

DEFINITIONS

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

CSOs can be defined to include all non-market and non-state organisations in which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. They cover a wide range of organisations that include membership-based CSOs, cause-based CSOs, and service-oriented CSOs. Examples include community-based organisations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organisations, labour unions, cooperatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes, and the not-for-profit media.

Advisory Group Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations, August 2008

Civil society organisations are highly diverse expressions of active citizenship in their society and are development actors in their own right. CSOs promote people's participation and democratic action and reflect the values of socio-economic justice and solidarity as global citizens.

Tomlinson, Reality Check, August 2008

Civil Society Organisations are voluntary bodies that come together to pursue a public purpose which can be characterised as social solidarity. ...Social solidarity is the foundation for democracy, expressing public people-centred interests of CSO constituencies in all their diversity.

Report on the North-South Civil Society Dialogue (Nairobi), November 2007

CSOs are autonomous membership-based, cause-oriented, or service-oriented organisations, which share a common defining identity – *social solidarity* with the people in society they serve or represent.

A Synthesis of Advisory Group Regional Consultations and Related Processes, January 2008

DEVELOPMENT

Development is the process through which societal changes are achieved to ensure people lead lives of dignity and are able to meet their daily needs and to reach their highest potential through addressing societal challenges such as poverty, injustices and imbalance of power.

Development is a process of societal and economic change requiring human organising, resource mobilisation, service provision, understanding and claiming of human rights. Governments and donors have international legal obligations to work with other stakeholders, including CSOs, to make maximum efforts and progress on the reduction of poverty and inequalities. The achievement of women's rights and gender equality are essential to making development progress.

Association of Southeast Asian Networks

OUTLINING THE ISSUE

CSOs actors have come to be recognised as a key force in enhancing citizens' participation in development. They are essential organisations for increasing peoples' demand for progressive realisation of human rights, for ensuring accountability of government, and for engagement and monitoring implementation of development change. CSOs are also widely seen as expressions of the rights to peaceful assembly, free association and to free speech embedded in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They facilitate peoples' claim to their political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights.

CSOs in development have many roles, sometimes within one organisation. The range of roles includes but is not limited to, mobilising grassroots communities, poor and marginalised people to claim their rights; monitoring government and donor policies and practices; holding national and multilateral development agencies to account through local knowledge, research, advocacy, and alternative policies; delivering services and innovative development programming; building coalitions and networks for greater civil society coordination and impact; and mobilising and leveraging Northern financial and human resources in North / South and South / South CSO partnerships.

Social solidarity between citizens forms the basis for the relations of CSOs to their constituencies as well as to other social actors – government, donors and the private sector. In addition to voting in periodic elections, social solidarity is also an essential expression of democracy, by organising and sustaining citizens' diverse interests in public policy and peoples' welfare.

SOME GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What are the most important principles that can best strengthen ways of working for CSOs / networks / platforms that are essential for CSOs to:
 - a. Achieve their intended objectives (e.g. poverty reduction, promotion of human rights, gender equality and sustainable development)?
 - b. Strengthen their accountability to their constituencies and stakeholders?
 - c. Increase the visibility and voice of CSOs?
 - d. Promote social solidarity and active citizenship?
2. What are some guidelines (for CSOs, for donors, for government) to implement these principles:
 - a. Within your own CSO and its relation to constituencies?
 - b. In the country and regional context in which you and other CSOs work?
 - c. In your global external relations with other CSOs, donors or multilateral institutions?
3. What is the added-value of CSOs as development actors?
4. What are the common elements of the identity of development CSOs that are relevant to the debate on development effectiveness?

USEFUL RESOURCES

Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, “Issues paper”, September 2007. Available at: <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-Advisory-Group-on-Civil-Society-.html>

Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, “Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations”, August 2008. Available at: <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-Advisory-Group-on-Civil-Society-.html>

Report of the “North-South Civil Society Dialogue”, sponsored by the Advisory Group on Civil Society Aid Effectiveness, Nairobi, November 2007. Available at: <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-Advisory-Group-on-Civil-Society-.html>

Report of the “CSO Northern Regional Workshop”, sponsored by the Advisory Group on Civil Society Aid Effectiveness, Brussels, October 2007. Available at: <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-Advisory-Group-on-Civil-Society-.html>

Reality Check, August 2008, “Civil Society and Development Effectiveness: Another View”, Canadian Council for International Cooperation and Asociacion Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promocion. Available at: <http://www.realityofaid.org/rcheck.php>