

Are we on the right track? Paradigm review by CSOs as development actors

Key findings of the Prague conference

May 14-16, 2008

This is a short summary of the conference findings. Each bullet point represents an individual outcome and individual discourse. Note that some points do not refer only to one of the categories – there are overlaps between changes, challenges and responses. A full evaluation and wrap-up of ideas to prepare the follow up conference in 2009 will be done by the organisation committee.

PARADIGM CHANGES

- Material wealth and power dominate and MDGs are not sufficient anymore as they focus on quantity instead of quality and accept that half of the poor stay poor.
- Free market and (in)security paradigms (demography planning) are growing.
- Change in geopolitics: old powers are losing influence, new powers (BRIC) are gaining influence but the political imbalance in terms of the power of countries continue to matter.
- Poor public awareness for the necessity of global fairness and limits of growth
- Multilateralism is weakening but bilateralism and regionalism are growing.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Consumerism and dependence in situation of resource crises (food and oil) and climate change (limits to growth).
- History affects the structure of civil society and its actions (South, East, West, global-national-local).
- What role for development aid: effectiveness and volumes?
- Local empowerment, role of the state. What appropriate, democratic and effective forms of governance?
- Shift from work in the South to policy and advocacy in the North?
- How can development be reached with limited growth?
- How much are we locked in our language or terminology of others?
- NGO self-reflection and accountability are needed.

RESPONSES / PRACTICAL STEPS

- Shared wealth and power is to be encouraged.
- More focus on lobbying and advocacy, development awareness raising, focus on media to demonstrate crucial links between the economical and political European decisions and their impact on developing countries.
- Human rights based approach.
- Policy coherence for development.
- New partnerships are needed in the South and East, and across the sectors and actors.
- Renewed focus on nation State while continued support for creative forms of global governance.
- Make international trusts accountable for their actions.
- Support critical thinking, redefine and rephrase key ideas in new vocabulary.
- Critical self-reflection of own values, approaches, policies and practise.

INITIAL EVALUATION IDEAS FOR FOLLOW-UP

(in preparation of the 2009 conference)

- Life in a resource-limited world versus the need to build viable local economies. European governments and citizens should question their own dependencies on the current dominant economic model: tackle climate justice; integrate limits of growth.
- Find new development objectives beyond the MDGs from CSO side and overcome MDGs; lobby for rights based approach.
- Civil Society Organisations own accountability: deeper reflections, more concrete, practical steps.
- Change of geopolitics: breaking the taboo of differentiated treatments between developing countries. How to react to the impact of new emerging powers on developing countries?
- Catalogue the variety and concrete examples of existing local development alternatives: make a link to policy (eg. carbon neutral cities, Local Exchange Trading Schemes/LETS systems, participatory budgeting etc.).
- Practical steps and first experience of direct South-East cooperation.
- More involvement of post-Soviet states (beyond the New Neighbourhood Policy).
- Promote diversity in and between NGOs and engage in coalition across sectors, actors and borders.
- Engage in more and new awareness raising for global fairness; promote well-being; strengthen global education.