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Alexandria encounter on fostering cross-sectoral partnership for development

Oxfam Canada organized a three-day forum for sharing experiences and identifying promising possibilities and strategies for partnership between CSOs and the private sector in the Horn of Africa. The forum, which was held in Alexandria, Egypt, from 27-29th November 2007, brought together representatives from CSOs and the private sector in Ethiopia, Somaliland and Sudan. FSS was represented by Dr Taye Assefa.

The Oxfam Canada officers from Ethiopia presented to the participants the findings of their survey on cross-sector partnerships in the Horn of Africa and the experiences from Poland during the time of transition from communist autocracy to liberal democracy. The survey from the three countries showed that the most common patterns of cross-sector partnerships in the Horn of Africa are:

- Education and health are the most supported sectors;
- Religion acts as a significant value denominator in fostering partnership between business and CSOs;
- Commitment/attachment to birth place is a motivational factor for collaboration towards community support;
- Personal connections facilitate collaborations by enhancing trust and credibility among partners;
- There is inadequate articulation of citizens' rights and responsibilities for participation in development processes; misconceptions prevail about roles and relations between CSOs, the private sector and government;
- There is limited dialogue between the private sector and CSOs, and the latter are not sufficiently engaging the former;

- Upscaling personal/individual relations to sectoral relations remains a major challenge to cross-sector partnership.

The Polish experience revolved mainly around two CSOs, namely, the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation (PEPF) and the Krakow Development Forum (KDF). Based on his personal experience in Canada and Poland, their co-founder Rafal Serafin describes the following five lessons in cross-sector partnership brokering (see his writing "five key things I have learned about partnership brokering") :

1. **Cross-sector partnerships are social institutions:** Social institutions cannot be legislated into existence. They result from people interacting with one another in groups. Cross-sector partnerships facilitate, encourage and otherwise make possible the interplay between the different groups. The Broker therefore needs to see himself as a social agent who is engaged in the process of building and rebuilding social institutions.
2. **Cross-sector partnerships change culture:** Cross-sector partnerships can be effective tools for changing culture, i.e., the habits, customs, values and ethics through which people relate to one another and which enable them to operate in large groups. The broker needs to be proactive in pushing for alternatives and for change rather than passively responding to the interplay between the partners engaged.
3. **Cross-sector partnerships generate social capital:** As explained by Francis Fukuyama, "social capital is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in society... it can be embodied in the smallest most basic social groups, the family, as well as in the largest of all groups, the nation, and in all other groups in between." Including civil society in cross-sector partnership should bring with it a focus on values, norms and moral imperatives.



New Publication

The Status of Governance, Academic Freedom, and Teaching Personnel in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions

(A Synthesis of Institutional Case Studies)

Compiled by
Tesfaye Semela

4. **Cross-sector partnerships do not last forever:** The broker has to ensure that cross-sector partnerships systematically and explicitly question their 'value-added'. When there are better alternatives, the role and nature of the partnership should come to an end.
5. **Cross-sector partnership needs brokers:** To be effective, cross-sector partnerships need brokers for managing the complex interrelationships involved. Brokering is like refereeing a football match. If you do your job well, no one will have noticed you, as attention will have focused on goal scorers and the thrill of the game. If you have done your job badly, you will be the focus of controversy.

Serafin points out the following **8 principles** developed and adopted by PEPF to guide the relationships of the Environmental Partnership (its member foundations) with government, business, private funders and other sectors:

1. **Social investment:** Focus must be on addressing an environmental problem so that their contribution towards sustainable development can be measured (the emphasis is on thinking in terms of social investment);
2. **Autonomy:** Independence of partners must be assured so that they can contribute what they do best;
3. **Ethical funds:** Funds and other resources allocated to a project or programme must be legally or ethically generated (and there must be no strings attached to funding or resource allocation);
4. **Continuous improvement:** Partners must be committed to active and continuous improvement aimed at achieving making the partnerships work for the benefit of all concerned (partnership is a relationship based on sharing risks, as well as benefits);
5. **Openness:** Partners must be committed to openness with each other when dealing with problems, mistakes, surprises, misunderstandings that will inevitably arise;
6. **Long-term commitment:** Partners are committed to making the partnership work over the long run as all parties must invest continuously in making it work (i.e., a partnership is not about a one-time media event, grant or donation);
7. **The principle of no-fault termination:** Not all partners will work and bring the expected benefits to the parties involved. A strong partnership must be based on allowing any of the parties to opt out or withdraw from the partnership without attribution or blame;
8. **Jointly agreed outreach:** Even though motivations for entering into a partnership may be different, outreach strategies to the wider community—especially through the media—must be jointly agreed and monitored.

Serafin says that the above **8 principles** and the brokering function have become part of their organizational culture. Further, cross-sector partnerships provide a way of nurturing a "sense of civics" or desire to look beyond self interest and contribute to the public good. He stresses that responding to the "democratic deficit" is of special importance at present, as citizens in many places around the world appear to have

lost faith not only in politicians, but also in their own ability to contribute to building a democratic culture that generates and secures the public good. In this context cross-sector partnerships have the potential to make a difference.

During the Alexandria encounter, participants thoroughly discussed potential and actual roles and contributions of CSOs, government, business, international NGOs and donors, the potential areas of collaboration among these sectors, ingredients for effective collaboration such as credibility and trust, leadership, available spaces for dialogue and existing capacity of CSOs as well as the challenges in each of these spheres. Based on their local experiences, the participants also explored possible strategies under the following key questions:

- How can CSOs engage with the private sector to mobilize and leverage their capacity (materials, financial management, technical expertise, connections, influences with government, etc.)?
- How can CSOs shift their image/present themselves in a way that builds their credibility?
- What are the opportunities/possibilities for engaging constructively with the government and international NGOs/donors?

The strategies identified are expected to serve as a basis for devising mechanisms to nurture stakeholders' capacities required to realize inter-sectoral partnerships. The participants found the Alexandria encounter quite enlightening and asked Oxfam Canada to continue organizing such forums in future.

Public Lecture on Assessing Regional Integration in Africa

The third public lecture on Good Governance and Democracy in Africa that was jointly organized by the Forum for Social Studies (FSS) and Heinrich Boll Foundation (HBF) was convened on 27th November 2007 at Addis Ababa Hilton Hotel. Attending the lecture were representatives of CSOs, members of the academic community, some staff of UNECA and other members of the public.



The public lecture was titled 'Regional Integration in Africa: Past Experience and Future Strategies', Dr. Joseph Atta-Mensah, who is the Chief, Regional Integration Section of the NEPAD and Regional Integration Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), delivered

the lecture. Since 2004 he has been advising African Countries, African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other Development Partners on the policies that could be used to enhance and deepen regional integration in Africa.



In his lecture, Dr. Atta-Mensah traced the long history of the various economic integration initiatives of Africa, successful or otherwise, since independence. According to him, the oldest regional economic groupings in Africa are the South African Customs Union (SACU) and the East African Community (EAC), both formed in the early 1900. He also noted that since independence, there have been a number of regional groupings created, most of them in the 1990s. He discussed how African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are making tremendous progress in the integration of the continent even though a lot needs to be done in order to integrate Africa economically.

Speaking about inter-state trade, he said that the common markets will become bigger markets, bringing about diversity of products and consumers and a unified common market, and could induce mobility among the 900 million people of the 53 African countries. He stressed that common market makes sense for Africa's mostly small economies because it could create a wider trading and investment environment, and Africa's collective economic force could make the continent able to compete with stronger economies such as that of China or Europe.

Dr. Atta-Mensah also discussed the building blocks for an African Economic Community (Abuja Treaty), the implication of the Abuja Treaty for trade liberalization in Africa, progress made by the regional integration groupings in Africa, intra-regional trade in the regional economic communities, and private sector and regional integration in Africa. He concluded that at present there is some positive progress in the attempt to develop African economic integration, but he also emphasized the need for creating a conducive environment for private sector participation, formulation of innovative policies and measures to increase financial resources, and developing sound macroeconomic policies and cross border financing.



His presentation was followed by a lively general discussion during which time many in the audience asked whether economic integration could address Africa's plight without political integration or democratization at various levels. Some of the other issues raised by members of the audience include the following:

- Many African countries officially declare the need for regional integration but they lack the preparedness, capacity and commitment;
- The whole process of realizing African regional integrations is centered on macro-economic issues and follows a top-down approach and the process neglects the need for bottom-up approach and considering micro socio-political issues, such as the role of civil society as well as issues of ethnic groups and cross-border issues.
- The approach that Africans should consider in the process of developing African regional integration, the contrast between the European approach (club model) and the African approach (block model).

Responding to some of the issues, Dr Atta-Mensah pointed out that many African countries are showing progress in their democratization process and emphasized his optimism that such political development will help realize African regional integration. He agreed that there is a need for preparedness, capacity and commitment, as African regional integration can never be achieved through official declaration. He also underlined the need for considering the role of civil society organizations and involving different actors and stakeholders in the long process of realizing African regional integration.

CSO consultations on governance components of DFID's draft CAP

On October 24, 2007, CSO representatives, including FSS, attended a consultative meeting organized by Inter-Africa Group. The aim of the meeting was to get the views of civil society on the human rights and governance components of DFID Ethiopia's draft Country Assistance Plan (CAP) for 2008 – 2010. The meeting was attended by nine representatives of invited civil society organizations.

Participants of the meeting discussed the DFID draft executive summary on governance trends in Ethiopia and the associated projections of risk as well as the appropriateness of the DFID approach to promoting good governance and improved social accountability in Ethiopia. They also debated on whether

DFID is doing enough towards the improvement of human rights protection in Ethiopia, creation of an enabling environment for civil society as well as what more DFID could do in the future on both issues.

Participants suggested that the DFID document on governance trends in Ethiopia is inadequate as it does not provide sufficient information on the governance institutions at the federal and regional government levels as well as sufficient evidence and clear indicators for some of the conclusions arrived at.

They pointed out that many of the conclusions in the document, such as: ‘...civil society is underdeveloped...’, ‘...the judiciary and the rule of law are showing some improvement...’, ‘government has an impressive record for pro-poor spending...’, ‘Opposition parties are immature, weak in policy’, etc., need to be substantiated with adequate supporting data. Participants indicated that the DFID interventions, which were presented in the executive summary, have to be further developed. Finally, six participants were nominated from the group to take part in the forum that will discuss the various programs of DFID in the near future.

Latest FSS Publications

1. *Medrek FSS Bulletin*, Vol.5, no. 1 (March 2007)

- ‘Teaching Staff Profile in Ethiopian Public Universities: Expansion Challenges and Quality Assurance’ (Yohannes Woldetensae)
- ‘The Threats of Massification to Educators: The Case of Haramaya University’ (Kedir Assefa)
- ‘Research Constraints at the Ethiopian Civil Service College’ (Tilaye Kassahun)

2. Dessalegn Rahmato. 2007. Development Interventions in Wollaita, 1960s-2000s: A Critical Review. FSS Monograph No. 4.

3. ጠና አበረ፣ 1999፣ በኢትዮጵያ የወጣ በሽታ ታሪካዊ ሂደት፣ ነገራዊ ሁኔታና የወደፊት ስጋት። ከድኅነት ወደ ልማት፡- ዕውቀትን ለትውልድ ማስተላለፍ፣ 2ኛ ዙር ተከታታይ ዕትም ቁጥር 2

4. ተፈራ ኃ/ሥላሴ፣ 1999፣ የኢንዱስትሪና የመንግስት ሠራተኞች አስተዳደር እድገት። ከድኅነት ወደ ልማት፡- ዕውቀትን ለትውልድ ማስተላለፍ፣ 2ኛ ዙር ተከታታይ ዕትም ቁጥር 3