



Conference
ARE WE ON THE RIGHT TRACK?
PARADIGM REVIEW BY CSOs AS
DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

Prague, Czech Republic, 14th – 16th May 2008

Wednesday 14th May 2008

Thematic working group with Rebecca Tanui (Kenya)

Facilitation: Joachim Lindau (Germany), George Ehusani (Nigeria)

The purpose of the thematic group with the speaker Rebecca Tanui from Kenya was to explain the situation in Kenya during the last four months and her expectations from Kenyan NGOs and civil societies.

Kenya is a country which was colonized by Great Britain and became independent in 1963. Since independence up to 1990 the country was a one party state. Through the work of NGOs and support of external partners pressure in 1992 Kenya became a multiparty state. Since then Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) engaged in a mass civil education which led to 2003 elections where a new government came up with the support of CSOs. It is however important to state that 1992 and 1997 were characterized by tribal clashes but the 2003 elections were peaceful. Then in 2007 there was violence after the elections. This was largely a result of the people feeling that they were cheated in the tallying of the election results. The result of the violence is that people were uprooted from their land due to the question of land tribalism. Up to now people are still living in the camps and the government is calling for aid.

Civil societies

For a good functioning of the state, peace and security, rule of law and land reform must be set up. Peace commission, decentralization of power and institutional changes are the main needs for change for civil societies. The constitutional change should ensure the improvement of the position of civil societies, but the issues of land, religion, gender, satisfied land holders were the key problems of its unsuccessfulness.

The growth of civil societies is not appropriate to the weak government which could not respond adequately to the need of development of community organizations. The parliamentary model is artificial and traditional structures emerged from the people should be included in these new systems. This will help people to associate with new leaders trained by the civil societies. Political conditionality imposed by Northern countries works only in few cases and it's mostly the challenge for northern partners. This poses the question of African capacity to build real partnership with North and important is the information sharing and networking between the South and North.

African problems

Africa needs to deal with historical injustices. For several centuries Europe and America had been exploiting Africa and built their own progress through it. Africa can't have the same way of development and can not play on equal level with the North.

Exploitation continues with brain drain. As a result Africa has lost most of its skilled workers and needs to found organizations that will help the communities of expatriates that send money back to their families. Migration of people to the cities and brain drain created new phenomenon such as beggars, homeless people and cause the change in traditional African extended families. The past function of the extended families disappeared and the social system is not developed or doesn't exist to replace it.

Another problem in African societies is the position of women in it. Empowering and mobilizing of women should begin from education in the local environment that will emerge to the equal system in the African societies. But gender is not only about women and to improve their situation it's important to change the men's mentality.

Northern countries are looking for easy solutions, but African problems are complex. What happened in Kenya was also a complex of problems on land issues and can happen anywhere. The Northern partners should therefore take a critical analysis of issues before seeking solutions to Africa's problems.

Closing Paradigm

State, market, civil societies need balance between them. The role of the civil societies is to challenge issues of budget and act as a watchdog on government. Another role is to educate and raise up leaders at various levels who are accountable to the people. The role of the government is to formulate and implement policies that are people friendly and that cater for the needs of the citizens. The government should also regulate the market to ensure that multinationals do not infringe on the rights of its citizens. The market should engage in best business practices and corporate social responsibility.

“Use connection to find out the true what's going on in Africa.”

Minutes: Zuzana Sladkova, FoRS