

Report

6th Civicus World Assembly

Theme: Acting Together for A Just World
Civic Justice Economic Justice Political Justice Social Justice

June 21st -25th 2006



Pictures:

Page 2: (L-R): Ms Ransome Kuti-Executive Director, NNNGO and Oyebisi Babatunde Oluseyi, Martin Sime- Chief Executive Scottish Council for Voluntary Organization (SCVO), Kumi Naidoo-Secretary General Civicus and Oyebisi, Oyebisi, a Scottish piper and Otunba Dele Ajayi-Smith- President African Citizen Development Foundation (ACDF).

Page 3: Some participants at the NNNGO display table

Page 4: Old Fire Fighting Ambulance- Picture taken at the Motor Museum- Scotland.

Page 5: Winners of the Civicus Nelson Mandela-Gracia Marshal Award

Page 6: Delegates at the Affinity Group of National Associations' (AGNA) Meeting.



Introduction

With well over 90 workshops, 80 exhibitors and numerous plenaries, the 6th Civicus World Assembly gathered together civil society activists from more than 100 countries of the world from the 21st -25th June 2006 with the theme: Acting together for a Just World and four sub themes: Civic Justice, Economic Justice, Political Justice and Social Justice.

On the 21st of June 2006, Scotland's First Minister Jack McConnell welcomed over 1200 delegates from across the globe to the events- "We are honoured to be the first country in Western Europe to host this assembly-and to have this opportunity to become a home to the assembly for the coming three years."

The conference plenary which opened on the 21st was addressed by Mary Robinson, President of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General, Civicus as well as Irungu Houghton the Pan African Policy Advisor from Oxfam, Kenya with agenda setting for the days ahead featuring dream weave.

This year's World Assembly significantly focused on international issues and also explores the role of the domestic voluntary sectors in global effort to secure social, economic, political and civic justice. The Assembly was also planned to coincide with the annual general meeting of the Affinity Group of National Association (AGNA)- the Nigeria Network of NGOs (NNNGO) is a member of this group.

AGNA members had a day session to share and learn from each other best practices as it relates to the Civil Society sector in the over 70 countries that are members of AGNA. Solutions were sought for problems of funding, membership, information exchange, member's involvement etc.

With experiences coming from all members of the group it became obvious that the problems associated with civil society movements across the world are universal and defies a universal solution but localization of best practices in areas where one or more interventions have worked for an organization.

From the foregoing it was agreed that members should share experiences from each and open up opportunities for capacity building and learning exchanges that would assist Southern Umbrella Networks learn from the Northern what works for them and what does not and vice versa.

The AGNA meeting amongst other things provided us with an opportunity to put faces behind emails and better still served as an avenue to set priorities and to elect new steering committee members for the AGNA year 2006-2007.

Other highlights of the World Assembly was the Civicus Annual Members' Meeting, the launch of the International Advocacy NGOs and Networks (IANGO) Accountability Charter, Learning Exchange Visits, highlights of 14 civil society activists who are in prison and various mini plenaries

Towards a Global Standard in Civil Society Organizational Governance was the title of the workshop hosted by NNNGO alongside Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa, Charities Aid Foundation, Chinese Association of NGOs (CANGOS), National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO), Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organizations (ACEVO) and Governance Hub.

Plenaries and Workshops at World Assembly in Summary

Thursday 22nd June 2006

Opening Plenary: Agenda Setting and Dream Weave



The plenary featured framing of issues that will be discussed in the plenary sessions and workshops of the 2006 Civicus World Assembly. Civil society in the new millennium face a complex plethora of issues, challenges and threats, and yet there is an upsurge of organized civic action as never encountered before, Mary Robison lead the session from the perspective of the global agenda, and Kumi Naidoo from the regional and national perspectives, as well as Civicus response to those issues.

Mini-Plenaries

Mini-Plenary 1: To what extent are counter-terrorism efforts and legislation impeding democracy?

This mini plenary explored the recent trend towards counter-terrorism legislation and other measures and how these are reducing the democratic space for civil society organizations globally. Participants critically analyze current issues of concern, including the some of the following questions: How can the concept of human security and civil liberties be balanced with the war against terrorism? What role can civil society play in the war against terrorism?

Mini-Plenary 2: Building Bridges for Social Justice across Sectors: Challenges and Lessons learned

Civil society is the arena outside of the family, state and the market where people associate for a common purpose. In promoting its values and implementing its objectives. Social justice encompasses the inalienable right to life, liberty and personal security for all citizens and at the same time it underlines that conflict and divisions have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable and marginalized individuals. With this social justice translates into the right of different groups to exist and flourish within a society this and others were the issues explored by this plenary.

Mini-Plenary 3: How can a stronger global civil society infrastructure help advance civic justice?

Understanding that civic justice pertains to the sphere of action where civic energy drives social organization for justice ends, Global civil society is formed by local and national actors who, in self-organizing at the global level, seek to realize a global understanding of justice objectives. This plenary looked at the question of whether a justice oriented global civil society infrastructure is a realizable vision or merely an illusion.

Workshops

26 workshops were held by different civil society activists, some of the topics discussed at the workshops include:

1. Youth as active agents of change
2. Street papers- A job creation opportunity for the Urban Environment
3. Bridging the gap between research and action-early signs of impact of the Civicus Society Index Project

4. Negotiating Change and Striving for Justice: the Role of Non-Governmental Public Actors
5. Women and Children in Post Conflict Reconstruction
6. Government and Civil Society-Implementing Compacts Effectively
7. Strategies for building better Governance and Democracy
8. Active Citizenship, Nation Building and Globalization
9. New Anti-Corruption Initiatives by Civil Society
10. Anti-Poverty Campaign Handles: Are MDGs 'Maximum Distraction Gimmicks' or Minimalist Development Goals'



Friday, 23rd June 2006

Main Plenary: Philanthropy or Philanthropy? Developing Resources for a Just World

Setting the tone for the day's discussed was Hilary Benn Secretary of State, Department for International Development, UK who informed the gathering of the British Governments Development assistance to developing countries.

This session brought together leading funders (multi-laterals, bi laterals, foundations, cooperates and individual philanthropists) with practitioners and experts in the field philanthropy to debate how to move towards more intelligent funding.

Workshops

Over 30 workshops were hosted with various topics such as:

1. Membership Based Organizations: Issues and Challenges
2. Community Involvement-Changing the balance of Power in Community Development
3. Networking for Development: Strengthening Civil Society and NGO Networks
4. Men in the Fight for Gender Equality
5. Empowering Youth toward Justice in Sustainable Development and Conflict
6. Crossing Borders: Empowering Rural Women through Action and Mobilization
7. Older People and Civil Society

Learning Exchanges

Series of learning exchanges were organized to assist delegates learn from each, best practices and experience as it regards different sectors with the civil society movement.

With over 20 learning exchanges in different towns and places across Scotland participants had the opportunity of visiting civil society organizations working in their area of interest across Scotland.

NNNGO participated at the learning exchange organized by Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS), the aim of this was to look at best practices and strategies for youth development in Scotland and participating countries, regions and organizations. A visit was also conducted to a local volunteer center in the historic town of Stirling. VDS is the umbrella body for volunteering in Scotland.

Night Cap



On the evening of the 23rd – A night cap with the title: Should the United Nations be dismantled was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Argyle Suite and was attended by representatives from the United Nations and civil society practitioners working on the reform of international institutions. The origin of the United Nations was critically analyzed through to its mandate and work and also explored its relevance, usefulness and effectiveness in this era of global civil society and global campaign work.

Saturday 24th June 2006

Main-Plenary: Are Political Leaders Listening to Civil Society?

Over the year's civil society has become more empowered and a legitimate voice wanting to be heard in the decision making process, in every part of the globe, from Africa, Asia, Europe and to the Pacific, North America, Caribbean, and Latin America, there has been marked increase in people forming associations, foundations, civil society organizations in order to deliver human services, promote grassroots development and advocate for political and civil rights, the session explored in depth terms whether political leaders are listening and engaging civil society in policies and legislation making.

Mini-Plenaries

Mini-Plenary 1: Just Information: Using 'New Media' to Build a Better World

This session explored the use of the media to effectively enhance the work of civil society organizations, guided by civil society practitioners working in the media, participants had the opportunity of learning what civil society messaging is, increased understanding of what new media entails and its importance in the work of civil society organizations nationally, regionally and internationally.

Mini-Plenary 2: Development Financing: Where is the Women's Dividend?

This panel discussion led by Neoleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM and featuring senior ministers and economists from a range of developing countries discussed key opportunities and challenges in financing 'the women's dividend'.

Mini-Plenary 3: The Rights to Rise Up: Why Civic Disruption can lead to Civic Liberty

Experts in civilian-based power and leaders of nonviolent movements/campaigns gathered at this plenary to discuss key ideas, such as the importance of strategic skills rather than favourable conditions, international norms and standards for assistance to nonviolent resisters and new applications of nonviolent power.

Mini-Plenary 4: Decent Work, Decent Life: Can NGOs, government, international institutions and trade union reach a common path for development?

At these plenary answers were provided to the following questions: What does general civil society movement think about decent work? Is it the right way to develop? And what about governments and the international financial institutions? Are they ready to prioritise the creation of decent work in trade negotiations, aid programmes and loan conditions?

Workshops

With over 10 workshops holding in different halls across the conference venue, the Nigeria Network of NGOs alongside Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa, Charities Aid Foundation, Chinese Association of NGOs (CANGOS), National Council for Voluntary Organizations (NCVO), Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organizations (ACEVO) and Governance Hub.

The topics for the workshop- Towards a Global Standard in Civil Society Organizational Governance explored what governance means in the wide range of countries represented at the workshop and begin the process of identifying common ground and the potential for an international statement on governance. Following these workshop country representatives will independently take forward discussions in their own context and continue dialogue via an e-network.



Other workshop topics include:

1. Toward a Better Legitimacy, Accountability and Transparency among Civil Society Organizations
2. Campaign for a Charter on Civil Society Rights
3. Where is Women's Voice in Civil Society and Public Institutions
4. Civil Society at the Local Level: Getting our Voices Heard
5. Renewing the Global Call to Action against Poverty- Together for Equality

Sunday 25th June 2006

Closing Plenary

The over 1000 delegates at the 6th Civicus World Assembly gathered together at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Center (SECC) by bringing together key non state actors in the diversity of their voices in very short messages and commitments for 2007. The session included a 'reaping' of dreams that delegates sowed in the opening plenary's "Dream Weave" exercise. What did we dream and how will we go about putting our dreams into action until we meet again at the 7th Civicus World Assembly in 2007.

Conclusion

The 6th Civicus World Assembly has no doubt provided NNNGO more insight into civil society activities and work globally with special emphasis on lessons learnt from colleagues within the civil society movement from different countries of the world.

Networking and Learning exchange opportunities were also part of the opportunities which came out of NNNGO's participation at the assembly, follow up activities will be initiated by NNNGO for capacity building and network strengthening purposes for its members and secretariat.

The 7th Civicus World Assembly will take place in Glasgow Scotland from the 23rd -27th May 2007.

The Civicus World Assembly is a principal convening event for civil society organizations that attracts civil society activists from 100 countries worldwide as they seek to explore the linkages, experiences and best practices that exists between them.