

Europe's and Germany's development cooperation with Africa

EUROPEAN/GERMAN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN AFRICA AND THE G8 PROCESS TOWARDS AFRICA

Dear Ladies and Gentleman,

First of all I would like to thank the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation very much for organising this conference.

I was asked to talk about European/ German civil society actors in Africa and the G8 process towards Africa. Therefore the first part of my presentation focuses on the role civil society plays in the development cooperation with Africa. I will start with a definition of civil society and the role it plays today in our world. Then I will focus on the work of German civil society with Africa. Finally I am going to talk about the involvement of the civil society in the G8 process towards Africa. I will conclude with a prognosis of future importance of civil society in the field of development cooperation with Africa.

I. WHAT IS CIVIL SOCIETY?

Well. I guess I will have to start with a definition of "Civil society". It is currently a very popular term to be used in the field of development work. The term refers to the arena of collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. Its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state and market. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development nongovernmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faithbased organisations, professional associations,

trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group.

Depending on a country's history and political tradition and depending on the degree of political liberalisation and democratisation, very different forms of civil society organisation have evolved in various countries. While civil society movements have already been developing in Latin American countries such as Bolivia or Nicaragua for decades, countries like Ethiopia, Niger or Vietnam hardly have such a political culture at all. Germany instead has a very long tradition of civil society movement.

The Civil Dialogue initiated by the Commission in the 1990s was a first attempt by the EU to give the institutions of society - and not only governments and businesses - a voice at the policy-making tables in Brussels. Civil society movements are on the rise, not only in European countries but also in countries where democracies are still very fragile, like in some of the African countries. Often they face discrimination or harassment when the government feels threatened, sometimes they are just ignored and not heard. In order to be in a better position to represent their positions on certain matters, civil society actors often join up in networks. (e.g. for the Poverty Reduction Strategy process in Zambia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Mozambique).

We see that there are different ways of multiplying the force of the message by joining up with other groups or actors. The last two

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years have seen a huge change in the approach of many organisations involved in the fight against global poverty. We have seen a massive coming together of networks, faith groups, people's movements, trade unions and charities to form the biggest-ever coalition against poverty – the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP). It is made up of national coalitions in over 100 countries including Your voice against Poverty (Deine Stimme Gegen Armut) in Germany.

In countries where democracies are not strongly developed, authorities are often not fond of civil society organisation, especially if they act as watchdogs. The current threat of terrorism is a popular excuse for many African states to criminalize civil society actions. This criminalization has involved, but not been limited to, the (judicial) persecution of human rights and pro-democracy organizations and individuals who have often been accused of either sponsoring terror or supporting treason. According to a 2004 Christian Aid Report the introduction of the 2002 Anti-Terrorist Act in Uganda, which amongst other things brands any organization establishing a dialogue with the Lord's Resistance Army as a collaborator, has stifled the initiatives of groups such as the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative to resolve the conflict through peaceful means.

Another problem is the constant changing of the rules of the game by some African governments (as in Zimbabwe or Nigeria) in relation to the functioning of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the demonization of CSOs as Western agents sponsored by foreign interests with dubious agendas, Namibia, South Africa and Uganda being cases in point. What is worrying is that this backlash against CSO, threatens to close off the spaces where alternative ideas may be expressed, where genuine dialogue may emerge, and where democracy may flourish.

II. EUROPEAN/GERMAN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS IN AFRICA

For a couple of years cooperation with CSOs has been playing an increasingly important role in the development policy of the German government. Reason for that might be the quality of the work. CSO often have a long history of experience working in developing countries and on certain issues related to development, peace and human rights. The other reason why the work of civil society organisations are of such importance is that they have no state authority and vice versa that the state has no direct influence over them. This gives many CSOs a different access to people than that enjoyed by state bodies. The strengths of CSOs can be seen in their close contacts to civil society in partner countries, including countries in which government-level cooperation is difficult or impossible for political reasons.

For some years now, there has been an in-depth exchange of experience and views between the German government and CSOs. Churches, political foundations and other private development bodies are regularly involved in the elaboration of the Ministry's development-policy strategies for individual countries and regions.

In Germany alone, there are several thousand CSOs working in the field of development – associations, action groups, federations, working groups, solidarity groups, twinning arrangements, foundations, development-policy networks, and many others. Most of them are private, church-funded or politically oriented providers of development programmes and projects. The most important fields of work of these CSOs are poverty reduction, the promotion of opinion-building and participation processes, the establishment of social and institutional structures, food aid, emergency and refugee aid, and development-policy education.

Most CSOs are dependent on donations from the general public to allow them to implement their programmes. In 2005 the German general public donated 3,5

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billion Euro for social society activities around the world. According to statistics more than 30 Million German out of a population of 80 Million donated money for the good cause. The German government contributed 29 million euros to projects of private development cooperation providers in 2005.

The churches play an extremely important role in German development cooperation. Along with their partners in the developing countries, the churches have been working for more than 40 years within the framework of the development cooperation of the Federal Republic of Germany. In many parts of the world they have been able to ease the poverty of the people and enhance their living conditions. Churches are able to mobilise sections of civil society worldwide, and can thus exert a strategic influence on political awareness building.

For instance, the churches played an important part in the adoption of the debt relief initiative HIPC II in 1999 at the Cologne economic summit. With their own funds and donations totalling some 500 million euros per annum, the churches fund their activities largely independently.

The newly developed concept for civil conflict management and crisis prevention by the German government is partly based on the experience of church development services. Civil conflict prevention and management and the protection of human rights have for many years been a focus of church development work. The churches played a pioneering role in the establishment of the Civil Peace Service (ZFD).

To describe the above said I will present you a tangible example of my own arena of work before I move on to the second part of my presentation about the G 8-process towards Africa.

The Ecumenical Network for Central Africa is – as the name already indicates – a network. The partners of this network are the major Christian based development and advocacy organisations in Germany such as Misereor, Diakonie or Pax Christi. They all

conducted a multitude of development and advocacy projects and programmes in Africa. They all have partners with whom they work very closely together. These organisations are also implementing development projects in the Great Lakes Region in Africa. They are engaged in health and educational projects, infrastructure projects, but they are also supporting human rights groups. To have a better understanding of the activities I will have to sketch with a few lines the political situation in the Great Lakes Region. Since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 two wars where fought in the east of the DR Congo. An armed conflict is still going on. Four million people were killed; hundred of thousands of people lost their homes. Women are mass raped and slaughtered. The east of the Congo is one of the mineral richest areas in the whole world. At the same time the DR Congo is on the bottom of the list of UN human poverty index. The armed conflict and violence has to do with ethnical differences but the main source of conflict is the richness of natural resources. Congolese, Rwandan and Ugandan authorities, armed forces and business people try to make their share in selling these minerals to the rest of the world. Nothing except hunger and war is left to the people.

So what can the civil society do? I want to select out of a pool of a variety of projects and activities just a few to give you an idea.

Heal Africa is a Congolese Christian Organisation in Goma, a small city in the east of the Congo, the middle of the conflict. The organisation runs a hospital to treat in particular women and children that have been victim to rape and other forms of violence. They train their medical staff and offer a variety of community projects. Many are related to assist vulnerable people, for instance victims of war, handicapped children, pregnant women or people with HIV/Aids and so forth. Another project is called RIO (Reseau d'innovation Organisationnelle) which is in Bukavu, another city in the conflict area, is specialised on the promotion of a culture of peace. They do research on topics of conflict, offer training and information to the population and act as mediators.

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One major partner is the coalition Publish What You Pay in the DR Congo, who is doing advocacy work to make sure that the revenues for natural resources are being used for the good of the people and not disappearing into some authorities private bank account. The coalition is doing research and lobby- and advocacy work in collaboration with western civil society organisation. A very important role is played by the churches themselves. They are represented even in the smallest of village. They provide education, information and assistance.

They are also very active in reconciliation among the different ethnical groups. How are the German civil society actors involved in the work? Through financial and technical assistance. The financial assistance I mentioned earlier. Technical assistance means that Western professionals are sent to Africa who work in a partnership approach with the partner organisations.

While supporting projects in the partner countries, lobby- and advocacy work for the conflict regions is at the same done to German and European decision makers by civil society groups to improve living conditions for the partners in Africa.

III. G 8-PROCESS TOWARDS AFRICA

This leads me to the second part of my presentation: Civil Society involvement and the G 8 process towards Africa.

The Group of Eight (G8) includes the eight leading industrialized democracies in the world: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States. Together, these eight states account for 48% of the global economy and 49% of global trade, hold four of the United Nations' five permanent Security Council seats, and boast majority shareholder control over the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The term "civil society" first appeared in an official G8 summit document in 1995. Since then, the relationship between the G8 and

civil society has undergone a marked evolution. Two decades ago, the notion of large-scale civic engagement occurring alongside G8 deliberations was unthinkable.

University of Toronto professor Peter Hajnal describes four distinct eras of civil society and G8 interaction: (1) 1975-1980, a period of the earliest form of dialogue; (2) 1981-1994, a period of gradual recognition through civil society lobbying and active protest; (3) 1995-1997, a period of formal recognition by the G8; and (4) 1998-present, a period of well-structured cooperation. As recently as 2006, the role of civil society has evolved again. Civil society does not only occupy the role of an external commentator, but also that of an internal stakeholder through a new program of formal consultations. The G8 and Africa: Progress Since Gleneagles In 2005, the "Year for Africa," the G8 assembled at the G8 Summit in Gleneagles, Scotland to discuss development on the world's poorest continent. The summit focused largely on the achievement of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of eight promises made by world leaders at the 2000 UN Millennium Summit. Pledges include eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, combating the spread of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, achieving universal primary education, fostering gender equality, promoting environmental sustainability, and establishing global cooperation in the development process. Perhaps naturally, the G8 adopted the MDGs as the basis for its own action vis-à-vis African development. At the end of the summit, promises were made in line with the MDG goals and framework to establish trade justice, cancel the debts of Africa's poorest countries, provide more and better aid, combat HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, guarantee education for all, maintain security and support peace initiatives, and fight corruption.

GCS claimed a central role in 2005, with Make Poverty History and Live 8 demonstrating the power of collective action in shaping the Gleneagles agenda. In an address at King's College, Tony Blair praised

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GCS actions in 2005 and recognized the need for global public mobilization to end poverty. At Gleneagles, the UK government made a step towards greater civil society inclusion by allowing CSOs to participate in G8 deliberations and have access to media centers.

The African agenda at the 2006 St Petersburg Summit centred on the delivery of these pledges. During the Russian Presidency, Vladimir Putin attended part of the Civil G8 Conference to canvass the views of CSOs prior to the 2006 St Petersburg Summit.

In an effort to ensure the delivery of past promises, the German G8 Presidency re-stored African development as a priority issue for the 2007 Heiligendamm Summit. The German government has attempted to establish and maintain dialogue with members of African civil society.

African Civil Society Organisation's, Diaspora, and International CSO delivered a Statement at the 8th Session of the African Partnership Forum, which took place on the 22 May 2007 Berlin for the preparation to the G 8 summit. The main recommendations concentrated on Trade and Investment, on Peace and Security, on Good Governance/APRM, on Climate change, on HIV/AIDS, TB, and Malaria and on Gender.

During the last G 8 summit in Germany, a range of demands was also expressed in the opening demonstration. While some groups demonstrated for the collapse of the G8, others were intent to work within the scope of G8 summits and lobby for specific policy outcomes. Around 30 000 people participated in the demonstration.

Conceived as a discussion-based complement to the demonstrations occurring on the streets, the Alternative G8 Summit (AS) has become a key feature of counter summit activities. The 2007 AS saw delegates from around the world participate in four original film screenings, seven satellite symposiums, and over 120 workshops in venues throughout the city of Rostock, Germany. Each event was focused on one of

the eight major themes of the Alternative Summit:

Climate, Environment, and Energy; Labour and Social Issues; Global Justice; European Union; War and Militarization; Migration and Racism; Gender; Education; and Strategies and Alternatives.

However, the recognition of Global Civil Society's importance does not always lead to the adoption of their policy initiatives. Even if the G8 made the desired commitments, complete implementation would not necessarily follow. However, some progress has been made.

Global Civil society remains sceptical of the G8's treatment of African development. Though the G8 has made some progress in debt cancellation, its contributions to effective aid, education, anti-corruption measures, and the fight against infectious diseases have been minimal. In terms of trade reform, the G8's performance has been miserable.

Conclusion

I am coming to the end of my presentation. The participation of civil society is a necessity for the strengthening of a democracy. It gives space for new ideas and alternative approaches of conflict resolution, democracy building and poverty reduction. Civil Society actors have an understanding of people in the partner countries which a representative of a government institution can never have. Civil Society actors must therefore not only be supported in their work they do in the field but also be included in the development of country and thematic strategies.

I want to close with the words of Dr. Vandana Shiva from the Philippines, a civic society actor with a long and respected history of activism who was the key not speaker at the G 8 Alternativ Summit in Germany that "another world is possible" through the efforts of grassroots movements and civil society.