

The role of CSO's in Development – RI Process

Regional Integration- Regionalism: where is Africa
in all this?

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What is the role CSOs in Development

- CSOs are perceived as more flexible, participatory and responsive to local needs of the poor - all prerequisites for sustained development.
- State bureaucracy and corruption erodes finances and policies are often motivated by institutional, political and even kinship interests;
- CSOs can potentially foster and support grassroots organizations to become more numerous, sizable, resourceful, and self-reliant.
- Also, grassroots contacts enable CSOs to provide critical information on potential crisis and thus contribute to early warning systems and
- Over and above these direct development roles, CSOs also have a very important advocacy role to play in promoting effective governance.

What CSO's can do

- Specifically CSOs, both local and international, can potentially contribute to local economic development and respond to the growing problem of poverty in a number of ways
- Their responses can be categorized into the following:
 - improve the local business investment climate;
 - encourage new enterprises and livelihood programmes;
 - deliver social services, provide training and capacity building programmes;
 - and contribute to relief and rehabilitation.

Regional Integration - A strategy

- Regional integration has emerged as an inevitable strategy for achieving sustainable economic growth as there is a consensus that by merging its economies and pooling its capacities, endowments and energies, the African continent, can overcome its daunting development challenges
- Deeper integration would allow the region not only to achieve sustained and robust economic growth but it will also help in:
 - poverty alleviation,
 - enhanced movement of goods, services, capital and labour,
 - socio-economic policy coordination and harmonization,
 - infrastructure development as well as the
 - promotion of peace and security within and between the regions

Civil Society's role in Regional Economic Integration

- The wider economic space created through regional and continental integration will strengthen Africa's voice and bargaining power in its relations with the rest of the world
- But this voice will not be as strong as it should be without first consolidating structures at national and regional levels where civil society should play a critical role in:
 - Helping to formulate and shape development plans and priorities
 - Participating in the implementation of those plans and programmes

Challenges in CSO Participation in Regional Integration

- Voice is weak to demand for fulfilment of what members states have signed
- Integrating Regional policies into national development plans
- Level of engagement: Few CSOs have capacity to engage MS at national level on issues of trade- CSOs
- Non institutionalization of CSOs in regional institutions like COMESA and SADC

- Lack of capacity and technical human resources
- Lack of domestic specialists on trade issues
- Need for better coordination and information sharing among CSOs
- Limited opportunities for effective participation
- Dialogue between the civil sector and the RECs exist, this is on ad hoc basis and has not been institutionalised

What has to be done to have CSO Engagement

- Immediate engagement in the TFTA with citizens of the regions
- CSOs need to go beyond just calling for “a people centred development framework” – we need to provide regional alternative response in the sectoral challenges in COMESA and SADC;
- Advocate for Heads of State Summit to meet commitments under the TFTA agreement.
- Develop priority areas/activity plans for engagement

What has to be done to have CSO Engagement

- Share information on the different processes taking place in the COMESA and SADC regions aimed at enhancing regional economic integration
- identify critical issues that should form the building blocks of our engagement at the national and regional levels
- define the actions and advocacy strategies for the civil society in the region to inform, track and monitor regional integration policies, plans and activities
- harness the different regional complementarities existing among the stakeholders for a shared common vision on the TFTA

KEY QUESTIONS

- HOW DEMOCRATIC ARE REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS?
- ARE THEY SERVING THE PEOPLE OF THE REGION OR ARE THEY MERE ELITIST CLUBS?
- WHAT SPACES ARE AVAILABLE FOR CSOs TO ENGAGE AND REPRESENT THE VOICES OF MAJORITY CITIZENS?
- WHY IS THAT MEMBERS ARE RESISTANT TO DOMESTICATE WHAT THEY SIGN?

- *Inclusiveness will generate national ownership which is the best guarantee for effective implementation of trade policy as part of overall development policy*

Zikomo..