

National NGOs Good practice Day Celebrated at CCRDA

Compound

Reportage

The National NGOs Good Practice Day was colorfully celebrated on March 1, 2010 in the premise of the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA) in the presence of senior government officials including H.E President Girma W/Ghiorgis, ministers, executives, dignitaries, partners, donors, member NGO/CSO, the media crew and other invited guests.

During the day the compound of CCRDA was partitioned with colorfully decorated makeshifts which have been used as display centers to exhibit good practices of member NGOs/COSs. The presence of the Country's Head of State had added grace to the event. IT was organized by CCRDA in collaboration with Freidrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation.

In his welcoming speech and background information, CCDRA Executive Director, Dr Meshesha Shewarega extended his deep gratitude to the participants for partaking in such important function basically intended to enhance Go-NGO partnership and thereby augmenting the unfolding multifaceted development engagements.

Dr Meshesha said CCRDA documented more than 42 worthwhile experiences, of which 10 good practices would be presented in the form of short films while the rest would be staged in the form of exhibition. Out of the 10 good practice films, five of them are from the CCRDA membership while the remaining are from CCDRA/Sida, CCRDA/Irish Aid, and CCDRA/Lucile Packard foundation.

The overarching objectives of organizing such an event, according to the Executive Director, are to showcase NGOs contribution to the national development, share and scale up the good practices by the government, local communities and even other NGOs. It attempts to build the image of the NGO/CSO community and redress the misperceptions currently upheld by the counterparts and to witness and reaffirm the government and donor community what kind of difference their support has been making to the Ethiopian people.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Meshesha underscored that such an Event is meant to demonstrate the ability and willingness of the NGO sector to contribute to the wellbeing of the country testifying its readiness to work with the government in the effort of fighting poverty in its all facets.

The Executive Director acknowledged the CCRDA members who willingly shared their good practice stories and thanked Frederic Ebert Stiftung Foundation for financing and technically supporting in organizing such colorful occasion.

In his opening statement, President Girma W/Ghiorgis on his part noted that the Ethiopian government considers NGOs as important development partners as they fill a considerable gap by sharing the burden of government in poverty alleviation and realizing development goals. The President said the past six to seven years have witnessed a double digit average economic growth of 10 percent, the result of which is the cumulative effects of such sectoral development actors including NGOs and CSOs.

According to the President, such a platform is believed to improve GO-NGO relations, strengthen partnership in development endeavors, weed

out misunderstanding, and thereby enhancing the contribution of NGO/CSO to the national development.

While appreciating the NGOs willingness and readiness to share this best practice, President Girma called upon government counterparts to value the inputs and arrange ways to scaling up these small valuable initiatives at the national level.

The President also underscored that NGO and CSO would be encouraged and not intimidated by the new circumstances relating to the new Charities and Societies Legislation, as it is basically meant to set a clear frame of governance and give clear direction into detail matters of the sectors. President Girma also seized the occasion to call upon members of the NGO/CSO community to proactively participate in the up-coming election, which he said will have great meaning to the national democratization process.

H.E Dr. Abera Dheressa, State of Minister of Agriculture and Rural development made a speech focusing on NGO – Government cooperation in the food security sector. He noted that civil society organizations have been dependable partners towards ensuring food security, which he said, is a key integrated component of the country's agriculture and development programs.

Dr. Abera cited the 2004-2007 statistics of European Commission Mapping study of 2008 which highlighted the NGOs sector contribution pursuant to rural development. Accordingly, 336 projects worth 2,977.75 Billion Birr were carried out in the integrated urban/rural development and food security sector while 117 projects valued at 467.95 million Birr and 74 projects worth 154.01 million Birr were undertaken in the agricultural and agro-pastoral as well as in the environmental and

natural resource sectors respectively by the NGO/CSO actors during the reported period.

The State Minister recognized that NGOs are working within the agenda set by the government, which allows all parties to play an effective role and also minimizes duplication and fosters joint approaches. Finally, Dr. Abera lauded the initiatives taken by CCRDA to compile good practices through films and exhibition, which are worth scaling up at a wider range and coverage.

In his key note speech, Dr. Tewodros Adhanom also said on his part that his Ministry and a host of other actors are involved in the Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) of the Global Fund, which he said brings NGOs and government together. The CCM is one of the landmark points of cooperation between the civil society sector and the government of Ethiopia.

Dr. Tewodros said other consultative forums such as the Annual Health Sector Development Program Review and HIV and AIDS Program Review Sessions are also being serving as avenues of dialogue and partnership to have CSOs on board as partners in development.

The Minister said CSOs have been dependable partners in training health workers at all levels, supplying health stations with medical appliances, and thereby helping implement the health sector program of the government.

According to the data gained from the NGO/CSO actors, NGOs have spent more than 990 million Birr from 1997 to 2001 for health related services to improve the health conditions throughout the country, particularly in Addis Ababa Amhara, SNNPRs, Tigray and Somali regions,

the Minister said, adding, from 2004-2007 alone, the NGO sector has contributed to the health sector about 1,084 Billion Birr for 235 projects.

The Minister considered CCRDA as an important partner in multilateral programs such as CCM, PBS or concrete collaboration in the regions through NGOs. Dr Tewodros also applauded the moves taken by CCRDA to compile good practices and underscored the dire need to jointly strategize as to how such practices can best be scaled up at wider scale and coverage.

After the key note speeches of the invited senior government officials, a brief explanation was made by Ato Berhanu Geleto, Chair of Good Practice Organizing Committee on the documentary films submitted by the CCRDA members. Ato Berhanu said the Good Practices presented to this event are showcases which highlighted the contribution of the NGO/CSO sector to the development endeavors and social transformation in the country.

He said 10 films of good practices viewed, of which five are from CCRDA members and the remaining from CCRDA partners. Berhanu called upon members of the NGO sector to bring forth their good practices to get the attention of the government, and be replicated.

Following the good practice viewing President Girma W/Ghiorgis, handed out the complete set of Good Practice DVDs to Dr. Tewodros Adhanom Dr. Abera Dheressa and Ato Ali Siraj, Director General of Charities and Societies Agency to share the good practices for scaling up in their respective fields of engagement. Certificates were also awarded to member NGOs/CSOs that have voluntarily submitted their documentary films of good practices. The certificates were awarded by Ato Girma W/Ghiorgis, President of FDRE.

Accordingly the following member NGOs/CSOs were accorded with certificates of appreciation, to namely:

- i. Abebech Gobena Yehitsanat Kibikabena Limat Dirijit
- ii. Action for Development
- iii. Agri service Ethiopia
- iv. Anti-malaria Association (AMA)
- v. Derash Relief and Development
- vi. Emmanuel Development Association (EDA)
- vii. Ethiopian Rural Self-help Association
- viii. International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR)
- ix. Integrated Service for AIDS Prevention and Support Organization
- x. Oxfam / Canada
- xi. Oromo Self Reliance Association
- xii. Remember the Poorest Community
- xiii. Support for Sustainable Development
- xiv. Sustainable Land Use Forum
- xv. Water Aid
- xvi. Wolayita Development Association

Among the above 16 members NGO/CSO which submitted their documentary films of good practices, Anti- Malaria Association (AMA), Emmanuel Development Association (EDA), Support for Sustainable Development (SSD), Integrated Service for AIDS Prevention and Support Organization (ISAPSO) and Oromo Self -Reliance Association (OSRA) were selected by an independent film reviewing consulting firm,

In the second category, documentary films provided by CCRDA and donor partners which included CCRDA /Sida- ORDA, CCRDA/Sida – Partners for Sustainable Development (PSD), CCRDA/Irish Aid- Dimtse Woyane Radio Anti-HIV Media Spots, CCRDA/Packard- TDA and CRDA

Packard and Impact on Awareness Creation on RH and Creating Jobs were also selected for viewing.

During the official visit and during tea break times participants of the event got the opportunity to visit the exhibition of good practices staged in separate makeshifts on the premises of CCRDA.

Moreover, members of the media crew (both the print and electronics media of the state owned and private) used the break to interview Dr. Meshesha Shewarega, Executive Director of CCRDA, exhibitors and others.

Responding to the question asked as to the impacts of the new CSO legislation, the Executive Director said that CCRDA has restructured itself and coined adaptive strategies in line with the changing legal and operational environment. He said CCRDA has been successfully re-registered with the Agency as a consortium comprising Ethiopian residents and foreign charities and societies. He further said it is now too early to assess and speak of the real impacts of the new legislation on the operational space of the charities and societies.

As to the question raised whether CCRDA is losing ground as a result of downsizing its affiliate members, Dr Meshesha said that 290 members of CCRDA have been re-registered and reaffirmed their consents to be dependable members of CCRDA. Thus, he said, CCRDA is now better placed to revitalize itself and continue becoming a truly representative of the NGO/CSO sector in the years ahead.

Dr. Meshesha also told the media practitioners that CCRDA is set out to revisit its membership criteria that would enable to embrace only

charities and societies which are accountable and strive to live up to their expectations and advance the real causes of the NGO/CSO sector.

In the afternoon session, at 2:00 P.M, viewing of films of Good Practices continued, and in the meantime, two research papers, one of which highlighted the contribution of CSOs/NGOs to development and good governance in Ethiopia and the other in the Oromia Regional State was showed.

The papers were substantiated by facts and figures of NGO/CSO undertakings on sectoral basis revealed the sector's irreplaceable roles in complementing the government's endeavors in the socio-economic transformations.

A panel discussion entitled, "Thinking out of the Box: the Role of Think tanks in Developing and Shaping Policies" was presented and discussed. The moderator was Dr. Sabine Fandryich, Country Representative of Freidrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation. Panelists like Professor, Bahiru Zewdie, from Forum for Social Studies (FSS), Ato Moges Teklemichael, from Ethiopian Institute for International Peace and Development (EIIPD), Ato Mulugeta Gebrehiwot, Institute for Peace and Security shared their experience and perspectives on the topic.

Finally, in his concluding remarks and the way forward, Dr Meshesha noted that NGO/CSO should press ahead with their endeavors towards making a real difference and ensuring a socio-economic transformation in this country.

He also underlined the need to widen the sectoral and geographical coverage's of documenting good practices and translate them in other dominant languages as much as possible. He said there is a growing

desire to scale up to the good practices in diverse forms of sectoral basis in accordance with the general framework and development agenda set by the government.

Dr Meshesha has also stressed the need for strong media engagements and improved the apparently misperceived images of the sector and adequately enhance its visibility and viability. Furthermore, the Executive Director underscored the importance of tracking the contributions of the NGO/CSO sector, assess and gauge problems /impacts observed in the aftermath of the enactment of the new CSO legislation.