

5 Seminars

Autumn 2009

**A changing world:
New challenges for
development NGOs**

Thematic Forum has the pleasure of presenting a chain of seminars during the autumn 2009, all addressing the most significant challenges NGOs are currently facing. The issues are all interlinked. Opening up one discussion leads to a need to address other issues. This is the case when opening the box by exploring the **changing civil society**. As soon as one addresses the questions of roles and room for manoeuvring for NGOs, other issues are lining up in front of us: Will independence and diversity still be a feature of CSOs in a development world highly influenced by the Paris Agenda and the claims for **effectiveness of development assistance**?

New challenges to all prospects for development in the South - including NGO activities - are brought about by the **climate changes**. Another crucial challenge for both CSOs and NGOs is the question of **legitimacy and accountability**. What are the most recent initiatives within these areas?

The chain of seminars will be concluded by investigating in-depth the new tendency of **internationalisation**, where major NGOs, also in Denmark, have decided to establish strong and formal relationships (or even merging) into alliances of very large international organisations. What are the prospects, challenges and risks in this trend?

Seminar 1

A CHANGING CIVIL SOCIETY 3 September 2009, 10 a.m. to 4.15 p.m.

Some argue that in fact NGOs have not been successful in promoting social change. Given that this is basically what they are meant for, we need to question whether NGOs are still able to work as change agents and advocates for the interests of the poor? What does it take for NGOs to re-think and renew themselves to become effective change agents? Or should we rather turn to social movements and other forms of civic action to find new potentials for transforming unequal and unjust social structures?

This seminar opens the series of seminars with reflections on the reality of a growing number of civil society organisations involved in development aid on a highly professional level, and on social movements as a challenge and a new opportunity to the work of traditional development NGOs. Core speakers will be Anthony Bebbington from University of Manchester (TBC) and Teivo Teivainen from the University of Helsinki.

Seminar 2

AID EFFECTIVENESS

10 September 2009, 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

The buzzword 'effectiveness' has always been closely linked to the concept of development assistance. Focus has increased during the past years where issues like harmonisation among donors, ownership and cooperation have been addressed by the OECD launched international aid effectiveness agenda. NGOs seem to play a double role in the discourse: One is how they can use the effectiveness agenda politically and strategically, and the other is the performance of the NGOs themselves. Basically the question is: How will this agenda change the civil society development architecture as we know it today?

This seminar will discuss the place and role of development NGOs within the framework of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. Lars Koch from IBIS and Christian Friis Bach from DanChurchAid will introduce the theme, and Andreas Vogt from Concord will present the ideas behind the "Open Forum for CSO Effectiveness".

Seminar 3

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

20 October 2009, 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.

The negative consequences of climate changes will primarily have an impact on the poorest people of the world. The present and future scenarios require new strategies for organisations working to assist people in developing countries. One might need to reinvent the term "sustainable development" and look into a rights-based approach combining the climate and development agendas. How can Danish NGOs ensure a participatory approach in addressing the issues of both agendas?

This seminar will focus on the requirements for adaptation of NGO programming and application of new components and approaches in NGO development assistance. Christian Friis Bach from DanChurchAid will set the frame with regard to future adaptation of programmes. A rights based approach to climate change can be one point of entry as presented by Eric Kemp-Benedict from The Stockholm Environmental Institute, and Poul Erik Lauridsen from CARE Denmark will share some lessons learned by a Danish NGO.

Seminar 4

NGO LEGITIMACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY 6 November 2009, 1.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m.

As development NGOs involve more and more in advocacy and political activities, questions to their accountability and legitimacy are raised from different stakeholders. NGOs are faced with extremely complex accountability demands and requested to ensure upwards, inwards, horizontal and downwards accountability - on their own behalf and as well on partners. Demands appears comprehensive as NGOs apparently need accountability mechanisms linked to transparency, participation, monitoring and complaints and redress mechanisms. The question is whether such demands will pose serious challenges to small and volunteer based NGOs?

This seminar will discuss the increasing demands on NGOs to demonstrate their accountability and legitimacy, and introducing the ideas behind the NGO Accountability Charter. Core speakers will be Bjørn Førde from the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre and a representative from CIVICUS will introduce the Accountability Charter.

Seminar 5

GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND INTERNATIONALISATION OF NGOS 24 November 2009, 9.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

As NGOs worldwide enter into alliances or even merge and become big global actors - international NGOs – the NGO community inevitably changes. Will this development prove to be a forceful step in gaining more impact for the benefit of the poor? Or will it turn out to be a bureaucratic Western governed response to the effectiveness agenda? Will it streamline and spoil the diversity among NGOs? Will smaller and less professionalised NGOs loose recognition and will internationalisation of NGOs impede true partnerships along the North/South axis?

This seminar will finalise the chain of seminars with a debate on the reality of global civil society today and especially the trends within development NGOs of merging into large international organisations. Marlies Glasius from University of Amsterdam and Harry Derksen from ICCO will be core speakers, followed by a panel discussion between CARE International, Save the Children Alliance, Alliance 2015 and MS ActionAid Denmark.

Venue For all the seminars except 3 September:

**MS' Global Platform,
Fælledvej 12, 2200 KBH N**

**Registration is free,
but preferable.**

**Please check
www.tematiskforum.dk
from August 2009 for information
about registration, venue, etc.**