

DRAFT Paper for DSA conference on Globalisation and Development

The challenges and opportunities for international civil society in promoting ethical globalisation

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Civil society is trying to turn things around in globalisation, but it is not clear where we should go. Building global democracy is not like building a national state. Citizen action on the global economy is a plug, but it is not clear where the socket is”.

Darrin Gualman, National Farmers Union, Saskatoon (quoted in J.A. Scholte, *Democratising the Global Economy: The Role of Civil Society* 2003)

This paper explores some of the challenges ahead in terms of strengthening civil society networks working for ethical globalisation and in turning their shared vision of ethical globalisation into an effective programme of action. It attempts to unpack what is meant by the terms international civil society and ethical globalisation, drawing on work of Scholte and others, including ongoing research the author is carrying out in Trócaire, the official development agency of the Irish Catholic Bishops. It examines the structural dimensions of globalisation. In particular it focuses on the role played by civil society on issues of economic globalisation and in seeking to address deficits in global economic governance, using the experience gained from a number of international campaigns. The final section discusses some critical issues for action by international civil society in strengthening its capacity and credibility, and in so doing, in harnessing globalisation in support of international development

Setting the Scene

At the start of the twenty-first century the level of political and public debate on the subject of globalisation has grown considerably. Within current debates there is increasing emphasis on the subject of ethical globalisation and the role of international civil society alliances in promoting ethical globalisation. Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, addressing the ‘Global Development Challenge’ Conference held in Dublin in July 2003, noted that to many observers there are currently two major world powers: the United States and global civil society. At the same time, the power to effect change continues to shift in significant ways from the public to the private sphere, from national governments to multinational corporations and to international organisations. And while civil society movements for change have growing constituencies they still face immense challenges in influencing policy decisions.

Hans Kung argues that a better world order will ultimately only be brought about on the basis of common visions, ideals, values, aims and criteria: a minimal basis consensus relating to binding values, irrevocable standards and moral attitudes, along with heightened global responsibility on the part of peoples and their leaders (Kung, 2002). Civil society, from local to global levels, has a role to play in realising this vision. Yet its role cannot be seen in isolation as governments, parliaments, multilateral agencies and private sector corporations also have important roles to play.

For many, the millennium development goals (MDGs)¹, signed up to by 189 governments at the UN Millennium Summit, encapsulate what Kung terms ‘irrevocable standards’. Addressing the ‘Global Development Challenge’ conference in July 2003 Jeffrey Sachs noted that three fundamental inputs are necessary for reaching the MDGs: good ideas centred on knowledge and research, adequate finance, and good governance from the level of local communities to national governments and the international structures in support of these MDGs. Various actors must be held to account on how they contribute to the achievement of the MDGs, which are in turn linked to fundamental human rights. Robinson (2003) also raises the question of how best global responsibilities should be assigned to different actors – international institutions, governments, business and civil society. She also notes that world is increasingly being connected through trade, technology and other factors, it must also be connected through shared values and norms, in essence, rules of the road for achieving ethical globalisation.

Defining Civil Society in relation to Ethical Globalisation

Perspectives on civil society are varied, culturally bound and sometimes controversial. For the purposes of this paper Scholte’s (2003) understanding of civil society as it related to global democracy is especially helpful. Scholte views civil society as being “*a political space, or arena, where voluntary associations seeks to shape the rules that govern one or more aspect of social life*”. Under Scholte’s definition civil society does not cover voluntary associations like households, recreational clubs or service NGOs when such groups do not strive to affect ‘*the acquisition, distribution and exercise of social power*’. Hence it covers *some* rather than all non-official and noncommercial activities. He notes that civil society associations bring together those who share concerns about a particular policy area or problem. These groups vary enormously in scale, organizational form, geographical scope, resources, constituencies and tactics to name but a few characteristics. What unites them is that they are *voluntary*, that is they do not pursue financial profit or public office, and they are actively ‘*political*’, they aim to affect the way that power is distributed and exercised in society at various levels, including global decision-making fora. At the same time international civil society must not be seen as a purely benign force or moral category with various international organisations, states or markets being viewed as malign forces. International civil society groups can come together to promote negative agendas from racism to terrorism. Nor can civil society organisations be neatly separated from the market or the State. For instance the non- profit sector is now a major economic force for employment and income – in Europe it accounts for seven percent of paid employment. And in Ireland, the share of development NGOs in the government’s official aid programme is substantial, exceeding that in all other OECD countries.

The quality of associational life at national or international level is more important than taking a mere headcount of organisational forms within civil society. At country level, the starkest evidence for this was provided by Rwanda (Kelly, 1999). In the years prior to the 1994 genocide, Rwanda remained a hierarchical, authoritarian and tightly controlled society with little participation by its citizens, despite the existence of numerous non-governmental organisations. In essence the high levels of associative life in the NGO sector did not address the absence of diversity in opinions, tight state control and the culture of fear that all contributed to making the 1995 Genocide possible as an elite continued to manipulate and control a wide body of uninformed, poverty struck and oppressed people who formed the majority of the country’s

¹ These goals include halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 as well as achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality. Goal eight, developing a global partnership for development, focuses on measures to address the special needs of the world’s 49 least developed countries, to allow access to new technologies and affordable essential drugs and to make debts sustainable in the long term, www.undp.org

population. Nearly a decade on, and learning from past lessons, a major challenge exists in terms of providing adequate political space for a multifaceted, representative, independent civil society operating out of a right based perspective, which in turn is a necessary precondition for the achievement of national reconciliation and reconstruction².

The past 15 years or so have also seen a number of authoritarian regimes brought down by popular movements, making the term civil society synonymous for many with 'people power' and the promotion of profound social change. The end of the 'Cold War' held out the promise of a peace dividend, which has since all but disappeared. The past couple of years have been dominated by the growing militarisation of geo-politics and an, undermining the established mechanisms for multilateral conflict resolution. These trends are squeezing the space for civil society, for instance as attempts are made to justify clampdowns on human rights defenders in the interests of winning the 'global war against terror'. Meanwhile progressive civil society agendas in terms of socio-economic justice are also being overshadowed by the Iraq crisis. On a positive note the global launch of the UNDP's 2003 Human Development Report with its theme 'The Millennium Development Goals: A Compact Among Nations to end Poverty' along with the establishment under the UN Secretary General's Millennium Project Initiative, of ten expert UN task groups which charged with developing action plans corresponding to these goals has placed greater attention onto these goals.

Perhaps it is in the socio-economic sphere where international civil society movements have to date been most active and visible. Though the strength of the anti-war global campaign in the face of the Iraq crisis demonstrates international civil society's ability to mobilise in other areas. For instance the Jubilee 2000 Debt Cancellation Campaign, the Campaign to Eradicate Child Labour and more recently through the World Social Forum. In part this may be because such networks have seen that advocacy at state level alone was insufficient especially where economic sovereignty was eroded under the weight of external debt burdens and structural adjustment. Activists in developing countries often perceive their national governments as being unable or unwilling to stand up to, or influence, their political and economic conditions, which they see as shaped by the policies of the major industrialized economies, powerful non-state corporate actors, which in turn influence the rules and structures of various multilateral bodies. In developed countries such as the UK, the creation of the Trade Justice movement also stems in part from a realisation that conventional engagement with government was not enough. Currently, there is a growing recognition and indeed excitement across bilateral and multilateral actors on the importance of an effective State in promoting development, and the role of a vigorous civil society in promoting good governance, democratisation and pro-poor policies. However, the type of role played by the state, including its regulation of market actors, and that played by civil society is subject to varying interpretations.

Understanding Globalisation

Globalisation is neither novel nor new. Grain markets were highly integrated at the turn of the twentieth century as evidenced by data sets on price levels. One hundred years ago labour flowed more freely across national borders while today there is an increasing array of restrictions on migration (O'Rourke, 2003). The most common meaning given to globalisation is that it refers to increased levels of *integration or interdependence* among countries, for instance in relation to

² Paragraph on Rwanda draws on policy documentation from the Trócaire Rwanda office.

trade, capital, technology and communications flows. Such a definition tends to focus on the economic dimension of globalisation but it is also widely recognised that globalisation is a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing political, cultural and social factors.

The UN, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Financing for Development conference, held in Monterrey in March 2002, had as its objective to contribute towards '*achieving a fully inclusive and equitable globalisation*'. Governments in the consensus text arising from the preparatory process for this conference stated, "*We commit ourselves to promoting national and global economic systems based on the principles of justice, equity, democracy, participation, transparency, accountability and inclusion*". While few could argue with these words, the gap between policy rhetoric and reality remains large – and remains a major impetus to action among those international civil society movements seeking to advance ethical forms of globalisation.

Perceptions of globalisation vary. For some it is epitomised by the growing power of Transnational Corporations (TNCs). The rapid pace of globalisation has seen the space for corporate interests expanded at UN and other multilateral bodies yet the influence of nation-states in some instances remains rather limited. Partly in response to this the 1990s witnessed a nineteen per cent growth in international NGOs (to over 37,000 such bodies). In many developed countries, political party affiliations are falling while membership of special interest and campaign groups has been steadily rising (UNDP 2002). Recognising this trend within the Irish context, TASC (a Think Tank for Action on Social Change) recently established a Commission examining democracy in Ireland. The impetus behind this is a deep concern that socially marginalized groups, particularly in the wake of a period of unprecedented economic growth, believe that they have no real stake in the political system.

In terms of perceptions of economic globalisation, many point to the importance of international trade to domestic welfare and on employment prospects as exports account for a greater share of national and global incomes. Some see globalisation as undermining the policy autonomy of nation states, especially developing countries. Some view the current phase of globalisation as being synonymous with the concentrated power of a limited number of industrialised nations, notably the US, EU, Canada and Japan, while a number of developing countries such as India, China and Brazil are exercising limited, albeit increasing, levels of influence. Still others emphasise the dualism of elite versus excluded groups within the current phase of globalisation, rather than a North-South divide with Northern or developed countries being synonymous with 'winners' and Southern or developing countries being synonymous with 'losers'³. For Amartya Sen, the real challenges associated with globalisation do not lie in globalisation per se, but relate to inequality, be this due to disparities in affluence or in political, social and economic power, though the two are invariably linked. At the same time globalisation does not imply that national government policies to address inequalities in access to productive resources such as land, credit and infrastructure are any less important.

Julian Filochowski (2003) highlights numerous perspectives and interpretations of the various dimensions of globalisation. For instance globalisation can refer to the homogenisation of cultural and consumption patterns, to the emergence not of *homo sapiens* but of *homo consumptors* – a new form of global individualism or what Kirby (2003) calls 'credit card citizenship'. Thus while extreme poverty prevents many in the poorest countries from participating in civil society associations the converse can be true in rich/industrialized countries

³ Newell, P, *Globalisation and the Future State*, Working Paper 141, Institute of Development Studies, 2002.

where too much resources, both financial and time, go into consumerism. Much of this consumerism is fuelled by media sources, as increasingly communications companies and media outlets are concentrated among a number of global conglomerates⁴. Yet Filochowski also points out that globalisation can refer to the networking of movements such as justice and peace networks, people's organizations, faith communities and development agencies amongst others – the emergence of a global civil society, a global citizenry responding to global threats, fostering a global ethic and protecting Planet Earth⁵. In recent years the establishment of the World Social Forum has been built on a movement of people seeking to end what they see as the domination of local economies and cultures by international capitalism (Hammond 2003)

The Structural Dimension of Globalisation

Joseph Stiglitz (2002) argues that the most fundamental change required to make globalisation work in the interests of development is for a change in governance. Stiglitz notes that the world has public international institutions, which lack direct accountability to the public, a type of minority rule writ large⁶. Despite many criticisms of the World Bank and the IMF, the fact that these institutions have, at least, established some public policy evaluation procedures is, in no small part due to civil society pressure. Developing countries, which make up 85 per cent of the world's population, are seriously under-represented in most international institutions. This political lack of power is mirrored many times by their lack of economic power. For instance, income from intellectual property rights accrues almost exclusively to developed countries as these countries hold 97% of all patents, with Transnational Corporations (TNCs) holding 90 percent of all technology and product patents. It is also mirrored in their limited technocratic power – the EU's combined delegation at the fourth WTO ministerial in Doha was made up of 502 persons. Haiti had no official representative in Doha.

There is no world government than can be made more democratic but global arrangements can allow for greater pluralism especially as globalisation is placing more demands on international institutions. According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2002, two elements could make global arrangements more effective and more reflective of democratic ideals:

- *Encouraging greater pluralism – through expanding the space for non-state actors to influence policies and to hold powerful actors to account; and*
- *Building more democratic international organisations with increasing representation, transparency and accountability in decision-making.*

In relation to the first point the growing role of global civil society movements, both those with a broad focus and those working on specific issues such as environment and debt, is making a difference in terms of shaping policy debates and in terms of shaking international bodies from their complacency, as for too long they have largely operated outside public scrutiny. Moreover, at a domestic level, advocacy groups are calling for national representatives to international bodies to be accountable back to their respective parliaments and societies. Some advances have been made. In June of this year the first ever parliamentary debate took place on Ireland's stance in the run up to the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference. The Irish Government also produces an

⁴ At the same time, examples arise of media organisations campaigning on international development/justice issues such as the involvement of the British Guardian Newspaper on the Cut the Cost of Medicines Campaign and their current involvement in a campaign to Kick All Agricultural Subsidies, www.guardian.kickass.typepad.com

⁵ (2003) *A Theology of Protest in a Globalising World*'.

⁶ Langmore, J, 'Challenges in the Governance of Globalisation', *Development Review* 2002, Trócaire

annual report on its participation in the World Bank and the IMF. At the same time there is room for improvement as the Irish Debt and Development Coalition, in its commentary on the fourth such Report, noted that it read more like a report on the operation of the IMF and the Bank rather than of Ireland's participation within these institutions. Thus the report is not fully meeting the objectives originally set by the Minister of Finance in the inaugural report – namely to create greater openness and transparency in decision making by the Irish government and the Bretton Woods Institutions.

On the second point, numerous proposals have been put forward on how international agencies can be made more democratic and accountable. Yet too often, as Stiglitz has remarked, macroeconomics is seen as too important to be left to democratic processes. Plesch has suggested that national representatives to the UN, the European Commission and the WTO could be directly elected at general elections. In this way there could be a direct relationship between electorates and their ambassadors to such bodies. Ministers could be posted aboard as their government's permanent representatives; a job now left to senior level diplomats/civil servants⁷. Other reform proposals put forward by the UNDP in its 1994 Human Development Report and by the UN Commission on Global Governance (1995) include transforming the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations into an Economic and Social Security Council.

To date, the potential role of the UN as the key forum for international development policy formulation has not been fulfilled. The Human Development Report 2002 highlights that the more representative parts of the UN, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, are usually considered the least effective, especially for economic and social issues, while much of the power and influence lies with the better funded World Bank and IMF. While the World Bank and the IMF are associated agencies of the UN family, the 2002 Human Development Report also cautions that these two organisations will be unable to do their jobs effectively if they remain tied to structures reflecting the balance of power at the end of World War Two. Nearly half the votes at the Bank and Fund are held by just seven countries, while sub-Saharan Africa, whose macroeconomic policy environment is most influenced by these institutions, only accounts for only two of the 24 Executive Directors of these institutions and two per cent of the voting shares. One way of enhancing Africa's voice at the World Bank and the IMF would be to increase the number of African Executive Directors (EDs) and the technical support resources for their work. Another would be to increase Africa's voting shares.

Even though the WTO may appear to be more democratic than the IMF and the World Bank, as it operates by so called 'consensus' rather than votes; such 'consensus' is driven by power bargaining. While civil society commentators were told that 'Green Rooms' or meetings dominated by the Quad of the US, EU, Japan and Canada, along with more strategic developing countries, did not exist at the Doha WTO Ministerial in November 2001, it is interesting to note that the 2002 UNDP Human Development Report published in July 2002 casually mentions the existence of Green Rooms. In the run up too the Cancun WTO Ministerial, Civil Society Organisations have continued to highlight key problems in relation to the WTO's internal transparency which threaten its democratic legitimacy, including the non-transparent procedures for the drafting of texts, the use of a small number of appointed chairpersons to drive the organisation rather than its wider membership alongside other factors such as the increased use of unrecorded meetings and mini-ministerials⁸.

⁷ Plesch, D, *Taming Globalisation*, Charter 88, May 2003

⁸ See The Cancun Democracy Challenge, www.iatp.org

Filoschowki (2003) argues that global rules and economic governance need to be repaired, updated, re-legitimised with an ethical core. Moreover, international bodies cannot be more *effective* in tackling global ills, including the vast levels of poverty and inequality in our world, if they are not seen as *legitimate*. Drawing on his experience of over twenty years as director of the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Filoschowki notes that faith-based communities and churches have an opportunity to inject a global ethic, centred on solidarity, into globalisation. In many countries such bodies have been to the fore in providing space for civil society action and for the development of secular NGOs, which have subsequently come to the fore in work on debt and poverty reduction strategies. In situations of autocratic rule as existed in the past in East Timor and currently in Burma, Churches and faith based groups have been the fore in providing space for civil society voices and in building international linkages in support of human rights. In many instances, these same actors can also harness enormous human and financial resources to promote ethical globalisation. Nonetheless, it is also important not to forget the historical wars and genocide perpetuated in the name of religion. Earlier this year an article in the *Guardian* newspaper⁹ noted that far from a decline in religion we are seeing its powerful re-emergence in a grotesquely distorted modern form. Rather than allowing such a view to dominate, churches worldwide and their networks such as Caritas, CIDSE, Approdev and the Network of Engaged Buddhists must work to bring values of solidarity, the dignity of the human being and justice to the fore. In this way the global approach to ‘security’ issues can be centred on human security rather than narrow militaristic perspective on security. At the same time as Scholte notes, such networks and other civil society actors must take care to avoid becoming high on “knee jerk polemics” and low on “detailed investigation” if they are to be both relevant and credible. This is increasingly so in a world of global communications where information overload is a reality and where the impact of information analysis very much depends on its rigour and credibility.

Globalisation and Global Citizenship

For many progressive NGOs and other civil society organisations, social action – people’s capacity to organise together for a common, social goal - lies at the heart of their understanding of development. Deborah Eade in *Development and Social Action*, notes that ‘*popular mobilisation, whether to defend existing rights that are under threat, or to protest against the denial of these rights, is seen to be just as critical to the development process as economic growth - if not more so.*’ Eade points out that the forces, which oppress and divide contemporary societies are stronger, more widespread and diverse than they have ever been, but that the potential to generate international solidarity across borders and frontiers for a rights-based approach to development has never been greater. Globalisation has affected civil society advocacy. The targets for such advocacy are often less visible, less accessible and less accountable. This makes advocacy more complicated. To take the example of advocacy on agricultural trade negotiations at the WTO, there is a challenge for farmers’ networks in understanding the technical and legal dimensions of trade liberalisation and the various structures within the WTO, particularly when their own governments have often marginalized such groups.

Globalisation has led to a growing recognition of arenas where policy impacts are global and where global collective action is required. Globalisation may have broadened thinking on human rights and strengthened dialogue around economic and social rights, an area to which Southern civil society actors can especially relate. Civil society is increasingly using the tools given to them by the commitments made by their governments under the six core international human rights conventions and other instruments – thus deepening public discussion of pressing practical concerns from the rights of refugee children to freedom of information. Civil society advocates

⁹ Madeline Bunting, “The Fight for Tolerance”, *The Guardian*, 20 January 2003.

have effectively argued that the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related treaties apply not only to states and individuals but also to ‘organs of society’ including transnational businesses¹⁰.

Globalisation has been accompanied by an increase in global negotiations structures which effect people’s daily lives be these environmental conventions or trade agreements. Awareness of such agreements has grown immensely. For instance in Brazil, during the 2002 Presidential election campaign, a coalition of social movements and the Catholic church organised an unofficial referendum on the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) in which over ten million people voted – with the vast majority (98 per cent) rejecting the agreement (Hammond 2003). Moreover, the World Social Forum, now in its third year, grew, in part, out of opposition to the proposals put forward for a multilateral agreement on investment back in the latter part of the 1990s.

International civil society has a key role in ensuring that the *fundamental* human rights of citizens which are the basis of a life of human dignity, and which are set out in numerous international treaties, are not overrun by the *instrumental* rights of investors and corporations contained in various trade and investment agreements. A Report on Human Rights, Trade and Investment, published by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in July 2003, notes that States should ensure that they give due attention to “ *human rights by including an explicit reference to the promotion of human rights among the objectives of investment liberalisation agreements*”¹¹. The authors also point out that ‘*There are currently no international mechanisms to consider complaints on all aspects of economic, social and cultural rights. On the other hand under investment agreements, investors have recourse to international redress against states and states have redress against other states. This risks skewing the balance of protection in favour of investors, which in turn could lead to investment decisions favouring the interests of investors over the human rights of individuals and communities who could remain voiceless in the event of a conflict of interests and rights*’. Thus it calls for consideration to be given to the development of methodologies for carrying out human rights impact assessments of trade and investment rules and policies.

Global changes have also fuelled the rise of a shared sense of identity in terms of global citizenship, which presents new opportunities and challenges. Effective global democracy rests on a knowledgeable citizenry – whose sense of identity is strengthened by working in associations. Moreover, this knowledge society is an area to be contested. Civil society groups such as the Peru Solidarity Forum (PSF), a network of missionaries and foreign citizens living in Peru, is seeking provide popular education on globalisation and citizens rights. PSF, which started as an annex to one small parish has scaled itself up from a local actor to a player within global alliances¹². PSF co-operates with other Peruvian networks, including debt, trade and human rights groups and is linked up to solidarity groups in the United States and Europe. For instance PSF is working with Swiss solidarity groups in its advocacy for the repatriation of the proceeds of corruption which were subsequently channelled into Swiss bank accounts. Likewise, in industrialised countries, increased investment in civic education can help promote an active citizenry with a critical understanding of, and interest in, their respective governments’ stance in

¹⁰ See also the new UN Norms on the Responsibilities of TNCs and other business enterprises with regard to Human Rights (August 2003).

¹¹ Human Rights, Trade and Investment, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, E/CN.4/Sub/2003/9: 2 July 2003.

¹² Interview between the author and Ray Feeney, Co-ordinator PSF, August 7, see also www.psf.org

international relations as this affects developing countries as well as in terms of its impacts at domestic level. A related issue for global civil society networks seeking socio-economic change is to invest adequately in research in order to back up their advocacy arguments especially as the ability to finance and publicise research, which is subject to power imbalances, remains highly skewed.

The *Cut the Cost Campaign* on patented medicines provides a strong example of a global campaign, which united a number of international NGOs and southern civil society organizations. It publicised the way in which international trade rules which should protect the weak against the strong, can have the opposite effect by showing how the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights agreement (TRIPs) has been interpreted to give priority to the profit wishes of TNCs rather than the health needs of developing country populations? In part, the heavy presence of corporate representatives on various official trade delegations charged with negotiating TRIPS and their wider lobbying presence in Geneva accounted for this perverse outcome. In contrast many developing countries did not, and still do not, have permanent trade delegations in Geneva, headquarter of the WTO. While the 4th WTO Ministerial in November 2001 adopted a Ministerial Declaration on TRIPS and public health in November 2001, it has taken almost two more years for an agreement to be reached on to how to provide low cost drugs to those countries lacking a domestic manufacturing base. In large part this delay in coming to a compromise solution was due to the US government coming under pressure from its own pharmaceuticals industry. However, various civil society groups including Medicines San Frontiers and Oxfam have already criticized certain limitations within this agreement.

As this example and others can show, global civil society movements are questioning the role played by multilateral bodies, and their governments therein, and seeking reforms to make these structures accountable and democratic. By responding to their legitimate concerns global institutions can gain in terms of their legitimacy. Moreover, unless change happens it may be all too easy that the views of those seeking to go a more unilateralist route will hold sway. Civil society actors are also seeking to open up new space for citizens' voice in decision-making not only at national and global levels but also at regional or continental levels. For instance, Trócaire, an Irish NGDO is supporting the work of APCDI, an Angolan organisation working for a participatory Angolan approach towards the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). While NEPAD, with its focus on economic growth linked with good governance, and pioneered by the South African and Nigerian governments does allow for the participation of 'organised' Civil Society, no civil society actors were involved in its drafting process. Yet NEPAD does contain mechanisms to hold governments to account through a peer review mechanism. Thus it is important that support is provided for civil society organisations advocating for citizens' participation in policy-making and for partnering governments to ensure that improved governance really is more widely practiced throughout the continent¹³.

Transforming Globalisation – Critical Issues for Action

Values and ethics matter in a globalising world where the unequal distribution of power is at the heart of inequality and exclusion for many people. Within this context, civil society movements, working for human rights for all, have a transforming as well as a reforming role. Indeed at the heart of civil society demands for a 'developmentally-friendly' policy environment and for ethical globalisation is a call for inclusion. As Kirby (1997) recognises '*At the heart of the call for a new development model is a call for inclusion*'. At an international level, many civil society

¹³ For more information on civil society initiatives around NEPAD see www.civicus.org and www.cidse.org

actors are seeking to make global arrangements more effective and more reflective of democratic ideals through expanding the space for non-state actors, especially Southern actors, to influence policies and to hold powerful actors to account. Examples of this include the work of NGOs such as the Tanzania Economic and Social Trust and the Zambian Economic Justice Project on budget monitoring, debt, and economic reform, which in turn is linked into the work of the international jubilee movement and other networks. Thus we are seeing a dual strategy of civil society seeking to deepen democratic decision-making at national as well as at global levels. Moreover, the deeper the intervention of international agencies into developing countries the greater is the need for them to be open and accountable to civil society.

Scholte (2003) clusters the contributions which civil society actors can, in principle, make towards democratic governance of the global economy under five main categories. These cover undertaking public education, promoting public debate, enabling public participation, increasing public transparency and enhancing public accountability. Naturally global civil society networks, which work across borders as well as across sectors and out of varying contexts, face resource constraints. Cross border initiatives also operate under different official circumstances, with different mass medias and levels of freedom, as well as under diverse, political cultures and social hierarchies.

In supporting civil society actors care is constantly needed on the part of the international donor community, both NGOs and official agencies, to avoid undermining or bypassing legitimate local organisations and decision-making structures. Wrongly applied, external finance can weaken civil society's transformative role, lessen its legitimacy, weaken or prevent networking (thus leaving civil society actors working in isolation), and fuel competition over financial resources rather than fostering co-operation for alliance building. Often civil society actors are not membership organisations (trade unions being a notable exception), and many outside religious/faith-based groups, have few roots in local communities. Thus they may have few accountability links to local communities as opposed to external donors from whom they receive funds. They may be more inclined to display 'upward accountability' to donors as against 'downward accountability' to communities they profess to serve. Moreover, there may be barriers to entry in accessing or being employed by civil society organisations; especially those with global focus, thus making it difficult for the poor and marginalized find a voice within civil society.

Another challenge for international civil society movements in maintaining a transformative role is that the active citizenship promoted by the World Bank and others entails promoting opportunities for individuals to access the market and to hold the state accountable. At the same time it entails a certain suspicion of certain collective social actors whether they are trade unions or social movements. Yet in South Africa, for example, trade unions were instrumental in ending the apartheid political system and served as a training ground for a new generation of leaders. Another critique is that the empowerment approach put forward by the World Bank and IMF does not provide adequate space for civil society networks to challenge prevailing macroeconomic wisdom.

A related concern is that in seeking to effectively participate in government-led fora, civil society groups will lose their autonomy. The focus by donors on participation and consultation may draw civil society networks away from challenging power imbalances. There is a danger of ending up with a rather narrow perspective on governance and accountability with an expanded role of civil society as the key answer to state failure. Thus, Scholte (2003) notes that the greater its autonomy from the centres of power, the more civil society actors can stimulate public debate

without constraint and can demand accountability. Thus groups must constantly be alert to co-optation and think critically about those relationships being created.

Poverty Reduction Strategies, which are underway in many countries, provide a good testing grounds for monitoring such relationships. In assessing consultation and participation in the PRSP one must ask who is missing from the table, for instance marginalized groups such as associations of people living with HIV/AIDS. In many countries, PRS processes do provide new space for civil society engagement on policy issues yet too often governments are more comfortable involving civil society actors in social policy area and service delivery rather than in inputting to macro-economic policy design. At the same time Northern development NGOs can and are providing support to Southern civil society actors in developing their own participatory processes and in working beyond the confines of the official PRSP processes so as to enhance the voices of most marginalised sectors and to challenge government and/ or IFI analyses of poverty. For instance Trócaire Honduras is supporting two local partners in developing regional poverty reduction strategies and in preparing a participatory poverty assessment in the south of the country. Among the aims of this work are to involve poor and marginalised groups, including the disabled, in the PRSP, to stimulate the formulation of project and programme proposals by the poor themselves for their communities and to strengthen relations between grassroots organisations and local governments so that they can work together for poverty reduction. In turn, this feeds into joint international level advocacy on PRSP and pro-poor economic policies¹⁴. In this way even if the overall outcome of the official PRSP is disappointing a lasting investment will have been made in connecting communities and groups to national and international networks and towards enhancing their analytical and research capacities.

Another challenge facing Northern NGOs is to examine the level of support provided to what might be termed as privileged urban-based national organisations, and the resources invested in community based organisations, traditional kinship groups and rural associations such as farmers groups, and the links being forged between the latter and international civil society groups. In reality many civil society organisations are populated by more educated/elite sections of society – this does not make them illegitimate but it does require that the development community distinguishes between more mass-based movements of the poor and specialist advocacy groups. A limited number of civil society actors are vocal at the level of international institutions – often these are national capital/urban based groups and a risk arises of sponsoring a cadre of career civil society leaders rather than investing sufficiently in building the capacity (rather than the financial dependence) of civil society institutions.

Ultimately, international policy processes are about *bargaining power*. A core issue for international civil society actors is how best to enhance the bargaining power of those who traditionally cannot get their voices heard. Oxfam policy director Justin Forsyth points to the need to identify '*wedge issues*', that is issues with a strong campaigning focus and which can be used to illustrate a wider point, such as the high costs of patented drugs or the collapse in coffee prices and their opposing effects on different groups, for instance South African HIV/AIDS patients versus pharmaceuticals companies or small coffee producers versus large food processing corporations. In this way building a global campaign around a trade issue can seek to achieve *specific* as well as *strategic good*. In terms of mobilising civil society around such issues broad coalitions, loosely structured but with shared objectives and agendas can work best¹⁵. Many point to the 'Jubilee moment' when 70,000 people from different corners around the world

¹⁴ PRSP Update – Honduras, Jennifer Cornally, Trócaire Honduras, August 2003

¹⁵ '*NGO Campaigns*', presentation at ODI Lunchtime Meeting Series 'Does Evidence Matter?', ODI, London, 21 May 2003, www.odi.org.uk

amassed to make a human chain around the venue of the 1998 G8 meeting in Birmingham as having irrevocably changed official attitudes to debt cancellation.

Turning from issues of bargaining power between civil society networks and policymakers, issues of power, internal democracy and accountability within civil society organisations, are also receiving greater attention. One example is the accountability spotlight being shone onto American NGOs by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research and the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies, which has set up an NGOWATCH website. It recently organised a conference entitled ‘Nongovernmental Organisations: The Growing Power of an Unelected Few’. The web information publicising the event states:

“In recent years, nongovernmental organizations have proliferated, their rise facilitated by governments and corporations desperate to subcontract development projects. While many NGOs have made significant contributions to human rights, the environment, and economic and social development, a lack of international standards for NGO accountability also allows far less credible organisations to have a significant influence on policymaking. The growing power of supranational organisations and a loose set of rules governing the accreditation of NGOs has meant that an unelected few have access to growing and unregulated power. NGOs have created their own rules and regulations and demanded that governments and corporations abide by those rules. Many nations’ legal systems encourage NGOs to use the courts or the spectre of the courts – to compel compliance. Politicians and corporate leaders are often forced to respond to the NGO media machine, and the resources of taxpayers and shareholders are used in support of ends they did not intend to sanction. The extraordinary growth of advocacy NGOs in liberal democracies has the potential to undermine the sovereignty of constitutional democracies, as well as the effectiveness of credible NGOs”.

This analysis is in sharp contrast to that underpinning a recent article by Hilary Wainright in the British Guardian newspaper entitled ‘people power’. Wainright argues that experiments in London and Brazil have shown how participatory democracy solves problems better than the market. She highlights how politicians such as Brazil’s President Lula and London Lord Mayor Ken Livingstone have recognised that existing state bodies are bureaucratic and unresponsive, and that electoral democracy is too weak to ensure public services are accountable. Instead of looking to the market to shake up the state, both have looked to the people, many of whom had already begun to organise for change. The Porto Alegre participatory budget approach in Brazil was part of the inspiration behind the first three World Social Forums, which have taken place in that city. Wainright notes that democracy can no longer stop at electing representatives but must be entailed deeper people’s participation from local to global levels. Moreover, it is to the advantage of society that the whole of its facilities be employed. Otherwise private businesses and bureaucracies tend to insinuate themselves into the cracks between the people and their representatives¹⁶.

Moreover, public trust in civil society organisations working for global democracy and ethical globalisation is best built through ensuring sound structures of internal democracy are in place as is an ethic of professionalism and through fostering links to organisations of the people whom they seek to serve. Otherwise there is always the risk that rising cynicism of party politics in developed countries as well as in developing countries will spread to civil society actors. One of the responses to this threat has been the setting up by Civicus of an affinity group of NGO

¹⁶ People Power, Hilary Wainright, Guardian newspaper, 18 July 2003, www.guardian.org.uk

associations in order to strengthen the key role that national NGO associations play in fostering a strong and vibrant civil society through peer learning and international co-operation, including sharing codes of conduct.

Indeed, civil society actors need to invest in improving their own internal democratic practices lest this is used to divert attention from their policy objectives. They also need to remain relevant in their analysis, competent in their skills and capacities, up to date in knowledge/research base and to engage in evolving public policy debates and to open up space for others to enter into debates. Pluralism is a characteristic of any democratic civil society. For instance, while some civil society groups focus on need for socially responsible capitalism others emphasise the need for alternatives to as well as resistance to capitalism and neoliberalism. At the same time, as powerful actors, notably the International Financial Institutions and others, adopt their language and as more funding may come on stream from these actors, civil society organisations must be constantly vigilant and critical in order to maximise their autonomy from power centres. This does not mean isolationism nor does it prevent them from co-operating with governments or multilateral organisations. A lack of civil society engagement at national or global level favours the status quo, which continues to allow unacceptable extremes of poverty, inequality and exclusion in our world. As Woolcock notes '*A dynamic civil society is vital for debating the many difficult issues associated with higher levels of integration into the global economy and for empowering domestic constituencies to press for appropriate institutional and policy reforms*' (quoted in Braga de Macedo et al: 200). Critical thinking about new forms of national and global democratic control over the forces of globalisation, which increasingly structure development choices, is vitally important as ultimately harnessing ethical globalisation for international development places local and global responsibilities on us all.

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