

GoGo - Quo Vadis? Suggestions and Options for the 2nd phase

Andreas Kahler, DED

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To start with

It is as usual: Dependent on the respective vantage point we arrive at different pictures of the current dynamics of CSOs in Zambia, emerging trends or challenges, but also at different outlooks. Before drafting the next phase, many different perspectives have to be taken into account. As the ideas sketched in the following carry about experiences mainly from advisory work in the province, they definitely have to be complemented by scenarios from elsewhere.

1. Disadvantaged rural areas

Rural areas in Zambia are even more disadvantaged, underprivileged, poor than urbanized parts of the country. Accordingly, CSOs outside the capital experience less supportive environments in their work. Moreover, we have to acknowledge the same asymmetry goes for TC and FC with civil society. Here, again, rural sites are underrepresented too.

The GoGo PPR report (19.3.2008) recognizes therefore the requirement “to counterbalance the exclusion of rural”, vulnerable groups. Of course, we are facing no easy task since the available non-urban CSO structures, quantities likewise, are equally weaker than for instance in the Provincial capitals. In my view, there are two anchor options GoGo can orientate towards to increase coverage:

- Work with NGOs in the province shows the prevalence of weak communication and suboptimal information flow. It is in particular from this angle that GoGo can address specifically rural challenges. Not only by “pro-active information sharing” with the partner organizations (PPR report) but also by widening and deepening the facilitation of information and communication between state and civil society as well as among CSOs themselves in general. Be it community media or new media projects from CSOs – pilots could target in particular rural districts in the first place to “counterbalance”.
- First experiences from the Eastern and Southern (also Western?) Provinces with the formation of “NGO Forums” demonstrate the feasibility of deliberate, additional civil society coordination efforts in association with participation in PDCCs and DDCCs. (Meanwhile it seems certain that CSPR alone cannot manage to fulfil this function, even though it might play a key role in organizing such forums. Bearing in mind the very successful development of CSPR at provincial level – indeed, the network’s strength lies with its PPMTs -, there are good reasons to believe that more emphasis should be placed on that sub-national levels.)

For sure, we are looking at an area of uncertainty when considering decentralization. In the recent Budget Speech, Government announced a upcoming capacity building need assessment at local levels. We do not know whether this is more than a kind gesture. However, within civil society and within its organizations there are a lot of things to be done in terms of decentralizing – independently from state. Thus, CSPR, like other CSOs, has to face its own challenges regarding lacks of “trickling down” of funds or whatever capitals. In this sense, immediate measures can be taken to tackle decentralization, somehow in preparation of the “official” process to come.¹

¹ Regarding “Access to Justice” we cannot say much due to lack of information, but it seems interesting to collect details on a recent South-African Programme, recently started by The Atlantic Philanthropies in conjunction with Inyathelo, Cape Town: A Non-Profit Sustainability Programme “is

2. Selecting programme partners

Another dimension concerns the selection of future program partners. Here are several options imaginable, and GoGo has always to balance continuity-assurance against promotion of diversity (as we note, “diversification” has finally entered the limelight, in 2009 (see for instance this Year`s budget speech), and this might also open up spaces for new state – civil society constellations and relationships). Let me list up seven suggestions:

- Taking up some brainstorming we had earlier, especially CSOs close to the interfaces with economy might be interesting. Associations dealing with labour, professionalism, economy, value creation, are likely to provide extra expertise relevant for inputs into political dialogues. This might be the case with professional or trade associations, with professional organizations, unions on the one hand, and expert networks –comparable EAZ – on the other (how to address the informal sector?). Regarding the “Access to Justice” component one might also ask whether to include Lawyer associations. We may assume that such associations offer special knowledge and open perspectives productively complementing others.
- Noting the current re-discovery of agriculture in Zambia, one could also consider closer linkages with agricultural organizations – as long as they are articulate concerning Governance: cooperations, networks of farmer associations etc. This would again stress the outreach to rural areas where only comparably few exclusively political CSOs can be found.
- Another sphere, not unfamiliar for GoGo, comprises the realm of academics, science and higher education system. With the University of Zambia, UNZA, but also with the eminent think tank JCTR it already maintains cooperation. For the sake of knowledge generation and transfer towards civil society as well as expertise inputs into policy processes it has to be asked where any potential groups from that angle – political engaged student fraternity? Critical Academics? Socially committed Lecturers? – are to be found.
- It might be contributing if further partners came from the angle of the media. There are good reasons why this would make a lot of sense: Not only is it the intermediating role GoGo plays in the space between state and civil society implying chances of information sharing, but also looking at the needs and demands within (civil) society itself why it seems desirable to enhance such infrastructures. (Finally, it has to do with the facilitation of the role clearing necessitated by recent Media Bill proposals which could threaten freedom of speech and media work in Zambia to a large extend putting harm to CSOs and citizenry in general.)
- To promote internationalization appears as another selection criterion for future GoGo partnerships. Cooperation with trans-national CSOs accelerates the transfer of know-how and information, for instance regarding decentralization (e.g. Malawi), NGO Bill (Ethiopia?), Media Bill (Kenya?). When Southern Africa`s civil societies learn from each other then also the political culture benefits through impulses from outside Zambia, through trans-national exchange.
- “Climate Change” – Like a new brand, the problem of global warming is now recognized as a key global challenge. Looking at the weak environment MDG progress in Zambia, it can be argued that in connection with Good Governance “green” groups show potential for critical impulses if they know how to translate their issues into legislative procedures etc.

targeted at selected human rights organisations and was borne out of the realisation that non-profit organisations working in rural areas are confronted with the challenge of implementing their mandates in a complex, multi-level context. Increased demands by the poor in rural areas for access to their constitutionally entrenched rights as well as shifting donor priorities...” shall be addressed “to build the sustainability ... working on behalf of the poor in rural areas ...” (Inyathelo, Annual Report 2008, p. 14f.).

- Last year, the EITI – Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative was joined by Zambia, providing a number of action possibilities for CSOs regarding transparency and accountability. The initiative is a remarkable opportunity as it provides joined ventures or common ground for government (state), private sector (mines) and civil society in Zambia. Why not “buying in” into this reform process?

3. Cooperation: CSOs and state

When it comes to the thematic scope of co-operations, the program is in a good position to assist relationships between civil society and state: While the issue of the NGO bill stands for the challenge of mistrust between CSOs and government (see documentation “Dialogue between the Southern Africa Trust and Zambian CSOs”, 17.8.2007, www.southernafricatrust.org/events_01.html), the GoGo project is characterized by its role between state and civil society, thus enabling it to mediate or moderate the interplay of government, state institutions and CSOs, for instance through dialogue forums or facilitation of policy work on both sides.

From its overall orientation, the program’s function of strengthening the interaction between state and civil society might become stronger. The PPR report (19.3.2008) points at options for deepening that function: in connection with parliament and members of parliament (compare CARITAS Parliamentary Liaison Programme), for example with view of their constituencies; through linkages with the MCDSS (also at provincial level?); and of course through the already stressed SAG interactions (“participation fatigue”). It seems crucial not to refer too much to concrete policy issues or quarrels like the constitution making process, media bill or NGO bill. GoGo’s strength lies in its formal support of interfaces.

4. Indicators

As an overall recommendation the PPR report asks how an additional goal or indicator can be identified. But it is not easy to decide if that complementary indicator should either refer to new modes of delivery, to the realm of parliamentary reforms or last but not least to participation structures at sub-national level like PDCCs and DDCCs. Which complementary indicator represents the best measurement and goal refinement for the next phase? Is it solely the additional measurement for “Access to Justice”?

The matter of parliamentary reforms could likewise be addressed from sub-national level (constituency level) to underline its significance. Meaning, in my view, an additional indicator may combine two aspects, so that it would be more comprehensive and solid. The goal and indicator set is likely to become more informed but also more informative when it takes evidence regarding sustainable sub-national anchoring of program results into account.