

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND AID EFFICIENCY IN WEST AFRICA

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I INTRODUCTION

Even after at least four decades of Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy and an increase of ODA per capita flow from \$4.0 in the 1960s to \$29.8 in the 1990s, poverty remains a concern in Sub Saharan Africa(n) (SSA). Low level of ODA and its inefficiency have been found to be some of the determinants of weak contribution of ODA in economic development and poverty alleviation in these countries. There is a consensus that to be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Africa will need an increase of official aid, estimated between \$ 20 billion to \$25 billion per year from now to 2015 (UNDP 2006). In addition, aid inefficiency in the past is the result of aid allocation and management policies. If before the fall of Berlin Wall, bilateral donors' political, economic, cultural and strategic interests have played a central role in aid allocation, empirical research tends to suggest that developmental criteria are becoming more and more important. Despite these changes, ODA impact on economic development or poverty reduction will not improve unless there is a dramatic change in aid management. ODA's efficiency became a concern also because of the result-based public sector management introduced in developed countries since the Thatcherism. To make sure that ODA will help developing countries achieve the MDGs, ODA's stakeholders adopted: (i) the Monterrey consensus in 2002, to increase ODA volume; (at the G-8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland in 2005, there was a commitment to double aid to low-income SSA countries to US\$85 per person by 2010 to help them progress toward the MDGs;) and (ii) the Declaration of Paris (PD) in 2005 to improve aid efficiency.

Although PD principles are a breakthrough in aid efficiency improvement process, it is believed that one of its weaknesses is the little room given to civil society organizations (CSOs), especially to those from the South in the new aid architecture. In fact, the close links between these organizations and the poor is a valuable asset which can be used to improve aid efficiency. Although there is a consensus that CSOs involvement in aid management can help improve the implementation of PD, the question remains to know how this can be done.

The objectives of this paper are to: (i) examine the role of CSOs in the development process and as actor of ODA implementation policies; and (ii) propose some ways through which CSOs can contribute to the improvement of aid efficiency. *After this introduction, section 2 will analyze aid flow to SSA countries, along with the importance of CSOs there and their implication in aid management. Section 3 will provide recommendations for CSOs implication in aid management and the improvement of the implementation of PD will conclude the paper.*

II AID FLOWS AND CSOs IN SSA

2.1 Rural dimension of poverty

Most of SSA countries are far from being able to achieve the MGDs. Progress in poverty alleviation is very low in most countries; as in Mali where people leaving under the poverty line decrease only from 68.3% in 1998 to 59.2% in 2005. These figures hide great disparities between urban and rural areas. In fact, due to poor productivity in rural areas and their contribution to GDP and employment, poverty in West Africa has a rural dimension. In 2001 in Benin, 31.6% of the rural population was poor, versus 23.6% in the urban area. In Nigeria, 63.3% of the rural area population lived under the poverty line compared to 43.2% of their counterpart in cities in 2003. In Mali, people living under the poverty line decrease from 30.1

in 1998 to 20.1% in 2005 in cities, whereas this figure declined only slightly in rural area (75.9% in 1998 to 73.1% in 2005).

Table 1 : Poverty incidence by area

	Rural Poverty (%)	Urban Poverty (%)
Bénin (2001)	31.6	23.6
Burkina Faso (2003)	52.3	19.9
Côte d'Ivoire (1998)	41.8	23.4
Ghana (1998-99)	51.6	22.8
Mali (2005)	73.04	20.1
Niger (1993)	66.0	52.0
Nigeria (2003-04)	63.3	43.2
Sierra Leone (2003-2004)	79.0	56.4

Source : Banque Africaine de Développement et OCDE, 2007, Perspectives Economiques en Afrique, pp. 646-647.

ODA volume has not been found sufficient in the past and it is also believed that ODA's impact on development and poverty reduction would have been more important if the resources had been used more efficiently. Therefore, to improve significantly poverty alleviation policies, SSA countries need more resources and most importantly, efficient policies.

2.2 Official development assistance to SSA

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) data, the growth rate of aid per capita to SSA has increased from 2.2% between 1965 and 1969 to 5.5% in the 1990s, before declining to 4.8% in the 2000- 2004 sub period. Aid per capita to the region had increased from \$US 4 between 1965 and 1969 to \$US 29.8 in the 1990s. Even though it has decreased to \$US 27.6 between 2000 and 2004, aid per capita in SSA has become the highest compared to any other developing region. Grants to West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) countries have increased from 360.0 FCFA billion in 2002 to FCFA 662.2 billion in 2005.

Table 2: Aid per capita, 1960-2004
(Mean during the period, in US dollars)

	1960-2004	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2004
Developing countries	11.4	2.7	6.8	13.2	16.8	12.6
Of which						
Africa	24.3	5.0	14.9	29.5	33.3	26.2
North Africa	30.5	8.9	31.4	36.1	45.5	14.6
Sub Saharan Africa	22.2	4.0	10.8	27.1	29.8	27.6
America	15.3	4.0	7.9	20.2	22.7	13.7
Asia	5.4	1.7	3.6	6.1	8.9	4.2

Source : Conférence des Nations Unies pour l'Afrique : Le Développement Economique en Afrique ; Doublement de l'Aide : assurer la « Grande Prudence », Genève, 2006

In 2008, official support (comprising program and project loans and grants) ranges between 2 and 39 percent of GDP in SSA. Official grants to SSA decrease from 1.0% of GDP in the 1997-2002 period to 0.7% in 2005. After the international community's commitments at the

G-8 summit in Gleneagles in 2005, official grants increased to 0.8% of GDP in 2007 and 2008. But aid flow to African low income countries decreased from 3.7% of GDP in 2005 to 3.0% in 2008. Official grant is the only part of external flows not to decrease following the global financial crisis. It is expected that official grants will increase to 6% in 2010 from 5% of GDP in 2005. Remittances to SSA, estimated at \$19 billion in 2007, and foreign direct investment, which has experienced an increase in the past years, are expected to decrease between now and 2010. For the low income countries, the situation is worsened by their deterioration of terms of trade.

Official grants (% of GDP)

	1997-2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Sub Saharan Africa	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.0
Middle income countries (Except South Africa)	7.0	6.2	6.0	6.7	8.1	9.4	8.6	8.5
African Low income countries	3.1	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.2	3.3	3.0	3.3
African Fragile states	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.3	3.0	3.2	3.7	3.3
Benin	2.8	3.2	3.2	2.0	3.1	2.8	2.9	2.8
Burkina Faso	0.7	4.2	3.1	3.4	3.0	4.3	3.7	4.0
Ethiopia	3.9	7.5	5.6	6.4	5.7	6.2	5.1	4.9
Ghana	3.1	4.1	4.9	4.3	3.1	3.7	3.9	4.4
Mali	1.8	2.6	2.0	2.1	2.7	1.8	1.8	1.7
Niger	2.5	2.8	3.2	3.3	1.2	1.0	3.0	1.7
Rwanda	9.1	5.8	14.0	14.5	8.8	10.6	9.8	10.1
Senegal	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.4	0.6	1.0	0.5	0.8
Uganda	6.5	7.3	8.4	8.0	4.6	4.5	2.9	4.5
Togo	2.4	0.6	0.8	1.2	1.4	1.7	1.6	2.2

Source: IMF, 2009, World Economic and Financial Surveys: Regional Economic Outlook, Sub Saharan Africa, April 2009. p.85

Following this expected deterioration of external financial flow to the region, the improvement of aid efficiency has become a necessity. Paris Declaration (PD) was designed by aid's stakeholders in March 2005 to respond to identified weaknesses in aid management and govern aid policies.

The Five Principles of Paris Déclaration

- **Ownership:** « partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies co=ordinate development actions »
- **Alignment:** « Donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures »
- **Harmonisation:** « Donors' actions are more harmonised, transparent and collectively effective »
- **Management for results:** « managing resources and proving decision-making for results »
- **Mutual accountability:** « Donors and partners are accountable for development results »

The implementation of the five principles of the PD is supposed to: (i) improve the involvement of the recipient countries in aid management and determining aid allocation in the country; (ii) reduce the duplication and inconstancies in the interventions of donors; and (iii) reduce transaction costs of aid management. The adoption of PD principles has been found to be a progress toward an improvement in aid efficiency. However, the marginalization of CSOs, as aid's actors, has been found to be one of the weaknesses of PD in

its objective to improve aid efficiency. The close relationship between CSOs and the poor will help them to: (i) be better informed of the problems of the poor; (ii) be in better situation to mobilize the poor in order to implement projects for them; and (iii) improve the follow up of impact on beneficiaries of projects/programs. It is in this view that it is believed that the participation of CSOs in aid management will improve aid efficiency.

2.3 Panorama of OSCs in SSA

CSOs includes various organizations, such as families and village associations, students, women and youth associations, professional associations, trade unions, independent research and academic institutions, think tanks, advocacy groups, faith based institutions, and traditional authorities and so on. They are necessary to:

- Give a voice to the poor and vulnerable groups;
- Mainstream policy issues especially pro poor policies and programs;
- Engage the public in the formulation of development policies concerning the poor;
- Ensure the transparency of the government and hold it accountable for its policies and use of public resources.

Due to the concentration of the population in rural areas and the high contribution of the rural sector in GDP and employment, CSOs are more concentrated in rural areas and in rural development and find that “rural livelihood/agriculture” are their areas of focus. In Mali for example, among the 11 000 CSOs, about 6000 are in rural areas with different sizes and different legal forms. Due to lack of awareness of citizen rights, high illiteracy rate and socio-cultural factors (such as traditional values of unquestioning deference to authority), the large part of the population and mostly the poor, cannot be directly involved in the country’s policy dialogue. However through CSOs which represent them, their voice can be heard on the country’s policy dialogue tables.

3 CSOs AND AID MANAGEMENT

3.1 CSOs’ important role as donors

CSOs play an important role in resource mobilization and programs and projects implementation. CSOs from developed countries mobilize up to \$14.7 billion for aid, which represented 14% of all ODA¹ in 2005. In 2004, from 6 to 34% of the bilateral ODA of the 15 OECD most important bilateral donors were channeled through CSOs. Moreover, according to Collier (2002), donors can bypass recipient country government and allocate aid via independent service authorities which can include CSOs. This is and will be the case for countries with bad governance track or insufficient administrative capacities for example. These figures show that CSOs may be seen by some developing countries as bigger donors than most of their bilateral donors.

To make sure that the development and poverty alleviation strategies and policies supported by ODA are in line with the population concerns, the first principle of PD is related to appropriation by ODA recipients. Appropriation means that the design and implementation of these strategies/policies are gone through a truly participative process. For participation of the

¹ This figure goes up to 18% if aid through debt reduction is excluded.

population, and mostly the poor and vulnerable groups, to be effective, these groups must: (i) be well identified; (ii) have their concerns well identified; (iii) have these concerns exposed to policy makers and donors; and (iv) have these concerns taken care of in strategies/policies to be implemented.

Being close to these groups, CSOs are supposed to be in better position to help fulfill these conditions. Making their beneficiaries' concerns better known to the donors' community and population of developed countries, the northern CSOs help: (i) improve their southern counterparts' visibility and participation in policy dialogue; and (ii) their countries' governments aid policy better known to their taxpayers.

3.1.1 CSOs and the quality and degree of participation.

The PD's principles of ownership and alignment can have a significant meaning only if strategies ODA is supporting are truly taking care of the concerns of the poor. Because they are close to the poor, it is believed that CSOs will be in better position to evaluate accurately the needs of their members. CSOs in Ghana, Zimbabwe and Kenya now provide 40% of all healthcare and education services in those countries (ODI, 2006). And through their activities, it is estimated that NGOs reach 20% of the world's poor (ODI, 2006). CSOs are therefore in better position to understand more clearly the problems of poor and to design appropriate and relevant strategies and policies which can be more efficient for poverty alleviation. The concern of the vulnerable groups and the poor can therefore be taken care of. This in turn indirectly improves the degree and quality of population's participation. They will also be best implementers of programs and projects supported by ODA and will be equipped for monitoring the results. Because they are more familiar to participatory methods through the involvement of strategic partners, such as chiefs and local leaders, CSOs will involve more beneficiaries in policy formulation and implementation.

3.1.2 CSOs as "watch dog"

The implication of CSOs in aid management will be necessary for better result of PD implementation and improved aid efficiency. But to achieve greater involvement in aid management, CSOs have to be first efficient themselves.

3.1.3 Constraints to CSOs efficient contribution to aid management

Even if CSOs are endowed with comparative advantages for helping ODA to be more efficient, there are constraints to their efficient contribution to aid management.

CSOs and the quality of their representation

Participation of the population and relevancy of strategies and policies are necessary for PD's principles of appropriation and alignment to have a meaning. To have a significant impact on strategies, policies and program, CSOs must have good knowledge of the population they are supposed to represent and have a comparative advantage in the evaluation of the needs of the marginalized populations. Being close to the poor, the CSOs are able to help in targeting the pro-poor policies/programs and also facilitate the targeting of the poor who will be the beneficiaries of these policies/programs. But to be invited to seat on policy dialogue table and

impact on policy agenda, CSOs must be judged by their partners (governments and donors) of having legitimacy and credibility.

Legitimacy

CSOs' legitimacy are often based on the fact that they are supposed to represent a particular group, the size of which may give them a weight on policy dialogue and may be important to impact policy arguments and issues concerning these groups. However, CSOs' partners questioned the size of this membership. In fact, most of the CSOs operating in Africa have a very limited membership whose adherence to their rules is not even proven; most of the members do not pay their subscription fees. In many cases, the CSOs have been put in place by external members and also by Northern CSOs to implement programs/projects for which they have mobilized resources. Moreover, women, rural-dwellers, the poor and other traditionally marginalized groups, are under-represented in the leadership of CSOs and women's groups. This undermines their capacity to properly represent the poor and marginalized community. To make things more complicated, the CSOs' sector is often too broad and disjointed to have effective representation in the policy dialogue.

To overcome this constraint, CSOs are networking with other organization to be in position to achieve a much larger representation. CSOs are often gathered together by thematic or by geographic region. Concerning CSOs in rural areas, peasants associations in a village can network with each other in the same village to find answer to their problems. At a higher level, these larger associations can network with of their counterpart in other close villages which have the same objectives. These groups can in turn network to form federations on the same theme, covering larger geographic area. Federations can link together to have a common platform to fight for the interest of their members. The first peasants' platform in West Africa was the "Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux" created in Senegal in 1993. The "Coordination Nationale des Organisations Paysannes du Mali (CNOP)" was founded in 2004 in Mali. The highest form of CSOs in rural area is when these national Platforms network together; i.e. in 2003, federations of five West African countries links together to form the "Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs d'Afrique de l'Ouest" (ROPPA).

In spite of all these efforts, CSOs in Africa are still fragmented with competitive federation; their activities are not also coordinated. For example, concerning farmers' organizations, there are five federations in Ghana: (i) The Farmers Organization Network in Ghana (FONG) is a network of 113 small scale farmers and fishermen working towards the achievement of food security and food sovereignty; (ii) The Apex Farmers Organization of Ghana (APFOG), is an apex organization for farmers' engaged principally in agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries and agro-processing; (iii) the Peasant Farmers Association in Ghana (PFAG) has a growing membership of over 2 million male and female farmers. PFAG lobbies the Government for greater investment in agriculture, and for fairer trade and market access; (iv) The Ghana National Association of Farmers and Fishermen (GNAFF) established by the Government of Ghana to bring small scale farmers, fishermen and women engaged in micro food processing in Ghana together under one umbrella; and (v) The Ghana Agricultural Workers Union (WAWU) of the Trades Union Congress represents the interest of all unionized agricultural workers in Ghana and in some instances, extended such representation to include the interest of self-employed rural employed workers (SERW) which includes rural farmers.

Unfortunately, in spite of all these efforts to bring them together, the coordination of their activities still remains quite low.

Management and technical credibility

Without credibility, it is difficult for CSOs to have the attention of policymakers such as government, donors and even CSOs from the North.

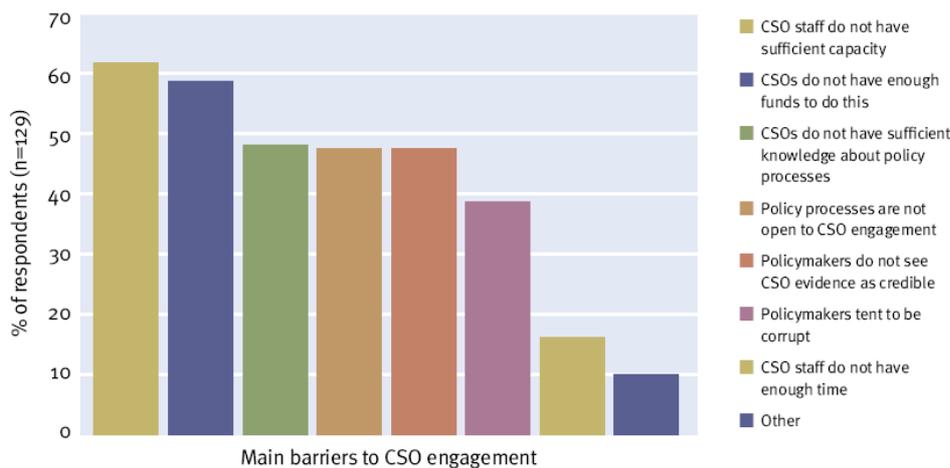
For improvement of their credibility, CSOs must be managed according to good corporate governance principles, which is not the case now. Most often, CSOs leaders are personalities elected without democratic rules. They also lack transparency in the management of funds they have mobilized. Furthermore, some of them have political and ethnic agenda. In addition, for most of governments, CSOs are considered as competitors for development aid, without the requisite responsibility for accountability.

CSOs also need technical skills to be able to make substantive contributions to policy dialogue. If strategies and policies they proposed are found to be sound alternatives to the ones proposed by the government, there will be less constraints in inviting CSOs to contribute. Better evidence leads to better programs, which in turn leads to greater impact for CSOs' engagement in direct service delivery. They have to convince their partners, through rigorous research and arguments, that they have a good understanding of political context and budgets constraints of their proposed strategies and policies. It is therefore understandable that research capacities of CSOs and the way they make use of their research findings will have greater policy influence and greater pro-poor impact. Therefore, credibility means also that CSOs must have technical skills in their interventions. To be in position to have a significant impact on policy agenda, CSOs must be able to address more and more complex issues. To design policy for food security for example, it is important for the countries and their government to find answers to such questions on the impact of improved input subsidization, efficient provision of such inputs, access to technology and market. CSOs can have a place on policy dialogue table only if they are seen as source of expertise and if their positions are not based on ideological positions.

Constraints to CSOs efficient participation in aid management

Even though up to 44% of African CSOs find that they succeed in influencing policy in beneficiary's countries (ODI 2006), there are constraints for the improvement of their participation in policy dialogue. These constraints are internal and external to them. The internal barriers have to do mostly with their; (i) insufficient institutional, human and financial capacities; and (ii) inappropriate internal structural organization. The external barriers there are: (i) the institutional and legal framework governing the sector; (ii) access to information; and (iii) the fragile relationship with other aid stakeholders.

Figure 4: Main Obstacles to CSO Engagement in Policy Processes



Source: Julius Court and al., p. 15

- *Internal constraints*

Internal factors to the CSOs are seen to be the main constraints and among these, insufficient capacity and funding (62% and 57% respectively) are the most important ones.

(i) *Insufficient CSOs capacities*

In a study on CSOs in Côte d'Ivoire, Kouassi (1996), found that 28% of CSOs interviewed do not have enough resources even to pay for a receptionist services and 64% of them lack logistical, communication and financial resources for basic administrative works. Because of weak participation of their members and beneficiaries in internal resource mobilization, financial capacities of CSOs are precarious. Most part of their administrative and activities costs is financed by external donors and sometime by government; this reduces their room of maneuver and make them less independent.

They depend sometime heavily on subsidies from donors or their government. The tendency to assess the CSO's performance by its resources mobilization capacity can be an incentive for CSOs to concentrate their actions on projects/programs financed by donors even though it might not in their objectives and specialization.

To be efficient in aid management and development policies, CSOs must have control over their programs and be autonomous; they must be less dependent on non members. In this perspective, they must be in position to finance a large part of their activities, especially their administrative cost, through their membership subscription fees and other resources they collect from their members (be it cash or services). The payment of subscription fees is a proof of the members' confidence in their organization and of their active participation in its management and life. To be able to achieve this goal, CSOs, especially those with high proportion of poors in the membership, must not confine their activities in socio cultural areas but should operate activities helping their members to improve their sources of revenue. In so

doing, their members will be able to give more resources to finance their organization's activities. Unfortunately, this is not often the case, southern CSOs heavily depend on their northern partners or on their government or donors to finance their activities. Most often they are implementing programs/projects not in line with their expertise or their objectives.

(ii) Inappropriate internal structural organization

Some leaders of CSOs abuse of the weaknesses of their members to put in place oligarchic structure. Leaders are not elected through appropriate democratic rules, are not held accountable for their management and are sometimes not even in contact with members they are supposed to represent. These associations are more a source of employment or revenue for themselves and of their family members and they do not respect the principle or the objectives their positions have been created for. In some cases, there is no appropriate flow of internal communication of information.

- *External constraints*

(i) Inappropriate legal framework

Since the 1990s, in most of the French speaking African countries, the "famous" 1901 law governing the associations in France and its colonies has been updated. However, the legal framework remains inappropriate. In Burkina Faso, the law n°10/92/ADP of December 15, 1992 governing most of associations, does not mention the concept of CSOs and NGOs. In Ghana, the law governing CSOs is the 1968 law on cooperatives and is no more in conformity with the associative life, with various types of CSOs autonomous from the Government and the intensification of democracy. Even with the existence of one law and two decrees regulating associations' life, there is no legal framework of associations' groupings and NGOs in Togo.

(ii) Access to information

Research quality of CSOs depends on access to information. Unfortunately, in most of the countries, the quality of information is questionable. Sometimes, government services are not organized to collect or to disseminate of information. There are cases also where civil servants are not allowed to disclose official figures or can be punished if they do so even when there is no formal prohibition to do so. There are cases also where information may be available and access to it may be allowed, but CSOs are not aware of that. In all cases, CSOs must be proactive in information collection; they have to put pressure on the governments to be more transparent in communication of the official figures. The time when citizens or CSOs trying to get information are in danger or under intimidation seems to be something of the past.

In this perspective, CSOs can:

- Put in place a system/mechanism of communication and information sharing on aid management and policies between them;
- Put in place mechanism and share experiences, information and research on policies and aid management from government services and donors;

(iii) Relations with other aid stakeholder

The relationship between CSOs and their partners is not often good to promote CSOs involvement in aid management.

Relation between CSOs

Lack of coordination and competition between southern CSOs is of great concern to their efficiency. In addition, some of southern CSOs have been created by CSOs from developed countries to implement programs/projects for which the latter have been given fund for. To make sure that the programs/projects will be well implemented, the southern counterpart must have the necessary capacities to do so. In this circumstance the former helps in the capacity building of its counterpart. The relation with northern CSOs is also a way through which southern CSO may be exposed to donors and improve its visibility and participation in policy dialogue.

However, there are instances when a southern CSO in desperate need for funds for activities, is forced into a situation where it implements programs/projects which objectives are different from its own. This Northern CSO may also take control of its counterpart. Northern CSOs' southern CSOs partners can shy away from efforts for activities harmonization/coordination by pretending that the rules imposed by their counterpart do not allow for that.

In some countries, CSOs have tried to find solutions to some of these constraints. In Mali, each regional structure of the Association des Organisations Professionnelles Paysannes du Mali (AOPP) organizes each year a regional meeting for all technical services, NGOs and associations in the region. These meetings are intended to give opportunity to each organization to share their experiences from their activities of the year and to discuss possible collaboration for the coming year. After experiencing and documenting the adverse effects of the competition between them, two NGOs federations in Togo succeeded in: (i) putting in place a common secretariat; (ii) working together to formulate a framework of partnership between civil society and government to design the legal and regulatory framework which will govern CSOs' activities in the country; (iii) implementing common projects.

If for objective reasons it is understandable that northern CSOs do not have confidence in southern CSOs due to the weak capacities of the latter, the former must engage in capacity building of their southern counterparts. To reduce the influence of the northern CSO on its southern counterpart's objectives, it is advisable that the two institutions work together on the strategies, programs and projects to be implemented together, with greater responsibility given to the southern association in the definition of objectives.

Relations with Governments

Even though developing countries governments' perception of CSOs contribution to policy dialogue has improved, there are still constraints for better CSOs' implication in aid management. In fact, in many cases, governments rely on individuals from CSOs but not formally on the organizations, which makes this sort of relations rather unsustainable. Division and heterogeneity of CSOs and weak capacities of southern CSOs have been often used by government as reason to limit the CSOs' participation in policy dialogue. Up to very recently, to design or implement development policies, most of governments thought that

there was no need to consult with CSOs and with the groups they represent. This argument has been mostly used in the cases of policies supported by multilateral and bilateral donors because they thought that discussing policies issues with population may increase delays in policy adoption and implementation. However following the Paris Declaration, there is a tendency to improve beneficiaries and CSOs participation in policy dialogue. This is the case in much of PRSP adopted in many SSA countries as a medium term policy document. But in many cases, the population and CSOs' participation in policy dialogue is not often real and effective and may be seen as phony. Often CSOs are invited in workshop to validate documents or to approve consultants' terms of reference. Documents for meetings are not sent in time to CSOs to enable them to have a substantive contribution in the meetings even if they have the human capacities to do so. Civil servants in high position may constitute obstacles to good relationship between CSOs and governments in aid management.

Policymakers can be unaware of the research of CSOs. Also one has to be conscious that policymakers may not have complex technical training. There is therefore a need for CSOs to have an efficient communication and dissemination strategy and a better targeting of their audiences. In addition to the technical reports with scientific language, there may be a need to transmit to policy makers clearer and more concise reports, which will be accessible in time for policy discussions and decisions. The Ghana NGO/CSO Standards for Excellence Project being implemented by the CSO community itself is a way of improving the credibility of CSOs and enhancing their relationship with the government.

Relations with donors

Objectives of reducing projects cycles' duration and transactions' costs have been used by donors to limit CSOs participation in policy dialogue in the past. If with the Paris Declaration, donors have found that beneficiaries' participation is a precondition for policies' success, their negative perceptions on CSOs' capacities are still constraints for the improvement of their relationship with these organizations, and they still discuss and consult with them only rarely on policy issues. Donors also rely more on CSOs from their counties or northern CSOs to channel their aid or implement the programs/policies they finance even though northern CSOs subcontract these implementations to southern CSOs. Moreover, donors often do not fund the whole CSO program; they are sometimes interested in some specific activities. It is therefore possible that CSOs get funding for separate projects without consistency between them. It is difficult in these cases to help CSOs have a global vision of the development perspective of the group or region for which they are operating. This also puts a burden on their meager human capacities because they have to manage disparate projects and comply with different donors conditions with different agendas.

One adverse effect of PD implementation is the fact that for developing countries' governments benefiting of budgetary support, there is a significant reduction of aid to CSOs. If budget's support implies more appropriation and alignment for improvement in aid efficiency, it is important to make sure that there is an effective participation of the disadvantaged population in policy design and policy agenda and dialogue. Donors must make sure that CSOs' capacities in advocacy and policy design are enhanced. If support has been and is still given to government to build their capacities in policy design and management, there is no reason not to do so for CSOs. It is worth mentioning the experience of G-RAP in Ghana. The Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme (G-RAP) is an innovative program aimed at supporting civil society engagement with the Ghana Poverty

Reduction Strategy as a complement to the central feature of the new architecture of international development assistance - multi-donor budgetary support (MDBS). GRAP was intended to help research and advocacy organizations to overcome some of the constraints they face, in providing these organizations with more predictable funding base as well as consolidating their autonomy by strengthening their institutional capacity to create more political space for them to engage in the policy process. In this case, multi donors have contributed to a sort of budgetary support fund to the project. However, GRAP has not been found very successful as it has favored elitist associations and financed programs not necessary in line with the concerns of the grassroots and poor communities.

4 - CONCLUSION

In close relation with the disadvantaged groups of the society, CSOs are in better position to target policies which take care of the concerns of these vulnerable groups, and to target the beneficiaries of such policies. In doing so, CSOs can have a significant role improving aid efficiency. Following workshops organized in West Africa for example, it is found that CSOs in the region want to be involved in aid management for better implementation of Paris Declaration on aid management. However, due to constraints related to their weak institutional, technical, human and financial capacities and some shortcomings in their relations with the other stakeholders their contribution in aid management is limited. To make better use of CSOs as an actor in improvement of aid contribution to the achievement of MDGs in SSA, it is therefore necessary to help them find solutions to these handicaps.

For this it is recommended to southern CSOs to:

- be more credible through: (i) improvement of their financial autonomy by improving mobilization of resources from their members; (ii) more accountability and transparency in management; (iii) better internal governance by improving new leadership following democratic elections; (iv) implementing peer review mechanism;
- improve their knowledge of the needs of the disadvantaged groups through the use of credible intermediaries;
- improve the capacity of their members;
- form common platform that will address their issues;
- organize themselves and get access to current information that concerns them;
- be strong at the grassroots levels;
- Improve their internal control mechanisms.

To improve the quality of southern CSOs participation in aid management efficiency, northern CSOs should:

- Strengthen the capacities of their local partners to influence donor and government policies;
- Consider their southern counterparts as true development partners;
- Support the mutual exchange of experience and knowledge among all CSOs;
- Commit to relationships with local partners that extend beyond the normal 2-3 year project cycle;
- Show greater inter-agency coordination in their work.

Governments should:

- Recognize explicitly that CSOs can play decisive role in improving policies and beneficiaries of these policies targeting;
- Establish institutional framework for formal and effective policy dialogue with CSOs;
- Adopt improve legal, regulatory and institutional framework of CSOs with active participation of these organizations;
- Contribute to the enhancement of aid coordination in involving CSOs in the framework to be established for that purpose;
- Design and implement a capacity building program for CSOs with active participation of these organizations;

Donors must:

- Explicitly recognize that CSOs can play decisive role in improving policies and beneficiaries of these policies targeting;
- Convince government in developing countries of the benefit of CSOs participation in aid management;
- Implement capacity building program for CSOs with active participation of these organizations;
- Even in budget support countries, continue to make financial resources available for CSOs activities.

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