

# TERRAVIVA

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Morag Livingstone

## Looking Ahead

► Zarina Geloo

After three days of heavy discussion on accountability, the 7th CIVICUS Assembly climaxed with the presentation of the Nelson Mandela Graca Machel Innovation awards to three development projects.

Two of the projects were from Nigeria, one of which was in collaboration with the Legal Services Agency in Scotland, while the third was from Fiji.

The projects, which reflected the theme, "Acting Together for a Just World" the theme of the last CIVICUS World Assembly, each won a \$5 000 prize.

One winner, the Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises in Development (FRIEND) from Fiji, submitted a proposal on a youth employment network.

Devina Devi, in charge of programmes, said that the project which previously reached about 30 unemployed youths would now be able to help over 100.

The project helps youths who have been in prison or are on the streets get into formal employment or self-sustaining businesses.

Devi said FRIEND gives the youths training in skills like wood carving, making artifacts and also provides skills training in customer service, to enable the youths to find employment in the island's big tourism industry.

"The award will enable the organisation to reach out to more youths, we will be able to increase awareness of our project, and get more employers interested in helping our youth," she said.

FRIEND has placed 15 out of the 30 youths in employment since it began. Devi says this has not been easy: "Some are difficult to reform, but we work on the trust, using the restorative justice. Hopefully with this new funding, we will be able to do a bit more in establishing trust."

The International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) in Nigeria, won its award for the proposal to "Make Poverty History for the Physically Challenged".

Rose Ekeleme from IAVE said there were about 20 000 physically challenged street youths in her area of Abia, in eastern Nigeria, where the project is located. "They are just thrown into the streets by their families and societies with nothing, people stigmatise them. No one helps them."

The project helps the youths acquire new skills, so that they are able to set up businesses of their own.

"With the funding from the award, we will be able to target 300 more youths," said Ekeleme who is a special education needs teacher.

The Centre for Human Rights, Research and Development (CHRRD) in Nigeria in collaboration with the Legal Services Agency (LSA) in Glasgow, Scotland proposed: "Women Trafficking: Nigeria to Scotland Research, Advocacy and Education Project."

The award will help LSA and the CHRRD undertake research on the extent of trafficking between Nigeria and Scotland and how the two organisations can provide an effective service to women.

"We will use the award to fund long term and dedicated research into the problem of human trafficking, what the factors that drive are and see whether we are providing an adequate service to women," said Nicola Laughran.

The judges said they were impressed not only with the overall quality of the proposals, their novelty and originality, but also with the sustainability, potential for a positive impact on citizen rights and justice movements and partnership opportunities of the projects.



## It's Better to Act, But Good to Talk

► Sanjay Suri

On the face of it, nothing really 'happened' at the CIVICUS World Assembly, other than the announcement that secretary-general Kumi Naidoo would quit. Perhaps the symbolic locking up in a cage to draw attention to activists was something supplied by way of a 'happening'. The rest was, and was expected to be, no more than talk.

The accent on accountability is new, but which of the non-governmental organisations represented at the Glasgow assembly this week will return home and proceed promptly to do a better job of holding others accountable – or make themselves more accountable?

"Civics is a dialogical space, its significance is for that," John Samuels, international director of ActionAid told TerraViva.

Because confrontation is not the only stance for civil society to take. "There has to be healthy challenge of each other, but also spaces of engagement, both dialogical and critical."

But to have called this meeting a world assembly was not overstating it. Representatives from 135 countries joined in the discussions. And they sat down to look at themselves, at ways of making civil society itself more accountable. In part, as CIVICUS secretary general Kumi Naidoo said, to "pre-empt" certain criticism to follow if civil society was to point fingers at others without first putting its own house in order.

An extraordinary number of sessions at the world assembly were introspective. And while much followed on corporate accountability, and that of media, governments and multilateral

agencies, very many more meetings focused on the accountability of civil society itself than on any other subject.

This mattered, notwithstanding the fact that two other events inevitably drew packed houses and closed doors. One, the day BBC television arrived. The other, a meeting called by the Department for International Development (DfID) of the British government. Some self-interest in turning up here did not negate the self-reflection elsewhere.

Three trends have become increasingly apparent over the last few years, Samuels said. "One is the great and growing research and knowledge capacity within civil society. Civil society leaders are now becoming the credible reference point for research in all sorts of fields, they are taking over this role from governments and political parties."

Reports from Oxfam on poverty, ActionAid on aid, Amnesty International on human rights and Transparency International on corruption are now prime research in these fields, he said. "Over the next 10 to 15 years, top positions in politics and in multilateral agencies will be taken by people from civil society," Samuels said.

Secondly, "digital mobilisation and a continuing democracy are an increasing trend. People with access to information can mobilise globally, as GCAP did, through digital action."

Finally, civil society has been helped by the "legitimacy deficit" of states, who have therefore been "forced to engage with civil society for damage control and to get innovative ideas".

"Civil society still lacks bite," Samuels said, "but it can keep barking, the barking wakes up citizens and media – and the political establishment."



**TerraViva (TV): So, why the decision to leave CIVICUS?**

**Kumi Naidoo (KN):** I personally have taken the view that if civil society activists call on prime ministers and presidents and government leaders to not stay in office for more than two terms – which is five to ten years or so – then nobody is indispensable. For the growth of organisations it is good to bring in fresh people. It's not like I have another job or I am going anywhere. Obviously for the last year, because people know I might be moving on, lots of requests have come asking me to consider joining them. Some of the requests have been quite humbling... but it's been quite easy to say no to them.

**TV: A fair guess to say that institutions like the World Bank are among those making the requests?**

**KN:** Over the years there have certainly been requests from the Bank, and a range of intergovernmental organisations, as well as civil society.

**TV: If you took a position with institutions like the Bank or intergovernmental organisations, would you then like the possibility that you might be able to influence how they operate?**

**KN:** I wouldn't say that I would not consider something in any sector – in civil society or outside of it – that might offer possibilities of change. So I think for the World Bank, if you see what is happening with (Paul) Wolfowitz, he is to me the symptom of the problem, not the problem – an extreme symptom of the problem. Isn't it quite interesting that the two big global tragedies that the US has been involved in have been Vietnam and Iraq. And Robert McNamara was the architect and executor of the Vietnam war, and he got rewarded with the presidency of the World Bank, and likewise Wolfowitz.

**TV: But let's talk about you, would you consider working in the multilateral agencies with the potential of taking civil society ideas to an agency like that to shape the policies there?**

**KN:** I would not rule it out, but I have to say the key question is 'where can I make the biggest difference'. It's not about money, it's not about status, and so if I was convinced that I could make a significant difference in a particular multilateral institution, whether it be the UN or whatever, I certainly would not rule it out on any grounds of principle.

**TV: Is the environment right for multilateral agencies to begin to open their doors – including the doors of their minds – to civil society?**

**KN:** Yes, they are opening in terms of rhetoric. There is still a big disconnect between words and reality, and I think there is a danger that words appeared to be aligned with the demands of civil society, when there isn't really a substance of change. If you take an institution like the World Bank, you would need a governance change, in voting share and how the president is elected.

**TV: Do you have a political dream of turning those words into reality?**

**KN:** Absolutely. Today, even when you have democratically elected leaders as in South Africa, they have very little power to shape the economic powers, and to that extent there is a dream of democratising global governance, and to that extent I think that is critically important.

**“There is still a big disconnect between words and reality.”**

# Reflections on Civil Society

**CIVICUS secretary general Kumi Naidoo announced that he would be stepping down from the position after nine years.**

**Sanjay Suri asked him to reflect on a decade of activism**

**TV: To do that, will you also consider joining politics in South Africa?**

**KN:** That is an option I had in 1994 when the transition happened, and that's an option that's always there. It comes back to where I can make the most difference. I don't rule that out as a possibility, but given the limitations of what national political power can deliver in terms of social, economic justice, right now I think a more urgent priority for people who've had the exposure and learning that I've had to make sure we have greater success in the WTO and other multilateral institutes, that is not something I am actively considering.

**TV: So if that is some sort of possibility, and multilateral institutions certainly are, do you think you've done enough in civil society for now?**

**KN:** Absolutely not. Right now the thing I am in most personal emotional pain about is our collective failure not just as CIVICUS but as civil society organisations, our collective failure of not being able to defend civil society activists and the space of civil society in the face of the juggernaut of the war on terrorism. I have friends in prison in Ethiopia and elsewhere in prison.

**TV: Where do you think you have taken civil society in the last ten years - and let's skip any appropriate modesty?**

**KN:** One, emboldening civil society, giving people the confidence that we don't have to stay on the margins, that the ideas that we have are probably the ideas that will save the planet, and to feel confident in not just talking to the people you agree with, but in talking to the people you disagree with. At this World Assembly we have invited people from the World Bank to come here, we are prepared to engage with them. I think if there is one thing I have contributed, it is to try to get the message across

to people that we need to understand our own values, that our values and visions have the capital that is needed to save the planet. The second achievement is I think challenging the contradictions within civil society. Civil society has many issues that it must address. Like the accountability debate that is now more acceptable.

**TV: Has your personal success to build up CIVICUS meant that your personality has overshadowed the organisation itself?**

**KN:** Yes. About four years we identified this as a challenge, we have consciously since then said we should change that, in fact one of the Board members said we need to *de-Kumify* the organisation.

**TV: How do you go about being less of yourself?**

**KN:** At first, if I was invited to speak, and couldn't make it, I would suggest a replacement. Nowadays almost every invitation, unless it is something like the opening of a big conference, 90 percent of the time if I say no, they say we want CIVICUS to be at the table. Increasingly now we are represented by other staff, other board members. Over the last two years we've tried to broaden the identity of CIVICUS beyond myself, and I don't think we have succeeded entirely, but we have moved considerably towards that. The only quantifiable indicator of that is that increasingly it is CIVICUS that people want at the table.

**TV: Wherever you go, would you carry your civil society ideas with you?**

**KN:** It's part of my DNA. I got involved in civil society activities when I was 15 years old when I got expelled from school. That time I did not know anything about civil society or anything like that. But when I look back, most of my early activism, and the majority of my public activism was civil society kind of activism at the grassroots

level. My big personal driver is a very, some people say romantic, but just a deep belief in the power of ordinary people. Coming from a working class background, I have seen ordinary people do extraordinary things. There is no doubt in my mind that I would carry that with me. I am not a careerist. I've had lots of what some people would consider very sexy job offers; it's been very easy to say no.

**“Over the last two years we've tried to broaden the identity of CIVICUS beyond myself.”**

**TV: Is the civil society idea in essence nothing other than the idea of being aware, active and moral?**

**KN:** Absolutely. I mean the vision of CIVICUS is a vision of a world that is committed, informed and active citizens working together to address the challenges facing humanity. Today if we take any chal-

lenge, whether it is climate change, or domestic violence or adult education, if you look at the amount of volunteer energy that is going into addressing those issues, that's where the future of the planet is.

**TV: So is what you do something you owe to people who need things done?**

**KN:** Not just need things done, but to people I fought in the trenches with.

**TV: And this work is a silent bond with them?**

**KN:** Yes. The most powerful conversation I've ever had in my life was with my friend Lenny Naidu. When we were both fleeing into exile at the age of 22, Lenny asked me what is the biggest contribution one of us can make to the struggle for justice. I said, giving your life. He said, you mean going out, participating in a demonstration, getting killed and becoming a martyr. And I said yes, I suppose so. He said no, it's not about giving your life, but giving the rest of your life. Two years later when I was in exile and a student here in UK, I got a call from friends to say that Lenny had been brutally murdered along with three young women from Durban. There were so many bullets in his body his parents couldn't recognise him. And I thought again and again what he really meant by that last conversation. Those of us who have had the luxury of being there, and to have an understanding of what is happening around us need to recognise that this is not about going out and having a flirtation with the struggle for justice but the real sacrifice is to have the energy and perseverance of a lifetime of commitment. That to a large extent changed my life.

**TV: And that does not contradict commitment to friends and family?**

**KN:** Let's face it, love is a very selfish emotion. You have a particular connection with those that are blood related. But I think the real challenge for us all is whether our sense of love and caring, while having a special relation with people we are related with through family, but the ability to transcend that and have maybe not at the same level, but to broaden that relationship.

**TV: To end this chat a little lightly, would you dress differently if you were to join a multilateral institution or something?**

**KN:** I hope not. You see, when I came into this job people said you could easily have a bright future in senior politics in South Africa, why would you leave strategic space that you have. Part of the reason I said was that South Africa benefited so much from international solidarity, I said part of it is to make some contribution back. But even though I've been very internationalist in my approach, I've done this job as an African. I feel very strongly that the images, of Africa, and I'm including those seemingly on our side, when they say things like Africa is a scar on the conscience of humanity...

**TV: That's an ugly thing to say.**

**KN:** It's an ugly thing to say, and they forget that Africa is one of the richest continents underneath the ground, one of the poorest above it. Africa is not poor, it has been impoverished by a set of historical and continuing circumstances. I've done this job partly to show that competent things can come out of Africa.

**TV: So would you dress differently?**

**KN:** I dress as an African, as you know, and wherever I go I hope I will be able to dress the same. I won't compromise on that.





Morag Livingstone

**Connecting the Dots:** A stroke of red, a green starburst, a black cloud. Deirdre Crowley, a graphic facilitator from the United States, travels across the world armed with crayons and felt-tip pens connecting ideas and drawing – literally – key points from panels and plenaries, as she has done for the past three days at the CIVICUS World Assembly. “If I think about it too much it gets in the way. I have almost to let it go through me,” she said after filling three huge white sheets of paper with an elaborately interconnected but clear account of the panel on “Government Accountability: From Political Won’t to Political Will.”

## Keeping Track of Promises

► Zoltán Dujisin

Providing 60 percent of global development aid, the European Union is the biggest charity organisation in the world. But saying ‘thank you’ won’t do much to turn money into results.

“We have to monitor both the volume and the quality of aid; governments are not being accountable to populations who fund aid with their taxes,” Henri Valot, CIVICUS’s representative for the Millennium Development Goals told TerraViva

“There has never been accountability in this field,” the man who chaired yesterday’s Training Workshop on Government Accountability added. “NGOs can play an important role in changing that by acting as bridges between governments and their citizens.”

NGOs want to make sure they do. Olivier Consolo, from Concord – Europe Aid Watch, denounced the EU’s inclusion of debt cancellation, student and refugee costs as aid and called for a twin policy approach to aid accountability.

“Accountability requires not only a technical process of monitoring aid and looking at facts and statistics, but also political processes involving civil society to organise and participate effectively in democratic processes.

“We need to work with two kind of NGO people,” he explained. “Those who are experts, produce reports, and give legitimacy to our action, and those who engage with the media, provide easy understanding of aid matters and change the fact that Europeans don’t have any knowledge of it.”

To avoid accusations of being over-ambitious, Consolo reminded the audience Concord was simply making sure the EU sticks “to its own official commitments”.

But pace, not only policy is imperative, Jane Backhurst, Director of the World Vision EU Liaison Office told participants. “Unless we don’t want to miss these goals, we need to put our feet in the accelerator and help the engagement of civil society networks around the world, even if it means becoming slightly confrontational.”

Activists are alarmed at being relegated to a submissive role. “NGOs are being totally removed from the debate by governments, they might work with their money, but are in fact a small player who doesn’t have much of a say,” Valot told TerraViva.

In a related mini plenary later, Olara Otunnu, a former UN special representative for children and armed conflict noted another obscure aspect of EU and Western countries’ aid policy.

By demanding recipient governments to live up to their accounting standards, the danger lies in decreasing democratic rights abroad. “Governments become attentive to what donors want and feel free to treat with contempt their own population and public opinion,” she warned.

# Using UN treaties to stop corruption

► Zarina Geloo

Civil society groups were yesterday given pointers on how they can use the United Nations Convention on Corruption (UNCAC) and other treaties to hold governments to their promises of transparency and accountability.

The UNCAC contains an asset recovery framework on a global basis and has also improved mutual law enforcement assistance, especially in extradition and investigations and also complemented other international conventions, John Devitt, from Transparency International in Ireland, said.

By far the most effective way in which civil society can make governments accountable would be to set up strong monitoring systems to coerce governments to amend legislation and conform to all the tenets of the UNCAC, Devitt recommended.

He cited two peer reviews conducted in 2003 and 2005 on how far the Irish government had implemented an OECD (Organisation of Economic Cor-

poration and Development) convention on the prevention of bribery, as an example to watch.

The second review was damning, Devitt said, and a couple of weeks after the report was made public, the government quickly set up a committee with stakeholders in the civil society and State on how to effect the recommendations.

Londa Esadze from an anti corruption coalition in Georgia agreed that peer review mechanisms were important, but they should be conducted with the participation of local organisations who knew the terrain. While the UNCAC had recommendations which state parties were not obliged to adopt, civil society and activists should drive towards settings standards, she said.

For example she said, the UNCAC did not make it mandatory for state parties to have a whistle blowers protection act or to safeguard freedom of expression or freedom of the press. “These are very serious components which need to be enforced to make the UNCAC effective.”

She gave the example of a recent study in Uganda

where an NGO was able to track resources going into rural areas. When it was made public that the communities were receiving less than ten percent of what they were entitled to, government quickly stepped in to correct the situation.

“This could not have happened if there was no access to information,” she said

Kirsten Drew, of UNICORN in the UK, said civil societies must be aggressive in finding a space at the conference of State parties where member states chart the way forward on implementing the UNCAC in their countries.

The next state party conference is in Indonesia but at the moment, civil societies and NGOs are only in as observers. “We can pressure our governments and the UN to allow civil society to be a part of these negotiations, if we speak as a collective group.”

Drew reported that at the last meeting of UNCAC state parties in Jordan, civil society managed to influence decisions by blocking access to web pages containing damaging amendments to legislation or language.

# Speak up for freedom of information

► Brendan O’Brien

The “Rights to Information: Securing Your Human Rights” workshop revealed the importance of freedom of information in empowering the least enfranchised citizen against the largest government bureaucracy.

Rights to Information (RTI) legislation was used to great effect in the village of Boru, India, where children die of preventable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis. The villagers rarely see a doctor and a nurse – assigned to the district – visited the area irregularly.

A villager sent a letter under India’s Rights of Information Act 2005 asking the authorities what sort of medicine was available and when and where visits were

due. As a result, “the health visitor showed up every single time she was meant to and she brought all her drugs with her,” according to speaker Maja Adhun, director of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.

The villager sent a second letter to the authorities and the district doctor showed up. The villager said: “We got respect, we got power.”

The problem is often just getting the legislation. Cece Fadope of Article 19, a group which takes its name from the UN declaration, explained how only four of 53 African countries have any provisions.

Angie Henderson of the Pacific Centre of Public Integrity in Fiji, said things were similar in the Pacific Islands: “Governments fear getting rights to informa-

tion out there because they feel that political opponents will use this to bring them down.”

While rights to information campaigns have failed so far in Fiji, Vanuatu has been a success because NGOs were careful to involve other beneficiaries like the media to explain that human rights and rights to information were “not in opposition to traditional culture”.

Looking for unlikely stakeholders was a way to further RTI, Jamaicans for Justice’s Dr Carolyn Gomes said. In Jamaica, civil servants were keen on the law because they were often blamed for problems with delivering.

“Freedom of information is democracy in action, it is development you can see, it is accountability that comes to your door,” said Adhun.



“When we see the delegates’ smiling faces as they arrive back, it’s all worth it.”

# An exchange for growth

► Claire Black

As the buses pull into the blustery SECC car park, there’s no mistaking the satisfaction on the faces of delegates returning from learning exchanges. Smiling and laughing as they gather their belongings and step off the coaches, they look like they’ve been at a party rather than at a networking session.

For Helen Swatton, Events Assistant at the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and the woman tasked with ensuring that the Learning Exchange programme runs to plan, enjoyment is key to the venture. “CIVICUS is a hard programme for delegates,” Swatton says. “They work long hours and fit a lot into each day. The Learning Exchange is a chance to get off-site and to have a bit of fun.”

The exchange programme, a series of information sharing events hosted by partner organisations in and around Glasgow, gives delegates the opportunity to meet project workers from local initiatives and the people whom they support, not to mention a chance to see a little more of the Scottish countryside.

Fiona Talcott, SCVO’s International Officer explains: “In Scotland we have a great deal to learn from the CIVICUS delegates but we hope that organisations here also have a lot to offer. We hope that these exchanges will provide a lasting legacy for Glasgow both in terms of learning and potential future partnerships.

“Too often people in the North think that we have all the answers but often we are only just starting to ask the right questions.”

The link between the local and global is key to the learning exchange programme. “Delegates get the chance to connect with local people. They get to see what’s happening on the ground,” says Swatton. “It’s all very well to listen to people talk, but delegates want to see action. They want to see the enthusiasm of the people working in projects, but also the people that the projects are helping.

“We always try to have project users at the exchanges because the delegates love to have that connection with the people of Scotland.”

## New ideas and approaches

With 12 organisations in and around the city participating, the exchange programme is diverse. Not only does it highlight the breadth of social initiatives in the west of Scotland, it also allows delegates to find projects which are relevant to them. A key aim of the exchanges initiative is that delegates will discover new ideas and approaches which they can take home and apply to their own projects. For organisations working with little or nothing in the way of budgets and often with limited support networks, the chance to learn from colleagues involved in similar work - albeit in a different country - is vital.

From the Scottish Refugee Council to Stepping Stones for Families, Awaz FM to the Govan Initiative Ltd, all 12 of this year’s hosts took part in the CIVICUS Assembly exchange programme last year. They are organisations which cover a range of social issues and serve diverse client groups. Their involvement illustrates that the benefits of the learning exchange extends to them as hosts as well as the delegates who participate.

Frank Burns, CEO of the Association for Local Voluntary Organisations (ALVO), says: “This is the second year we have organised a CIVICUS Learning Exchange. We have drawn as much inspiration this year as last, fuelled from delegates own experi-

ences of building community led initiatives and networks around and across the globe.”

Following a discussion which covered the difficult relationship between NGOs and local/central government as well as ways of linking those often unheard voices into a coherent and powerful voice, Burns was pleased with the conclusions reached by the group visiting ALVO.

He says: “We collectively agreed that it is people and processes, much more than structures or institutions that fundamentally drive forward positive and real change.”

## Range of experiences

For Swatton, this sharing of ideas which benefits hosts and visitors, is what the learning exchange is all about. “The exchange hosts want the chance to learn from delegates too, so it really is an exchange,” she says. “We try to ensure that each exchange is different so that delegates get a range of experiences. We also ensure that the hosts are happy with what they’re offering. We don’t want anyone just standing at the front talking.”

Javed Sattar, project director of Awaz FM, Glasgow’s community radio station aimed at Ethnic Minority listeners, welcomed the opportunity to host a group which included delegates from the Port of Spain, Sudan, New Delhi and Kenya amongst others. As well as receiving a tour of the radio station, delegates also got the chance to try out the station’s studio equipment.

Sattar says: “The group was surprised that the studio was so little and yet does such good work. But this is the essence of what makes Awaz FM. Zane Ibrahim of Bush Radio in Cape Town South Africa, one of the mothers of community radio, said ‘Community Radio is 90 percent community and 10 percent radio.’

“We have to remember the real value of community radio is its people and volunteers and the people who listen.”

The result of nearly six months of planning and discussion between SCVO and partner organi-

sations, the learning exchange is anything but a simple part of the CIVICUS programme.

However, from the response of delegates, hosts and organisers alike, all the hard work has certainly paid off.

As Swatton says: “When we see the delegates’ smiling faces as they arrive back, it’s all worth it.”

**Hundreds of CIVICUS World Assembly delegates were hosted by 12 Scottish NGOs**



## Learning Exchange Hosts

- Scottish Refugee Council
- Association of Local Voluntary Organisations
- Awaz FM
- Learning Link Scotland
- Legal Services Agency
- LGBT Youth Scotland
- Stepping Stones for Families
- Telephone Helplines Association
- The Village Storytelling Centre
- Volunteer Development Scotland
- Deserve
- Govan Initiative Ltd



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**Patrick Logan Leckie**  
Permaculture Association Britain



I was part of the LGBT Scotland exchange and it was fantastic. It was really informative and interactive, as well as encouraging. We had an initial discussion about what LGBT means and about the kind of work that LGBT Youth Scotland has done here in Scotland. We also talked about the history of gay rights.

It was great to get an international perspective from the other delegates. One colleague from Sri Lanka told us that it's still illegal to be gay in his country. The discussion amongst delegates was just as informative as the information from the project.

One of the questions on the feedback form asked what we were least satisfied with. I found it really difficult to come up with anything to write because the session was just so good.

The most useful part was exploring the idea that discrimination is inherent to most societies. It was interesting to hear that Scotland is pioneering legislation that is doing something to break down that prejudice. There was a delegate from India there and she was really excited about what is going on in Scotland. It was clear that she was thinking about how she could take ideas from here to India.

**Reynaldo De Guzman,**  
National Chairperson, Philippine Peace and  
Solidarity Council, Philippines



The Learning Exchange is one of the most important activities of the CIVICUS programme. It gives you the opportunity to get personal contact with local people and to learn from their experiences. I visited the Deserve project in Dunoon and I was very impressed.

I believe the project is a great help to people who live and work in inaccessible areas because it provides transport assistance. It also helps disadvantaged and disabled senior residents in the community by taking them to services that they need.

I hope we could replicate the same kind of project in my country because many workers there are unable to live in the city where they work because of the high cost of living. In the Philippines 30 percent of the workforce in urban areas are from the countryside, from small towns. So this kind of project could really help.

It's different for us because we are from the Third World, we don't have access to the kind of financial assistance as projects here. But that's why we are at CIVICUS, to learn how to be self-reliant.

I felt that we experienced real Scottish hospitality on the Learning Exchange. The scenery was spectacular. Up to now I've only seen the city of Glasgow.

**Xin Yi Lim**  
Youth delegate from Singapore



I was at the Storytelling Centre in Pollock. It was really good fun. We met with the director of the centre as well as the founders. They told us about their project, about how they work with children from primary schools and also how they use storytelling to bridge the gap between asylum seekers and local Scots. They invited

asylum seekers to come to the centre to tell stories to young Scottish people. It was a real exchange of ideas and it has helped to overcome racism - at least to some extent.

We sat down, had a nice cup of tea and talked about how storytelling is a valuable tool in our cultures. There were delegates from Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago and Estonia so it was a wide pool of participants.

We talked about how valuable storytelling is for our communities, although we each do it differently. For example, we learned that in Trinidad and Tobago they do it through song.

When I saw storytelling on the sign-up sheet, I thought it was something you do with children but we saw today how it can be used to bridge the gap between local communities and building up trust between them. It was great.

**Sakeena Khaled**  
Student Youth Delegate, Sudan



Awaz FM was a very nice project to visit. I was happy to go there and meet the people who work at the radio station.

There were different kinds of activities arranged for us as part of the exchange. We got to see the technical equipment - the Awaz staff gave us demonstrations of how it works and we also got a chance to experiment with it.

The hosts were very nice to us and they were very flexible about answering our questions and showing an interest in us. I have taken away many positive experiences from the exchange.

This is the first CIVICUS event that I have attended. I have had a very positive experience here. The learning exchange has been an important part of that.

When I get back to Sudan I have lots to tell my friends about how things work here and in that project. I have never been involved in a radio station before but I really hope that I can get involved with something like that back in Sudan.

**Katherine Robson**  
Centre for Human Rights Research and  
Development, Nigeria



My experience of the learning exchanges has been extremely useful.

When I attended last year, my visit to the Legal Services Agency was the impetus for our

proposal to the Nelson Mandela Award.

This year, the delegates in my group, which visited the Scottish Refugee Council, were from New Zealand, Denmark, Nigeria and Zambia.

We got to meet the staff and a refugee who is living here in Glasgow spoke to us about her experiences. It was very interesting to meet a beneficiary of the project as well as the people who work for the council.

From the questions we asked we each got a sense of the different issues in our countries; there were some which were separate but also some which interrelated. The delegate from New Zealand talked about teenage refugees and the difficulties they face.

We had the same kind of issue in Canada where I'm from and as he was talking about the need for research to be done it made me think about whether there had been any research done in Canada.

That's the great thing about the learning exchange, it gets you thinking about commonalities and where the gaps are in your own work.



► Gavin Yates

The cliché that young people are more interested in themselves than their communities is being eroded in Scotland. According to figures from the NGO Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) almost 30 percent of young people in the current home of the CIVICUS World Assembly give their time to help others.

This remarkable statistic shows a vibrant volunteering culture where young people are involved in various projects from conservation and care to media and uniformed projects such as the Scouts.

At a session that was part of The Gathering – Scotland’s voluntary sector event – the growth of youth volunteering was highlighted and in particular the fun involved in participating in community projects.

Louise Cumming has boundless enthusiasm for her community. She is a full-time volunteer with an organisation based in North-East Scotland but also finds the time to act as a youth advisor for the National Lottery – one of the UK’s largest grant providers. She is also involved in community drama and the youth activism “Roars Not Whispers” project. It is a workload that would swamp the doughtiest of campaigners.

“I started volunteering with the Wendy House (a project in her community that gives respite care to children) and since then I have always volunteered. You could say I’ve been



Morag Livingstone

More and more young Scots are becoming hooked on volunteering

# Putting fun into activism

hooked on volunteering for life,” she told TerraViva.

“In the last week I have met over 150 other young people who feel the same way as me and the experience has been terrific. Volunteering can change your life.”

So, why has there been an increase in youth volunteering? The answers appear to be varied but topping the list of reasons is that it’s good fun.

Alison Harrower from VDS told the session that the community element of volunteering is crucial.

## Attracting young volunteers

- 1 Recognise the value** Volunteers must have their work appreciated and recognised.
- 2 Meaningful** The work should not be process driven. It must have a value and a result.
- 3 Flexibility** If an NGO is not flexible in the hours and duties that they offer they will be less attractive to potential volunteers.
- 4 Team based** Young people usually want to work in groups.
- 5 Meet Their needs** Young people have particular needs – it’s up to NGOs to help provide that.
- 6 Given them a say** Encourage young people to have a say in the organisation. If they are included then they are more likely to stay.
- 7 Recruiting** Young people use the web and listen to radio. Use new media to attract recruits.

“Volunteering gives young people the opportunity to meet new friends. Over 200 000 young people in Scotland volunteer and give hundreds of thousands of hours of work.”

Apart from the comradeship and fun aspects, volunteering is increasingly seen as a way of gaining recognition from future employers and for assisting with getting into higher education.

Scotland has numerous ways for young people to get into volunteering but since 2005 over 1200 young people have got into full-time volunteering placements with Project Scotland – a government and private business backed NGO.

Project Scotland’s Mhairi Brown said that 91 percent of their volunteers went on to full time education, jobs or even started their own business.

“We want to change the lives of young people and give them the chance to achieve what they want to achieve,” she said.

On the scheme a young person can get a living allowance of £55 (\$110 dollars) a week to assist them and they, in turn, commit to three months work. The placement NGOs need to be accredited by Project Scotland and ensure that a proper structure is in place.

“It’s not a job replacement (for an NGO) but they can add value to the organisation and give a fresh outlook.”

In Scotland, the future of youth volunteering appears to be strong but NGOs will have to ensure that they offer worthwhile and fun experiences to snare new recruits.



Morag Livingstone

Technology will boost the debate on the environment when Nobel Laureate Wangari Mathai contributes to today’s plenary sessions at the CIVICUS World Assembly.

The Kenyan founder of Green Belt Movement International will deliver a video message on “Our Accountability to Future Generations: Responding to the Challenge on Environmental Sustainability”.

Mathai is expected to highlight the ongoing struggle to reduce poverty, encourage sustainable management of resources, promote human rights, promote the rule of law and equity.

The discussion, in Hall 2 at 9am, will be moderated by Jem Bendell, Adjunct Associate Professor, Griffith Business School, Australia/Switzerland. Other speakers include June Zeitlin, executive director, Women’s Environment & Development Organisation and Alan AtKisson, executive director, Earth Charter International, Sweden.

## A Little Aid, A Big Favour

► Sanjay Suri

“When,” came the question from a Ugandan delegate at a CIVICUS World Assembly meeting in Glasgow, “will the West ever stop giving aid on unequal terms?”

“We are unequal by the fact that, speaking as a donor, we are providing the funds,” said Jan-Petter Holtedahl from the civil society department at the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

Plain speech there – and there has been a good deal of it at the civil society gathering. But Holtedahl added a sweetener. “We start from inequality but need to mitigate that by having a comprehensive dialogue.”

There were others. “Obviously there is in that sense a power relationship between the northern NGOs and the southern NGOs,” Sylvia Borren, director of Oxfam-Novib in the Netherlands told TerraViva.

It all depends on how you deal with power relationships, she said. “We as Oxfam Novib have 850 partners, and we think that by sitting together and saying what is your vision, what is your strategy, what is our vision, what is our strategy, and what are the opportunities we see, and can we come to enough common ground.”

But, however politely that giving of aid is presented, it is in all instances a fraction of the money intended as aid. The variation lies in just how fractional it is.

The usual subtractions are 15 percent for the northern NGO from a donor agency

or government, another 10 to 15 percent for the southern NGO through which that aid is channelled. That leaves about two-thirds or so for the beneficiaries. A fair-looking chunk, except that further subtractions must follow.

The money left over is “money to the programme, not necessarily the beneficiaries,” said Borren. “Some of the programme is about advocating our own governments, for instance, or advocating the EU, or advocating the World Trade Organisation. That is not getting directly into the hands of the programme participant.”

Subtract further. An ActionAid study on aid found that almost two-third of bilateral aid given is “phantom aid”. That money, John Samuel international director of ActionAid told TerraViva, “is being spent on technical support, which means advice and support by agencies and consulting groups in the donor countries”.

Within bilateral aid, substantial amounts in what is budgeted as aid money have been written actually to companies like KPMG and PriceWaterhouse Coopers at a high consultancy rate, said Samuel.

That profile varies vastly across countries. ActionAid found that the British and the Irish governments had among the best aid programmes; the United States and France were among the poorest.

The Department for International Development of the British government has “effective systems of transparency and accountability, a more international team, plus sensitivity and an understanding of

the dynamics of aid,” Samuel said. “And it has offices in those countries; outside London, its biggest office is in Delhi.”

And a big chunk of that aid goes directly to beneficiaries, he said.

In the USAID budget, some of the biggest beneficiaries are Afghanistan and Pakistan, where money goes to security issues, he said. Iraq is the biggest aid beneficiary, but very little of that money is benefitting people. “Only a minuscule part of American and French aid goes towards poverty eradication,” Samuel said.

Other familiar ghosts continue to haunt the aid business. Like fixing the books to write off debt cancellation as aid, after a green light for this kind of accounting by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a grouping of 30 rich nations. That is not a mandate the OECD has been able to undo, despite progressive policies on many other fronts.

“There is additional duplicity when some of the rich say they have increased aid and decreased debt, because they cancel each other,” said Samuel.

The subtraction business goes on. Add up the subtractions, and the total that filters through as aid is not a very impressive fraction of the 50 billion dollars or whatever in aid that the rich nations like to proclaim in collective boast.

Yes, aid giving is unequal, as the Norwegian told the Ugandan. It is doubtful reassurance on all sides that the inequality here is not quite as much as people say it is.



# Nonviolence works, activists insist

Contrary to a widespread belief that equates nonviolence with passivity, it is an active struggle.

► Harmonie Toros

Olukayode Ajayi-Smith launched a hunger strike in prison to protest lack of resources for schools in his district of Nigeria; Olivier Cournoyer Boutin wrapped his local assembly building in Canada with a “human petition” made up of flags; Advent Dlamini led a march of clergymen protesting the lack of consultation in Swaziland’s new constitution.

Delegates young and old gathered yesterday to discuss a slew of nonviolent actions used regularly across the world – and successfully, they argued – in a workshop on “Waging Non-violent Struggle”.

And contrary to a widespread belief that equates nonviolence with passivity, it is an active struggle, insisted the US-based International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC) and the Belgrade-based Centre for Applied Non-violent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) that organised the workshop.

Examples such as Mohandas Gandhi, Poland’s workers movement, and the US civil rights movement were presented as historical evidence of the potential power nonviolence.

Offering a contemporary example, Salka Barca, an activist working for the self-determination of Western Sahara, said she believed nonviolent methods are more effective than the 16-year-old armed struggle carried out by the Polisario Front against Moroccan forces.

Protests – including wearing the traditional costume or blanketing the walls of towns and villages with the banned Sahrawi flag at nights, as well as thousands of letters to governments, international organisations and businesses – are slowly putting the region’s conflict back



Moreag Livingstone

## Keys to success

- 1 Unity** People united under one unifying cause or theme; organisational cohesion and robust coalitions.
- 2 Planning** Tactical capacity building; strategic sequencing of events.
- 3 Nonviolente Discipline** Remaining nonviolent to enlist participation of most people; avoid risks associated with violent repression.

## Non-violent Methods

- 1 Protest and Persuasion** Letter, leaflets, petitions, etc.
- 2 Non-cooperation** Boycotts, not paying bills, strikes, etc.
- 3 Nonviolente Intervention** Nonviolent obstruction, seeking imprisonment, hunger strike, etc.

on the international agenda, she said.

“Our intifada, the nonviolent movement became more effective with respect to the United Nations,” she said, pointing at a UN resolution on Western Sahara passed earlier this year calling on unconditional talks between Morocco and Polisario.

But, she warned, nonviolent activists are under pressure from the former members of Polisario who are arguing for a return to armed struggle.

One participant wondered if it was precisely that threat of a possible resumption of violence that made nonviolence effective.

Janet Cherry, a veteran nonviolent ac-

tivist from South Africa, said the threat of violence was not a necessary ingredient to the success of nonviolent action.

“Violence and nonviolence can co-exist, but they are not necessarily complementary,” said Cherry.

What is needed to make nonviolent action or “people power” successful is unity, strategic planning and nonviolent discipline, said Vanessa Ortiz of the ICNC.

“What you need is numbers,” said Srdja Popovic of CANVAS and leader of the OTPOR! (Resistance!) movement that helped bring down Serbian former president Slobodan Milosevic. “And the

only way to mobilise people is to make it personal.”

Nonviolence action must not be ad hoc, Popovic insisted. There are more than 198 nonviolent actions that can be used, he said, inviting participants to share their experiences in non-violent struggle.

From boycotts to sit-ins, participants described their actions and strategies.

Omar Lopez of Cuba gathered thousands of signatures for his petition pressing Cuban authorities to stop the use of US dollars in shops, hotels and restaurants in Cuba. Most Cubans earn their salaries in pesos.

“We went to policemen and they signed. We went to a drunk man in the street, drinking pure alcohol because it is the only drink available for ordinary Cubans and asked him: ‘Do you want a good beer?’ and he signed,” said Lopez.

Another tactic presented by Cherry was the dilemma action. It involves putting your adversary in a dilemma where not giving in to your demands is also costly. The other side thus has to choose between two costly options.

“It can be simply an action that makes people laugh at your government, that makes it look foolish,” said Cherry.

One example was Gandhi’s Salt March which presented the British with the dilemma of facing mass protests and boycotts or abolishing the Salt Tax and thus losing authority and revenue.

Whichever action is chosen, it must be carefully planned and be part of a broader strategy, organisers stressed.

Discipline is another key factor. “One broken window can completely ruin the legitimacy of 100 000 people acting non-violently,” said Popovic.

Organisers also distributed a series of practical videos and a video game inviting players to organise a nonviolent protest which could turn violent or simply fail if not properly organised.

Participants were grateful of the practical tips offered.

“Most of the actions in my country are sporadic and not coordinated, so the way they are talking about how to organise a movement is very useful,” said Manju Taludhar, an activist from Nepal.



## Global Protest

Millions of people are expected to heed the call to “Stand Up and Speak Out” against poverty and inequality on October 17 this year.

Yesterday, the Global Call Against Poverty (GCAP) – which has been participating in discussions at the CIVICUS World Assembly in Glasgow, released an updated list of multi-national events being planned. These include:

### Guinness Stand Up World Record

In 2006, 23,5 million people around the world Stood Up Against Poverty – a Guinness World Record which GCAP and the UN Millennium Campaign expects to break.

### Delegations to Heads of State

Small, nationally-nominated delegations – which are representative of the population – will visit their Head of State or other political leaders on October 17<sup>th</sup> to take a message that they must do more to end poverty and inequality.

### The World’s Largest Banner

People all over the world are being asked to join an Australian and Pakistani initiative to construct the world’s largest banner, set to be 10km long and unfurled simultaneously on October 17<sup>th</sup>. The hope is that pieces of each national banner will then be sent to Washington to make one global piece calling for action at meetings of the International Financial Institutions later that month.

### Poverty Requiem

The poverty requiem was launched globally at the CIVICUS World Assembly. Now, choirs and singers worldwide are being asked to perform the piece simultaneously in October.

For more information on any of the events, go to [www.gcap-whiteband.org/](http://www.gcap-whiteband.org/).

## Post-Soviet Civil Society Emerging in the Midst of Tense Geopolitics

► Zoltán Dujisin

As the CIVICUS World Assembly discusses how to improve accountability to grassroots constituencies, representatives of civic groups from the post-soviet region admit they face a particularly delicate challenge.

The demise of socialism in Europe saw the replacement of state-sponsored civic activity by an emerging civil society. What they didn’t expect was to be caught in the crossfire of a geopolitical struggle between superpowers.

Two popular revolts against vote rigging, in 2003 in Georgia and in 2004 in Ukraine, swept to power staunchly pro-Western governments supported by local NGOs.

These NGOs are heavily reliant on funds from Western countries and philanthropists and Russia and its neighbour Belarus have accused NGOs in the region of serving western goals under the guise of democratisation.

But activists themselves are asking whether these

groups have been more accountable to their sponsors than to constituencies.

“You cannot attribute all of it to foreign foundations; you would be giving them too much credit,” Russian-born Olga Alexeeva, Head of the Charities Aid Foundation Global Trustees told TerraViva.

Civil society in Ukraine “did what had to be done, but the problem is people are very easy and fast in making revolutions and don’t think about what’s going to happen next”, she said.

Alexeeva believes Ukraine’s civic sector will now have to make sure it won’t become “a toy of politicians and people who create foundations for their personal benefit and profit”.

Georgia is in a similar position: “International financial flows supported post-soviet civil society, but the fact that democratic processes in our country were supported is good,” Paata Papava, from the Centre for Training and Consultancy in Georgia told TerraViva.

However, he admits an unhealthy mix of politics and civil society could pose a threat. “Civil society

leaders are shifting into governmental structures, and many donors are looking more intensively at initiatives coming from the government.”

The same cannot be said of Russia, where the Kremlin closely monitors politically-oriented civic groups.

“You can’t be political in Russia, that’s suicidal. In Russian you have the same word for policy and politics, and when civic groups start discussing policy, the government sees it as them discussing politics,” Alexeeva told TerraViva

Yet for most Russians this is not a problem: “They don’t give a damn about parliamentary elections, but they give a damn when a high rise building is built on a playground. Russians just live their life, they are preoccupied with their personal challenge to survive and build a decent quality of life,” said Alexeeva.

This would explain why the largest civic sector in Russia is that of apolitical social NGOs for groups such as veterans, the elderly or the disabled. This potential has not been grasped by NGOs, Alexeeva thinks.

“A revolution would be disastrous for Russia, and

would be used in even worse ways by all sorts of individuals. But there should be more reaching out to ordinary people and less publishing leaflets that nobody reads. There should be civic, not political action, teaching the public that human rights is not just politics, and that if you don’t have them other rights you might care about are not protected.”

In Belarus Dmitry Savelau, from the soon-to-be-closed Transformation of Humanities Association, defends the need for political action and claims “we are not in a situation in which we can focus on accountability”.

In Belarus “every day NGOs are closed and you can easily be considered a criminal, so we are thankful that there is any kind of alternative organisations,” he said

But Papaava thinks in Georgia it’s time for NGOs to move closer to the grassroots. “Most people are more concerned about socio-economic issues and less about democratisation, and if you want to speak for people you have to represent them.”

As in most of the post-soviet world, in Georgia donors support top-bottom democratisation and accountability refers mostly to them: “It’s not difficult to identify the reason: getting more funds and support. But we have to think of strategies and policies for building democracy from the grassroots levels,” Papava told TerraViva.



# From Nairobi to Glasgow

**Does that applause in the heart of Scotland mean that perhaps social activists want to see Britain on its knees, starving, their people drowning in the high seas waters trying to reach the rich African shores? Unlikely.**

► Alejandro Kirk

Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, is home to some of the world's biggest and worst slums. Yet, shortly before the start of 2007's World Social Forum last January, a European NGO built a fake shack at Kisangani - the huge Chinese-built sports centre where the WSF took place - to show how they screen movies for the poor in slums elsewhere. Odd.

The road to Kisangani from downtown Nairobi is a showcase of injustice and underdevelopment. The trip might take either 10 minutes or three hours, depending on the hour, as it is the only link between well-to-do suburbs and the city. On the sides, scores of people just walk, walk, walk, unable to afford a bus ride.

For well-founded safety reasons, the thousands of visiting social activists were kept apart from the poor and the poor were in turn banned from Kisangani, where passionate debates were conducted on ending poverty through radical change.

At Kisangani's main food outlet, owned by Kenya's Security Minister, a sandwich cost some L4, a little more

than a Ciabatta at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, but you could get a pint of lager in a plastic glass for about 75 pence.

In Nairobi, though, the restaurant was looted and employees forced to feed poor children for free.

In Glasgow the meals were served with precision timing.

There were no free lunches and dinners in Nairobi, but phone chips were cheap (L1,5). Celtel, the multinational phone company owned by Sudanese entrepreneur Mohammed Ibrahim sold them. Celtel was one of the WSF's sponsors, in exchange for exclusive rights within Kisangani. Mobile phone cards from Celtel were even accepted as proof of payment of WSF's fees. Weird.

Ibrahim did not participate in Nairobi, but was here in Glasgow sitting as a panelist for the BBC's World Debate this week. There he praised himself for daring to invest in Africa and said that his "dream day" would be when Africa could provide aid to Britain, which won him a warm applause from the audience.

Does that applause in the heart of Scotland mean that perhaps social activists want to see Britain on its knees,

starving, their people drowning in high seas waters trying to reach the rich African shores? Unlikely.

Security in Nairobi was provided by Kenya Police, one of the country's five police forces, dressed in combat fatigues and armed with AK-47s. What a contrast with some of the unarmed women watching us here at SECC. But who knows who is tougher.

"Civil society gatherings are noisy and messy," one young journalist said while enjoying tasteless noodles and listening to jazz in Hall 2. "This meeting looks more like a United Nations conference."

Then she stood up, climbed up to the stage, took the microphone and demanded an ovation for the musicians. Granted.

The SECC is a business conference centre, not a revolutionary hall. Yet the contracts where here too: not a fake slum, but a fake prison cell to keep alive the presence of imprisoned activists.

Next to the social fighters was The Gathering, full of booths raised by some of the more than 1 000 groups that form SCVO, our hosts. Charity and goodwill rather than revolution are more visible at Hall 5. You learn there that one in four Scots do voluntary work of some kind. Powerful.

They also print lots of documents and give away pencils, keyrings, t-shirts, bags and candies. Great to take home.

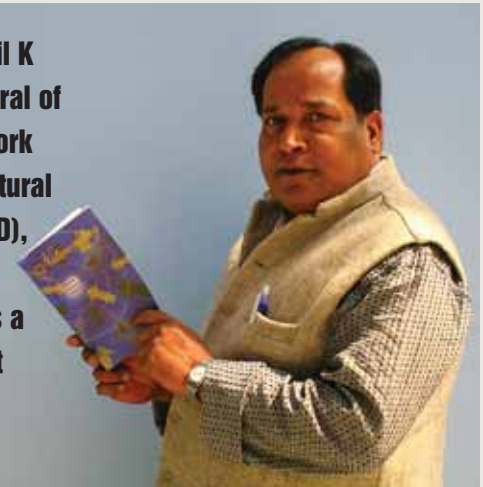
Politics surrounds, the World Assembly. It is at the core of its issues and its future. It permeates everything, from poverty alleviation to media, youth and gender.

But just like the WSF, it is what mostly torments and divides this growing being: most civil society groups, at least those on the leftish side of the spectrum, refuse to become a political force and take their ultimate responsibility in shaping the justice we all want and want now.

Q&A

## Networks that Bind

TerraViva spoke to Anil K Singh, secretary general of the South Asian Network for Social and Agricultural Development (SANSAD), who has co-authored "Networking: Towards a Better Tomorrow" that analyses networks of organisations.



Morag Livingstone

► Brendan O'Brien

**TerraViva (TV): Why are networks important?**

**Anil K Singh (AS):** Common issues and common agendas bind people together. Maybe you have a different kind of approach but because you have a common philosophy or idea you can bring people together in a network. Organisations benefit from joining together in bigger networks. Networks are important for bringing more and more organisations around a common platform to influence government policies.

Civil society organisations come in different sizes. Around 20 percent of organisations are small, 50 to 60 percent are middle sized and 10 percent are the largest and have the largest capacity and resources. So, for example if I ran a disabled organisation and I joined CIVICUS then our influence would be greater.

**TV: What are the mistakes organisations make in building networks?**

**AS:** The best network is not a federation but one where members can collaborate more loosely. Federations do not allow members to associate on other platforms; their rules are very rigid whereas in other structures different voices and opinions are allowed. Networks should keep the rules simple to allow you to keep them informal so they can be sustained for longer periods. Networks bring people together with different agendas. People who feel their agenda is being hijacked will not come and network. Every member tries to get something from the network but not all put something back in to the network. If you do not contribute then the network will become empty.

Do not depend on donor agencies or financial institutions because the donors will dictate terms and use the networks in their favour. Members should try and finance their own networks.

**TV: What do you think of the CIVICUS World Assembly?**

**AS:** CIVICUS is a great place for people to network not only because it provides a platform but also by disseminating lots of information to help to develop perspective and plans of action.

**TV: How can organisations encourage others to join them in building networks?**

**AS:** Without accountability networks do not exist. Networks are not only accountable to their members but they should be accountable to those they serve as well. Leadership should be rotational. In organisations around the world, people are not moving from their positions. If leadership rotates then interest in the network is maintained. You should have different networks for different issues. Larger organisations can encourage smaller organisations to join by helping them build capacity. Members can encourage other organisations to join in by being responsible for spreading news about the network and motivating other to participate.

## Watch your Words

► Zoltán Dujisin

You are a slave of your words, they say. It became plain yesterday at the Training Workshop on Government Accountability: a woman in wheelchair asked for the floor and caught everyone off-guard by criticising the speaker for the misuse of the word "handicapped".

"Every time someone wants to say something bad they say 'handicapped'. We should think about these terms especially if we, as

activists, believe in cultural diversity," she said.

The speaker, who was giving a multimedia presentation on public participation in India, had just quoted Kumi Naidoo as saying "the government in India is handicapped, it neither listens nor sees".

Up until then, nobody had made the connection, but many felt immediately guilty and embarrassed. The speaker argued he did not mean offence.

But she accused the speaker of

"excluding disabled people" because the pictures of public mobilisations in India, screened on the wall "did not include any disabled people."

The term "disabled" is becoming risky too: some now say "differently abled" is more appropriate. One participant complained later that words could not be banned as they can be used in different contexts.

"Identity politics taken to this extreme can only be divisive," he said.



**Delegates can show support for prisoners of conscience by signing and sending the CIVICUS postcards**

Morag Livingstone



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