

The Future Role of the Global Civil Society – a situation analysis

Towards 2015





Towards 2015

Dear reader

First of all we would like thank you for participating in the arena process at SCSC – Sida Civil Society Center in Härnösand, Sweden – by reading this report.

The Swedish framework organisations, working with development co-operation, have invited partners from civil society organisations in Asia, Africa and Latin America to participate in this process.

During four very exciting days at SCSC in the end of August 2005 we worked on a roadmap leading civil society organisations towards 2015.

- to make an analysis of the development of the Global Civil Society
- to stimulate reflection over the future and readiness for action
- to create a basis for the organisations, as well as for the strategies that will increase their efficiency
- to create scenarios for the future and discuss challenges

We hope that this report will inspire and stimulate you to think about the role of your own organisation.

The challenge is to build the best roads towards 2015 for all members of the global civil society.

Bo Forsberg
Diakonia

Inger Björk
The Swedish NGO Centre for
Development Cooperation

Gabi Björsson
The Africa Groups

Dag Jonzon
Sida Civil Society Center

The way forward

– a situation analysis for a global civil society 2015

Civil societies – including non-governmental organisations, popular movements as well as networks of all kinds – have grown tremendously over the last decades. In 2000, the number of civil society organisations numbered 37 000, a fifth of them formed in the 1990s. Every fifth person in the world is said to be a member of a civil society of some kind.

The rapid globalization with its effects on markets and the social fabric in many developing countries, the unipolar power structure with one major power setting the agenda, as well as an increased focus on terrorism, have resulted in a new environment for the civil society, especially in the third world. This calls for new ways of working, based on a situation analysis.

By definition, a civil society is the arena, separate from the state, the market and the individual household, where people organise themselves and act together to promote their common interests. The concept of a “civil society” encompasses a number of very different actors; everything from obscure, government controlled or politically manipulated groups to truly democratic, open as well as transparent popular movements.

RIO and after

The non-governmental organisations, the NGOs, stand out as among the most prominent actors in civil society. During the many UN conferences in the 1990s, NGOs came forward as a partner to be counted upon in any development area. Indigenous communities, chased from their lands in the Amazon, following illegal timber logging and aggressive cultivation, gathered at the UN conference on Development and Environment (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 to bring their grievances to the fore. Together with hundreds of other civil society organisations, the NGO community in Rio managed to steal some of the limelight from the official conference.

This way of working became more or less institutionalised during the number of UN conferences arranged during the 1990s (the UN conferences on population and development, social affairs etc.). The tradition of holding these meetings outside the formal power base has since then been carried on by the World Social Forums in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and other similar gatherings.





The Cardoso Panel, named after its chairperson, Fernando Cardoso, former president of Brazil, was an answer to this development in 1993, trying to find a way for the UN to interact with the growing civil society movement. “A constructive co-operation with the social society is no longer a possibility for the United Nations, it’s a necessity. The world has changed and the UN has to change accordingly,” said Mr Cardoso, presenting the report to the UN Assembly.

New ideas for civil society

In order to analyse the new situation with an emphasis on the developing world, and to come up with new ideas for civil societies to continue playing an important role in modern, more democratic societies, an international conference, Globalizing Civil Society 2015 – a situation analysis, was arranged at the Civil Society Center in Härnösand, Sweden in late August 2005.

At this crucial meeting, based on a preparatory meeting in March, representatives from a wide range of the civil society organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East discussed possible ways of fulfilling their mission in a new world.

On hand to present their work and compare experiences were organisations engaged in a broad spectrum of activities – all sharing the overall purpose of advancing democracy in their respective countries.



Azizurrahman Rafiee, Afghanistan



Nhek Sarin, Cambodia



Sugar growing peasants Malawi

An important task for the conference was to plan ahead for 2015 when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agreed on by some 50 states in 2000, should be reached, and at the same time develop the longstanding partnership between northern and southern counterparts.

Different settings...

The southern NGOs described an environment of a sometimes unstable political framework, limited resources and in many cases little understanding from their respective governments, while their counterparts in the north were much more organised as well as recognised by society. They were also well funded and equipped with well-trained staff.

...but a lot in common

The eleven southern civil society organisations, representing Asia, Africa, Latin America as well as the Middle East, realised that they had very much in common, even though working in different cultural settings, political situations and sometimes with entirely different agendas.

“It feels good to broaden one’s perspective and together with others, identify obstacles and problems for the future. It is also important that our colleagues from the north participate in the process. We have all something to contribute,” said Andrea Z. Stephanous from the CEOSS Publishing House in Egypt.

Similar views were expressed by most other participants. “We certainly have a lot in common, for instance our social work and the interest in a democratic society,” said Frank Okuthe-Oyugi, representing the Africa Alliance of YMCAs.

“Act local – think global”

Somehow setting the agenda for conference, the keynote speaker, Dr Rajesh Tandon from PRIA, a well renowned civil society group in India, stressed the importance for all civil society organisations, especially in the South, to strengthen their own base, before trying to influence policies on an international level.

“Look what happened at the World Economic Forum in Davos recently,” said Dr Tandon. “There you had government ministers trying to get



Miriam Suarez, Director of the Women's Rights Movement, Bolivia

through to the leading businessmen, without even having anchored their policies back home. So what could the civil society have achieved there?" asked Dr Tandon.

"It is time to act local and think global", said Dr Tandon, arguing that civil action at a local level can have international impact. "If we educate the women in our own countries (in the south) about marketing their products, it may well improve their negotiating power, exporting their goods."

Looking ahead, Dr Tandon claimed that the future for the social society was quite good, following the declining interest in political parties and decreasing voter turnout in elections. "But the problem for civil society organisations is to attract the young generation as they rather go for 'issues'," added the PRIA president.

Finding similarities

Inspired by Dr Tandon's keynote speech, and the Sida Director General Maria Norrfalk's remark that the civil society plays an "extremely important role" (see separate story), the southern participants set out to find similarities among themselves. It turned out that most of the invited organisations were engaged in development and political change, providers of basic social service, catering for people in need, promoting dialogue between different religious groups as well as trying to change attitudes. On the agenda for many of the southern NGOs were also advocacy and civic education.

"Generally we work with people in great distress, often marginalised people," commented Miriam Suarez from Bolivia, Director of the Women's Rights Movement, Casa de la Mujer (The Women's House). "This means that we need each other, that we have to formulate common strategies." "We are all looking for social change," added Mehboob Sada, Director of the Christian Study Centre in Pakistan. And an overview of the work of the attending organisations would prove him right.

Pushing for peace work in Afghanistan

Azizurrahman Rafiee from the Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) described a very polarised society, where the security situation called for constant concern. The ACSF tries to encourage Afghan citizens to participate in social work and the development of the war-stricken country. The aim



is to promote a just and accountable society by initiating and facilitating dialogue, networking and information sharing.

“We try to work with all sectors and levels of Afghan society in the reconstruction, development and peace process in Afghanistan,” Mr Rafiee told the audience.

“Our vision is a democracy supported by informed, committed and active citizens to participate in the development of a just and equitable society based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedom in our country,” added Mr Rafiee.

The Swedish counterpart for the ACSF is the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan.

Promoting dialogue in Pakistan

In neighbouring Pakistan, Mehboob Sada’s Christian Study Centre, working in a mostly Muslim environment, takes a look at factors fostering or hindering peaceful coexistence between people of different faiths in a society wrestling with religious fundamentalism. This is done by seminars on a grassroots level with representatives of different local organisations and local leaders. The results from these meetings are then presented to a “strategic” target audience of journalists and religious leaders, considered crucial target groups to influence politicians, authorities and leading women’s activists on a national level.

The Swedish counterpart for the Christian Study Centre is the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden and the Church of Sweden.

Building democracy in Cambodia

In Cambodia, Star Kampuchea is trying to bridge the social sphere between family and state in this country ravaged by a turbulent political history. This is done by providing a platform for fledgling civil society organisations advocating change based on grassroots initiatives from and by educating and raising awareness about issues in society.

“The space for democracy is finally increasing,” said Nhek Sarin, whose organisation, after intensive campaigning, managed to avoid stiff legislation that would have made the state the conduit for foreign funds directed



Mrboob Sada. Pakistan



Evelyn Flores, Nicaragua

to Star Kampuchea or any other civil society organisation in Cambodia, thereby being able to favour loyal organisations.

The Swedish counterpart for Star Kampuchea is the Swedish NGO Centre for Development Cooperation

Bridging religious differences in the Arab world

Adding a very different and refreshing view to the conference was Mr Andrea Z. Stephanous, from the CEOSS Publishing House in Egypt, who works with Arab perspectives in an international discourse. Representing a Christian organisation Dr Stephanous works in an almost totally Muslim environment.



“Civil society in the Arab world is not a ready-made package that we can impose; it is a process that is based on social, economic and political conditions,” Mr Stephanous told the audience. However, given the gradual change in which the political system moves towards political pluralism and democracy, he believes strong civil society organisations will eventually emerge.

The Swedish counterpart for the CEOSS Publishing House is the Swedish Mission Council



Kathini Maloba Caines
Women's Workers Union, Kenya



Mban Kabu, ICTU-AFRO



Ravin Singh, Sydafrika

Providing civic education through African YMCA

Based in Kenya, Frank Okuthe-Oyugi, Associate Executive Secretary of the Africa Alliance of YMCAs, travels the continent to supervise the extensive programs covered by the Alliance, including among other things civic education, peace building, gender mainstreaming and sensitisation as well as drug control and mine awareness.

“Our aim is to support people’s efforts to meet their basic needs as well as to create opportunities for marginalised groups to increase their income,” said Mr Okuthe Oyugi.

The Alliance works in some 30 countries in South, West and East Africa.

The Swedish counterpart for the Africa Alliance of YMCAs is the Swedish YWCA–YMCA

Strengthening labour unions in Africa

Also covering large parts of the African continent, but from a different angle, Mr Mban Kabu, at the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU-AFRO) spearheads the social work of trade unions. “Africa is the poorest, most miserable and backward region in the world, where the gap between haves and have-nots is growing at an alarming rate. An increasing number of people in the region get thrown into the poverty hole, living on less than a dollar a day. Against this background, the labour unions have a major job to support the workers rights,” said Mr Kabu.

The Swedish counterpart for ICFTU-AFRO is the LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Cooperation

Backing women workers in Kenya

In a country struggling to find viable ways of exporting, Kathini Maloba Caines leads a women’s workers union in Kenya, a country very much dedicated to the flower export industry. “The conditions for the 50 0000 women working in this industry are appalling. Roughly ten persons try to survive on the wages raised by every working woman in the industry. Also, many of them are getting ill because of using strong pesticides,” says Ms Maloba Caines.





Barbra Kohlo, Housing People, Zimbabwe

She left the traditional labour unions in Kenya, “because of their lack of interest for women’s working conditions “to form the Kenya Women Workers Organisation (KEWWO).”

The Swedish counterpart of KEWWO is Diakonia

Supporting the poor in Zimbabwe

Facing an entirely different situation is Barbra Kohlo of the Housing People of Zimbabwe (HPZ). Here, the tearing down of whole blocks of houses in the outskirts of major cities has added to worries. Barbra’s organisation tries to protect the evicted people in a nation that has had housing problems even before the evictions.

HPZ supports housing co-operatives all over the country, helping women organise their work, get to know their legal rights and earn an income. It is the largest organisation in Zimbabwe working specifically with supporting the construction of low-income housing. The housing problems should be viewed against a social backdrop where life expectancy in Zimbabwe has plummeted from 62 years in the late eighties to 33 years last year. HIV/AIDS, drought and food insecurity are the primary reasons for this decline.

The Swedish counterpart of the Housing People of Zimbabwe is the Swedish Cooperative Centre

Training communities in South Africa

Working with the Education Training Unit (ETU), Ravin Singh works all over South Africa and neighbouring countries with community-based organisations. The overall goals are to deepen democracy and community involvement in development. Every year, thousands of local activists and politicians are trained to become better leaders and organisers. A lot of focus is on people engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS, where many institutions are run down by the magnitude of the problem.

The Swedish counterpart of ETU is the Olof Palme International Center

Safeguarding women’s rights in Latin America

Ms Miriam Suarez with the Women’s organisation Casa de la Mujer in Bolivia, gave a sad picture of the women’s situation in her country.

“Violence towards women is a major issue as is the continued suppression of women’s rights,” said Ms Suarez, getting support from her Nicaraguan colleague Ms Evelyn Flores from the organisation Puntos Encuentros in Nicaragua. Both organisations work with issues concerning women’s rights as well as health issues and strengthening community participation by women.

The Swedish counterpart of Casa de la Mujer is the Education for Aid Activities and for Puntos Encuentros, the Swedish NGO Centre for Development Cooperation

Many common factors

As shown above, the civil society organisations gathered in Härnösand presented very different agendas and working environments. But over the four days of convening, especially during the workshops, a growing number of common factors emerged. It turned out that the participating civil society organisations were all engaged in:

- Dialogue and political change
- Changing attitudes and behaviour
- Addressing the needs of marginalised people
- Promoting human rights
- Engaging in social change and empowerment
- Networking
- Capacity building
- Interfaith dialogue (some civil society organisations)
- Involvement in communication and media issues.

The southern CSOs also noted that they were united by a high level of commitment among staff and members, that their work had the same value base, and that they all were able to adjust to new environments. Moreover, they all shared a commitment to work for democratic values.



Interviews with participants



Maria Norrfalk, Director General of Sida

Civil societies crucial in fighting poverty



“Civil society organisations fill an extremely important role in the development of democratic societies. They play a crucial role by introducing the poverty issue into the political agenda and by offering a channel for the poor to organise and increase their interests and needs. By constituting an arena in which poor people can organise and increase their influence, civil society can contribute, directly or indirectly, to the reduction of poverty,” said Maria Norrfalk, Director General of Sida, addressing the conference on globalizing civil society 2015.

Maria Norrfalk, who joined Sida only two years ago, was happy to learn that the invited civil society organisations at the conference had so much in common. She pointed out that the Swedish government adopted a new policy two years ago, calling for increased efforts to involve all parts of civil society in the strive for equitable and sustainable development.

“The opportunities available to people to influence their lives are generally greater if people organise themselves together with others than if they are alone. The right to organise is therefore essential to enable a poor person to exert influence on his/her life and to escape from poverty,” said the Ms Norrfalk.

Poverty focus

On the new aid policy decided on by the Swedish government, Ms Norrfalk added: “Development co-operation has been given a sharper poverty focus through one single goal (instead of formerly six), stating that we shall help create conditions that will enable the poor to improve their lives.”

According to the head of Sida, two perspectives of the poor shall be taken as starting points for the work, emphasising the many dimensions of poverty.

“The new policy has started a process of change at Sida and at many organisations in civil society that the government agency works with. This does not mean a dramatic shift in direction of our work – we have always been focused on poverty issues – but rather raised ambitions. We see a

need to improve analysis and to become better at listening to and supporting the voices of poor people so that their perspectives will influence development co-operation. We need to work more with participatory work methods while also strengthening our dialogue with governments of partner countries,” the Director General told the audience.

The gender issue

Finally, on the gender issue, Maria Norrfalk pointed out: “All development co-operation must also clearly build on gender analysis. Saying so, in 2005, I know that I am repeating what we all have heard many times before. Still I say so, since both you and I know that we are not there yet. Both Sida and organisations in civil society need to increase their efforts and improve methods to address gender issues to be able to cut through all other issues.”



Dr Andrea Z Stephanous NGOs show the way for civil societies in the arab world

“NGOs have the potential to develop civil society in many Arab countries,” says Dr Andrea Z. Stephanous of the CEOSS Publishing house in Cairo, in a paper presented to provide background for the conference on civil societies.

According to Dr Stephanous, NGOs are increasing in number and in one way or another, they practise democracy. They are also intermediary between the grassroots and governmental authorities. Although they are mainly dependent on foreign funding, they are financially independent from the state. They are also able to build networks with other structures on national and regional levels. “As they provide the appropriate context for building the capacity of future leaders and are strongly connected to the masses, one can conclude that NGOs have an important role to play in developing civil society,” says Dr Stephanous.

A vacuum to fill

In his paper, the CEOSS Director argues that civil societies in the Arab world are not a ready-made package that one can impose. “It is a process that is based on social, economic and political conditions.” However, concludes Dr Stephanous, the Egyptian NGOs have the potential to develop civil society. “The collapse of the USSR, the promotion of a free market economy and the pressure for democracy, have contributed to

a single superpower and single economic model. Structural adjustment has required the state to withdraw from many fields of services that were formerly subsidised. This withdrawal has created a vacuum in which NGOs have been able to step in to provide the services needed by the community.”

The role of the NGOs in the development of civil society is increasingly affirmed. However, writes Dr Stephanpous, “The quality of democracy practised in NGOs is of concern. Although the majority of NGO heads are elected, most of them stay in office over a long time in the manner of political leaders. There is also a debate about the conduct of elections in NGOs which in many cases are run superficially and improperly.”

As for threats to an emerging civil society, Andrea Z. Stephanous is anxious to point out that the polarisation of civil society serves the interest of political elites. “This process has led the political elite to consider civil activities as political opposition that must be crushed.” Adds Dr Stephanous; “Destroying civil society kills civil authority as well as the context that can produce new forms of government. As a result, one can suggest that a positive relationship between state and civil society is crucial. A weak state will not create a strong civil society and a weak civil society will not guarantee the stability of the state.”

The CEOSS director is anxious to stress that the development of society should be based on developing rather than destroying old structures. “The new is not the alternative to the old, but both are needed for the development of civil society.”



Frank Okuthe-Oyngi

Greater involvement needed

Planning ahead for the year 2015, it is essential to ensure that not only effective co-operation between northern and southern civil society organisations (CSOs) is improved, but that there are genuine partnerships and alliances between state, civil society and corporate sector. This implies a common notion of shared responsibility and that the southern civil society will be an equal, but different partner, in the process of development co-operation, says Frank Okuthe-Oyugi, Associate Executive Secretary of the Africa Alliance of YMCAs, in a paper delivered at the conference.

Mr Okuthe-Oyugi calls for more pronounced “shared responsibility” between north and south. “Southern governments and CSOs active in

development co-operation should be given more support in the pursuit of their development goals. The burden is on both southern and northern CSOs to offer solidarity and support to their counterparts in other countries.”

The YMCA Secretary proposes a re-negotiation of the role of Northern CSOs in the South through collective dialogue and policy activism.

“This should be a process of redefining development agendas and their respective roles of northern and southern CSOs. As we look at the year 2015, northern CSOs are hereby challenged to promote a higher profile for southern issues within northern domestic and foreign policy.”

Discussing new types of CSOs for year 2015, Mr Okuthe-Oyugi envisages new models of grouping of global citizens and organisations to come together by reason of identity or interest to pursue a common objective. “Development co-operation in the next ten years should be a multi-directional process where northern CSOs draw on the advice of southern counterparts and on their programming experience to reshape organisational mandates and practises. Southern CSOs should be empowered to take a leading role in the collective redesign of northern CSO organisational strategy and structures.”

Models for co-operations

Looking ahead, the YMCA Secretary presented a number of models for co-operation to be considered:

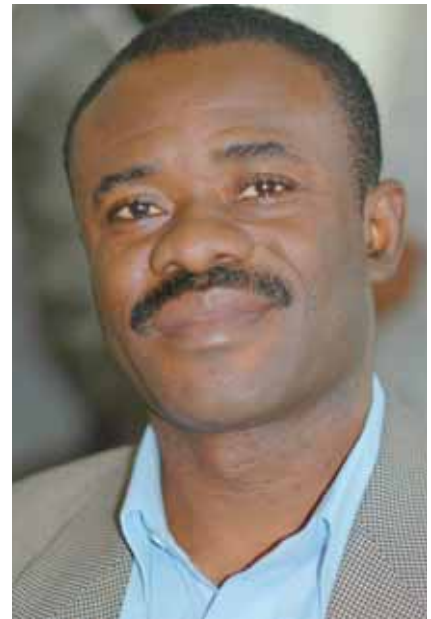
- The Spin-off NGO. This is the model in which a dependent franchise or northern CSO field office is expected over time to become organisationally and financially independent of the home office. This is a more acceptable model of co-operation as it allows for southern contextualizing while at the same time providing room for increased networking and sharing of methods and agenda between the North and the South.
- The Visionary Patronage in which northern and southern CSOs, with a shared vision of development, jointly agree on goals, outcome, measures and reporting requirements for a programme which the latter implements and the former supports with funds and other resources. This is a very common mode of development co-operation among the civil societies. It allows for the internationalisation of the development agenda but has its weaknesses because of the golden rule that says ‘he who has the gold makes the rules’.
- Collaborative Operations in which the northern and southern CSO share decision-making power over planning and implementation of joint programmes implemented by the southern CSO with funding and technical support from the North.
- Mutual Governance in which the northern and southern CSOs each have decision-making power, or at least substantial influence, over each other’s policies and practises at both the organisational and programme levels.

“From this list of operational and collaborative frameworks,” argues Mr Okuthe-Oyugi, “it is imperative that global civil society in the year 2015 be guided by a collaborative model that increases southern participa-

tion”, adding: “With this in mind, I would like to suggest that our planning be guided by a partnership framework informed by the ‘spin off’ and ‘mutual governance model’ for enhanced participation of southern CSOs in development co-operation.”

Trade unionist Mban Kabu:

African trade unions should join forces with other civil society organisations



African trade unions could gain a lot by joining other civil society groups in the struggle to get Africa back on its feet, argues trade union leader Mban Kabu, ICFTU-AFRO Education Officer. “The African trade unions may need to forge new alliances with other credible groups, notably human rights organisations, co-operative movements, informal economy organisations, peace groups as well as women’s organisations to be able to deal effectively with some of the problems caused by centuries of neglect and abuse in Africa.”

In his paper, presented at the civil society conference, Mr Kabu proposes that the constructive and collective engagement of these civil society organisations should be driven by information sharing, consultation on policy matters and access to resources in order to support local development initiatives and programmes.

“The need for trade unions to develop a network of contacts with other social organisations is founded on the absolute need for building the force necessary to address broader issues and, reverse the growing appalling human misery in Africa. It’s a matter of ensuring that the people on the ground shoulder the responsibility for Africa,” says the trade unionist in his paper.

Consolidating democracy

“The goal is to have everyone carry forward the banner and agenda for democracy, good governance and development. The bottom line is to build pressure for the struggle in consolidating democracy, and the fight against injustice, human rights abuses and poverty. It is also a matter of shaping the development agenda to reflect the interests of the people. This would also create a new social responsibility as well as a new political culture in Africa,” writes Mr Kabu.

Political obstacles

However, there are several problems to deal with when forming credible civil society coalitions in Africa, according to Kabu.

“The African states are overly interventionist in people’s life and thus often fail to recognise and utilise the capacities of their citizens. They have a track record of applying coercive measures to suppress citizens if they are organised, assertive and critical. They often perceive citizens organisations as enemies, who are competing with the state for political space and resources.”

At the same time Mr Kabu points out that broad coalitions take time to mature: “African civil society is highly diversified, dynamic and fragile. As a result the idea of bringing non-state actors together has to be pursued carefully. There should be no reliance on so-called quick fixes in organising them. Time will be required to understand who is who with a view to identifying legitimate progressive forces that can provide real added value.”

According to Mr Kabu, the way forward for the new broad coalitions, which he suggests would gain from being labour-led, would be to “implement a participatory approach, reflecting civil society’s essential role in development processes, both as a target, and above all, an active agent in such processes. Citizens should be encouraged, challenged and supported to undertake initiatives to address local needs,” ends Mban Kabu.

Voices

A WEALTH OF IDEAS TO BRING BACK

The international conference on Globalizing Civil Society 2015 in Härnösand was very well received by the international guests, representing a whole range of civil society organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America as well as the Middle East.

“Useful for strategy formulation”

Barbra Kohlo, Executive Director, Housing People of Zimbabwe:

“It was very good getting together, learning about each other’s issues. I think we can use this conference for strategy formulation back home. It’s essential for us to sit down with other civil society partners in the South. A lot of relevant ideas have come up. I find it very important to think in terms of scenarios for the future. And in our case, in Zimbabwe, we might have to plan for a worst-case scenario, how to survive as an organisation. It’s hard to predict what will come out of the future, given the present state of things in the country. Still, it’s reassuring to note that the number of civil societies is growing steadily back home.”

“Many thoughts will influence our policy making”

Mban Kabu, Education Secretary, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Kenya:

“I think we arrived at broad conclusions. It’s obvious that we have many common goals building a better society. There was also a very constructive analysis on strengths and weaknesses in our work. I feel we can do a lot more together. As southern partners we are not strong enough yet, so meetings like this are crucial. Many thoughts from this conference will definitely influence our thinking and policy making.”

“Its good to share your problems with someone”

Frank Okuthe-Oyugi, Associate Executive Secretary, Africa Alliance of YMCAs, Kenya:

“We now have the results. Let us see what we can do with them. It’s good to know that you share your problems and concerns with other people. Now I have a better understanding of issues than before. Conferences like this are crucial now that we have to take on larger roles in social, economic and political development.”

“The closer we come, the stronger we get”

Azizurrahman Rafiee, Co-ordinator, Afghan Civil Society Forum:

“We have now a common ground for working together. This will be good for our global networking. The closer we come, the stronger we get. I appreciate very much the action-orientated approach at the conference. People were very future orientated. That was very inspiring. It seems that we share the same concern for the future.”

“Good for future networking”

Miriam Suarez, Director, Casa de la Mujer, Bolivia:

“It’s nice to have a common platform with social society organisations on other continents. This will be essential for future networking. I find it interesting that we all share the concern for poverty issues, as we can’t bring about a change on our own. The globalisation of the world has caused a lot of hunger. Many of our people, especially women, work as ‘slaves’ in the North. For my organisation and many others in Latin America, this is the key problem to handle.”

“A lot of constructive ideas”

Nhek Sarin, Director, Star Campuchea, Cambodia:

“Unfortunately, we have so far very few contacts with civil societies in our neighbouring countries. It was therefore extremely useful to meet colleagues from other parts of the world in Härnösand and to learn from their experiences. I will bring back a lot of constructive ideas to my constituency.”

“We are drinking the same water”

Andrea Z. Stephanous, Director, CEOSS, Egypt:

“I appreciated the group dynamic of this conference. After all, we are drinking from the same water. It was also interesting to learn that we share so many similarities given our different cultures. I think the ideological framework in civil society organisations is coming back strongly. That is a good sign.”

“We must not be static”

Ravin Singh, Trainer and Programme Co-ordinator, Educational Training Unit, South Africa:

“The biggest mistake we can make is to believe that our ways of working are static. We need to communicate with each other. That’s an important lesson from this meeting. Also, it was interesting to focus on internal problems within our organisations. Maybe it’s time for a change of guards. We need new activists to carry the work forward.”

“Women’s rights violated everywhere”

Kathini Maloba-Caines, General Secretary, KEWWO, Kenya:

“It was an excellent opportunity to meet other organisations, focusing on women’s rights from other angles than I do in my daily work. It’s clear that women’s rights are violated everywhere, be it in the export industry in Kenya or behind closed doors in countries like Bolivia and Nicaragua. I think conferences of this kind should be replicated by other donor countries.”

“We have a lot in common”

Mehboob Sada, Director, Christian Study Centre, Pakistan:

“With all the friends I have made here, it feels a lot better to continue the work back home. Now I know that there is a whole ‘world’ of supporting civil society organisations out there. We have a lot in common even though our activities differ a lot.”

“New arguments presented”

Evelyn Flores, Co-ordination General, Puntos Encuentros, Nicaragua:

“It was happy that the problem with violence against women was brought up. This is a major concern for my organisation. “Now I have new arguments to use in our campaigns. There is still so much to do to protect women, both in Nicaragua and elsewhere.”



Malawi:

Civil Society gets the country on the right track

The position of civil society in Malawi is undisputed by most other countries on the African continent. This is due to the inexperience of the country's first democratic governments, after decades of dictatorship, to bring about much needed development. As a result, a coalition of civil society organisations, including organisations, teachers' unions and churches, got a unique role to play in the development of this poor country.

Malawi, squeezed in between Zambia, Mozambique and Tan-

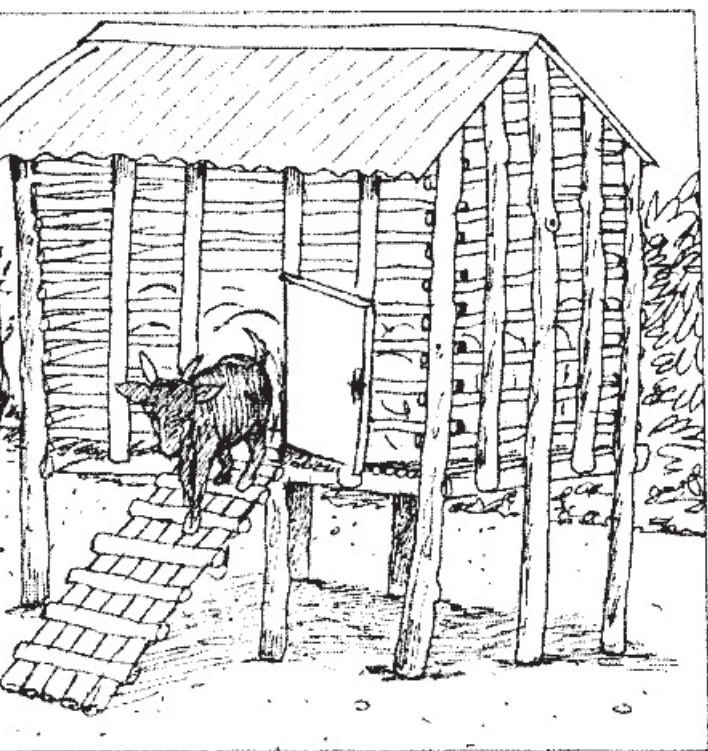
zania in Southern Africa, is one of the poorest countries in the world. Seventy per cent of the rural population live on just a dollar day. The level of unemployment is record-high and the HIV/AIDS pandemic is crippling the country's work force, causing unprecedented social and economic unrest.

Popular version in six languages

Few in Africa needed a working poverty reduction strategy more than Malawi. When it arrived in 2003, it was received with great expectations. "But who could

digest – or even make practical use of – a 1200-page document, written in a bureaucratic language", says Collins Magalasi of the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN). This civil society organisation is an umbrella organisation for over a hundred smaller unions, churches and co-operatives throughout Malawi. Formed in 2002, the network set out to produce a popular version of the Poverty reduction strategy paper, named "the People's guide to poverty reduction".

The six-page guide, written in an easy-read language, using a minimal number of technical terms, has been printed in the six major languages of the country. It has an overview of the strategy, advising the smallholder how to get his products on the market or a local



fisherman to improve his catches, using drawings and illustrations. The guide has been printed in huge numbers and is said to be very popular even with ministry employees.

Pressing the government

But the MEJN did not rest with the success of this popular guide. Approaching last year's general elections, the network felt it would be appropriate to review the government's progress in fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals. The aim was to make the government accountable to its people.

As the review, arriving some time before the elections, revealed a number of serious shortcomings, the government was immediately pressed to improve its efforts on meeting the MDGs. According to the review, again published in

an easy-read format for everyone to understand, the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE) found that the authorities had failed to provide primary schools in the rural areas with enough teachers.

Moreover, the distribution of school books was insufficient even though there had been government funds allocated. Also, the network of small farmers, CISANET, found that the promised support for farmers hadn't been met. Similar observations were made for the health sector.

The case of Malawi shows that the civil society can have a major impact on a country's development by pressing its government to fulfil its promises.



Towards 2015

Space for improvements

But the southern civil society organisations also looked at shortcomings that had to be addressed. Some organisations have a restricted focus making them unresponsive to interests outside their narrowly defined constituency. This restricted focus, in terms of issues and geographical constituencies, reduces the capacity of many southern civil societies to respond to different interests and confines their operations to the south. As a result, southern civil societies run the risk of becoming passive partners in development co-operation, making them reactive rather than proactive in the global civil society network.



The lack of professional expertise is also a factor hampering social societies. Many of their leaders lack the organising and managing skills needed to develop a small organisation (to take on a bigger role). This opens the way for increased dependence on northern counterparts to provide professional organisers, thereby also setting the agenda for the

southern counterparts. The lack of material resources may also lead to an increased lack of autonomy for southern CSOs.

The opening up of political and democratic space in the south has also paved the way for a variety of civil society organisations. However, a widespread sector pluralism has led to duplication of efforts in some cases, missing the opportunities for a much needed co-ordination and synergy. The result has been the problem of so called “MONGO-ism”, an acronym for “My own NGO”, where anyone with writing skills can pretend to be a potential partner, and this way attract funds from abroad that might have been better used, be it for poverty eradication, education or health support.

Some participants also pointed to the lack of common ideology among southern civil societies and a poor understanding of concepts. Those issues would have to be improved for the future.

Then, there’s also the risk of civil societies getting too close to the power base. Said Frank Okuthe-Oyugi: “Where social society initiatives have led to regime changes, the new governments often reward the champions of civil societies with high offices and new state-based responsibilities, thereby hampering the role of civil societies as watchdogs.”

Improving relations with northern partners

In addressing all the challenges, most southern civil societies found relationships with their northern partners, also funding their work, to be of uttermost importance. The participating organisations were eager to point out that co-operation generally works very well, inter-linked by a common platform on issues, goals and interests. Characterising co-operation with Swedish partners, representatives from southern NGOs mentioned: “true partnerships based on mutual trust, self criticism, democracy and horizontal relationships”. But there were still things that could be improved, some suggested. Fewer ready-made solutions from above and more “trust-building on equal footing”, were mentioned as ways of improving relations.



Facing today's realities

Looking at problems brought about by today's political realities, the participants all found a number of common problems and obstacles to adjust to.

First of all the present power structure of a unipolar world has a profound impact on the environment in which most civil society organisations work. As opposed to the former East/West divide, power now stems from one strong super power. This has effects on political life. Secondly, increasing globalization may have negative effects on labour forces with severe consequences for third world countries. Export-processing zones are set up in many third world countries to attract cheap labour, often with poor social and economic conditions, and standard solutions are being imposed through standard institutional designs without consideration for local, national or regional variations and priorities. Said Miriam Suarez, Bolivia: "Globalization has caused hunger. Our people work as slaves in northern countries". As for fundamentalism, "it's found everywhere", she said.



"We encounter fundamentalism even in Latin America. No one pays attention to the beating of women. Added Mehboob Sada, Pakistan: "We can steer away from fundamentalism if we work together."

Another, very powerful challenge for most civil societies is the alarming poverty with billions of people living on only a dollar a day. Miriam Suarez: "We as civil society organisations have to come in when the governments lack the needed resources. Then it is up to us do the job."

With some 40 million people affected by HIV/AIDS, a majority of them in Sub-Saharan Africa, this global pandemic is also a major concern, with grave economic and social consequences.

Scenarios for the future

Having inventoried most problems facing civil societies on the global as well as the local scene, the conference moved on to project possible scenarios and trends for the development of civil society organisations.

Some participants envisaged a future with an increasing number of multinational NGOs, especially in the development field. The London-based Action Aid, working in most developing countries, was mentioned as an example, expanding its international network to Sweden in 2005. There would also be stiffer competition for money as the number of southern civil society organisations grows. The ones with the lowest costs would appeal the most to donors.

Other scenarios suggested were more pronounced advocacy roles for the CSOs as well as the emergence of more civil society organisations in eastern Europe.

Some southern CSO representatives also envisaged more competition – less transparency and accountability among CSOs. Others expected that global migration would increase focus on ethnicity and environmental vulnerabilities.



Heading for 2015

With all these ideas in mind, where would the civil societies go in the future? Would it be possible to provide a road map for the way ahead or just present some good advice?

The conference finally settled for a list of basic recommendations:

- **Keeping the initiative.** “Allow space for new initiatives.”
- **More proactive work.** “We have to be challenged.”
- **Increased advocacy** to raise the profile of CSOs
- **Strengthening the capacity** of southern CSOs beyond certain individuals.
- **More strategic thinking** was also recommended.
- **Better education** by policy formation to strengthen the capacity of CSOs.
- **Closer monitoring** “of our own countries”.
- **True partnership.** This has to be based on mutual trust.
- **Self-criticism.** “We have to ask ourselves: Are we making a difference?”
- **Developing local resources.** Political awareness-raising.
- **Re-engineering to meet tomorrow’s challenges.**
- **Regional co-operation.** More need for regional co-operation to meet the growing threats of HIV/AIDS, negative effects of globalization and to counter-balance the uni-polar world system.
- **Closer networking** in strategic areas.
- **Increased use of media.** “We need to increase our communication. Local action can become global through the Internet. Communication is a driving force,” said Mban Kabu.
- **Act local – think global.** The best guiding principle for the future.
- **Fighting corruption.** An important field for southern CSOs.
- **Engaging youth.** Recruit more youth to the southern CSOs.
- **Generating own incomes.** CSOs should try to generate their own incomes to counter-balance the donor reliance. There is scope for new ideas in this field as shown by a campaign in Paraguay, where by pupils set out to give anyone a hand, by shopping for elderly people etc. By doing this, the pupils managed to raise a substantial amount of money. This initiative is based on a model often used in Sweden, called “Operation Day-work”.
- **Targeting minorities.** “In Bolivia we have 34 different nationalities within our borders. This calls for respect for diversity,” said Miriam Suarez, adding that many NGOs in Latin America had emerged in lack of equality.
- **Engage in fair trade,** where production takes social issues into account.
- **Empowering the marginalised poor.**

Delegates of the conference/Delegados del Conferencia internacional

“Globalizing Civil Society 2015 – a situation analysis”

“Globalizando la Sociedad Civil 2015 – un análisis de la situación”

Sida Civil Society Center, Härnösand, Sweden/Suecia 29/8 – 1/9 2005

- * **Azizurrahman Rafiee**, Coordinator, Afghan Civil Society Forum, Afghanistan
Invited by Svenska Afghanistankommittén, Swedish committee for Afghanistan
- * **Frank Okuthe-Oyugi**, Associate Executive Secretary, Africa Alliance of YMCAs, Kenya
Invited by Kfuk-Kfum, YWCA-YMCA
- * **Miriam Suarez**, Director, Casa de la Mujer, Bolivia
Invited by UBV, Education for Aid Activities
- * **Andrea Z. Stephanous**, Director, CEOSS, Egypt
Invited by Svenska Missionsrådet, Swedish mission council
- * **Mehboob Sada**, Director, Christian Study Center, Pakistan
Invited by Svenska Missionskyrkan, The mission covenant church of Sweden
- * **Ravin Singh**, Trainer, programme, co-ordinator, ETU (Education training Unit), South Africa
Invited by Olof Palmes Internationella Center, The Olof Palme International Center
- * **Barbara Kohlo**, Executive Director, Housing people of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe
Invited by Kooperation utan gränser, The Co-operative movement
- * **Mban Kabu**, Education Secretary, ICFTU-AFRO (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), Kenya
Invited by LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd, The LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Co-operation
- * **Kathini Maloba-Caines**, General Secretary, KEWWO, Kenya
Invited by Diakonia
- * **Jacob Thundyil**, President, PREM, India
Invited by Plan Sverige, Plan Sweden
- * **Evelyn Flores**, Coordination General, Puntos Encuentros, Nicaragua
Invited by Forum Syd, The Swedish NGO Centre of Development Cooperation
- * **Nhek Sarin**, Director, Star Kampuchea, Cambodia
Invited by Forum Syd, The Swedish NGO Centre of, Development Cooperation
- * **Kjell Fransson**, President, Afrikagrupperna, The Africa groups
- * **Ulrika Modéer**, Head of Int., Dep Diakonia
- * **Bo Forsberg**, Secretary general, Diakonia
- * **Peder Ericsson**, Co-ordinator, Evangeliska frikyrkan, InterAct International
- * **Inger Björk**, Secretary General, Forum Syd, The Swedish NGO Centre of Development Cooperation
- * **Ulf Carmesund**, Chair of managing board, Globalverkstan
- * **Barbro Thorén**, Advisor, Kfum-Kfuk, YWCA-YMCA
- * **Lennart Hjalmarson**, Executive Director, Kooperation utan gränser, The Co-operative movement
- * **Joakim Olsson**, Programme Officer, Kooperation utan gränser, The Co-operative movement
- * **Anna Åkerlund**, Secretary General, Kristna freds, The Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation
- * **Bernt Jonsson**, Retired Executive Director, Liv- & fredsinstitutet, Life & Peace Institute
- * **Anders Åhlin**, Method Development, LO-TCO Biståndsnämnd, The LO-TCO Secretariat of International Trade Union Development Co-operation

- * **Anna-Klara Granstrand**, Method Officer, Olof Palmes Internationella Center, The Olof Palme International Center
- * **Sanna Johnson**, Head of development, Olof Palmes Internationella Center, The Olof Palme International Center
- * **Anna Garvander**, Programme Officer, Plan Sverige, Plan Sweden
- * **Gabriella Olofsson**, Head of programme, Plan Sverige, Plan Sweden
- * **Christian Holmgren**, Administrative Director, PMU InterLife
- * **Carin Åström**, Programme Officer, Rädda Barnen, Save the children
- * **Alfhild Petrén**, Acting Secretary General, Rädda Barnen, Save the children
- * **Bahare Haghsheenas**, President, Röda Korsets Ungdomsförbund, Red Cross Youth association
- * **Maria Linder Lundgren**, President, SHIA, The Swedish Organisations of Disabled Persons International Aid Association
- * **Katarina Bergwall**, Administrative Director, SHIA, The Swedish Organisations of Disabled Persons International Aid Association
- * **Maria Norrfalk**, Director General, Sida, The Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation
- * **Svante Sandberg**, Head of NGO division, Sida, The Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation
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- * **Malin Ljunggren-Elison**, Programme Officer, Sida, The Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation
- * **Tomas Brundin**, Adviser on Civil Society Issues, Sida, The Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation
- * **Bengt Kristiansson**, Secretary General, Svenska Afghanistankommittén, Swedish committee for Afghanistan
- * **Bertil Svensson**, Mission Secretary, Svenska Missionskyrkan, The mission covenant church of Sweden
- * **Anders Malmstigen**, Development Coordinator, Svenska Missionsrådet, Swedish mission council
- * **Göran Sturve**, Secretary General, Svenska Missionsrådet, Swedish mission council
- * **Margareta Lilja**, Programme Officer, UBV, Education for Aid Activities
- * **Alex Muigai**, Programme Officer, Human resources, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Alexandra Swenning**, Project Co-ordinator, ATHA, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Dag Jonzon**, Project Co-ordinator, Arena and Communication, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Ewa Wärmegård**, Training Officer, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Karin Olofsson**, Project Co-ordinator, Civil Society, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Magdalena Haggren**, Division Administrator, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Maria Nordlander**, Co-ordinator IT and communication, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Maja Bonta**, Librarian, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Roland Stenlund**, Head of SCSC division, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Toomas Mast**, Programme Officer, Organization development, Sida Civil Society Center
- * **Dr Rajesh Tandon**, Lecturer Wednesday August 31. Founder of PRIA (The Society for Participatory Research in Asia)
- * **Björn Mittag-Leffler**, Interpreter
- * **Maria Gustafsson**, Interpreter
- * **Andreas Lång**, Journalist, documentation
- * **David Dahmén**, Journalist, documentation

Sida Civil Society Center – where good ideas meet

Sida Civil Society Center in Härnösand was started in 2002 as a meeting place for NGOs and popular movements whose activities focus on the role of civil society in the field of development.

The Center's guest-house

As a course participant you are welcome to stay at the Center's guest-house, Lönnebo, which is located beside the main building.

Lönnebo has 50 single rooms which also can be used as doubles, if necessary. Every room has its own bathroom. In the guest-house there is a spacious kitchen, open to all guests, where breakfast is served. There is a TV-room, sauna, laundry room as well as common rooms. There are also two double rooms with their own kitchenettes. Sheets and towels are supplied by the guest-house. All rooms have been adapted for use by disabled persons.



Halving poverty by 2015 is one of the greatest challenges of our time, requiring cooperation and sustainability. The partner countries are responsible for their own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge and expertise, making the world a richer place.



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