



INDIAN INTERNATIONAL MODEL UN

STUDY GUIDE

COMMITTEE: ECOSOC

AGENDA: Finding means of utilising Civil Society Organisations for Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

“Leaving no one behind” is a central principle of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its aim is to ensure that development has positive impacts on the poorest and most marginalized. The advancement of the SDGs depends on concerted efforts by all stakeholders concerned. National governments however cannot realize these ambitious goals on their own. Collective and individual efforts at the local, national and international levels are necessary, to help in executing them – and at the same time, accelerating them as well.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted at the United Nations General Assembly Summit in September 2015, are a universal set of environmental, social and economic goals and targets, that UN member states are expected to achieve by 2030. The SDGs build and develop on the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by focusing on crucial dimensions of sustainable development. This is emphasized in both developing and developed countries, including aspects of human rights obligations, equity within countries, environmental sustainability, social justice, good governance, vulnerability and the exclusion of marginal populations and the poor. The SDGs will not function to be legally binding like that of the MDGs. The SDGs, instead, work to represent political commitment they represent a political commitment to development by all UN member states. Eventually, these worldwide goals are expected to create a standard that ensures the balancing of economic expansion and global environmental targets with its respective objectives.

The initial stage in examining the participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) is describing precisely who is included within its delineation. In the broadest sense, civil society has been categorized as a subject of social life that is public but excludes government activities.

Civil Society Organizations encompass non-state actors – including not-for-profit and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – farmers, women, the scientific and technological community, youth and children, indigenous people and their communities, business and industry, workers and trade unions. In the context of the United Nations Guiding Principles Reporting Framework, Civil Society Organizations do not include business or for-profit associations. The SDGs presents opportunities for governments to engage with Civil Society Organizations particularly in public service delivery and to help ensure that development activities benefit the poor and disadvantaged.

At the national level, CSOs play a crucial role in transforming global agendas into national priorities, working through networks and their members. In turn, they ensure that through their supporters and the citizens that they work with, these national priorities reflect provincial, regional and local needs. In this manner, CSOs operate as catalysts for critical global and national agendas, and assist in bringing citizens' voices to national debates and the development of national strategies.

Civil society groups are agents of development. They appear to play an important role in social, political and economic development activities. The transformation of any society or system, particularly the developing societies, depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of its civil societies.

Besides from advisory and support roles, civil society organizations can also take on a more direct role in environmental management and governance, for example, through representation on multi-stakeholder governance stands such as river basin authorities or fisheries management councils, thus functioning as chief actors and agents for better governance.

HISTORY

Analysts describe the emergence of a 'global civil society' in the last two decades, as a movement of men and women, groups and individuals, getting together to do things by themselves to change the societies they live in. People of all classes, creeds and ethnic backgrounds have organised themselves to defend democracy and human rights, to fight for more equitable development and a safer environment, or just to help those in need or improve the quality of daily life in their communities. [CIVIL SOCIETY and DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION: An Issues Paper]

● History of Civil Society Organisations since Rio 1992

During the first period of CSD from 1993-1997 through the first and second CSD period through 2001, there was much more stakeholder involvement than what we have today. In 1996, on the advice of the CSD NGO Steering Committee, the UNGA Second Committee recommended that there should be multi-stakeholder dialogues at the Five-Year Review of the Earth Summit in 1997. The Major Groups Programme is based on Agenda 21. NGOs and CSOs were asked to be the voice of people where the rights of marginalized groups like women, indigenous peoples and youth were defended. The organizations felt frustrated when they sought to replicate the roles that governments traditionally played. As the volume of NGO participation increased, the opportunities in turn for them to participate effectively decreased. Moreover, the more important the issue discussed, the less were the NGOs and CSOs allowed to participate effectively in the diplomatic process.

Today, NGOs and CSOs have added value where governments themselves fail profoundly, in particular, in the area of mutual accountability where governments are typically reluctant to hold themselves accountable

to the commitments that they make except to score political points. They can make a significant difference in using the intergovernmental process to hold national governments accountable for the commitments that they have made to their own citizens.

- **Civil Society Engagement in the post-Rio+20 Framework on Sustainable Development**

The aim is for a Rio+20 outcomes that commit the UN to a process for improving civil society participation in the global sustainable development governance framework. In 2004, UNEP replaced its Global Civil Society Forum with the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum, where the status of the 12 elected regional legislative bodies was changed to “observers”. In the current revision of the UNEP Guidelines, there were calls for both the restoration of the regional representatives to the Steering Committee as well as the original name “Global Civil Society Forum.”

There are many examples of civil society and multi-stakeholder participation in the multilateral system. It is perhaps the only other example comparable to the Habitat II process of civil society being able to engage in the drafting of text on a par with governments. There was also a proposal at the end of the Habitat conference that the UN Commission on Human Settlements should have a number of seats for NGOs, government, and industry, to do that kind of engagement putting forward recommendations into the negotiations.

There are also regional agreements like the Aarhus Convention that provides an example of on-the-ground implementation and cooperation where local law enforcement is collaborating with NGOs and community-based organizations to ensure that commitments are being kept. NGOs face their own challenges of accountability. There is the significant gap between organized civil society and social movements which are at the leading edge of societal transformation worldwide. NGOs face the continual challenge of rising beyond their individual concerns in order to work together toward a common vision.

CURRENT SCENARIO

With the rise of globalization, the influence of Civil Society Organizations on governments and its citizens has become more prominent in many open economies. Until now, the debates regarding the SDGs have only mainly concerned the setting of goals and indicators. Few attention has been paid to discussing the roles and responsibilities that different stakeholders should take in accomplishing these goals – in particular, how to best execute this universal framework at the local level. Given the scope and objective of the SDGs, it is clear that governments alone cannot achieve the agenda. They must also aid the partaking of all divisions of society, including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the private sector and the general public at the local level. This

localisation calls for a wide-ranging approach that utilises local facts to alter the ambitious global-development agenda to definite local circumstances.

Recognizing the pressing roles that CSOs play in accomplishing the SDGs, including mobilizing citizens and assisting with proficient SDG functioning, there is a requirement for a well-defined space for effective arrangements between the various national governments and CSOs.

Many CSO networks have approached the SDG agenda – at both the national and regional level – together, with many groups focusing on efforts to stress their governments to implement the SDGs, and to monitor progress around its functioning.

Regionally, various initiatives have also been emerging. The Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals provides as an open platform that contributes to the regional and global discussion on the SDGs, building on a network of 49 think tanks from Africa, Latin America and Asia. On the monitoring side, the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) urges improved tracking of financial allocations to sustainability projects. SDG Watch Europe is a union of over 50 CSOs across Europe focusing largely on holding governments liable at the European and global levels. Global networks are also collaborating at the local level using citizen-generated data that is capable of leveraging technology to generate real-time and context-specific data. These initiatives can sometimes complement stand-alone national-level SDG tracking processes.

CSO-run, citizen-based programmes for monitoring collect data on the progress of the SDGs. This information, many times add to the official data that is collected. Numerous organizations also note that their current data collection can be adjusted so as to be more aligned with the SDGs.

Most CSOs have a large constituency and membership covering the whole country and/or specific regions. Creating a strong national network can help achieve the majority of the goals, but can also help educate citizens, and create awareness about the same. CSOs' large collective reach within the country facilitates sharing tools and materials for education, thus avoiding the replication of efforts.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) held an event named “Post-Rio to Post-2015: Planning International Stakeholder Engagement”. The conference aimed to recognize vital entry points for stakeholders and to notify stakeholder advocacy on the processes subsequent to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the post-2015 development agenda.

BLOC POSITIONS

- **The United States of America:** The Organization of American States (OAS) has accommodated liberties for the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in its different

activities. The existence of civil society participation since 1999, has contributed to reaching the hemispheric aims of strengthening the democratic system, protecting human rights, and supporting essential development and multidimensional security as well as other initiatives under way in the OAS that are a part of the inter-American agenda – and especially regarding the sustainable development goals . Mutual confidence and understanding has grown between CSOs and the OAS over the years, which are evidently proved with the increase in the number and level of involvement of CSOs in OAS initiatives, projects, and activities.

- **France:** The partnership between the French Development Agency (*Agence Française de Développement* – AFD) and civil society has been greatly enhanced in recent years, making civil society organizations (CSOs) essential partners for AFD. In terms of financing, AFD’s budget to support CSO initiatives has increased, and it frequently calls on CSOs to be project operators, propose innovations, or intervene in crisis situations. The partnership has also been strengthened in terms of strategic and sectoral dialogue on AFD’s policy documents and the main development issues. One of the three main French CSO initiatives is to support civil society organizations in fighting poverty and achieving the SDGs.
- **Germany:** Civil society actors play a central role in fostering skills and mobilizing civic engagement. The educational measures and information campaigns carried out by the CSOs significantly help in establishing the complex field of development policy within the German society. Due to the high esteem and credibility of the civil society actors, they are constantly successful in gathering and mobilizing large members of people across Germany to volunteer. They mainstream civil society participation as an important consideration in all projects and sectors of their development cooperation. Germany works with civil society partners to bring global learning and active involvement in environmental development projects, and to accomplish the 17 sustainable development goals in the nearest future.
- **Brazil:** Civil society in Brazil is a fundamental force in determining and building the economic, social, political and environmental agenda of the country and a major component in setting a new development trail in Brazil, contributing to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. When President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva came to power in 2002, he created the Economic and Social Development Council (CDES), with 90 members from different sectors of civil society and twelve government ministers, to discuss national development issues.
- **Egypt:** The response of the Egyptian Government to local environmental challenges faces some barriers at the policy, strategy and interventions levels. One reason is the weak role of civil society in demanding more effective government measures, due to weak institutional capacities, lack of

understanding of environmental governance processes and approaches to engagement, as well as insufficient financial capacities. There is also a lack of public consciousness of sustainable development and of the social responsibility of public services.

SUGGESTED MODERATED CAUCUS TOPICS

- 1) Civil Society Engagement in Sustainable Development Governance
- 2) Impact of Civil Society Organizations in developing countries
- 3) Barriers and limitations faced by Civil Society Organizations in the society
- 4) Developing the capacity of governments and CSOs to work together
- 5) Engaging diversity and knowledge of civil society in contributing to sustainable development
- 6) Promoting CSOs as a force for citizen participation and representation
- 7) Impact of global civil society on sustainable development
- 8) Legal Assistance and funding required for Civil Society Organizations
- 9) Objectives of the international Earth Summit 2012 (Rio+20)
- 10) Economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainability
- 11) The methodology used by CSOs in approaching the 17 SDGs
- 12) The legitimacy of the training and advocacy of the CSO members
- 13) Possible solutions to attain global sustainable development through CSOs

RESEARCH LINKS

1. <http://www.gppi.net/publications/innovation-in-development/article/the-roles-of-civil-society-in-localizing-the-sustainable-development-goals/>
2. http://www.gppi.net/fileadmin/user_upload/media/pub/2016/KAS_CS0_2016_Localizing_SDGs.pdf
3. http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/319308/6-Not-without-us-civil-society-role-implementing-SDGs.pdf?ua=1
4. <http://www.voicesofyouth.org/en/posts/the-role-of-civil-society-in-a-sustainable-future>
5. http://www.augurproject.eu/IMG/pdf/cso_note_provisional_draft5_june_2012.pdf
6. http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/pdf/OP_CivilSociety_4themes_FORMAT.pdf
7. http://www.ccic.ca/_files/en/what_we_do/002_aid_civil_society_and_development.pdf

8. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/9486ANilo%20Civil%20Society%20&%20Other%20Stakeholders.pdf>
9. http://ofop.eu/sites/ofop.eu/files/actionplan.cs_platformonsustainabledevelopment.pdf
10. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/civil_society/publications/2003_UNDP_Partners-in-Human-Development-Report-UNDP-and-Civil-Society-Organizations_EN.pdf
11. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=2141&menu=1515>
12. <https://environment.yale.edu/publication-series/documents/downloads/a-g/gemmill.pdf>
13. <https://www.politico.eu/article/civil-societys-major-role-in-sustainable-development/>
14. <http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/0/f553495f06f98dce80256b5e005c9ddc>
15. <https://www.usgbc.org/Docs/Archive/General/Docs5928.pdf>
16. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/ngos>
17. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/resources/sd21>
18. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20>
19. <https://unchronicle.un.org/article/objectives-and-vision-rio20>