

CSOs/NGOs IN ETHIOPIA

Partners in Development and Good Governance

SUMMARY OF MAIN REPORT

The Ad Hoc CSO/NGO Task Force

Addis Ababa

November 2008

Introduction

Like in other countries, non-governmental and civil society actors are visible on the overall institutional landscape of Ethiopian society. Because of the specific contexts, compared to many other African countries, the Ethiopian NGO/CSO community is not that developed in terms of diversity, size and capacity. During the last two decades the community has had, in relative terms, some opportune moment for growth in size, diversification in make-up and self-organization for active participation in the national socio-economic process. At the same time, the community was also engaged with the government for the enactment of a legal framework that would further facilitate and legitimize the sectors' position in society. The task is yet to be finished, and this study itself is initiated by the *CSO/NGO Enabling Environment ad hoc Taskforce* for that purpose.

The main objectives of the were to make: exhaustive assessment of the contributions of CSOs/NGOs to the development effort of the country; documentation of roles played by CSO/NGO community in addressing the social and economic problems of the marginalized sections of the population; and illustration of geographic and sectoral spread of programmers and size of the resource outlay. Data for the study was collected through field visits to four regional states and extensive review of secondary sources. This executive summary highlights major findings of the study.

On the Size and Distribution of the CSO/NGO Community

According to the registry of Ministry of Justice (2007) a total of 2,305 organizations have acquired legal registration at federal level (Table 1). Local NGOs accounted for 75% (1,742) of the total, while International NGOs were 234. There were also 149 professional associations and 125 civic advocacy groups. Particularly the size of local NGOs represented significant numerical strength compared to where it was some five years back. In addition to the federal-level, regions, too, have registered many more localized NGOs, and if included the total number of formally registered CSO/NGOs are expected to be more than 3,000.

CSO/NGOs are widely distributed and can be found in all Regions of the country. Oromia and Addis Ababa have more operational NGOs (229 and 217, respectively), while Dire Dawa, Harar and Gambella have the least numbers (11, 12 and 11, respectively).

Table 1: NGOs with Ongoing Projects by Region

	INGOs	NNGOs	RNGOs	Total
Oromia	53	176	-	229
Addis Aba	44	173	-	217
SNNPR	28	70	-	98
Amhara	34	41	15	90
Tigray	14	9	43	66
Somali	22	17	15	54
BSGR	14	3	24	41
Afar	11	7	0	18
Dire Dawa	5	6	1	12
Gambella	7	1	4	12

Harari	3	8	-	11
Total ¹	235	511	102	848

Source: EC 2008

On the Size of Resources Mobilized by CSOs/NGOs

Evidence compiled by NBE shows that the global resources mobilized by the voluntary sector are immense and this has benefited the country's economy significantly. Between 2004 and first half of 2008 the total foreign currency transferred by NGO's amounted to US\$1.78 billion. The annual breakdown of this is greater than earnings from the export of coffee. The EC mapping study produced in mid-2008 estimates that between 2004 and 2007 NGOs' budget for over 2000 projects in regions was about 10 billion Birr².

Table 2: Foreign Currency Earnings from Selected Exports, NGO and Private Transfers (In Million USD)

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08*
Coffee Export	335.2	354.3	424.2	145.0
Oil seeds Export	125.0	211.4	187.4	66.9
NGO Transfers (Cash)	444.0	497.8	537.4	305.3
Private Individual Transfers (Cash)	350.8	354.9	632.6	415.4

Source: NBE 2007; 2008

On Sectoral/Thematic Targets

The bulk of NGO resources have gone into human development (health, education, child welfare) and agriculture and food security. These are the same priority areas emphasized by the government's poverty reduction program as set out in PASDEP. In the Agriculture and rural development, NGO/CSOs have invested about 3.8 billion Birr between 2004 - 2008, and this amount is by 1.6 billion Birr more than the aggregate amount (2.2 billion) assumed to be generated from the private sector, NGOs and communities for implementing the agricultural and rural development components the PASDEP (2005 - 2009/10).

Table 3: NGO Projects in the Country and Resource Flows by Sector

Sector	No of Projects	Budget (Mn Birr 2004/07)
Child Development	394	2,139.50
Education	206	621.01
Health	235	1,084.52
HIV/AIDS	175	710.96
Integrated urban/rural development & Food Security	336	2,977.75
Water & sanitation	141	573.62
Women and girls empowerment	96	217.73

¹ The total figure, except for regional NGOs, does not tell the actual number of NGOs as many of the national and INGOs have operational presence in more than one region.

² The total does not include budgets of NGOs and CSOs having project agreements with federal sector bureaus

Environment & Natural Resources	74	154.01
Advocacy & peace building	34	44.03
Disability & elders support	35	82.50
Agriculture & agro-pastoral	117	467.95
Youth	23	142.05
Social welfare	15	53.83
Capacity Building & Others	139	268.33
Total	2046	9,537.79

Source: EC 2008

Mode of Participation

The study verified that CSOs/NGOs indeed operate inside the framework of the country's development and poverty reduction plans and strategies. To ensure this, regional and local governments have developed systems and structures for interaction and integration. NGOs have provided considerable support to capacity building of government agencies, particularly at local-levels and in the remote parts of the county. Such support has contributed to effective leadership, improved responsiveness and positive orientations to the poor, the rights of children, women, and other marginalized groups.

Contributions of CSOs/NGOs to Development and Governance

The study has found out that CSOs/NGOs have been extensively and engaged in and significantly contributed to agricultural and rural development. Their major engagements in the area include strengthening rural institutions (cooperatives, micro finance institutions, self-help and other grassroots associations), environmental rehabilitation, promoting conservation based sustainable development (promotion of small-scale irrigation, fruits and vegetables, apiculture, etc.), addressing chronic food insecurity, water supply and sanitation, pastoralist livelihood development, market development, and strengthening government capacity. NGOs have experimented and successfully piloted approaches and technologies which include technologies for water-lifting and apiculture; improving access to finance and market by the rural poor and promotion of new and high-value crops and stocks that eventually came to be part of the governments' national strategies and programs. In general NGOs CSOs/NGOs engagement in agricultural and rural development contributed significantly to the emergence and development of rural institutions for facilitating access to finance, market, potable water supply and the likes. Moreover, their engagement has contributed immensely in transforming agricultural practices towards intensification, diversification and market-orientation.

Promotion of human development or provision of social services has been another major area where CSO/NGOs have been extensively engaged. According to a recent study, NGOs investment in the broad area of social services topped 5.1 billion Birr in the period 2004 to 2007. CSOs/NGOs engagement in the area of human development covers promotion of health services, education, child protection and welfare, and institution building and empowerment. In particular, CSOs/NGOs introduced innovative approaches such as community-based approaches to health services and alternative basic education, which are eventually adopted by the government and which have significantly contributed to the achievements attained in the health and education sectors.

The findings of the study also reveal that CSOs/NGOs have contributed significantly in promoting good governance. CSOs/NGOs have been extensively engaged in promoting public awareness and participation of citizens in governance, democracy, human rights and peace building through mobilizing and empowering grassroots, religious, community and mass based organizations. A number of CSOs/NGOs have also involved in promoting access to justice through providing legal aid services to the poor, women, children and other marginalized sections of the society. CSOs/NGOs have contributed significantly in promoting the efficiency of the legal system through providing trainings to concerned government officials as well as through initiating and supporting the establishment of special structures within to the judiciary and law enforcement organs such as Child Protection Units in the police and Child and Victims Friendly Benches in the Courts. CSOs/NGOs have also played significant role in supporting legal reforms in different areas related to human rights and governance.

In general, the participation of CSOs/NGOs in the overall development and governance processes of the country has had significant impacts on the lives of the poor and the disadvantaged, and the broad range of basic services made accessible to them; on the country's economy and the development programs; on the process of democracy building, access to justice and good governance; on public awareness and empowerment; on the capacity of government agencies especially at the woreda and kebele levels.

The study shows that currently NGO/CSOs are primarily engaged in addressing the root causes of poverty and vulnerability, as well as helping to build institutions for good governance and democracy-building. In rural areas, short-term relief distribution is not any more an important part of their program activities. Instead, they are concerned mainly with strengthening of awareness, transfer of skills and technologies, supporting institutions, and promoting linkages. The study is convinced that further facilitation of these engagements would create grounds for achieving even more useful contributions to the national effort of addressing poverty, vulnerability and promoting good governance and democratic practice.

On the Effects of the Draft Charities and Societies Proclamation

In light of the contexts of CSO/NGO operation and the evolving trends of collaboration with government at different levels, the study is of the opinion that, if approved as it is, the proclamation would entail a far reaching negative consequence both on the existence and growth of CSO/NGOs and also on the benefits they bring to the Ethiopian society at large.

The draft law defines as “foreign” any Ethiopian CSO that receives more than 10 percent of its funding from foreign sources, and then bars all “foreign” CSOs from working on human rights and governance issues. As a result, if the draft proclamation comes into force as it is, most CSOs/NGOs (international NGOs as a whole and almost all of the formal local CSOs) will be excluded from engaging in the promotion of good governance, democracy, human rights and peace.

Contrary to other policy documents, the draft proclamation attempts to make a separation between development and governance/human rights interventions. The draft proclamation, by excluding most of the CSOs/NGOs from engaging in governance or policy advocacy, will practically limit their development intervention to relief and

service provision and will profoundly affect their effective and sustainable engagement in the development process of the country.

The draft proclamation gives much expanded regulatory power for the Agency and allows it to interfere with the operation of CSOs/NGOs beyond the acceptable standards. This lack of acceptable degree of operational freedom will affect both the development of the sector and the effectiveness of its interventions. Other effects of the draft proclamation that will hamper the growth and development of the civil society sector include:

- It will make CSOs/NGOs highly insecure and unsure of their role and future prospects.
- The exclusion of most CSOs/NGOs from engaging in governance and human rights issues under the proclamation will discourage donors from supporting them.
- It will discourage citizens to organize and establish new CSOs/NGOs
- It will reduce the size of the sector, since almost the entire advocacy CSOs/NGOs will be forced to completely cease their operation and most of the development CSOs/NGOs (employing the rights-based approach) will be forced to terminate the advocacy/governance component of their intervention.

The above-discussed undesired impacts of the draft proclamation on the engagement and development of CSOs will have far-reaching consequences on the democratization and development endeavors of the country by undermining most of their invaluable contributions in the areas. Some of the major implications of the draft legislation that will affect the governance and development processes of the country include:

- i. Most CSOs/NGOs will not be able to continue their interventions in mobilizing and empowering different sections of society to engage in governance and human rights issues and this will result in reduced participation of citizens. This diminished citizen's participation in governance will, in turn, lead to less pluralism, democracy and respect for human rights in the country.
- ii. Most of the CSOs/NGOs working on justice issues will be forced to discontinue their services of promoting access to justice and this will decrease the ability of citizens, especially the poor, women, children and other marginalized sections of the society to access the justice and administrative process.
- iii. Most CSOs/NGOs will be prohibited from participating in the formulation of policies, laws and programs related to governance and human rights and this will minimize policy dialogue among the public, which will, in turn, affect the formulation of appropriate and responsive policies.
- iv. Most of the CSOs/NGOs that have been engaged in building the capacity of law enforcement and other governance organs could not continue their invaluable contribution and this will lead to less efficiency of the justice and governance system. This will also affect the implementation of government's policies in the area such as decentralization, justice sector reform program, etc.
- v. Most CSOs/NGOs that have been engaged in promoting development or poverty alleviation could not continue their successful contributions in addressing causes of

poverty related to governance or policy frameworks. This will deter CSOs/NGOs from making effective and sustainable contribution in the development process of the country. As a result, many of the poor and disadvantaged, which benefited from the development programs undertaken by the CSOs, will be deprived of the support and services that was provided to them.

- vi. The limitations imposed on the scope of engagement of CSOs/NGOs may be considered as contravention with the international development cooperation agreements entered by the country such as the Cotonou Agreement. This may reduce the gains from development cooperation of the country with the international community, and
- vii. The adoption of the draft proclamation will lead to a decrease in the size and scope of engagement of the civil society sector. This will also result in the loss of significant amount of foreign currency flowing to the country as well as in the loss of significant number of jobs.