new development concerns, but also is crucial to the success of these efforts. Properly developed and operationalised, rights-based development is the scaffolding supporting construction of more equitable, just and secure societies.

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13 *See, for example, DFID 2006, Making government work for poor people, building state capability: Strategies for achieving the international development targets. http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/tspgovernment.pdf*

5.2 - RBAs and governance

RBAs are successful in encouraging people's political agency

Agency in RBAs is built up through the development of systems that institutionalise participation, inclusion and fulfilment of obligation. There is a focus on the relations of power, on rights and responsibilities, and on the way that different stakeholders relate to each other. In this way, RBAs promote agency for all stakeholders, particularly for those who are usually marginalised in decision-making processes. RBAs seek to identify where tension may occur among stakeholders and, in contrast with non-RBAs (which seek to avoid conflict), intentionally engage with it and seek to reduce it.

When people's agency is meaningful, and part of a process of improving accountability of all stakeholders, it appears to increase stability rather than cause conflict *(all RBA projects)*. In non-RBA projects, people's agency is increased to a lesser extent and is not part of a process of increasing take-up of obligations. Here, tensions and conditions for conflict remain, albeit hidden. RBAs, by recognising the importance of political agency and working to achieve it, at the same time as engaging with possible conflict situations, can contribute to stability in a climate of worsening global insecurity.

RBAs are increasing all actors' willingness and ability to fulfil their obligations and to be more accountable to each other

RBA projects are demonstrating that their approaches encourage greater take-up of responsibilities by all stakeholders *(all RBA projects)*. Several of the RBA projects had, as a key component, the establishment of multi-stakeholder fora. These opened up spaces in which different actors – in communities, from different organisations and from state offices – could learn more about each others' expectations and formal obligations. Increased understanding for all parties also opened up possibilities for negotiation on roles and responsibilities (within legal parameters) and establishment of a more mutual system of accountability. Whereas accountability had previously only been 'upwards' (i.e., those with less power were expected to be accountable to those with power), in RBAs it became possible for the relatively powerless to question, and expect response from, powerful people and office holders *(Bangladesh: PDP, OCMP, PWC; Malawi: LIFH, PACE; Peru: PROPILAS, DCDEL)*.

RBAs encourage greater autonomy and ownership of development processes, by citizens and state

The studies showed that in RBAs there is a focus on building capacity and competency to understand, implement and oversee development processes. This focus is lacking in non-RBAs. RBAs encourage local ownership of development and, because state and citizens are all encouraged to take up rights and responsibilities, dependency on state patronage decreases *(Bangladesh: OCMP, PWC; Peru: PROPILAS)*.

Increased ownership means that there is greater flexibility in development models and that they tend to be demand-driven. This means that RBA initiatives are more likely to be fully relevant and appropriate to the particular context than non-RBAs are. It also explains why RBAs are both context-specific and capable of being brought to scale (see below): the development model can be nationally 'generic' and flexible enough to be adapted in local settings *(Bangladesh: OCMP; Malawi: aspects of PACE; Peru: PROPILAS)*.

RBAs can provide the means to realise decentralisation

RBAs and processes of decentralisation are mutually dependent. RBA projects, as reviewed in the Learning Process, work to rebalance power relations at local and middle levels. For decentralisation to work, power has to devolve away from the centre. However, without efforts to build capacity at middle and local levels (and at national level) to deal with changes in the way that power and authority operates, it is not possible for decentralised government to function. All the RBA projects are working, in some way, to ensure that a wide range of local and middle-level actors are involved in decision-making processes *(all RBA projects)*. Particularly at local and middle levels, RBAs can create the mechanisms and systems of accountability that support decentralisation processes, and help to reduce the possibilities of decentralisation reinforcing new structures of exclusion, dominated by local elites.

Conversely, non-RBA projects tend to focus more on the particular entry level and give less attention to working for change in power relationships between different stakeholders. Because of this, they are not as useful in promoting

more equitable governance which involves and reflects the needs of poor people *(Bangladesh: SABEC; Malawi: BESP; Peru: PN23)*.

RBAs increase the chances of achieving sustained positive change

Both non-RBAs and RBAs have led in the short term to positive results and improvements in life circumstances (increase in assets, decrease in vulnerability, increase in human security, see Section 4). Some of the RBA projects demonstrate real comparative success in increasing tangible assets *(Bangladesh: OCMP, IPDP; Malawi: PACE)*. The PACE project in Malawi has, for example, shown evidence of a considerable rise in school enrolment and attendance. In Peru, in the education projects implemented by Tarea and the CARE water projects, both the non-RBA phase and the RBA phase achieved increases in school enrolment or access to water or reduction in diarrhoeal disease. However, as PACE (Malawi), PROPILAS (Peru) and DCDEL (Peru) showed, a RBA focuses on underlying causes of poverty and the obligations of different actors, helping to establish and institutionalise capacities, systems and mechanisms that are vital to ensuring that gains made are sustained. In the non-RBA education project, BESP (Malawi), constituents confirmed that the rise in school enrolment owed in large part to the (unsustainable) school feeding programme. In the PACE project, no such incentives were offered, yet internal community monitoring mechanisms ensured that children had the opportunity to enrol in school and attend regularly. The PROPILAS project (Peru), by working through local government rather than directly with communities (as in PN23), built capacities at that level to expand services in other areas within their jurisdiction, leading to an increased level of local government investment in water and sanitation in districts where PROPILAS was working, compared with those where PN23 was working *(PACE, Malawi; DCDEL, PROPILAS, Peru; all RBA projects)*.

Because positive change is embedded and sustained, there is a higher degree of innovation in RBA projects. There is evidence to show that, in RBAs, skills learned, and mechanisms established are used and replicated beyond the project remit. This does not happen in non-RBAs. For example, in PACE (Malawi), several school communities took on issues of inclusion and organised themselves to provide care for orphans, who were then able to go to school.

By engaging with power inequity, RBAs can be successful in removing underlying causes of poverty

Stakeholders in all RBA projects are benefiting from the realisation that greater and sustainable equity cannot be achieved without changes in the power relations that produce and maintain social, political, economic and cultural inequity and disadvantage. In all the RBA projects, efforts were being made to understand the full context of poverty and disadvantage for different people. In doing so, RBAs were addressing the multidimensional aspects of poverty, rather than simply aiming to alleviate present symptoms of poverty.

Not all projects are at the same stage of understanding regarding how power relations within and between communities facilitate, or prevent, equity in access to resources. However, in all RBA projects there is acknowledgement that the way in which power works in society determines whether people will be able to move out of poverty or not. The RBA projects are all now working with an explicit understanding of the political nature of poverty: relations of power (at individual, community, social and global levels) create and maintain situations of poverty *(all RBA projects)*. Failure to understand this political nature of development, as with most non-RBA projects, reinforces unequal structures that perpetuate poverty; being supposedly 'non-political', then, actually ends up being regressively political.

The non-RBA projects aimed to alleviate difficulties faced by poor and disadvantaged people, but did so without engaging directly with power structures. Because of this, they failed to make a lasting impression on attitudes, structures and systems that perpetuate disadvantage and poverty. At times, because non-RBAs tend to engage with local power elites without questioning the way that power is used, they may, inadvertently, encourage inequity. In Bangladesh, River Project staff commented that, since the project had not tackled structural issues in the area, allocation of resources was now as inequitable as it had been before.

RBAs add value to efforts to reduce social exclusion and create more inclusive societies

RBAs focus on ensuring that the poorest and most marginalised (the poorest quintile of the population) can have equitable access to development processes and can participate in decision making that affects their lives. The most successful and developed of the RBA projects prioritise having a full understanding of the heterogeneity of their

constituents and of who are the poorest and most marginalised within poor communities. They then work to ensure that these people are actively encouraged to participate **(Bangladesh: OCMP, PWC, IPDP; PACE, Malawi; DCDEL, Peru)**.

Although many non-RBA projects have opened access to services for *groups* of people normally excluded from development, they have been less successful in i) ensuring that these people have equitable access to decision-making processes that affect their lives; and ii) ensuring that the *poorest and most marginalised* individuals, in any population or social group, have equitable access. Non-RBAs have encouraged participation (in problem identification, planning and implementation) but have not focused on inclusion of marginalised people, including the most marginalised within marginalised groups. The (non-RBA) EDPE education project in Peru focused on increasing the participation of a range of stakeholders in school improvement, but did not make particular efforts, as did DCDEL (RBA), to ensure that the most marginalised students (working children, children from abusive families, children living without parental care, etc.) could access school and be part of school improvement management. However, it must be stressed that *none of the RBA projects* has yet gone far enough to ensure that inclusion issues are *always* given full focus or that the development and institutionalisation of systems to ensure inclusion of the poorest and most marginalised. For example, in the RIC project in Bangladesh, it is younger old people, and usually men, who are in positions with decision-making power.

Because RBA projects seek to combine the elements of participation, inclusion and obligation rather than focusing on one of these elements (usually participation), they have better success in addressing inclusion issues. In projects where this is most developed, and where improvements in relations between citizens and government are institutionalised, testimony of client satisfaction suggests that there has been a significant reduction in social exclusion *(Bangladesh: PWC, OCMP; Malawi: PACE, LIFH; Peru: DCDEL, PROPILAS)*.

RBAs build sustaining and enabling environments and influence policy agendas so that successful models can be brought to scale

Because there is a focus in RBAs on linking voice and response, there is also a tendency for projects to concentrate on finding strategies to make this link possible. As is shown in PACE and LIFH (Malawi) and DCDEL and PROPILAS (Peru), strategies involve forming and improving relationships between and across different levels in society, stretching from communities through to central government. The ability to do this often requires civil society to work together with government in ways it previously has not. In non-RBA projects, focus is more rooted at community level, with forays towards local and mid-level government where a particular response is required. PROPILAS (Peru) was deliberately designed as a pilot project, the lessons of which would be – and were – used in the design of the new national Rural Water and Sanitation Program, PRONASAR, thus incorporating from the start such a vision of taking a model to scale. In non-RBAs, little or no attempt is made to link through levels or ensure that mechanisms to maintain dialogue and negotiation are developed and implemented.

In the RBA projects reviewed, there is still some way to go before the mechanisms linking voice and response are fully institutionalised. However, there is evidence to suggest that this is well underway in Malawi and Peru. The strategic approach taken, with access to all levels of decision making, means that the projects are well placed to influence the development of policy (see, for example, PACE, Malawi, which has been directly involved in development of education sector policy, and DCDEL, Peru). In Malawi, there were requests from central government that the PACE approach be rolled out in a large number of governorates.

5.3 - RBAs and human security

RBAs can create the environment necessary to meet the MDGs

All the RBAs developed partnerships and issue-based alliances which went beyond the types of partnership established by non-RBA projects. This new approach to partnership and alliance facilitates a more holistic approach to ensuring that people's rights and needs are met.

None of the projects (RBA or non-RBA) gave particular focus to achievement of the MDGs per se, yet all were concerned with reducing the life and livelihood disadvantages experienced by their primary stakeholders. Because RBAs focus on changing power relations, establishing systems, building capacities and forging the links and networks necessary to address poverty issues holistically, they are better positioned to contribute to the establishment of an

environment that can support ongoing work towards the achievement of the MDGs. Active work towards participation of a wide range of stakeholders, from different 'levels' (local, middle, national and, where relevant, international), means that RBAs establish environments that, while directed towards meeting project objectives, also support wider efforts and national-level policy change, towards meeting PRSs and other development goals *(Bangladesh: OCMP; Malawi: PACE; Peru: PROPILAS)*.

As the RBA projects are at different stages, and because the implementing agencies have different capacities and capabilities and are at different points in political engagement, they show a wide range of approaches to partnership and alliance building. For some, partnership is limited largely to the local level (Bangladesh: IPDP); for others, this extends through all level of society, and even internationally *(Malawi: PACE; Peru: DCDEL)*.

RBAs increase the chance that people will be able to withstand shocks, and encourage positive risk management

As discussed, RBA projects place emphasis on ensuring ownership, of project processes and products, by project constituents. In the non-RBAs, while there may be take-up of services, this is not strongly linked with an increased sense of ownership. When people have greater ownership, they appear also to be better able to embed skills and capacities gained through a project. As structural causes of human insecurity are addressed, poor people involved in RBA projects are gaining the ability to take and assess risks. They are more able to use diversified strategies to cope with shocks (e.g. in the way that families of working children are now coping in Bangladesh in PWC compared with the dependency evidenced in the River Project). They also develop and rely on community safety nets (such as the orphan care schemes in PACE, Malawi). The evidence suggests that it is less possible for people involved in non-RBAs to envisage future wellbeing possibilities and take risks in investing for these.

RBAs add value to the quality of assets attained, and the ways in which vulnerability is reduced

In RBAs, there is more emphasis on the achievement of benchmarks and of working to standards that ensure greater access to quality services. RBA projects concentrate on changing attitudes of people in power towards those who are relatively powerless. This change in understanding and behaviour brings greater mutual respect and creates an environment where improvements in services can have most benefit **(all RBA projects)**.

For example, in both DCDEL (Peru) and PACE (Malawi), the improved relationships between teachers and students, and among students themselves, led to less dependence on corporal punishment and violence as a means of control. Testimonies from stakeholders attest to the benefits of increased harmony in the classroom with regard to furthering learning *(Malawi: PACE; Peru: DCDEL)*.

Vulnerability is reduced in both non-RBA and RBA projects. However, non-RBAs tend to address social vulnerability simply by working with groups of vulnerable people *in isolation*. In contrast, RBA projects challenge deeply held cultural attitudes and behaviours that compound discrimination by actively bringing different stakeholders together in dialogue and action (see above) *(all projects, although the process is more developed in some than in others)*.

5.4 - RBAs: solving underlying problems, building security

As the conclusions above show, the RBA Learning Process has provided evidence to support the original assumption that: *implementing RBAs increases our programme impact, and we can demonstrate this increase.*

The findings suggest that working with RBAs to development adds value and demonstrates a greater range and depth of positive impacts, which are more likely to be sustained over time, than does working with non-RBAs. Working with RBAs enhances the possibility of achieving improved governance, which includes the voice and concerns of poor people and can reach out to the poorest and most marginalised. The strategies employed promote recognition and fulfilment of obligations by both citizens and states. The ways in which voice and response are beginning to be linked are strengthening the chances that services will be appropriate, adequate and accessible. This also strengthens the chances that investments made into technical improvements in services will be sustained, protected and used over time.

The RBA projects reviewed in the study are still young. Not all of them have employed strategies that explicitly aim to understand, and challenge, inequities in power relationships. Across the range of projects, there is considerable

difference in scope and scale, and in the approach taken. There are also wide differences in the current skills and competencies of staff in the different agencies. Nevertheless, in the approaches taken, all of the RBA projects are, in some way, shifting power and opening new spaces for dialogue between people who have power and those who are usually considered powerless. In addressing the underlying causes of inequity, fostering communication between different actors, and promoting action which tackles inequity, RBAs have huge potential to contribute to the current development agenda and to support efforts for human, national and global security.

In practice, the principles of participation, inclusion and fulfilment of obligation underpin all accepted good practice in development. However, as the results of the study show, it is in the way the RBAs seek to link these three principles, rather than working with them separately as is the case in non-RBAs, that the added value of RBAs may be found.

Annex 1 - Thematic Areas/Questions under the Learning Process Assessment Framework

Voice, participation, and accountability	Power and transformation, relationships and linkages	Institutional response	Tangible evidence, increased human security	Sustained change
• Trends in poor and marginal people's participation in decision-making processes	• Trends in linkages between local, middle and national levels	• Changes in the way organisations develop and strengthen networks and partnerships with each other and with poor and marginal people.	• Trends analysis of programme outcomes and impacts in relation to MDG empirical data	• Trends in power relationships between poor and most marginal people and other social groups
• Trends analysis of movement towards self-mobilisation and autonomy by poor and marginal people	• Changes in partnerships and networks including poor and vulnerable people	• Changes in accountability, transparency and equity (including redistribution), in resource allocation	• Change in capacity of poor and marginalised people to apply skills and competencies outside programme	• Changes in processes to embed inclusion, equity and obligation at local, middle and national levels
• Changes in ability to challenge people/institutions of power	• Changes in how constituents within programme treat each other and how conflict is addressed	• Changes in identifying and implementing more appropriate responses to the needs of poor and most marginalised people	• Perspectives of poor and most marginalised people on benefits, gains and losses from projects	• Assessment of amounts or different types of sustainability including likelihood of withstanding shocks
• Changes in transparency and accountability of offices and institutions between poor and marginalised people, their representatives (traditional, elected and organisational)	• Accessibility of middle and national people and processes to local voice	• Changes in processes and systems used within and between organisations	• Ability of project to maximise resource take-up in relation to targets	• Changes in perceived vision of future
	• Trends in information flows	• Continual learning and organisational systems that are disaggregated in tracking outcomes and impacts on poor and most marginal people	• Likely long-term impacts, positive and negative, on inclusion and equity within programme area and on achievement of MDGs	• Changes in influence of state and outside world
	• Changes in attitudes, behaviour and practices which, over time, point to changes in power relationships based on gender, age, diversity, etc.	• Changes in mechanisms and processes of redress		• Changes in cultural values
	• Trends in trust between duty bearers and rights holders over time (including elected and appointed officials)	• Changes in tackling issues of exclusion, poverty and marginalisation		• On the basis of your analysis, what are the trends towards or away from structural change?
		• Changes in way roles and responsibilities are defined and acted on in relation to meeting obligations		

Theme	Question areas
VOICE, PARTICIPATION & ACCOUNTABILITY	
Trends in poor and marginal people's participation in decision-making processes	Type of participation practiced at different times with different people in different circumstances? What has participation of poor and marginalised people achieved? Is it ethical? Who participates and who does not? In what fora?
Trends in movement towards self-mobilisation and autonomy	Changes in ability of different interest groups to represent own views? Replication and application of principles, skills and knowledge by project constituents?
Changes in people's ability to challenge offices and institutions of power (at all levels)	How do people question authorities and service providers? Are there recognised channels through which to do this? Has the process changed over time? Who can challenge? What is the effect and impact of challenging?
Changes in transparency and accountability of offices and institutions between poor and marginalised people, their representatives (traditional, elected and organisational)	How have systems of transparency and accountability developed over time? What are these systems? Who is accountable to whom, and for what? How has this changed over time? What do people, at different levels, feel about how transparency and accountability works?
POWER AND TRANSFORMATION, RELATIONSHIPS AND LINKAGES	
Trends in linkages between local, middle and national levels	Are there changes over time in the ways that local, middle and national level people and organisations work together? What are the types of interactions between local, middle and national levels? (meetings, visits, participation in work and presence). What is the agenda, and what gets decided?
Changes in partnerships and networks including poor and vulnerable people	Are poor and marginalised people able to participate in partnerships (of all/any kind)? How are organisations working together to enable this participation? What do poor and marginalised people feel about the process? How are achievements monitored? Is there any evidence of communities/ organisations taking initiatives to ensure continuing/ increasing inclusion?
Changes in how constituents within programmes/ projects treat each other and how conflict and tension is addressed	How are conflicts and challenges resolved, and have processes for resolution changed over time? What value is given to the way people work together and treat each other? Has this changed during the course of the project?
Accessibility of middle and national people/offices and processes to local voice	How do project constituents feel valued by officials/people in authority? Are people aware of channels for accessing officials and authority at their own and other levels? What priority is given to demands from poor and marginalised in decision making, at all levels? Any strategic changes in access?
Trends in information flows	Number and type of information exchanges planned and recorded between different organisations and people at different levels in each year of project lifetime? What is the quality of the information and what actions does it generate?
Changes in attitudes, behaviour and practices which, over time, point to changes in power relationships based on gender, age, diversity, etc.	Number of women engaged in public decision-making processes? How have these changed over time? What is impact of involvement? Are young people able to join in decision making? How? Impact of this? What are the changes in relationships in the home? Have instances/type of domestic violence changed? How? How are financial decisions made in the home? Has this changed over time?
Trends in trust between duty bearers and rights holders over time (including elected and appointed officials)	What are the perceptions of 'trust' (constituents to people in authority and vice versa)? How have these changed over time? What is the level of rights holders' satisfaction with the action of duty bearers and how has this changed over time?

OBLIGATIONS AND STANDARDS, INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

Changes in the way organisations develop and strengthen networks and partnerships with each other and with poor and marginal people

Do poor and marginalised people have active roles in partnerships and networks and how has this changed over time? To what extent do the partnerships work to address the issues of poor and marginalised people and how has this changed over time? What sort of organisational partnerships, linkages and alliances exist? Are there systems and mechanisms to regulate these? Who decides on how these are organised and implemented?

Changes in accountability, transparency and equity (including redistribution), in resource allocation

What is the percentage of resources (people, goods and money) given to specific interest groups, and how has that changed over time? How are decisions made on resource allocation, how are these decisions transmitted, and how has this changed? Are they publicised? How is resource use reported, and how has this changed over time? What mechanisms of accountability exist and how are they implemented and monitored?

Changes in identifying and implementing responses more appropriate to the needs of poor and most marginal people

How have projects been planned? How has this changed over time? Who is involved? Whose voice is included in project planning and how is this reflected in implementation?

Changes in the processes and systems used within and between organisations

What are project constituents' perspectives on project systems, processes and protocols (simple? easy to understand and follow?) Have there been changes over time in response to constituents' concerns?

Continual learning and organisational systems which are disaggregated in tracking outcomes and impacts on poor and most marginal people

Does the project framework contain indicators which are explicitly disaggregated by interest group? How is this disaggregation done? When were explicit indicators introduced? Who tracks outcomes and impacts and how? (Not just: are people involved in PM&E; but how, and to what ends?) How and when is learning carried out? What routine actions are taken in response to learning? How does local learning feed into middle and national levels?

Changes in mechanisms processes and success of redress

What are the trends in development and implementation of processes by which poor and marginalised people seek to confront rights abuses (legal and cultural) (what are the mechanisms? What are the trends in success of these processes?

Changes in tackling issues of exclusion, poverty and marginalisation

Have project constituents carried values and principles of the project into other areas of their lives and work? What evidence is there for changes in practice over time in partner and network institutions tackling exclusion, poverty and marginalisation? How is inclusion envisaged by people at all levels? Who is included, who is left out? What do people at all levels understand by inclusion?

Changes in the way roles and responsibilities are defined and acted on in relation to meeting obligations

Who defines roles and responsibilities? How are they documented? How are they monitored and evaluated? What are the changes in the approach to accountability and systems used? Have there been changes in who is involved?

TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF IMPACTS & OUTCOMES

Trends analysis of programme outcomes and impacts in relation to MDG empirical data

How appropriate are project outcome and impact targets in contributing to the MDGs? To what extent have/do projects meet their outcome and impact targets? How has this changed over time?

Change in capacity of poor and most marginalised people to apply skills and competencies outside programme

What are the changes in poor and marginalised people's abilities to access new opportunities? What are the changes in livelihood security (broad analysis of assets and vulnerabilities)?

Perspectives of poor and most marginalised people on benefits, gains and losses from the project

What do constituents consider to be the important changes (positive and negative) in their lives as a result of being part of the project? When did these changes happen?

Ability of projects to maximise resource take-up in relation to targets

How has/does the project been able to be flexible in reallocating its own resources, staff and support in response to changing circumstances?

Likely long-term impacts, positive or negative on inclusion and equity in the programme area and on the achievement of goals

What have been, and what are, the predicted longer-term impacts on poverty reduction, as evidenced through achievement of targets and goals?

SUSTAINED CHANGE

Trends in power relationships between poor and most marginal people and other social groups

What has the power of poor and marginalised people changed in relation to other more powerful groups over time?

Changes in processes to embed processes of inclusion, equity and obligation at local, middle and national levels

Have local and middle-level actions led to changes in national policy and strategy? What are they?

Assessment of amounts, or different types, of sustainability including likelihood of withstanding shocks

What are constituents' perceptions of altered capacity to adapt to changing circumstances by themselves, and other organisations? What is the perceived future of the decision-making processes and systems put in place since the project started?

Changes in perceived vision of future

How do poor and marginalised people think of their future and the future of their community? How do they perceive this has changed since their involvement in the project?

Changes in influence of state and outside world

In what ways do constituents interact with the state (participation in electoral processes; seeking representation; lodging complaints, lobbying; etc.) Have there being changes in the way the state understands the local context and what does it do differently in response to this?

Changes in cultural values and practices

Has there been change in cultural values and practices that discriminate against people or may be damaging?

On the basis of your analysis, what are the trends towards or away from structural change?

What are the indicators that changes generated by the project are likely to contribute to increased equity in the longer term?

Defending Rights-based Development

The Learning Process involved various different organisations, all of which had a somewhat different understanding of, and approach to, rights-based development (RBD), so it was necessary to come to a common understanding on what RBD is about, covering the approaches of all organisations. These principles and components of the framework are described in different ways in different organisations, and the various organisations may have different focuses, depending on their particular area of expertise. However, the main characteristics are generic.

What distinguishes RBAs from non-RBAs, in terms of the framework, is the fact that RBAs explicitly work to build links between aspects of good practice, and to increase justice, equity and dignity for all. Non-RBAs, conversely, tend to view achievement of tangible goals as sufficient evidence that progress is being made towards justice and equity for all people.

For RBAs, this is not enough. RBAs are process-oriented, equal focus being given to *how* things are done as to *what* is done. This has tended to lead the projects to give less focus to tangible impacts, although it should not have. Assessment of tangible impacts of improvements in poor people's wellbeing is essential. However, it must be remembered that the MDGs are only representative of relative achievement. It would be possible to reach the MDGs while still ignoring the 'worst' 20% of poor people in the world, that is, the poorest and most marginalised (around 500 million people). This is not acceptable in RBAs, which work to increase equity and improve justice, for all people, without discrimination.

Vision

RBD is value-based development which works for the ethical inclusion of all people, without discrimination, in building a fair, just and non-discriminatory society. To do this, it is necessary to understand the full context of people's lives – that is, their geographical, social, political, cultural and economic circumstances. With this understanding, RBD works to increase people's access to, and power in, decision making which affects their lives and their work. RBD also works to strengthen the willingness and readiness of all people (both as rights holders and as duty bearers) to take up their responsibilities and to fulfil their obligations towards each other.

### Contestation and mobilisation

Some organisations working for RBD take a *standards-based* approach – advocating, with stakeholders, for institutional response which will ensure that particular groups of disadvantaged people, such as older people living in poverty, indigenous people stigmatised by mainstream society, child domestic workers etc., can access services and have their needs met. Often, these institutions are most concerned with issues of 'voice': increasing the capacity of marginalised people to organise for themselves and claim their rights to particular services. While they deal with discrimination and stigma through mobilising communities and bringing marginalised people and those in decision-making positions closer together, and by challenging the stereotypes held by mainstream society, they do not always address directly the root causes of power imbalances. These organisations may concentrate more on the needs of the particular group identified than on disaggregation of the people who constitute that 'group' or on understanding the multiple, and different, vulnerabilities which different people within the group face (see for example, GBK in Bangladesh). Organisations working in this way may see the focus of RBd as essentially confrontational: rights need to be contested and relationships changed so that the state and other duty bearers can be held to account.

Negotiation of values and practice

Other approaches, such as those taken by PACE in Malawi and DCDEL in Peru, deal more directly with the values which underlie relations of power, and work explicitly to change the relationships between stakeholders at all levels, looking beyond 'groups' and working with a dynamic understanding of inclusion. Here, the approach is as much about

building *responsible and accountable ownership* of services, by stakeholders at all levels, as it is about building access to services, by primary stakeholders. Ownership is encouraged through working to *change relationships* in ways that ensure that *power and responsibility can be shared safely between stakeholders at all 'levels', building accountability and encouraging willingness to fulfil obligations*.

The focus and direction taken by different organisations depends greatly on the evolution of the organisation itself. For many of the international NGOs, adoption of RBAs has depended on a 'trickle down' effect, as policies decided in head offices are filtered through to operational levels. Although this filtration process has been more strongly supported – by training and follow-up – in some of the organisations, than it has among some of the donors and multilateral agencies, people at field level have not always received adequate support or training, and may not have built all the necessary skills or understanding to put RBD into practice.

Participation

Inclusion

RBD

**Fulfilment Of
Obligation**
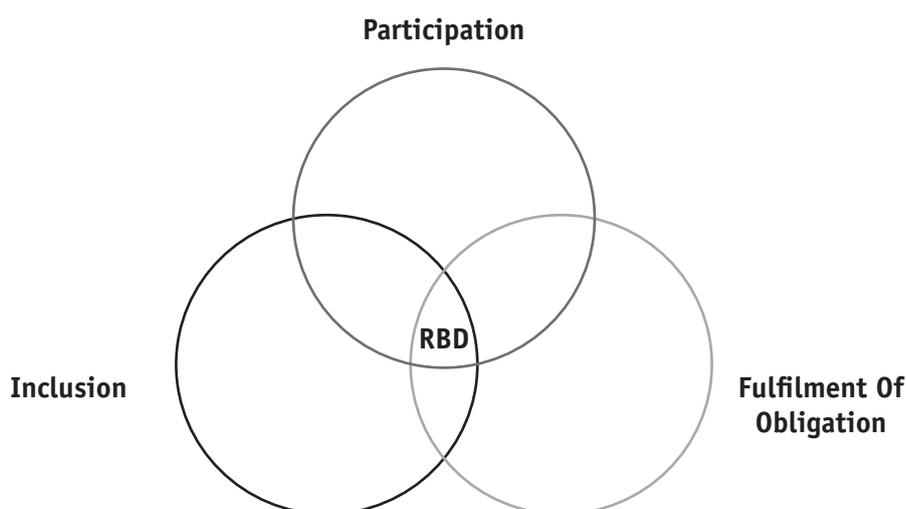
Central to all RBD is the issue of *power and the politicisation of development*. RBD, and a multidimensional approach to poverty, work on the basis that poverty is equivalent to political powerlessness. That is, people living in poverty lack power, not only in terms of an inability to obtain and maintain physical assets, but also in terms of being unable to accrue social capital, to gain information and to be able to participate fully in society as active citizens.

Limitations of the Learning Process[14]

The Learning Process provided sufficient evidence to allow for conclusions to be drawn. Nevertheless, huge barriers have had to be overcome. At the same time, opportunities have been lost.

Difficulties of comparison

The Learning Process has presented a number of real difficulties in terms of making meaningful comparisons between the different projects in the different countries. Because of the range of RBAs demonstrated, and because projects are at very different stages of implementation, it has not always been possible to compare 'like with like', or even, at times, 'like with highly similar'. The framework has had to identify issues and themes common to all projects, so as to enable a meaningful comparison to take place. It is also important to note that, because of the need to compare impacts and results between RBA and non-RBA projects, the Learning Process did not focus, necessarily, on the best or most successful examples of each, rather those which could be identified as comparable within the time available for selection.

Social and political environment

In the three different countries, the different social and political environments have had profound impacts on the ways in which the implementing organisations have been able to develop and act as CSOs. This, too, has affected the stages they have reached in design and implementation of RBAs and non-RBAs. Because of this, what might be considered a 'good' RBA in Bangladesh might, in Peru, be seen to be lacking in a number of RBA characteristics.

In terms of development approaches, and either despite or because of previous political repression, the implementing organisations in Peru are far more politically engaged than in the other countries, and both the thinking and the practice of RBAs are well developed. In Bangladesh, in contrast, organisations operating explicitly for rights are at risk in a country environment of growing insecurity – where bombs have been exploded in NGO offices and women development workers have been attacked. The rights approach is much newer in Bangladesh, and the projects reviewed reflect this. In Malawi, although the implementing agencies have met little resistance to RBAs from officials, there is an underlying belief that people in Malawi are 'aid dependent' and therefore 'not ready' for RBAs. This has not been found to be the case in reality but it has shaped the way the RBAs have been introduced.

In general, the different socio-political circumstances mean that some of the RBA projects are more rights-based than others. For example, in the comparison between Tarea-implemented education projects in Peru, the non-RBA project (EDPE), which focuses strongly on participation and democratisation of the education process, might well have been thought of as rights-based in Bangladesh.

For the purposes of the Learning Process, the definitions made by organisations as to whether their projects are rights-based or non-rights-based have been accepted – so long as, in rights-based projects, a reasonable number of RBA characteristics can be demonstrated.

Inadequacies in baselines

At the beginning of the study, consultants expressed doubts about the ability to identify convincing statistical differences in impact between RBA projects and non-RBA projects. As was feared, all the organisations involved have inadequacies in their baseline data. They did not have enough of the right kind of baseline statistics to allow us to be fully confident regarding what we were measuring statistical change against. For example, in the comparative example on education in Peru, it was unclear whether the figures suggesting that there was little difference between the RBA and non-RBA in terms of school enrolment were telling a full story about levels of access to quality education. As in this example, proxy data (from local government statistics etc.) have been used to supplement baseline data held by the projects, but the quality of these data is often suspect.

14 This annex is a more detailed account of Section 2.6 of the main body of the report.

Nevertheless, the qualitative data available are certainly adequate to reach findings and draw conclusions. There is, as would be expected in working with NGOs, a bias towards qualitative data rather than quantitative data. NGOs are not best placed to collect and analyse statistical data and, where statistical data is amassed, this can tend to be haphazard, focused on recording activities rather than on setting up an impact monitoring system. However, project documentation and the current Learning Process fieldwork studies have provided a basis on which to make the comparative analysis.

Scope, scale and capacity of projects

Across the three countries, the projects were very different in their scope and scale. Some, like those undertaken by Gram Bikash Kendra (GBK) in Bangladesh, were relatively small scale, operating in a restricted geographical area with a relatively small population and small budget. Others, such as the CARE Partnership in Capacity Building in Education (PACE) in Malawi, have a much wider scope. PACE operates directly in six governorates in the country and at the central level, and is part of the DFID-funded ESSP (£70 million). This means that the scale and quality of impact is very different between projects. However, for each comparison study, the scope and scale of the two projects, or project phases, are similar.

In addition to the issue of scale, the implementing agencies in the different countries have widely different capacities to implement their work. This is true for both RBAs and non-RBAs. Partly, these differences are to do with staff skills and experience; partly, they are to do with the particular political and development environments in which the projects are situated.

Time and preparation

At the beginning of the study, the coordinating consultants pointed out that it would not be possible to complete the LP in the original three-month timescale envisaged by the IAG. Nevertheless, it was recognised that a considerable amount of funds available for the Learning Process from DFID would need to be disbursed in the first quarter of 2005 (before the end of the financial year), or they would be lost. The unrealistic timescale meant that preparations for the Learning Process study were not complete before the assessment began.

Because of time constraints, country consultants from Bangladesh were not able to join the initial start-up workshop, capacity building and piloting of the field method, which was held in Malawi. Peru consultants joined this training but, again because of time and days allocated, received no in-country support. The coordinating consultant went to Bangladesh to hold preparation workshops and pilot fieldwork with the team there.

The coordinating consultants had also pointed out, before the beginning of the study, that time was necessary for mentoring of field teams, in-country, during the Learning Process. Unfortunately, funds for mentoring processes could not be raised. This has, in part, led to the different ways in which work has been carried out in the three countries; to differences in reporting styles (though a format had been set); to the fact that only Bangladesh attempted an overall country comparison between RBAs and non-RBAs; and to the fact that data only from non-RBA projects are available from Malawi. This has also contributed to the fact that, despite inputs during feedback workshops in both Malawi and Bangladesh, there are considerable differences among the three countries in the way in which analysis has been made. This has, of course, also depended on the experience of the country consultants and on different traditions of analysis in the three countries.

In studies such as this, there is always a complaint that not enough time has been made available to carry out the assessment and to support the process. Nevertheless, since this has been an expensive study, it is definitely a shame that a somewhat higher investment could not have been made to ensure adequate support to country teams during implementation and analysis. Where the study has been very successful, however, is in the opportunities given for feedback workshops – in Bangladesh, Malawi, Peru and London (where representatives from all the countries participated), and the (separately funded) dissemination workshop in Peru.

Understanding impact

An early task in the Learning Process was to define exactly what would count as 'impact'. Nevertheless, there remained a degree of confusion among researchers over whether tangible impacts would be identifiable in rights-based

projects. This was because, in line with much of the contemporaneous thinking among NGOs, many of the country coordinators felt that the rights-based projects would not demonstrate impact in terms of the MDGs. The focus of the rights-based projects was not thought to be directly on tangible impacts but to be on improved processes which 'empower' people and encourage them to greater participation in the development process. Project documents for the rights-based projects talked about changing processes to increase people's participation and access to decision making, but set few goals in terms of reaching concrete targets (in health, education etc.)

All rights-based projects, and some non-rights-based ones, work for people's empowerment and increased participation and inclusion in development processes. Empowerment is rarely fully defined, but is taken to mean that people will be in a better position to effect improvements in their life conditions. Empowerment, however, must have the ultimate goal of effecting improvements in people's wellbeing, and these improvements must, at least in part, be measurable through concrete targets. The framework developed for the Learning Process, shows how changes in process (in terms of voice, participation and accountability; relationships and linkages; and institutional response) are geared towards achievement of tangible changes in people's wellbeing – both in terms of goals mentioned in PRSs and the MDGs, and beyond these, in terms of increased justice and equity and fulfilment of the Millennium Declaration.

Despite this, the Learning Process would have benefited from greater concentration, in country studies, on the connection between process and product (tangible impact). In both rights-based and non-rights-based projects, country teams were more comfortable assessing the process gains made than they were assessing the tangible impacts. This is in large part because the implementing NGOs did not have reliable impact monitoring systems, or full baseline data on which to draw. The baseline and monitoring data that were available tended to be activity based and gave little reliable information, with facts and figures measuring change. This is why, where no internal data are available, proxy data have been used to measure change.

Lack of data has also meant that, at times, country researchers have missed opportunities to identify tangible impacts of both rights-based and non-rights-based projects. This is particularly so in relation to rights-based projects, as researchers were predisposed to think that rights-based projects were more likely to demonstrate process impacts than to show product impacts.

Missing data

The most serious constraint has been the loss of primary data from Malawi. Although fieldwork was carried out in all four projects involved in the study, the data from the two RBA projects, Local Initiatives for Health (LIFH) and PACE, appear to have been mislaid and were never written up into a report by the responsible country consultant. All that remains of the primary findings from the PACE project are those from the pilot carried out in Kasolo Primary School community, Mangochi. Reports on the non-RBA projects were prepared by the other country consultant, and a comparison document on education was produced. However, there is no primary data analysis of the RBA education or health projects, and no overall analysis was made for Malawi.

The coordinating consultants (CR2) strongly felt that the Learning Process was not viable if it only involved two countries rather than three. For this reason, every effort has been made to compensate for the lack of primary data from PACE and LIFH by making use of data from other sources. Fortunately, shortly before the Learning Process took place, an extensive lesson learning was carried out for the PACE project, using a similar methodology. This provided useful data. The drawback of this is that the lesson learning was facilitated by the CR2 consultant. Nevertheless, DFID carried out an evaluation of PACE and other DFID-funded rights-based projects, at the same time as the Learning Process. The report on this, and the response from CARE Malawi, has provided other valuable inputs. Similarly, at the time of the Learning Process, LIFH completed its first phase and a second phase was to be developed. An internal evaluation was carried out, using the Learning Process framework, and the document resulting from this has been invaluable in allowing insight into the workings of the LIFH project. Information from the feedback workshop held in Malawi, and the preparations for it, also provided inputs from the whole research team. Finally, the CARE Malawi evaluation officer, and several other staff members on the Learning Process team, drew together a country document which collates the information available.

This situation is hardly ideal. However, the CR2 consultant, having assessed the available data, feels confident in the analyses drawn and has felt able to incorporate analysis of the Malawi studies into this Synthesis Report.

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