

UNDP and Civil Society: News & Views

April 2007

A periodical bulletin of civil society programmes, resources and events

Greetings from the CSO Division in BRSP. We are pleased to send you this second news bulletin for 2007 featuring inputs received from the CSO Advisors Team and other colleagues. We hope to issue this news bulletin as a collective effort of this global UNDP network as a means to regularly exchange news and updates on the subject of civil society engagement. Please post it on your intranet sites and disseminate to interested colleagues – and let us keep the news flowing.

Contributions received with thanks from: Abla Amawi (Beirut), Andrea Cuzyova (New York), Artemy Izmestiev (Ghana), Dasa Silovic (New York), Diego Antoni (Mexico), Emmanuel Evbodaghe (Nigeria), Li Jing (China), Marina Vasilara (Cyprus), Marjolein Ooijevaar (Bolivia), Pernille Friis (Viet Nam), R Sudarshan (Bangkok), Sean Southey (New York), Turhan Saleh (Nigeria).

News from the Field

- Pakistan and the Philippines are the first in the Asia Pacific region to establish national Civil Society Advisory Committees to the United Nations Country Team. In Africa, Tanzania is the second to launch an advisory committee, following Burkina Faso. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Bolivia became the first country to set up a national dialogue council to the UNCT – and one that is exclusively for indigenous peoples. A number of other country teams (Ghana, Macedonia, Mozambique, Malawi, Kyrgyzstan and Uruguay) are in the process of setting up advisory committees as a means of engaging regularly with civil society partners in policy dialogue and debate. Read more [here](#).
- Nigeria has launched a Partnership Board and an Independent Stakeholders Group for the UNDP-Shell partnership for the Niger Delta. These two bodies will play a critical role in managing the partnership, by enabling review and oversight by the partners themselves and by independent groups and individuals, respectively. The five-year \$32.5m partnership, including resources from Shell (\$24m), UNDP (\$4m) and Baylesa State Government (\$4.5m), launched in 2004, focuses on: improving the knowledge base on the Niger Delta; enabling responsive local governance; addressing youth unemployment; and restoring the natural environment. Three significant results achieved so far are publication of the [Niger Delta Human Development Report](#) (2006); experience in managing the relationship between an oil major and the UN in what is the largest such partnership in the world; and expansion of the partnership to include UNEP. For more information, please contact [Emmanuel Evbodaghe](#).

- Civil society organizations and local government in Lebanon met with Jordanian counterparts in Amman from March 16-18 to discuss the latter's experience in engaging civil society partners early in MDG processes. Jordan was the first pilot in the Arab States region for [localizing MDG processes](#). [The Capacity 2015- Arab States Programme](#) has also piloted initiatives in Tunisia, Libya and Syria.
- In Mexico, civil society organizations including the Catholic Church, trade unions, social organizations, business and the media are participating in an unprecedented [national dialogue process](#) to construct a national development agenda on key issues such as growth with equity, poverty and inequality reduction, human rights, the rule of law and the MDGs. More than 150 people in civil society, business and the media participated in a [national leaders' survey](#) conducted by the office of the UN Resident Coordinator with support from the Government.
- INTRAC and their Cypriot partners, [MC-Med](#) and [NGO Support Centre](#), officially launched the new [Cypriot Civil Society Strengthening Programme](#). The programme will develop the organizational capacity of Cypriot CSOs and enhance local CSO support provision through: training, technical assistance consultancy, long-term capacity building support, workshops, events and processes for learning and relationship building. Read more about programme activities [here](#).
- A Civil Society Programme jointly funded by UNDP and the European Commission is being launched in China in April 2007. The initiative aims to achieve broader civil society involvement, improve the policy and legal environment for CSOs, enhance government capacities to involve civil society in policy-making and public service delivery, improve coordination and communication among civil society actors and between CSOs and the Government, and improve institutional and professional capacities of civil society groups. For more information, please contact [Li Jing](#).
- [UNDP and Indigenous Peoples, Towards Effective Partnerships for Human Rights and Development](#) (November 2006) is available from the [UNDP Oslo Governance Center](#). The paper was written by Max Ooft (UNDP sub-office in Suriname) as his thesis for the [Democratic Governance Fellowship Programme](#). The programme provides UNDP staff with an opportunity for reflection, codification and discussion on specific governance issues.

News from Headquarters

- [UNDP and Civil Society Organizations: A Toolkit for Strengthening Partnerships](#) (April 2006) is now available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#) as a user-friendly web-based tool to facilitate easy access to specific sections. Contents include a methodology for CSO mappings, CSO capacity assessment, an operational guide, information on the design and role of CSO advisory committees and a list of resources.

- The Regional Bureau for Africa has launched a pilot regional programme to develop the capacity of CSOs to participate in policymaking and to support civil society assessments in RBA countries over 2007-2008. The programme is geared to respond to priority needs of country offices in engaging with civil society and provides catalytic support to civil society organizations in key areas. It has been developed in partnership with BRSP/CSO Division and BCPR and will be implemented by UNOPS.
- An e-Discussion on '**CSO Accountability: Issues and Approaches**' hosted by CSO Division, Bratislava Regional Centre and Alison van Rooy of CI DA with MDG-net addresses the complexity of civil society issues of accountability, governance, transparency, and legitimacy in both conceptual and practical terms. Please see the [summary](#) that consolidates over 40 responses and provides additional reading materials on the subject.
- [The Equator Initiative](#), a worldwide partnership committed to showcasing and supporting communities in developing countries, has just selected the 25 finalist communities for the [Equator Prize](#). The Equator Prize is awarded to community-driven initiatives that have demonstrated success in poverty reduction and social development through local biodiversity conservation.
- [Civil society focal points](#) in the United Nations Country Teams can now communicate with one another via [group e-mail](#) to exchange information and advice on their [work](#). Please use this resource!
- [The new global UNDP website on engagement with civil society](#) features information from various practices and regions. This site will be the principal UNDP web space for news, developments and resources related to civil society. Please help to keep the site vibrant and relevant by contributing to this newsletter and sending news and reports from your countries and regions.
- The [CSO Advisors Team](#), a global virtual resource network of UNDP staff working on and/or interested in civil society issues, now has 185 members. Please e-mail if you would like to join this useful forum for information and advice on civil society issues.

Upcoming Events

- The Financing for Development Civil Society Forum for the 2007 High-Level meeting of ECOSOC with the BWIs, WTO and UNCTAD will take place on 15 April in the Church Center 777 UN Plaza, New York. For more information, please contact civil society networks active in facilitating civil society participation in past meetings, or [Daniel Platz](#). Read more in the [Road to Doha](#) newsletter.
- "Localising the MDGs: Local Development, Global Impact," an international learning event organized by UNDP and SNV, with UN-HABITAT and UNCDF, will take place in Nairobi from April 18-19. The meeting will address all aspects of localization of the MDGs and its links with decentralization and good governance, review the impact of localization efforts so far, and assess challenges and opportunities, with a specific focus on capacity development. About 75 participants are expected from civil society, government, SNV, the UN and partner organizations. For more information, please contact Lara Yocarini. Read more [here](#).
- The International Civil Society Fair, "Open Voices Active Citizens," will take place from 3-5 May in Nicosia, Cyprus. Organized by [UNDP-ACT](#), the event seeks to raise active participation in civil society through local and international partnerships and networks on corporate social responsibility, fundraising, networking and volunteering. The fair will take place alongside the International Civil Society Symposium, "**The State of Civil Society: Where do we go from here?**" where local and international experts will share their work and encourage dialogue around the findings of the [CIVICUS Civil Society Index on the nature of civil society in Cyprus](#).
- The next CIVICUS World Assembly will be held from 23-27 May in Glasgow, Scotland, and will focus on Accountability: Delivering Results. This is the third CIVICUS World Assembly to be held in Glasgow on the common theme: "**Acting Together for a Just World.**" The World Assemblies have served as venues through which CSOs articulate and exchange information about critical issues faced by them and the societies in which they work. For more information, see www.civicus.org.

Recent Events

- The [African Civil Society Forum](#) on the theme, "Democratizing governance at the regional and global level to achieve the MDGs" took place in Addis Ababa from 22-24 March. Organized by the Conference of NGOs and the **African Women's Development and Communication Network** in cooperation with the African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Forum brought together more than

250 civil society leaders from 32 countries. Two key objectives of the forum were the establishment of an independent platform to give African civil society a larger voice at both regional and global levels and identification of civil society's role in the achievement of the MDGs. Read the [final declaration](#) here.

- The annual gathering of the Forum International de Montreal on March 12-13 in Montreal focused on lessons learned from and future directions of civil society impact on the multilateral sphere. The forum sought to identify major challenges and opportunities facing future civil society relations with multilaterals and identify three governance issues and organizations to focus on in the next five years. The forum brought together 29 participants from 17 countries.
- A dialogue between CSOs, the OECD Development Assistance Committee and multilateral institutions on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of March 2005 was held on 7 March in Paris. The meeting is part of a number of processes linked to the Paris Declaration to provide opportunities for civil society to engage more fully in the global dialogue on aid effectiveness. They will culminate in the Accra High Level Forum planned for September 2008, to review progress in implementing the Paris Declaration. More information is available [here](#).
- [The Seventh World Social Forum](#) brought the world to Africa as coalitions and other progressive forces from Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, Europe and all corners of the African continent converged in Nairobi, Kenya from 20-25 January for five days of cultural resistance and celebration. Over 66,000 participants attended representing 1,400 organizations from 110 countries. Read more about WSF 2007 [here](#). Prior to WSF 2007 was an [African Civil Society Organizations Summit](#) from 17-19 January.

Civil Society Perspectives and Papers

- Mark Robinson, Head of Governance at DfID, addresses the impact of civil society budget groups on public budget allocations and implementation using case studies from Brazil, Croatia, India, Mexico, South Africa, and Uganda, in [Budget Analysis and Policy Advocacy: the Role of Non-governmental Public Action](#) (Institute of Development Studies, Working Paper Series, 2006).
- Vivien Collingwood explores the issue of transnational NGO legitimacy in the context of globalization and international society in [Non-governmental organisations, power and legitimacy in international society](#). (Review of International Studies, 2006)

- Martina Fischer discusses civil society expansion into conflict prevention, peace-making, peace-building and human rights monitoring, drawing primarily on the experience in the Balkans over the last ten years in [Civil Society in Conflict Transformation: Ambivalence, Potentials and Challenges](#) (Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2006).
- ["Filling the Gap: The Emerging Civil Society in Viet Nam"](#) (2007) provides a context for the recent CIVICUS Civil Society Index Study in Viet Nam and summarises the methodology and outcome of the study. The paper analyses major findings and recommends ways to support civil society.
- More than 50 civil society leaders have written an [open letter to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) urging him to "move from reports and resolutions to reforms and their implementation," with the participation not only of member states but all stakeholders, especially civil society.
- Twenty-six CSO signatories call on donors to be bolder in their vision and commitments on aid effectiveness in the [NGO Statement on Aid Effectiveness](#) and present 11 recommendations on poverty reduction, conditionalities, aid delivery, aid harmonization and increased national ownership over development.
- [CCIC papers on Aid Effectiveness and Civil Society \(2006\)](#) advocate a rights-based framework for monitoring and evaluating donor progress in the aid system and discuss CSO strategic roles and challenges in achieving greater international development cooperation, ownership and accountability.
- Articles by OpenDemocracy contributors Anthony Barnett and Patricia Daniel offer [critical](#) and [gender](#) perspectives on the 2007 World Social Forum in Nairobi.
- [Towards a People Driven African Union](#) (AFRODAD, AfriMAP and Oxfam, 2007) analyzes the potential role of civil society and citizens in determining policy and practice changes towards a more transparent and open African Union, and conclude that, despite progress in opening spaces for citizen participation, the promise of a people-driven AU has yet to be fully realized.
- [Where to Now? Implications of changing relations between DFID, recipient governments and NGOs in Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda](#) (ActionAid and CARE, 2006) charts changes in the aid environment and their impact on civil society in these countries.

- The [CIVICUS](#) Global Survey of Civil Society has completed its 40th country report, which provides a thorough assessment of post-war civil society in Serbia. CIVICUS country civil society index reports for Argentina, Bolivia, China, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Viet Nam and Wales are available [here](#).

Contacts

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