



GLOBAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER **September/October 2007**

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Strengthening Civil Society in Africa

Executive directors and Presidents of national councils from 17 countries of Southern and Eastern Africa have just completed intensive training to strengthen their councils. The training in Mauritius was organised by ICSW in partnership with the SADC Council of Non Governmental Organisations (SADC CNGOs) and the Mauritian Council of Social Service (MACOSS). The programme was made possible through the support to ICSW by the governments of Finland and Sweden. This training is the beginning of a process to strengthen national councils and further training will be conducted in other ICSW regions.

The programme used the technique of shared learning which forms part of ICSW's Global Programme of South – South cooperation. At the end of the programme the participants' evaluations were consistently enthusiastic.

The programme started with speeches by two Ministers of the Government of Mauritius - the Hon Sheilabai Bappoo Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizens' Welfare and Reform Institutions and Hon Madan Dulloo Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Cooperation. Both indicated the importance they see in a strengthened civil society to engage with government on welfare and development issues.

The training examined why we need strong national councils or umbrella organisations in each country. National councils are the building blocks of ICSW membership. It has been a long standing policy of ICSW to have only one member national council per country. Participants discussed the absolute imperative of bringing together civil society interests in a common voice. A strong voice enables civil society to balance the influences of other interest groups eg the commercial sector. Key to a credible national council or umbrella organisation is a broad membership that includes thematic groups and non government organisations working in the field of welfare and development.

A very popular segment looked at the challenges facing an executive director. In the concluding evaluations, the subject of board/president relations with the executive director was in high demand for the next training.

Also popular with participants was work done on developing a value base and connecting this to policy. Without a value base a national council is subject to "value drift". The "drift" is most likely to occur when national councils continually respond to crises without first establishing the value base. Creating "value anchors" or "beacons" as one participant described them, helps avoid value drift caused by changing influences in the national council. Establishing values provides the base line for council policies. Values have to be tangible and not vague. If a national council is to be successful in influencing policy it needs to bring together the variety of interests that form the membership of the council. The first part of this cohesion is establishing the value base line.

A practical part of the programme was the examination of how members of the SADC CNGOs would contribute to the April 2008 SADC conference on "Poverty and Development". The participants agreed to organise country civil society consultative meetings on issues they would like to flag during the forthcoming poverty conference. These issues will be coordinated by the SADC CNGO secretariat.

Many times in past editions of this newsletter reference has been made to the need for civil society to take an active part in influencing government budgets. Thus this was a part of the training.

Fundraising was the last interactive session. Despite the talk of supporting civil society to engage with governments and other stakeholders, real commitment by international agencies and governments is lacking. National councils are the basic building blocks of civil society's influence in any society. The amount of support they get is very limited. At this stage it is only Sida (Sweden) and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland at global level that show real understanding of the importance of supporting organised civil society. Some governments are giving support at national level.

One participant observed that African civil society has been adversely affected by an international architecture of development which is donor driven. African civil society needs to build its own development architecture.

At the end of the programme participants prepared work plans for their own councils. The plans were related to the content of the three days training. These plans will form part of the manual that ICSW is writing on strengthening national councils. A more detailed report of the training will be placed on the ICSW website in the next few weeks.

World Social Security Forum

Over a thousand leading policy makers in social security met in Moscow in September for the First World Social Security Forum. Positions on social security are becoming increasingly clear. "The world does not lack the resources to eradicate poverty. It lacks the right priorities". (Juan Somavia Director General of the International Labour Organisation - ILO)

Michael Cichon Director of the Social Security Department at the ILO debunked three myths: that poorer countries cannot afford social security, that social security expenditure acts to undermine economic growth and that the benefits of national economic growth are systematically shared by all. Mr. Cichon argued that a basic package of universal social security benefits should be possible for all countries. This would cost no more than 5 per cent of national GDP.

Mr Cichon quoted research that showed that social security reduces poverty by at least 50% in almost all OECD countries and similarly social security reduces inequality by at least 50% in the same countries. In two African countries a minimum social security package reduced poverty by 40%.

Concluding his comments Mr Cichon said we need four things:

1. International consensus on growth with equity
2. More experience with implementation of schemes
3. Strengthening national capacities through needs analyses and improved administration of social security

4. An international convention on basic social security benefits and an established global bottom line for social development.

A speaker from Zimbabwe backed Mr Cichon's comments referring to the lack of political will to introduce basic social security. Much more on the Forum can be found at <http://www.issa.int/wssf07/index.html>

Helping the Bottom Billion: Is There a Third Way in the Development Debate? (From CGD Development Update 11th September 2007)

Paul Collier's new book, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, argues that many developing countries are doing just fine and that the real development challenge is the 58 countries that are economically stagnant and caught in one or more "traps": armed conflict, natural resource dependence, poor governance, and geographic isolation. In a review of the book recently published in *Foreign Affairs*, CGD research fellow Michael Clemens explores whether or not Collier's proposed solutions constitute a practical middle path between William Easterly's development pessimism and Jeffrey Sachs's development boosterism.

Civil society and the research nexus

UNRISD Deputy Director Peter Utting presented a paper on 'Reflections on the International Forum on the Social Science-Policy Nexus' given to the Intergovernmental Council of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme, 16-18 July 2007, UNESCO, Paris. <http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BF3C2/setLanguageCookie?OpenAgent&langcode=en&url=/80256B3C005BE6B5/search/80B3F0994A151A3DC125737800318E1D?OpenDocument> Utting accurately observed that "by focusing on researchers and policy makers, other key actors in the policy process were perhaps marginalized, particularly those engaged in advocacy. Key in this regard are civil society organizations, activists, think tanks, and action-research".

Report on lower-income countries with tax-financed pensions

The International Social Security Association (ISSA) has published a report *Developments and Trends: Supporting Dynamic Social Security*. It is available on the ISSA Website <http://www.issa.int/engl/homef.htm>

The report points to a series of lower-income countries where tax-financed pensions support vulnerable older people and also benefit households, communities and local economies. The research looks at programmes in Samoa, Namibia, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Bolivia and Lesotho.

The findings confirm that even small cash transfers represent a significant and cost-effective source of support for vulnerable population groups and have a measurable impact on improving health and reducing poverty.

Global Social Policy Journal

Each four months a new issue of Global Social Policy is released. Every member of ICSW receives the journal as a membership benefit.

In each edition there is an amazing resource of what has been happening on the global and regional scenes. The latest edition (7.3) <http://www.icsw.org/whatsnew/globpub.htm#gsp> covers:

Millennium Development Goals report

G8 Summit Germany – comments on the results of the Summit by various actors

OECD review of development cooperation

Global Forum on Migration and Development and other reports on migration

Labour issues

Human rights

Indigenous issues

Gender equality – three reports

UN reforms

World Bank – new directions under Zoellick?

Regional social policy – reports and papers

Health including World Health Assembly, health regulations, social determinants of health and lots on health systems.

HIV/AIDS – UN General Assembly and new reports

Social protection – new works on MDG related development strategies, ILO on decent work agenda and more on that from the OECD.

Education – reports from conferences, the World Bank

Habitat, land, housing – reports on water and population issues

Trade and social policy – WTO issues.

Southern Voices covers reviews of MDGs in Asia, CSO meeting in Ghana on trade, material from Organisation of American States, the Caribbean and Pacific Islands Business Forum.

New from UNRISD

Identity, Power and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

A series of seminars is being convened to disseminate the results from the research project 'Identity, Power and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples', under the programme on 'Identities, Conflict and Cohesion'.

<http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BF3C2/setLanguageCookie?OpenAgent&langcode=en&url=/80256B3C005BE6B5/search/0580742379B3EADAC125734F003684DC?OpenDocument>

New Book: Staking their Claims, Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility in South Africa

This new volume asks about the responsiveness of South African corporations to their social and environmental responsibilities. It also questions whether business is generally proactive in redressing the legacy of apartheid given the extremes of economic inequality. It breaks new ground in emerging from a tradition of applied social sciences rather than industrial sponsorship.

<http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BF3C2/setLanguageCookie?OpenAgent&langcode=en&url=/80256B3C005BE6B5/search/3C7440095F3E3389C125734B00450552?OpenDocument>

2007 Social Watch Report

The 2007 *Social Watch Report* focuses on the theme of Global Social Policy, or Global Social Security, to be more precise. The report is titled: "*In Dignity and Rights: Making the Universal Right to Social Security a Reality*". You can access the Report and the related databases on the internet

at: <http://www.socialwatch.org/en/informeImpreso/tablaDeContenidos2007.htm>

2008 ICSW 33rd Global Conference on Social Welfare

Date: 30th June to 4th July 2008

Venue: Tours, France

Contact Information: <http://www.icsw2008.org/> and comite.service.francais@wanadoo.fr

This will be the 80th Anniversary of ICSW. The theme of the conference is Social Work, Social Protection and Social Development: Where have we been? Where are we going?

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