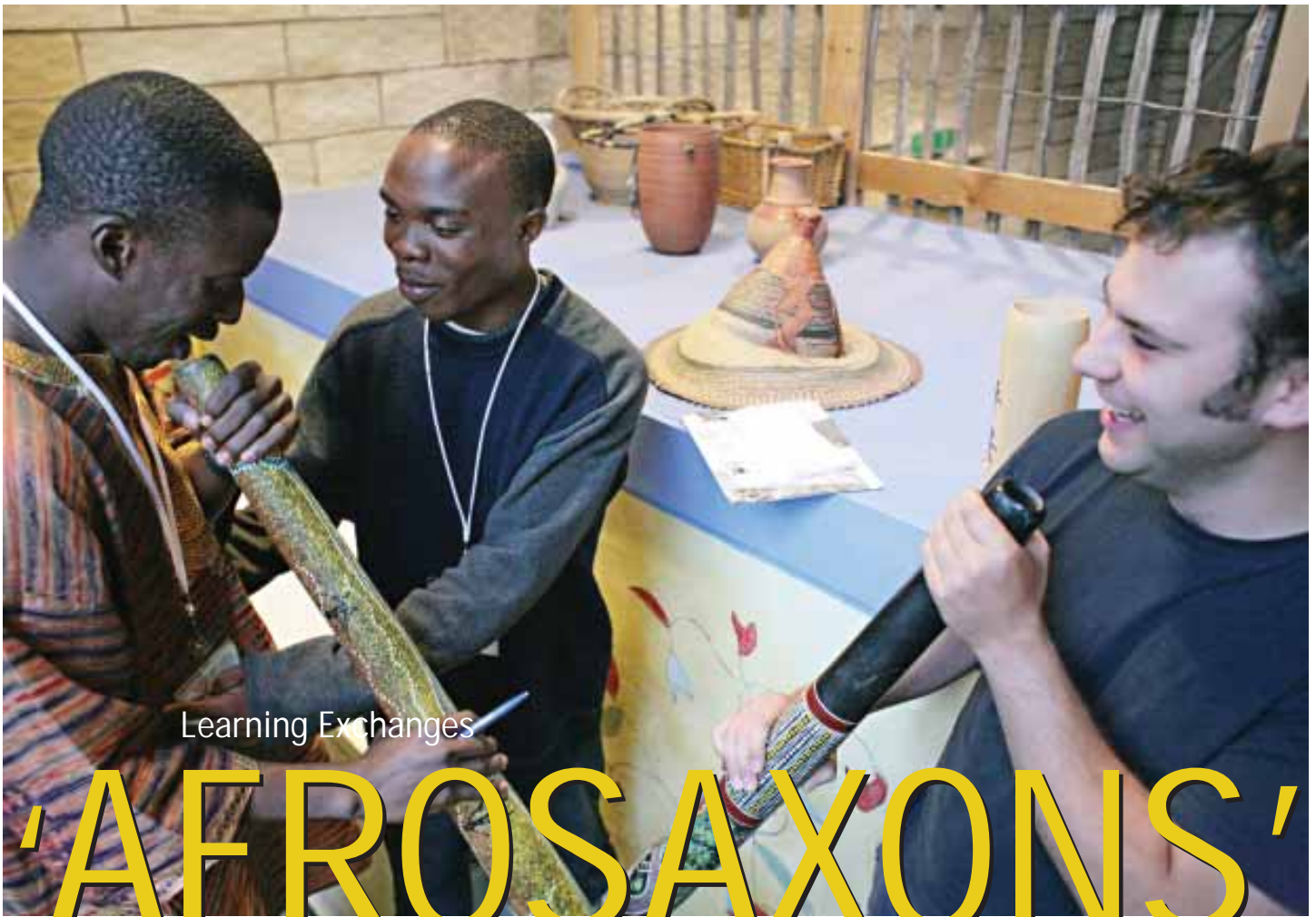


TERRAVIVA

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JUNE 24, 2006 **3**



Learning Exchanges

'AFROSAXONS'

Scotland took centre stage yesterday as the World Assembly took a lighter turn with delegates getting out and about to meet the locals.

Local voluntary networks, national charities, community radio, rural and youth projects were just some of the groups opening their doors to Civicus delegates as part of the Learning Exchange programme.

The idea was to learn from each other in order to develop new ideas and partnerships as well as have a bit of fun.

TerraViva shadowed a set of eight delegates who headed to one of Glasgow's poorest areas to visit The Village Storytelling Centre – a faith-based voluntary organisation that is run from St James' Church, Pollok. The centre has grown since it opened in 2000 to help regenerate the community through providing story-telling activities to a wide range of groups, including children, old people and local asylum seekers.

"This is one of the things I always look forward to in conferences like this," said Mae Chao, of UN Volunteers based in Germany. "You get to hear what's going on in the communities at a real level."

"When you're in the meetings, it's all theoretical and there are lots of nice debates but you also want to see what's going on at a grass-roots level."

Read a full report on the success of this year's Civicus Learning Exchanges in tomorrow's TerraViva.

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Kumi Naidoo on reforming the U.N. / 5

Economic Growth Only Way to Slip Out of Poverty

To defeat poverty, good governance is also needed in addition to aid, debt relief, and a fairer trading system.

Developing countries will have to resort to economic growth and good governance to slip out of poverty —not merely get aided out of it, says British secretary for the Department for International Development Hilary Benn.

“In the end, it’s going to be economic development that’s going to raise the money that developing countries need to pay for the nurses, the drugs, the clinics and the schools,” Benn told IPS/Terraviva in an interview yesterday at the world assembly of civil society organisations by CIVICUS and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO).

Growth rather than philanthropy is what developing countries need. Or worse than philanthropy, ‘foolanthropy’, as a meeting that Benn addressed described as philanthropy gone wrong.

Good Governance

Western civil society organisations focus, however, on what the North can do by way of aid or measures like debt relief. “Inevitably, campaigning here in the UK tends to focus on what people want us as a government to



Benn: Time for self reliance

do, on aid, on debt relief,” Benn said.

The government in turn, he said, will stress good governance in the developing countries that Britain supports.

“We have to tell the truth about other things that need to happen,” Benn said. “So not having a war, putting your guns down and negotiating, fighting corruption, building good governance, developing democracy, encouraging people to come and invest their money in your country — those are fundamental to us making progress, and I’m very keen that we should tell the whole of the development story, and not just half of it.”

The British government is due to publish a white paper soon on development and British support to it.

Role for Civil Society

“The central message is going to be that if we’re going to defeat poverty, we need to have good governance,” Benn said. “Aid, debt relief, and a fairer trading system, so that countries can earn their way out of poverty, but in every country we need much more debate on this.”

Development on that front, as on all others, will have to include civil society, Benn said.

“I’m a very strong believer in people making what contribution they can, and that’s partly about governments taking on their responsibility for good governance, us working with developing country governments to build their capacity to deliver the things that people look to governments for — educate our chil-

dren, look after us when we’re sick, give us peace and security, give us a chance to earn a living,” Benn said.

The CIVICUS world assembly had brought “a very strong plea from civil society for governments around the world to recognise the contribution that people getting together in their local communities can make to help solve the problem of world poverty,” Benn said. “A strong and vibrant civil society articulating people’s concerns and demands, taking part in politics, is absolutely fundamental to winning the fight for good governance.”

Fair Trade Needed

Good governance means also international good governance and some of that debate inevitably needs to get fair between countries as much as within countries. Fair trade is at the heart of this, and there has been no progress on this, Benn acknowledged.

Progress has come more in the form of aid and support. The summit of leaders of the G8 countries (the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia) did not end poverty last year, Benn said. “But did we make progress. Yes we did. And actually we need hope and encouragement if we’re going to carry on doing this.”

Britain itself is sharply increasing aid, he said. “We are the first government in British history to commit to a date by which we will achieve the UN 0.7 percent target in 2013.”

► Sanjay Suri



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Sylvia Borren and Kumi Naidoo

Who Spends Money Best?

Should the money go from government to government, from northern NGO to southern NGO, or directly to southern NGO? NGOs should claim part of the taxes from our own governments to build an enabling environment for civil society

Just when does philanthropy become ‘foolanthropy’? That emerged as an engaging debate yesterday during the assembly of civil society organisations.

“I think the discussion is really about the most effective way of deploying money for development,” Sylvia Borren, executive director of Oxfam Novib in the Netherlands who led the discussions, told IPS/Terraviva in an interview. “It’s about, should the

money go from government to government, whether it should go from northern NGO to southern NGO, or directly to southern NGO. And questions like, where is the accountability?”

There is no simple answer, Borren acknowledged, saying: “I do believe I’ve seen examples of northern governments supporting southern NGOs and being very dominating in that, and southern NGOs and northern NGOs sometimes become sub-contractors. I’m very against that.”

Taxes to NGOs

But south or north, NGOs should “claim part of the taxes from our own governments to build an enabling environment for civil society,” she said. “And being paid by governments shouldn’t mean they can’t be critical towards that government. So for me it’s a part of real and live democracy that government supports its own civil society, and civil society turns around

and criticises that government.”

But civil society is used too little as a development route, Borren said. “In the Netherlands it’s less than 20 percent going through NGOs; it’s about 40 percent going through multilaterals, and most of the rest going bilaterally. It’s my view that at least a third should go through NGOs.”

And that proportion is better for civil society in the Netherlands than the average, she said. “I think globally it is less going through the NGOs. It should be significantly higher.”

Civil Society Effective

But is money spent through civil society money better spent?

“That’s what all the research shows,” Borren said. “The results are cheaper and more effective. Take for example the global fund for Aids and tuberculosis. From what I read of the evaluations in general the multilaterals are the worst in terms of what overhead

costs are versus efficiency. In a broad generalisation, work done by NGOs is more effective.” But of the money that goes to civil society, most goes to civil society organisations from the North, Borren said. And how much of that do NGOs from the North spend directly, and how much do they route through Southern NGOs?

Women Get Less

“That depends very much which NGO you are talking about. We at Oxfam spend 9 percent on our overheads, and a vast amount of the rest of the money through southern NGOs. Oxfam has strong principles about supporting local energy and so we try to be operational only when local NGO strength is not strong enough.”

This channelling of money from NGO to NGO is good because then “you have a global civil society to civil society network,” she said.

Despite the better track record of NGOs in putting money to good use, more funding is not necessarily coming the way of civil society for development work, Borren said.

“I actually think the talk about NGOs has got bigger, and the reality for the NGOs is different,” according to Borren. And, worse for women.

“We’ve seen a discernible trend that’s been researched, that women NGOs are getting less and less. There’s a report out ‘Where did the money go?’ which shows that in the last ten years women NGOs are getting less money. This is strange, because everyone talks about gender, gender, gender. And this is the position with funding. This is stupid.”

► Sanjay Suri

Meanwhile, in Vanuatu ...

Development fails to silence indigenous people ...

Some call it restorative justice, others participatory. But custom law helps sort matters quickly. Will it survive the rigours of time?

Vanuatu? Does the name sound familiar? What is it? Where is it? You'd get blank looks from many. But then, where else but in a global assembly such as this one on civil society organisations would you find representation from this small island group, known as New Hebrides till 1980.

Made up of 80 breathtakingly beautiful, yet volcanic (some of them active) islands with a population of 216,000 of whom 90 percent are indigenous, there are 100 distinct indigenous languages and the economy is sustained by tourism and agriculture.

But promoting tourism, touting the beautiful beaches and the flora and fauna was really not the reason why Douglas Ngwele – representing Malvatumauri (Vanuatu National Council of Chiefs), Kathy Solomon – Director, Vanuatu Rural Development and Training Association (VRDTCA), Gregoire Nimbтик were here from the South Western Pacific Ocean.

Nor were they here to talk of past injustices meted out to them with the aim of wiping out the Melanesian tradition and customs. They did not want to talk about depopulation and the psychology of dependence from mid 1800s to 1900s or how 80% of their population perished



Workshop on recognition and legitimacy

mainly as a result of introduced western diseases to which they had developed no immunity back then, or the introduction of guns and deliberate policies of extermination of populations to possess their land.

Chief's Sagacity

They were here to talk about their successes, about two systems of governances one formal, enacted under a National Constitution when they got independence in 1980 with three separate bodies — the parliament, the legislature and the courts; and the other, called the custom law, which has been existence since time immemorial, governed by traditional leaders known as chiefs and which needs to be protected and promoted.

Since independence when the state came about, there was recognition of the traditional law with the Chiefly Act enacted in the Vanuatu constitution

through the establishment of Malvatumauri in 1980. But last week called for a particular round of celebration.

It was the passage of the chiefly bill by the parliament which gives more functioning roles to chiefly councils' to be recognized formally. Another act recognizes the establishment of village or island courts with jurisdiction over customary and other matters with more powers for the chiefs' councils.

While the formal system leans on a set of neatly written laws, protecting power, property and position of nobility, reprisals included punishments meted out by courts. At another level it also signifies a threat and undermining of their economic and cultural development.

Vital Role

The custom law, on the other hand, is oral and dictated by respect, the chief's sagacity,

common understanding and past experiences and still finds a much larger acceptance.

According to Ngwele, the traditional custom system forbids killing, stealing, adultery, lying etc. "It aims at protecting human rights, strengthening relationships or helping resolve conflicts in communities. The offender is also accepted in the community."

While the chief plays a vital role, Solomon feels there is an urgent need to empower the chiefs on issues of human rights and make the processes more democratic.

Despite a slow but growing women's representation where there were women chiefs, Solomon underpinned the need to further bridge the gender gap, reduce inequalities and provide better opportunities for women in the fields of education, employment etc.

► Zofeen T. Ebrahim

The World Needs a More Democratic United Nations

Since the end of the Second World War the world has seen breathtaking geopolitical changes and technological breakthroughs, but our system of international governance has failed to keep pace with the times.

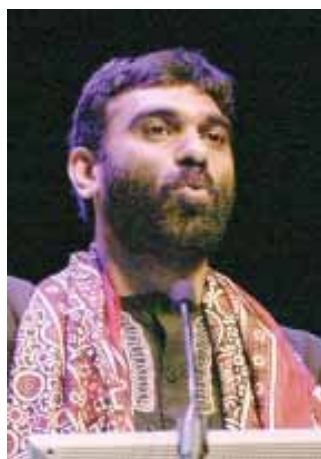
Now, sixty years later, as humanity faces increasingly intractable global challenges in a profoundly interdependent world, the urgent need for coordinated, collective responses is obvious. Quite simply, the global challenges of the 21st century require global institutions of governance capable of dealing with them in a democratic and effective manner.

In its present form the United Nations (UN) is ill-equipped to advance humanity's best interests. As an inter-governmental institution, the UN provides a forum for global issues, but only to member states through their representative governments. It was designed for a time when crises on one side of the world did not necessarily affect national interests on another, but globalisation has changed that once and for all. Nowadays, a crisis anywhere is a crisis everywhere.

A change in consciousness is required at the national level, where, in the words of British prime minister Tony Blair, "national self-interest becomes delivered through effective communal action".

The veto power in the Security Council of the permanent members (P5) is the most glaring example of the nationalistic foundation on which the UN was built. With it a single member can block any initiative, for any or no reason.

The P5 veto privileges are blatantly anachronistic and, if not eliminated entirely, they should at the very least be reserved for truly exceptional circumstances. Veto power



Calls by the Secretary General for full, systemic, and meaningful civil society participation must be urgently implemented in order to make the UN system more transparent, accountable, and democratic.

certainly should not be extended to potential new permanent members; on the contrary, its exercise should be strongly discouraged by all member states and eventually phased out.

In relation to the selection of the Secretary General, it can be argued that the veto was never intended for use in this context. Furthermore, the selection process should be open to the General Assembly and civil society. It should include steps to insure the selection of the best qualified woman or man for the position.

The democratisation of the UN cannot be limited to the current efforts at reform, however welcome these may be. Calls by the Secretary General for full, systemic, and meaningful civil society participation must be urgently implemented in order to make the UN system more transparent, accountable, and democratic.

Some member states see NGOs as anti-government and not as necessary partners providing expertise and legitimacy to UN processes. This perception must change. While some governments will reject any level of civil society participation out of fear for their own legitimacy, others are honestly con-

cerned by the large increase in the number of ECOSOC-accredited (UN Economic and Social Council) NGOs. Thus the current trend at the General Assembly away from the large conferences of the 90s toward informal meetings and other "NGO-free spaces".

This trend is troubling to civil society, but it also provides new opportunities for more effective and focused NGO participation at the General Assembly (GA) level. We at CIVICUS welcome GA President Jan Eliasson's current consultations to explore concrete and pragmatic new forms of collaboration between the General Assembly and civil society.

However, while this is a positive development, it is no substitute for participation in agenda setting, preparatory processes, and the events themselves.

For its part, civil society must recognise its own transparency and accountability deficits and adopt new international codes of conduct. An "Accountability Charter" developed by CIVICUS and a group of leading international NGOs has just been announced.

The economic and social objectives of ECOSOC are regularly thwarted by the de facto independent policies and decisions of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). While ECOSOC is powerless to enforce its rules, these organisations are not, which allows the seven powerful countries that control these bodies to dictate economic models at odds with ECOSOC goals.

The private sector needs to be persuaded to enter into a sincere collaboration with governments, international institutions, and civil society in the understanding that such collaboration will benefit all. Some of the most pressing issues of common interest include human rights, the eradication of poverty (including but not limited to the MDGs), climate change, responsible production and consumption, and migration. The market can no longer be allowed to dictate economic and social policy. New rules are needed to govern international capital flows, trade, markets, and multinational corporations. The Global Compact must undergo a radical transformation, including the adoption of basic rules of corporate responsibility and accountability which are internationally binding and enforceable.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women must figure prominently in all aspects of UN reform. The current widespread exclusion of women from the international institutions' rosters of high-level officials is disgraceful and counter-productive.

But first and foremost, what is needed is a change in consciousness at the international level. This is essential for the UN to achieve a profound democratic transformation that will allow humanity to deal effectively with the new challenges of the 21st century. Civil society traditionally has helped bring about great societal changes. It shall continue to do so in the years ahead.

Kumi Naidoo is Secretary-General of Civicus: World Alliance For Citizen Participation.

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Bilateral donors and civil society

Long engagement... Will they ever get married?

Like a long suffering courting couple, donors and civil society met up again yesterday at the CIVICUS World Assembly to try and find out what it would take for them to take the huge step of permanent togetherness.

And as in any long term relationship, the basic questions had to be hammered out: "Do you really understand me?" "What would it take for you to come into my world or for me to enter yours?" These questions were bantered back and forth between the audience from civil organisations and the donors some of whom were on the panel from Norad, DFID and CIDA.

Julian Buenvista from the United States had picked up the cue after it appeared that both sides kept insisting that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with closer collaboration and that there was really no good reason for any wall between the two.

If that were so, why was there this great divide between civil society and donors/ governments. Why were relations between northern governments and civil societies in the south polarised?

"How can we act differently and yet together," she asked and followed it up with a further question of "what it would take for a funding agency like DFID or CIDA to send a person to work with an NGO for three months or more in a project."

There are problems...

She said this would be to enable the funding organisation get a first view of the NGO's work with their own perspective. In turn, a person from the NGO could be attached to a funding agency to understand how the system and processes worked.

"What would it cost to do that, what would it take to do that? We

need to attain a better understanding of how the other operates and we can only do that if we detach ourselves from our little corners and step into the other persons shoes," Buenvista said.

One of the audience participants said contrary to what was being said by donor organisations that they had no problems with civil society, there were problems. He described funding agencies and some northern governments as outdated and operating in an antiquated straight-jacket style and did not have a clue about what civil society desired to achieve. He gave an example of many donors insistence on limiting funding to three year programmes, as an example of how out of touch they were with the programmes of civil society. "Poverty alleviation, capacity building, all these things cannot be achieved in just three years," was the word.

Too Bureaucratic

"Let's get down to brass tacks and speak honestly, we are not the best of friends, we do not work together because the relationship is unequal. It is at most condescending on the side of donors who usually have no idea about what civil society

The relationship between civil society and donors has always been tempered by misunderstanding and a lack of trust. Now both want to change this and form closer alliances. After all, they share the same constituency and seek to work for the betterment of those that need it the most.

wants to achieve," he said.

A participant from Latvia who said she once worked for DFID said donors were too bureaucratic, could not operate out of a box, were stuck in thematic areas, geographical locations and could not get over their own bureaucracy. "How are we going to get governments and funders to think out of the box and change their mind set?"

She said donors even used a 'runaway strategy' which they euphematically called an 'exit

strategy' in their programme which entitled them to 'run away' when things got too hot or the work became labourious. This, she said, damaged relationships and created distrust.

From a panelist from Jakarta who preferred to be called 'Yemi' (her name was too complicated for people to remember she said): "You will get donor support if you are going to be unsuccessful in your work." She explained this phenomenon as something she had experienced in her work in Indonesia. "When you appear to fail and struggle, for some reason the funding comes in, but when you grow and become strong, you appear to be an anathema."

For Indonesia at least, Yemi said it was a politically sensitive time and donors and NGOs were a little wary of each other at the moment.

Bridging the divide...

She brought in a another dimension: that of southern NGOs having to compete with their sophisticated and less financially encumbered northern counterparts. "We do not even have an equal relationship with our sister organisations in developed countries because they are more able



Guggi Larya, of the World Bank

to access resources and funding than we can.”

Another participant from Nigeria, Erinu Okpang, adds that as a result of this inequality, there is a lack of confidence in capacities.” If an NGO that has never dealt with say a project of US\$30,000 it is unlikely that do-

nors will be taking the risk to approve funding for that amount because they are not sure that it will be able to dispense that kind of money or even account for it.”

An example was given of OXFAM channeling some funds through the World Bank for poverty alleviation because OXFAM

thought the Bank was more efficient in disbursing funds for these kinds of projects. In reply, Guy Mustard from DFID, who was on the panel, admitted there was a disconnect between civil society and donors, but it was not entirely the fault of funding agencies. The problem had been created by

both donors and civil society working at a tandem.

DFID was trying to bridge the divide and engaging with civil society in a very open way. Mustard gave the example of how DFID helped set up the CIVICUS group in Tanzania. It is now an independent entity and has support from a host of other organisations including DFID. “We are getting stronger in our engagement with civil society an indication that mind sets are changing,” he said.

Slow change.

“Admittedly, we have played it safe when dealing with civil society in the past. We have confined ourselves to the civil societies that we dealt with in the past, that we knew and had long experience and good track record.”

He said however that things were slowly changing as donors moved from the narrower project funding to vast projects.

Mustard did point out rather tongue in cheek that sometimes civil societies were unrealistic in their demands for time for dialogue. He said while donors would be thinking of a one hour meeting, the civil organisation would be organising a two day workshop. He said the idea of seconding people to organisations and vice versa, was very good.

Another panalist Guggi Larya, a consultant with the World Bank said he was a perfect example of how donors were engaging with civil society. He used to work with an NGO before joining the Bank and was now in charge of civil society in the Bank.

He said most international donors had a strong code of practise in working with civil society and there was a great thawing of relations between the two.

► **Zarina Geloo**

Counting the cost ...



Oksana Chelysheva: Where is freedom?

Cold War on NGOs

Getting up for work in the morning is never easy, but how would you feel if you faced slander campaigns, being put on a list of 'undesirables', or even murder because of the work that you do?

Threats and intimidation are all part of working for an NGO in Belarus. In Russia, you run the risk of your organisation being closed down, having charges fabricated against you, or being imprisoned. These are all methods, that have been invented to prevent foreign-funded NGOs operating within these countries, the CIVICUS conference heard yesterday.

Representatives from NGOs in Russia and Belarus spoke of their experiences, and the ever-increasing legal restrictions, which have been mounting since the 'orange

revolution' took place in the Ukraine last year. Governments fear that foreign funding will be directed towards NGOs with political motives, who will try to institute regime change or other political changes.

Activity curtailed

A new law was passed in Russia in April, which has severely curtailed the activity of NGOs in the country. According to several NGOs, the Russian authorities have attempted to overcome the public's outrage by using the media, over which it exerts considerable control. It is alleged that the Russian government created a story that 12 NGOs in the country were under the payroll of the British intelligence agency MI6.

Yuri Dzhibladze, from the Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, an organization that was implicated in the scandal, told a workshop audience: "This has really affected

the way NGOs are viewed in Russia. We had organizations, who we had previously been working with us, come to us and say 'we can't work with you any more, because we are too afraid.

"We haven't been affected too badly by this legislation, just yet, because of international interest in the story and President Putin's involvement in the G8 Summit. By the autumn, we are expecting to feel its force."

Chechnya in peril

Organisations that focus on issues in Chechnya have also been hit hard by the Russian Federation. Oksana Chelysheva, from the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society spoke of how a senior member of her organisation was arrested on fabricated charges, and she received death threats. Their funds, part of which were destined to pay for hospital treatment for a Chechen girl, were also seized by the Russian govern-

ment, but later returned after protracted discussion.

Repression against NGOs has been taking place in Belarus since 1999. NGOs are being forced to re-register, restrictions are being put in place on the setting up of NGOs, a ban has been implemented on non-registered NGOs and foreign funding without state permission, and people who work for NGOs face criminal responsibility for their activity. Thousands of NGOs have been closed down as a result, and it is human rights organisations that have been hit the hardest.

Spirit of NGOs

While the international community looks on, the worrying fact remains, that many countries in Eastern Europe and central Asia are looking enviously, rather than with horror, at this government repression. In fact, Venezuela is increasingly exerting control and restrictions over its civil society.

Despite all of the new laws being brought in by the Russian and Chechen governments, they have not been able to kill the spirit of NGOs, working on behalf of the marginalised and vulnerable groups in society. Many organisations that have been declared illegal are continuing their work underground. Others have tried to legalise their activities by setting themselves up as another legal entity.

Whilst other speakers at the event urged the international community not to turn a blind eye to the situation. Yuri Dzhibladze summed up by saying, "International governments need to stay vigilant of the situation. NGOs should work with their governments to encourage them to raise repression of civil society in Belarus and Russia."

► Siobhan Wakely

Many uses of information and communication technologies

Revolution in Hand

When an alliance of business leaders, army generals and opposition trade unionists deposed Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez in April 2002, government supporters were caught unprepared. Within 24 hours, however, streets filled with people demanding the president's return and eventually succeeded in returning him to office.

In February this year, thousand of Filipinos took to the streets in Manila to protest a feared coup, surprising both the Army plotters and the Government, which replied to this unexpected democracy defenders with water cannons and riot police.

In March, 2003, days before general elections, a crowd gathered in front of then Spain's ruling right wing People's Party, to protest Government's false reports blaming the Basque separatist group ETA for the bomb attacks against passenger trains in Madrid.

In Chile, last month some 500,000 high school students seized 400 schools demanding radical changes in the country's educational system and coordinated negotiations, decisions and actions on an hourly basis, 24 hours a day, some of them 4,000 kilometers apart from each other. Their blogs counteracted the mainstream media heavily biased reporting.

Common factor

As diverse as they were in different parts of the world, all those events had a common factor: the phenomenon known as "information and communication technologies", or ICT — mobile phones, instant messages and the Internet, which are subverting the information order as well as other orders, worldwide.

The Internet is not free, as many believe, nor mobile phones can always be put good use, but still they exist. Independent community-based voice communications are being organized in Africa and South-East Asia.



Sean O'Siouchru

The Philippines in 2002 provided the first real test of the technology, says Howard Rheingold, author of "Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution." Black-clad protesters, summoned together by a single line passed from phone to phone: "Go 2 EDSA [an acronym for a Manila street]. Wear Black," eventually helped topple President Joseph Estrada.

In Glasgow, a group of mainly Latin American groups gathered yesterday to discuss the use of these technologies in their work. Two of the four presentations were done long distance, from

Brazil and Nicaragua, using the conference features of the popular free-phone Swedish software Skype.

One could not say that the workshop room was packed. A group of some 20 people showed up to exchange experiences and ideas. Analia Bettoni and Marcelo Castillo, from Uruguay's Instituto de Comunicación y Desarrollo, exposed Internet activities such as training and "digital literacy" campaigns. From Costa Rica, Erika Valverde, of Fundacion Acceso, linked to OneWorld, showed a portal used to combine

information and agitation on issues such as the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas the United States is pushing throughout the region.

Community phones

The Latin American groups also discussed solutions to some of the problems, ranging from digital illiteracy to access to utilities and Internet services, to "digital cities" where governments provide free wireless access to all.

But this is not enough, Irish expert Sean O'Siouchru told TerraViva. In his own workshop, Politics of the Information Society (also underpopulated), it became plain that telephone technologies and the Internet can be manipulated at will by governments and corporations. "It is not true that Internet can't be controlled", he said at an interview.

"One of the things that came up today is the situation in Ethiopia. There you can't text (over mobile phones) anymore. The government stopped it for exactly the reason Chilean students were able to organize and keep their discipline," he said.

What cannot be that easily controlled, he added, is the so-called IP telephony, which is booming in some 600 hundreds cooperatives in the United States, and which O'Siouchru is promoting in places like Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Cambodia.

"Networks in poor communities can provide free or very cheap voice communications to 10,000 or 15,000 people", he said and thus beat the big corporations now hugely profiting from people who earn two dollars a day but have to pay 35 cents for one minute of phone talk.

► Alejandro Kirk

Another Resolution Not Implemented

When the U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted its landmark “Resolution 1325” in October 2000, it conveyed a strong political message to the international community: that there can be no lasting peace in post-war rebuilding without active participation of women.

The resolution, described as the first in which the Security Council addressed the role and experience of women in armed conflicts, called on warring parties to adopt “a gender perspective” on peace negotiations and “gender mainstreaming” in all U.N. peace-keeping missions.

But nearly six years later, there are growing complaints that the political thrust of that historic resolution still remains unimplemented, and that there is now a need for a fulltime U.N. special representative to pursue the resolution into reality.

U.N. Under-Secretary-General Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, who piloted that resolution in his capacity as then Bangladeshi ambassador and president of the Security Council, says that gender perspectives are still not fully integrated into the terms of reference in peace operations — both in new Council resolutions and in U.N. peacekeeping missions.

“We continue to find reports that women are still very often ignored or excluded from formal processes of peace negotiations and elections, and in the drafting of new constitutions or legislature frameworks,” he told IPS/Terraviva. He proposes a special representative.

Was a Milestone

June Zeitlin of the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO) said the passage of Security Council Reso-

Gender perspectives are still not fully integrated into the terms of reference in peace operations. A fulltime U.N. special representative to pursue the resolution into reality?

lution (SCR) 1325 was a milestone because for the first time the Council officially recognised the vital and indispensable role women play in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding.

“Unfortunately, only a baby step has been taken in the implementation of SCR 1325 by the Security Council and member states,” she told IPS/Terraviva.

A recent review of Security Council resolutions in 2005 by the U.N. Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) shows that less than 10 percent of the resolutions adopted recalled or reaffirmed SCR 1325 (six out of 70).

This is not surprising given the very weak mechanisms for accountability, contrasted with other Security Council thematic issues, such as children in armed conflict, she added.

“The Chowdhury proposal for a full-time U.N. special representative on 1325 is long overdue. It will help to provide the necessary leadership and visibility to spur action at both global and national levels,” Zeitlin added.



Arab women: essential to achieve peace

Threat to Men

Cora Weiss, president of the International Peace Bureau and Hague Appeal for Peace, said there has never been a Security Council resolution with better known numbers.

“The resolution hasn't been fully implemented because including women (in peace processes) seems to be threatening to men who want to hold the seat of power... we don't want to take their power away, we want to share it,” Weiss told IPS/Terraviva.

She said that 1325 rocks the boat too much for the status quo. “But life will never change and we will never ‘give peace a chance’ unless we bring women to the table: peace women, human rights women, environmentally sensitive women, gender sensitive women.”

Chowdhury's proposal is right on time and essential, she said, “before more women are raped, abused, exploited or ignored in decision making and peace processes”.

“If the United Nations can demonstrate a model of decency, of equality and respect for women, it will rub off on the communities it serves,” she declared.

A serious priority

Charlotte Bunch of the Centre for Women's Global Leadership,

said the United Nations has fallen short on implementation of many of its commitments on women, including 1325.

Therefore, the proposal for a full-time U.N. Special Representative on 1325 “would be a good thing as we do need stronger mechanisms for government accountability on 1325”.

“This needs to happen at multiple levels and a special representative has been proposed before and would be a good step toward putting some muscle into the implementation of the resolution,” Bunch told IPS/Terraviva.

She said it would also be useful to have other mechanisms — similar to what exists on children and armed conflict at the country level — specifically with gender focal points.

Bunch also said that it was her understanding that new Assistant Secretary-General Carolyn McAskie has made it clear that the newly-created Peacebuilding Commission is to be mandated to include gender, and that she intends to make this a serious priority.

“The key, of course, will be to get member states on the commission to take it seriously as well,” she added.

► **Thalif Deen** United Nations

Aid Traps

Poorest Nations Warned

A much-touted “development package” offered recently to the world’s least developed countries is “rife with tricks” and could be far more limited than originally publicised because the United States maintains the right to deny the promised duty-free access to some of those countries’ most important exports, a new study says.

The development package was announced at the December 2005 World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial meeting in Hong Kong. It has made headlines as a breakthrough in the stalled talks and was trumpeted by officials from rich nations as evidence that the negotiations have a development component.

Under the deal, rich countries offered 32 so-called Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific regions 97 percent duty-free access to agricultural products such as bananas, sugar and tea by 2008.

The package also includes an increased infusion of funds for the “aid for trade” programme, designed to increase poor countries capacity to trade.

More harm?

But the report by two development groups, ActionAid International and the Washington-based Public Citizen, says the plan was actually designed to soften up countries that have resisted opening their markets as part of the global free trade talks, known as the Doha Round, to imports from rich nations.

“LDCs would do well to abide by the precautionary principle,

and ‘first, do no harm’ to their countries’ interests by not trusting empty U.S. government ‘Development Package’ promises in the Doha Round trade negotiations,” says the report.

“These are designed to divide the developing countries so as to ease the completion of a Doha Round that has been broadly predicted to harm developing countries even more than the decade of existing WTO damage.”

The 24-page analysis shows that Washington maintains the right to exclude certain products under a “three percent” loophole, in effect giving only minimal additional market access to the poorest nations.

“By focusing the three percent exclusion on the tariff lines under which the greatest value

‘Development Package’ promises could be to divide developing countries so as to ease the completion of a Doha Round that has been broadly predicted to harm developing countries

of LDC exports enter the U.S. market, the United States could maintain tariffs on a significant share of total LDC exports that now face tariffs,” says the report. The study, “The WTO’s Empty Hong Kong ‘Development Package’”, finds that under WTO most-favoured nation (MFN) rules or various unilateral preference programmes, 27 of the 32 LDCs who are members of the WTO already have, or could have, duty-free access to the U.S. market on more than 97 percent of their exports.

The report’s authors caution that the package may not benefit poor nations because many of their export earnings are concentrated in only one or two products that could be barred under the three percent provision.

Hong Kong Promises

Textile and apparel exports from Bangladesh, Cambodia and the Maldives, which do not now have duty-free entry, are precisely the categories that the United States is seeking to exclude in the three percent of tariff lines in the package despite being the most important exports for those poor nations.

The report also criticised promises made at the Hong Kong meeting for 2.8 billion dollars in “aid-for-trade” funding by 2010. It says rich nations double counted some commitments that were already made and applied “fuzzy math” that considers some government expenditures as “trade capacity building”.

In addition, it notes that Japan is actually doling out loans rather than “aid”, while the U.S. pledges remain subject to congressional approval, which is unlikely under the current climate of war expenditure and deficit.

“Given that the ‘aid-for-trade’ funding proposal is contingent on a Doha Round being completed effectively, the proposal involves short term quantitative offers of money to ‘buy’ permanent qualitative policy changes on trade that may not be in the long-term interest of the poor countries involved,” says the report.

The LDCs are the world’s poorest nations and their economies are so fragile that locking them into a privatisation and liberalisation agreement could wipe out their local industries and agriculture, development activists warn.

► Emad Mekay /Washington

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR DELEGATES

► Saturday’s plenary session

This morning’s main plenary session “Are Political Leaders Listening to Civil Society?” features Peter Ackerman (Founder and Chair, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, Abiola Tilley-Gyado, Senior Global Health Advisor, Plan International and Guy Ryder, General Secretary of International Confederation of Trade Unions. The plenary starts at 9.00am sharp so please get there on time for this essential session.

► The Nelson Mandela Graca Machel Innovation Awards

The call for nominations to the Nelson Mandela Graca Machel Innovation Awards Announcement will be one of the highlights of the Gala Dinner being held this evening.

The Innovation Award is aimed at providing seed funding for innova-

tive ideas emerging from organisations or groups of participants at the CIVICUS World Assembly. The broad idea is to support community based and grassroots initiatives with an emphasis on the overall WA theme: Acting Together for a

Just World through one of the four sub-themes: Civic, Economic, Political and Social Justice.

The dinner itself will be rounded off with speeches and a traditional Gaelic social dance, the Ceilidh, in which delegates are invited to join.

Delegates are reminded that the buses will leave from their hotels/ university accommodation NOT from the SECC.

For more information see www.civicus.org/new/media/CIVICUSMedia

► New time for Rural Women workshop

Workshop number 48: Crossing Borders: Empowering Rural Women through Action and Mobilization unfortunately was cancelled on Friday morning. The workshop will go ahead in Argyll Suite 3 today between 2.30pm-4.00pm.

► Proof positive

The Positive Lives exhibition has been organised by Concern Worldwide and is a fascinating and extraordinary insight into people living with HIV and AIDS in Rwanda. Go to the far right hand corner of Hall 5 and see for yourself this remarkable photographic display from Stuart Freedman.



► Youth can change CIVICUS

The CIVICUS Youth Assembly is destined to play a large part in the CIVICUS Assembly programme in 2007. If you’re young and want to help shape that event then come along to Dochart 2 in the SECC at 1.30pm today.

BUS TIMETABLE FOR FRIDAY EVENING and SATURDAY



FRIDAY PM	TIMES	PICK-UP	DESTINATION
	18.00 departure	Express 0730Premier George St 07.40Premier Charing Cross 07.50 and Ibis 08.00	Kelvingrove dinner
	18.00 departure	Glasgow University, Queen Margaret Halls, Kirklee	Kelvingrove dinner
	18.00 departure	Strathclyde University Anderson Campus	Kelvingrove dinner
	18.00 departure	Strathclyde University Jordan Hill Campus	Kelvingrove dinner
	18.15 departure	Glasgow University Wolfson Hall	Kelvingrove dinner
Hotel/Campus Transfers	23.30	Pick up from Kelvin Hall, Glasgow. All coaches will carry the name of your accommodation on the screen	Hotels/Campus