

Southern African Civil Society Consultation on the Commission for Africa Report
14th - 15th June 2005
Johannesburg, South Africa

Report by the Expert Group on Human Development and Gender

Introduction

The Expert Group on human development and gender considered the chapter in the Commission for Africa (CFA) report entitled *Leaving No-One Out: Investing in People*. In its analysis, the CFA report recognises the major role played by poverty and the exclusion of people from decision making processes and institutions. The CFA report thus, draws attention to four priority areas for 'investing in people' to ensure address poverty ultimately for the attainment of basic human rights and social justice. The four areas are one, education; two, rebuilding systems to deliver public health services; three, improve water supply and sanitation; and four, HIV and AIDS.

This report is a summary of the issues and questions considered by the Expert Group and it is organised around the guiding questions provided to the group by the conference organisers. In certain instances, the group couched their views with some caution as these issues relate to other chapters in the report and that this group could not authoritatively address those issues.

Reflections on what the Commission for Africa (CFA) seeks to achieve

The CFA seeks to address poverty and stagnation in a coherent and co-ordinated manner with the proposal of a comprehensive response including a focus on education, health, HIV/AIDS and protecting vulnerable people.

While ownership of the report and its recommendations rest in the West with the G8 countries, it recognizes the centrality of partnerships with national governments, civil society and the regional and continental institutions of Africa such as the African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) if it wishes to achieve its stated objectives.

Reflections on what the CFA probably will achieve

Recognizing the uncertain lifespan of the CFA and the nature and content of the report, CFA can realistically work towards achieving the following objectives:

- Mobilize the requisite (financial) resources (as stated in the report) to implement the recommendations.
- Advocate within the West for the issues raised by the report to remain current and on the agenda.
- Promote the report as a lobbying tool for civil society in the West and in Africa.
- Promote the content and recommendations of the report.

Achieving the above objectives could ultimately lead to the creation of an environment for implementation of the recommendations as the CFA, itself, cannot be an implementing agency.

Positive and negative implications for human development and gender in light of the recommendations in the CFA report

Positive implications

- Generally, the report addresses issues in a coherent manner.

- In respect of education and health care, there is recognition for a 'systems' approach to addresses individual or specific problems in these sectors.
- At least 50% of the financial resources provided for in the report are allocated to the area of human development. This is an important signal about the importance of health and education in responding effectively to the main objective of addressing poverty and stagnation.
- The analysis and recommendations mention the impact of men and women and the need for taking into account the unique experiences of men and women.
- Introduces a change in the way donor funding has been provided up to now and introduces mechanisms for economic growth such as fair trade rules.
- Contains a bold statement about the need for an internally agreed upon co-ordinated response to HIV/AIDS.
- Increases the funds for the response to HIV/AIDS.
- Recognizes the need for and strengthening of regional framework and response to, for example, funding for HIV/AIDS.

Negative implications

- While it was noted that gender as a theme, tool for analysis and action is mainstreamed throughout the report, there is a need for specific focus on, for example, the relationship between gender roles and HIV/AIDS or access to and benefits from education.
- There is a lack of / little emphasis on steps that African countries should / could take in order to ensure sustainability of the programmes / interventions identified for funding.
For example, the promise of more funds in certain instances is made in a manner that can be considered as encouraging the dependence on donor funding.
- The term 'donor' does not specify instances where this may be domestic institution, private companies or international donor agencies. There is a need for expressed clarity on this to map different sources of funding.
- Locating additional financial resources that may be available to the country is necessary and this includes identifying money that can be returned to the country that was exported as a result of the exploitation of resources or the corrupt conduct of politicians.
- Corporate governance should be included in the report as a cross-cutting theme and not restricted to issues related to trade. For example, transparent and accountable corporate governance and business practices are also important concepts for the response to HIV/AIDS in particular, access to antiretroviral medication.
- The category of 'vulnerable children' is too restrictive and, for instance, excludes some of the most vulnerable communities such as people with disabilities.
- There is a lack of strategy and/or programme of action.
- There is no information about the engagement of national governments in Africa with the content of the report and a possible way forward.

Opportunities, challenges and threats in the CFA report for civil society

Civil society is an important governance actor in addressing poverty and stagnation. The work of the CFA and its resultant report presents a number of challenges, significant opportunities and threats to civil society. These include:

- Civil society can use the report as an advocacy and lobbying tool to inform its advocacy agenda. It runs the risk of being left out of an important process if it does not take note of the report and the CFA process.

- It challenges civil society to be more vigilant in respect of the implementation of the recommendations of the report particularly in light of the fact that some of the demands made by civil society organisations in recent years have been incorporated into the report. Disregarding this challenge could result in civil society being forced to 'line up' in support of the plan as the latter can be interpreted as usurping the agendas of some of the civil society organisations.
- Civil society could engage in public activism and campaigns around (some / all of) the recommendations in the report prior to both the upcoming AU and G8 meetings. Two proposed goals of this public activism could be one; demanding endorsement and support for the content of the report and the development of a programme of action by both the AU and the G8; two, raising awareness about the CFA and its report amongst its constituencies; and three, demanding for substantial consideration and endorsement of the report at the next G8 meeting.
- One of the biggest challenges is perhaps that of leadership by and greater co-ordination within civil society in order to embark on efforts to constructively engage both the CFA and governments.

Practical steps for civil society in its response to the CFA and its report include:

- Advocating national governments in Africa and in the north (in partnership with northern-based civil society) to develop a programme of action for implementation of the recommendations.
- Forming strategic alliances with, for example, civil society organisations in the North in support of those organisations holding their governments accountable for the fulfillment of their undertakings once endorsing the report. In the event that countries do not endorse the report, civil society organisations in the north can lobby their governments to endorse the findings.
- SARPAN should liaise with CIVICUS for a co-ordinated voice for civil society.

General comments, recommendations and questions

A number of general comments were made including:

- The lack of constructive and informative media coverage of the CFA process and the contents of the report.
- The CFA itself should re-package its report and embark on its own media campaign to popularize the report and motivate for decisive action.
- What is the alternative plan of action if the report is not endorsed by the G8?
- What is the future of the CFA? The answer to this question is important if civil society is called upon to support the process in order to map the form of co-operation that can be undertaken to achieve the goals of the CFA. Further, it becomes an important question if developments at the G8 meeting are contrary to expectations, i.e. if the report is not endorsed.
- Related to the above issue, the report requires a 'home' or a base that will drive it and enable future action on its recommendations.

Conclusion

In general, the group welcomed the report. It did express caution about an unquestioning commitment to the CFA process and wholesale adoption of the recommendations. It encouraged civil society actors to engage robustly and critically with its content.

Group participants:

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