Part V
OECD

Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

- Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US$1 a day;
- Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

- Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

- Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

- Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

- Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS;

- Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

- Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and program and reverse the loss of environmental resources;
- Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water;
- Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without access to adequate sanitation *[WSSD 2002]*;
- Have achieved, by 2020, a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

Millennium Development Goals

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

- Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system;
- Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries;
- Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states;
- Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term;
- In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth;
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries;
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.

Governance and poverty: can the goals get donors back on track?

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Governance was introduced into aid programmes ostensibly as an attempt to enhance poverty reduction. Donors justify the inclusion (and increasing prevalence) of so-called 'good governance' activities in their aid programmes by claiming that they are essential for sustainable development to end poverty.

Today the 'governance' sector covers an ever-wider field of activities ranging from economic policy, to human rights, to counter-terrorism. The governance bandwagon has picked up speed recently, particularly with the increasing influence of the anti-terrorism agenda. Now, more than ever, there are serious questions to be asked about the implicit and explicit political objectives of the donors' agenda and the effect of the increasing funds poured into governance. The contribution of governance aid to poverty reduction is still asserted, but seldom tested or proven. Instead, the ill-defined 'governance' sector provides a space for pursuing a range of donor interests with aid money.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) require, among other things, a commitment from donors to focus their aid squarely on poverty reduction through the fulfilment of basic rights. Achievement of the MDGs alone will not eradicate poverty, but the effort required even to achieve them leaves no room for competing priorities. The MDGs, while imperfect, may offer an opportunity to assess the governance aid agenda against specific poverty reduction outcomes, and to reopen the debate on donor approaches to development. But the MDGs will only help if donors are prepared to accept the challenge of some good governance of their own, through accountability for their contribution to achievement of the Goals.

Donors and Governance — not an easy answer

Aid donors began to focus on 'good governance' because they argued, with some justification, that corruption, weak financial management and low planning and implementation capacity within developing country governments, was preventing aid and domestic financing from reaching the people for whom it was intended. In short, 'poor governance' was undermining poverty reduction. Few could argue with the principle that if weak and/or corrupt governance kept essential resources from the poor, addressing these problems was a necessary activity.

Whether the complex, and very political, issues of governance in sovereign states

Millennium Development Goals

could, or should, be resolved by outsiders, would always be a more difficult and contentious question.

Nevertheless, good governance has increasingly become a major focus in the aid programmes of many donor governments, including the United Kingdom, Sweden, the United States and Australia, not to mention multilateral donors and international financial institutions. In the Australian case, for example, governance is now the single biggest sector in the aid programme; in 2003-04, governance activities will absorb 21% of all Australian aid.

Donor approaches to good governance do not often examine, but rather take as given, the links between aid programmes for 'good governance' in developing countries and the outcome of less poverty. Donor activity rests on the simplistic assertion that donors understand what policy settings and institutional structures will lead to the best outcomes in economic growth and, thus, poverty reduction. Critics note that when the so-called 'Washington Consensus' economic model failed (repeatedly) in the developing world, donors blamed recipients' poor implementation of it and rushed to strengthen that, rather than addressing the logical question about the appropriateness of the model in the first place.

In the early years of the 21st century — in the wake of the Latin American and Asian economic crises of the 1990s, in the light of the ongoing global debt crisis, and facing as big challenges as ever to eradicating poverty and realising global equity — there is no choice but to reject donor confidence that the neo-liberal model of good governance is a recipe for poverty reduction.

… then along came terrorism

Perhaps the most troubling trend of all in the field of governance aid, which has intensified over the past two years, is the increasing use of 'governance', as a broad and ill-defined descriptor to signify a handy catch-all sector under which to place a widening array of projects and programmes, in pursuit of donor objectives that have little to do with direct poverty reduction.

The starkest example of this is the increasing use of governance aid to further donors' national security interests. In particular, increased aid for various counter-terrorism activities has been slotted under the 'good governance' heading, using governance rhetoric to justify spending aid money on national security objectives.

Recent collaborative work by international NGOs, has demonstrated the breadth of the trend towards pursuing national security through aid. NGOs have observed counter-terrorism being established or increased as a development priority in the aid programmes of Australia, Japan, the USA, UK, European Union, and Denmark. In the programmes of these donors, and no doubt others, the nature and direction of aid have shifted to accommodate the national security and anti-terrorism agendas of the donor governments.[1]

Most donors have made some attempt to justify such aid spending by linking counter-terrorism to development. In February 2002, US Secretary of State Colin Powell made the connection between development assistance and counter-terrorism, saying 'we have to show people who might move in the direction of terrorism that there is a better way'.[2] The Australian Government has justified an increasing focus on counter-terrorism in its aid programme by claiming that 'stability and security… [are] critical preconditions in tackling poverty'.[3]

Other donors have perhaps been more honest, construing the connection the other way around. Japan's ODA Charter, revised in 2003, says 'Japan will proactively contribute to the stability and development of

Millennium Development Goals

developing countries through its ODA. This correlates closely with assuring Japan's security and prosperity and promoting the welfare of its people.'[4] In 2003, the Danish Government commissioned a think-tank to explore how Danish development cooperation could be used 'as an instrument in the prevention of terrorism'.[5]

Donor countries in the OECD DAC have turned their collective minds to the role of development cooperation in counter-terrorism. The result in April 2003 was the policy paper *A Development Cooperation Lens on Terrorism Prevention: Key Entry Points for Action*.[6] While general statements in the paper note the importance of donors' commitment to poverty reduction and human rights, the paper is infused with the suggestion that donors may need to 'calibrate' current aid allocations and approaches to take account of terrorism prevention. NGOs have expressed serious concern that this OECD paper, and the trend in donor thinking it reflects, opens the door for terrorism prevention increasingly becoming a goal of development cooperation in its own right.[7]

There is little doubt that conditions of poverty, combined with perceptions of global injustice and alienation, contribute in some circumstances to the creation of environments that can breed instability and conflict and, in extreme cases, acts of terror. At the same time, NGO research has suggested that 'linking acts of terrorism and their prevention with the goals of development cooperation... is highly problematic.'[8]

Poverty reduction arguments are evidently not the driving motivator, nor the guiding principle, for donors' new governance and security agendas. Recognition of the importance of stability and security for effective aid implies the need for a greater commitment to *poverty-focused* assistance,

to address the causes of conflict and provide greater economic and social equity to affected peoples. Simplistically combating symptoms through law enforcement, financial regulation and the like, is not an adequate response. As one NGO commentator has noted, if alleviating poverty reduces terrorism, there is no need to create a new counter-terrorism goal in aid programmes. All that such a link implies is the need to step up poverty-focused aid in order *to eradicate poverty*.[9]

There may be merit in the proposition that many types of aid directed at counter-terrorism may ultimately contribute to poverty reduction. More stable and better-governed states, for example, can benefit from international trade and growth more easily and, under the right circumstances, the resulting growth can lift the living standards of those in poverty. But where spending scarce aid funds is at stake, doing things that may possibly, eventually, make some contribution to reducing poverty is not good enough — regardless of the foreign policy or national security benefits for the donor. Donors must ensure that their programmes are the *best*, most effective way to use their limited resources to eradicate poverty. Much of the present aid for counter-terrorism activities would fail this test.

In fact, a glance at the types of anti-terror activities now being funded by large amounts of aid, reveals that the security threats being countered are almost always those directed towards rich countries and peoples, rather than threats to people in the countries of the terrorists' origin, or those they work through. Australia provides aid to small, poverty-trapped countries in the Pacific Islands to prevent international terror groups from laundering money, *through* them, towards Australia and other western countries. Even aid targeted at restoring stability to conflict-ridden states is now

Millennium Development Goals

described as preventing fragile states from becoming 'havens' or 'breeding grounds' for terrorists.[10] Much aid is being provided to assist Indonesia to counter international terrorist threats, while the world largely chooses to ignore the human suffering caused by conflicts within Indonesia's own territory, such as in Aceh.

While it is understandable that rich countries want to protect their citizens and their defence and security interests, by combating international terrorism, it is questionable whether diverting scarce aid money to this end is the appropriate way to fund these policy pursuits. That is to say, strengthening money-laundering regulations and customs police in East Timor or Nauru, may be in both governments' national interests, but is it an activity truly and primarily directed at reducing the burden of poverty for the citizens of such countries?

Regardless of any links that happen to exist, the language of donors' statements on counter-terrorism and aid leaves little doubt that the ultimate goal of such aid is security, not development. Like other donor-driven political priorities before it, counter-terrorism activity has too easily found a home under the catch-all category of aid for 'good governance'.[11] When it comes to their governance aid programmes, in particular, many donors need a reality check.

Can the Millennium Development Goals help?

The MDGs are fast becoming the international 'main game' in global development discourse. Eight simple goals, backed up by 14 hard targets and 49 measurable indicators, with a definite deadline of 2015, were endorsed by some 148 world leaders through the Millennium Declaration. Since that time, the MDGs have been vigorously promoted, developed and refined, chiefly by the UN but also, increasingly, by developed

and developing country governments and other international institutions.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that civil society's reaction to the MDGs has been mixed. Some critics point out that several of the targets are restatements of UN Goals that the world failed to achieve, as promised, by 2000. Others, importantly, wonder whether the Goals represent the same old donor-driven agenda in a new guise. Critics also berate the lack of civil society and recipient community participation in both the development of the Goals themselves and in the mechanisms being used for their implementation (such as MDG Country Reports and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers).

It is certainly true that the MDGs are neither exhaustive nor perfect. Among other things, they lack an explicit grounding in human rights, neglect to take account of the specific needs of marginalised groups such as people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, and lack a clear interaction with goals and standards established in other forums.

Nevertheless, there is a compelling argument that the MDGs represent the best opportunity in recent history to transform development debates and to achieve real results in poverty reduction. The Goals already have the UN, the World Bank and many donor governments talking about increased commitment to development, new approaches and accountability for real results in poverty reduction. At the very least, the MDGs represent a potentially powerful advocacy tool that NGOs and local communities can draw on, to hold developed and developing country governments to account for their own commitment to combat poverty.

For the first time there is a coherent set of priorities and a definite deadline. The Goals are easily understood, measurable and patently achievable. While they are not the

Millennium Development Goals

complete recipe for poverty eradication, their achievement would represent a major step. Most importantly, they have *already been agreed* by the vast majority of the world community. The Goals represent specific commitments to which donors can (must!) be held accountable.

The relevance of the MDGs to the governance debate is that they provide an internationally agreed framework to focus the aid and development agenda where it belongs — on action to *eliminate poverty*. Further, if taken seriously, the MDGs absolutely require aid to be used to that end, because all current aid resources and more will need to be directed to the Goals if they are to be achieved. The World Bank and others estimated that, in 2002, global aid added up to no more than half of the annual aid needed between now and 2015 to achieve the Goals.[12]

Governance provides an ideal example of the potential of the MDGs to sharpen aid priorities and to refocus on the basics. There is, quite appropriately, no specific MDG on Governance. That is because governance is not, and should not be, a development goal in itself. Governance activities for their own sake, or for the pursuit of objectives other than — or only distantly related to — poverty reduction, will not achieve the MDGs.

Instead, governance assistance is a means that should be employed, only where it can *most effectively* augment the ability of people in poverty to realise their basic right to a life free from poverty. If governance activities are not optimally contributing to the achievement of this, donors 9should simply not be spending aid money on them. Donors' own commitment to achieving the MDGs, demands that governance assistance be rigorously assessed against tough targets, embodying the real priorities that should be at the centre of aid efforts — poverty reduction through meeting basic needs.

The catch in this equation, though, is equal accountability for achievement of the MDGs. With the support of international donors and the UN, developing countries are doing an enormous amount to account for their progress towards achieving Millennium Goals 1 to 7. Meanwhile, Millennium Development Goal 8 — *develop a global partnership for development* — touches on the reforms needed to donors' approaches and the rules that govern the global economy, if the Goals are to be achieved. But Goal 8 is not as specific as the other Goals and lacks an adequate mechanism for holding developed countries accountable. The latter is a major unresolved problem with the MDGs as a whole. If the MDGs are an opportunity to reopen the discussion about policy and practice on governance with donors, they also make it necessary for NGOs and others to demand better accountability from them.

There has been some discussion about Goal 8 accountability in the international system. Various proposals have been made, including incorporation of MDG targets into OECD DAC peer review assessments, use of the IMF Chapter IV mechanism, and more directed use of the 'Commitment to Development' Index pioneered by the Centre for Global Development and *Foreign Policy* magazine in 2003.[13] These are some of the options. NGOs and others are publicly beginning to push hard for more work to be done on this crucial issue, in the lead-up to the UN Secretary-General's 2005 progress report on the MDGs.

But to date, donors have conspicuously failed to come to the party. Very few donors have indicated that they are even consi-dering reporting against MDG Goal 8 in any structured way. Indeed, unless there is a much stronger demonstration of political will on the part of donors to account for their contribution to the Goals, their good faith in

Millennium Development Goals

claiming to support the MDGs must be exposed as a sham. NGOs in OECD countries have a role to play in ensuring their governments are accountable for the integrity and effectiveness of their aid. MDG Goal 8 can, and should, provide a strong basis for a global effort towards better donor accountability between now and 2015.

Getting Donors Back on Track

Governance, rights and poverty reduction are natural allies. But seeing them in this way and adopting approaches that maximise all three, requires a donor re-think about why good governance should be pursued with aid, what sort of activities can truly improve governance, and a genuine donor re-commitment to the ultimate goal of poverty reduction. Now more than ever, donors are imposing 'good governance' which fits their own agendas, rather than genuinely prioritising a better standard of life for those in poverty around the world. Donors' own commitment to achieving the MDGs by 2015, presents perhaps the best opportunity for NGOs to advocate for bringing governance back to the basics — to poverty reduction — and for the international cooperation that will make it a reality. What is needed is a display of good governance from the same donors who so vigorously promote it. A start would be a transparent accountability mechanism for donor performance against MDG 8.

If alleviating poverty reduces terrorism, there is no need to create a new counter-terrorism goal in aid programmes

Notes

1. Information collected and distributed by the NGO Global Security and Development Network during 2003; see http://www.bond.org.uk/advocacy/globalsecurity.htm

2. Speech at the World Economic Forum, February 2002.

3. *Counter-terrorism and Australian Aid*, Australian Agency for International Development, Canberra, August 2003.

4. Revision of Japan's Official Development Assistance Charter, unofficial translation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, August 2003: http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/reform/revision0308.pdf

5. *Development Cooperation as an instrument in the prevention of terrorism*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Research Report, Edited by Timo Kivimaki, NIAS Copenhagen, July 2003.

6. OECD DAC, 22-23 April 2003, available at www.oecd.org.

7. Joint statement by members of the Global Security and Development Network on the Development Assistance Committee policy statement and reference document 'A Development Cooperation Lens on Terrorism Prevention: Key Entry Points for Action', London, 30 October 2003.

8. Tomlinson, Brian, A CCIC Commentary on 'A Development Lens on Terrorism Prevention: Key Entry points for Action', Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Ottawa, October 2003.

9. Gaughran, Audrey, *Shifting Goalposts: Aid and Terrorism*, British Overseas Network on Development (BOND), available at www.bond.org.uk.

10. See for example comments made by Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer MP in relation to Australian intervention in the Pacific: Security in an Unstable World, National Press Club, Canberra, 26 June 2003: http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2003/030626_unstableworld.html

11. In some cases, this goes so far as to be directly contradictory — assistance provided to developing countries to draft and implement restrictive and draconian anti-terrorism laws and regulations, has in some cases undermined core good governance principles relating to fundamental civil rights, transparent justice systems, and a free media.

12. *The Costs of Attaining the Millennium Development Goals*, World Bank, Monterrey, Mexico, March 2002.

13. On discussion of accountability proposals, see for example http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docsoslo/events/Achieving%20the%20MDGs%20Strengthening%20Mutual%20Accountability/bergen-final-summary.pdf On the Commitment to Development Index specifically, see http://www.cgdev.org/rankingtherich

Civil society participation in EC Aid: a cornerstone of good governance?

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'*Whatever the development question you ask, the answer is Good Governance.*'

Rt Hon Clare Short, Former UK Secretary of State for International Development, Valladolid, 7 March 2002

All aid actors, whether donors, recipients or implementers, now underline the importance of civil society participation in the development process. But, has there really been a paradigm shift? What does the European Commission mean when it talks about 'participation' and 'stakeholders'? What institutional and attitudinal changes are necessary, to enable poor people to truly participate in decision-making?

In its White Paper on European Governance, the European Commission refers to people's increasing distrust in institutions, a widespread image of the Union as 'remote and at the same time too intrusive' and the need to 'connect Europe with its citizens'.[1]

Upon his nomination in 1999, European Commission President Romano Prodi made 'good governance' — an expression that, for the European Union (EU), encompasses bottom-up participation through public partnerships with civil society — one of the main priorities of his mandate. The Commission emphasised the need for a stronger interaction with civil society and a 'reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue'[2]. Participatory democracy entails 'opening up the policy-making process to get more people and organizations involved in shaping and delivering EU policy'[3]. The Union had to become less top-down and complement its policy tools 'more effectively with non-legislative instruments'[4]. The EU, therefore strongly commits, in unequivocal terms, to promoting a more participatory democracy as a global principle of good governance.

The biggest challenge, however, is how to translate laudable principles into operational dialogue structures and practical programming orientations, bearing in mind that the concept of 'participatory development' implies a cultural revolution for most EC developing country partners.

This paper looks at the rhetoric on promoting good governance as communicated at various EU institutional levels. It examines the extent to which the principle of participatory democracy, as a fundamental element of good governance, is being implemented in developing countries.

European Commission

Defining 'good governance'

The concept of 'good governance' is difficult to define with precision, but it has been influenced by the international debate on the relationship between human rights, governance and economic development, incorporating elements of each.

For the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it is '... among other things participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources.'[5]

For the World Bank, it is '... epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law.'[6]

Numerous European Commission communications on development cooperation, both of a general nature and region-specific, have incorporated discussion of the importance of good governance. According to the European Commission Communication on Governance and Development, 'governance is a meaningful and practical concept relating to the very basic aspects of the functioning of any society and political and social systems. It can be described as a basic measure of stability and performance of a society.'[7]

The Commission lists a number of concepts that, when developed within a society and political system, provide for a transition from governance to good governance. These concepts are human rights, democratisation and democracy, the rule of law, civil society, decentralised power sharing and sound public administration. The Communication is a step forward in defining governance within EC development cooperation. But there is little emphasis on enabling civil society participation and little attention to how civil society can be supported in building capacity to respond to, and influence, governments.

Civil society participation: a fundamental element of good governance in EC policy

Since the Joint Declaration of November 2000 on the European Community (EC) Development Policy by the Council of Ministers and the European Commission[8], the promotion of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance have become integral elements of EC development cooperation. Strengthening democratic systems in developing countries therefore lies at the heart of Community efforts to encourage 'the most wide-ranging participation of all segments of society',[9] thereby creating conditions for greater equity and greater participation by the poorest in the development process.

The key conditions for effective dialogue and cooperation between partner countries and the EU, encompass institutional capacity building in partner countries and good governance, 'with a view to ensuring transparent and responsible management of all the resources devoted to development'. These parameters will guide the distribution of Community development aid 'in order to allocate it to where it has the greatest chance of reducing poverty efficiently and sustainably'.[10] Institutional capacity building represents one of the European Commission's six priorities for action, to maximise the impact of Community development policy.

Furthermore, the Compendium on Cooperation Strategies in the Cotonou

European Commission

Partnership Agreement between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, identifies, among other things, capacity building of 'non-state actors' (NSAs) and the strengthening of structures and mechanisms of information, dialogue and of consultation between NSAs and the national authorities as an area of support provided by the Community.[11].

Articles 9 and 10 of the Cotonou Agreement state that development centred on the human person, entails 'respect for and promotion of all human rights'. The Articles state that 'democracy based on the rule of law and transparent and accountable governance are an integral part of sustainable development', and that 'greater involvement of an active and organised civil society' is essential to maintaining and consolidating a stable and democratic political environment.

Underpinning these articles is the recognition that at the heart of governance and development are two linked concepts, the one a result of the other. Firstly, that a working concept of good governance must be based on a recognition of the promotion of economic, social, political and cultural rights. This rights-based approach to development is not country specific. Secondly, that governance and good governance is therefore predicated on the strengthening of transparency and accountability, with active citizens' organisations engaging on a regular, open and systematic basis with elected representatives in their countries. In other words, participatory democracy is a direct result of the rights-based approach to development.

Civil society participation in EC development programmes
The key features of civil society organisations include: autonomy from the state and the market and development through a fundamentally endogenous process; CSOs are established voluntarily by citizens who have common values, concerns, needs or interests; and they are organised around the promotion of an issue or the interests of a particular section of society. CSOs are seen as increasingly crucial agents, because of their knowledge, experience, low-cost, flexibility, and ability to bridge the critical gap between strategic goals and their practical realisation.

Commission Communication on NSA participation
In November 2002, the Commission published a Communication on the 'Participation of Non-State Actors in EC Development Policy', followed by 'Guidelines on Principles of Good Practices for the Participation of Non-State Actors in the Development Dialogues and Consultation'[12]. Both seek to align EC aid firmly with the principle of 'local ownership' by recipient countries. Yet, in sharp contrast with the Commission's adamant will to enhance participatory democracy, the key terms of this approach, such as 'non-state actor' (NSA) and 'participation' and their place in the context of wider EC aid reforms lack clear definition. This questions the very legitimacy of the system.

While the paper uses the broad term 'non-state actor', to include non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social partners, business associations and the media, its substantive content deals exclusively with NGOs. It seems ironic that the very document that aims to ensure 'an adequate level of consultation and participation in all partners' countries' is itself developed with very little official consultation or input from civil society organisations in Europe and without any consultation with the developing world.

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Criticism of 'ad hoc-ness'

The EU's relationship with associations of development NGOs undertaking policy dialogue in Brussels itself has been strewn with problems. The organisations themselves complain that any consultation they enjoy is entirely ad hoc; they often also accuse the Commission of consulting when it wants to legitimise its own perspective, rather than genuinely to listen and respond to alternative viewpoints. This ad-hoc consultation practice may be a result of limited staff numbers, as Commission staff have genuinely struggled to cope with the myriad of demands from literally thousands of organisations — local, national and international. But even if the Commission did consult with NGOs on a consistent basis, there would still be a problem: the Commission assumes that NGOs are representative of civil society as a whole and this leads it to the misconception that policy has been made in a participatory manner.

Criticism of inconsistency

The participatory approach to development, which aims to increase the ownership of development strategies by the countries and populations concerned, is an innovation in ACP-EU Cooperation. The Cotonou Agreement, signed in 2000 between the EU and the ACP, makes the participatory approach at all levels of cooperation a legally binding, well-structured obligation, which aims to encourage dialogue between the national authorities and the NSAs in the country. Participation is not limited to project implementation, but extends to political dialogue, policy formulation and monitoring and evaluation of progress.

Although the EU's main policy document is the Communication, it is only the Cotonou Agreement that places a legal requirement on EC Delegations for NSA participation. In the regulation for Latin America, the Commission simply states that current regional, sub-regional and country strategy papers have a strong civil society component and that growing support to civil society can be perceived in the new generation of agreements. Yet, the agreements in force between the Commission and Asian and Latin American countries do not contain a legal obligation to consult civil society. There is a serious inconsistency for delegations, regarding the simultaneous implementation of the regulation for Asia and Latin America (ALA), which essentially ignores civil society actors,[13] and the Communication on NSAs that does indeed apply to all developing countries.

Linking EC Delegations and NSAs

According to recent EC literature, the role of the EC Delegation is that of observer and facilitator. It is to facilitate the engagement of NSAs in policymaking and implementation of cooperation policies and, in particular, to provide technical assistance in programming. According to the EC, the Head of Delegation (HoD) will play an increasingly important role in the selection process of co-financing projects, presented as NSAs' own initiatives. In this context, the HoD is expected to ensure that there is an acceptable degree of consistency between these initiatives and the whole cooperation strategy.

In the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, most ACP Governments, in agreement with the EC, have undertaken to provide support to NSAs by reserving a European Development Fund (EDF) for this purpose in their respective Country Strategy Papers. In the implementation process of these innovative provisions, the ACP national authorities, the EC Delegations and the NSA representatives are expected jointly to identify the range of actors and activities to be supported. As far as the management of the funds and the funding decisions of NSA

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activities are concerned, the HoD will be the main person responsible.

The decentralisation of resources and responsibilities to EC Delegations, which began in 2001, and is expected to extend to all Delegations before the end of 2003, is intended to improve the quality of the participatory approach in EC development policy. The ongoing rationalisation of development aid instruments, which aims to facilitate sound management and coherence of development programmes, also provides an opportunity to clarify the EC's approach to working with NSAs. Good co-ordination between the EC Delegations and Headquarters is crucial.

According to the EC, the participatory approach must be implemented while

respecting both the particular situation in each partner country and the central role of the Government, complemented by the local authorities, the business sector and other NSAs. The EC identifies lack of political will to involve NSAs on the part of the national governments, and the poor structuring and capacity of NSAs, as two important issues that Heads of Delegation often face. Interestingly, this is not necessarily just in the poorest countries. A useful tool for overcoming these issues may be Country Strategy Paper consultations that, from the outset define policy towards NSAs. They give NSAs the opportunity to emerge, to present their ideas, to promote debate in society and to add to the rooting of democratic systems.

Box 7. Participation in Senegal

A BOND research project on the participation of southern civil society representatives in the decision making processes and implementation of EU development programmes, was conducted in Senegal during August 2003.[14]

The choice of NSAs invited to participate in the EU programming process was essentially based on a national assessment of available information. Yet, the multitude of civil society organisations made it difficult to involve them all in consultation. A 'pragmatic' approach was therefore adopted, with co-opted representatives of some of the most visible organisations and those known for their expertise.

In February 2001, an open consultation process was launched with NSAs in order to draw up Senegal's Country Strategy Paper with a 'central group', comprised of six Dakar-based NSAs playing a coordinating role. Subsequently, five issue-based 'technical working groups', comprising 66 co-opted NSA representatives were established focused on: macro-economic adjustment and budgetary support; social sectors the poverty reduction, transport and trade, good governance and non-state actors.

Seven more working groups, comprised of the same participants, were then set up to identify projects in accordance with the agreed areas of cooperation between the Government of Senegal and the EU: good governance, transportation, hygiene, budgetary support, trade, culture, Non-State actors. These groups met four or five times, concluding with a three-day workshop to develop strategies for the particular areas. NSAs were invited to participate in all groups; however, substantial participation only took place in the group on good governance.

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In general, NSAs were pleasantly surprised at the invitation from the EC Delegation and the Government of Senegal to participate in the identification of areas of cooperation between Senegal and the EU. Prior to this, there was a lack of knowledge on the EU's activities in the country. However, some critical NSA voices have suggested that participants mostly represented an urban Dakar-based 'NGO elite' and little effort was made to reach out to smaller, grass roots or regional organisations. As a result, a lack of consideration was given to a number of serious concerns in the Country Strategy Paper. Agriculture, in particular, was not considered a focal sector despite studies showing that agrarian people constitute approximately 60% of the population most affected by poverty in Senegal.

All of the meetings of the different technical groups were held at the offices of the EC Delegation in Dakar, but all the costs of engaging in the consultation were borne by the NSAs themselves. Furthermore, the process suffered in its entirety from a lack of clear terms of reference and a precise work plan, which would have framed objectives and mandates within a clear timetable. Most participants also deplored the way in which NSAs were brought into the process on the basis of co-option without any prior preparation, no mandate and therefore no legitimacy from their constituencies. Finally, there was a noticeable ill-preparedness, lack of knowledge and expertise among NSAs, on the policies outlined in the Cotonou Agreement, and how these should be implemented.

Participation: actual or nominal?

Effective consultation with NSAs presupposes that they are properly organised and have access to adequate information. NSAs need the financial and technical ability to respond adequately to consultation. They need to be able to articulate issues on their areas of concerns, in a manner that is taken seriously and acted upon.

But an official of the Kenyan Ministry of Planning and Development was candid enough to admit that NSA participation in the elaboration of the Kenyan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), on which the Kenyan Country Strategy Paper was based, was purely cosmetic, in that the process was government driven. Most, NSAs received documentation late and as a result, even though they were sitting at the table, NSAs could not effectively participate, so civil servants ended up dominating the process, as

well as writing the reports. Although on the surface, NSAs can be said to have been consulted, since they were allowed to sit at the table, their participation was hampered by lack of information. The lack of consultation with civil society in drawing up the Kenyan Country Strategy Paper, seemed largely to be based on lack of understanding about the supposed benefits of involving civil society groups in discussions about policy.[15]

Conclusion

Most academics and development practitioners agree that ownership of development strategies, by those they are intended to benefit, provides the best guarantee that strategies will succeed. Many of today's buzzwords around public-private partnerships, good governance and sustainability, are equally dependent on participation by a healthy and functioning

European Commission

civil society in developing countries. Consultation is not an exact science measurable in numbers alone. The quality of involvement, particularly from the poorest and most marginalised, is important when the Commission's activities are assessed. It is a cornerstone of good governance that consultations and their results are not an 'add on', but integrated into the mainstream processes for the delivery of EC aid. This should include all relevant policy instruments. The first test of whether such a commitment is serious, will be the forthcoming 'Mid-term Review' of existing agreed Country Strategy Papers.

To date, limited attention and resources have been made available to governments for strengthening democracy, respect for human rights and civil society engagement in democratic and participatory processes. Implementation of the principle of NSA participation in the development process will evolve over time and will require identification of best practices, flexibility and institutional innovation. Yet, it is the principle of participatory development — not simply the operation of consultation processes — that must be the ultimate arbiter as to whether the good intentions of the Commission really do make a difference.

Notes

1. *European Governance, A White Paper*, COM(2001)428 final, Brussels, 25.07.2001, p 3.

2. Ibid, p 16.

3. Ibid, p 3.

4. Ibid, p 4.

5. *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, A UNDP policy paper UNDP 1997,p 2-3.

6. *Governance: The World Bank's Experience*, World Bank 1994.

7. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee: *Governance and Development*, COM(2003) 615 final, Brussels, 20.10.2003, p 3.

8. The European Community's Development Policy — Statement by the Council and the Commission: http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/legislation/docs/council20001110_en.pdf#zoom=100

9. Ibid, p 3.

10. Ibid.

11. Partnership Agreement between the Members of the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Community and its Member States —

Compendium on co-operation strategies: http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/cotonou/compendium/comp12c_en.htm

12. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee: *Participation of non-state actors in EC development policy*, COM(2002) 598 final, Brussels, 07.11.2002.

13. The European Parliament has introduced recommendations to the Regulation proposed by the Commission supporting civil society participation.

14. Researched by Moussa Ba, a consultant with *Sahel Ingenieurs Conseils* based in Dakar and coordinated by INTRAC, an international training and research NGO. The BOND research project, 'Ensuring Civil Society Participation in European Commission Development Assistance Programmes' seeks to measure the effectiveness and impact of the EC's development assistance programme by evaluating the nature and quality of civil society participation in the development of EC Country Strategy Papers in four developing countries. The research will be published in March 2004.

15. BOND EC-PREP Research, 'Ensuring Civil Society Participation in EC Development Assistance Programmes', Kenyan Study by Halima Noor, p. 47.