

DEFINITIONS

NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN CSOs

Northern and Southern CSOs are distinguished by their place of origin, where the Northern CSOs originate from the developed countries and Southern from the developing countries. The origin of the CSOs may determine and differentiate the type and level of resources available, their foci and modus operandi.

INTERNATIONAL CSOs

International CSOs may be neither Northern nor Southern in that they operate as a global network / partnership, while many still retain a strong identity, operational and financial structure as a Northern CSO donor.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are, understood and mutually enabling, independent interaction with shared intentions.

Fowler, 1997, p.117

Partnership is an important tool in the enhancement of social capital, which brings about a more functional civil society better able to deal with the states and markets at all levels of operation.

Cornwall, Lucas and Pasteur, 2000

“Authentic partnership means a long-term commitment to agreed objectives based on shared values, strategies and information. It is characterized by honest feedback and joint planning, accompaniment, transparency and accountability on both sides, and a genuine openness and sensitivity to the other’s needs, feelings, expertise, experience and wisdom. It is based on mutual respect, trust and goodwill.”

The Caritas Partnership Guiding Principles

OUTLINING THE ISSUE

There are distinctions between Northern and Southern CSOs with regard to the roles that they play in development by virtue of the context in which they operate and their overarching aims. A large number of the Northern CSOs exist to support Southern CSOs and act as donors in their own right, channels for official donor funds and social solidarity development actors. These differences in roles and *modus operandi* between Northern and Southern CSOs have often led to imbalances of power leading to situations where Southern CSOs may be treated more as a client “aid recipient” than an independent CSO partner, with Northern CSOs passing onto their Southern CSO partners the same kinds of rigid (and criticised) aid delivery conditionalities and requirements that they are subject to from institutional donors.

The relational issues between the Northern and Southern CSOs have been subject of many dialogues and reform in CSO operations and practices. For instance distinction is made between Northern CSOs that work in partnership with Southern CSOs, and those that operate their own programmes in developing countries and have their own affiliates and offices in those countries. The former arrangement is said to have the potential for a better balance of power, while the latter arrangement, it is argued, allows Northern NGOs to better understand the needs of the poor and marginalised.

Effective and equitable North / South CSO partnerships are characterised by traits such as (Fowler, 2000; Tomlinson, 2006):

- A long-term relationship based on a shared vision derived through dialogue involving each party;
- Agreement on shared development objectives, recognising that each party may have other complementary objectives;
- Responsiveness to Southern CSOs priorities, with increasing programmatic support for these priorities through joint planning;
- Alignment with Southern CSO systems and procedures, including core budgetary support;
- Respect of differences and diversity, in relationships built on honesty, transparency, mutual trust and knowledge sharing; and
- Explicit negotiated terms of mutual accountability.

Recent evidence indicates a number of trends in the aid system pushing in the direction of increased power imbalances in Northern-Southern CSO relationships that affect Southern CSO development effectiveness. These include the following:

- Increasingly prescriptive donor funding to Northern CSOs (sector and geographic restrictions on the type of development initiative that donors will support or requirements for alignment with government priorities, which notably results in absence of aid for forgotten crises and aid orphan countries)
- Increasingly prescriptive Northern CSO funding to Southern CSOs, based on Northern CSO constituencies' and private donors' interests;
- Increased direct presence of multiple Northern CSOs and International NGOs in Southern countries competing for staff and resources with domestic Southern CSOs;
- Greater emphasis on quick and demonstrable results unrelated to the development context facing Southern counterparts; and
- Greater one-way accountability from Southern CSOs to Northern CSOs, centred on the use of funding.

As a number of Northern official donors have started to grant funds directly to Southern CSOs (instead of using Northern CSOs as intermediaries), the recent years also saw the emergence of new opportunities for Southern CSOs. The European Commission, for instance, has decentralised some of its funding mechanisms to its Delegations.

Some countries, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, shifted from being aid recipients to aid donors, and the CSOs of these countries may offer different perspectives on partnership to Southern CSOs.

There has also been increased dialogue on South-South cooperation amongst various development actors including CSOs. South-South cooperation has evolved in the context of the common struggle of developing countries to reach development and growth. Based on shared struggles, Southern CSOs in various regions (Latin America, Africa and Asia) ought to increase opportunities for sharing their learning and practices and tapping into the resources in the South. Southern CSOs may need to increasingly define terms of engagement with Northern donors, both official and CSOs, through joint funding mechanisms controlled by Southern CSOs.

SOME GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What distinctions need to be made between Northern and Southern CSOs with regard to the roles that they play in development? How do these distinctions affect principles for CSO development effectiveness, guidelines for their implementation, and mechanisms of accountability?
2. How do Southern and Northern CSOs perceive the intermediate role that Northern CSOs often play in the aid architecture, in particular in terms of their value added?
3. What are some examples of partnership and good practice of NCSO support for CSO development programmes in the South? Consider:
 - handling of resources (human and financial)
 - ownership of programs and strategies
 - impact for beneficiaries

How can the relationships and imbalance of power between the Northern and Southern CSOs be addressed? What principles of operation would enhance the relationships between Northern and Southern CSOs for greater impact?
4. How can Southern CSOs in different regions enhance their partnerships and share their learning and practices? How can increased Southern cooperation be reflected in CSO development effectiveness principles and guidelines?
5. What reforms would Southern CSOs like to see in the way that Northern CSOs work with them? What are some examples of positive North / South CSO relationships from which lessons could be drawn?
6. How do donors and governments affect the quality of North / South CSO partnerships? What principles, guidelines and practices should define these conditions? What examples are there of good donor practice in support of international CSO partnerships for equitable social solidarity?

USEFUL RESOURCES

Fowler.A, (1991), “Building Partnerships between Northern and Southern development NGOs: Issues for the 1990s”, *Development in Practice*, Vol. 1, No. 1.

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Fowler A., “Striking a Balance: A Guide to Enhancing the Effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organisations in International Development”, 1997 (London: Earthscan)

Stephen P. Osborne (ed), “Public-Private Partnerships: Theories and Practice in International Perspective”, John Hailey, “NGOs Partners: The Characteristics of Effective Development Partnerships”, 2000, Available at:

<http://cenfor.etailer.dpsl.net/Home/html/moreinfo.asp?isbn=0203207114>

Rajpal Singh Ghataoura, “To What Extent Is The Relationship Between Northern NGOs and Southern NGOs Based On Partnership and Free From Local and International Agendas?”, 2008, *International Relations*, <http://www.e-ir.info/?p=592>

Marrakesh Declaration on South-South Cooperation. Available at:

www.g77.org/marrakech/Marrakech-Declaration.htm

Tomlinson B., “Determinants of Civil Society Aid Effectiveness: A CCIC Discussion Paper”, Canadian Council for International Cooperation, 2006. Available at:

http://www.ccic.ca/what_we_do/aid_civil_society_e.php#cs_determs