

#### 4. Economic Justice in Africa

John Mihevc (KAIROS) pointed out that KAIROS assists the Churches in elaborating public policy positions regarding the impact of government and corporate actors on vulnerable and marginalised groups. For instance, KAIROS monitors and reports on the impact of Canadian foreign interests on the people in the “global south.” KAIROS also belongs to the Halifax Initiative and was involved in the International Jubilee campaign (calling for 100% debt cancellation for the poorest countries and an end to Structural Adjustment Programs). KAIROS promotes the full cancellation of the debt of the HIPC countries.

Mihevic outlined the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI) undertaken, among others, by KAIROS and the Halifax Initiative. He said that SAPRI began as a challenge to Jim Wolfensohn when he became President of the World Bank six years ago and popular protests against Structural Adjustment policies took place throughout the “South.” The people most affected by these policies were seen as “having neither the wisdom nor the right to contribute to the policy debates in their own countries.” The groups that met with Wolfensohn and his staff sought to engage the Bank with civil society organisations in the South to help bring them and their constituencies into the economic decision-making process. Wolfensohn accepted the challenge and requested that a mechanism be designed and established for carrying such an initiative. A broad group of NGOs from around the world organised themselves into a global network – Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative Network (SAPRIN), and proposed a series of in-depth, broad-based consultations around the world.<sup>2</sup> While the World Bank accepted this proposal and acknowledged the importance of local knowledge, experience and analysis in the formulation of economic policies, it was not prepared to learn from the output of the consultations. Little of the civil society input made its way back to Washington, none made its way into the Bank’s own adjustment assessment.

The consultations addressed the experience of civil society with SAP, including:

- the impact of trade liberalisation policies on local industries, small enterprises, rural producers, the agricultural sector, domestic production, employment and workers
- privatisation of public utilities, services, and other state-owned entities
- agricultural sector reform
- the impact of labour market reforms on workers
- liberalisation of the financial sector and the problems of credit access for local producers
- public expenditure reform.

The outcome of the consultations and research shows that the efficiencies and competitiveness that Structural Adjustment policies meant to generate failed to materialise. Overall, Structural

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<sup>2</sup> These countries include: Ecuador, El Salvador, Bangladesh, Ghana, Mali, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Hungary.