

Strengthening civil society participation and promoting conflict prevention under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement

Nairobi
14–15 November 2005



Africa Peace Forum, InterAfrica Group, Saferworld

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**Report of a regional meeting on lessons learned in the
Horn of Africa**

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Acknowledgements

Africa Peace Forum, InterAfrica Group and Saferworld, are grateful for the project funding received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and the Civil Society Challenge Fund of the Department for International Development (DFID), UK.

Introduction

This is a report of the proceedings of a two-day regional meeting organised by Africa Peace Forum (APFO), InterAfrica Group (IAG) and Saferworld in Nairobi on 14-15 November 2005. The meeting was attended by representatives from the European Commission (EC) Delegations, government National Authorising Offices (NAOs), and non-state actor (NSA) committees from six of the seven countries in the Horn of Africa.¹

This was the final meeting held as part of the joint APFO, IAG and Saferworld project on “Enhancing the EU’s role in conflict prevention in the Horn of Africa.” The most recent phase of the project, which began in 2003, focused on the implementation of the EU-ACP Cotonou Partnership Agreement (Cotonou). The project was initiated to facilitate dialogue between the EC, civil society, and Horn governments, to strengthen civil society participation, and to promote conflict prevention within the Cotonou framework. Over the last two and a half years, the project has supported the formation of a variety of NSA committees in Horn countries, with the view that these would become platforms for civil society to engage in dialogue with the EC and Horn governments on conflict prevention and other policy issues.

The purpose of the meeting was to share lessons learned and to assess progress in strengthening NSA participation and promoting conflict prevention in the implementation of Cotonou in the Horn of Africa. The meeting began with presentations on the national experiences of each Horn country. Those representatives from the EC, government and NSAs that were present from each country gave presentations on the successes and challenges in strengthening NSA participation within their national contexts. On the second day of the workshop, three working groups, composed of representatives from a mix of countries, shared experiences across countries and discussed lessons learned. Discussions focused on lessons learned related to the themes of strengthening NSA participation, promoting conflict prevention, and influencing development policies and strategies within the Cotonou framework. Following this, a new set of working groups developed concrete recommendations for how the EC, NSAs, and government could strengthen dialogue and NSAs could have greater influence in policy processes.

In addition, sub-regional and Africa-wide policy processes were discussed. NSA focal points from Southern Africa and East Africa made presentations on civil society participation and activism in sub-regional policy processes, such as trade negotiations, and a paper was presented on trade, aid and conflict.² A representative from the EC Regional Political Unit gave a presentation on the EU’s political framework for policy towards the Horn of Africa and Saferworld presented on policy processes in Brussels and opportunities for advocacy.

Part one of this report summarises the main lessons learned and recommendations, as identified by participants in the working group discussions. Part two then summarises

¹ For the purpose of this report and the project, the Horn of Africa refers to the seven members of the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD): Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda. No representatives from Eritrea attended the meeting.

² This paper has been published separately. Ochieng, B (2005) *Trade, aid and conflict in the Horn of Africa: the role of the EU-ACP Cotonou Partnership Agreement*, APFO, IAG and Saferworld.

the experience of each country in the Horn, as presented by representatives from the EC, government and NSAs. Part three provides a summary of the presentations on the sub-regional experiences of Southern and Eastern Africa, and part four summarises presentations on the EU's broader political framework towards Africa, and opportunities for advocacy in Brussels.

1

Lessons learned and recommendations

Lessons learned

The following is a synthesis of the lessons learned identified by participants in the working group discussions:

- **The success and effectiveness of NSA forums has depended upon the degree to which they are recognised as legitimate and representative by the EC, government and NSAs, and therefore, the process by which they are formed is critical.** In many cases, interim or provisional NSA structures were established in an ad hoc manner, or coalesced around a particular policy process, such as the mid-term reviews. However, in some cases, these structures have not been recognised by all stakeholders as legitimate representatives of NSAs. There was broad consensus that although there is no one-size-fits-all approach, it is important that NSA forums be representative and accountable in order to be recognised as legitimate partners by the EC and government. As the case of Somalia shows, the process of establishing NSA forums can be as important as the forum itself. Although it may take a long time, continuous dialogue among all stakeholders throughout the process of establishing the forum is important for developing a structure that is ultimately recognised as representative by NSAs, and as legitimate by the EC and government.
- **NSAs need sustained support to facilitate the formation of representative structures to engage in dialogue.** Although many NSAs have the will to establish representative structures, they lack the capacity and resources to do so. NSAs need sustained support in order to carry out the mappings, facilitation, dialogue, and training required to establish representative committees that are capable of engaging in the policy process.
- **NSAs continue to struggle to access and make use of EU funds for capacity-building.** Bureaucratic procedures and resistance from governments have often prevented NSAs from accessing EU funds for capacity-building. Even when funds have been specifically committed and allocated for NSAs by the government and EC, NSAs have had difficulty making use of them, due to the complexity of procedures and eligibility requirements.
- **Government resistance to NSA participation has been a significant obstacle, in some countries.** Governments have not always been ready to accept the views of NSAs and to work in partnership with them. In some cases, governments have been suspicious of NSAs and have refused to authorise or have tried to limit EC funds available to NSAs. The perception that NSAs are linked with opposition political parties has been problematic in some countries, such as Ethiopia, and has led to mistrust of NSAs by the government. In other cases, government NAOs have lacked the capacity

to engage with NSAs or have not seen this as a priority. Where government resistance is a problem, the EC needs to take on a more proactive role in promoting dialogue, building trust, and establishing the basis for an improved working relationship between government and NSAs.

■ **The EC and Horn governments have often neglected to provide timely information to NSAs about opportunities for consultation and participation in policy processes.** In many countries, NSAs reported that they had not been informed of opportunities to participate in mid-term or annual reviews, or that they were informed too late to prepare for them. In some cases, NSAs reported that this was due to government suspicion of NSAs, and that NSAs that were viewed as ‘anti-government’ were deliberately excluded. The absence of an agreed policy and institutional framework for NSA participation and consultation was also cited as a reason for the lack of transparency and inadequate information. In some countries, such as Uganda, EC, government and NSA representatives are working together to develop ‘ground rules’ or agreed procedures for NSA consultation in EDF programming processes.

■ **Greater progress has been made where the EC has appointed a staff member specifically responsible for NSAs and has proactively supported NSA participation.** On the other hand, in countries such as Djibouti, where the EC Delegation is understaffed and under-resourced, the absence of an NSA focal point and the lack of EC capacity for sustained engagement with NSAs remain serious obstacles to NSA participation.

■ **NSA committees have not always been effective in disseminating information to their constituencies.** NSA representatives reported that they were often unable to widely disseminate information and lessons learned from workshops (such as this one), particularly at the grassroots level. In some cases, this has been due to the fact that NSAs do not have well-established networks and information and communications systems. Some NSA committees do not have strong links at the grassroots level and there is often a significant gap between awareness in the capitals and in the rural areas. NSA representatives recognised the importance of awareness-raising outside the capitals, and felt that this should be done in a way that enables people to understand how Cotonou directly impacts on their daily lives so that they can actively engage with the issues and participate. In addition, NSA representatives reported that the lack of continuity of people attending workshops has been a problem.

■ **Capacity should be measured and defined in relation to specific objectives.** Lack of capacity was repeatedly identified as an important obstacle to NSA participation. But, many expressed concern that it was not clear what was meant by ‘capacity-building’ and questioned whose objectives ‘capacity-building’ was designed to serve. A lesson learned is that capacity should be measured in relation to specific objectives - the skills and resources needed depend upon one’s objectives.

■ **Developing a good working relationship between the EC, government and civil society representatives, based on mutual respect and trust is crucial.** Uganda is a good model of a constructive working relationship between NSA, government, and EC representatives.

■ **Evidence-based advocacy is a critical ingredient of policy dialogue.** Where NSAs have tried to engage in policy change, they have often lacked the advocacy know-how required to influence policy-makers or the evidence base to support their claims. For instance, if NSAs are going to engage in trade debates, they need technical understanding of trade negotiations as well as evidence to support their arguments.

■ **Governments have been more receptive to NSA influence in some sectors than in others, and conflict is generally a sensitive issue.** Generally, governments have been much less willing to involve NSAs in discussions on governance, human rights and conflict, than on less politically sensitive issues such as trade. For instance,

NGOs interviewed in the mapping study in Ethiopia reported that the government was open to consulting with them on the PRSP and the food security policy, but not on the rights of pastoralists and human rights issues.

■ **NSAs committees have often focused more on developing structures and processes for dialogue, than on advocacy on particular policy issues, and as a result, the focus on conflict prevention has been limited.** Participants reported that NSA committees had primarily focused on processes and structures for NSA participation, rather than on advocacy on particular policy issues, such as conflict prevention. Improving dialogue and strengthening NSA participation were seen as prerequisites for influencing development policies and programmes and making them more conflict-sensitive. However, participants also discussed the need to move beyond this focus on processes, to develop concrete strategies and plans for change.

■ **There are a number of opportunities for NSAs to promote conflict prevention within the Cotonou framework, particularly, to advocate for a conflict-sensitive approach to development co-operation.** Cotonou contains explicit commitments to conflict prevention, which provide an opportunity to advocate for a conflict-sensitive approach to development co-operation under the agreement. NSAs could make use of the annual, mid-term and end-of-term review processes to review the impact of development programmes on conflict. They could also use the next CSP revision as an opportunity to advocate for mainstreaming a conflict-sensitive approach throughout the development strategy. There is growing recognition that NSAs are key stakeholders in conflict analyses. This provides an opportunity for NSAs to participate in conflict analyses, which could then be used to inform programming.

■ **Further work is needed to consider how NSAs could promote conflict prevention in the trade and political dialogue dimensions of Cotonou.** NSAs could explore opportunities to make trade 'conflict-sensitive' and to bring conflict issues into EPA negotiations and debates. But, there is a need to better understand the relationship between trade and conflict, at both the local and regional levels, for instance, by investigating cases where trade could make conflict worse or by bringing small farmers into the discussion. Evidence and case studies of the impact of trade on conflict are needed as a basis for advocating that the conflict-impact of trade be considered in EPA negotiations. NSAs could also investigate ways of participating in political dialogue between the government and EC under Cotonou, which may focus directly on conflict prevention and management.

■ **NSAs could also engage with regional structures that are involved in conflict prevention and management, such as the African Union, IGAD, CEWARN, FEWSNET and RECSA.** Participants felt that a strong regional NSA forum could play a role in voicing common problems and representing NSAs in regional institutions, in EPA negotiations and in Brussels. However, they felt that it was first important to support the development of strong, representative national forums.

Recommendations

The following is a summary of the recommendations made by participants, based on the working group discussions:

To the EC Delegations:

- Appoint a focal point or establish a desk with well-trained staff dedicated to working with NSAs in each Horn country. The role of the focal point should be to provide information to NSAs, to facilitate dialogue, and to support NSA capacity-building.
- Take a proactive role in informing NSAs about opportunities to participate in development programming and reviews (eg annual and mid-term reviews, CSP revisions). Ensure that schedules and timetables are disseminated in a timely way, so that NSAs have the opportunity to prepare a response and participate productively.

- Simplify funding procedures and requirements for NSAs to enable them access funds.
- Establish a separate funding instrument that would allow direct funding for NSAs without requiring authorisation of the government. This would enable the EC to work directly with NSAs and would prevent the government from blocking their participation or access to resources.
- Establish an independent body to monitor and evaluate NSA participation. This body should be appointed through a process mutually agreed by government, EC and NSAs.

To Horn governments:

- Actively support NSA participation in the next revision of Country Strategy Papers (CSPs), due to occur over the next two years in the Horn. Work with NSA and EC representatives to agree a set of procedures for involving and consulting with NSAs in the upcoming CSP revision process.
- Work with NSAs and EC representatives to develop and agree a policy framework, 'ground rules' and/or set of procedures for NSA participation and consultation in Cotonou processes.
- Set up desk or focal point within the NAO to specifically engage with NSAs. Ensure that officers have time, authority and skills to engage with NSAs and that they view this as a priority.

To NSAs:

- NSA forums must be representative of **all** NSAs. The apex forum or steering committee must be recognised by NSAs as their legitimate representative.
- Establish a Memorandum of Understanding and a code of conduct for each national NSA forum. This should include guidelines on communication and dissemination of information throughout NSA networks and on how to work together.
- Improve dissemination of information from the apex forum or steering committee to other NSAs, and strengthen networks and links at the grassroots level.
- Establish a roster of NSA experts working on particular themes, sectors or policy areas.
- Explore opportunities to promote conflict prevention within trade and aid policy processes and frameworks. Look beyond Cotonou when exploring opportunities to promote conflict prevention.

2

National perspectives from the Horn of Africa

Overview of progress in the Horn of Africa

Thomas Ansorg, Saferworld

The process of implementing Cotonou in the Horn of Africa has greatly progressed over the last three years of the joint APFO, IAG and Saferworld project. There is now more sustained dialogue between Horn governments and civil society and between governments and the EC. Progress has also been made in strengthening dialogue between the EC and civil society, though this has been more limited. There is greater awareness of Cotonou's provisions and of the importance of NSA involvement under the agreement. There is also greater awareness that development assistance has the potential to aggravate conflict.

Provisional NSA structures have now been formed in five of the seven Horn countries. The exceptions were Somalia, where the process of organising NSAs is well-advanced and three regional working groups have been established, and Eritrea, which remains a very difficult environment for civil society.

The EC has also appointed a NSA focal person or dedicated member of staff to engage with NSAs in many of the Horn countries. This has been crucial to enabling dialogue with NSAs. In countries where the EC has not established an NSA focal point, NSA participation is lagging far behind. Progress has also been made in establishing EC-funded programmes to enhance the capacity of NSAs to participate within the Cotonou framework.

Governments increasingly recognise the need for NSA participation and consultation in the development of CSPs and in the annual, mid-term and end-of-term review processes. The joint project organised a meeting around the mid-term review process that generated debate and raised awareness of the need to institutionalise processes for consulting and involving NSAs.

Nonetheless, the level of NSA participation has varied significantly from country to country. In Uganda, civil society participation is most advanced. In Kenya, the focus of NSA participation in Cotonou processes has been on trade and on the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPAs) negotiations. In Ethiopia, NSAs have provided some input into the mid-term and annual review processes, but there is a need for more systematic engagement. In Djibouti, the focus has been on raising awareness of Cotonou's provisions and the role of NSAs in its implementation. In Somalia, significant

progress has been made in raising awareness of Cotonou and a process for developing a representative NSA forum is underway. Finally, in Eritrea, progress has not been made due to lack of support from the government.

Despite significant progress, there are still many challenges to be overcome. Consultations with NSAs on development programming are still happening on an ad hoc basis, giving NSAs insufficient time to prepare. Although awareness of Cotonou has improved, it is still very limited outside the capitals. There have also been delays in disbursing EC funds for NSA capacity-building, and lack of clarity about who is eligible.

There have been a number of important steps toward reducing conflict in the Horn, notably the signing of peace agreements in Sudan and Somalia. This is reflected in the recent *Human Security Report*, which reports that the number of conflicts and fatalities from conflict has decreased in sub-Saharan Africa, though the level of fatalities is still greater in sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else in the world.

However, although the number of conflicts has been reduced, **the underlying causes of conflicts are not being addressed**. Conflicts are being repressed or contained, but without addressing their root causes, the region will remain volatile and vulnerable to conflict.

Despite the important role that development assistance can play in addressing the root causes of conflict, conflict prevention is still not systematically addressed in CSPs in the Horn. The risk of conflict is sometimes identified, but the link is then not made to sector or programming priorities. While some development frameworks in the Horn address security issues, this is usually addressed narrowly through specific interventions focusing on the security system. Instead, conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity should be mainstreamed across all sectors of development programming.

Uganda

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Uwe Bergmeier, EC Delegation in Uganda
Fred Twesiime, NAO

In Uganda, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) recognises NGOs, community-based organisations, farmers association, churches and other faith based groups, co-operatives and other citizens' associations as key stakeholders in the fight against poverty. The Government of Uganda recognises CSOs as important to grassroots democracy and to poverty reduction because they hold local and central government institutions accountable and help the Government understand the needs of the most marginalised sectors of the population. For instance, CSOs monitor whether resources are used properly and reach those for whom they are intended and make the government and public aware of people who abuse or interfere with the smooth flow of resources. They also articulate demands for appropriate services by vulnerable communities.

The National Indicative Programme (NIP) for the ninth EDF in Uganda identifies two focal sectors for EC support: transport and rural development (support for the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) as well as macro-economic support and support for economic reform). In addition, interventions have been planned in the non-focal sectors of decentralisation, rule of law and human rights (six percent of ninth EDF). The NIP identifies the role of CSOs as a cross-cutting issue, and provides for targeted support to strengthen the capacity of civil society to engage in the development process in

order to enhance their role across all sectors (three percent of ninth EDF).

The EU's support for poverty reduction in Uganda is designed to assist sectors that are considered critical for the future development of the country. In deciding which sectors to support, the following criteria are used:

- the development priorities of the Government outlined in the PEAP, PMA, etc
- the financial requirements and implementation capacities in the sectors concerned
- the history of development co-operation between the EC and Uganda
- complementarity with other donors.

The Government has opened up democratic space for CSOs by involving them in policy processes and in programme implementation and monitoring. This is slowly evolving and CSOs are presently trying to find ways to stretch the accepted boundaries of democratic practice. In the past, CSOs have primarily engaged in the provision of services. CSOs have a tough task in engaging with the Government and donors because of a lack of technical and analytical skills as well as a lack of a common understanding of problems and approaches. At the same time, many donors have directed their support to a few, larger and more visible CSOs. This has left a gap between CSOs in Kampala and their sister organisations at the district, parish and village level.

The Government, through the Office of the Prime Minister, and in collaboration with CSOs, formulated a four-year programme to support civil society with an estimated budget of 8 million euros. The EU-Civil Society Support Programme under the 9th EDF is essentially a capacity building programme to expand the skills and ability of Ugandan CSOs to participate in the development process and hold those institutions accountable that affect the lives of the poor. CSOs are the intermediate beneficiaries of the programme, which is designed to empower the local population, particularly the more vulnerable groups.

The overall objective of the programme is to ensure that government and donor policies and programmes are increasingly responsive to the demands of the more vulnerable sections of the population. In order to achieve this, CSOs need to be able to engage effectively with government, the private sector and donor agencies in the development process, and this is the prime objective of this support. The programme will act at three levels (national, district and local) but will focus particularly on supporting CSOs and communities at the grassroots level. It is expected to yield the following results:

- improved co-ordination and networking amongst participating apex organisations and networks and ensure that they are more accountable and representative;
- empowered local populations, particularly vulnerable groups in selected districts through CSO activities and greater involvement in resource planning and monitoring;
- improved capacity of CSOs to advocate and lobby on issues affecting the poor;
- improved capacity of CSOs to deliver services appropriate to the poor and
- National Regulation Framework to facilitate CSO-government relations and CSO involvement in the development process.

Within this framework the programme aims to enhance the capacity of CSOs to be actively and productively involved in the implementation and monitoring of development programmes, as well as to enhance their advocacy capacity. The programme will follow a 'human rights based approach', intended to enable the poor to increase demand for their rights (political, civil, economic and social) and to exercise their right to participate.

CSOs are not a cohesive group and hence need to be organised to speak with 'one voice' and to increase their legitimacy, transparency and accountability.

Uganda is often held up as a good model of civil society participation and of

constructive NSA, government and EC dialogue. However, there remain a number of important challenges ahead. The first challenge relates to the composition of the NSA committee. Uganda's Steering Committee is primarily composed of civil society networks. NSAs in Uganda are now at a point where they need to discuss whether it is possible to broaden the composition of the Steering Committee to include the private sector, trade unions and other NSAs. The second challenge is that the Government does not yet have an agreed policy framework for NSA participation. A policy framework is needed in order to institutionalise NSA participation. The third challenge is that although funds have been allocated for NSA capacity-building under the ninth EDF, NSAs may not have the capacity to absorb them, because of lack of capacity to meet the requirements and guidelines for using these funds.

Kenya

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Benson Ochieng, African Centre for Technology Studies

Kenya was a latecomer in terms of NSA participation in Cotonou processes. NSA involvement in Cotonou has focused primarily on trade issues and grew out of civil society activism around the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Freidrich Ebert Foundation (FES) initiated the process in 2001 by organising a group of civil society organisations (CSOs) to work on trade issues, focusing particularly on the WTO. FES, in collaboration with APFO and EcoNews, later supported the formation of an ad hoc group called the Kenya Civil Society Alliance. The group initially tried to follow the broad definition of NSAs under Cotonou and include the private sector, economic and social partners, civil society organisations, and local government authorities. However, civil society and the private sector had different interests (particularly in relation to trade debates) and found it difficult to work together. The private sector organised under a separate umbrella called the Kenya Private Sector Alliance

Kenyan civil society did not participate in the development of the EU CSP. The CSP acknowledges this and implies that because the CSP is based on Kenya's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which was developed through a participatory process, civil society participation in the formulation of the CSP was not essential.

Kenyan civil society also did not participate effectively in the mid-term review (MTR) process. Civil society was not well organised to participate in the review and the Alliance was only beginning to coalesce when the review began. Civil society was not informed that the review was happening well in advance and did not have time to prepare. They participated in a meeting, which they thought was the beginning of the review, but which actually turned out to be the concluding meeting. The failure to inform civil society of the review in a timely way reflected government suspicion of civil society, as well as the lack of systems for information management and communication.

In response to their inability to participate formally in the MTR process, Kenyan civil society produced their own alternative report, which they sent to the NAO and the EC. This 'parallel' report was then annexed to the official review, ironically giving the impression that Kenyan civil society had actively participated in the review.

Only one percent of the total EDF for Kenya, out of a possible fifteen percent, has been allocated to NSAs. This reflects the fact that Kenyan NSAs were not involved in the allocation decision.

Looking forward, there are a number of challenges and opportunities for NSA participation in Cotonou processes in Kenya, particularly in the area of conflict prevention. Because Kenyan CSOs have focused primarily on trade issues in their engagement in Cotonou processes (ie Economic Partnership Agreements), there is a need to make a clearer case for the link between trade and conflict, so as to bring conflict issues into trade discussions. Case studies and evidence of the impact of trade on conflict are needed in order to achieve this. In addition, a major challenge is to strengthen the involvement of CSOs from the conflict sector in Cotonou processes.

Somalia

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Thomas Ansorg, Saferworld

Somalia is a 'special case' because it lacks an internationally recognised government. Because there is no government NAO, the Somalia Unit of the EC delegation based in Kenya is playing this role. Somalia doesn't have a CSP. Instead, the EC has developed a Strategy for the Implementation of Special Aid to Somalia (SISAS). SISAS has four main objectives:

- To enhance good governance, to support reconciliation and sustainable peace building.
- To reduce widespread vulnerability
- To improve access to affordable social services
- To enhance sustainable economic growth and diversification

Support to NSAs within SISAS falls under the first objective of supporting good governance and sustainable peace-building. The EC has held a number of consultations with NSAs. In 2002, the joint APFO, IAG and Saferworld project facilitated a meeting in Hargeisa with the EC Somalia Unit and CSOs, where a provisional NSA forum was formed. Since then, a series of consultations have been held. In 2004 in Nairobi, NSAs were involved in the mid-term review process, and later in Djibouti in 2005, a meeting was held to share the conclusions of the MTR. A consultation was held on the focal sectors for assistance in Nairobi in 2005.

The EC is actively supporting the formation of an NSA forum, through a project implemented by Saferworld, which began in September 2004. The process of establishing the NSA forum began in 2002, when the need for broad-based participatory structure for dialogue with the EC was made clear. A series of consultations was held on what the role of such a forum should be. Extensive mappings of NSAs in the three regions of Somaliland, Puntland and South-Central were conducted, and went hand in hand with awareness-raising activities. The mappings included seven categories of NSAs, including the private sector, women, elders (traditional leaders), NGOs, youth and professionals.

Over the last five months, working groups were formed in each of the three regions. The project is being carried out in parallel in the three regions and NSAs are engaging with the respective administrations in these regions. The working groups are also engaging in dialogue with each other and are now at the point where they will decide whether to form a national forum and what this forum should look like. EC support for the NSA forum through this project will continue for the coming three years.

In the future, the EC envisions:

- More engagement with the Transitional Federal Institutions.
- Periodic consultations with the NSA Forum (on the external evaluation of the SISAS, the preparation of future programming, and on working towards a CSP)
- Advocacy for the role of NSAs during the Transitional period and thereafter

Somalia has differed from other countries in the Horn of Africa in that the process of establishing an NSA forum has been very deliberate and has been based upon extensive consultations and mappings of CSOs to ensure that the forum is representative and legitimate. In Somalia, the existing working groups represent a wide range of NSAs, including the private sector. In addition, the EC has been continuously engaged in the process of setting up the forum. There is a strong recognition that the process for establishing the forum is as important as the forum itself and that there is a need for continuous dialogue among NSAs and other stakeholders throughout the process.

Sudan

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Hussein Alahmar Koko, NSA Interim Committee for Sudan

The EU suspended development co-operation with Sudan in the 1990s due to concerns about human rights abuses and the civil war between North and South. With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the EU resumed development co-operation with Sudan. The EC and the Government of Sudan signed the CSP in January 2005, shortly after the signing of the peace agreement. Development co-operation is very new and the EC and the government are still adjusting.

The CSP allocates 318 million euros to the reconstruction and development process. The two focal sectors are food security and education.

The first development activities began in March 2005 with the launching of the Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme. The EC Delegation has various ongoing projects dealing with or involving NSAs. However, until now, the NSAs that have been the most involved in directly implementing EC projects in Sudan are international NGOs.

The EC also has a specific project, which aims to support capacity-building of NSAs, called the Non-state Actors Capacity Building Programme. However, this programme has suffered serious setbacks and delays due to technical, procedural and political problems. A number of factors brought the viability of the project into question, including the limited presence of the EC in the South, political difficulties, and the particular situation of Sudan ("one country, two systems"). The EC representatives asked for patience with this process, stating that the delays were partly related to the newness of development co-operation and to the lack of capacity of the NAO. Recently, there has been some progress in getting this programme up and running, and funds have been disbursed to the programme. The main activities will be two regional workshops, which will aim to disseminate information on the project and on the Cotonou Agreement, collect information on NSAs' immediate training needs, propose the creation of regional

NSA networks and discuss NSAs' participation in North-South peace-building.

Three million euros have been earmarked under the Rehabilitation and Capacity Building Programme (RECAP) to provide further assistance to NSAs in a later phase of the project.

There are two interim Cotonou committees in Sudan, representing the North and South. A plan has been developed to establish an NSA forum based on a decentralised structure composed of regional forums that reflect Sudan's decentralised federal structure, under the CPA.

The process of establishing an NSA forum in Sudan began in 2002. Separate activities were carried out in parallel in North and South Sudan, leading to the formation of two interim NSA committees. The joint Saferworld, IAG and APFO project facilitated two North-South dialogue meetings with members of the interim NSA committees in August 2004 and September 2005.

ECDPM funded a mapping of NSAs in Sudan, however, the study was limited in its coverage of Sudan's regions. In May 2002, the NSA interim committee (in Khartoum), in collaboration with a consultant employed by the EC, developed and agreed a plan to establish an NSA forum based on a decentralised structure composed of regional forums that reflect Sudan's federal structure. A process of surveying NSAs, with the aim of establishing an NSA database was initiated in 2003. NSAs were trained to carry out the survey and information was collected, but the project was never completed. Given the changes in Sudan since the information was collected, particularly the outbreak of conflict in Darfur, the accuracy of the existing data is now questionable.

The process of forming the regional and national NSA forums should be completed, once the NSA capacity-building programme is up and running. However, the changes associated with achievement of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and the potential for a political resolution to conflicts in Darfur and Eastern Sudan, may impact on the work of CSOs and the way in which they organise themselves, leading to further restructuring.

South Sudan is far behind in this process. The Government of South Sudan (GoSS) is still being set up, and the deputy NAO for the South has not yet been appointed. The EC Delegation will meanwhile act on its behalf.

NSA representatives from the South reported that Southern Sudanese civil society has a very poor relationship with the Sudanese Government in Khartoum. They also reported that NSAs in the South are suspicious of the EC because the EC has historically treated Sudan as one country, rather than two systems in one country. Previously, the EC argued that funds for NSAs in the South would have to be authorised by the NAO in Khartoum and that NSAs would have to be registered in Khartoum in order to be eligible. This was unacceptable to Southern NSAs. An extension of the EC should open in the months to come in the South and a deputy NAO will also be appointed shortly in the South.

NSA representatives expressed frustration that they have not been able to access EC funds. In particular, they referred to difficulties in meeting funding criteria and requirements and inability to manage large EC grants, due to their size.

The Sudanese Government recently issued a decree that limits the freedoms of civil society and requires CSOs to re-register with the government. NSA representatives from both interim committees expressed concern about the provisional decree relating to CSOs, stating that it violated the Interim National Constitution. Sudanese civil society as well as the international community are concerned by this decree and a political demarche has also been carried out by the EC and other donors

Djibouti

Charmarke Idris, Ministry of Employment, Government of Djibouti
Ahmed Arita Ali, Djibouti Cotonou Task Force

The joint APFO, IAG and Saferworld project initiated the process of raising awareness of Cotonou in Djibouti, with a workshop organised in March 2004. There had been no previous initiatives in Djibouti of this kind. A provisional task force, comprised of six CSOs was formed to work on the poverty reduction strategy for Djibouti.

Civil society now faces the challenge of establishing a more permanent NSA structure. The government has been pushing for civil society to be more organised before they are provided with capacity-building and support.

During the mid-term review, a debate took place relating to CSO participation. The government now recognises the need for more involvement of civil society through the task force.

The EC Delegation in Djibouti currently only has two staff members and has not yet appointed a focal person to work with NSAs. Although there has been a person within the Delegation who engages with NSAs as part of her role, the Delegation still does not have the capacity to support NSA participation and engagement has suffered from a high level of staff turn-over. The EC needs to appoint a permanent NSA focal point in order for the process to move forward.

The joint APFO, IAG and Saferworld project is the only source of support for this process. Awareness has been raised of Cotonou and the government has recognised need for consultation and dialogue with NSAs. But, there is a need for continued support if tangible changes are to be made to strengthen NSA participation.

Ethiopia

Saheleselasie Abebe, Center for Local Capacity Building & Studies
Mesfin Tilahun, NAO
Yibrah Hagos, Rest Relief Society of Tigray

Representatives from civil society and government spoke about the successes and challenges of NSA participation in Ethiopia. NSAs have been represented or consulted on co-operation strategies and policies in Ethiopia. NSAs were invited to “give feedback” on the CSP for 2002-2007. NSAs were also consulted in the joint annual reviews in 2003 and 2004, where they provided input and recommendations. Their recommendations on the 2004 review will be attached to the final report. However, although NSAs were consulted, they were involved very late in the process of preparing the CSP and JARs. NSAs have also lacked capacity to fully participate in the process, and their input has been more limited in some thematic areas than in others. Slow dissemination of information to NSAs by the EC has been also been a problem.

NSAs were also consulted in the preparation of Ethiopia's PRSP, called the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme (SDPRP).

NSAs are also represented in the national and regional forums in the EPA negotiations. About half of the task force in the National Development and Trade Policy Forum is from NSAs, while about one third of the task force in the Regional Negotiation Forum is from NSAs.

After three years of delays, progress has been made in committing and signing an agreement to allocate ten million euros to a Civil Society Fund to be used for NSA capacity-building. CSOs are represented on the Steering Committee of the Fund. While this is a step forward, CSOs still have not been able to access these funds. Now that the programme has been approved, it may start early next year. There is a separate programme, the Micro and Small Enterprise Development Programme (seven million euros) to provide assistance to the private sector and promote business development.

Another challenge has been delays in establishing a 'formal' Cotonou Task Force to represent NSAs. The current interim Cotonou Task Force was established by IAG and is comprised of representatives from nine organisations (primarily advocacy NGOs). A mapping of NSAs has now been completed by the British Council.

CSOs, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED) have a stronger working relationship and improved dialogue. A steering committee that includes the EC, MOFED and four CSO representatives from the Cotonou task force has been established to facilitate dialogue. After pressure and lobbying by NSAs, the EC has also established a permanent focal person within the Delegation to work directly with CSOs. This is very welcome.

The joint Saferworld, IAG and APFO project has supported this process in Ethiopia and raised awareness of Cotonou. No financial support has been received from the EC, MOFED or other donors.

The NAO, EC and the Cotonou task force will work together to establish a set of 'ground rules' for NSA participation and consultation in Ethiopia under Cotonou. They will each nominate two representatives to join a special working group that will develop the ground rules. The Cotonou task force will also identify its immediate needs (eg information sharing, briefing, training) in order to be better prepared for upcoming consultations on the 2005 joint annual review, the end of term review, and the next CSP and will submit these suggestions to the EC.

3

Sub-regional perspectives from Southern and East Africa

Southern African experience

Thomas Deve, MWENGO

Civil society activism around Cotonou at the Southern Africa sub-regional level has been more focused on social and economic justice and rights than in East Africa, and has been very politically charged. MWENGO, a Zimbabwean NGO, is the NSA focal point for the Southern Africa region. The NSAs that are active are primarily pro-democracy activists and CSOs whose mission is to promote human, social and economic rights. The approach has been influenced by the history of social movements in the region and has emphasised grassroots mobilisation.

The sub-region has established “centres of excellence”, which are pools of experts in the region focusing on particular policy areas, such as trade or peace and security. In many cases, civil society expertise and technical capacity surpasses that of government officials. The themes NSAs are working on at the regional level include, human rights and governance, gender mainstreaming, HIV/AIDs, economic policy, trade and regional integration.

CSOs in Southern Africa have fundamentally questioned whether the EU-ACP partnership enshrined in Cotonou really brings benefits to the ACP countries. At a workshop in Harare in 2003, civil society expressed a very angry assessment of the relationship. For instance, they felt it reflected the strong states within Africa linking up with the strong states in Europe, bringing about a new power dynamic. They also felt that Europe was behaving as “big brother” (telling Africa to sort out its internal conflicts) and that the agreement was a mechanism of control that did not really bring tangible benefits to people’s lives. They have also question who is participating in Cotonou dialogue, saying that *citizens* are not participating and that the relationship is not democratic and genuine.

Civil society has placed a strong emphasis on the trade dimensions of Cotonou, and generally view the agreement as more about trade than about aid. They have opposed

the fact that Cotonou operates within the framework of the WTO. They have also argued that the Eastern and Southern Africa configuration in the Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations undermines Africa's own regional configurations (eg SADC and COMESA).

East African experience

Peter Aoga, EcoNews

The discussions made clear that East Africa is much farther behind than Southern Africa in terms of the organisation of civil society at the regional level and civil society engagement in regional policy processes. EcoNews is the East Africa representative or focal point for NSAs. Although an East Africa NSA forum exists on paper, it does not really exist in practice.

EcoNews tried to facilitate the creation of a regional forum, however, this has not been possible because national forums and task forces have not been established yet in countries such as Tanzania. Nonetheless, EcoNews has been playing a central role in the "no to EPA" campaign, and in trade discussions which affect the Eastern and Southern Africa region.

4

EU policy towards Africa

The EU's regional political framework and the new EU-Africa Strategy

Francesca Arato, EC Regional Political Unit

Political dialogue is an essential part of Cotonou and of the new EU-Africa Strategy. In fact, political dialogue is one of the innovations of Cotonou, as previous agreements focused on trade and aid dimensions of co-operation. Conflict prevention is an important component of political dialogue.

In pre-crisis situations, or countries at risk of conflict, the EC supports on good governance (democracy, civil society, independent media, gender equality) and on cross-cutting issues such as arms trafficking and cross-border issues. The EC also uses conflict prevention instruments such as the rapid reaction mechanism (RRM) and early warning systems.

In post-crisis situations, the EC has taken a "friends of" approach, which is a way of collaborating with other international donors in diplomatic relations towards a country or group of countries. For instance, this approach has been used to provide technical, financial and diplomatic support to the International Conference on the Great Lakes and has been used to support reconciliation processes. The EC also supports demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration and security sector reform in post-conflict contexts.

The general objectives of the EU's regional political approach for the Horn of Africa are:

- Regional stabilisation
- Fighting terrorism and trafficking
- Countering the proliferation of small arms and light weapons
- Promoting economic and political development

The EU focuses on a range of cross-border issues that are relevant to the Horn of Africa, including managing regional water resources, addressing the needs of pastoralist communities, reducing insecurity in border areas, responding to fundamentalism, and encouraging regional co-operation and integration.

The proposed EU Strategy for Africa is a new, comprehensive and integrated framework for EU policy towards Africa. It is currently only a *proposal* of the European Commission to the Council and European Parliament, and is therefore not an adopted

approach. The Strategy addresses Africa as one entity, and provides an overarching framework for improving EU-Africa relations. Although it is a new strategy, it would be implemented within the existing Cotonou processes, and would strengthen and improve the existing approach. It aims to strengthen the relationship between the EU and Africa, not just from the perspective of aid, but also economic and political ties. It brings together the different dimensions of co-operation (aid, trade, political dialogue) into a single integrated approach.

The main objective of the Strategy is attaining the Millennium Development Goals within Africa. The Strategy has four pillars:

- peace and security,
- good governance and democracy,
- economic growth
- sustainable development.

The Strategy is guided by six principles: equality, partnership, ownership, subsidiarity, solidarity, and political dialogue. The principle of subsidiarity refers to the idea that although Africa is one entity, engagement will occur at different levels – continental, sub-regional and national. This implies that although the Strategy sets out an integrated framework for Africa as a whole, different approaches could be used in different parts of Africa.

The view from Brussels – opportunities for advocacy

Damien Helly, EU Policy and Advocacy Co-ordinator, Saferworld

Saferworld now has a presence in Brussels. This opens up opportunities for advocacy towards EU institutions in Brussels focused on EU policy towards Africa and how it is practically implemented on the ground. The presentation focused on the current focus of policy discussions related to Africa in Brussels as well as some of the challenges for advocacy in Brussels.

EU policy processes in Brussels have been stagnating, following the rejection of the new EU Constitution with 'no' votes on referendums in France and Netherlands. Elections in Germany have meant there has been no leadership during the last two months, which has also stalled policy processes. There were huge expectations that the UK Presidency of the EU would deliver policy changes towards Africa. The UK's Commission for Africa and its decision to make Africa a priority in its presidency of the G8 raised expectations but the results were ultimately disappointing.

The proposed EU-Africa Strategy is supposed to be a new start for EU policy towards Africa. The strategy has been proposed by the European Commission, but has not been approved yet, so it should not be considered a final document. The strategy promotes very big principles, but the challenge will be whether the new approach is actually translated into action. Many of the principles, such as ownership and equality, are very difficult to implement in practice. Furthermore, without a change in the budget, there will be no real change in policy on the ground. Discussions relating to the budget are ongoing and it remains to be seen whether the Commission will have adequate means to meet the ambitions of the strategy.

There are a number of challenges associated with effective advocacy in Brussels. Firstly, information and communications links need to be established between day-to-day work on the ground and what people in Brussels need to know. Secondly, it is important to understand the calendar and timetable in Brussels, and to engage early, to

increase one's chances of influencing decision-making. Thirdly, recommendations need to be practical, concrete and specific, even if this means going into technical detail. Policy-makers in Brussels often have very limited time, so it is important to communicate one's message precisely, and to make a very clear argument for why a particular policy issue matters. Fourthly, it is important to remember the importance of member states, who ultimately provide the funds to the EU, and to make use of them as well in advocacy.

Another challenge is to maintain the focus on conflict prevention and on mainstreaming a conflict-sensitive approach in aid and trade policy processes. NSAs have the potential to use their knowledge and experience to demonstrate the importance of conflict sensitivity, so it is important to keep this on the agenda, and to focus on the achievements, strengths and potential of NSAs in this area.

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InterAfrica Group (IAG) is an independent regional organisation based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which focuses on advancing peace, justice and respect for humanitarian law in the Greater Horn of Africa.

Saferworld is an independent non-governmental organisation that works with governments and civil society internationally to research, promote and implement new strategies to increase human security and prevent armed violence.



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