

BREAKING GROUND, TAKING ROOTS:

THE ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES@7

CSOPartnership 
for **Development Effectiveness**



DOCUMENTATION REPORT



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADE	AID AND DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS
AP	ASIA AND PACIFIC
CC	COORDINATION COMMITTEE
CPDE	CSO PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS
CSO	CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION
DE	DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS
EC	EUROPEAN COMMISSION
EDC	EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION
EE	ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
GPEDC	GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION
HLM	HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
HRBA	HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH
IP	ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES
NOD	NAIROBI OUTCOME DOCUMENT
PS	PRIVATE SECTOR
SDG	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
SPD	SECURITY, PEACE, AND DEVELOPMENT
UN	UNITED NATIONS

OPENING REMARKS

Tetet Nera-Lauron, Co-Chair of CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, welcomed the participants and opened the event by paying respect to the 7th death anniversary of Medardo Roda, fondly called 'Ka Roda', a landless peasant, taxi and jeepney driver, and freedom fighter who was jailed on charges of rebellion against the Marcos dictatorship.

Nera-Lauron shared how Ka Roda worked tirelessly for a truly progressive, democratic, and free society through organizing and leading struggles against foreign monopoly control of the Philippine oil industry and government collusion with industrial giants.

She then related that like Ka Roda, it is in civil society's DNA to expose and oppose what is wrong in society, and to propose alternatives that work for the betterment of people and planet through powerful tools – arousing, organizing, mobilizing – for change.



Nera-Lauron reminded CSO participants of the 3-year process of arriving at the Istanbul Principles (IPs) on CSO development effectiveness that articulated civil society's core values and accountability as independent development actors performing a myriad of roles from watchdogs, service providers, advocates, mobilizers and so on.

She posited however that while these principles are not new, there is still a low level of awareness among CSOs – not because they do not practice it in their

daily operations nor they find it unimportant, but because of the countless urgent priorities and struggles that we are faced with everyday. She also cited the lack of an enabling environment for CSOs – not as an excuse for such low IP awareness but as a reality check, saying that CSOs are disabled from effectively promoting the principle of dialogue and participation by the lack of government recognition; their efforts towards environmental sustainability are countered by laws and programs that continue to give a blank check to foreign mining corporations to exploit natural resources; they are barred from effectively promoting and upholding human rights as they themselves are moving targets of rights violations..

Given these circumstances, Nera-Lauron concluded by posing the question of how to move forward after seven years of the Istanbul Principles, and by encouraging/challenging everyone to continue breaking ground, taking roots and bearing fruit.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Wanted and Wanting: An Enabling Environment for CSO Development Effectiveness in Agenda 2030

Prof. Virginia Dandan, UN Independent Expert on International Solidarity

Good morning. Magandang umaga and mabuhay. It is my pleasure to be here today and I look very much forward to be interacting with you especially in the workshops.

According to the recently launched CIVICUS Monitor, more than 32 billion people live in countries in which civic space is either closed or repressed. This means that the scope for citizen action is restricted and getting worse



in much of the world including in some countries where you least expect it to happen. The civil society EUROPE, which is an organization, published a survey report in 2016 aimed at assessing civil society's perception and confidence in key civic space freedoms such as freedom of assembly, association, and expression, as well as their views on key challenges and political trends. The survey findings identified the main areas of concern which includes decrease of financial support, increased conditionality of funding that limits advocacy activities, lack of effective and adequate consultation mechanisms, and development of measures and legislation in the areas of security and surveillance which have had a chilling effect on civic space. The chair of the civil society group has even acknowledged that while shrinking space is less of an issue for Europe as compared with other parts of the world, for example our region, evidence shows that the operating context for civil society is becoming more challenging even in European member states.

I wonder if a similar study has been held or is being held in our own region here in Asia Pacific, and if so, do these main areas of concern also hold true? I ask because it would be a great starting point for discussions at this conference. In its absence, what would be as an alternative starting point then? In reviewing the Nairobi Outcome Document, I was once again struck by how familiar the commitments made by governments can be to the many other outcome documents over the past decades using similar language applied of course to different situations and always stating ambitious and good intentions. Sometimes it seems to me as though there is a template used in all of these outcome documents. And once again I wonder to myself, what is the level of awareness among the constituents of these governments regarding the commitment they are making outside the country. Don't you ever wonder sometimes?

Pardon the touch of cynicism but having been in the UN system for so long, as an independent human rights specialist, mind you I am not in the employ of the UN, I was exposed to the realities of how governments can put their best foot forward then turn around and forget all about their commitments, or even worse go against their own pledges. This has taught me not to be too optimistic about the so-called commitments. So why am I still around working on human rights of all things? I am not even a lawyer and I therefore cannot invoke that I'm still here because of my profession. My first discipline after all is in the arts. I am an artist alongside my calling to social development. What gives me hope is that, the Nairobi Outcome Document (NOD) for example like the Busan Partnership for Development, also carries the commitments of other stakeholders, particularly civil society organizations like you. I am certain that many of you must be in Nairobi last December, I wasn't. If today many governments acknowledge and recognize the valuable work done by CSO, why then is civic space shrinking?

From my own experience of dealing with states at the UN, those in power are weary of activism by NGOs and the less experienced governments continue to hold the stereotypical view that CSOs are the natural enemies of government. A more recently emerged factor of course is that governments are fearful of terrorists in the guise of CSOs. Let me quote Paragraph 18 of the NOD Preamble and this is very important to remember, and I quote:

“We recognize (we, meaning governments) the importance of civil society, sustainable development and in leaving no one behind, in engaging with governments to upholding their commitment and in being development actors in their own right. We are determined to reverse the trend of shrinking civic space wherever it is taking place, and to build a positive environment for sustainable development, peaceful societies, accountable governance, and achievements of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. We commit to

accelerating progress in providing an enabling environment for civil society including in legal and regulatory terms in line with internationally agreed rights. In this context we encourage multi-stakeholder dialogue at country level supported by capacity building measures.”

So right there is the solution to what we’re looking for to reverse the trend of shrinking civic space. Indeed we are here to discuss initiatives to reverse this trend because without CSO engagement, there will be nothing, progress maybe there will be but very slow. Perhaps we should also discuss strategies then, to remind governments to the commitments in Nairobi and in other similar summits and world conferences. Allow me at this point to introduce to you the mandate of Human Rights and International Solidarity for which I am currently an independent expert – not so much because it is a promotional effort but I would like to show to you why it is relevant as far as development effectiveness is concerned.

The Independent Expert’s original mandate is contained in several UN Human Rights Council resolutions, among them requesting the Independent Expert “to prepare a draft declaration on the right of peoples and individuals to international solidarity, develop guidelines standards norms, and principles with the view to promote and protect that right by addressing inter alia, existing and emerging obstacles to the realization of this right. In addition, the Independent Expert is also requested take in to account the outcomes of all major UN and other global summits and ministerial meetings in the economic and social fields and seek the views and contributions from governments, UN agencies, other relevant organizations and NGOs. This will introduce to you the depth of my involvement in studying the commitments made at important UN gatherings.

I am the second Independent Expert of Human Rights and International Solidarity, and my predecessor; the first was a lawyer from Indonesia. I have completed the process of crafting the draft declaration, conducting consultations on the draft, and I’m glad to see one of the ladies who was present at a regional consultation in Panama, Susana, working with an expert group of lawyers to revise the document, and it is now finally ready for submission June this year. As I speak, the draft declaration is being translated to the UN languages in preparation for my presentation in June and it will be forwarded to the General Assembly for adoption.

Now let me get back to what international solidarity is. The draft declaration says that international solidarity is the expression of the spirit of unity among individuals, peoples, states and international organizations encompassing the union of interests, purposes, and actions and the recognition of different needs and rights to achieve common goals. It also states that international solidarity is a foundational principle underpinning contemporary international

law in order to preserve the national order and to ensure the survival of international society. I am so tempted really to delve deeper into but this is not the proper forum. The declaration identifies the rights holders and the duty-bearers of the right to international solidarity. Of course the primary duty-bearers would be the state but the declaration also identifies as duty-bearers international and non-state actors who also have a duty to respect the right to international solidarity, particularly in situations where such actors bear similar and complimentary responsibilities to the duties of states.

Many of the Western states objected to the fact that this draft declaration places and implies that CSOs are at the same level as the states if they are assigned particular obligations. But despite the objection I still decided to keep this offending article in the draft declaration because based on my experience, I am convinced that non-state actors such as CSOs, particularly those doing development work, must also be held accountable for both their actions and inactions just like all states – not only for the impact and exercise on human rights on peoples and individuals of what they do, but also for the consequences of what they fail to do. In fact NGOs were the ones who encouraged me to put this accountability right in the declaration in black and white. This is the first time that any UN document identifies the obligations of NGOs.

In September last year, I visited Norway and the main purpose is to observe the integration of human rights in the design and implementation of Norway's international development cooperation and the impact of its commitment to development assistance in the promotion and protection of human rights. I did a similar visit to Morocco and to Brazil doing the same thing with the same purpose. And I engaged not only with government agencies but also more importantly with NGOs based in these countries. These country visits were not the usual fact finding visits done by special rapporteurs and independent experts. My visits was targeted at studying how governments design policy and enact administrative and legislative measures relating to their duty to engage in international cooperation. My visits and engagements with state agencies and CSOs provided me with valuable insights regarding their development practices, their best practices and the challenges they are trying to overcome. These engagements and first-hand observations of policy and practice within countries and across their borders were the sources that gave rise to the many aspects that eventually provided flesh t the draft declaration on the right to international solidarity. However, I also observed that these countries I visited apparently are confronting a common challenge and that is they have to contend with difficulties in assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of their development partners whether as donor partner or recipient partner.

The draft declaration contains provisions that embody the Istanbul Principles

expressed in the language of rights to wit: human rights and social justice, I don't have to go through all these you know these by heart at least I hope so. Since we do not have time to go through all of it, let me at least suggest to you as starting point whether or not you are moving forward or backward or not at all. In your development effectiveness, how do you translate the Istanbul Principles from abstraction to concrete action and determine whether or not you are progressing? I know many of you are doing these and the literature richly provide evidence for that. In my thematic report to the UN General Assembly in October 2015, I focused on three elements essential to a rights-based approach to development effectiveness in the context of state practice – good governance, accountability, and participation. I suggest we consider these elements to see if they are applicable as well to evaluating the development practices aligned with the Istanbul Principles as practiced by civil society.

Good governance can be simply defined as the exercise of authority through political and institutional processes in a manner that is transparent and accountable and that encourage participation. Good governance is implicitly linked to human rights standards, for example, in ensuring access to basic services especially for the most marginalized and disadvantaged sectors. Accountability is a complex issue, as you know and it cannot be narrowed; but it has to be narrowed for specific purposes. From a human rights perspective, accountability refers to the obligation of actors to take responsibility for the impact of their actions and inactions. Participation implies ownership of development initiatives by all relevant stakeholders and not just the government and there is no blueprint for participation because it plays a role in as many different contexts and in as many different purposes. Implementation of government goals at the national level requires the state to support and enable a robust vibrant civil society to be its partner in government efforts for service delivery and in promoting accountability of all actors in the implementation of the SDGs.

International cooperation is a duty of states and targeted to its primary responsibility to implement human rights obligations at the national level. Global partnerships were positioned within this broader frame of international cooperation would regain some of the momentum and credibility lost within the MDG Goal 8 framework. You remember that Goal 8 that nobody even talked about. My challenge to you is to try and see how good governance, accountability and participation, which are originally targeted as indices of development effectiveness of states, can be similarly applicable in the development practice of CSOs and subsequently in monitoring and evaluating progress in development effectiveness.

In my human rights work spanning more than 25 years, I have observed that despite invocations of human rights that comes easily to the fore when

violations occur or undeniably evident, the true value of human rights as a positive intervention in the scheme of world affairs continue to be in the realm abstraction and lip service. Recognizing that we have been remiss in this regard would be a genuine paradigm shift and taking corrective action would be indeed the one transformative shift that would positively affect development effectiveness. I am making a case for an informed, consistent rights based approach in implementing the Istanbul Principles and I look forward to your positive response.

Thank you, maraming salamat po.

SESSION I UNDER THE LENS: VIEWS ON CSO EFFECTIVENESS

MODERATOR:

Julia Sánchez, Canadian Council for International Cooperation

PANEL:

H.E Judy Taguiwalo, Minister of Social Welfare & Development, Philippines

H.E Brendan Rogers, Ambassador of Ireland to Thailand

Dr. Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh

Mr. Isaora Zefania Romalahy, Head / Aid Coordination Permanent Secretariat, Madagascar

This session is an interactive discussion among state actors on their views of civil society's effectiveness as development actors. The moderator asked the honorable guests to share their perceptions of civil society seven years after the adoption of the Istanbul principles, beginning with their direct experiences in working with civil society, and then with the challenges they see around development work and what they recommend civil society to do with regard to this.



HE Brendan Rogers talked about his involvement with civil society as head of Irish Aid and of several missions to Uganda, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. He said that Irish Aid's development cooperation programs was regarded as one of the best in the world even by peers in the OECD owing to their intensive work with not only governments but also civil

society, upon realizing how his organization had been providing funds without actually engaging with the empowered CBOs in the countryside of these countries. Such work had not been always easy though, citing the democratic revolutions going on in said countries where CBOs would usually be in opposition to the government. He also cited as other challenges the decreasing importance of development cooperation, the changing governments, changing externalities, the North-South disconnect, how to unite the very wide and diverse civil society, security issues being used to reduce civic space, the need to shifting from project to program approach, the need for different tactics to be effective in the face of different government attitudes towards CSOs. He pointed to the myriads of challenges but at the same time to the existence of solutions owing to the power of CSOs. As a parting message, he said CSOs should be proud of their many achievements but not to sit on their laurels – to continue to examine what they have been doing and how to do it better, to hold governments to account to the SDGs and to development effectiveness, to conduct monitoring and evaluation, to hold oneself accountable as well, to build coalitions and stay united despite the differences, to be inclusive and representative of the people from the grassroots; and to never lose energy and passion.

Dr. Rahman said the Bangladesh government has a long experience in working with CSOs. They have institutionalized consultations through formal and informal meetings and dialogues, for example, prior to approving any budget or policy. He is currently coordinating the Bangladesh government's work on foreign aid policy and sees CSOs as sources of alternative view and strategies, as well as a potential strategic ally in dealing with the powerful people from the North. To him, CSOs are the real connectors between people and the government, saying that they can reach out to people in the far-flung areas and can make innovative approaches despite scarce resources. In citing challenges for CSOs, he pointed to the external challenge of shrinking spaces for alternative views and solutions across many countries, and to the internal problem of rising oligarchs within CSOs. This rise of oligarchs, he said, marginalizes not only people from within a specific CSO but all other grassroots organizations. He pointed to a lack of change in leadership for decades particularly in CSOs receiving huge funds, especially in those orgs receiving huge funds. These CSO elites, he said, become government instruments for legitimizing their interests and lose the organization's legitimacy, internal democracy and constituents' ownership. CSO dependence on external funds as well as Westernization, which he said do not necessarily mean modernization and democractization, are also additional challenges. He concluded by asking CSOs to hold their leadership to account, and to extend their arms to supporting and enabling the grassroots.

HE Taguiwalo has been with the Philippine government for only nine months. She has been an activist and part of the Philippine mass movement since

she was 18 and has worked with various organizations such as Asia Pacific Women, Law and Development and International League of People's Struggles. She said CSOs play the very important role of not only speaking truth to power but also making sure that the government listens and actually responds by delivering social services and other obligations to the people. The problem, she said, is that the government does not listen unless they are an extension of those in power, which is if the officials got support during the election. Adding to the challenges already cited by HE Rogers and Dr.



Rahman, she pointed to the co-optation of CSOs in the process of holding the government accountable. She said CSOs that start with good intention are sometimes seduced by invitations to international conferences and being part of the power instead of speaking truth to it. She then advised CSOs to police their ranks so that corruption would not tempt, taint, and erode them; and to continually ask the questions “for whom?” who are we serving at the end of the day?” In addition, she also said that CSOs should be persistent in ensuring that the government’s huge resources are brought to the grassroots, to the communities needing them. Finally, she reminded everyone that the problems that CSOs deal with such as violence against women and children, poverty, and environmental degradation, are just symptomatic of structural problems, and that we need to look at and build solidarity to address it from the roots whether in the North or in the South.

Mr. Romalahy admitted that although mutual accountability mechanisms have been established by partner countries since Paris Declaration, it was only in 2011 after Busan that they have had the participation of CSOs and other sectors. The problem that they are facing is in bringing them in each of the several sectoral platforms that the government has established. Nonetheless, they are continuing efforts at reaching out by extending to them the OECD survey handed out to them. He said they intend to keep the questionnaire functioning and to develop it by adding more questions to effectively measure CSO participation. He cited as addition to the challenges earlier mentioned

the alignment of CSO structure to that of the government, saying that while CSOs are not and should not be obliged to mirror government structure, having some semblance would be helpful. Another challenge is the lack of mutual understanding. The government of Madagascar, he said, sees CSO role as interference in politics. The government becomes even more wary when CSOs enter into bilateral funding partnerships with other development actors. In fact, the government has created a basket for CSO funds to ensure that funds received are not linked to a specific political agenda. He admitted



that the government is afraid of CSOs, all the more if they become effective at the national level. On a more personal note, he said he shares the pieces of advice given by the three other honorable guests and concluded by telling CSOs to keep on the side of the people.

VIEWS ON CSO EFFECTIVENESS

Dr. Mohammad Mizanur Rahman recognized the helpful role that CSOs play in development as they view things from a different perspective (i.e. North-South relationships). He alluded to seeing CSOs as using their power to support government and to offset the challenges coming from the North or powerful sectors. He recognizes CSOs' use of innovative approaches to promote development that greatly complements the work of the national government to reach out to all communities needing assistance.

Dr. Rahman mentioned that development cooperation has become less and less important over the years, and that CSOs have contributed a lot in transforming this into a national discourse. Rahman said there are 2 kinds of CSOs: the grassroots CSOs who are marginalized and not connected to those in power, and 'professional' CSOs run like businesses and who have good communication abilities to reach out to donors and further their own political interests. Rahman challenged CSOs to democratize leadership and improve their ways of working to demonstrate their commitment to advocating for democracy and accountability.

H.E Judy Taguiwalo had always considered herself part of civil society and social movement. She recognized the vital role of CSOs in ensuring that governments, as duty bearers, deliver services and assistance to the people, most especially to the marginalized communities and people who need it most.

Min. Taguiwalo emphasized on the responsibility of civil society and social movements to speak truth to power and hold governments accountable to the people. She believes that states should have equal treatment of people regardless of their political and ideological affiliations. But she said the reality is that those in power tend to provide services only to those who supported them during the elections. Taguiwalo stressed that government's role is to listen to the people and effect the necessary changes in policies and programmes based on that.

Mr. Isaora Zefania Romalahy shared on the Madagascar government's experience of engaging CSOs in consultative workshops and in the conduct of national survey where CSOs mobilized focus groups to participate. He recognized the need to bring in more CSO voices in development processes as well as on the coordination table with governments and other development partners and private sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON CSO EFFECTIVENESS

H.E Brendan Rogers advised CSOs to not rest on their laurels and to continue to examine what they are doing and keep doing better. He emphasized on the need to: (1) continue holding governments to account to their commitments to SDGs; and (2) build coalition around certain themes or issues, and to stay united despite differences internally or between Northern-Southern civil society.

Similarly, H.E. Taguiwalo recommended CSOs to continue holding governments to account for corruption, violence against women, environmental degradation, deeper structural issues and social inequalities.

Dr. Rahman challenged CSOs to also hold their leadership to account apart from holding accountability to government and other development actors.

SESSION 2 WALKING THE TALK: CIVIL SOCIETY AS ACCOUNTABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

MODERATOR:

Justin Kilcullen, CONCORD

PANEL:

Emele Diututuraga, Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organizations (PIANGO)

Analía Bettoni, Instituto de Comunicación y Desarrollo

Ellie Gasagara, World Vision International

Amy Taylor, CIVICUS

Susana Erostegui, UNITAS

Suzanne Keatinge, Irish Association of Non-governmental Development Organizations (DOCHAS)

Justin Kilcullen introduced the session as one that would look into how CSOs are doing, and how they know how they're doing, how they measure what they're doing? It is a look into some of the accountability mechanisms since IP proclamation seven years ago, a check whether these are working, what lessons can be drawn, and how to make them better.



Emele Duituturiaga, who could not make it to the conference, shared updates on their end through a recorded video message. She reported that PIANGO

developed its own code of minimum standards, and launched a pilot project involving national platform members to develop their own country codes. A draft is already available for Fiji and Vanuatu, translated and open for consultation at national level; other countries are on their way, to be followed by a regional consultation and that will come up with a regional code.

Analia Bettoni talked about Rendir Cuentas, a regional initiative in Latin America whose work started 10 years ago. It did research on what CSOs and other stakeholders think about accountability and found out that they find it very necessary and that there is actually a growing demand for it from CSOs. She said it started in four countries wherein CSOs prepared common information gathering form for individual organizations in each country on financial, accomplishments, governance, funders, and other matters



that would give them more legitimacy and transparency. They also made collective accountability exercises of putting information together in order to make a more political statement about what the organizations worked out, as well as attempted to influence policies. This, she said, grew to other countries not only in terms of membership and country participation but also in the kind of action done – assessment manual, participation in many workshops, online courses for organizations, etc. Rendir Cuentas is also part of the Global Standards Initiative that seeks to put together all the initiatives around the world and make one reference standard that every country/region can take as a model. According to her, this standard is not only applicable to donors and governments but also to the constituencies to give them the tools to make CSOs accountable to them.

CIVICUS, as Amy Taylor explained, is composed of 4,000 members in 175 countries, from smallest to big INGOs. She said it is a signatory to INGO accountability charter and found out that being so helps to be explicit about being accountable, where they can be explicitly accountable – not only where they are doing great but also where they fall short of. In addition to being a signatory to the said charter, she said CIVICUS also has a membership

verification and validation system – through which they recognize social movements without registration status and individual online campaigners as well as INGOs, but which on the other hand fails to recognize existing mechanisms at this point, which leads to organizations having to go through double verification. She said CIVICIS is reviewing this and, in addition, also wants to do better about showing accountability and utilizing next-generation verification-validation tools, and to use mechanism that identifies weaknesses not to exclude certain formations from membership but to strengthen them. Finally, she said they also want to implement a values-based system that speaks to everybody. `

Ellie Gasagara talked about Accountable Now (previously International Accountability Charter) – which shows INGOs being in the domain of



accountability to increase transparency, effectiveness, and shareholders' engagement. He narrated Accountable Now's close work with a number of organizations in the area of accountability to develop a global standard to bring different entities together. The global standard, he explained, will bring entities together to align, not to replace their standard of those organizations; and wants to achieve four key points closely aligned with IP: justice and equality, women rights, healthy environments, lasting positive change/impact. He identified factors believed to result in realizing these – people-driven work, making sure that peoples voices are taken into account, meaningful consultation and participation, feedback, strong partnerships, advocating for fundamental change, transparency and sharing. In addition, he also pointed to the necessity of having empowered and effective volunteers and staff, well-handled resources, anti-corruption measures, responsive decision-making, accountable management, and independent oversight.

Susana Erostequi described Bolivia's experience of self-regulation as an epic political and social commitment and responsibility – which are UNITAS's main commitment as a national network. They have been following a Code of Ethics since 2002, and in 2010 approved a system of information about

the finances, outputs, governance and impacts of all their 22 members. Since four years ago, she said, they had public accountability exercises in eight cities – which helped them have more legitimacy or get political sustainability, and CSO effectiveness. Without an enabling environment, she said they think that accountability is a very good exercise to have possibility to dialogue with other stakeholders in the country, the region, and the world. She noted that it is not easy to dialogue with the government unless you are aligned with government policies and underscored the challenge of how to be a real political social actor, to build the culture of transparency, to defend human rights. She said if we have enough capacity to work together and to have clear political vision of what we need to bring forth or strengthen in our practice, we can promote more structural changes in our countries.



Hearing these experiences and initiatives, Suzanne Keatinge said that there is a lot to celebrate around accountability; that CSOs have done a huge amount in a short period of time. The problem however is when you invest a lot in change – you go too far the other side. She said it makes her wonder whether in the process of doing more around accountability, CSOs lose the point of being transformational. The other challenge she identified was the question around linkage and coherence between the many frameworks – how can these be made as simple as possible while ensuring CSOs are accountable. She also raised the question of who is paying for all of these – not only in terms of money but also leadership and management time as it takes so much to have all these systems in place.

To this Gasagara commented that there is really a need to streamline reporting and funding requirements to donors so that CSOs can focus on their work itself. A participant from Zimbabwe somewhat blames stringent processes and requirements to corruption within many CSOs. Keatinge cited on the other hand that there was an Irish NGO that complied to all donor processes and requirements but still drew flak for its corrupt practices – pointing to the fact that compliance does not change culture and behavior,

which led her to suggest to monitor culture and behavior as well/instead of reporting. Gasagara added that it would help if CSOs would start talking about their own corruption issues.

On the observed divide within CSOs on the accountability approach and the prospects of an agreed minimum standards in the midst of the proliferation of minimum standards raised by a colleague from Kenya, Keatinge said she is not convinced with having a single standard, saying we should accept the reality that there will always be myriads of contexts giving rise to those. For Taylor, having a global standard as a reference point is one cause for celebration, as long as it is used as a means of opening up resources for those working in the frontlines of change, and as long as it allows to lower the threshold for smaller organizations to demonstrate accountability and access resources. At the same time, she admitted it could also be a cause for concern as pointed out by the Zimbabwean colleague. Taylor cited the existence of a Vooka coalition – (vooka meaning ‘to awaken’) to awaken citizen participation around the world, to develop an alternative narrative to the idea that CSOs are foreign agents, spies and undermine local agencies arising from locals lacking trust in INGOs. From this she explained the importance of knowing what CSOs are doing that cause their publics to lose trust, and look examine the language that CSOs are using.

Responding to AMMAN’s question on how to better involve the multitudes of Muslims and people in war-torn Middle East North Africa to learn and share in the development effectiveness process, Gasagara wondered if CSOs need to come up with commitment about peace, of being peacebuilders instead of dividers.

Bettoni addressed the question from her Latin American colleague on dialogues with governments by saying that the results vary depending on the country and the kind of government that exists. In Uruguay, she said, CSOs’ exercise of accountability was very welcome in some parts of the government.

Erostequi’s final remark was on keeping the CSOs’ transformative character. She said that to do so, it is important for CSOs to keep their political independence and autonomy, which she said can better be done through self-censorship rather than allowing the government to directly control them.

A colleague from Burundi asked the body to extend more support to their fragile country in terms of spreading the Istanbul Principles.

Apologizing for not entertaining more questions, Kilcullen ended the session with the assurance that there will be follow up discussion on the issues in the workshops that would follow.

SESSION 3 IMPLEMENTATION, IMPLEMENTATION: TAKING THE EFFECTIVENESS CHALLENGE FORWARD

MODERATOR:

Anas El Hanoui, L'Espace Associatif

Vitalice Meja, Reality of Aid-Africa/CPDE

Collins Aseka, The National Treasury, Kenya

Beverly Longid, Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination & Liberation (IPMSDL)

This session presented the implications of the outcomes of the 2nd High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), including civil society commitments, and how to move these forward.

Mr. Aseka of the Government of Kenya, first acknowledging the important role of CPDE in the process, said that the Nairobi Outcome Document captures the vision in realizing Agenda 2030. He said that while the SDGs, talk about the 'what', the NOD talks about the 'how', pointing particularly to how partnership in development should be done. In relation to this, he said the Kenya government is doing several things, some touching on global stakeholders, some domestic. At the global level, he said their government conceptualizes the youth empowerment agenda, specifically looking at having the youth empowerment indicator in their next monitoring round, as well as leading the initial discussions to ensure that this indicator is inclusive. Another thing they are doing is domesticating the commitments on the unfinished business from Paris, Accra, and Busan. Lastly, the Kenyan government, he said, is raising awareness of the Istanbul Principles at the national level.

On behalf of the CSOs, Vitalice Meja of CPDE/Reality of Aid – Africa, provided a comprehensive discussion of the core business of effective development cooperation and the implications of the Nairobi Outcome Document to CSOs.

Believing that there is no CSO development effectiveness without an enabling environment for CSOs, Meja stated that the NOD recommits to multi-stakeholder partnership, recognizing CSOs in their own right in the realization of the Agenda 2030 through advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, and research.

He shared significant achievements of CSOs in the recently concluded GPEDC HLM2 such as: (1) commitment to a time-bound work plan for achieving the core/unfinished business; (2) commitment to reverse the trend of shrinking spaces for CSOs; and (3) the openness to a fourth non-executive chair which would reflect the effort for a more inclusive character of partnership.

However, these gains come also with responsibilities through the Istanbul Principles. Meja emphasized the relevance of the Principles as critical in the work of CSOs to achieve sustainable development results. The Istanbul Principles are not just guiding principles for CSOs alone. It also reflects accountability framework through which governments will hold CSOs to account. As such, CSOs are called to demonstrate highest organizational capacity in terms of transparency, accountability, and integrity to the people/communities they commit to serve.

Voicing out what the Istanbul Principles mean to the indigenous peoples, mass



movements, and people's organizations, Beverly Longid underscored that no one will fight harder for accountability and transparency than those who suffer from its absence. She added that the indigenous peoples, in particular, look at it as an expression of their right to self-determination in the midst of rampant landgrabs and plunder, neglect, militarization, discrimination, and misrepresentation. Such situation further leads them to look at the Istanbul Principles as an accountability and transparency mechanism that should be empowering – so that they would be able to address these situations lest this and other standards will be useless. By virtue of mandate, CSOs have been practicing the IP, even without knowledge of the term. And more than knowledge of the term, she underscored that what is important is how CSOs

practice it – the commitment to do the principles and for whom. She also said if CSOs cannot apply it to themselves, they cannot hold duty bearers – government and states – to account to the people. Regarding the NOD, she enjoined everyone to go beyond documents and not look at it as the end by itself, to go beyond jargons, slogans, but rather, to act on it and enhance it.

The moderator then opened the panel for some comments and questions from the floor. The questions and comments revolve around progress on the youth indicator, government implementation of NOD commitments, and better awareness and implementation of Istanbul Principles at country level.

A youth participant inquired on the progress on the youth indicator – what progress has been made and the attitude of the different stakeholders? Aseka shared positive updates, having involved very top government agencies and some other stakeholders in meetings, including the youth sector working group in helping identify critical youth groups to make relevant contributions.

On the question of how should governments be implementing the NOD, Aseka explained that there are specific commitments and principles for specific stakeholders and that they try to disaggregate those principles, use an action plan with specific timelines and resources. Adding to what governments have been doing, the representative of the Bangladesh government shared update on their efforts as one of the three co-chairs of GPEDC in the NOD implementation, that is, working on the draft action point, and took the moment to invite CSOs to connect to and support the Joint Support Team to contribute to the work plan while it is still a draft in discussion.

A Nigerian participant reaffirmed the need for CSOs to go back home, allow rural and city-based CSOs to know and be guided by it. A couple of CSO representatives suggested concrete ways at ensuring that the Istanbul Principles are implemented, saying that should start off by domesticating the principles and interlinking the Istanbul Principles to every organization's operational frameworks and documents e.g. constitution, articles of incorporation, and move beyond that by enhancing awareness among peers. We need to disseminate the IP and ensure every CSOS is aware of what is expected of them. Furthermore, the Malawi CPDE focal person pointed out the need to clearly show the Istanbul Principles' link to the other outcome documents and efforts around development cooperation, the SDGs, national development plans, etc.

To these, Longid responded by saying that CSOs are not homogenous and undergo uneven development, which means others may be more capacitated in different respects but doesn't mean the rest are not implementing the principles. She assured them that there are some organizations that have already incorporated them in their organizational documents, and that

CPDE has been conducting trainings where participants even came out with an IP implementation and government engagement guidelines for use at the national level. She concluded by reiterating that the IP should not be delimiting, but rather empowering because at the end of the day, it is CSOs and citizen participation that would lead to greater gains. On internal accountability and corruption, she said that if CSOs are really guided by their mandate and to whom they are accountable to, then they will never lose track of their mission.



Asked about the new nuances or emerging practice from CSOS in terms of being accountable in the context of lack of enabling environment or in fragile contexts, Aseka talked of the possibility of changing the existing Kenyan aid architecture to Development Cooperation structure to engage with different stakeholders, including the private sector, through which there will be consultations on creating an enabling environment. In fragile states, Meja said, the environment is tougher, very violent and physically threatening, finances are very difficult, and there is no space to exercise the mandates in the NOD, and thus the commitment to address those need follow up and demand accountability from governments.

As his final remark, Meja pointed out three more things about the NOD, one is that it is the first time the private sector is being held accountable in a document; the other is what he sees as the questionable requirement for CSOs to align with country results framework, explaining that the challenge is about interpretation; and lastly, that the NOD is the only global unit that has a monitoring framework, but how to improve, simplify and decrease cost of monitoring to deliver more results and impact are the challenges.

SESSIONS 4-5 SIMULTANEOUS SELF-ORGANIZED WORKSHOPS

There were two rounds of the simultaneous self-organized workshops, running 2 hours each, to give participants an opportunity to: (1) share best practices in implementing the IP; (2) identify challenges and lessons in implementing the IP; and (3) brainstorm on recommendations, plans, and strategies on advancing work around these Principles.

Gender Equality and Equity

AWID, NETRIGHT, Forum of Women's NGOs Kyrgyzstan

"While laws promoting gender equality and equity abound, gender-based discrimination continues to persist and remains to be a major obstacle to development. Women across the globe still find themselves barred from fully contributing to social, political and economic life. There is a need to persistently stress women's equal participation as an important foundation of progress, and gender equality as a fundamental element of democracy and justice. How do civil society organizations promote gender equality and equity within their own organizations and to the larger global community?"

- Integration of Principle into Country Compact for CSO Development Effectiveness
 - Ensure CSOs various decision making bodies (Boards, Committees) equal and meaningful participation of women.
 - CSOs to include gender equality and women's rights in the job description of staff as part of their performance evaluation.
 - CSOs budget should allocate adequate and meaningful amount of funds in their own budgets for addressing women's rights and gender equality issues e.g. budgets should reflect funds for research on gender analysis of CSOs constituents (e.g. working on migrants allocate funds for women migrants, if farming- women farmers if peace keeping women peace keepers not just for participation of women in workshops.

- Provide information and capacity building on women's rights and gender equality to young people (beneficiaries and staff of CSOs).
 - Integrate women's rights and gender equality into CSOs agenda, programmes, research from their constituencies and perspectives (e.g. poverty from women's perspective, environment, democracy).
 - CSOs are recommended to invite to their meetings, dialogues, roundtable discussions women's rights and gender equality activists to ensure inputs from women's groups.
 - Women's Rights Organizations are recommended to invite CSOs activists to their meetings, to ensure meaningful inputs and perspectives of CSOs.
 - Women's organizations are recommended to proactively share and disseminate women's groups analysis, data and case studies to ensure that CSOs have this information to apply in their decision making and advocacy and lobbying.
 - Recommend CSOs to strengthen partnerships between CSOs and Women's rights organizations and vis versa. This includes organize campaigns and participate in each other campaigns.
 - CSOs are recommended to invite leaders of women's groups to participate in CSOs strategic planning exercises and processes to ensure that women's rights and gender equality are part of their agenda, programmes, and processes.
 - Donors to make women's rights and gender equality a prerequisite for funding for CSOs. Every funding program should integrate women's rights and gender equality
 - CSOs should not compete for funding allocated for women's rights organizations. Funding partners should also not fund CSOs who are not women's rights organizations for women's rights work (e.g. to open a women's rights crisis center or address VAW).
- Indicators to Guide Future Action by CSOs and other Development Actors
 - CSOs internal documents bye-laws include gender equality and women's rights
 - CSOs various decision making bodies (Boards, Committees) include equal number of women.
 - All job descriptions and performance evaluation include gender equality and women's rights.
 - CSOs annual and long-term budgets include budget allocations from women's rights perspective.
 - Number and quality /percentage of capacity building programmes of CSO constituencies that integrate on gender equality and women's rights.
 - Number and quality /percentage of CSOs agenda, programmes,

research from their constituencies and perspectives that integrate gender equality and women's rights.

- Percentage of CSO meetings, dialogues, roundtable discussions where women's rights and gender equality activists participate..
- Women's Rights Organizations are recommended to invite CSOs activists to their meetings, to ensure meaningful inputs and perspectives of CSOs.
 - ✓ Number of times WROs invited you
 - ✓ Qualitative indicator on the quality your CSO made into women's rights meeting: data analysis of your constituency.
- Qualitative data: in what way did you use data disseminated by women's rights organizations for example what was the level of uptake of recommendations, which spaces did you use the recommendations.
- Number and forms of partnerships between CSOs and Women's rights organizations and vice versa.
- Number of joint initiatives for example campaigns, advocacy, research and capacity building activities.
- How many strategic planning processes included leaders of women's groups and gender activists.
- Percentage of donors at national, regional and global level that integrate women's rights and gender equality as a prerequisite for funding.
- Did CSOs compete and how many times did CSOs compete for funding allocated for women's rights organizations?

- Priorities for Knowledge Sharing at Country, Regional, and Global Levels

Women's group reflected that most CSOs are not always following Istanbul Principle Gender Equality and Equity on the following reasons: (1) lack of knowledge (CSO activists do not have knowledge and are not aware of women's rights and gender equality issues, concerns, challenges and strategies); (2) lack of sensitivity (CSOs have this knowledge but they are not sensitive to it); and (3) lack of political will (CSOs might have the knowledge but they resist either due to patriarchy or they are just not willing).

As such, they deem it necessary to give priority on sharing general knowledge, data analysis, and practical results with emphasis on results and good practices. These can be done through: (1) using cases from women's groups; (2) capacity building, training, and information sharing; and (3) information sharing in joint meetings, various advocacy spaces and processes, dialogue, platforms, and CSO strategic planning.

Environmental Sustainability and Sustainable Change

PIANGO, IPMSDL

“As communities feel the effects of climate change and environmental degradation more and more, CSOs are expected to step up all efforts to address environmental issues by making environmental sustainability a part of their work. Our role as agents of change, our close relations to communities, and our contacts with various stakeholders and governments inevitably makes us key actors in identifying environmental issues, making those linkages with the social, economic and political environment and contribute to addressing the root causes of the climate crisis.”

- Good Practices
 - Advocating for the inclusive participation of Indigenous People (i.e. elders knowledge invaluable in relation to indigenous conservation practices; partnership between indigenous elders and youth for the transfer of such knowledge; partnership with Local government to come up with by-laws to guide the effort)
 - Drawing from CSOs and grassroots organizations for lessons learned & sharing of tools (traditional mechanisms for co-existing sustainably within their environment) Integrate environmentally friendly policies within organizations (for e.g. limit the use of plastic – must be biodegradable, recycling of waste)
 - Organic collection of food scraps from organizations and events for composting & livestock/animal fodder (e.g. Vanuatu – collection of food waste from markets for pig food)
- Challenges and Recommendations
 - Cultural diversity & traditional ties: behavioral issues (dolphin hunting in Solomon Islands)
 - Advocacy and coalition-building in countries
 - Low understanding by CSOs Board members on importance of Governance issues.
 - Economic System – focused on Profit making instead of Sustainable consumption & living within our planetary boundaries
 - Implementing Free Prior & Informed Consent can sometimes be distorted by unscrupulous corporations who consult lone landowners or heads of communities
 - Disconnect between realities at the Local level, when International policies are made (REDD+ does not take into account local communities context nor consult Indigenous owners & occupiers of such lands)

- Government is reluctant to collaborate (i.e. intimidation)
- Localization of the Istanbul Principles at the country level (i.e. translation into local language and practice necessary)

Democratic Ownership and Participation

International Migrants Alliance (IMA), People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS)

“CSOs promote people’s empowerment when they effectively and fully engage their constituencies in planning, implementing and monitoring development plans and actions. People’s empowerment is also about building their capacity to influence policy, make demands and call into account the state institutions, thus giving them real voice and influence on development initiatives that affect their lives.”

CSO participants focused on the concrete experiences of CSOs from the ground on how empowerment is particularly observed both horizontally and vertically. CSOs clearly identified democratic ownership as a principle that places people at the center of aid and development effectiveness. They further reiterated that democratic ownership is not only about inclusive participation, which largely remains at the discretion of governments or donors. Rather, one that centers the legitimacy of development priorities and processes on the rights of people to access democratic institutions.

Over the years, CSOs have been strengthening democratic ownership through: (1) creating multi-stakeholder formal bodies and effective broad consultation processes to determine and monitor development policies, plans and strategies, which are inclusive of women and marginalized populations; (2) advocating for enabling environment for CSOs; and (3) improving transparency and access to information on development plans as well as the accountability for the use of development resources and aid provided to the government.

CSO Transparency and Accountability

Cooperation Committee of Cambodia (CCC), Collectif des ONG pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et le Développement Rural (COSADER), DOCHAS

“Transparency and accountability are elements critical in the debates around civil society integrity as independent development actors. Civil society acknowledges the importance of being accountable to all, but especially towards the people they serve and represent. What are some of the key issues around CSO transparency and accountability? How could civil society from North and South learn from each other to improve on this area?”

- The Practice of Self-regulation Mechanisms

Many participants were involved in some form of self-regulation system, so it was clear that there was a lot of good practice, and much that could be learned from each other. In particular, the countries that have gone down this route were looking for ideas to incentivize NGOs to engage, but were also struggling with how to manage non-compliance. A key question that requires more exploration: What sticks and carrots are available to strengthen self-regulation mechanisms?

- Re-energizing Commitments to the Istanbul Principles

Key issues arising in this regard included the need to understand the connections between the number of different principles, frameworks and standards that are available, including within the humanitarian sector (the core humanitarian standards?). There appears to be an array of options making it difficult for civil society actors to know how 'to choose' and/or leading to confusion. There was then some discussion on whether we should be pushing for one 'single framework', or instead accepting the multiple ones available, but doing more to map their linkages. Whilst there was no consensus, it was suggested that some form of mapping was necessary in the first instance to understand the level of linkage/overlap/duplication.

- Ownership of the Istanbul Principles

It was raised that small organizations were struggling to adapt the standards, as they simply didn't have the capacity or resources to do so. At the same time, the need for ownership – if the principles are to be real – was stressed by participants. It was suggested that more needed to be done to simplify and translate the IP so that they could easily be applied. One specific suggestion was for CPDE, or another body, to prepare a pack summarizing existing standards e.g. Accountable Now, IPs etc, and provide a mechanism whereby a local set of standards could be aligned/derived from them, thus giving them a national flavor and a sense of ownership. This may also avoid the "one size fits all" problem, noted above, but would still ensure ownership based on agreed standards. It was also agreed that more needed to be done to create a forum for exchange, learning and peer support among small organizations.

- Aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals

It was suggested that the SDGs provided a huge opportunity to re-energize the importance and relevance of the Istanbul Principles. In effect, they need to become the 'how' to drive forward the transformative change

required in delivering the SDGs. Ultimately, the process of delivering the goals – in partnership, mindful of the environment, promoting gender equality etc – will be as important as the target themselves. What more can CSOs do to push the IP in this regard.

- Emerging Themes

Obstacles to applying standards of accountability and transparency. A number of participants raised the issue of needing to create an enabling environment for NGOs that allowed them to honestly discuss where and how they struggled in relation to governance. In many contexts, there remained an environment of secrecy and/or distrust and/or a risk-averse culture. For example, NGOs did want to admit the pressure on costs, and there remained a reluctance to admit to failures. Instead, CSOs need to generate a more honest debate and dialogue that allows for these kinds of discussions in order to find solutions. The idea that accountability is a journey and not simply something that ‘we reach’ need constant improvement and vigilance as another useful theme.

Accountability is about culture and behavior, not a tick box exercise. Whilst everyone agreed that what we were trying to change was organizational culture in relation to good governance, the solutions offered in relation to standards and compliance, tended to encourage a tick-box approach. CSOs therefore need to continue to find ways and mechanisms to encourage a principles-based approach to accountability, not a rules-based one. But given the many different political contexts CSOs are working in, that will demand a diverse set of approaches.

Overall, it was clear that civil society representative were highly engaged on this issue of accountability and transparency through examples of good practice, both within the organizations, and in promoting it among its networks. CSOs need to continue to learn and share what is working, and what isn't. CSOs also need to reduce the confusion around the multiple accountability standards and frameworks out there, and make sure that they become more accessible and owned by grassroots organizations. *Build a culture of accountability from the bottom, not the top.*

Equitable Partnerships, Solidarity and Commitment to Mutual Learning

Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social (UNITAS),
Research Center for Management and Sustainable Development (MSD Vietnam)

“CSO work is founded on solidarity. Through shared values and mutually-agreed upon goals organizations and their partners achieve their visions for development. CSOs and communities learn from each other’s experience and expertise thereby enhancing the results and effectiveness of their programs. This synergistic collaboration between CSOs, their constituents, the donors, and other stakeholders creates an environment for continuously improving development effectiveness. What are some of the debates and lessons around North–South CSO partnerships? How do we improve on our own practice?”

CSOs were able to identify principles within effective mutual learning, solidarity, and partnership such as: (1) shared vision and values; (2) transparency, mutual accountability, and trust; (3) mutual learning; (4) mutual commitment and long-term change; (5) clear roles and responsibilities; (6) respect differences and recognize power imbalance; and (7) deliver ultimately positive changes. As such, priorities and indicators should be centered on: (1) sharing local initiatives and good practices; (2) enabling a community of learning/practice; (3) committing to learning and partnership agenda/process with multi-stakeholders; as well as (4) engaging in policy dialogues.

Human Rights and People’s Empowerment

IBON International, CPDE Youth Constituency

“Civil society works to promote human rights, both individual and collective. Our work aims to contribute to the empowerment of people to claim these rights – at the community, national and international levels. What are the successes and lessons learned from decades of work around these areas? What new challenges and opportunities arise?”

Issues & Challenges	Actions Taken	Recommendations
Lack of a common understanding of IP	Capacity building	Broad based, multi-stakeholder dialogues
Low awareness of IP	Information dissemination Exposure & exchange visits	Intensify dissemination LB (?) for governments & CSOs
Limited ownership of IP	Intensify promotion of IP	Advocacy, targeting all key sectors
Limited uptake/ institutionalization of IP	Minimal institutionalization efforts (in CSO organizational instruments, i.e. Constitutions, Policies	Advocacy for uptake, follow-up (uptake & implementation)

Shrinking civic space, mistrust, de-legitimization of CSO work/agenda (bad propaganda for CSOs)	Advocacy for enabling environment (lobbying, demonstrations, campaigns, and litigation)	Intensify advocacy (strategic planning & overview) Networking/ synergies
Lip service, poor implementation record	Advocacy for improved implementation	Build sustainable follow-up/ self-regulatory mechanisms
Corruption/ poor governance	Advocacy	Intensify advocacy – prevention & punishment/ deterrence
Poor government–CSO coordination	Advocacy for coordinated implementation	Intensify (PPP?) for effective implementation of IP
Poor participation of SHs (?)	Capacity strengthening of communities/ SH	
Barriers – cultural, religious (relativism)	Transformational CE (?)	Strengthen programme to address barriers (transformational)
Heavy reporting load of CSOs		Appropriate reporting tools—not cumbersome
Low financing/ Sustainability	Resource mobilization (diverse resources)	Invest in sustainability programmes



SESSION 6

CRITICAL CONDITIONS FOR ENABLING CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

MODERATOR

Vitalice Meja, Reality of Aid-Africa/CPDE

PANEL:

Modibo Makalou, Development & Cooperation Initiative, Office of the President, Mali and Co-chair, Task Team on CSO DE & EE

Ziad Abdel Samad, Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

Rumman Hameed, Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)

Antonio Tujan Jr., IBON International

The session debated on the different aspects of an enabling environment for CSO Development Effectiveness, with a reference to how far or how slow progress has been in these areas outlined in the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness. In particular, the session looked at the legal, regulatory, financial and social environment, including spaces for policy dialogue in which CSOs operate.

Modibo Makalou talked about how the Mali government has been engaging CSOs at the national level and the challenges both on the government and CSOs' side. In Mali, they see development effectiveness as about development outcomes. The Mali government, he said, gives importance not only to the commitments but more so to implementation as well as evaluation with effective CSO participation. They make sure of inclusiveness by; for example, by making sure that partners coordinate their actions, and asking civil society to designate a member that would participate in development cooperation actions. According to him, they also created an harmonization secretariat that would coordinate multi-stakeholder actions where an umbrella CSO was designated to be in the dialogues.

Rumman was asked whether CSOs should be regulated or self-regulated, and about the importance of a strong, sound legal framework for an enabling environment for CSOs? She responded saying that self-regulation is more

important but a larger framework also needs to be there because that gives them more legitimacy and recognition as a sector, and that is one thing that VANI is actually working for, specifically working with the government in improving the 1818 registration legal framework. One of the demands, she said, was to distinguish development organizations and not lumped with other NGOs which most of the time do not comply with government requirements and thus taint the image of development organizations.

Meja noted that most legal frameworks are not for promoting civil society but about registration and so asked how to make them about promoting, supporting and not threatening the work of CSOs. Rahman said laws must be updated and must address specific needs of the sector, and that there should also be a focal organization that they can run to for these needs and other concerns. Remarking on this, Abdel Samad – whether a law is old or



new does not matter, citing Lebanon for a really old law that is one of the best in the region; Egypt for having a very liberal Constitution accompanied by laws that are highly restrictive on the creation and work of civil society and access of resources; and finally Tunis for a very good law but with no way to implement, concluding that not only about the law but also about administration and political will.

Meja turned to Abdel Samad for his take on the importance of having a stable and conducive political and social environment for CSOs work. Abdel Samad stressed the importance of first making a strong link or showing the vicious circle of shrinking space and restrictive measures and fragility leading to more restrictions, which in turn trigger and worsen instability and fragility.

Fragility, he explained, has different dimensions– vulnerability, poverty, all these development challenges and basic needs of community, and violence, which keep people in need. When you talk about fragility, you talk about weak policies, institutions, and governance, which means that restrictive participation is not only related to the legal framework or to the restriction measures, but also to the inability to influence decision making at the political level neither for you have clear decision making processes for CSOs to

participate. In the Middle East North Africa region where there have been decades of dictatorships, authoritarianism, and restrictions on CSOs, there are 22 countries each with different realities – you have on one hand some states have totally collapsed, unable to provide to the population, and some states that previously did not exist; and on another, a rather positive reality, countries in transition which somehow displays some balance of power between state and civil society. Enabling environment is not just about the legal framework but also about addressing (i) political will of the state to enhance civic participation; and (ii) capacity which is up to civil society to become a strong partner in decision making and questioning, holding governments to account.

Meja then had Antonio Tujan address concerns thrown at CSOs of being donor-dependent and therefore donor appendages, and ways by which CSOs should secure funds to guarantee their independence. Tujan



clarified that enabling environment is fundamentally about recognition, core registration, dialogue space, and support for CSOs, which is not always financial support, and which is not always from donors and INGOs. Most support comes from CSOs themselves, who thus become enablers or important actors in ensuring enabling environment, and cited as just one example Ibon's provision of pro-bono capacity building to fellow CSOs. At the same time, he underscored the need for CSOs to be self-reliant, and lauded especially grassroots for being so, thus the importance of asserting their independence. On the other hand, he underlined that CSOs provide public service and are fundamental in a functioning democracy and therefore CSOs have to be supported and that is something they should not be ashamed of. He shared how some governments, like that of Egypt, accuse CSOs receiving donor funding of subverting national sovereignty but explained that CSOs should assert their independence, and that independence and self-reliance should not be interpreted in the absolute (i.e. we won't receive money because we're independent). In other words: we should receive money because that comes from people's taxes whether from the North or South, and then use that for the people – for human rights and poverty reduction.

Meja then entertained questions and comments from the plenary. One

comment was from the Bangladeshi government official who raised what he calls an inconsistent approach among CSOs, referring particularly to his observation that when faith-based organizations are being silenced, mainstream CSOs who consider themselves liberal and secular remain silent. To this he asked CSOs to be a consistent voice of the people despite differences in approach. The two questions from the floor were from Julia on how the Istanbul Principles can be used to maintain independence; and from Georgina if there have been any improvements in government-CSO relationship.

Tony responded to Julia using some of the seven principles themselves. The principle of accountability, he said, reminds us that as a CSO, you have to know who you are and what your mandate is, and who you are accountable to before receiving money and by talking about accountability to your donors. The many elements of support that CSOs need to look into, he explained, is a function of partnerships among ourselves and other institutions we work with, and indeed many of us fail in the Istanbul Principles in recognizing the question of equality, mutual cooperation and other principles of partnership, which is why funding partner now dictates/shapes/create framework where recipient is captured.

On the second question, Modibo said there had been some progress since Paris albeit a very slow one. He said that in this changing world though, it is becoming more difficult to make sure that there are democratic models and that there are a lot of external shocks. In the Swahilian part of Africa alone he said, 20 million people are threatened by drought, jihadism, terrorism, food insecurity associated with climate change and so on. Abdel Samad, on the other hand, pointed to international or global systemic issues that create more tension between decision makers of the state and the civil society, which in turn leads to more restriction on CSOs. He cited as an example Egypt, which negotiated a five-year USD 12 million loan with the IMF with severe conditionalities like heavy taxes, austerity measures, lifting subsidies, etc. He concluded by saying that a new ODA definition reflects a new paradigm how we understand global partnership and the role of global community in addressing these. When you have money for ODA but less for development, more money for security and defense, humanitarian intervention etc., we are witnessing a very serious, challenging paradigm shift in understanding international financial aid and global partnership for development. Tujan said that said that by nature, donors and governments dictate and this is where developing participatory governance is fundamental. We may now be able to question the policies, affects how it is being shaped, but reform has only achieved 1 percent.

SESSION 7

STRAT CAFÉ: STEPPING UP AND MOVING FORWARD

Simultaneous open conversations and brainstorming on: (1) building country compacts for CSO development effectiveness; (2) defining indicators for monitoring CSO commitments in the HLM2 Nairobi Outcome Document; and (3) knowledge sharing and coordinating diverse initiatives on CSO effectiveness and accountability, were done to gather initial thoughts and recommendations from CPDE constituents.

Building Country Compacts for CSO Development Effectiveness

With reports from: Anas El Hanoui, L'Espace Associatif

CSOs underlined the necessity and duty to consider Country Compacts as part of their commitment in all high-level meetings in the past as well as in the recently concluded GPEDC HLM2 through its key message of universalizing the Development Effectiveness, which demands all development actors to translate the Nairobi Outcomes Document (NOD)'s rhetoric into tangible and relevant actions.

- Necessity

To ensure sustainability of CPDE action as part of its responsibility to implement the NOD with finality while promoting and ensuring multi stakeholders dialogue space, and warranting a sustainable enabling environment of CSOs action.

- Conditions and Constraints in Implementing the Country Compact

CSOs in general (members of CPDE in a particular measure) are going towards constrained conditions because of shrinking spaces for CSOs action, which constitutes the main challenges to the implementation of the Country Compact.

However, legal frame and political will are also fundamental limiting issues

to advance on the road to successful multi-stakeholders dialogue and consequently to make this Country Compact recognizable by all the parties.

Moreover, language used until now especially by CSOs (from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness, from county ownership to democratic ownership, gender approach and feminist approach, human rights-based approach, framework of Siem Reap, Istanbul principles) is an additional barrier to promote the Country Compact and to make it understandable by all parties including other CSOs.

As such, it is important to build capacities of CSOs and coordinate their actions to act beyond their own sectors for engaging a common and integrated action in a global perspective.

- Assets

CSOs are recognized as the most involved actors in leading development effectiveness agenda at both political and intellectual levels. This comparative advantage legitimizes CPDE's offer and makes it as a privileged role of Country Compact's catalyst.

- Implementation of the Country Compact

Taking into account some conditions/constraints cited above, the implementation should be more warranted if the Country Compact is to be implemented. Thus, it was suggested that the SDG 17 of the 2030 Agenda on international partnership to be the prime reference of CPDE action in promoting the Country Compact.

Also, adopting the productive approach of 'global light' and a 'country heavy' makes perfect sense in concretizing outputs. This option would also use the relative success realized at global level. Among others propositions, CSOs deem it necessary to institutionalize a political framework where the Country Compact will be applied. Also, it was proposed to create a space of dialogue between different CSOs and establish some control rules within CSOs to scan the use of Country Compact and its results.

Defining Indicators for Monitoring CSO Commitments in the HLM2 NOD

With reports from: Auli Starck, KEPA Finland

CSOs reiterated that indicators for CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment should be a demonstration of IPs in practice, and its purpose should be an evidence to GPEDC and/or other development actors

that CSOs are constantly improving their practices and commitments to the people they serve.

Moreover, indicators for monitoring CSO commitments in the HLM2 NOD should be: practical, tangible, informative, credible, flexible, and more qualitative than quantitative. In the process, it should be able to show percentage of CSOs have been able to accomplish certain criteria or principles.

Organizationally, the indicators should be focused on the national/local level so as to feed information at the international level. Regional and sub-regional processes may be considered as facilitating and enabling mechanisms but emphasis should be given to national/local processes. Sector issues should naturally be well integrated in the process as well.

CSO participants have identified the following steps as ways forward: (1) creation of baseline (looking for what has already been used/collected); (2) reflection on Istanbul Principles and Siem Reap Consensus; and (3) linking indicators with country compact.

Other ideas that CSO participants have brainstormed include:

- Transparency and Accountability: Self-Accountability, Self-coordination, and Networking
- Peer Review Rates
- Clear Mandate, Legitimacy
- CIVICUS Civil Society Index, CIVICUS Monitor, EE Index
- Level of Performance in HRBA
- Sectoral Base
- Trust, Confidence by People Served
- Gender Indexes – also at Lower Level – Gender Balance In Staff, Beneficiaries, Budget/Spending
- Progress in Anti-Corruption (Transparency International)
- Civil Society Awards (but what would be the criteria?)
- Publications in Local Languages (in local newspapers)
- Inclusion of Disable People
- Legislative Framework
- Civil Society (CSO) Participation in Decision-making and Policymaking Level of Downward Accountability
- Ownership of Priorities, Resources, Implementation
- Partnerships – Equality
- Budget Monitoring (Environment)
- Non-conditionality of Funding to Civil Society (from Governments, Private Sector)
- Outreach to People
- Engagement of Communities
- Feedback from Communities
- Relevance of IPs to Communities
- Percentage of Donor Funding Going Directly to Local CSOs
- Level of Networking (Learning and Sharing)
- Environmental Awareness

Knowledge Sharing and Coordinating Diverse Initiatives on CSO Effectiveness and Accountability

With reports from: Séverin Carminati, Alianza ONG

- Challenges: Knowledge Gap and Ownership Challenge

Lack of awareness on the IPs: Part of the challenge of IPs implementation relies on the capacity to build ownership and awareness on the IPs. If the IPs were built from a bottom-up approach with consultations of thousands of CSOs, there is a feeling of IPs being “stuck” at an elite global level with difficulties to take it back to the national/local level. The obstacles are linguistics at a double level: (1) the “language” of IPs which is technical and concepts proved difficult to grasp for many CSOs, and (2) the lack of translation to the many languages spoken at local level, or visual materials to bring the IPs to the non-readers in order to left no one behind.

Lack of transparency and communication on the CPDE: The advocacy power of IPs and CPDE within the GPEDC implies a continued effort towards building and strengthening the community of CSOs who implement the IPs on a daily basis implies knowing who is part of the CPDE and what is being done: who are the national focal points, who are the representatives of the 7 sectors at global/regional level, etc. To many outsiders, the internal structure and architecture of the CPDE has a bureaucratic complexity that needs to be more clear and transparent. The same applies to the CPDE own capacity to be accountable to its constituency and stakeholders, which can be worked out easily from the CPDE web platform.

- What to Share

Many things are being done to promote and measure good practices of CSOs to implement the IPs and the International Monitoring Framework for CSO Effectiveness. This content includes case studies, investigations, transparency and accountability mechanisms, internal policies and by-laws based on the IPs, peer learning and partnership initiatives, all of which have the potential to be replicated and give clues and tips on how to work towards CSO effectiveness at national and local levels.

The context of the Agenda 2030 and the need for each country is both an opportunity to build the necessary partnerships and monitoring frameworks, and a challenge to share between CSOs the good practices, successes and difficulties that many will face.

- How to Share It

ICTs provide many options and tools to gather and share information and

knowledge around the IPs: starting with the CPDE web platform, use of the cloud to share documents and create group discussions, webinars and MOOCs, effective use of social media through thematic planning of publications, e-bulletins with content from national focal points, etc. Many of these tools are cost-effective and have a strong impact and engagement potential.

Regarding the language barrier, a good strategy might include the translation of the key asks and IPs to the variety of languages used at local level, including visual elements to “de-conceptualize” the principles and break them to concrete elements with which all CSOs can relate. Bringing the IPs back to the grassroots implies building ownership again.

National focal points should be empowered and with capacity to promote the IPs and CPDE efforts through newspapers, radios and other mass medias.



SESSION 8

STEPPING UP AND MOVING FORWARD

The closing event, held during the dinner cruise, was lead by Atama Katama and Justin Kilcullen through a rap song, capturing key messages from the Istanbul Principles and CSO Enabling Environment. (see video clip)

ANNEXES

I.

Bangkok Unity Statement

Bangkok, Thailand – March 31, 2017

We, civil society organisations (CSOs) from around the world, have gathered in Bangkok alongside representatives of our partners in national governments and international institutions to mark the seventh anniversary of the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness.

CSOs contribute in unique and essential ways to development as innovative agents of change and social transformation. CSOs are channels for social solidarity, service and mobilization. CSOs implement, monitor, and review effective development cooperation. CSOs enable people to better claim their rights, to improve conditions of life, and to build a democratic society.

In 2010, almost 200 CSOs from 82 countries unanimously adopted the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness. These Principles constitute a statement of common values and approaches to guide CSO work, adaptable to highly diverse country contexts and different CSO approaches. They represent a meaningful commitment by CSOs to the practical implementation of the four development effectiveness principles (democratic ownership, focus on results, inclusive partnerships, and transparency and accountability).

This workshop in Bangkok has been inspired by the seventh Principle, by which CSOs pledge to create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning. These meetings have represented an important opportunity to take stock of where CSOs have been successful in being accountable for, and effective in, their development practices. CSOs and other stakeholders have been candid in evaluating their experiences with the Istanbul Principles. We have celebrated where implementation has been successful, and acknowledged where further work and greater progress are needed.

Today, we strongly uphold the continued value of the Istanbul Principles as well as associated documents, notably including the Siem Reap Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness. We reaffirm our commitment to take action to continue improving, and to be fully accountable for our development practices.

In particular, we affirm the following five points:

1. CSOs are important and independent development actors in their own right, and equal partners with government and other stakeholders in inclusive, participatory and effective development cooperation.

2. Civil society is united and committed to achieving development that is based on human rights and supports self-determination and the empowerment of people, especially the poor and marginalised and those in situations of vulnerability. We note that this includes contexts of humanitarian response, human insecurity, conflict and fragility, and that these situations particularly affect women and girls as well as children and youth. We are committed to leaving no one behind. We acknowledge the essential importance of CSO practices consistent with human rights standards and approaches.
3. Progress in realizing CSOs' potential contribution to effective development cooperation depends in large measure on government policies, laws, and regulations that create and maintain an enabling environment for civil society. The policy, legal, and regulatory environment with which many CSOs find themselves inhibits their ability to fully implement the Istanbul Principles. We note with concern the closing and shrinking of civil society spaces globally. We are similarly alarmed by the increasingly limited access in many countries to funding for CSOs, despite commitments such as the Grand Bargain pledge to allocate at least 25% of humanitarian funding as directly as possible to local and national organizations.
4. Despite these restrictions and impediments, CSOs have and remain committed to proactively and unilaterally strengthen their own development effectiveness through implementation of the Istanbul Principles. In particular, CSOs are committed to continue improving their own practices in relation to transparency, mutual accountability, and country-level ownership of initiatives, including by ensuring that CSO policies and practices support the participation, empowerment, and equitable partnership of local communities.
5. Effective development cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships will play a critical role in the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Effective development cooperation is an essential and stand-alone complement to the Sustainable Development Goals, and must be applied universally.

Furthermore, we make concrete commitments to:

- Take proactive actions to improve and be fully accountable for our development practices, including by expanding CSO accountability frameworks and developing national and sectoral CSO effectiveness compacts.
- Comprehensively implement human rights-based approaches throughout our development cooperation efforts, including by integrating and implementing gender equality and women's rights in all of our practices, and by supporting and facilitating transparent, participatory, inclusive and multi-stakeholder dialogue at various levels (national, regional and sub-regional, and local) that allows the free, prior and informed consent of affected communities and stakeholders.
- Support and facilitate inclusive, participative, and local partnerships that ensure the delivery of meaningful and sustainable results to people and communities,

particularly those most in need.

- Integrate climate justice, oceans management, and environmental sustainability into all CSO policies, practice, program planning, design processes, advocacy and public engagement – recognizing that the fates of people and planet are inherently connected.
- Uphold mutual accountability with other stakeholders in development, including local communities, using a variety of development cooperation policies and tools.
- Be guided by country-led results frameworks in which our work as independent development partners in our own right is acknowledged, in support of the notion of countries' responsibility for and democratic ownership of their development.
- Use evidence-based processes, including through the use of disaggregated data and gender- and age-responsive tracking, to identify the most vulnerable people – including refugees, migrants, children, people with disabilities, and indigenous peoples – and to leave no one behind.
- Continue to engage with the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), including accountability through the monitoring process, and with stakeholders inside and outside of the GPEDC, to evaluate, document and communicate the contributions of CSOs to effective development, including in relation to CSO commitments in the Nairobi Outcome Document from the Second High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC.
- Participate and engage in all relevant policy arenas with the objective of universalizing effective development cooperation.
- Share and disseminate these commitments with our development partners, including the communities in which we work, using a diverse range of appropriate communications tools and strategies, and continually assess our progress in meeting these commitments.



IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS BY CITIZEN NEWS NETWORK

DO NOT LEAVE MIGRANTS BEHIND IN AGENDA 2030

Eni Lestari

Civic spaces are important for achieving the 2030 Agenda for no government, even the UN, will ever achieve any development without the participation of people from different sectors and countries. Even though civic space remains limited and is actually shrinking these days, the Istanbul Principles has become a tool for CSOs to assert for that space. For the migrants' movement, using the Istanbul Principles and through the CPDE, we try to mobilize and involve as many migrants and refugee groups in the development talk so these have definitely helped give us space to learn and to engage.

The biggest challenge that we face in implementing the Istanbul Principles lies in the fact that there are strict immigration policies and harsh employment conditions that do not even allow us to go out organize, consolidate our ranks, and sustain whatever organization we have formed. Nevertheless, we just have to strengthen ourselves in whatever condition/realities we are in to not lose our space. We have to be present and unite on issues so some people really have to excel in terms of going around, talking to people, doing outreach, gathering and putting together issues and presenting it to the government. We are training more people to become leaders and our voice, and we have to show that we can speak development even if many of us have low educational attainment.

For the Istanbul Principles to help safeguard this little space that we have, we have to assess its seven years of existence – not only how much we've achieved but more importantly to prepare for bigger challenges. As we know the world is not going the way we want it to be – crisis is everywhere, states are getting harsh everywhere, landgrabbing, disasters, wars are all more intense, and business is still taking over the whole development agenda. As CSOS we have to take more firm commitment and stance. We have to confront governments and the private sector to make sure government will re-evaluate and listen. This is the most difficult part. They can talk to you but it doesn't mean they will listen.

EQUAL, ACCOUNTABLE AND EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL TO ACHIEVE AGENDA 2030

Ziad Abdel Samad

The Istanbul Principles has been a very important tool in the last seven years not only for holding others accountable but also for us, CSOs, to become transparent, effective partners that are also accountable to others. It is our contribution to the global agenda on equal partnership, mutual accountability, etc.

I'm coming from a very complicated and different region where civil society is

struggling for their rights to exist, to assembly, associate, membership, freedom of expression, access information, which are all important for civil society to become effective development partners. So the first challenge in implementing the Istanbul Principles is protecting these rights, which needs clear commitment from the state. Without active civil society participation, we won't be able to implement Agenda 2030 or face development challenges such as peace building, addressing inequality and exclusion. And for civil society to effectively participate in addressing these challenges, they must develop their capacities and empower themselves to hold other partners especially the private sector accountable – so the second challenge how we can strengthen and empower civil society. The third challenge is about partnerships at the global level – equal partnership and mutual accountability should also apply to international actors, donors and community. They should also accept to be transparent and accountable.

But we have to be clear that accountability is not only financial but also political. It's very important to redefine partnerships to mean that international actors change or adapt the policies and strategies according to the needs of local actors instead of to their own perception. We also have to be clear that the financial dimension is not the most important element of the partnership, that empowerment is not only financial because it is limiting ability of civil society and can frame civil society within certain agendas.

The Istanbul Principles can be a very important tool to empower for civil society in these redefinitions, but as to how it is very complicated. Some partners need awareness for the implementation, some of the stakeholders are aware but they don't implement it, and still for some it is a threat. Democracy and transparency is not easy for some decision-makers. So in a system where you have a lot of tax evasion and illicit capital flows, who can accept to be transparent? When a state is tied to certain donor conditions – it means that it will have more tension with its civil society and shrink space even though it is aware of the IP and committed to the NOD. Advocacy is not only to make them aware but also to respect the commitments and priorities of the people – people's rights, human values, and human dignity, equality. In the region where I come from it's even more difficult – when we talk about empowering civil society it is not only the moral dimension but also about balance of power. We need an empowered, independent civil society, one that can impose its presence and pose itself as an equal partner when it comes to implementing democratic values and development policies and strategies.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF ALL DEVELOPMENT ACTORS WILL STRENGTHEN RESPONSE-ABILITY

Dr. Azra Talat Sayeed

The Istanbul Principles, the main context of which is accountability of the people to the people – is something that the grassroots, the social and people's movements have always possessed. If there is one thing that it has been helpful in in the last seven years that would be giving the larger INGOs and CSOs, some food for thought. And if there is one thing that we should be careful of the Istanbul Principles is that Southern governments see this as a whipping tool for civil society. Since 9-11, the world scene has changed drastically – things have become very difficult, any

kind of asking accountability to the government results in you being labeled.

But then again we have to redefine accountability, especially for the big NGOs and CSOs taking money from the World Bank or USAID who are promoters of anti-people public-private partnerships. There are billions of dollars and many of these big NGOs and CSOs willing to bring in neoliberal policy framework are now like clearing houses for ODA. Accountability meanwhile is being used as a stick for those who really serve the people. We believe that aid has to be accountable. For us to be accountable, we are happy to be accountable. There are many shades of being so. There is accountability of the work we do, of the messages we bring to the state functionaries, to the media, we are accountable in many ways – how we are spending our hours, and so on. Subsequently, we also need to redefine the World Bank, restructure or dismantle it along with the IMF and WTO who all consider themselves the biggest players in development. For the Istanbul Principles to be effective, it should be applied to big CSOs who have become clearinghouses for ODA money.

We also have to think in terms of sensitive issues with respect to peoples and social movements because they are very vulnerable. But indeed space as shrunk immensely especially in the farmers movement, in the grassroots movement – there's no money going to migrant work, landless farmers, women, especially fisherfolk women, agriculture women, and all of that arena has been taken over by private sector. If you speak out and say these women peasants are being brutalized, they would say we are working against government interest. So in terms of shrinking spaces, yes, for the most critical areas they don't want us to be working on it. On the other hand, the private sector is now the torch carrier, and then big CSOs who have WB, IMF, USAID money redefine what are people's rights.

The Istanbul Principles and workshops on democratic ownership – things like that where we look at something like democratic ownership and see that democratic ownership is only possible when people work in an enabling environment – when we talk about it, we are able to give out those messages. All these – accountability, democratic ownership, all these are attached to enabling environment so it helps us to connect these two, to bring it out very clearly – how can we be accountable if environment is so anti-people? It highlights issues in a different way which is very useful.

ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES CAN HELP CIVIL SOCIETY TO MAKE SDGS A TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA

Justin Kilcullen

The Istanbul Principles has highlighted for CSOs and NGOs that we are at our best when we practice gender equity, when we approach things using human rights-based approach, when we show solidarity with each other, when we have relationships based on equality rather than one based on power or financial resources, when we're sharing with and learning from each other. In seven years, many CSOs in the South and North have taken these principles and tried to put them into effect. It also has helped in getting that recognition that civil society is an autonomous development actor and was reaffirmed three months ago in Nairobi

at the HLM. Through the Istanbul Principles – we were able to demonstrate to the development community that we are responsible, being accountable, and we want governments to be all of those things and we can't really ask that of others if we are not those ourselves.

But implementing the Istanbul Principles, specifically the principle of equitable relationships is a challenge. How do big CSOs who are partners with small CSOs in the South release their power so that there is equal partnership? To whom are CSOs, particularly those receiving funds from governments, accountable? How is equitable partnership demonstrated between sophisticated CPDE member organizations based in capital cities and their rural-based members? So this goes up and down the chain, not just geographic or regional. It's a challenge for all of us because where there is money and power play, there are some things that have to be negotiated. On redefining effectiveness and accountability, I'm not so sure we need to redefine it; we just need to understand and implement it. The other one is about sustainability, something we talk a lot about, but some of our work can be short-term, what happens at the end of it? Applied to partnerships, this means if you are a partner, then be a partner for life because a three-year program does not necessarily get you to the end, and social and economic issues are complex things that can't be resolved in short-term programs.

Moving forward, we need to make the Istanbul Principles a reality in our lives. In terms of Agenda 2030, one of the big drawbacks is it's not a transformative agenda because like in the MDGs, we promised to change everything, lift everyone out of poverty, leave no body behind, but don't tackle the basic economic and social structures that created the problem. But I won't say it is a bad thing – we can use this as a means to promote the rights-based approach agenda that we believe underlies true sustainable development and we have to find the good bits in it, we have to be seen as constructive partners not complaining all the time, we have to find allies and together maybe we can make something more of agenda 2030 than it appears to be at the moment. The Istanbul Principles are the basis on which the civil society can make the Agenda 2030 a transformative agenda, it means living it ourselves and in our advocacy work, and really putting pressure on other development actors to transform how they work.

But civil society space is shrinking. Even in the EU we see governments moving to the right. A lot of views of civil society by many governments are that you're free to operate as long as you're operating in our policy framework. We might say okay but we need to participate in the formulation of those policies, but often there's no way to participate in that.

CIVIC SPACES ARE CRUCIAL FOR GOVERNMENTS TO FULLY ACHIEVE AGENDA 2030

HE Ambassador Brendan Rogers

How important are civic spaces for achieving Agenda 2030?

Government represents the people and should be working for the people, and civil

society organizations are the people, and hopefully they represent the people. So it's the government's responsibility to work for the people, with the people; and civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations are the platforms, the communicators through which the people can speak to the government. And elections are important. Elections elect the government, but the process of communication does not stop at that point. It continues with the partnership between the people and those who govern them with their permission, so it's absolutely essential that the space is clear for that dialogue.

But the first thing that governments face in developing civic space sharing their power with other organizations and being inclusive because there is a tendency of all power structures to believe that they know best. Governments, as legitimate guardians of the country, also have the challenge to ensure that the organizations they are speaking to truly represent the people, and also speak to power within the structure of their organization.

On the helpfulness of the Istanbul Principles to the government, CSOs and other development actors to be more effective in achieving the SDGs, the challenge is in implementing, monitoring and evaluation, and holding everyone accountable because I've been in the UN and listen to ministers and come back to a particular country and it does not seem to be happening.

Is CSO space shrinking? How can the IP safeguard the CSO space?

Rogers: We live in difficult times and there is a general consensus that civil society space is shrinking and that is possibly true. But when I worked in development many years ago, there were few CSOs and there were some intimidatory governments in some places that I worked. That is all changed now; there's been a democratic revolution in the 90s, in the early 2000s throughout many continents. But what is happening now with the security agenda, governments are pushing back saying CSOs are being funded from the outside, here are human rights issues, there are environmental issues so there is no doubt that there is a battle there. Civil society by the way is a name for the people, right? So the people need to push back and they need to do it in the best way possible and they have to be united. Those of us who have the luxury of living in democratic states and who are members of international organizations like the UN and EU, it's incumbent upon us to speak out and to push in international fora and in dialogue to ensure that we support the importance of a space for civil society.

CIVIC SPACES ARE CRUCIAL FOR GOVERNMENTS TO FULLY ACHIEVE AGENDA 2030

HE Minister Judy Taguiwalo

Civil society plays an important role in ensuring that the issues of the grassroots from the communities are brought to the attention of the government. And government, if it is sincere in its role in providing services and serving the people, then should acknowledge the role and recommendations of CSOs. In the Philippines, it is already enshrined in our Constitution that CSOs play a major role in the democratization

of society. The challenge in developing spaces for them is ensuring that they are legitimate, not representatives of just a small group. Second, on the part of the government, to make the accreditation process simple, just as one of the first steps my department has done – not too bureaucratic, not too expensive, because there are genuine CSOs who don't have the money to pay for the requirements but are really good ones.

On how the Istanbul Principles can help government and CSOs, as development actors, to be more effective in achieving the SDGs, international agreements and principles in general provide the mandate at the national level. In that sense, the Istanbul Principles will help CSOs and government improve their efficacy and relationship and eventually this would redound to better services to our people.

Is CSO space shrinking? The growth or reduction of the number of CSOs is a function of governments in a specific society. Under a democratic regime, the conditions are better, CSOs thrive; under dictatorships, freedoms are prohibited so I think in some areas, CSOs are thriving, in others they are not. But at the end of the day, where there is repression, there is resistance. If the conditions are terrible, the people will find a way of forming organizations, of acting so that their grievances are redressed, their rights are implemented. I was part of the anti-dictatorship during the Marcos years, I was arrested, I was tortured – I was forced to sit on a block of ice naked while being interrogated; I was in prison first time for 1 year and 7 months, then we escaped. We went back underground and I was re-arrested, at the time I was pregnant, so I delivered my baby inside the prison camp. But you know, so long as you remain in your commitment, your belief in the people, in a better way of life, and your passion to serve then you will never grow old.

CAN ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES HELP DEVELOP CIVIC SPACES FOR IMPLEMENTING AGENDA 2030?

Julia Sanchez

It is important to have CSO spaces for achieving Agenda 2030 because there is a generalized agreement and acceptance of the fact that civil society is a key player in any country's democracy, peace, and socio-economic development efforts. If we don't have a civil society pushing governments to do the right thing in mobilizing people to ask and to act on issues that are important then you do not really see progress. And since Agenda 2030 is a really ambitious agenda – it covers a whole range of issues from economic growth to health to education, peace building, climate change – so in all those fronts, civil society, especially locally, has to be resourced and supported to be able to play its role in building and sustaining successful prosperous societies.

Have the IP been helpful in the past 7 years for developing CSO spaces?

One of the important things that the Istanbul Principles did in the last seven years was help to articulate and communicate with other stakeholders – governments, donors, private sector, parliamentarians, and other stakeholders in the development landscape – what we are all about and where we set the bar for ourselves. They also reflect what civil society does on a day-to-day basis and strives to be. It is important that we communicate what we believe in, what principles guide us, but also that we're holding each other accountable. Still, one challenge in implementing

these is making them real for all the organizations. Often when you get a new set of principles, a new code, the automatic reaction is 'oh my gosh there's something new we have to learn', but a lot of it is not new. Of course there might be areas of improvement. The other challenge is that there are different codes and standards that organizations are held up to that a little wears down enthusiasm. There is also a north-south divide that we have to face, which was very present during the Istanbul Principles process – the hierarchies that are created, the lack of trust that exists sometimes. The equitable partnerships principle speaks to that different realities and power dynamics that are not always healthy, and we need to challenge ourselves to create and support equitable partnerships among ourselves first of all, and then with governments and other stakeholders.

Lastly, CSO space is undeniably shrinking. It is happening in most countries. Now, can the Istanbul Principles help in any way? The Istanbul Principles and other codes bring people together around a set of common goals. We need to be united, when things are difficult it's that much more important. The Istanbul Principles are the unifying movement that can help to address this enabling environment challenge.

