



Development Centre Studies

Ownership and Partnership

WHAT ROLE FOR CIVIL
SOCIETY IN POVERTY
REDUCTION STRATEGIES?



Edited by Ian Smillie
and Henri-Bernard Solignac Lecomte

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FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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Foreword

This book is a collection of the proceedings of the Development Partnership Forum jointly organised by the Development Assistance Committee and the Development Centre of the OECD in December 2000. It is produced in the context of the Development Centre's programme of co-operation with civil society in member and partner countries of the OECD.

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Abbreviations

ACP	Africa, Caribbean, Pacific
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CGM	Consultative Group Meeting
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DC	Decentralised Co-operation
DENIVA	Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations
DFID	Department for International Development
EC	European Commission
EDF	European Development Fund
EFA	Education For All
EU	European Union
Fem Act	Feminist Activism Coalition
GBI	Tanzania's Gender Budget Initiative
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GEC	Ghana Education Campaign
GNECC	Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IDT	International Development Target
IFI	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Office
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISODEC	Integrated Social Development Centre
IT	Information Technology
MFPED	Uganda's Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM	National Resistance Movement
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAF	Uganda's Poverty Action Fund
PEAP	Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PUCMM	Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SWAP	Sector-Wide Approach
TAS	Tanzania Assistance Strategy
TGNP	Tanzania Gender Networking Programme
UDN	Uganda Debt Network
UJCC	Uganda Joint Christian Council
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNPD	United Nations Development Programme
UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project
USAID	US Agency for International Development

Preface

Development Partnership Fora have been organised by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) since January 1998 to enable discussion and exchange of information between DAC Members and Observers, international organisations, and experts and representatives from developing countries on issues related to implementing the partnership strategy. Fora themes have included: *Implementation of the Development Partnership Strategy: Ownership and Donor Procedures* (January 1998); *Untying, Procurement and Capacity Development* (December 1998); *From Aid Co-ordination to Development Partnership*, with the World Bank and the UNDP (December 1999); *Ownership and Partnership: The Role of Southern and Northern Civil Society in Poverty Reduction Strategies* (December 2000); and *ODA and Private Finance: Attracting Finance and Investment to Developing Countries* (February 2002).

This book is based on the 2000 Forum, which reviewed the progress in civil society participation in development and poverty reduction strategies. It was co-organised by the OECD Development Centre, whose programme of work for 2001-2002, under the general theme *Globalisation and Governance*, recognised the importance of “*policy reforms to be completed by rules and institutions [including civil society] which provide options and incentives at the micro level so as to encourage participation.*” Similarly, the DAC Chair, in his contribution entitled “On Common Ground: Converging views on development and development co-operation at the turn of the century”, concluded that “*country-owned development strategies and targets should result from an open and collaborative dialogue between developing country authorities, civil society and the private sector, on their shared objectives and their respective contributions to the common endeavour.*”

The Forum recognised that civil society needs to experience ownership of policy reform by participating effectively in the setting of policy objectives at the local level. As it turned out clearly from the discussions reflected in the following pages, there is much more at stake than the quest for greater ownership: participation encourages more pluralistic and decentralised political systems, therefore affecting the whole process of democratic governance. Indeed, the strengthening of civil society not only contributes to institutional development, but also shapes standards and values and affects positively the ways in which actors interact with each other.

The Development Partnership Forum 2000 addressed the wide implications of these issues and tried to clarify the related challenges, building on the experiences of partners in development working together to enhance the role of civil society in poverty reduction strategies. This book makes available the material presented and the policy conclusions reached by over 150 participants from government and civil society, including representatives of business associations, NGOs, churches, trade unions and the media, both from DAC member countries and partner countries.

Louka T. Katseli
Director
OECD Development Centre
September 2003

Executive Summary

Henny Helmich, Fritz Meijndert and John Simpson¹

In contrast with the long-prevailing situation whereby collaboration and co-ordination to promote human and economic development happened mostly between central governments, partnerships are now more complex. Indeed, they are becoming increasingly so, as a consensus within the international community emerges on the idea that “country-owned development strategies and targets should result from an open and collaborative dialogue between developing country authorities, civil society and the private sector on their shared objectives and their respective contributions to the common endeavour².” This vision has become one of the main building blocks of country-level development frameworks such as the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, all of which are seeking to respond to the rise of more pluralistic and decentralised political systems.

Most operational development Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member countries have welcomed the new dynamism of the development partnership strategy, and the poverty eradication efforts of the multilateral institutions, although they were — and still are — critical of the strategy’s operational modalities and the slowness with which the international development targets in specific countries and sectors are being addressed. Many of these NGOs have acquired a good deal of experience in executing partnership strategies with counterpart NGOs in developing countries and would view these targets as only intermediary.

It was against this background that the DAC and the Development Centre of the OECD framed the agenda for the fourth Development Partnership Forum, which took place in Paris on 11-12 December 2000. The DAC had earlier reviewed experiences of donors supporting civil society initiatives in the South, and had shared perspectives with NGOs on progress in implementing the partnership strategy. However, the collaboration between civil society in donor and in partner countries had not been the subject of a separate discussion.

The Forum sought to address this issue by bringing together over 150 participants from government and civil society, including representatives of business associations, NGOs, churches, trade unions and the media, both from DAC member countries and partner countries. The organisers sought a double objective: to provide an opportunity for these partners in international development to discuss the role of Southern and Northern civil society and private sector organisations, and to outline future directions for strengthening national consultation processes in implementing country-level development frameworks³.

The rest of this overview chapter consists of two sections: the first one synthesises the policy conclusions which emerged from the Forum, while the second one summarises the papers presented by invited experts, on which the discussions were based. Those papers are included in Chapters 1 to 7. Chapter 8 then provides a review of challenges ahead by participating expert and volume editor Ian Smillie. Finally, an independent review of the Forum's debates by rapporteur Judith Randel is annexed.

Major Findings and Recommendations

The Forum proposed several concrete measures to strengthen the enabling environment for improved North-South civil society co-operation. Following are some of the major findings and recommendations.

1. The involvement of civil society, in addition to partner country governments and the private sector, is an obligation included in the poverty reduction strategy, for political (ownership) and practical (effective and accountable implementation and realism check) reasons. To establish and implement successful participatory poverty reduction strategies, country ownership must include all stakeholders.
2. As illustrated by the Ugandan (review of budgetary policies and public expenditure by the Uganda Debt Network), Tanzanian (gender budget initiative) and Ghana (education campaign) cases, civil society plays an effective role at *various* stages of the poverty reduction process. The Forum also included experiences from Asia (Malaysia) and Latin America (Bolivia) on matters of the impact of financial crises and the Jubilee 2000 and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.
3. Many citizens are active in a civil society capacity, even if their first loyalty is with a private enterprise or a government office. Citizens, in North and South, are active consumers, parents, members of trade unions, school boards, neighbourhood groups, religious organisations, a national employers' union or human rights organisation or an international environment organisation. A priority of citizens when they are active in civil society organisations is to forge coalitions with other parts of society, government and the private sector, to help transform and empower the poor and marginalised to play a fuller role as informed, active and participating citizens.

4. Civil society is not homogeneous, but consists of many diverse actors, each with their own interests and responsibilities. This may not facilitate answering the question of whom to involve in the consultation process; however just inviting a narrow selection of actors would create false consensus and should be avoided. The argument of the lack of time for adequate consultation processes needs to be rejected. The absence of proper consultation of civil society creates only the illusion of speed, because ownership will not be fostered
5. Civil society should be allocated resources with fewer strings attached in terms of the specific activities chosen by civil society actors, but with strong conditionality in the standards for accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, in particular their accountability to the poor; bilateral and multilateral official aid agencies should also live up to these standards.
6. If the international community is serious about partnership and participation of all stakeholders, it should also be ready to invest in improving the quality of this partnership; not only by increasing resources (e.g. to help build capacity) but also by changing the ways their aid agencies are working (e.g. simplifying and harmonising procedures); the principles of partnership and the joint engagement of actors in poverty reduction processes should also be more important than the labels of the actors involved. More ordinary citizens than ever before have been asked to engage themselves in development strategies in an unprecedented way. Donor actors often request partners in government and civil society to undertake activities which they are not able to implement even in their own developed societies. The PRSP processes and the requirement to involve citizens and civil society actors in consultation processes constitute a formidable request for time and resources.
7. Donor agencies need to step up their efforts to inform and educate their own public on the objectives and implementation of the partnership strategy and its principles. DAC member governments should better enable the general public to understand that available resources for development co-operation are insufficient to reach the partnership targets.
8. DAC members should set a target percentage for financing development information and education in their own countries, and should enable civil society actors in partner countries to play a more active role in advocacy of better poverty reduction strategies.
9. Donors should become more predictable in their provision of long-term resource flows and be more transparent about the destination and terms of these flows; systems should be introduced to monitor the extent to which budgets from donor resources, but also from partners' government budgets, actually reach the intended beneficiaries. Donors should be aware of the tension between short-term and long-term policy coherence.

10. One of the questions raised during the Forum which needs further consideration is how far the international development community (official bilateral and multilateral donors, but also international civil society actors) should and can go in opening up space for the advocacy role of civil society actors in partner countries. The effort to create more space is in particular important *vis-à-vis* those societies where governments are not willing or able to enter into a genuine partnership for poverty reduction, or which are in or emerging from conflict.
11. The partnership strategy should minimise fashion shifts. The focus on children and the education of girls is a well known objective. It being well known and often repeated should not lead to a conclusion that the goal is within reach.
12. Donor actors should foster *sector* specific partnerships with civil society actors. Civil society actors should be encouraged to use their resources to add to service delivery programmes, and sometimes replace these programmes with capacity building programmes and should be encouraged to avoid creating “project islands”. Capacity building should support enabling environments and better political and economic governance to empower the poor and marginalised to participate more fully in the construction of their societies.
13. Accountability and transparency would be better served if actors could provide more support for media (traditional print and communication as well as modern IT applications). Actors in development should be aware of content; information about realities should prevail above opinions about realities. Information, media and education activities should enable users to develop their own opinions and to use media interactively. Media coverage of the whole process at work, e.g. the elaboration of PRSPs, should be facilitated rather than restricting journalists to briefings and press handouts at the end of the process. This is important for stimulating local participation and ownership, and should also create more confidence and understanding in the North for policy making in the South. Media are also an important guardian against corruption and economic mismanagement.
14. Donors should create enabling environments for civil society’s capacity building efforts by recognising the importance and the cost of international networking and South-South collaboration by civil society actors. These costs are often excluded from conditions of financing efforts by restricting overhead cost to the minimum, forcing some actors to limit themselves to a project approach and avoid capacity building activities in which these cost elements can be very high. Donors should change their financial procedures in line with their expectations from civil society. Civil society actors should also include in their own resource allocation realistic amounts for use of modern technology to support better networking.

An Overview of Papers

The above conclusions emerged from discussions over several papers presented during the Forum. Those selected for publication in this volume address the role of civil society in partnership strategies at four different levels: *i) North-South Civil Society Partnerships* (Chapter 1); *ii) Country-Level Frameworks* (Chapter 2 on the World Bank experience of Comprehensive Development Frameworks; Chapter 3 on the Ugandan Debt Network); *iii) National Programmes including Sector-Wide Approaches* (Chapter 4 on *Education in Ghana*); and *iv) Results-Based Approaches* (Chapter 5 on the Gender Budget Initiative in Tanzania.). Finally, moving on from those concrete examples, Chapters 6 and 7 assess the scope for strengthening the role of civil society in partnership strategies for development and poverty reduction.

Changing Partners, Changing Assumptions

In the opening chapter of this volume, Sylvia Borren focuses on the potential for civil society participation in decentralised co-operation programmes recently introduced in the co-operation between the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. These programmes — an alternative to top-down approaches that offer little scope for local adjustment, creation of responsibility and viability — are based on five central ideas: the active participation of all the families of actors; the co-ordination and complementarity between actors and consistency between their various initiatives; the delegation of administrative — including financial — responsibilities to the closest possible hierarchical level of actor concerned; the adoption of a “process approach” with a view to ensuring genuine participation and local adjustment; and strengthening local capacities to initiate and successfully manage projects.

As Borren notes, the implementation of such a pluralistic partnership faces the formidable challenge of breaking away from the attitudes, instruments and procedures formed over the earlier 25 years of centralised ACP-EU co-operation. Not only do the central governments of the EU states, the European Commission and in-country Delegations have little experience of dialogue, networking or public-private partnerships, it is not obvious that the decentralised actors in ACP states are ready to embark upon this new partnership concept either: some remain excessively inclined to regard the state (or local government) more as an enemy than a partner; others lack either the legitimacy, organisation or capacity (in some cases all three) to position themselves as credible partners for governments and the EU.

She concludes by suggesting that the success of this new multi-actor partnership is dependent on the adoption by the EU of consistent political, financial and procedural approaches. Such consistency will help to ensure that the ACP states abide by the participative spirit of the new agreement, that resources really are made available to decentralised actors and that operating methods and procedures are adapted to a

genuinely decentralised form of administration. In addition to this, she also stresses the importance of ensuring that administrators, both in Brussels and, especially, in the Delegations, have the necessary capability to implement a participative partnership.

National Dialogue: The World Bank Experience

Whilst the principle of participation — the need to involve local stakeholders — has become increasingly accepted in development practice around the world, national dialogue, which involves larger numbers of actors and addresses national-level policy issues, has proved more difficult to accomplish. Even when sitting governments are enthusiastic it can be difficult to get all of the relevant parties around the table, especially when it is not self-evident who accountably represents “the relevant parties”. Pablo Guerrero’s contribution outlines the lessons that the World Bank has learned from observing national dialogue unfold during the pilot phase of six countries’ implementation of the Comprehensive Development Framework.

In each of the six countries studied — Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Romania, Uganda and Vietnam — the nature of the national dialogue has been different. Further, the form taken varies over time. As Pablo Guerrero importantly notes, national dialogue should properly be seen as a *process* rather than an event. Just as there are degrees of engagement, there are a variety of means of achieving it, and there are a wide variety of political, social and cultural contexts — all of which matter. For this reason, there is no “one size fits all” format, no “right” way.

Basic lessons have nevertheless emerged. First, strategies developed without inclusion are inherently weak. It is particularly important therefore to reach out to stakeholders, especially the very poor and marginalised, for otherwise crucial information held by excluded stakeholders may be ignored and implementation may be impeded because they do not feel that they own the strategy; this also implies engaging in capacity building where necessary. Second, transparency is important: stakeholders with clear information about the process can more easily participate. Confidence is also thereby enhanced.

Civil Society Participation and the Poverty Eradication Plan of Uganda

As one of the poorest countries in the world, with approximately 45 per cent of the population living in absolute poverty, Uganda is heavily dependent on development aid. Indeed, over 50 per cent of the government’s budget is financed by the international donor community. Walter Eberlei looks at the participation of civil society in the implementation of Uganda’s Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) which like the Poverty Action Fund (PAF), a mechanism for controlling financial resources freed by debt relief and for fighting poverty, contains a participatory element.

Though pointing to the effective role that civil society has played at the various stages of the poverty reduction process, Eberlei's rich report also highlights the difficulties that his country's burgeoning number of NGOs have surmounted. Local capacity building has been of considerable importance. The Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) made a key contribution to facilitating networking and information exchange, organising training programmes and undertaking research and lobbying on poverty issues in particular and economic and social policy in general.

Particularly disquieting is his observation that NGOs may be exploited to legitimise the political system, not only internally but also, and perhaps more importantly, *vis-à-vis* donors. Moreover, the existence of such a large number of NGOs (Uganda counted approximately 3 300 in 2000) can be used as an argument against the widening of rights for political parties. Against this background, his reminder of the fact that independent and pluralistic media are a pre-condition for a vibrant civil society takes on an added weight.

Civil Society and the Education System in Ghana

Decline in the Ghanaian Education System

Emmanuel Kuyole reviews the deterioration of Ghana's education system, which had been one of the best in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. The source of this deterioration lies in the steep fall in government expenditure on education which accompanied the country's economic decline from the late 1960s through to the early 1980s. Indeed, although education reforms were introduced in 1987 with the announced objective of expanding access, improving quality and enhancing managerial and budgeting practices, the underlying rationale was to continue minimising government expenditure. As Kuyole observes, education is becoming increasingly privatised with potentially serious consequences in terms of accessibility for the poor, equality of opportunity and the role of education as a social good. In all regions of Ghana, school fees constitute the main reason for children not enrolling in, or dropping out of, school.

Against this background, he welcomes the International Monetary Fund's recognition that high quality growth is dependent not only on macroeconomic stabilisation and liberalisation, but also on good governance and sound social policies. Since 1995, the Fund has included education as conditionality in the structural adjustment agreement with Ghana; this provided for the Basic Education Sector Improvement Program which began in 1996. However, other conditionalities prescribed by the Fund such as privatisation, retrenchment and cost-recovery have rendered the education conditionality impotent.

Oxfam and Ghana's National Education Campaign Coalition

Tony Burdon follows up Kuyole's review with an examination of how local civil society and northern civil society organisations worked together on education sector reform in Ghana by developing together the Ghana Education Campaign. Under

its auspices, work has been done to promote community involvement in the provision of education, not only in terms of demand for access, quality and increased local accountability, but also in terms of putting forward constructive ideas for improving school performance.

Nevertheless, just as the Ghana Education Campaign shows how much can be done through a carefully designed campaign, coalition-building and good quality research, in his judgement it also highlights the fact that partnerships in such national programmes would be strengthened by the inclusion of civil society groups in macroeconomic decision-making fora. In Ghana and elsewhere, processes such as PRSPs and the CDF, as well as the follow-up to the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000, would all benefit from deepened civil society participation.

Gender, National Budgeting and Civil Society in Tanzania

Aggripina Mosha describes the efforts of the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) to develop improved gender equity and women's empowerment by working on the country's financial and budgetary systems. Her presentation is complemented by Marja Ruohomäki's outline of the Swedish approach to poverty reduction, which supports efforts to mainstream a gender approach in government budget formulation and monitoring processes.

The TGNP has been pioneering a Gender Budget Initiative (GBI) since mid-1997 in close collaboration with the over 20 NGOs that comprise the Feminist Activism Coalition, all of which are committed to promoting change through skill sharing and collective action on gender and policy-related issues. The GBI seeks to ensure that all stages of the planning and budgetary processes take into account the needs of marginalised communities, particularly women, poor men and youths.

The organisation has had some successes. In particular, it has gained a great deal of access to government structures and strategic decision-making bodies, including the body with overall responsibility for the country's PRSP, and has contributed to the integration of gender issues in the 1999-2000 budget guidelines. Nevertheless, considerable room for progress remains. Mosha emphasises the need to strengthen capacity building among government actors in order to link gender issues to budgeting and macroeconomics, as well as the urgency of challenging international macroeconomic frameworks, in particular as reflected in the PRSP process. In both of these areas, she is of the view that the support of northern NGOs is essential.

The Idea of Ownership, The Reality of Systems

Judith Randel echoes the concern expressed by several participants in the Forum that donors have become so committed to new ideas of ownership and advocacy that they have ceased providing support for other valuable elements of donor assistance, in particular service delivery, and that this is having an impact on the poorest. She

stresses that whilst enhancing governments' ability to deliver services is important, this should not be accompanied by the removal of support for non-governmental service deliverers: waiting for capacity to deliver education and health services to increase comes at a very high cost, especially for the poor.

Emphasising the importance of civil society participation in budgetary processes, which are the loci of rights, policy, spending and action, Randel notes that the Ugandan experience is unfortunately exceptional. She also observes that it is precisely in the budgetary process that the active engagement and partnership of civil society in the North and South is likely to have its greatest impact.

Power Relationships: Government, the Market and Civil Society

Sylvia Borren looks at the balance in power between government (politicians and civil servants), the market and civil society. She notes that politicians and government bureaucrats wield a lot of formal power over NGOs, the example of Egypt being particularly striking in this regard. Multilateral and bilateral donors therefore have a role to play in ensuring that local civil society participation is not unnecessarily impeded. Indeed, Borren goes so far as to suggest that donors should insist on a formal process to show that civil society has been consulted seriously in the elaboration of poverty reduction strategies, and that there is consensus on the way forward.

Turning to the funding of development, she notes that total aid flows originating from civil society organisations are dwarfed by private sector investments in lower-income countries and minuscule in comparison to the annual turnover of the largest multinationals that operate in them. This has obvious implications for the distribution of power. Against this background, she suggests that civil society might expect to receive increased funding from that part of the private sector which sees social engagement and social processes as a logical part of ethical enterprising.

Her overall view is that that economic globalisation is far more powerful than either the globalisation of governance, or of democratic global citizenship. The checks and balances for global democracy are not yet in place. As a consequence, the voices of the poor remain inadequately heard. This calls for new alliances between civil society framed within a global perspective and on the basis of mutual respect and autonomy.

Notes

1. Henny Helmich (OECD Development Centre) and Fritz Meijndert (Development Co-operation Directorate), co-organisers of the DAC/Development Centre Partnership Forum 2000, drafted the major findings and recommendations. John Simpson (OECD Development Centre) summarised the papers assembled in this book.
2. This was put forward by Jean-Claude Faure, Chairman of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in a 1998 paper *On Common Ground: Converging Views on Development and Development Co-operation at the Turn of the Century*, subsequently published in OECD (2000), Development Co-operation 1999 Report, *DAC Journal No. 121*, OECD, Paris.
3. As the 2000 DAC High-Level Meeting stated, overall progress towards the international development targets can be shown in most developing regions with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa. It was therefore also proposed to focus in these issues on sub-Saharan Africa.

Changing Partners; Changing Assumptions

Sylvia Borren

There is a growing civil voice around the world. The number of civil organisations is increasing rapidly. Governments and the business world want to engage in dialogue (or at least to be seen to do so). Email and the Internet stimulate a global flow of information and communication which is unprecedented, and increasing daily.

Sylvia Borren, Executive Director of the Dutch NGO, Novib, describes some of the changes that have affected governments, business and civil society organisations in recent years.

On the other hand, economic globalisation is happening very fast, and global governance structures are as yet too slow and cumbersome to provide any semblance of effective checks and balances. Civil society organisations and the growing number of NGOs are mostly a reactive force, only rarely able to develop policy initiatives which affect government or market forces.

Poverty reduction — or as some of us prefer, poverty eradication — is a policy area where citizens and their organisations are approached by governments and by some market actors to play a stronger role. The reason for the invitation and its seriousness will become apparent in the coming years. It remains to be seen whether the flirtation with civil society will bloom into a serious relationship based on a common desire to fight poverty and injustice, or whether it is window dressing, or an attempt to subcontract cheap implementation labour...

We used to assume that commercial organisations were (rightly from their point of view) profit-driven, and that concerns about labour rights, environment and social accountability could and should not be expected from business. It was up to trade unions, environmental groups and others to act as advocates and to engage government. Government regulations would then provide the checks and balances to regulate market forces.

We now assume that businesses — local, national or multinational — can actually be held accountable, that they do carry responsibilities beyond profit, towards their workers, the environment and the communities with which they engage.

We used to assume that governments were democratically elected bodies responsible for “good governance”, which had something to do with fair play, with weighing wisely the needs, rights and responsibilities of different groups with their own vested interests. We used to assume that government would also provide, or would at least organise the provision of, basic services for all: food, water, health, education, roads, railways, telephone and postal services.

We now see many governments reducing their responsibilities, or failing in them, and privatising once sacrosanct government responsibilities: health, education, water, welfare services. This doesn’t surprise us anymore.

We used to assume that civil organisations and NGOs could do small-scale welfare work and thus be the final safety net for those who fell through the government safety net. We thought the NGOs were innovative, quick to reach their target groups, and successful in implementing participatory development programmes. We now live with evaluations which show that:

- NGOs often do not reach the poorest;
- they are too often unaccountable to their target groups and other stakeholders;
- they are not always efficient, effective, flexible or innovative;
- they have trouble proving that policy changes can be attributed to their efforts.

Finally we used to assume that people living in poverty were victims, passively waiting to be helped (or not). We now know that people who suffer poverty and injustice have vastly different histories and situations — and may need a trampoline more than a safety net because of the urgency in getting beyond their present intolerable situation.

The Changing Donor Mindset

Danida outlines some of the new and evolving relationships between governments and civil society.

In line with the increasing interest in democratisation and good governance, and a recognition of the varying degree of success of civil society projects that deliver specific services, both bilateral and multilateral donors have increased their focus on the role of civil society and its organisations as being an active and critical voice, or partner, to the government and the public administration. There is a need for support to capacity building of civil society organisations instead of support to specific projects. Multilateral organisations also intend civil society organisations to have a new role in development co-operation.

The World Bank has proposed the adoption of a new approach to be used in drawing up national development plans and achieving donor co-ordination; the “Comprehensive Development Framework” (CDF). In this approach civil society representatives are to be involved in the formulation of national policies — including

the “Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers” (PRSP). It is intended that these poverty strategies should in principle replace the World Bank and the IMF’s own country strategies and encompass development plans for all relevant sectors.

UNDP is in the process of giving higher priority to co-operation with civil society organisations within politically sensitive areas such as human rights and social rights, and predicts that its co-operation with civil society organisations in the future will be just as important as co-operation with governments.

Regardless of whether specific initiatives such as the CDF and the PRSP are implemented in the intended form, everything suggests that international donors will try to involve civil society organisations in dialogue regarding formulation of national strategies and reforms to a much greater extent than earlier.

Furthermore, as regards co-operation between bilateral donors and Northern NGOs, changes have taken place in working relations. A Danish study of other donors indicates a more active form of co-operation between bilateral donors and Northern NGOs¹. Likewise, a series of initiatives have been identified where state donors actively support capacity and knowledge building within Northern NGOs.

New Features of Bilateral Donor Co-operation with Northern NGOs

- DFID (Department for International Development) in Great Britain has established a new fund, “The Civil Society Challenge Fund”. Allocation of funds from this body takes place on the basis of project applications, and British NGOs, institutions and firms are eligible to apply for funds to support civil society in developing countries.

In addition, DFID has plans to co-ordinate the lobbying and advocacy activity of British organisations as well as DFID itself with regard to a series of predefined priorities and strategies. Furthermore, by entering into strategic partnership agreements, a set of goals with mutual commitments will be formulated for co-operation.

- In Norway, voluntary organisations are seen as having a special role within the area of democratic and human rights, and therefore the country has developed close co-operation with organisations involved in peace and reconciliation processes. Norwegian NGOs play an active role as entrepreneurs within Norwegian bilateral assistance in this area.
- USAID has initiated a project, NGO Networks for Health, whose purpose is to build capacity in five large American NGOs within the area of health care. The goals of the programme are to strengthen the capacity analysis of the head offices regarding family planning, reproductive health, child mortality and HIV/AIDS, and through this to deliver a better advisory service. The programme focuses on establishing local NGO networks in five recipient countries within the health area, so that local partners are able to influence national policies on health. It is anticipated that experience gained from the programme will be applied to those other countries where the five NGOs conduct activities.

Globalisation and the Establishment of Global Networks and Organisations

Alongside the increasing focus on the role of civil society organisations as social and political actors, there has also been increased focus on — and recognition of — the need for civil society organisations in developing countries to be given the opportunity and capacity to participate in fora where the agenda for international development is set.

The opportunity to do this has rapidly increased owing to developments in information technology. At the same time, civil society organisations and NGOs in developing countries have a completely new opportunity for establishing global networks and contacts on their own initiative. Such new global networks partly focus on seeking influence at international conferences and in decision-making processes.

At the same time, a globalisation of Northern NGOs is taking place. A few large American and European organisations have developed into “multinational NGOs” with offices in Europe, the USA and Japan, as well as in a number of developing countries. Some of these large NGOs make use of their global presence and considerable capacity to act as partners and critics of the large international organisations. They have a genuine possibility to influence important international decision-making processes. However, these “multinational NGOs” are largely controlled from the North and only limited steps have been taken to granting any real influence to the branches in developing countries.

Only time will reveal the extent to which civil society in developing countries in the long term can obtain an international voice by working with “multinational NGOs”, by participating in international NGOs, or by developing firmer patterns of co-operation and organisational structures in the existing, more loosely organised South-South and South-North network co-operation.

The Role of Non-Governmental Actors in the New ACP-EU Partnership Agreement

The View From Brussels: The European Commission explains emerging views of decentralisation and participation in its relationships with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States.

The new ACP-EU Convention enshrines the principle of participative development, extending the partnership concept to include a very wide range of actors (civil society, the private sector and local authorities). The idea is not just to involve these actors in implementing projects but to bring them into the political dialogue and procure their participation in defining and evaluating development strategies and programmes. Decentralised co-operation, based on this principle of participative management, is thus destined to become an essential aspect of the ACP-EU partnership. However, for this approach to become operationally effective, it is necessary for the actors concerned to confront a number of challenges.

An Inevitable Trend

Post-independence strategies have made the state a controlling influence in development, often at the expense of other actors. This development approach was also the inspiration behind co-operation policies. Thus, the successive Lomé Conventions have essentially been the preserve of central government. Despite recent innovations (such as the decentralised co-operation introduced under Lomé IV in 1989) ACP-EU co-operation offered the decentralised actors few opportunities for participation or access to funds.

During the consultation process preparatory to the Green Paper (1996), the need to extend ACP-EU co-operation to other types of actor was perceived as a main political priority. Two processes of change made this inevitable: first, the ascendancy of a broader range of actors (civil society, the private sector and local authorities) anxious to make a larger contribution to development, and secondly the emergence of a new role for the state, with the implementation of political reforms and support for the processes of liberalisation and decentralisation. In the first stage, development co-operation enabled certain actors to be involved in the implementation of projects and programmes. Today, they also want to participate in the formulation and implementation of development and co-operation policies.

At the present time, there are a number of factors that underline the need to progress from the mere involvement of these actors to their genuine participation in the administration of development policies and programmes. Recent events (the public demonstrations in Seattle and Washington) emphasise the part that an active and organised civil society expects to play in international co-operation. The challenges posed by globalisation, the fight against poverty and sustainable development do indeed suggest that we should abandon the “state versus market” debate and emphasise the mobilisation of the various actors, resources and capacity, and the concept of new public/private partnerships. It is now acknowledged that the necessary adaptation of the development processes requires the involvement of all families of actors.

The EU and other providers of funds are currently undertaking a radical review of co-operation policies and approaches to co-operation. The political interest of the EU in more participative development was also reflected in its negotiating mandate for the period after Lomé in the other co-operation agreements, and in a whole series of recent initiatives designed to introduce new rules governing transparency, in order to facilitate public access to information and the definition of European policies laid down in the Amsterdam treaty.

The problems associated with the role and involvement of civil society in everyday affairs arise not only in the South but also in the North, and in Europe. In this respect, it is worth recalling the guidelines set out by the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, in his address “Shaping the New Europe”, given to the European Parliament on 15 February 2000:

“The challenge is to rethink radically the way we do Europe; to devise a completely new form of governance for the world of tomorrow. Let me be clear here. The enlarged Europe will certainly need strong institutions, but they must be democratically legitimate institutions that operate in a transparent and accountable way and enjoy the full confidence of the citizens. People want a much more participatory, ‘hands-on’ democracy. They will not support the European project unless they are fully involved in setting goals, making policy and evaluating progress. And they are right. I believe we have to stop thinking in terms of hierarchical layers of competence separated by the subsidiarity principle and start thinking, instead, of a networking arrangement, with all levels of governance shaping, proposing, implementing and monitoring policy together.”

The message is clear: for Europe to be a driving and an energetic driving force it needs to be transparent, responsible and therefore trusting in its relations with the public.

The opening up of ACP-EU co-operation for the decentralised actors may therefore result in major advances. It offers an alternative to the top-down approaches that offer little scope for local adjustment, creation of responsibility and viability. It may improve the processes of (sectorial) policy formulation and programme implementation, while promoting synergistic effects between public and private actors. It is also crucially important for the achievement of the aims of ACP-EU, co-operation (the fight against poverty, the advancement of the private sector, support for local governance). Following this line of reasoning, the broadening of the partnership should not be perceived as a threat to the ACP governments. On the contrary, experience suggests that sustainable development is indivisible between states and markets, central and local governments, public actors and society, from genuine civil interaction.

New Opportunities

It is precisely this interaction that future ACP-EU co-operation intends to promote. The first point to be made is that the legal provisions of the new Agreement represent an important step forward. The “participation” of various types of actors is defined as one of the four “fundamental principles” for implementing the partnership. An entire chapter is devoted to the “partnership actors” divided into two main categories: the public authorities (local, national and regional) and the non-state actors (the private sector and the economic and social partners, including trade union organisations and civil society in all its forms, depending on the characteristics of each country). This section contains specific commitments to ensure the participation of the decentralised actors in:

- supplying them with appropriate information on the ACP-EU partnership Agreement, especially in the ACP states;
- ensuring that civil society is consulted on the economic, social and institutional policies and reforms that will be the subject of EU support;

- facilitating the participation of non-governmental actors in the implementation of the programmes and projects;
- supplying them with appropriate support to boost their capacities;
- encouraging networking and the establishment of links between the ACP and EU actors.

References to the non-state actors are also to be found in other sections of the new Agreement, covering in particular the complementary nature of their role and their potential contribution to the aims of co-operation (for example, in the promotion of human rights, the processes of democratisation and governance, and conflict prevention), and their advisory role in the decision-making bodies of ACP-EU co-operation (for example, as regards dialogue at the level of the Council of Ministers and the Joint Assembly).

The Institutionalisation of Decentralised Co-operation (DC)

The new opportunities mentioned above reflect the ascendancy of the decentralised co-operation approach. Experiments with this line of approach have taken place through the Community budget (budget line B7-6430 “Decentralised Co-operation”) and, in some countries, in connection with the EDF. These experiments made it possible to clarify the concept and operational implications of DC, to inform the various actors and improve their awareness, to promote partnerships between public and private actors, to institute pilot programmes, to test new, decentralised administrative mechanisms and to improve integration of decentralised co-operation with the political decentralisation processes taking place in various ACP states.

Even though its implementation was often complex and slow, initial results confirm the potential of this innovative approach. More sophisticated and diverse decentralised co-operation programmes — going beyond the traditional micro-project approach — have been launched in a number of countries (Benin, Ghana, Uganda, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Guinea Conakry and Madagascar). By degrees, there are also signs that minds are becoming more receptive to this new approach, both among the ACP-EU political leaders and among the decentralised actors (who, for their part too, have often preferred to work in isolation rather than in partnership with other actors). Decentralised co-operation within the framework of the EU is not just another instrument or outlet for financing small grass-roots projects, but a specific approach to co-operation based on five central ideas:

- active participation (“responsibilisation”) of all the families of actors;
- the quest for co-ordination and complementarity between various actors through the dialogue, the quest for synergies, and an attempt to establish consistency between the various actors’ initiatives;
- delegation of administrative — including financial — responsibilities to the closest possible hierarchical level of actor concerned;

- the adoption of a “process approach” with a view to ensuring genuine participation and local adjustment;
- the prioritisation of reinforcing capacities and institutional development with a view to boosting the potential for action and control of local initiatives.

In practice, decentralised co-operation programmes can be conceived as mainly following two priority axes of intervention:

- as support for the process of decentralisation, aimed at the establishment of legitimate and effective systems of local government;
- as support for local development initiatives and processes, making it possible to ensure consistency between isolated activities (micro-implementation, NGO activities, twinning) within a given spatial framework.

The challenge is to find complementary and synergistic effects between these two axes which, overall, represent legitimacy and credibility.

The Practical Challenges

The moment of truth will come when these new principles are put into practice. In this context, it is necessary to be realistic: the implementation of a pluralistic partnership will take time, political courage, institutional creativity and on-the-job learning. Twenty-five years of “centralised” administration have shaped the attitudes, instruments and procedures of ACP-EU co-operation. The involvement of decentralised actors in defining and implementing policy is, in many ways, a “cultural revolution”. Council Regulation 1659/98 rightly observes that the purpose of decentralised co-operation is to help to “bring about a real long-term change in the EU’s co-operation procedures.” Unless the mental barriers can be broken down, progress will be slow.

In any case, it must be said that neither the central governments nor the Commission (Delegations) have much experience of dialogue, networking or public-private partnerships. It will be necessary to establish new consultation, planning and joint action practices, in line with the realities and capabilities of each ACP state, in particular by encouraging reflection on the implications of this approach in terms of the radical change in the roles and attitudes of the central agencies and partners of the North, such as the NGOs, and in terms of flexible and decentralised administrative procedures. It will also be important to strengthen the capacities of governmental actors to enable them to play their new part as facilitators. The decentralised actors of the ACP states are not necessarily ready to embark upon this new partnership concept. Some of them are still too prone to regard the state (or local government) more as an enemy than a partner. Others are confronted by problems of legitimacy, organisation or capacity to position themselves as credible partners for governments and the EU, let alone as representatives of grass-roots actors. In this context, it is encouraging to note that ACP actors are increasingly organised, especially at the global level, as

witnessed by the recent creation of an ACP Civil Society Forum, an ACP Business Forum and an ACP Local Government Platform, initiatives supported by the Commission's Directorate-General for Development.

The success of this new multi-actor partnership will to some extent depend on a consistent response by the EU at various levels: political consistency (for example, towards those ACP states that fail to abide by the participative spirit of the new agreement); financial consistency (ensuring that resources really are made available to decentralised actors); instrumental and procedural consistency (adapting operating methods and procedures to a genuinely decentralised form of administration); and consistency as regards capacity (ensuring that administrators, both in Brussels and, especially, in the Delegations, have the necessary capability to implement a participative partnership).

Note

1. "Undersøgelse af bilaterale og multilaterale donorerers NGO-arbejde. Udenrigsministeriet, marts 2000". (No English translation — "Study of the NGO co-operation of bilateral and multilateral donors", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, March 2000).

National Dialogue: The World Bank Experience

Pablo Guerrero

Background and Introduction

National dialogue is a process to promote broad stakeholder engagement for the purpose of reaching some level of national consensus on development direction and policy priorities for a given country. The principle of participation — the need to involve local stakeholders — has become increasingly accepted in development practice around the world. National dialogue, while a complementary concept, is more difficult to accomplish. It entails larger numbers and addresses national-level policy issues — rather than the more local focus of typical “participation” concerns. There are degrees of engagement, there are a variety of means of achieving it, and there are a wide variety of cultural contexts — all of which matter.

This chapter outlines the World Bank’s learning from observing national dialogue unfold in six countries implementing a Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) approach. It draws on the national dialogue experience of Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Romania, Uganda and Vietnam. Each has been tracked during the pilot phase of CDF. Information has been drawn from two sources: reporting of World Bank country teams; and field visits by CDF secretariat staff.

Despite the challenges, national dialogue can have many benefits for the country. National dialogue is important to pursue, as at least some level of domestic consensus is essential to sustain pursuit of a development agenda. National dialogue can yield consensus on “organising principles”, i.e. policy priorities, around which all resources (domestic and external) can be allocated. Existence of such a consensus can greatly increase policy makers’ confidence, and provide a reliable framework for decision-making and the management of external financial assistance. This in turn contributes to development effectiveness and facilitates poverty reduction. For this reason, a country’s experience with national dialogue is of interest not only to its citizens — but to all interested development partners. The World Bank is among these.

The paper is not meant to make either definitive statements about, or pass judgement on, individual experiences. In four of the countries (Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Uganda), national dialogue was (or had been) explicitly underway before the CDF was launched. In the other two, processes of national consultation either began or became more explicit in the context of adopting the approach CDF advocates.

There are two dimensions to national dialogue. There are clearly technical aspects (e.g. sectoral expertise), but in some respects the process is also fundamentally political. Given the political character of national dialogue, there is no “one size fits all” format, no “right” way. National dialogue looks different in each country — and it looks different within a country over time. Looking at national dialogue as a process (as opposed to “event”) highlights its complex nature.

While there are myriad reasons to engage in national dialogue, it can be very difficult to accomplish. First, even if sitting governments are enthusiastic, it can be difficult to get all relevant parties around the table — especially when it may not be self-evident who accountably represents

“relevant parties”. Second, even if all domestic stakeholders share a broadly common goal — e.g. national prosperity from which all can benefit — there may be vastly different understandings of interim priorities, necessary measures and actual policy trade-offs.

Impetus for National Dialogue

National dialogue processes are a means of seeking broad stakeholder input in identifying national development priorities. National dialogue can be initiated for any number of reasons — post conflict, fiscal crisis, political change among others. The way a process of national dialogue gets started seems to influence its course. Progress apparently is often quickest where there’s a compelling factor and/or a clear champion.

When neither of these factors — i.e. compelling cause or strong champion — is present, successful conduct of national dialogue may be more challenging. On the other hand, the presence of either of these factors increases the probability that key aspects of the national dialogue process — i.e. inclusion, transparency, alignment to action, integration — will get attention as necessary. The presence of a compelling cause, such as conflict or economic hardship, introduces strong incentives for all stakeholders to work towards success — even if compromise is required. In a similar way, a committed champion is willing to devote effort to working with all stakeholders. Attention of the champion may enable stakeholders to overcome tensions or setbacks that would otherwise stall the process.

Institutional Issues

If “national dialogue” is diverse across countries and evolves across time, how can varying experiences be meaningfully discussed and lessons extracted? One way to organise observations across very different settings and experiences is on characteristics of process — i.e. on institutional aspects.

The institutional economics literature contends that process matters: how a process is structured affects the outcomes that are possible and probable. Applying this logic, there are certain questions that can be asked about national dialogue processes, with an eye towards forming a view about both areas for focus and overall likely effectiveness. The questions fall into four categories. Is the process:

- *inclusive* — do all groups have the opportunity to be involved; in practice, is there a broad political will to carry through; and is the process being monitored for success?
- *transparent* — is it clear who convenes consultations; is there a series of meetings/ encounters, or just one; and are results disseminated?
- *aligned towards action* — are clear objectives agreed; are implementation roles assigned; and are there consequences for failure to follow through?
- *integrated* — connected with appropriate government activities; related to donor programmes; and are performance indicators in use?

These are significant aspects of national dialogue processes. How they are handled fundamentally affects the rate of progress and eventual effectiveness of any given process.

Each of the aspects highlighted here — i.e. impetus and the four institutional issues — contribute, along with other factors, to shaping national dialogue processes. They do not describe absolute standards by which processes can be judged as “right” or “wrong”.

The aspects are all related in some way, and what happens on one front is bound to affect what happens on another. Why and how national dialogue gets started will affect the process throughout its unfolding. In almost all cases, however, it is reasonable to expect that the four institutional issues will receive uneven attention over time, developing at varying rates. National dialogue is likely to be less of a straight, smooth road than a curvy and often bumpy path. Even though there is no absolute road map to national dialogue, assessing these aspects of a process yields significant information about probable short-run challenges and effectiveness.

True “consensus” — i.e. universal agreement — is not the objective (nor probably feasible). The objective is more nuanced: allowing maximum information flow among all stakeholders and gaining some critical mass of support for national policy.

There are different views on whether dialogue is essentially a political or a technocratic process, although the former view tends to prevail. Casting national dialogue as a technocratic process ignores its two most important dimensions: i) direct implications for trade-offs in the use of resources; and ii) societal choices (or limitations on choice) regarding access and inclusion.

In assessing any ongoing national dialogue process, it is essential to draw the difference between immediate experience (i.e. short-run) and longer-term prospects. Because national dialogue is a process, there is always the opportunity to go back and try again, to improve upon what isn't quite working, what failed. Iterations are in fact essential to building trust and relationships which can successfully sustain dialogue. Costs (in terms of time and effort of participants) may increase the longer it takes to establish

national dialogue, but benefits are always likely to outweigh costs (for the country as a whole).

Country Cases

Impetus

In four of the six countries included in this review — Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Uganda — national dialogue was initiated before participation in the CDF. In Bolivia, Dominican Republic and Uganda, national dialogue was initiated essentially to focus on issues of poverty reduction and economic progress. In Ghana, while issues of economic improvement played a role, fostering civil society inclusion clearly appears to have been a motivation as well.

In the other two, Romania and Vietnam, CDF provided the means for an organised effort at national dialogue. Each of these countries is going through significant transformation. Romania is several years into a political transformation and the Romanian government recognises the need for productive national debate — especially if EU accession is to become a reality. In Vietnam, the focus is economic transformation and external partnerships.

Of the six countries in this sample, Ugandan experience illustrates the “compelling factor”. After years of conflict and hardship, the great majority in the country were motivated to work together towards political stability and economic improvement.

Experience in the Dominican Republic illustrates the value of a process “champion”. The current national dialogue process has a strong, visible champion in the Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM). This iteration has thus progressed further than the country's first attempts. The 1990s were characterised by several national agreements. Each was based on a different attempt at national dialogue, which were led in turn by the church, NGOs and, recently, the government itself. Initial attempts at national dialogue stalled, apparently because there was no effective champion able to bring the political opposition into the process.

Inclusion

In order to reach a holistic development strategy which balances among priorities, it is essential that the views and expertise from the various sectors of society be incorporated. There are three practical aspects to inclusion. First, is the process structured so that it is possible for all relevant stakeholders to participate? Second, do the majority of relevant stakeholders in fact participate? Third, is inclusion being monitored (as opposed to access being controlled)? The questions are related. If there is some sort of process monitor — however informal — that has inclusion as a priority, answers to the first two questions are likely to be positive. If, on the other hand, the answer to the third is either unclear or negative, then inclusion may well be limited.

Ensuring inclusion can often be time-consuming and labour-intensive. It can be difficult to accomplish — even in political environments that are conducive to broad participation. The importance of reaching out to stakeholders — especially the very poor and marginalised — is, however, hard to over-emphasise. Lack of a truly inclusive process is likely to have implications for the long-run results of national dialogue. A strategy developed without inclusion may not prove robust. This may be because crucial information held by excluded stakeholders is missed, and/or because implementation is impeded because stakeholders do not feel “ownership” of the strategy.

In order to get the most out of the process, and ensure credibility, national dialogue incorporates a broad cross-section of stakeholders. This does not mean that each and every group must be at the table, and it will always be to some extent a judgement call who is “relevant”. It is fair to say that, consistent with general trends in the region, processes in Bolivia and the Dominican Republic made significant efforts to be inclusive — and a variety of stakeholders have participated in the processes.

Patterns in the other countries are more varied, for two reasons (or some combination thereof). In some instances, government structuring of the national dialogue process precludes participation of certain groups. In other instances, key stakeholders choose not to participate. Was the cause lack of interest, distrust, misunderstanding, or other reasons? Based on information available, it is not possible to assess the motivations of stakeholders in these cases. However, for countries engaged in national dialogue, understanding why certain stakeholders do not join in may be very important — especially for future iterations.

Vietnam has initiated an extensive and inclusive national dialogue process. From the civil society side, approved “mass organisations” are included. Notably, only recently have local NGOs and private sector interests joined in the process. This approach is consistent with government policy. Whether delayed inclusion of civil society and the private sector will have implications for implementation and policy effectiveness remains to be seen.

Deciding who is “relevant” is by no means a simple issue — who is a “relevant stakeholder” varies by topic. There may also be genuine differences of view. For example, if the issue is local distribution of resources, and the local populace actively engages in the decision-making process, how much input should a national advocacy NGO (with objections) have?

In Ghana and Uganda, participation of civil society and the private sector in national dialogue processes developed unevenly, despite the governments' interest in stakeholder involvement. Civil society participants came forward in both countries, but it was initially difficult to get engagement of the private sector. As dialogue processes continued over time, private sector actors have become more involved.

Transparency

Experience shows that inclusion and transparency are mutually reinforcing. It is virtually impossible to accomplish one without the other. (Yet the two alone are not enough to ensure successful national dialogue.) Transparency does not mean that all stakeholders are involved in all aspects of national dialogue — only that all are relatively clear on what's happening. One actor may be managing the process, or agenda-setting may be more iterative. Either can work, as long as those involved have a clear understanding of how the process is being managed, and what the anticipated schedules and outputs are. If a broad cross-section of stakeholders is invited to national dialogue, but potential participants are not informed about key procedural issues — i.e. when meetings will be held, what expected outputs are, how outputs will be used — then progress is likely to be slowed.

Transparency doesn't ensure that all stakeholders will get what they want out of the process, only that all stakeholders have the same information about the process. Transparency is important because of the information issue. If stakeholders have clear information about the process, it makes it easier (i.e. less costly) for them to participate in national dialogue — and engenders confidence in the process. Lack of transparency introduces a significant risk — it increases the chance that stakeholders will remove themselves from the process (either in attitude, or in body).

Romanian experience clearly illustrates this point. The World Bank, on behalf of the government, invited a wide cross-section of participants to initial consultations. There was a lag of one year between the initial meetings and the follow-up dissemination session, so a significant number of participants formed the impression that access to the process was being controlled. There is reason to believe that the government had no intention of excluding — only that the government was over-extended and mistakes were made. The damage to the process occurred, however, regardless of intention. Stakeholders' expectations of the national dialogue process decline sharply, negatively affecting the process.

In Vietnam, in contrast, schedules have been clearly disseminated. Meetings are arranged on a sectoral, issue-oriented basis. Those who are involved seem to have a clear understanding of what the government expects of participants, and how the government will use session outputs. The range of stakeholders included may be more limited than in other countries, yet the process appears to be transparent for those that are involved.

In countries with particularly complicated political situations, or where previous attempts at national dialogue have failed, transparency — if coupled with concerted outreach efforts — can contribute towards achieving an inclusive process. This appears to be reflected in Bolivia’s continuing experience. In the process of composing the National Action Plan, some NGOs were apparently unhappy on two counts. First, they were apparently left with the sense that the government intended a one-off “consultation” as opposed to genuine dialogue. Second, they felt they had insufficient lead time to prepare adequately. Neither result was intended. The government of Bolivia relaunched a much-enhanced national dialogue process in the context of preparing a PRSP. This effort has been designed taking NGO criticisms of the initial experience into account.

Alignment to Action

In order to produce change (“outcomes”) countries engaged in national dialogue must ensure: *i)* dialogue produces some degree of legitimate consensus; *ii)* consensus is translated into actionable steps for implementation; and *iii)* mechanisms to assess follow-through are available.

The step from consultation to action can be a long one. A decision to act in one way means that other actions will not be taken (at least in the short run). This in turn often implies there will be potential “winners” and “losers”. A process organised around relevance for action makes the best use of participants’ time, and leads most quickly to policy changes. Such processes, however, have more room for controversy and conflict than those where hard trade-offs do not need to be discussed.

In virtually all cases, implementation of policies which flow from national dialogue is likely to require some change not only of government but of civil society and the private sector as well. Mechanisms for enforcing government accountability vary according to political structures. Ensuring civil society and private sector accountability for changing behaviours may be more difficult. These are important issues to consider, as continuing efforts are likely to be required.

The six CDF pilot countries included here are fairly far upstream in the overall process. It is not possible to report on how follow-through unfolds in these cases. The Dominican Republic has been at the process for the longest time. The current iteration has focused on identifying quite specific policy changes which need to be made — e.g. legislative changes necessary to support trade. Recommendations have not yet been translated, however, into actual policy changes. The government of Bolivia continues to devote substantial effort — including through a transition in government — to

There are any number of examples of difficulties in changing behaviour: attempts to change fuel consumption patterns in the United States, attempts to reduce distortionary subsidies (e.g. on sugar) in other countries.

translating national consensus on priorities into policies for implementation. The other four countries continue — at varying levels of intensity — iterative processes to identify policy changes necessary to implement long-term plans.

It is worth stopping for a moment to note the experience of Ireland, on its continuing path of national dialogue. Ireland endured very poor economic performance for several years before initiating a process of national dialogue in the mid-1990s. Key stakeholders — e.g. labour unions, government, social organisations, private sector — went through difficult negotiations to identify necessary changes to regain macroeconomic balance. Each group made concessions in order to follow through. Significant economic improvements resulted (e.g. growth rates exceeding 8 per cent). Increasing inflation (i.e. close to 5 per cent) has recently sent stakeholders back to the negotiating table. How it will come out is not yet known.

Integration

Choices about national policies and use of public resources are inherently political decisions. For this reason, it matters how national dialogue processes are related to a country's formal political process. If national dialogue processes and prevailing political structures are not somehow linked, then moving beyond dialogue to action may prove particularly problematic.

The presence of both the governing and opposition bodies — while unlikely ever to be a perfect marriage — is important. If consensus is built, participation of diverse political constituencies can be crucial to implementation of national dialogue recommendations. “Ownership” of the agenda becomes non-partisan, which can facilitate implementation. Participation of competing political parties offers a certain built-in accountability function.

In three of the six countries discussed here, there is a fairly clear relationship between national dialogue and the formal political structure. In Bolivia and the Dominican Republic, political parties have been at the table, although, in the Dominican Republic, the opposition did not actively join until the latest iteration. In Vietnam, the political structure clearly owns the process that has unfolded.

Romania is at a different stage in its experience. The country is in a political as well as economic transition. Relations between the executive and parliamentary arms of government tend to be antagonistic. Further, the executive branch is comprised of both the Presidency and the Cabinet, with the latter chaired by the prime minister. These two can be at odds with each other if the party dominating the parliamentary elections does not also win the presidential election. This has complicated — and weakened — the national dialogue process and poses a challenge to the country in moving from “dialogue, as in talking” to “dialogue, as in negotiating agreed action”.

Preliminary Lessons

There is a large body of experience on national dialogue. In just these six countries, there is a wealth of knowledge to be gained. While no recipe for success can be defined, 18 months of observing national dialogue processes in CDF pilot countries highlights three points:

Defining actions and retaining a focus on results may be the biggest challenge of consultation processes. This is especially true where processes are newly emerging and there may be a tendency to associate high expectations with consultation. It is relatively much more easy to get agreement on principles than it is actually to make decisions which distribute costs of policy reform. Without a focus on action and results, however, processes run the risk of becoming cycles of discussions, yielding little but frustration.

In addition to designing and managing the process to identify actions, ensuring transparency can mitigate these risks. If key messages are clear from the start — i.e. that the intention is to define actions, certain processes will be used to define those actions, identifiable individuals/units will have responsibility for following and results will be disseminated — the process is most likely to benefit from motivated and effective stakeholders.

Capacity building must be a priority. Particular skills are important for having productive national dialogue processes. Probably the two most important among them are facilitation in the context of broad interaction and consultative processes, and policy analysis. Facilitation skills are necessary to the process, but are not required of all participants. On the other hand, if maximum benefits are to be derived from dialogue, all stakeholders must have some capacity for — or access to capacity for — policy analysis. Complementary capacities which need support in many countries are: management of policy reform and dissemination results.

Viable institutional rules to support the process must be in place. Put another way, national dialogue processes must be “institutionalised” — set up to sustain stakeholder engagement through inevitable iterations. Without this aspect, there is substantial risk that countries will be unable to get the full benefits of gaining actionable consensus on — and effective implementation of — development priorities.

Civil Society Participation and the Poverty Eradication Plan of Uganda

Walter Eberlei

Introduction

The development of Uganda over the past one and a half decades is generally seen as something of an exception in Africa. Politically the country has, after two decades of dictatorship and civil wars, and after the takeover by the *National Resistance Movement* (NRM) under the current President, Yoweri Museveni, undergone enormous stabilisation. The country has since been following a democratic transition course. Some important features of the political development are the new constitution (in force since 1995) which has emerged after several years of broad-based societal debate; parliamentary and presidential elections which observers have predominantly referred to as being fair and democratic; a largely free press, and a very lively civil society.

Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world. Roughly half of the population lives in absolute poverty. The economy has, over the past few years, however, shown constant growth rates. The enormous dependence on development aid remains, however. More than 50 per cent of the national governmental budget is financed by the international donor community. Because of its willingness to carry out strict structural adjustment policies, and because of Uganda's political significance in East Africa, the donor community has repeatedly supported Uganda with debt re-scheduling and debt cancellation. In 1996, Uganda was the first country to be granted debt cancellation within the framework of the HIPC initiative.

As early as 1996, the Ugandan government announced that it would use the funds freed by debt cancellation for fighting poverty within the country. This was put into practice in the development of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) in 1997 (revised in 2000), and by the Poverty Action Fund (PAF), a mechanism for controlling financial resources freed by debt relief and for fighting poverty.

Both the PEAP and the PAF contain participatory elements. The government has invited civil society to participate actively in designing and implementing these instruments. Uganda was thus a model for the basic idea underlying the decisions made at the 1999 Cologne World Economic Summit, which envisaged a linking of debt cancellation and future development aid to poverty reduction strategies for the poorest countries. This chapter examines how civil society participation within the framework of PEAP was implemented.

Civil Society in Uganda

In Uganda about 3 300 NGOs are currently registered officially. This number has grown steeply over the last few years (from 700 in 1992). Registration is carried out by the National Board for Non-Governmental Organisations which functions as an inter-ministerial working group with a secretariat in the Ministry of the Interior.

NGOs in Uganda extend from small organisations based mainly on voluntary work and operating on a very limited scale, to larger NGOs which are active in various parts of the country and have offices staffed by full-time employees. There are notable differences between indigenous and foreign NGOs. The latter have, as a rule, comparably very good financial and personnel bases. Some foreign NGOs, notably Oxfam, have played an important role in the development of poverty eradication policies. Several hundred indigenous NGOs have joined together since 1988 in the Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA) for networking, information exchange, training programmes, research and lobbying on poverty issues in particular, and economic and social policy in general.

In 2000, the Uganda National NGO Forum was officially registered. This new network invites both indigenous and foreign NGOs to become members (by the end of the first year there were about 600 members and 17 district councils). The Uganda Debt Network (UDN) has 70 members, and is both a network and a registered NGO. UDN has strongly advocated comprehensive debt cancellation both nationally and internationally, and has argued in favour of the freed financial resources being applied to poverty eradication.

Churches

Most Ugandans are Christian. About 70 per cent belong to the Roman Catholic Church, to the Anglican Church, to one of the other Protestant Churches or to the Orthodox Church. Muslims represent 16 per cent, and indigenous religions are also found. The three large Christian churches have a common forum in the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC).

The relationship between church and state has been affected by various historical events, and by the fact that the churches concentrate very strongly on their interior life and on their differences (e.g. the role of condoms in the anti-AIDS policy of the government). The UJCC has, however, drawn attention to itself in two areas: the organisation of election monitoring and civic education with regard to elections; and through the annual ecumenical meeting of the bishops of the three member churches, which attracts a high degree of public attention. Here subjects such as the eradication of poverty, democratisation and peace policies have been debated.

The Media

Independent and pluralistic media are a pre-condition for a vibrant civil society. Uganda partly meets this prerequisite. Both in print and in electronic media plurality exists. One study concludes that the media act as a control body for the government, although the government keeps the upper hand in every respect. A number of legal restrictions impede what could be completely free journalistic work. However, various newspapers, magazines and broadcasting stations are vehicles for public political debate and are thus of significant importance for the political activities of civil society. The Internet so far plays a significant role only in Kampala. For Kampala-based NGOs, however, the link with international civil society has been enormously expanded by the Internet.

Characteristics of Civil Society Involvement in Uganda

The Colonial Legacy and Political Retreat in Times of Repression (Up to 1986)

The attitude of the colonial power — which, in order to strengthen its own authority, degraded the people to passivity — was initially retained by the new governmental elite in the post-colonial system. Worse for the development of civil society, only a few years after independence Uganda passed into a phase of political repression which lasted for two decades. This led to political abstinence or a complete retreat from the political sphere, while parts of the opposition elite went into exile or “into the bush”.

The “Movement Regime” and Civil Society

The relationship between the movement-based government and civil society is ambivalent. On the one hand, the NRM regime has shown itself from the outset to be open to democratic participation. This is particularly well rooted at the local and regional levels in the respective councils. Toleration of civil society actors beside them is difficult for many, and is felt to be an attack on the political heritage of the NRM revolution and current political leaders. The system therefore attempts to integrate individuals and even whole civil society institutions into the movement, or to bind them

closely to the movement. NGO political activities are watched with suspicion, and are sometimes suppressed. On the other hand, particularly at the national level, the political value of NGOs is recognised and they are used for legitimising the political system — internally, but more importantly *vis-à-vis* donors. Moreover, the existence of so many NGOs can be used as an argument against the widening of rights for political parties.

Dependence on Foreign Donors

Ugandan NGOs have very few opportunities to raise financial resources inside the country. This has led to a high dependence upon foreign donors.

The Socio-Cultural Dimension: The City/Country Gap

Political life is, despite serious attempts at decentralisation, still massively concentrated in the capital, Kampala. The government and parliament are located here, along with all of the important media, all of the major associations and NGOs, all of the diplomats and donors and all of the major research and educational institutions. The political elite of the country — civil society included — is based, and acts largely in Kampala.

The Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP)

The First Poverty Eradication Plan (1997-2000)

The Museveni government applied for debt cancellation in the mid-1990s, promising to use freed resources for the urgent fight against poverty. Uganda has repeatedly benefited from debt rescheduling and cancellation within the framework of the HIPC I and HIPC II initiatives. As a result of the Enhanced HIPC Initiative after the Cologne G7 Summit, the country received far-reaching debt relief for fiscal year 2000/01, with government expecting savings of \$100 million.

In 1997, the government submitted a first programme with the ambitious title, *Poverty Eradication Action Plan* (PEAP). The government has insisted on the term poverty “eradication” — arguing that the term poverty “reduction” is too weak. The government aims to reduce the proportion of absolutely poor persons from the current 44 per cent to below 10 per cent by 2017. At the end of 1999, the government published a new draft plan, and invited the country, in particular civil society actors, to discuss it.

The Central Actors

The first PEAP was developed by the government. Participation of civil society had been requested in advance, but only to a limited extent. It can be assumed that the IMF and World Bank were also involved in its formulation. The revision of the PEAP in 2000, on the other hand, was different. The draft was published by the Ministry of

Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) in December 1999 and civil society was requested to make its contribution to the preparation of the final version. During the months January to May 2000, a Civil Society Task Force, which had been organised by the Uganda Debt Network and Oxfam, worked on proposals for the improvement of the PEAP.

The MFPED organised five regional two-day workshops with official representatives of the 45 districts of the country in May. These were intended to prepare district authorities for the implementation of PEAP and for processing inputs. International agencies were also involved in the debate. In March, a Consultative Group Meeting (CGM) took place in Kampala. This important donor forum dealt in detail with the PEAP over several days. The importance attributed to this meeting by the Ugandan government can be seen from the repeated and relatively long presence of President Museveni.

Notably, parliament participated only marginally in the consultations. According to the MFPED, parliamentarians were requested to give their comments, but only ten replied and made “very little impact”. A prominent exception was M.P. Winnie Byanyima who repeatedly involved herself in the public debate, in particular with regard to gender questions and poverty eradication.

Structure and Contents of the Revised PEAP 2000

The PEAP contains essentially four parts. First, the national vision and overall goals are explained. Heading the list is a drastic reduction of absolute poverty by 2017. Specific goals are formulated for education, health and empowerment.

Second, PEAP describes the principles and basic features of the Poverty Eradication Strategy:

- creating a political framework for economic growth and development;
- ensuring good governance and security;
- measures which will contribute directly to increasing the incomes of the poor;
- measures which directly improve the quality of life of the poor.

Third, PEAP describes economic, financial and budgetary implications for the implementation of the strategy. Of particular importance from the point of view of participation is the Poverty Action Fund. And fourth, statements are made about the monitoring of PEAP.

Both NGOs and donors described the PEAP as being a very well thought-out plan, distinguished by its long-term strategic orientation as well as by its consistency. However, critical voices drew attention to the fact that economic growth had so far hardly benefited the poorest. From this point of view, the absence of measures for the creation of income equality was seen as a weakness of the PEAP, and a feature which made it similar to earlier growth-oriented structural adjustment programmes.

Implementation of the PEAP

The transformation of the plan into real policy started in 1997, after the approval of the first PEAP. With regard to the governmental budget, central importance is given to the Poverty Action Fund (PAF), set up during the 1998/99 fiscal year. This fund focuses on measures to fight poverty, and is fed from the savings resulting from debt cancellation, as well as from additional development aid resources. The growing importance of this fund is made clear by the following figures:

Table 3.1. Development of the Uganda Government Poverty Action Fund

	1998/9	1999/00	2000/1	2001/2	2002/3
Amount (\$ million)	96.79	193.01	315.85	361.62	447.68
Percentage of the budget	22.0	26.2	29.2	30.8	32.2

Source: MFPEd. The enhanced HIPC Initiative is taken into account.

Additional measures of poverty eradication are financed from the PAF:

- measures for the improvement of the quality of life for poor people (e.g. upgrading of health centres, improvement of access to water in rural areas, construction of schools and classrooms, teacher training);
- measures for the improvement of incomes for the poor (e.g. further implementation of land reform, micro finance programmes).

A considerable part of these measures was initially planned at the national level and implemented at the district level. In future, however, PEAP/PAF mechanisms are to be implemented to a greater extent at the district level.

Civil Society Participation within the Framework of the PEAP

Three years after the first PEAP came into force, the plan was subjected to a revision which was designed as a participatory process. In December 1999, the government submitted a draft for a revised PEAP and expressly invited civil society to participate in the discussion. On the initiative of Oxfam and the UDN, an NGO workshop took place in early January 2000 which was attended by 45 NGOs. Here a Civil Society Task Force for the Revision of PEAP was constituted, in which ten NGOs and research institutions are involved. UDN was selected as lead agency, and a three-person, full-time team was located in the UDN office. The work of the team was financed by the NGOs involved, as well as by the World Bank and DFID.

After mid-January 2000, members of the task force regularly attended meetings of the Steering and Drafting Committee at the Ministry of Finance, which became the central forum for the dialogue between government and civil society. During the months February to April 2000, the task force organised a number of events, including

eight regional consultations in order to involve civil society actors from rural regions in the discussion process. At these two-day regional consultations, a total of 644 participants (including 239 women) from 42 of 45 districts took part. Besides information on the PEAP process, discussion of poverty eradication priorities was the central topic. The government draft served as a focus. Generally, the vast majority of participants agreed with the PEAP specifications. On some aspects there were, however, concerns:

- participants stated that they could not see any effect of economic growth on the situation of the poorest. It was demanded that PEAP must be more specific on programmes for poverty eradication;
- the cost of medical treatment was viewed by representatives from poorer districts as very problematic;
- concerns were expressed with regard to the capacity of regional authorities to implement a truly pro-poor policy. The subject of corruption arose repeatedly as a considerable problem.

The regional consultations were seen by the UDN and other NGO actors as extremely fruitful and important for the PEAP debate. The results were documented in detail and were presented both in writing and orally in dialogue with the government.

At the end of March 2000, members of the task force attended the Consultative Group Meeting of the governmental donor community. Concerns included: the government's NGO policy; lack of institutional safeguarding of dialogue between government and civil society; and the need for adequate donor financial resources for the implementation of PEAP — clearly tied to the Poverty Action Fund in order to prevent money from being used for other purposes than for the eradication of poverty. Finally, in mid-May 2000, the task force had an opportunity to present the summarised positions of civil society on the PEAP in a concluding major workshop with the MFPED.

With regard to participation in the context of PEAP, reference should also be made to three further elements in the overall process:

First, the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) which started in 1998. This research process has been carried out in co-operation between government, civil society and some foreign donors. By 1998/1999, teams had been sent out to obtain qualitative statements on poverty and its eradication, in direct talks with the poorest sectors of the population. The government delegated leadership for the implementation of UPPAP to Oxfam. The first interim results from the UPPAP were incorporated into discussions on the revision of the PEAP.

Second, the participation of civil society actors in development, implementation and monitoring of sector programmes relating to PEAP. The government, for example, invited NGOs to contribute to a new Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture. The situation was similar in the water and sanitation sector. In both sectors the NGOs involved reported that the government was very open to specific policy proposals.

Third, the process for the annual preparation of the national government budget has been increasingly opened up to the participation of NGOs. The Uganda Debt Network and other NGOs are regularly involved in discussions with government on the budget. In 2000, UDN was in particular demand with regard to the information policy concerning the budget. After consultations with NGOs, the MFPED published a brochure on the budget process (*Citizens' Guide*), in order to make more participation possible.

Participation from the Viewpoint of the Actors

From the government side, the contribution of civil society to the PEAP revision was seen to be very positive. Minister of Finance Ssendaula, in a letter to the CSO PEAP Task Force, stated: "Government in general, and my Ministry in particular, acknowledge the very valuable contributions that civil society have made, particularly in the PEAP revision. The wealth of information and knowledge about local development issues that civil society shared with us during the revision exercise greatly enriched the revised PEAP." Staff at the MFPED said that many NGO positions came very close to their own ideas concerning the modernisation of Uganda.

The CSO PEAP Task Force also drew favourable comment. Civil society actors clearly succeeded in influencing both the revision process and the contents of the PEAP. In fact the handwriting of civil society could be seen clearly on several points, for example in the areas of employment policy, security and conflict resolution, and the problem area of "child-headed households". On the other hand, it was said that goals concerning the institutionalisation of participation, a stronger pro-poor taxation policy, and financial issues in the health system were not reached.

Representatives of various NGOs agreed that they were consulted in a very serious way. The government, they felt, was clearly open for constructive co-operation with NGO partners in the country's development process. Referring to individual points, there were, however, also a number of critical remarks. On PEAP content, two aspects stand out:

- the basic orientation of the PEAP was said to be still based on economic growth, liberalisation and integration into the world market. While some NGOs thought this created uncertainty concerning the prospects for success of the PEAP, others felt that with this orientation, the poverty eradication strategy was already more or less pre-programmed for failure;
- a criticism was expressed by representatives of women's organisations that gender aspects were inadequately addressed in the PEAP, and that gender-specific goals and indicators were missing. For example, no special importance was attached to the need for girls to catch up with regard to school enrolment. Land ownership, domestic violence and other issues had been excluded.

In addition, a number of critical remarks were made regarding the PEAP process:

- there was enormous time pressure;

- access to information for the process had been markedly improved as compared with earlier processes, but was still deficient. Documents were available only in English, but not in the country’s major languages, of which there are at least four;
- some said that the general political situation and the NGO policy of the government still made real participation difficult. One NGO activist said she occasionally asked herself, “Am I politically safe?” “Then,” she said, “the scissors in the head started working”;
- participation of socially relevant groups was, it was said, not representative, and was dependent upon incidental contacts and flows of information;
- representatives of women’s organisations complained that the integration of women was deficient;
- some also asked about the fact that parliament had not been systematically involved.

From the point of view of the CSO PEAP Task Force as well as of other NGOs, there were some self-critical insights with regard to their experience:

- there was a danger that participation served to define an NGO’s own profile more clearly and allowed it to pursue its own interests;
- the balance between co-operation with, and criticism of government is difficult, and could endanger the autonomy of civil society;
- because of their involvement in political decision-making processes, the power of some NGOs had grown; they should be willing and able to be held publicly accountable with regard to the use of this influence;
- NGOs, it was said, did some of their homework rather badly. They were not prepared for detailed analysis and concrete policy proposals; sometimes only “hot air” was produced;
- there were also weaknesses where political correctness and deference to government were concerned;
- criticism was also levelled at the very influential role of Oxfam (with simultaneous recognition of Oxfam’s important input). Small indigenous NGOs were, it was stated, hardly in a position to make their voice heard.

Assessment

The participation of civil society actors within the framework of the PEAP can be assessed in different ways. On the positive side:

- the openness of the government to CSO participation in recent years has grown. In comparison to the formulation of the first PEAP in 1997, CSOs enjoyed considerably more participation in the revision. The positive experience in

co-operation between government and civil society in the context of the Poverty Action Fund (PAF) has promoted growing openness, as has the related sustained pressure from the donor community;

- the government is apparently willing to include specific proposals from civil society in the PEAP. Also, critical aspects raised by civil society (e.g. the subject of corruption) are not only taken up, but are constructively processed;
- the participatory processes have led to a growing capacity in civil society and thus contain a democratising element which can bear further fruit in the future;
- through the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project, there is an enhancement of direct participation by the poorest parts of the population;
- the government is actively promoting further development of participatory processes at the district level.

On the other hand, the following points are noted on the more negative side:

- the participation of civil society actors is still very strongly tailored to the educated elite based in Kampala, as well as to organisations which have emerged from it and are supported by it. Large parts of the population are only involved to a slight extent;
- the time pressure, imposed mainly from outside, has confronted civil society with considerable difficulties;
- the extremely low analytical and networking capacities of civil society have prevented satisfactory participation;
- as civil society has sought co-operation, it has tried to avoid conflict on fundamental points (e.g. the fundamental orientation of economic policy). So far representatives of civil society, in particular UDN, have frequently been “coalition partners” of the government *vis-à-vis* the donor community. Depending on the degree to which debate on the use of freed money occurs, it can be expected that conflicts will increase between government and civil society. The viability of these relationships will only then be seen;
- understanding of participation as a whole remains unclear. On a scale from simple information on the one hand, to shared decision-making on the other, representatives of the government naturally tend towards weaker forms of participation, while NGOs insist on far-reaching opportunities for influence;
- the process of participation rests on a very weak institutional and legal basis, and is thus subject to a wide range of interpretations. CSO involvement in the Poverty Action Fund is a positive development, but it has just as little legal security as the involvement of civil society actors in the revision of the PEAP and other planning instruments. Participation is therefore still subject to a certain arbitrariness. The strongest institutionalised instrument of participation — parliament — is only marginally involved in the PEAP process.

The Future Role of Civil Society in PEAP Implementation

Central Tasks: Monitoring and Political Dialogue

After approval of the PEAP by cabinet, implementation will require all the attention of civil society. The catchwords for the future are monitoring and political dialogue. In this context all of the planning instruments for the eradication of poverty policy are to be considered (PEAP, sector plans, district plans, budgets at national level and district level, UPPAP). Building on this, it will be the task of civil society to strengthen political dialogue, to make “the voices of the poor” heard, and to ensure that their concerns are listened to. The experience with the PEAP revision shows that room for participation has indeed emerged, but this must be used professionally and consistently.

Central Problems

Ugandan civil society is, with regard to monitoring and political dialogue, faced with a number of difficult problems:

- resources, in particular for financing full-time staff and for networking throughout the country, are extremely scarce and are not reliable or constant;
- the capacities of civil society organisations are still very weak, despite the progress of recent years. This applies in particular to civil society actors in rural areas;
- countrywide networks of civil society are still inadequately developed. NGOs are, in fact, attempting to carry out further work on the development of networks (the newly founded NGO forum has set itself the task of networking of NGOs throughout the country; other networks such as DENIVA and UDN are making attempts to network at district levels and with Kampala); this networking, however, is still in its beginning;
- the previous point underlines the town/country gap in the field of participation. The problems of resources, capacities and the missing networking further intensify this imbalance;
- the inadequate level of women’s participation is a central problem for a representative approach. UDN showed in its regional consultations of 2000 that the systematic promotion of women within participatory processes can lead to success. The results of the participatory UPPAP study show that a shortfall in the participation of women has profound structural social and economic reasons, and overcoming them will require particular attention;
- the legal framework for civil society, despite the progress, is still uncertain, and the weak institutionalisation of participatory processes constitutes major obstacles to intensified participation. Legal reforms which can create more room for stronger civil society participation remain an important concern.

External Support for the Future Participation of Civil Society within the Framework of the PEAP

Editor's note: the final section of the original version of this chapter was addressed primarily to the German government and German NGOs. Generic ideas and recommendations have been distilled from that version because they are more widely applicable.

Participation of Uganda's civil society should be intensified in order to promote the eradication of poverty. This calls for greater support by international governmental and non-governmental development policy and co-operation.

Political Dialogue at the International Level

- the time pressure on the PRSP processes is enormous and is a great obstacle for civil society participation. In this respect, more flexibility on the side of the creditors would be highly desirable;
- intensified co-ordination among donors is viewed by the Ugandan side not only as an advantage, but sometimes also as a threat. Consultative Group Meetings should not be used to reinforce the bilateral exercise of power. The participation of NGOs from the South and from the North at these meetings should ensure transparency and fairness in the negotiating process;
- the Ugandan government has barely changed the macroeconomic basis of the PEAP in order to avoid a conflict with the IMF. This needs to be considered from the aspect of *ownership*: the principle of ownership also applies to macroeconomics;
- the relationship between macroeconomics and poverty eradication requires more attention at the international level. The unquestioning acceptance of old macroeconomic concepts as a basis for poverty eradication is not good enough;
- for poor countries such as Uganda that are developing long-term, comprehensive poverty reduction strategies, a continuous flow of new financial aid will remain indispensable. At the same time the influx of new loans must be addressed. NGOs in Uganda fear this will lead to new debt repayment problems.

Political Dialogue with the Ugandan Government

Opportunities for political dialogue with the Ugandan government are available through various fora. Issues include the following:

- the legal framework in which NGOs work. Governments can make it clear that civil society should be given a role in the development process (with the current formulation of PEAP/PRSP) not only in the short term or on one occasion, but permanently. Institutionalised participation requires reliable basic legal conditions which create space for the activities of civil society;

- media restrictions in Uganda regularly lead to substantial problems for journalists. A free press is not the luxury of a democratic society, it is an essential prerequisite for the political participation of civil society.

Governmental Development Co-operation

The promotion of civil society institutions and processes has so far been a peripheral aspect of much development co-operation. Donors could do more:

- it should be agreed with the Ugandan government that the promotion of civil society participation is an important area of development co-operation;
- donors could make an active effort to promote civil society participation by means of individual measures, or through the intermediary of foundations or Northern NGOs;
- in bilateral development co-operation, the participation of civil society should be enhanced;
- with regard to strategies for development co-operation with Uganda, three things should be checked. First, compatibility with the PEAP should be ensured. Second, overlapping or contradictory approaches of different donors should be excluded. Third, participation should be strengthened.

Non-Governmental Development Co-operation

For Northern NGOs, there is a wide range of possibilities for supporting the participation of civil society in the country's eradication of poverty:

- *human capacity building* measures: in particular, the implementation of the PEAP at district level will require great efforts to develop knowledge and skills at the regional level (e.g. knowledge of budgetary matters, lobbying and public relations);
- measures for the systematic *empowerment* of hitherto powerless people: women (in relation to men), juveniles (in relation to adults), electors (in relation to the elected), citizens (in relation to civil servants who frequently hold antiquated ideas of the state and authority);
- development of institutional capacities at the national level: UDN, for example, is considering whether a national Public Information Centre could be set up to function as an information broker for civil society;
- *local networking*: the various networks require financial support. Church-based NGOs should endeavour to support existing church networks. Exchanges between networks in Europe and Uganda could yield additional benefits.

Civil Society and the Education System in Ghana

Decline in the Ghanaian Education System

Emmanuel Kuyole

Ghana's 1992 constitution guarantees to "all persons... the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities". To achieve this right, the constitution provides that basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all. In terms of post-primary education, the constitution specifies equality of opportunity for all and the progressive introduction of free education, even at these levels.

Education provides the means for people to acquire knowledge, to absorb new ideas and to develop the cognitive skills necessary to acquire technical capabilities. It is therefore a key factor in human development because of its role as facilitator in the process of enlarging people's choices, and because of its intrinsic value. Education is the most powerful weapon for fighting poverty. At the personal level it saves lives, gives individuals the opportunity to improve their lives, and it gives them a voice. Primary education is of special significance because it is the foundation for learning higher skills, and it is to this level that even the most disadvantaged in society have greatest access.

This chapter outlines the decline in Ghana's education system during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and how civil society and international NGOs worked together on education sector reform through the development of a national education campaign. The first part of the chapter was written by Emmanuel Kuyole, a member of the Ghanaian NGO, the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC). The second part was written from an Oxfam perspective by Tony Burdon.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the education system in Ghana was one of the best in sub-Saharan Africa. It included a policy of providing education for all, with free primary and middle school education, free tuition at secondary level, and free tuition

and lodging at university level. Although the reality was more limited than this, access to education increased throughout the country. Primary and middle schools were built everywhere, new teacher-training colleges were established, and by 1973 Ghana had three full-fledged universities. Scholarship schemes enabled many Ghanaians to be educated at home and abroad. The Northern Education Scheme, for example, enabled poor children from the northern part of the country to enjoy special scholarships.

The economic decline of the late 1960s through to the early 1980s led to a reversal. By 1983, government expenditure on education had fallen to 1.4 per cent of GDP from 6.4 per cent in 1976. There was a lack of expansion of physical infrastructure, with deterioration in existing structures at all levels. There was a lack of textbooks and other instructional material. The percentage of trained primary teachers dropped from over 90 per cent in 1965 to 72 per cent in 1979. School enrolment and learning outcomes fell, and the proportion of school age children in school fell from 75 per cent in 1965 to 69.9 per cent in 1979.

Education reforms were introduced in 1987 to expand access, improve quality and enhance managerial and budgeting practices. The underlying rationale for the programme, however, was different. It aimed to minimise the cost to government. And by 1994, it had become clear that the reforms had not achieved all their objectives, especially those of universal access and quality. There was, nevertheless, a significant expansion in basic education, and between 1987 and 1998, there was steady expansion of education facilities at all levels in both the public and private sectors.

Between 1987 and 1993, poverty rose dramatically from 9 to 23 per cent in Accra, according to the Ghana Statistical Service. This contributed to the large number of street children now seen on the streets of Accra. According to the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Directorate in 1997, the phenomenon of street children has further increased and is becoming more widespread. It is estimated that 10 000 children live and work in Accra alone. These figures are expected to rise, given that poverty has risen throughout the country — making it more difficult for parents to care for and send their children to school, particularly as the cost of education keeps rising.

Indeed, a major phenomenon of the current educational reforms is the increasing privatisation of education, with potentially serious consequences in terms of accessibility for the poor, equality of opportunity, and the role of education as a social good. In all regions of Ghana, school fees constitute the main reason for children not enrolling in, or dropping out of, school.

The sector is riddled with growing inequalities, with the rural areas seriously disadvantaged compared to the urban. Children of the poor are more excluded than those of the rich; girls have less access and drop out sooner than boys; people with disabilities face more constraints than those without; public schools are declining in quality compared with the private. While gender gaps are narrowing in primary and junior secondary schools (JSS), the number of girls at secondary level is 39 per cent of the total, and at tertiary level it is only 27 per cent.

An estimated 13 per cent of school age children in rural areas have no primary school in their community. Thirty-six per cent of rural children have to walk between seven and 15 kilometres to get to the nearest JSS. Dropout rates in the north are higher than in the south. In East Gonja, for example, 74 per cent of boys and 83 per cent of girls drop out at the primary level. In Tamale, only half of the school age children are actually in school. Twelve years after the introduction of the reforms, 984 basic schools are without any structure, holding classes in the open air; 70 per cent of the JSS in the rural areas are without workshops and 41 per cent of the children in basic education facilities have no chairs or tables.

Since the beginning of the reform in 1987, the recurrent budget allocation to education has increased. Donor support to the sector has also been quite substantial, but in terms of GDP, government expenditure on education has declined from 6.4 per cent in 1976 to an average of about 4 per cent, and per capita expenditure has also progressively declined. The distribution of the education budget has favoured basic education. Between 1995 and 1997, 50-57 per cent of actual expenditure went to basic education, 28-35 per cent to secondary and about 14.5 per cent into tertiary education. However, 90 per cent of the funds allocation to basic education goes to the payment of salaries, leaving little for non-salary items. And there are very wide geographic inequalities in the allocation of resources.

The current 8.3 per cent of total government expenditure on education is inadequate. Both the IMF and the World Bank recognise education as the cornerstone of economic growth and social development, and as the principal means of improving the welfare of individuals. Basic education is its foundation, and therefore poor basic education undermines the entire process, not only of human capital development, but the entire development process. On these premises, it is imperative to maintain an adequate investment in basic education. In spite of this, basic education in Ghana has suffered progressive decline, principally because of chronic under-investment. Part of the problem has resulted from the IMF's fixation with financial stability, budget surpluses and cost-sharing in the provision of social services.

Of late, the IMF has redefined its high quality growth strategy as dependent not only on macroeconomic stabilisation and liberalisation, but on good governance and sound social policies as well. This reflection of social concerns in programme design constitutes a paradigm shift on the part of the IMF. Since 1995, the IMF has included education as a conditionality in the structural adjustment agreement with Ghana. This provided for the Basic Education Sector Improvement Programme that began in 1996. Since 1996, the World Bank has supported the Primary School Development Project (PSDP). However further conditionalities, such as privatisation, retrenchment and cost-recovery — prescribed by the IMF — have rendered the education conditionality impotent.

Ghana's total external debt at the end of September 1999 stood at approximately \$6.68 billion, of which \$5.11 billion was owed to multilateral agencies. Between 1994 and 1998, Ghana paid in external debt service \$667 million. Debt servicing to the IMF averaged 25 per cent of total debt servicing between 1994 and 1998. There is no doubt that debt servicing has been "crowding out" priority social investments, diverting the limited revenues available to overseas creditors.

Oxfam and Ghana's National Education Campaign Coalition

Tony Burdon

The Global Campaign for Education

In October 1999 a broad coalition of international and national development NGOs and teachers' unions joined forces to launch the "Global Campaign for Education" (GCE). The coalition represents organisations active in over a hundred countries, including Oxfam International, Education International, the Global March against Child Labour, ActionAid and dozens of national NGO coalitions in developing countries.

Donor approaches to development support have made substantial progress over recent years. The move towards Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) has enhanced, to some extent, donor co-operation. The recent shift, supported by many donors, of the IMF and World Bank to the use of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in low-income countries has also been very important for national programming.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) offer an unprecedented opportunity for civil society to influence national policy making. The development of these papers has become the focal point of dialogue between NGOs, parliament, government, and the international community on strategies for poverty reduction. Issues such as market liberalisation, social sector investments, public spending, budget transparency and accountability will be central to this dialogue. PRSPs also offer the chance to ensure that poor people

benefit from growth. Improving the distribution of the benefits of growth will be the only way of achieving the 2015 target of halving poverty in many countries. It is therefore vital that governments, donors, and civil society work to ensure that PRSPs reflect pro-poor policy choices.

PRSPs offers numerous opportunities for civil society. First they provide a framework to prioritise poverty reduction in government, the IMF, World Bank, Regional Development Banks, donor and civil society programming. The framework covers a wide range of policy and practice, from macroeconomic, to education, to governance. They build on existing sector plans and SWAs. PRSPs also provides increased opportunities to ensure that a gender-aware analysis is undertaken in all areas of policy making and implementation.

Second, the PRSP also requires the development of a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) — essentially a three-year rolling budget. Prioritisation within the budget, public spending and monitoring, and efficiency of spending are all important areas highlighted in the PRSP approach. Civil society has a key role to play in budgets, an issue described in Chapter 5, on Tanzania.

Third, while the development of national poverty reduction strategies and the PRSP offer opportunities to influence the content and implementation of policy and spending, it also offers the potential for enhancing the participation of civil society. The process of developing PRSPs and the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), as well as commitments to civil society participation made at the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000, all have the potential to deepen civil society participation within government, and within the international financial institutions and donors.

Looking beyond low-income countries, CDF principles may ultimately underpin World Bank programming in middle income countries, allowing civil society increased opportunities for influencing national policy in countries such as Indonesia or Ecuador, Peru or India.

This new agenda for development co-operation has big gaps between rhetoric and practice, but major commitments have been made. The new agenda promotes civil society involvement, and offers key opportunities for civil society, South and North, to influence policy and programming — whether this is macroeconomic policy, or budget development, or in sector plans such as education.

The binding element is a deep concern about the lack of official action to achieve quality education for all. GCE members agreed jointly to mobilise public opinion and lobby together in order to hold governments accountable to promises made at various international meetings and world conferences.

The Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC) is a member of the international effort. Comprising several Ghanaian NGOs, it has mobilised civil society organisations across the country to address factors that constrain access to quality education for all, and to cultivate a more democratic school environment. It has conducted studies on the state of basic education in Ghana, and it has established regular communications with the Ministry of Education, aiming to reduce inequities and to halt the decay in the sector.

Developing an International Campaign on Education

Oxfam International started to develop an education campaign in 1997. It was the first campaign that all of the 11 Oxfam members worked collectively on, in an attempt to increase our impact. We selected education because it is a key ingredient to breaking the cycle of poverty, because it saves lives, it improves the livelihoods of poor people, and it gives people a voice — vital for democratic and accountable government.

We looked at the promises made at the World Education Forum in Jomtien in 1990, and at a context in which we estimated that 125 million children were still out of school. Trends showed that the DAC targets in education would not be met, with 75 million children predicted to be still out of school in 2015. We noted that at Jomtien the world's governments promised free primary education by 2000, but failed to agree on a global plan to deliver on that promise.

We looked at barriers to providing children with a good education — the lack of national investment in basic education; the poor quality of education, the problem of school fees barring poor children from school. We noted that the debt of poor countries undermined investments in poverty reduction, with many countries paying more on debt than on health and basic education. We looked at aid to education — where OECD commitments to 2015 targets in education are undermined by low aid spending. We believe that OECD governments should increase aid to basic education from a current figure of around 2 per cent of total aid, to at least 8 per cent.

And we looked at the role of the IMF and World Bank, where adjustment programmes in low-income countries had led to worsening enrolment rates, particularly in Africa. We also proposed solutions, in particular the development of a Global Action Plan to provide a framework for ensuring that all countries serious about education would be provided with the resources and support required to achieve the international development goals.

Early in the development of this campaign, we held meetings with like-minded civil society organisations around the world, including national organisations such as ISODEC in Ghana, which now hosts the secretariat for the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition (GNECC). We agreed to work with others to develop a Global Campaign on Education, made up of civil society organisations all around the world, and we agreed to give focused support to the development of national education coalitions of civil society.

Northern Civil Society Support to the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition

Firstly, we held discussions with ISODEC and members of the growing coalition to see what they were proposing to do, and to see how we could best support this. They were keen to develop a detailed analysis of barriers to delivering good quality education in Ghana, looking at the role of government, regional disparities, and international concerns — debt, the role of adjustment programmes in Ghana. They were keen to build a wide coalition of concerned civil society organisations across the country, and with international NGOs such as Oxfam, ActionAid and World Vision. They had developed a clear strategy for influencing government, donors and international institutions, including use of the media — a very powerful campaign.

The Ghana Education Campaign (GEC) has moved on since its launch in five cities in Ghana. It commissioned an education status report to contribute to the EFA process; it conducted further studies into the impact of decentralisation of education in Ghana, and into the impact of IMF policies on the education sector. All were areas that we supported and which were of interest to Oxfam.

We, and other northern civil society organisations, provided support in a number of ways:

- through direct financing of the GEC from different Oxfam International members — Oxfam in the UK and Novib in the Netherlands, and others — for example, ActionAid and World Vision;
- we also provided advice and views on research areas and strategy, trying to share good practice learnt from other parts of the world;
- we helped the GEC make links to other civil society groups working on education in other countries, and to the Global Campaign;
- expert staff visited to work closely with the GEC on areas of research and analysis, e.g. on IMF programming and the impact on education, or on fees as a barrier to poor people's access to basic education;
- advocacy capacity building workshops were organised to share experiences between various national education coalitions across Africa and globally;
- we worked closely with other northern NGOs to ensure that our support was well co-ordinated and complementary;
- in Ghana, our field staff engaged in campaign development, undertaking local advocacy with government at decentralised and national levels, and our office in Tamale hosted the launch of the campaign in that region.

Sector Strategies

The Ghana Education Campaign, supported by international NGOs such as Oxfam, has helped civil society organisations engage more strongly in the development of the education sector strategy from local to national levels. At local levels, work has been done to promote community involvement in the provision of education — in terms of demand for access, quality, and increased local accountability, but also in terms of ideas for improving school performance. Many of the members of the Coalition are involved in the delivery of education throughout Ghana. Such organisations have much to say about the design of programmes, curriculum development, and the concerns of poorer regions in the development of a strategy and the actual implementation of programmes.

At the national level there has been close engagement with the Ministry of Education on sector design, and growing discussion with donors, particularly the IMF and World Bank. Looking beyond the Ministry of Education has been an important aspect of educational work in Ghana, one which international civil society can contribute to, given its proximity to donors, the IMF and the World Bank. Poverty is a major barrier to education, and many aspects of education cannot be addressed through an education sector plan alone. Improvements in people's livelihoods, in their health, or increases in financing and in the efficiency of spending all have an impact. It is vital therefore to look at other actors in government, and at the actions of donors who have considerable influence on economic reforms. All too frequently in sector discussions, for instance, the role of the Ministry of Finance — which is strongly influenced by IMF programming — is ignored.

Wider civil society engagement in the development of the PRSP (as well as the CDF pilot) in Ghana is also promoting closer civil society involvement in sector strategies, and wider policy development. The PRSP can only be as good as its core components, and therefore must closely integrate well-designed sector strategies and programmes, with key policy frameworks.

A major lesson of the Ghana Education Campaign is that improvements in education in Ghana are also closely linked to international action on poverty reduction, specifically in education.

Global Civil Society and Education For All

While numerous activities have taken place in Ghana, we worked with the GEC and other civil society organisations to help develop the Global Campaign on Education. In early 1998 the campaign was launched around the world, in Accra, London, Washington, Johannesburg and Delhi. The launches and subsequent media coverage highlighted education concerns, raising public awareness and a desire for action.

A key focus for the campaign was the Dakar World Education Forum. The Ghana Education Campaign, coalitions across Africa and internationally, and the Global Campaign on Education engaged heavily in the build-up to Dakar. This was done by trying to influence the position of governments prior to the meeting; by participating in regional EFA fora from a civil society perspective, then participating in Dakar as part of a global movement of civil society organisations concerned with education. The Global Campaign was recognised as an important input to the Dakar meeting.

The World Education Forum made some important commitments that the Global Campaign had been pushing for. Firstly, primary education should be free, compulsory and of good quality — all areas of importance to the Ghana Education Campaign. Dakar agreed on an important framework for action, particularly in three areas:

- National plans: governments agreed to develop or strengthen national plans through a transparent and democratic process, in consultation with all stakeholders — including civil society — by 2002. Such plans would reflect “a commitment to achieving education for all goals and targets at the earliest possible date, and no later than 2015.”
- Guaranteed financing: the international community agreed that “no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources.”
- And to put that principle into practice the Framework says: “The international community will deliver on (its) collective commitment by developing with immediate effect a global initiative aimed at developing the strategies and mobilising the resources needed to provide effective support to national efforts.”

What this means in Ghana is that a well-designed education sector strategy, supported by appropriate budget allocations, will have any financing gaps met by the international community through increased aid and debt relief.

This commitment to education is a reflection of what may ultimately be possible in the future with overall development support — where aid can be provided as budget support to well designed poverty reduction strategies, coupled to strong budget frameworks that integrate the costs of meeting the 2015 targets and others.

The challenge for Ghana in education is to develop a good strategy, and to implement it with political vision, starting perhaps with the immediate provision of free basic education.

Key Lessons

Looking at our experience in Ghana and in other countries, and not just in education, we offer the following lessons and recommendations on how to promote and strengthen civil society partnerships in national programmes. The following list is directed to donors and civil society, but much of it would apply to developing country governments as well.

Problems with Civil Society Participation

Frequently civil society organisations perceive efforts at partnership or participation as superficial consultation — in Malawi for instance the government had initially planned to hold a one-day workshop to consult civil society on the PRSP, providing NGOs with a draft a few days before. Frequently civil society is consulted on poverty and social policies, rather than on macroeconomic areas, market reform, or budgets. Yet civil society organisations have growing expertise and valuable contributions to make in these influential policy areas.

Some of these problems arise because of time or planning cycle constraints, and some from the attitude of technocrats, both in government and among donors. Officials worry about opening up on early drafts of documents in case there is serious criticism. Frequently key strategic meetings ignore the views of civil society, while civil society is invited to engage in more formal but less influential processes. This is expensive and time-consuming, for governments that are already heavily over-burdened, for donors, and for civil society organisations, many of which have limited time and capacity to engage in policy making.

From our experience, civil society partnerships in national programming can be a win-win situation, although this requires considerable effort on all sides. Governments gain from civil society views, leading to better quality programming and an increased poverty focus, with improved awareness of the impact of policies on the poor. Openness demystifies government policy making, improves wider understanding, and increases public ownership and support for the government programme. Accountability is improved, and ultimately aids efficiency in the use of scarce resources. All of the above can lead to increased effectiveness in reducing poverty and in responding to changing circumstances of the poor.

Donors

Donors have recognised that civil society can help to give poor people a voice, and can help to protect their interests. This is a vital ingredient of poverty eradication around the world:

- donors need to do more to promote the participation of civil society in policy making, implementation and monitoring. Some are far ahead in this area, but there is long way to go, and this must move beyond lip service to action;
- while key responsibility lies with the national government for national and sectoral planning, donors can support civil society involvement, urging governments to open up to the involvement of appropriate organisations in a wide range of areas. This must become an institutionalised process, rather than a one-off event. Such partnerships could include, for instance, a Ministry of Finance-led macroeconomic working group; a working group on the budget; or civil society involvement in poverty monitoring through Participatory Poverty Assessments;
- similar approaches should be adopted when reviewing the implementation of programmes, whereby civil society organisations can play a key role in education or health delivery, in agriculture extension, or micro-credit, or poverty monitoring. While some civil society organisations are strong service providers, many also play a vital role as catalysts for new ideas, as innovators;
- donors should strongly promote the voice of women's organisations in national policy making, and ensure that policy and practice are scrutinised from a gender perspective — something that is largely absent from current PRSPs;

- donor working groups should open up to civil society where appropriate, and donors should push the IMF and the World Bank to include civil society in discussions around national policies;
- donors should share their position papers on key development issues, and on policy development in the IFIs. Donors could use civil society organisations more systematically to undertake research as part of the development of national programmes, or in reviewing the impact of proposed reforms;
- donors should hold consultative group meetings in-country with full civil society participation in planning and follow-up;
- donors should be careful not to overburden civil society with consultation processes. Different donors often call on the same few organisations over and over. Just as there is a need to organise more coherent forms of donor/government interaction, the same is true for donor/civil society interaction;
- donors can help to finance civil society engagement where such costs are prohibitive to government. Donors can promote national and regional fora and provide help with networking. Donors have a role to play too, in financing direct civil society programming.

Civil Society

- the Ghana Education Campaign shows how much can be done through careful design of a campaign, attention to building a coalition, and through good quality research. For effective partnership in national programmes, civil society organisations need to be able to promote a strong and articulate platform for change. This requires good organisation and the development of a coherent and well-informed voice, based on sound analysis. It requires organisations, national and international, to co-operate together for a wider purpose, sometimes subordinating organisational agendas, and profile, to wider objectives.
- while civil society can provide a robust critique of government, donors and IFIs, it is also important that recognition be given to success and progress, and that civil society recognises constraints faced by official actors. While being critical, it is also important to propose practical alternatives. In this way more meaningful, respectful and effective dialogue can take place;
- Northern civil society can play a useful role, helping to support the efforts of national and local organisations. This can involve funding and working closely with national coalitions. Support can be given to civil society participation in government working group meetings, helping civil society to develop positions, and to undertake research and analysis;

- assistance can be provided with finance and technical assistance, but there are other means: collaborative approaches to research can build local research capacity; the development of joint advocacy strategies allows sharing of ideas around targets and strategies to influence them;
- Northern civil society organisations can play a useful role in-country through their own contacts and by influencing government and donors;
- support to international networking and learning is vital; with the growth of civil society organisations around the world there is a range of useful networks that can provide information or help with advocacy;
- for effective partnership, civil society must be accountable. Organisations should do more to adopt codes of good practice. Many NGOs have developed a code of practice for work in humanitarian response situations — for example, the Red Cross and NGO Code of Conduct. This code sets performance criteria and minimum standards for cost-effectiveness and auditing, and the position of an independent ombudsman is being developed. It is vital that civil society is proactive in setting minimum standards in performance and integrity.

Chapter 5

Gender, National Budgeting and Civil Society in Tanzania

This chapter describes the efforts by one donor, Sida, and a coalition of Tanzanian NGOs, led by the Tanzanian Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), to develop improved gender equity and women's empowerment by working on the country's financial and budgetary systems. The first part of the chapter outlines Sida's policies and programmes on gender equity. The second part of the chapter, written by Aggripina Moshia of TGNP, describes the efforts from the civil society perspective. Marginal comments reflect the related views of Sida. The Sida contribution was prepared by Marja Ruohomäki, Programme Officer at the Embassy of Sweden in Tanzania.

The Swedish Approach to Poverty Reduction in Development Co-operation

Marja Ruohomäki

The overriding objective of Sweden's development co-operation is to raise the living standards of the poor. The main responsibility for poverty reduction lies with the government and the people of developing countries.

Sweden views poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon. The perception of the poor themselves constitutes a starting point, which means that poverty is much more than the conventional dimensions of income/consumption and education/health. It also includes risk/vulnerability and voicelessness/powerlessness. Poverty is lack of access to and control over political, social, economic and ecological assets, which are necessary to facilitate empowerment, promote opportunity, and enhance security for poor people. This often implies very different things for women and men — adults,

youth and children. Consequently the gender dimension is imperative for poverty reduction strategies. In the centre is the individual as a subject, not as an object, and his or her right to life with dignity.

Seen in this perspective, development co-operation should facilitate the interplay between the micro and macro level dimensions of development. Accordingly, the reduction of poverty is seen as a complex process which has to be placed in its historical, political, social, economic, cultural, ecological and institutional contexts. It goes beyond pro-poor growth and an equitable distribution of resources. It also involves political and economic power, good governance, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

By stressing the comprehensive nature of poverty reduction, Sweden does not work exclusively with the poorest groups of people. Development co-operation also involves activities that affect the entire society, such as democratisation, macroeconomic stability, financial sector development, environmental care, the empowerment of women and the rights of children — all crucial for sustained poverty reduction.

Human rights, based on a recognition of the rights of individuals and the corresponding responsibilities of the state, are a normative expression of what we want to achieve in our development effort. The rights are codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in subsequent human rights conventions. Respect or disrespect for human rights is therefore a development indicator, and can be used as a tool for analysis and prioritisation. Democracy is the structural answer to what kind of political system is best suited to fulfil the aspirations described in this normative framework. Democracy is a system for the distribution of power and collective decision-making, based on principles of rights and equity.

Development co-operation cannot create democracy and respect for human rights — they must grow from within. But development co-operation can play a key, strategic role in assisting democratic governance by supporting inclusive and transparent political processes and institutions in a society. The rights-based approach to development can be seen as a logical consequence of the development experience of the last decade. Sweden is currently developing modalities to introduce this approach to all development co-operation efforts, bilateral as well as multilateral. Specific funds are allocated to promote democracy and human rights as such. The major challenge is to mainstream human rights values in all co-operation programmes. From the Swedish point of view, an international dialogue on the commitments in human rights conventions is a qualitative prerequisite for success in the global fight against poverty¹.

Swedish support to the Public Financial Management Reform in Tanzania, and particularly the effort to mainstream a gender approach in government budget formulation and monitoring processes, is an effort to support the implementation of this policy in Swedish development co-operation practice. The Ministry of Finance and the Tanzanian Gender Networking Programme, a Tanzanian NGO, are jointly developing an approach to gender-aware budget formulation and monitoring, and Sweden funds the required capacity building. The process has been a good example of a situation where common values are shared by the three parties involved, namely the ministry, the national NGO and the donor.

Mainstreaming Gender in National Planning and Budgeting Processes: The Case of Tanzania

Aggripina Mosha

As in many countries of the world, women and girls have a relatively weak position in Tanzanian society, characterised by unequal opportunities and lack of economic and political power. Patriarchy is an entrenched system governing social relations in Tanzania, in both private and public life. This system of male domination has been internalised and accepted as a reality of life by the majority of men and women, including those in power and decision-making positions. The reality in Tanzania is that young people and women who constitute the main producers are denied equal access to, and control over, critical resources for production. The implementation of laws that are expected to protect all citizens and uphold their human dignity is still controlled by patriarchal values, meaning that they limit possibilities for equal opportunities in matters such as property rights, inheritance, resource allocation and access to social amenities. Although women constitute over half the population, social structures and institutional procedures create systematic barriers for their equal representation in positions of power and decision making.

Sweden has since the mid-1980s supported the Ministry of Finance in Tanzania to strengthen the capacity of the government in public financial management including revenue collection, budgeting and expenditure accounting...

A key contributor to this distorted balance of power is low understanding of the social, political and economic relationships between men and women that result in the systematic disempowerment of women at all levels. At the same time, there is a lack of organisational, networking and sharing capacity at the local level. The current top-down administration of organisations, planning systems, research facilities and communications also contributes to the weak position of women, girls and grassroots communities.

As the Ministry did not have in-house competence in gender budgeting, external technical support in this area was requested to carry out the training of the government budget officers in six pilot ministries. Initially, The Tanzanian Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), a South African gender budgeting expert and a Swedish gender consultant were engaged to carry out the capacity building of budget officers in the six pilot ministries (finance, education, health, water, agriculture and local government)...

Development of the Gender Budget Initiative

Budget formulation in Tanzania is mainly done at the central level with the Ministry of Finance as the main actor. There is very little bottom-up participation and influence for actors at the district and village level. This applies to local authorities and civil society actors in general, and women in particular. Children and youth do not participate at all.

Coalition (FemAct). The FemAct Coalition is composed of over 20 NGOs that promote change through skill sharing and collective action on gender and policy-related issues, participatory methodologies, lobbying and advocacy, networking and information sharing.

The GBI was developed in the context of cost sharing and retrenchment policies implemented as part of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s. These

Donors usually carry out dialogue at the top level of the ministries. The discussions held with the IMF and World Bank are not transparent to Tanzanian taxpayers or people in general. There is very little information on the outcome of negotiations, even among different government actors. The agreements between the government, the IMF, the World Bank or any bilateral donor are not discussed in detail in the national parliament, or with the private sector and civil society. Parliament also seems to have limited opportunity to influence the outcome or the objectives and conditionalities of donor credits and grants, even though, at present, the share of debt service is more than a third of annual expenditure. It also seems that there is a lack of policy coherence between economic policies, poverty reduction strategies and the sectoral policies for both the social and productive sectors, especially on the part of the IMF. Economic policies and practices are seen as something very technical, and human development seems not to be part of this framework.

The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) is a non-governmental organisation working for social transformation with a gender focus at all levels of society. The organisation has been pioneering a Gender Budget Initiative (GBI) since mid-1997 in close collaboration with other NGOs that comprise the Feminist Activism

programmes precipitated dramatic cuts to vital social services, particularly health care and education, at the same time as liberalisation and privatisation caused massive layoffs of government workers. During this period, most civil society organisations were marginalised from policy-making and budgetary processes.

Created in this context, the GBI advocates planning and budgeting strategies that evolve from the people. It wants stakeholders to be able to take stock of their needs, strengths and weaknesses, and to be able to set their own development priorities, priorities that ensure equitable allocation of resources. The strategy is to ensure that planning and budgetary processes use participatory techniques, taking into account the needs of marginalised communities, particularly women, poor men and youth. The concept is to integrate issues of equitable distribution of resources into all steps and stages of the budgetary process.

Action

Advocacy and lobbying interventions are most effective when they involve the greatest number of stakeholders and civil society sectors. Over the years TGNP's experience has proved that coalition building represents an effective strategy for lobbying and advocacy work. The sheer weight of numbers often brings appropriate attention to bear on pertinent issues, and tends to produce quick results. Towards this end, therefore, the GBI Programme stresses coalition building with like-minded NGOs. To fulfil GBI's aims, TGNP has developed strategic points of entry within the government, parliament, and civil society. This process included the following activities:

1) Preparatory

- instituting the programme within TGNP and FemAct structures;
- identifying and building working relations with key government actors;
- building a documentation base and building links with related initiatives in South Africa, Australia and other members of the Commonwealth.

2) Action-oriented research in the selected sectors

- research was conducted at the national level (ministries) and district level (related sectors at the district level). Research was also done in the Planning Commission and Treasury, as the key sectors in the planning and budgeting process; Health and Education as vital service providers; Agriculture as essential to the livelihood of most Tanzanians; and Industry and Commerce;
- data were collected and analysed, with a gender focus, on the process of planning and budgeting (composition of the budget officers, technocrats, and decision makers; sources of income; allocation of the resources, and planned and actual output);
- within each sector, data were collected by a team of three researchers, one from the university, one from NGOs and one from the government sector involved. Government actors were integrated into the process as researchers, providing access to data that would otherwise be considered confidential. This also enabled building ties between TGNP and technocrats working in the respective ministries.

3) Dissemination of research findings

- reports were disseminated to different sectors of society beginning with activist organisations, government departments and external agencies;
- findings were shared through working sessions and public fora with civil society, donors, policy makers and technocrats, and various groups of MPs, specifically the Parliamentary Budget Committee.

4) Development of lobbying strategies

- one strategy was the publication and dissemination of a popular book called *Budgeting with a Gender Focus*, which outlined gender gaps in the budget in an easy-to-read format;
- dialogue was started with key policy makers, the legislature and political parties on discriminatory gender-blind policies and laws.

5) Capacity building on gender and budgets

- capacities of NGOs and CBOs were strengthened at national and local levels to build support for lobbying efforts;
- capacity building efforts were also undertaken among allies and key actors in government ministries;
- the organisation developed alternative budget guidelines, as an example of ways in which guidelines could be gender mainstreamed;
- a checklist was also developed to guide budgetary planners and technocrats;
- a tool was developed to guide the collection of gender-disaggregated data.

6) Information-sharing, coalition building and networking

- information has been popularised through flyers on GBI in Kiswahili, use of the media and a website, and public fora;
- members have attended strategic fora to share information at national, regional, and international levels;
- coalition building and networking at all levels have been used to create alliances, contacts and solidarity with other groups, promoting collective action.

Results

The methodology of carrying out the research and disseminating its findings have been as important as the findings themselves. The process built the skills needed to analyse social-political dynamics between men and women at all levels. This, in turned, raised the awareness of national development actors — parliamentarians, technocrats, donors, NGOs and the general public — as to deficiencies in policies, programmes formulation and resource allocation.

Getting the macro prices right is a sound approach, but it is not enough. Stable exchange and interest rates are important for those who export, import and take or give loans. However the poor — 50 per cent of the population — live in a subsistence economy where money and markets do not matter very much.

Using participatory and animation techniques, the research identified structural and social constraints to change. For instance having an equal number of schools for girls and boys is not enough. The quality of education is an issue in equitable resource allocation. The old top-down model of budgeting facilitated corruption and leakage at all levels, with a decline in transparency and accountability. Some international development agencies were also involved in the plunder of resources, as were government agencies and civil society organisation, as discovered through careful scrutiny of tendering processes.

It is very positive, therefore, that the IMF and World Bank have introduced Poverty Reduction Strategies as part of the requirement for debt relief. However, much attention needs to be given to the process and content of these strategies in order to make them meaningful, gender-aware instruments for poverty reduction. The present version of the Tanzanian PRSP is still almost gender-blind, and the indicators for monitoring need to be further improved...

The organisation has gained a great deal of access to government structures and strategic decision-making bodies. The organisation has also been invited by government and donors to be a part of the Public Expenditure Review (PER) process responsible for ensuring increasing transparency and accountability within the government machinery. TGNP has been incorporated into the Tanzania Assistance Strategy (TAS), which seeks to co-ordinate government and donor programmes and budgets. TAS has an overall responsibility for the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

As a convener of GBI processes, TGNP has contributed to strengthening the NGO coalition, and has built capacity in analytical, advocacy, communication and persuasion skills. There is increased knowledge among civil society organisations about structures in government policy making, planning and budgeting bodies.

The lobbying and capacity building activities conducted through GBI contributed to the integration of gender issues in the 1999-2000 budget guidelines. The 2000-01 guidelines gave a mandate to all ministries, departments and agencies to prepare their budgets focusing on men *and* women at all levels in resource allocations. In order to ensure that budgets would focus on gender, TGNP was commissioned by the Ministry of Finance in partnership with Sida to build gender analysis skills among technocrats, and to integrate gender issues in the budgeting of six pilot sectors: Health; Education; Agriculture; Water; Ministry for Community Development, Women Affairs and Children; and Regional Administration and Local Government.

Future Plans

Phase 1 of the GBI process (1997-2000) focused primarily on information collection, research and dissemination, and capacity building. The second phase of the process, starting in 2001, aimed to continue with data collection and capacity building, but with greater focus on advocacy through a campaign aimed at:

- the general public and civil society, focusing on raising public awareness about the importance of playing an active role in resource allocation processes;
- government — to enhance parliamentary lobbying efforts;
- donors — to enhance linkages and share information with northern NGOs and donor allies and to participate in processes that will influence relevant macroeconomic structures and systems (such as HIPC).

Lessons and Challenges

- *Building capacity at different levels is essential.* One of the main obstacles faced by the organisation has been the inability of many civil society actors to analyse and critique macro and microeconomic issues. A continuing barrier is an insufficient pool of informed actors to meet training needs and to raise public awareness. Vital to the process is increasing the skills of government actors to link gender issues to budgeting and macroeconomics;

Maybe the most important finding is about the fragmented methods of planning applied in Tanzania. These methods need further consolidation to become sharper and more efficient as instruments for policy implementation in general, and gender equality targets in particular.

- *Meeting expectations of serving as a role model can be difficult.* While TGNP is eager to serve as a role model for similar processes in other countries, and places a strong emphasis on coalition building and networking, the demands can sometimes spread the capacity of the organisation thin;
- *Working with government while protecting the civil society agenda is not easy.* By viewing government officials as partners in research and capacity building processes, government and civil society were able to learn from each other and to capitalise on each other's strengths. It has also given NGOs insight into the constraints of government, while alleviating some of the bureaucratic red tape that can often hinder a project. At the same time, there remains apathy and frustration on the part of budgetary planners; hierarchical processes give them little control over the actual budget allocations and process;

The co-operation between the Ministry of Finance and TGNP turned out to be a very cost-effective way to build the capacity of the budget officers in the six pilot ministries. As the integration of gender into the budget requires a wide knowledge of gender problems and a broad understanding of possible solutions, a national expert has a comparative advantage over an expatriate Swedish consultant. The co-operation with government ministries has given TGNP practical experience of the difficulties in applying a gender approach in government budgeting.

— *Challenging international macroeconomic frameworks is essential.* The Structural Adjustment Programmes and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes have compromised the government, making fewer resources available for development. For example, the IMF and the World Bank ordered Tanzania to charge fees for school attendance. As a result, school enrolment dropped from 80 per cent to 66 per cent. During the 15 years of IMF policy implementation, GDP has dropped from \$309 to \$210 per capita. The literacy rate is falling and the rate of severe poverty has climbed to 51 per cent of the population. It is vital for NGOs to reflect on the concrete impact of such policies and to promote change;

— *North-South NGO Partnerships are critical.* Northern NGOs have both access to information and opportunities to influence global macroeconomic policies and frameworks, particularly those of the World Bank, the IMF and bilateral donors. Southern NGOs are more able to assess the relevance of policies to local development needs. Forming close ties on an ongoing basis can help to ensure that policies address both global and local development concerns, and are suited to the needs of the country. Overall, as members of civil society, we feel that we were only superficially involved in the process of preparing the poverty strategy paper for Tanzania. Part of the rush may have been due to pressure by the World Bank for submission of the document, but Tanzanians do not benefit from a document that does not take into account their needs and interests. The DAC partners in Tanzania might have been in the position to pressure for a more participatory process, but many were also keen to see the paper done on time, regardless of the content.

DAC, UN and bilateral donor policies are not always known and discussed by donor representatives in the field. Policy formulation is often done at headquarters... Experiences, lessons learned and best practices are not taken into account in a systematic manner. The risk is that the donor policies and methods may not be relevant to the reality...

The IMF, the World Bank, UN, bilateral organisations and even international NGOs often do not comply with agreed policies on poverty reduction, gender equality, human rights, participation, good governance and environment when preparing, negotiating and monitoring development co-operation programmes...

Recommendations for DAC and other Donors:

Development actors should identify common denominators that are to be a priority for donors, government and civil society. For example, education is a pre-requisite for all development needs and should be approached in a holistic manner, recognising that it extends beyond formal education to encompass an understanding of citizenship responsibilities, basic rights and other issues.

Donors should more actively promote the participation of civil society organisations in the formulation and implementation of poverty reduction policies and programmes in Tanzania...

An active, flexible and independent Policy Watch group for monitoring the implementation of donor policies on poverty reduction and gender equality should be established in Tanzania, including women and men from the North and the South, government, civil society, even youth and children. The DAC could take the initiative to organise this.

There is a need, therefore, for donors to invest in civil society for the spearheading of development activities. Civil society organisations, however, need to become more proactive in identifying needs, and more committed to the implementation of development programmes on a long-term basis.

Donors need longer time-frames, and they need to adjust their often cumbersome reporting requirements.

More investment is needed in human resources and institutional development for Southern NGOs, including exchange programmes, strategic planning and management, good governance and information technology; endowments and other support for financial sustainability; assistance in lobbying and advocacy techniques in key areas of budgeting and policy formulation.

The DAC should encourage Southern governments to contribute resources directly to civil society organisations, along with the freedom and autonomy needed to monitor governmental development programmes and budgets.

Notes

1. See, for example, “Sweden’s Policy for Poverty Reduction”, Statement by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 3 October 2000.

The Idea of Ownership, The Reality of Systems

Judith Randel

Most of the previous chapters have been adapted from papers presented at an OECD Development Partnership Forum described in the introduction. The Forum, however, sparked a wide variety of comment and debate, some of which builds on the previous chapters, but some of which is both new, as well as significant and interesting. Is “ownership” just another donor-led fashion? Participants pointed out a number of dangers and experiences illuminating this concern. The following points do not rehearse areas where there was clear consensus and shared assumptions, nor do they necessarily flow from the written presentations, although the themes can be found throughout the previous chapters.

Quotations from participants have been used in the boxes to sum up some of the key points made.

The Idea of Ownership, its Abuse and its Power to Change

“Donors want countries in the driver’s seat, but they want to keep the road map.”

“The PRSP conflicts the need for donor co-ordination and a country-owned plan.”

A brief survey of the Forum revealed that most of those present had been involved in development co-operation for between ten and 20 years. Only a handful of people brought less than five years’ experience and a significant number more than 20 years. Most people in the room had therefore lived through a number of aid fashions, all led from the North, and many perceived them to be imposed in an unwarrantable way on developing countries — the dominant fashions being structural adjustment and policy conditionality.

Danger of Fundamentalism

“Children cannot wait.”

Donors have become so committed to new ideas of ownership and advocacy that they have stopped supporting other valuable things.

“The government must not relinquish the obligation to deliver services to rural areas.”

Several participants expressed real concern, for example, about withdrawal of support for service delivery and the impact that this is having on poorer people.

“We need constructive engagement in service delivery.”

Participants called for greater realism and less dogmatism. Donors were behind major programmes to reduce the role of the state and downsize the public service. Now they only want to support government capacity to deliver services, as they believe it offers the best long-term prospects. Some approaches involve withdrawing support from non-governmental service deliverers, on the basis that this will provide the incentives and maximise the resources available to government. This is overly doctrinaire when the capacity of government is so slim. It is unrealistic to expect system-wide reform plus continued service delivery by government. And the costs of waiting for education and health service delivery capacity to increase are very high, especially for the poor.

Danger of Cynicism

“How does the PRSP relate to the national plan? There is no room for two frameworks; they have to merge. The PRSP came into being as the ticket for HIPC — but we can only have one planning process.”

Ownership has become the new mantra, which is adopted with cynicism by some as just another of the hoops through which aid agencies and governments have to jump. Aid officials are reported to be “searching for an owner”; the PRSP is seen as the release mechanism for IMF, Bank and other concessional finance; consequently it is perceived by some as more important than

real indigenous poverty plans which may conform to different criteria and standards.

Danger of Passivity and Indicators of a Change in Mindset

“Too often it is a process of ‘giving papers and getting money’.”

Many of the obstacles to real developing country ownership of development co-operation are institutional; donor agencies and governments require reporting, disbursement and accounting procedures to conform with their national standards and are unwilling to compromise.

Donors are too passive about what needs to change within their own systems.

On the positive side participants' comments suggest that there is also the germ of a changed mindset which is characterised by a real recognition that transformation of any society has to come from within.

“Not all government structures — local or national — believe in partnership.”

Listening, seeking out other, less powerful voices, has to be the task of anyone who wants to support that transformation.

“The PRSP neglects regional and social issues — often major obstacles to development.”

Donor agendas really do have to be subsumed under a government agenda.

Donor Action Agenda — Predictable Finance and Full Transparency

If such a change of mindset is there, what is the donor action agenda?

Donors must be prepared to “bite the bullet”, starting with long-term, predictable funding. Aid policy is notoriously volatile and aid disbursements notoriously unreliable. Income in the OECD has gone up by \$16 000 per person in real terms since 1960. Aid has gone up by \$3.

“The IMF has changed its thinking — the quality and distribution of growth are new issues for them but the full implications are not taken into account, for instance, in attitudes to budgetary deficits — targets have been unchanged since the introduction of PRSPs.”

In environments where governments may be planning on a monthly basis — because public finances are so tight — the value of predictable, flexible aid resources is high.

Trends show the IDTs will not be met in education. 75 million children will be out of school in 2015. We need to sprint towards the education targets but at the moment only 2 per cent of ODA goes to basic education.

“Donors need to adapt. What has happened on work to harmonise reporting requirements?”

Ownership is dependent on transparency. How can a government “own” the development co-operation process if it does not know how much money is being transferred, when, and to whom? When donors are seeking to increase the incentives for improved governance and transparency, what excuse is there for the lack of transparency in aid finance?

“We (donors) need to be changing not just policies but systems and procedures. We need to be clear about what we are going to stop doing.”

There is an accountability deficit both to taxpayers in the North and citizens in the South. At a minimum, donors ought to be able to report on all disbursements both by value, date, sector and the agency to which the payment was made.

Marrying the Unpredictable Forces of Participation with the Aid Bureaucracy

“Let us close our eyes and think about what we are talking about.”

It is one of the ironies of the current situation that we live in an era of unprecedented technocracy and bureaucracy in aid, but at the same time we expect the ordinary citizen to be involved. Examples of the techno-led aid phenomenon abound — not least the PRSP handbook. Participants expressed some impatience with the sort of demands and bureaucracy surrounding the process.

“We need simplicity in the whole discussion.”

Notwithstanding these issues, a clear message about the power of real life experience emerged. Participants commented on the real life dilemmas around the difficulty of authentic consultation, not overburdening a few groups and getting reasonable representation.

The Power of Real Life Experience

A number of participants highlighted the power of bringing the voice of the poor to policy makers; to enabling people to hear “how poverty is experienced by the poor themselves.”

“The PRSP is a huge opportunity and should be backed, but civil society participation has to be authentic.”

The Government of Uganda showed a video — which has been used to great effect — to the Partnership Forum. This has brought the dilemmas and situation of the poor to the attention of the government in a way that excites real identification with their struggle.

Importance of Information

“The PRSP is now reinforcing the old system because there is no information parity in the whole process; citizen groups need to have the information to be able to engage.”

Other participants highlighted the power and importance of information; the value for instance of making known to people the services to which they are entitled and the funding that has been allocated in their name, so they can assert their rights. Others highlighted the inadequacy of consultation based on poor information sharing: “If people know what their entitlements are they can go and claim them.”

Unpredictable Outcomes of Participation

“We have to accept conflicts in civil society.”

In real life the outcomes of participation are unpredictable; those being consulted will not necessarily speak only within the agenda set by the government or

an aid agency. They may wish to challenge the framework. Donors and governments are uncomfortable with this and there is a danger that all the dialogue becomes “insider” dialogue; those who challenge the fundamentals are excluded.

Shaking up Preconceived Notions

Real participation also shakes up preconceived notions and assumptions. Several participants during the Forum noted that the participation of civil society in budgetary processes in the North was much less than that in Uganda or other case studies presented to the meeting.

“Do people ask about the army, or corrupt purchases? We should be aware of the limitations to the process.”

Others commented on the redundancy of categorisations based on a North-South definition.

“In Bolivia the national dialogue was criticised because only political parties were invited.”

The Power of Engagement, the Need for Humility and the Potential of Citizen Engagement in Budgets

All this demonstrates the *power of engagement* and the importance of citizens having access to information and influence on the policies and budgets that affect them.

It suggests that donors should adopt some *humility*. The aid regime demands things of extraordinary political difficulty from the South — things that challenge vested interests and established ways of working. At the same time, the North has proved unwilling to take even tiny amounts of political pain at home to enhance its contribution to development co-operation globally. In this context, humility and a much less prescriptive approach by donors is the minimum that should be expected.

“The discussion of the budgets creates a new dimension — Northern societies do not involved civil society in their budget.”

Robust public engagement in the North and South is needed to provide an environment where politically difficult decisions can be taken in the international public interest. A new paradigm based on opportunities for working in solidarity needs to be created.

“Budget campaigns can create allies between NGOs and champions of change in government.”

Budgeting is the place where citizen action, rights, policy and spending meet. The prospects of citizens, North and South, becoming actively engaged in understanding, commenting on and influencing budget plans and spending against those plans are likely to become a major social, political and economic dynamic in the future.

“Institutions are often fragile in LDCs and opening up to participation requires courage and risk taking. Participation equals complaints, which can equal toppling of government.”

As one participant in the Forum put it, “Capacity building implies that the North has the capacity and it is going to help the South to build it, but in fact many of the tasks and processes are new; they are not imitations of activities successfully concluded by developed countries. Capacity building is thus a misleading misnomer. Those

engaged with development co-operation have to find a way of moving forward together and learning at the same time.”

Power Relationships: Government, the Market and Civil Society

Sylvia Borren

Sylvia Borren, Executive Director of the Dutch member of Oxfam International, Novib, began this publication with a discussion about changing expectations of governments, NGOs and the private sector. Here she analyses the power relationships between government, the market and civil society, and offers some personal recommendations for the way forward.

In addition to my professional career, I have a long voluntary background in social movements, particularly in the Dutch and international women's movements, and the lesbian and gay movement. There I learned that the position of women is affected not only by their lack of education and opportunity, but by the structural balance — or should I say imbalance — of power, which often exists between men and women in the home, in the workforce, and in the arena of politics.

Power governs relationships. Power is the extent to which one person or group of people affect the behaviour of another person or group. Here I will look at the balance in power between government (politicians and civil servants), the market and civil society. Obviously I will be generalising, because these relationships are not the same everywhere. I will deal with six types of power:

- formal power to decide, make and implement rules;
- the power to sanction positively or negatively; with money, control mechanisms, public opinion;
- the power of networking — among the elite, at the grassroots level, horizontally and globally;
- the power of knowledge and experience, and the ability to apply this;
- the power to convince others, with content and leadership, and sometimes charisma;
- the power of identity, and the successful demand for consideration because of it.

Formal Power

Politicians and government bureaucrats wield a lot of formal power — not only to make and change laws, but also through administrative rules and accountability standards. Today there is a wave of new legislation and regulations in many countries, aimed at increasing controls on civil society. Examples include the de-registration of NGOs (Pakistan), controls on foreign funding (Egypt), controls on the freedom of speech of NGOs (Ethiopia and many others), the power to dismiss and make appointments at board and senior staff levels (Cuba, Egypt and others), the power to decide which NGO receives its annual registration (Ethiopia).

Amnesty International reports show convincingly how formal power is used, legally and illegally, against citizens — particularly citizens who attempt to organise around a civil cause which irritates government. In comparison, many governments seem much more “liberal” towards the private sector. Examples include the non-enforcement of laws against child labour, environmental degradation, or laws in favour of reasonable working conditions and minimum wages.

Recommendation: Obviously my recommendation is for an NGO registration system which allows for accountability to government and to the specific participants of NGO programmes, and which can be invoked in cases of corruption, discrimination, or ethnic tension. But multilateral and bilateral donors should take a strong stand: “good governance” means stimulating rather than controlling civil society initiatives. In developing poverty reduction strategies, I believe there should be a formal process to show that civil society has been consulted seriously, and that there is consensus on the way forward. This means that strategies should not be just government-owned.

The Power to Sanction Positively or Negatively

Governments can sanction positively and negatively through formal power, through bureaucratic and technocratic tendencies (the power of the civil servants), with subsidies and aid flows, and with influence, through political leaders, on public opinion. Market forces can sanction positively or negatively with money — using monopolistic practices, buying control or favours, by hiring and firing, breaking trade union efforts — or by showing appropriate responsibility on social and environmental and labour issues. Civil society can sanction mainly via facts, figures, case histories and convincing arguments — trying to sway public opinion and to influence consumer practice.

Some figures on aid and investments: total global aid flows from civil society are estimated to be \$5 to \$6 billion, of which more than a third is derived from government contributions. Total aid flows from donor countries are 11 times this amount, around \$55 billion, about six times the money needed annually to send every child in the world to school. Private sector investments in lower-income countries are estimated at \$250 billion annually, 50 times the flow from civil society. And for the

purpose of comparison, the 30 biggest multinational firms have an annual turnover that is 16 000 times greater than bilateral aid flows, and 180 000 times the civil society aid flow. This tells us a lot about the reality of these power relationships.

Recommendation: Civil society should receive funding from government with few strings attached in terms of strategic focus — but a lot of strings in terms of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. The same standards should be applied equally to bilateral and multilateral aid. This recommendation is based on the assumption that taxpayers' money does not “belong” to government, but should in part flow back to civil society in order to ensure the strengthening and development of civil society. Good governance means a strong democratic government, a skilled and lean civil service, and a well developed and well supported civil society. Civil society might also expect to receive increased funding from that part of the private sector which sees social engagement and social processes as a logical part of ethical enterprising.

In terms of poverty reduction strategies, I believe that civil society should be involved and organised so that it has the power to change or reject plans. It would be interesting to contemplate whether positive or negative civil society sanction might significantly influence the Bretton Woods Institutions. Would those institutions share power in making plans? I do not believe there can be true ownership of poverty reduction strategies unless governments *and* civil society have signed on.

The Power of Networking

We live in a time of increased networking. The problem is that many networks are too often inward-looking: the business community meets with the business community, governments with governments, NGOs with NGOs. There should be much more interaction between them so that people begin to know and understand each other's positions. NGOs make networking at grassroots level their priority, and use this as a way to demand recognition. The cost in time, money and effort for international networking, on the other hand, is high. It is often said that NGOs need ideas, skills and patience, but these things require money as well as dedication and time. A new initiative that Novib finds exiting is the “self-audit” — a comprehensive tool that allows NGOs to compare their performance in organisational development, or in specific issues such as gender and diversity, with other comparable NGOs.

Recommendation: Networking, skill-sharing, capacity building and prediction-orientated research is of the utmost importance in understanding the dynamics of wealth and poverty, power dynamics, successful democratic processes and intervention strategies for effective poverty eradication. Donors should provide the financial means for civil society actors to engage in more linking, learning and strategising. A good example is the Social Watch initiative, which monitors the promises made by governments at the Social Summit in Copenhagen and at the 1995 UN Women's Forum in Beijing.

The Power to Convince Others

Politicians, civil servants, researchers, business leaders, NGOs — we all like to think that we are convinced by solid evidence and good arguments. The reality, however, is different. Arguments are accepted on the basis of who makes them, and in which power context. For example, there is no better case for stopping injustice, suffering and poverty than that in halting child labour, and ensuring good quality education for all boys and girls. The question is whether governments have the political will to enforce existing laws, whether civil servants will ensure that enforcement becomes reality, and whether or not they will allow themselves to be corrupted with payoffs. A further question is whether trade unions and other civil society actors will take the issue seriously.

Kailash Satyarthi, of the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude, came to Novib to get support for a global march against child labour. He thought he could get the march organised in some 30 countries. We thought he was optimistic, but we supported him, and in the end, the march took place in more than 90 countries. It successfully influenced ILO policy, and now has 140 countries working against child labour and for a global education campaign. Kailash has been helped and supported by many, but it is fair to say that he mobilised support in part through his personal conviction and dedication, and an ability to find support at many different levels in very many different countries. This kind of leadership also exists amongst politicians, amongst civil servants, and amongst business leaders.

As a group of organisations, Oxfam is committed to building alliances with others, both individuals and organisations, who are committed to a world of equity. We will follow the initiatives of others, and where appropriate, we ourselves will lead. We hope to play a role in the growing global movement for change and equity which we think is emerging. We will actively try to break down barriers between different social movements, and we will engage not just with governments, but also with the corporate sector.

Recommendation: We must and can find allies, global citizens wanting to work towards a fair world for all, individuals prepared to stick their neck out and challenge vested interests, be they in business, government or in civil society. We must increase our effectiveness in poverty eradication by finding and linking such allies, in order to provide greater space and new strategies. Poverty reduction strategies must engage new allies, and must generate new partnerships as well.

The Power of Identity

The power of identity can be very strong. It is sometimes very relevant, and sometimes divisive. It is the power of belonging to a minority group and demanding one's rights, of challenging the majority in its sometimes exclusive, insensitive and discriminatory practices. We have seen where women, ethnic minorities, people with

handicaps, sexual minorities and others claim their rightful space. They are usually right, but the majority can become insensitive to blame. The victim role can be powerful but it can also be destructive, as can the claim to uniqueness which many minority groups make. These problems can be solved by managing diversity in a proactive manner, and by accepting the plurality of needs and opinions as an important and vibrant part of development processes.

Recommendation: The assumption that civil society is a uniform actor should be dropped; it should be seen as a vibrant dynamic interaction between many different actors. It is possible to organise democratic processes that are inclusive and that give space to diversity. It is possible to achieve convergence, but probably not total consensus on poverty reduction strategies. It is essential to avoid false consensus — by picking out a few civil actors and having them speak for the whole, or by assuming a consensus which does not exist. It can be very destructive for alliance building amongst civil actors if governments or the private sector do not recognise diversity, and favour some who do not represent the whole. The challenge for society actors is to begin to manage alliance building and its own democratic processes in a more mature way.

Broad Conclusions

It is clear to me that economic globalisation is far more powerful than either the globalisation of governance or of democratic global citizenship. The latter has not begun to be organised yet, however energetic we as NGOs are in whatever space we can find. This means that although the conceptual language of government and business talks about equity and ownership, the reality is that the new economic dynamic too often joins hands with old dynamics in countries where the political, bureaucratic and economic elite rule, with little real concern about what happens to the poor.

The necessary checks and balances for global democracy are not yet in place. We need a strategy of building alliances among concerned citizens who in their private and professional lives are prepared to show courage and break through barriers and vested interests to achieve change. My biggest concern is the behaviour of some politicians and bureaucrats who invest more in their relationships with the corporate sector, possibly unaware of the inequality of that relationship. Civil society is treated as a necessary irritant, of much less importance to solid relationships and alliances. Sometimes politicians react to NGOs as though they are in competition for the voice of the people. This psychology leads to the formal and sanctioning power I have described above.

In terms of poverty reduction strategies this psychology can lead to top-down planning and technocratic management of change processes. This will not be effective, as the record of the World Bank has convincingly demonstrated, and as the World Bank itself seems to be recognising.

People living in poverty must be engaged to improve their own lot. Oxfam International takes a rights-based approach to such an engagement. These rights are:

- the right to an adequate and sustainable livelihood;
- the right to basic social services;
- the right to life and security;
- the right to social and political participation;
- the right to identity.

Governments and NGOs can stimulate people living in poverty to increase their capacity and their economic standing, and to change the expectations they have for their children. New alliances can lead to experiments and leaps forward. Governments and embassies must be prepared to leave their own tight networks — and engage in new processes and alliances. This means less technocratic control and more sharing of power.

Even in the Dutch government, with its positive track record in development aid, I see a process of increased top-down planning and control. My nightmare is that poverty reduction strategies will be designed in the offices of Washington or The Hague — and that we as development NGOs will be controlled in our networking and strategic opportunities, and told which sectors or countries we will be allowed to work in. I will gladly sit at any table to co-operate against poverty and for equity, as long as the meeting takes place on the basis of mutual respect and autonomy. We must grow beyond the North-South paradigm and look at processes from a global perspective. We must avoid false partnerships based on unequal power relationships and apparent but false consensus, so that we can start a truly iterative process towards a fair world with equity for all.

National Dialogue: Realistic Expectations?

Ian Smillie

Editors of publications do not normally step out of the shadows to comment on the actual editing process. In an “edited volume” like this, they are expected to write opening and/or closing remarks, and to carry out the actual copy-editing function in silence. This latter expectation is undoubtedly because the publisher will engage a better copy editor to polish the final text.

I could not help noticing something about the chapters in this book, however, as I was doing the final edits. The *OECD Style Book* says that repeated vowels confuse the eye and should be divided. The two most prominent examples in this publication are “co-ordinate” and “co-operate”, often spelled “coordinate” and “cooperate”. This is a simple matter to rectify with a word processor, but what struck me in going through the various chapters was that “co-ordination” and “co-operation” are used extensively in the papers written by authors representing donor organisations, and almost never by those writing from a civil society perspective. It struck me that those writing from an aid perspective were concerned to a very large extent about aid, whereas those writing from a civil society perspective were writing more about poverty reduction. This is perhaps not surprising and it would be wrong to read too much into it, but it could account for some of the apparent mismatch that can be discerned among the chapters.

At one level, the presentations are complementary. The papers by authors from World Bank, Danida and Sida talk extensively about the need for the wider participation of civil society in poverty eradication programmes — at the conceptual and planning stages as well as in the implementation stages. The papers written from a civil society perspective agree. And the examples from Ghana, Uganda and Tanzania demonstrate that this can happen, and that it can be productive. It is not without its problems and there is much to learn, but it is possible.

There is another thread running through the papers, however, one that an editor can see more clearly than a casual reader might: a sense of profound mistrust on the part of those writing from a civil society perspective. In November 2001, World

Bank President James Wolfensohn said that the World Bank was doing more for the world's poor than it gets credit for. He said that the Bank has been hearing the same arguments for years, and while the World Bank has changed, its critics have not. "There is a need for us to change in the Bank," he said, "But there's also a need for civil society to give us credit for the ways we do change!"

Now listen to the NGO voice: Oxfam's Tony Burdon says, in Chapter 4:

Frequently civil society organisations perceive efforts at partnership or participation as superficial consultation — in Malawi for instance the government had initially planned to hold a one-day workshop to consult civil society on the PRSP, providing NGOs with a draft a few days before. Frequently civil society is consulted on poverty and social policies, rather than on macroeconomic areas, market reform, or budgets. Yet civil society organisations have growing expertise and valuable contributions to make in these influential policy areas.

Novib's Sylvia Borren says in Chapter 7:

It is clear to me that economic globalisation is far more powerful than either the globalisation of governance or of democratic global citizenship. The latter has not begun to be organised yet, however energetic we as NGOs are in whatever space we can find. This means that although the conceptual language of government and business talks about equity and ownership, the reality is that the new economic dynamic too often joins hands with old dynamics in countries where the political, bureaucratic and economic elite rule, with little real concern about what happens to the poor.

Speaking of Tanzanian civil society experience with government, Aggripina Mosha said in Chapter 5:

Working with government while protecting the civil society agenda is not easy. By viewing government officials as partners in research and capacity building processes, government and civil society were able to learn from each other and to capitalise on each other's strengths. It has also given NGOs insight into the constraints of government, while alleviating some of the bureaucratic red tape that can often hinder a project. At the same time, there remains apathy and frustration on the part of budgetary planners; hierarchical processes give them little control over the actual budget allocations and process.

These voices are saying two things. First, new approaches to the engagement of civil society are just that, *new*. And second, there is a deep concern, perhaps because of the newness, and more likely because of the way the new ideas have been applied, that they are superficial and possibly insincere. Judith Randel cited two prominent civil society fears: the danger of doctrinaire donor fundamentalism; and the danger of cynicism — of governments doing whatever is required, including talking to civil society — in order to get donor funding.

A Visit to Amnesia

In order to illustrate the problem that governments, aid agencies and civil society have in working to a common agenda, let me make a small diversion to a real country which, for the sake of propriety, I have renamed *Amnesia*. In Amnesia, much greater emphasis is now being placed on making the connection between aid effectiveness, poverty reduction and good governance. Governance, in fact, has risen to the top of the policy agenda for donors and civil society alike. Their analyses, while similar, lead to very different conclusions and action.

The Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) being developed in health and population is a case in point, championed most strongly by the Netherlands and the World Bank, with active participation by DFID, Sida and the EC. The Sector-Wide Approach “puts the recipient country in the driver’s seat” — an oddly recurring phrase among many donors these days — and participating donors co-operate in pool funding for the overall sector. The advantages include sector-wide management rather than a piecemeal and administratively inefficient project approach. There is co-ordination among the donors and a common monitoring framework. The perspective can be broader than with one-off projects and individual donor programmes, and if it works well, the government can take the lead in establishing policies and priorities. From the Dutch standpoint, “ownership should go beyond government ownership; other actors in the sector such as NGOs, the private sector, researchers, etc. should be an integral part of the... policy development and implementation agenda².” Local “ownership” notwithstanding, a SWAp gives participating donors much more leverage with a recipient government, adding a new and more powerful dimension to conditionality.

The new approach foresees an end to direct donor funding of Amnesian NGOs in the health and population sector, in favour of greater inclusion of their efforts within the overall framework developed by government. NGOs would thus be contracted *by government* to deliver health and population services within that broad framework. The new approach, presumably, would put an end to free-range NGO duplication and patchiness, and would ensure that all efforts in health and education are basically headed in the same direction. The World Bank explains it this way:

NGO institutional and incentive structures provide much higher service quality. This calls for scaling up NGO activities and for greater public-NGO partnerships in service delivery. Second, community influence and participation, hallmarks of NGO activities, must be integrated more fully into public service provision to create the conditions under which public services can also become responsive to user needs³.

Civil Society organisations might be forgiven if they see this the other way around — as an approach which will ensure that their “much higher service quality” is subordinated to the systems and the authority of a government in which there is, as yet, limited donor confidence. Until the much-discussed problems of governance have been solved in fact, rather than in theory, civil society organisations would be justified

in fearing that they could be submerged beneath the waves of the government mismanagement and corruption that donors seek to correct. Instead of having a positive influence on government — which will obviously be in the dominant financial position — the approach could have a negative influence on civil society. The Sector-Wide Approach is now up and running in health and population, and donors in Amnesia are discussing the education sector as the next target.

A major ODI study of the SWAp phenomenon finds them to be casual in their approach to poverty, assuming — as with much aid in the past — that if the policies are right, and if spending flows according to policies, poverty will take care of itself. Examining a wide range of SWAps, the study found that “sector programmes have in general not made as much use as one might wish of poverty analysis in designing strategies. In the health sector, essential service packages are unaffordable, and exemption schemes for charges [are] crude and ineffective, virtually without exception⁴.”

More interestingly perhaps for civil society is the fact that a 67 page study on SWAps contains only two pages on participation, and only two paragraphs on the role of civil society and NGOs — because there was little evidence that they had been taken into consideration: “Our impression is that SWAp processes have tended to be top-down in character with little participation... . In [the] Amnesia health [SWAp] there was little local involvement in the sector strategy outside the Central Ministries, and the concept of the SWAp was poorly understood in the field⁵.”

If it becomes a widespread donor strategy, the Sector-Wide Approach — which seems to be the preferred programming manifestation of the CDF and the PRSPs — may well turn some NGOs into co-opted government sub-contractors, rather than innovators, advocates of change, and independent organisations in their own right. Not all bilateral and multilateral donors subscribe to the Sector-Wide Approach, however, and it is still possible that some of those that do will fund organisations and activities that fall outside the government framework — for innovations, pilot projects and advocacy.

There is a more critical aspect to this, however. In all societies, there is interaction between civil society and government. If we think of two overlapping circles, one representing the state, and the other representing civil society, the amount of overlap obviously depends to a great extent on the country. In Canada, Netherlands and the Nordic countries, for example, there is a lot of overlap. Much of the overlap is encouraged by civil society organisations themselves, wanting to have as much influence as possible on government by working “on the inside” — by participating in policy meetings, working with government departments to influence change, and so on. Civil society and government also co-operate on service delivery. The provision of welfare services, blood collection and day-care centres, for example, may be run by civil society organisations but regulated and subsidised by the state. The more democratic and inclusive the government, the greater the likelihood of convergence between the state and civil society.

The reverse is also true. In repressive states with weak governance, civil society organisations are likely to seek as much distance from the state as possible. The state, on the other hand, will pursue ever greater convergence, if only to control dissident elements. While civil society will seek to diminish the overlap, government will try to expand it.

The issue in the Amnesia example, therefore, is not whether civil society organisations should work within a government framework, but — depending on what they want to achieve — whether they actually can. Donors and government may seek to involve them for different reasons, but civil society organisations may be fully justified in keeping as much distance as possible if they want to avoid the kind of control and convergence that would compromise the quality of their service, or more particularly, the strength of their voice. Greater overlap between government and civil society in a system of weak governance may simply reinforce the weak governance instead of doing the opposite.

Conclusions

More importantly, however, the Amnesian case suggests that while there may be dialogue between the three actors — government, civil society and the donor community — each may have an agenda which is quite different from the others'. Compatibility and agreement may not be possible. The role of civil society is not, *per se*, to support government, nor is it to support donor initiatives. When interests do coincide, this may well happen, but the reality in many countries is otherwise.

The purpose of dialogue, therefore, must be understood from the outset. It is not a panacea to the problems of the past. It is, as the World Bank contribution in Chapter 2 states, “a process to promote broad stakeholder engagement for the purpose of reaching some level of national consensus on development direction and policy priorities for a given country.” The key phrases here are “broad stakeholder engagement”, and “some level of national consensus.” The chapters of this publication are, in fact, a debate about these two phrases: How broad or narrow will the stakeholder engagement be, and what level of consensus is possible in a given circumstance?

By bringing civil society into the debate on development direction and policy priorities, donors and governments have, in a sense, embarked on a difficult challenge, one that will not always work in the ways they might hope or expect. Civil society cannot be expected simply to endorse existing ideas and directions. Civil society does not speak with one voice. It is unruly; it has a memory, and it comes from different places and different experiences. As the World Bank says, in Chapter 2, however:

Despite the challenges, national dialogue can have many benefits for the country. National dialogue is important to pursue, as at least some level of domestic consensus is essential to sustain pursuit of a development agenda. National dialogue can yield consensus on “organising principles”, i.e. policy

priorities, around which all resources (domestic and external) can be allocated. Existence of such a consensus can greatly increase policy makers' confidence, and provide a reliable framework for decision making and the management of external financial assistance. This in turn contributes to development effectiveness and facilitates poverty reduction.

The operative word in these sentences is “can” — national dialogue *can* have many benefits, *can* yield consensus, *can* increase policy makers' confidence. For these conditionalities to have substance, the process of national dialogue must be inclusive; it must be open and transparent; it must have clear objectives and be oriented towards action; and it must take cognisance of the different responsibilities of those participating. Much has been made in the foregoing chapters of the need for strengthening the capacity of civil society to participate more meaningfully in national dialogue. There is a suggestion in this that if civil society cohesion, knowledge and research skills can be enhanced, there will be greater consensus on divisive issues. This is probably wrong. There will always be debate. The interests of governments, donors and civil society organisations will not always coincide. There will always be a certain mismatch in their expectations of one another. The essence of good development and good governance, however, does not lie in perfect consensus: it lies in the ability of different stakeholders to talk to one another, and more importantly, to *listen* to one another on some of the most important issues of our time.

Notes

1. “World Bank president refutes protesters' claims” *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, 19 November 2001.
2. “The Sectoral Approach in the Dutch Development Cooperation Policy”, Information Brief, Netherlands Embassy, Amnesia, March 2000.
3. World Bank, *Amnesia: From Counting the Poor to Making the Poor Count*, 1998, pp. 49-50.
4. Brown, A., M. Foster, A. Norton, F. Naschold, “The Status of Sector Wide Approaches”, *Working Paper 142*, Overseas Development Institute, London, January 2001, p. 33.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

Development Partnership Forum 2000

Ownership and Partnership: The Role of Southern and Northern Civil Society in Poverty Reduction Strategies

**Jointly organised by the Development Assistance Committee
and the OECD Development Centre**

Paris, 11-12 December 2000

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