APRN

African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network
Réseau parlementaire africain pour la réduction de la pauvreté

NEWSLETTER

IMPROVING PARLIAMENTARY BUDGETARY OVERSIGHT SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE POVERTY REDUCTION

The fact that budgets are central to development cannot be overemphasized. And the Parliamentary Centre (PC)'s interventions with Parliaments over the last few decades confirm this fact. At the PC, we strongly believe that who and how budget decisions are made, determines, to a large extent, development outcomes, particularly their impact on the poor and vulnerable in society.

At the PC, we continue to innovate and design programs to help Members of Parliament (MPs) in their oversight work, particularly in the budget process and pro-poor policy. In December 2006, with support from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) the PC opened a Learning Centre within its

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Regional Office for Africa – the Africa Poverty Reduction Office – Accra, Ghana. The Learning Centre will primarily serve as the venue for training and equipping MPs with skills in analyzing national budgets. This way, they can make a meaningful contribution to the annual debates on their national budgets as well as positively influence development outcomes in their respective countries in the interest of the poor and vulnerable in society.

The first in a series of such trainings took place in December 2006 and brought together MPs from Budget and Finance Committees from the Parliaments of Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda. Over the next five years, MPs from Budget and Finance Committees from 15 African Parliaments, will undergo training in Budget Oversight at the Learning Centre, thanks to the generous support of the Austrian Government.

We believe that such an initiative, as well as others that the PC is involved in, will in a very small way, contribute towards the cause of good governance and poverty reduction on the African continent.

Inside this issue

The African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network brings together parliamentary committees involved in the design, implementation and oversight of poverty reduction policies. The Network promotes greater cross-Africa dialogue among committees and creates opportunities for improving effective implementation of Poverty Reduction Programs, particularly through local monitoring with community-based civil society groups.

Parliamentary Centre
le Centre parlementaire

Hon. Anne Makinda, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania, is the newly elected Chair of the APRN Executive Committee.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

It is increasingly becoming evident that the potential role that parliaments could play in addressing one of Africa's greatest challenges – poverty – cannot be over emphasized. This is because democratic governance makes it obligatory that as legitimate representatives of the people, parliaments should be involved in enacting laws and policies that contribute positively to the development of a people. Domestic oversight of governmental actions is a crucial determinant to the success in the fight against poverty. For instance one of the challenges facing parliaments is how they can use their oversight responsibilities, influence on budget matters, and legislative leverage and to insist on delivery of commitments made to reduce poverty within the context of the poverty reduction strategies (PRS) of African countries.

The Canadian Parliamentary Centre, through the African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network (APRN), has been actively supporting Parliaments and Parliamentarians as well as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) by undertaking programs to enhance their capacity for effective roles of oversight of public policy and development, particularly in areas of public accountability, transparency, budget oversight and national participation in the governance process. This is a worthy undertaking and a very significant contribution to the promotion/ deepening of democratic governance in Africa, as well as in the fight against poverty. Indeed, it is a course which must be supported and given the necessary assistance by all who wish to see the back of poverty, particularly, in Africa.

I am privileged to be elected to chair the executive committee of the Africa Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network (APRN) at this time in the history of the continent when the awareness and drive for democratic governance is perceived to be attracting renewed interest and commitment. I take this opportunity to assure APRN members as well as the Canadian Parliamentary Centre that my colleagues and I on the executive committee will play a leading role in the development of the network and would work together to bring a great number of our colleague parliamentarians to the network. We will particularly provide guidance and advice on program development and activities as well as to engage in setting priorities for future direction of the network.

Once again thank you for the confidence reposed in us. We look forward to a fruitful and productive working relationship.

Hon. Anne Semamba Makinda

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Annual General Meeting of the APRN successfully took place on December 16th 2006 in Accra, Ghana. Seventeen Members of Parliament and two committee clerks from the APRN network countries Benin, Malawi, Niger, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe attended the meeting. The agenda for the meeting included:

- Review of past APRN activities
- Elaboration and ratification of an action plan for 2007
- Elections of the Executive Committee

After a review of past activities and ratification of an action plan for 2007, elections were held to select the members of the Executive Committee. This meant that the APRN now moved away from a coordinating council and steering committees, which have had ad hoc mandates, by instituting an Executive Committee tasked to play a leading role in the development of the APRN. Among the responsibilities of the Executive Committee are to: review past activities of the network; plan and discuss the direction of APRN; and review work plans, budgets and areas and issues of focus for the coming year.

The executive committee was elected based on the election structure developed by the steering committee in the early part of 2006. The following conditions had to be considered:

- Regional balance in representation;
- Gender balance; and
- Members should have demonstrated commitment to the work of APRN as well as to possess institutional memory and experiences in the Parliamentary Centre's activities.

Based on this agreed structure, six members were elected as the Executive Committee for a two year period (see below). Hon. Anne Makinda (Tanzania) and Hon. Soulé Adam (Benin) were then elected by their colleagues as the Chair and Vice Chair respectively. The regional and gender balance once again governed the election of the two leaders of the executive committee.

We are happy to present the new APRN Executive Committee:

REGIONS	ELECTED MEMBERS
Eastern Africa	Hon. A. Makinda (Tanzania) Hon. W. Okecho (Uganda)
Southern Africa	Hon. P. Mushonga (Zimbabwe) Hon. Dr. K. Thindwa (Malawi)
Western Africa	Hon. S. Adam (Benin) Hon. I. Adamou (Niger)

FIRST TRAINING SESSION ON BUDGETARY OVERSIGHT
By Philip Cobbina, Budget and Governance Advisor, PC Ghana

The Africa Poverty Reduction Office (APRO), the regional office of the Parliamentary Centre located in Accra, Ghana, held its first training session on budgetary oversight on December 11-15, 2006 in its newly established Learning Centre, both financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). The theme of the workshop was *"Financial Oversight Function of Parliamentarians: Tools and Mechanisms for Optimum Government Budget Analysis",* and the program attracted eleven members of parliament and two committee clerks from three network countries - Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania.

The objectives of the training workshop were to:
- Strengthen capacity of parliamentarians to perform their financial oversight functions; and
- Equip parliamentarians with tools with which to analyze government budgets particularly identifying pro-poor and gender equity programs.

The workshop was planned and delivered to make it as interactive as possible, by combining presentations, discussions and group work as well as a field visit.

The training program specifically covered:

- *Understanding National Budgets*
- *Role of Parliamentarians in the Budget Process;*
- *National Budgets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);*
- *Analyzing Government Budget Statements: How Pro-Poor should a Budget be?; and*
- *Analyzing Gender Equity in Budget Statements: Key Issues*

Participants at the first ADA funded workshop on budgetary oversight busy during one of the group discussions.

The group work and discussion sessions were tailored to the presentations and practical examples of issues were drawn from three national budget statements of Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. The group discussion questions included:

- *Why are budgets described as economic, legal and political tools?*
- *Key issues in understanding the budget process;*
- *What roles do Parliamentarians play during – legislative scrutiny, legislative oversight, and legislative accountability;*
- *Track MDG related expenditures in national budgets;*
- *Identify MDG goals and targets in budget statements;*
- *Identify and track expenditure on Gender, and Pro-poor initiatives in the three national budget statements: Ghana,*

Workshop participants also made two field-visits. The first visit to the Parliament of Ghana offered an opportunity for the participants to gain a first hand experience of the Ghana parliament in session and to be able to draw comparisons with their own. The visiting MPs' presence in the Chamber of the Parliament of Ghana was recognized as the Speaker of the Ghana Parliament acknowledged their presence by introducing his guests to their Ghanaian colleagues.

The other visit aimed at giving practical meaning to the theoretical issues of tracking expenditure in national budgets as well as to gain a better appreciation and understanding of how accountability and oversight issues in the budget process could be addressed. The visit took participants to a portion of a national highway under construction to link the two major cities in Ghana, Accra and Kumasi. They were briefed on the estimated cost of the road project, estimated time for completion, status of the work at the time of the visit and the process that led to the awarding of the contract. Additionally, the intended impact of the project on beneficiaries when completed was also addressed. The participants had opportunity to interact directly with the service providers and to ask questions in order for them to get a greater understanding of the various processes and procedures, especially to see which role the Ghanaian Parliament had played in the process.

Participants stated that they had benefited immensely from this training program and that their understanding and tracking of topical and relevant issues of national importance such as pro-poor programs, the Millennium Development Goals and gender equity issues in national budgets has been greatly deepened. More training sessions on budgetary oversight, funded by ADA, will continue to be offered to MPs from other African countries, both in French and English, during 2007.

APRN

On October 27 and 28, MPs, parliamentary staff, and CSO representatives came together in Accra, Ghana to assess the pilot projects they undertook in their respective countries using community monitoring tools taught by IPA. The pilot projects were an opportunity for MPs to evaluate poverty reduction programs implemented by their governments. Themes ranged from HIV-AIDS to girl-child education and food security. Participants felt that community monitoring tools were an effective way of getting feedback from their constituencies to bring before Parliament and effect change.

Paul Ouedraogo of IPA Bénin leads a focus group discussion at the Self–Assessment Workshop.

ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY MONITORING PILOT PROJECTS: WHAT LESSONS HAVE BEEN LEARNT?
By Petra Andersson, Program Officer Africa, PC

Since 2003, the Parliamentary Centre has administered an extensive training program for MPs, parliamentary staff, and civil society representatives on community monitoring tools, which focussed on the tools the Community Score Card (CSC) and the Citizen Report Card (CRC), as well as questions of social and public accountability, MDGs, PRSPs, monitoring and evaluations, objectives of development plans and participatory community monitoring techniques. This program has received funding through the Canada Fund for Africa administered by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and has been carried out in partnership with the Institute for Policy Alternatives (IPA) in Benin and Ghana.

Following the training program, participants from Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe have conducted pilot projects in their respective countries focusing for example on education, literacy, HIV-AIDS, and micro-credit programs, to put the community monitoring tools and knowledge they have acquired to practice. The pilot project have in many cases offered a unique opportunity for members of parliament, parliamentary staff, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to discover how effective a government-funded project has been for a given community, and the use of citizen report cards and community score cards have allowed research teams to uncover how communities view aid effectiveness.

On October 27 and 28, 2006, MPs, parliamentary staff, and CSOs who had participated in community monitoring training as well as completed a pilot project in their respective countries gathered together in Accra, Ghana for a Self-Assessment Workshop to evaluate that training and the effectiveness of the pilot projects, to share country specific experiences as well as mapping out possible ways forward for continued community monitoring.

The Pilot Projects offered MPs:

- a rare opportunity to interact directly with the community
- a better understanding of the poverty challenges on the ground
- a chance to work in partnership with civil society
- tools to hold their respective governments accountable for aid

Parliaments have an important role to play in the monitoring and evaluations of government poverty reduction programs. The general consensus at the workshop was that the training on community monitoring tools and the pilot projects had added great value and practical knowledge to perform this task. Several MPs said that the use of the scorecard allowed them a rare opportunity to interact directly with the community which also gave them a better understanding of the poverty challenges on the ground. In many cases it was also the first time ordinary people were being asked for their view on government program and services. By recording the voice of the community and later returning to their parliament to disseminate these perspectives, MPs were now able to hold their governments accountable for aid in a joint effort with community members and CSOs.

In many of the participating countries, the relationship between parliament and CSOs had previously been more or less non-existent. One of the benefits of the pilot projects was that the barriers that existed between parliaments and CSOs were broken down and a trust between the two developed instead, which has opened the door for future cooperation. The pilot projects also had a positive impact on the relationship between parliamentarians themselves through greater dialogue and cooperation. However, it was stressed that it is important to clarify the roles and responsibilities between parliaments and CSOs and that these relationships should be formalized to be more effective.

The lack of resources made available to parliamentary committees to undertake independent reviews or analysis in addition to inadequate access to information and data on poverty related issues is a challenge for many parliaments. By bringing MPs and parliamentary staff, who constitute the institutional memory of parliaments and play a key role in assisting parliamentarians in their work, together with civil society groups working with the most vulnerable and African policy institutes, the pilot projects were able to address some of the challenges that the lack of strong research offices in African parliaments pose. However, the

linkages and the information-sharing need to continue and to be strengthened even further.

During the pilot projects, the visits to the local communities also offered a chance to inform about government programs and policies to reduce poverty. This made the local people more willing to participate in the accountability process and also fostered a trust between the pilot project representatives and the people. However, it was also observed that expectations and hopes were raised in the community when a questionnaire is administered or when parliamentarians come to visit. When the communities realized that the representatives did not come to deliver services but to assess how services were currently being delivered, it created disappointment. This could be addressed by making the government more accountable for the implementation of the programs.

Following the community monitoring training and pilot project, several parliaments of the participating countries, for example Senegal, Mali, Uganda and Tanzania, have committed to implementing monitoring and evaluation tools at all levels of parliament to improve its efficiency and transparency as well as to continue working in close relationship with civil society organisations**.** The findings and evaluations from the pilot projects have already been discussed and disseminated in most of the respective parliaments and recommendations have been made to the governments on changes to their poverty reduction programmes. For example in Ghana, a specific recommendation have been made to promote free education programmes especially for girls, in Zimbabwe the pilot

project revealed that ARVs were not free, contrary to the government policy, and in the case of Mali, the pilot projects identified difficulties for NGOs to access funds for their activities on the ground. The National Assembly of Mali has as a result of these findings implemented changes regarding its laws for NGOs, thus allowing them to benefit from state funds and to be included in the national budget, in particularly NGOs working in the area of HIV-AIDS. For a more information on each of the participating countries, pilot projects, see our next newsletter.

The participants of the Self-Assessment Workshop stressed the continued need for capacity building for more MPs, parliamentary staff and CSO representatives in community monitoring and other relevant tools. It was recommended that special focus should be put on training parliamentary staff and training-of-trainers in order to ensure continuity and a wider spread of knowledge. They also emphasized that poverty reduction programmes need to be undertaken on a regular basis and on a wider scale to ensure that the country specific PRSP are implemented effectively and are in line with the needs of the beneficiaries. Although the community monitoring training and the pilot projects have provided the participating countries with some tools to monitor government poverty reduction programmes, in addition to providing parliamentarians with a way to fulfill their responsibilities in terms of oversight and accountability a little bit better, there is still a long way to go before parliaments are able to play a full role in the PRSP process.

CHALLENGES

- Expectations and hopes raised by beneficiaries during field visits: expect direct service delivery
- Lack of resources for parliamentary committees to undertake independent reviews
- Lack of strong research offices

OUTCOMES

- Several Parliaments committed to implement monitoring and evaluation tool at all levels of Parliament
- Relationships between Parliament and CSOs to be formalized in several countries.

THE LEARNING CENTRE

In December, 2006 the Parliamentary Centre opened a new Learning Centre at the African Poverty Reduction Office (APRO), located in Accra Ghana. Funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), this Learning Centre will equip parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, academics and researchers with technical skills on budgetary monitoring and on developing and delivering training modules and materials for poverty reduction as well as providing the opportunity for research and exchange of ideas and best practices on parliamentary democracy, particularly on issues relating to budgets.

With the addition of a documentation centre, the Learning Centre is useful to academics and researchers conducting research on poverty reduction and governance issues. The Learning Centre is equipped with a growing library of teaching and learning materials, several computers with internet access, and can accommodate approximately 15 people at the time.

Feel free to contact APRO and the Learning Centre directly, or drop by when you are in Accra!

SENEGAL ADOPTS NEW PRSP DOCUMENT

By Françoise Ndoume, Program Officer, PC Senegal

In October 2006, the government of Senegal adopted an updated version of its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), previously covering the period 2003-2005. The new strategy document, PRSP II, is for the period 2006-2010, and is the result of a participatory process which involved several actors from civil society, the local community and the private sector. The document has also been approved by the National Assembly of Senegal. It sets up clear annual, medium- and long term objectives for poverty reduction, defines indicators to follow progress as well as the means to be mobilized in order to reach the results envisioned. It thus constitutes a reference framework for the involvement of the government and its partners in development, but also for other actors, such as the civil society, local communities and the private sector, who will be involved in the implementation and follow-up of the PRSP II.
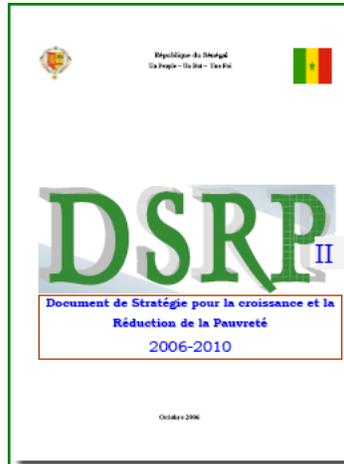
The PRSP II also takes in consideration internal and external economic, social and cultural factors to a greater extent, in addition to the commitments made as part of various partnerships, notably those of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the strategic plans of the African Union (AU), NEPAD (The New Partnership for Africa's Development), ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union.

The following new developments within its four major priority sectors characterize the PRSP II:

1. **Wealth creation for a pro-poor growth**
   The focus areas previously identified in the PRSP I are maintained, but the Strategy to Speeded up Growth is added and occupies a central place. Moreover, new priorities relating to infrastructure and energy, such as multi-structural policies to boost growth, now occupy a more visible place. This strategy is dependent on a strong economic growth, sufficient to have a substantial quantitative impact on the national and regional prevalence of poverty. It also rests on a scenario which increases the incomes of the poor, i.e. a growth which takes into account the sectors and the areas where the poor live and their means of income. Pro-poor growth will therefore have to focus on the rural areas, increased productivity and revenues from agriculture in addition to being labour intensive.

2. **Accelerating the promotion of access to basic services**
   Although the focus areas of the PRSP I are maintained, more emphasis is put on the need to speed up results in order to achieve the objectives of the MDGs in social areas, for example developing human capital and capacity building, improving access to and quality of education, improving health and nutrition for mothers and children in particular, improving access to water and sanitation as well as the management of natural resources and the environment.

3. **Social protection, prevention and management of risks and disasters**
   A more overall perspective is adopted in the area of improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups, where specific strategies have been developed for women, children, the youth, the elderly, the handicapped and displaced and repatriated persons. It takes into account the new priorities of the state, such as reforming the social security system, expanding social protection as well as the management of risks and disasters, such as those that the population has faced in recent years (the Joola shipwreck, flooding, grasshopper invasions, bad weather etc).

4. **Good governance and decentralized and participative development**
   This focus area takes into account the developments taken place since 2002 when the National Program of Good Governance (PNBG) was established, as well as the action plans on the Country Financial Accountability Assessment and the Country Program Assessment Review. It aims at reinforcing the state of law in a democratic society as well as the effectiveness and transparency in economic and social management by:

   - **Improving the quality of the public service and economic governance** by rationalizing the administrative structures; reducing the deficit of the internal and external communication of the administration; improving the management of public finances as well as the procedures of the signing and implementation of public works contracts; and by strengthening the citizens capacities to control public action.

   - **Increasing juridical governance** by improving the judicial system; safeguarding the respect for the law and the rights of the citizens; continuing the struggle against corruption; and by reinforcing the analytical capacity of the legislative power. To this effect, Senegal places great importance on the fight against corruption, as it recognizes that corruption increases poverty, leads to additional costs and hampers economic and social development.

The APRN website now launched

The African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network, APRN, has now launched the English version of its website. The French version is soon to follow. Here you can find more information about the APRN, our upcoming activities, information and reports from past events and much more. We would really appreciate you input, so do not hesitate to contact us.

Check out the new APRN website at:

www.aprnetwork.org

- **Reinforcing local development and decentralization** by introducing a more global framework for local development; improving the financial and administrative management of local authorities; reinforcing the capacities of local authorities by improving the programming of human resources and increasing their resources; and by developing budgetary and financial reforms for the local authorities.

- **Developing secondary poles** by reinforcing the development of secondary cities and promoting more competitive territories; reinforcing existing networks between cities at national level and improving the exchange between cities, and by creating conditions to better promote rural activities etc.

- **Promoting social dialogue** as mechanism for conflict prevention, by using negotiation and permanent cooperation as an indicator of good governance, as it appears in the National Charter of Social Dialogue (CNDS). It aims at deepening social dialogue at all levels by reinforcing the institutional framework in which it takes place; reinforcing the mechanisms of social dialogue; and by strengthening the capacities of civil society in order to allow it to play a more active role in the formulation of strategies of development etc.

To be able to ensure the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions, the following guiding principles are to be followed in the implementation of the PRSP II:

Proximity: decisions in relation to the implementation of the PRSP must be taken as close to the beneficiaries as possible in order to assure better targeted interventions;

Know-how: the State acknowledges that the implementation of the PRSP II is not only the prerogative of administrative authorities, but also a matter for local authorities, representatives of civil society and the private sector;

Transparency: to guarantee visibility and control in order to establish equilibrium between responsibility and self-government;

Participation: the beneficiaries of various poverty plans and programs must be involved in any decision concerning them;

Equity: in order to respect the equality of rights and responsibilities in the involvement of different parties, gender, social inequalities and regional differences etc. are to be taken into account;

Swiftness: in order to be able to adopt procedures which ensures speediness and transparency in relation to the process of disbursing and granting public market contracts;

Subsidiarity: implementation will be organized by those actors responsible at various administrative levels, ranging from national to local level, according to comparative advantages in terms of effectiveness, targeting, economy of scale, etc.; and

Complementarity and synergy: the strategy must aim to combine the available means and resources efficiently in order to optimize the results.

Finally, follow-up and evaluation is an important part of the PRSP II. An institutional framework for the implementation and follow-up of the PRSP will be developed, which involves the state, local communities, civil society the private sector and donors. The National Assembly will also play an important role in the monitoring of all government programs and projects relating to the PRSP. Progress will be measured against the specific objectives set up and the expected results. According to the PRSP II, the aim is to follow-up implementation of the strategy from a global-, regional- and sectoral perspective; to evaluate the results and impacts according to the intermediate indicators set up; and to follow-up and evaluate the financial implementation. It also aims to establish a system for sharing information between the involved actors and to develop a communication strategy, as this area was identified as insufficient by several actors during the implementation of the PRSP I.

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Links and Resources

Poverty Reduction:

International Monetary Fund: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)
http://www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/prsp.asp#o

The World Bank: PovertyNet
http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/
EXTPOVERTY/0,,menuPK:336998~page
PK:149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:336992,00.html

UNDP: Poverty Reduction
http://www.undp.org/poverty/

NDI: Access Democracy
http://www.accessdemocracy.org/usr_search.asp?SearchType=bas&DocURL=
doc&RC=0&TS=U1&Date=0&keywords=

African Forum on Debt and Development (AFRODAD)
http://www.afrodad.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1

Human Development Report 2006
http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/

Resources:

ASGP – Constitutional and Parliamentary Information
http://www.asgp.info/en/publications/constitutional

AWEPA - Resources
http://www.awepa.org/index.php?option=com_resources&Itemid=72

ELDIS - guide to manuals and toolkits
http://www.eldis.org/manuals/index.htm

IDRC - Publications
http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-8574-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

IDASA - Publications
http://www.idasa.org.za/

IDEA Publications
http://www.idea.int/publications/index.cfm

IPU Publications (Reports & Surveys, Periodicals, Handbooks etc.)
http://www.ipu.org/english/pblctns.htm

World Bank Publications and Resources
http://www.worldbank.org/reference/