



## Economic Governance Programme

<http://www.idasa.org.za>

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### Report Notes

#### Case Studies on "Civil Society Influence on National Governance"

A Small Group Working Session  
conducted during a global conference on  
"How Can We Build Political Will for Participatory Governance?"  
convened by the  
CIVICUS Participatory Governance Programme  
17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2008  
Caledonian University, Glasgow, Scotland, UK.

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#### I. Introduction

Experience shows that one of the key challenges faced by participatory governance (PG) practitioners is lack of political will. From a public finance management perspective, participatory budgeting is a decision-making process through which citizens deliberate and negotiate over the distribution of public resources. Participatory budgeting programs are implemented at the behest of governments, citizens, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs) to allow citizens to play a direct role in deciding how and where resources should be spent.

These programs create opportunities for engaging, educating, and empowering citizens, which can foster a more vibrant civil society. Participatory budgeting also helps promote transparency, which has the potential to reduce government inefficiencies and corruption. Most citizens who participate have low levels of formal education and incomes, nevertheless participatory budgeting offers citizens from excluded groups the opportunity to make choices that will affect how their government acts. Put simply, participatory budgeting programs provide poor and marginalised citizens with access to decision-making that ultimately determines their lives and future.

Although participatory governance offers important concrete benefits for citizens and state actors alike, there is often initial resistance from political actors and government officials who are unfamiliar with such approaches. It is within this context that the CIVICUS hosted a global conference on "*How Can We Build Political Will for Participatory Governance?*" with the objective of exploring and understand reasons for "political won't"

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and, most importantly, to share and learn about strategies and tools that have proved successful in building “political will” for participatory governance.

A small working group session was convened during the conference to discuss on civil society influence on national governance. The Economic Governance Programme of Idasa was invited to act as rapporteur at the working group session aiming at identifying challenges and best practices with regard to civil society influence on national governance processes.

This working group session involved three case study presentations which focussed on describing and analyzing approaches undertaken by CSOs in building political will for participatory governance (PG). Each presentation was followed by questions from participants. After the presentations, the participants brainstormed on the main reasons for “political won’t, strategies used for building political will, and key factors of success or lessons learned. The group discussed key points in each of these areas and prepared a “Top 5” list for each (i.e. top 5 reasons for political won’t; top 5 strategies for building political will; top 5 lessons learned). The following is a summary of the three presentations and discussions thereof:

## **II. First Presentation:**

- Title: *Critical Citizenry for Participatory Governance: “The experience of a civil society manifesto in Malawi”*
- Presented by: *Dalitso Kingsley KUBALASA, from the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN)*

### **Introduction**

The presentation introduced the “Civil Society Manifesto” as a centre-piece for building political will in Malawi. This manifesto is based on the principle of active and critical citizenry, meaning that citizens & societies have powers to construct or call for a re-arrangement of any government of their choice. The first manifesto was initially produced in 2004 while the second is now being crafted to be released before the end of 2008 year.

### **Guiding principles**

- Government should be perceived as a “trust” where the governed citizens are beneficiaries; and governors are the trustees. The presenter defined “trust” as a mutual public arrangement whereby there is an express agreement that government (as a trust) shall only be given (entrusted) to elected officers, through a fair electoral process, who shall, in turn, administer it in the best interest of the beneficiaries/owners (the people)
- On this matter, participants clearly agreed that both the governed and governors are bound by a social contract. The legal aspect of this social contract is based upon an agreement that the ruled (the people) give consent for the rulers (leaders) to rule them for specific benefits. This means that duty bearers (trustees) must do everything in the best interests of the beneficiaries (citizens and rights’ bearers) lest the powers are invoked and the trust dissolved through peaceful means i.e. elections

- Society should be made up of critical citizenry and be well-informed to effectively shape the political society (a critical link in the governance chain), to provide constructive input and judgment into the whole process.

### **Why is political will for PG lacking?**

- Responding to this critical question, the presenter pointed out that “active and critical citizenship accepts the necessity of government but insists that it is the quality of government, and not quantity, that determines political obligation on the part of the citizenry” (MEJN Civil Society Manifesto, 2004:7)
- He also underscored that government has the potential to either abuse, exploit or benefit the citizenry. This indeed justifies the need for critical citizenry in which those aware know that not all laws are just laws, not all authority is legitimate authority and not all public institutions serve the common good. It is neither super-patriotism nor anarchism that will build just, accountable and democratic states but active and critical citizenship that holds governments accountable for their deeds. He remarked that governments must serve the common good, but if they don’t, what actions civil society groups can then played?

### **What lessons are we drawing to inform the future?**

- The CS manifesto is a yardstick for measuring performance vs. people’s expectations *and/ or whether or not the government- in-waiting holds any sound promises for the future*. It’s also a framework for mobilizing political, financial and social capital for poverty reduction and national development. It seeks to influence parties’/candidates’ political agenda.
- Lack of political will is due to several elements in the political economy: i.e. the disconnection between the politicians and the technocrats. Quoting Booth (2006), the presenter indicated that government’s broad policy objectives are too remote from politicians’ election platforms and thus from one of the few real incentives; they are too distant from activities for accountability purposes (Booth 2006).
- A very robust political society has all it takes to usher a very good economic society and bureaucracy by, among others:
  - triggering a virtuous circle through responsible and ‘content-based’ electoral processes well-informed and shaped by citizens/civil society, and;
  - yielding equally deserving and responsible MPs, cabinets, state machinery, etc

### **How should political will be sustained?**

The presenter and participants, in sharing knowledge on strategies for way forward, agreed upon the following:

- Follow-up programmes monitoring political party manifestos *vs.* their government’s policy commitments
  - independent budget analyses and monitoring and policy commitments monitoring
  - economic literacy and budget accountability for participatory governance
- Independent civil society budget research for evidence-based advocacy

- Continued strong advocacy around political and socio-economic developments in the country
  - following the civil society manifesto's themes and sub-themes
- There's an urgent need for stakeholders (incl. civil society) to *continue championing, fostering and supporting the notion of 'active citizenry'* for sustaining political will & participatory governance.

The presenter concluded that “the biggest danger to democracy in our time is the exclusion of “the people” from real power. He later on remarked that citizens in Malawi can do better than be a faceless mass of potential voters, waiting to be civic educated, sensitized, empowered, democratised and lifted out of poverty. Hence, active and critical citizenship in Malawi and perhaps the rest of the world requires citizens to control governance. At local level, organised community groups, with assistance of civil society organisations, should engage in controlling local government decision making. They must also demand transparency & accountability; and establish open and free debate of critical social and economic issues that might have impact on their well being and human rights.

### III. Second Presentation:

- Title: *Azerbaijan and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative*
- Presented by: *Vugar Bayramov, from the Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD), Azerbaijan, [www.cesd.az](http://www.cesd.az)*

#### Introduction

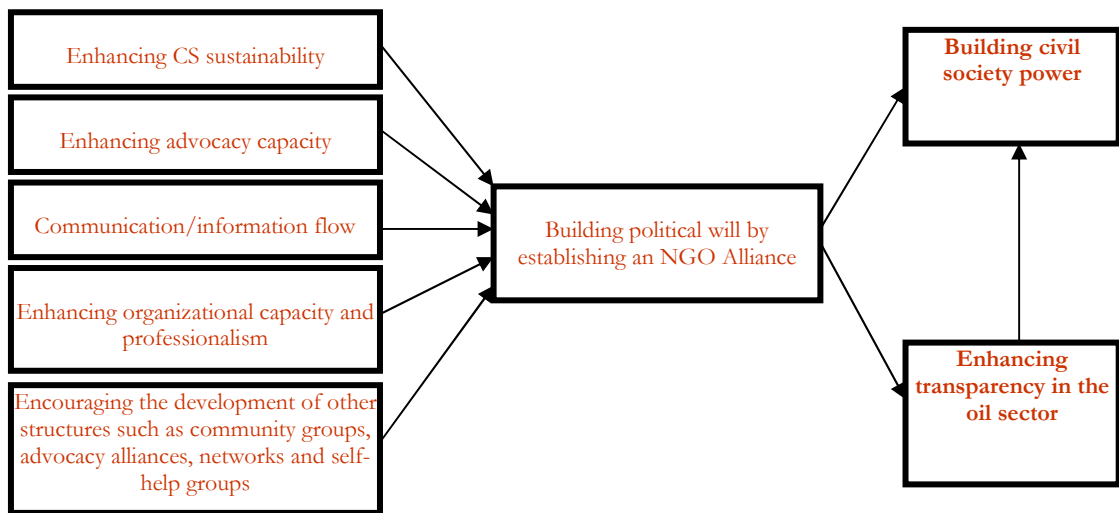
This presentation aimed at outlining the role of CSOs in enhancing transparency with regard to oil revenues in Azerbaijan - more precisely to showcase CSO approaches in building political will for participatory governance in Azerbaijan and draw lessons for CSO engagement in participatory governance in the rest of the world.

Participatory approaches to fighting corruption, and especially the importance of active involvement by civil society and the media, is now generally accepted as fundamental to any successful anti-corruption reform program. Right from the introduction, the presenter indicated that CSOs around the world are playing a fundamental role in building political will to enhance transparency and curb corruption in the extractive industries sector.

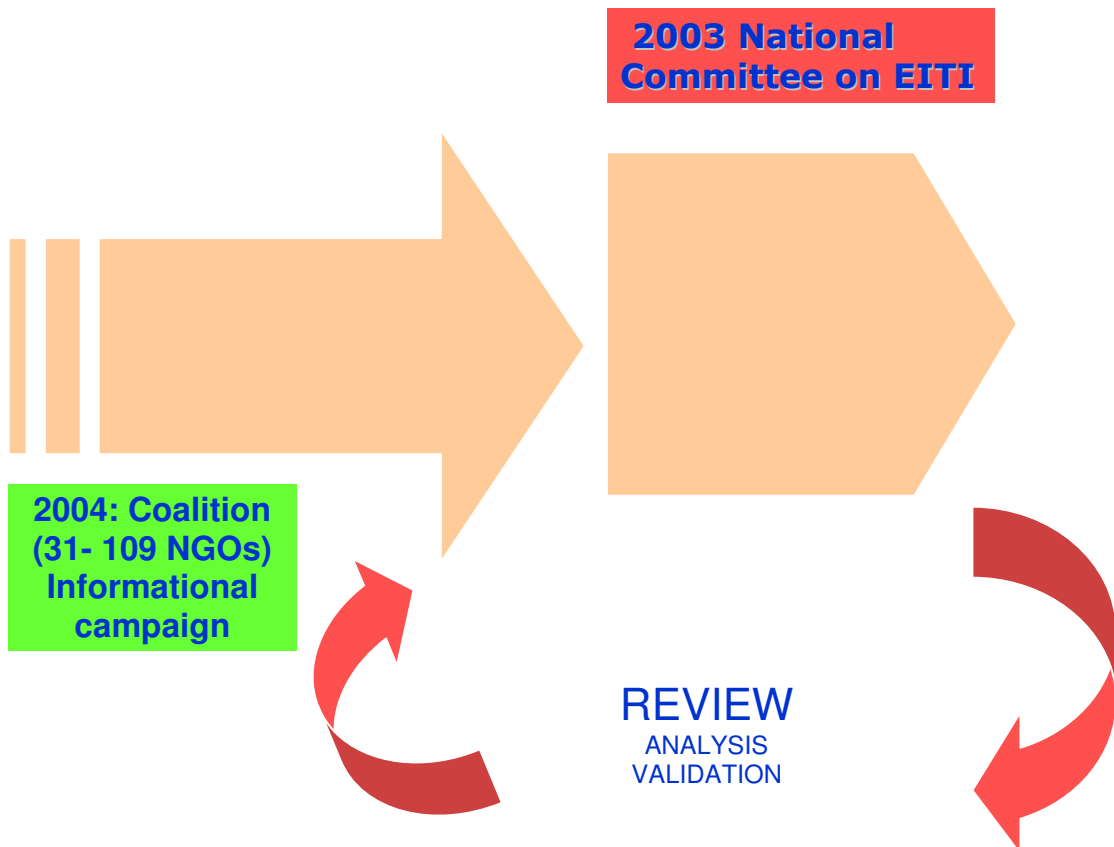
#### **How an African's proverb is inspiring CSOs engagement in Participatory Governance:**

The inspiring African proverb is known as “*To reac faster- go by yourself, To reach to longer- go with others*”. Building from what this proverb entails in term of CSO engagement in participatory government it simply means there a comprehensive engagement approach must be in place. It includes the following

1. The first step is to build political will. This means CSOs must set up coalitions such as the EITI, and start in engaging in the process of influencing the government's policy related to the oil revenues
2. Structure for building political will established by CSOs:



What is the implementation cycle in Azerbaijan?



This above cycle can be translated into the following main steps in Azerbaijan engagement in the EITI:

1. September 2002: Prime-Minister Tony Blair announces EITI.
2. June 2003: Azerbaijan delegation joins EITI at the First International Conference on EITI held in London and the Azerbaijan volunteers to become a pilot country.

3. November 2003 – President Ilham Aliyev instructs the Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan to establish an interagency committee on EITI to implement obligations taken at the EITI Conference in London.
4. November 2003 - Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan establishes a National Committee on EITI .
5. The Committee is chaired by the Executive Director of the State Oil Fund and includes representatives of the ministries of foreign affairs, economic development, industry and energy, finance, tax, ecology and natural resources and statistics.
6. Reports on oil revenues are submitted twice a year..
7. An internationally recognized audit firm is hired to aggregate reports of foreign and local companies. It then reviews and collates report of the Government and aggregated reports of the companies.
8. The audit firm is selected on a competitive basis by a selection group comprising equal number of representatives of Committee on EITI, foreign and local companies and the NGO coalition. The selection procedure is applied for each reporting session.

#### **What can be the strategy targets from active citizenry?**

- The strengthening of civilian oversight of the effective use of natural resources;
- Expansion of the strength and capabilities of civil society;
- The strengthening of accountability and transparency of the government and companies;
- Diminution of corruption in the extractive industry;
- Achievement of poverty reduction and sustainable growth.

#### **What are the coalition priority areas of activity?**

- Monitoring the transition of local companies to reporting under international accounting standards;
- Deciding on the classification of incomes of local mining companies and the monitoring of those incomes;
- Analysis and monitoring of petroleum production, sale and supply;
- Analysis and monitoring of gas production, sale and supply;
- The inclusion of incomes from other minerals (besides oil & gas) in EITI and the monitoring of them;
- Monitoring the impact of the exploitation of natural resources on the environment;
- Monitoring of the treatment of staff by companies.

#### **Impact of active citizenry and CSO engagement in participatory governance in the oil sector**

The following direct results and successes were evidenced by the presenter:

- Equitable involvement of CSOs, along with other stakeholders, in the selection of the audit company;
- Accessible information on oil incomes to public, and awareness-building activities through co-operation with CSOs, building the capacity of civil society organisations;

- Mobilisation of the capacity of civil society;
- Development of the scope and authority of media; co-operation with media;
- Campaigning to raise public awareness and stimulating the interest of citizens for the effective use of oil incomes.

Questions from participants as well as the conclusions of the presenter highlighted fresh ideas and future plans that CSO can follow depending on their own contexts. Increasing transparency in the activities of local and foreign oil companies; monitoring and analysis of efficiency of oil fund financed projects; making information on oil incomes accessible to the masses, and carrying out the corresponding enlightenment activities; and development of institutional and expertise capacity in order to honour the commitments of the coalitions as per the memorandum on EITI.

It was also agreed that the main way to develop political will was to set up CSOs alliances in order to concentrate all opportunities in civil society sphere. Now, Azerbaijani CSOs have the right to attend auditing processes in oil revenues. The State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan regularly reports to the EITI NGO Alliance. That's the power that civil society has in ensuring transparency and accountability.

#### **IV. Third Presentation:**

- Title: *Enhancing Social Accountability through Community Empowerment*
- Presented by: *Eshetu Bekele, Executive Director of the Poverty Action Network Ethiopia (PANE)*

#### **Introduction**

This presentation showcased the use of the Citizen Report Card (CRC) as a CSO tool for social assessment of citizens' satisfaction with the delivery of public services. The presenter described the CRC as a simple but powerful tool to provide public agencies with feedback from their users, using a random sample and survey. It provides means and voice for citizens to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in simple and unambiguous terms. It also allows communities to publicly express their views about the availability, adequacy, quality, and access to basic public services.

The Citizen Report Card is commonly used to provide detailed information, not just measures of satisfaction or approval. It is credible and trusted as its methodology is based on sampling and quantitative/qualitative analysis on data gathered from the ground. It can be used to reach informed policy decisions and reexamine conclusions from other analytical studies.

#### **A pilot approach of using CRC in Ethiopia**

The CRC was integrated as part of the tools used by CSOs to assess the country's progress in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It fits well within the assessment framework of the main government policy, known as Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programs (SDPRP/PASDEP). The CRC was designed and implemented by PANE and its local member groups. Its methodological stages included:

1. Assessment of the fit of CRC in the Ethiopian context
2. Selection of variables through Focus Group Discussions.

3. Design of the survey.
4. Sampling.
5. Training of trainers (supervisors & enumerators).
6. Execution of the field survey.
7. Conduction of a process audit.
8. Data entry (using SPSS).
9. Analysis and interpretation of findings.
10. Drafting and dissemination of the report.

Information gathering in the CRC is based on a rigorous sampling. The PANE surveyed 3,900 households in Oromiya, Tigray, and SNNPR surveyed among rural areas; Dire Dawa surveyed among urban areas. The technical team of the PANE classified Woredas as either *remote* or *non-remote* from regional centers, and subsequently selected randomly from each category. The study covered 4 priority sectors: agricultural extension; primary education; health & sanitation; and drinking water services.

## **Main findings**

### **On demographics**

- For all regions, the greatest proportion of people who have never attended school is found for those above the age of 60.
- In Dire Dawa the incidence of marriage is lower, but that of divorce is higher than in the rural regions.
- With regard to employment, women are most often engaged in household chores, while men are engaged in agriculture.
- Among public services, government primary schools are the most widely available (more than 80%), while government health facilities are the least available (less than 20%).

### **On Drinking Water**

- Nearly three-fourths of rural Ethiopians depend on non-potable water sources.
- Roughly half of those in both rural and urban areas report water scarcity.
- Satisfaction scores for public water sources are high in terms of both adequacy and quality.
- 62 percent of rural respondents reported willingness to pay more for better drinking water services.
- Citizens made the following suggestions regarding water policy:
  - Lack of access to protected water supply sources, as well as the safety of unprotected sources, must be improved.
  - Specific programs must be developed to support users during times of water scarcity.
  - Regional disparities in access to and reliability of water supply must be addressed.
  - Policymakers must analyze carefully respondents' willingness to pay more for better drinking water services.

### **On Health & Sanitation**

- 84 percent of rural children have been vaccinated.
- Less than one-third of rural respondents use toilets, with “custom of not using a toilet” the most frequently cited reason.



- More than one-third of rural respondents travel a distance greater than ten miles to reach a health facility.
- Most rural respondents believe both health and sanitation services have improved over the last two years.
- Citizens pointed out the following weaknesses with regard to health and sanitation policy:
  - Lack of health facilities must be addressed.
  - Reports on the unavailability of drugs and the wide variation in cost begs a review of existing drug policies.
  - Awareness campaigns on safe sanitation practices must be stepped up, and existing systems must be improved.

### **On Education**

- Less than one-third of rural students report the availability of drinking water in school.
- The cost of education varies across regions.
- More than one-third of parents pay extra amounts to various school authorities; 17 percent of these payments were demanded.
- Community involvement in school management is high, although few parents reported membership in parent-teacher committees.
- Citizens made the following recommendations regarding education policy:
  - Essential infrastructure in schools and ensuring safe drinking water must be improved.
  - The wide variation in the amount of monthly fees paid to government schools indicates a need to reexamine existing policies.
  - Low membership in parent-teacher committees need to be examined, and alternative forums considered.

### **On Agriculture Extension Services**

- Roughly one-fifth of farmers have borrowed money for agriculture and related activities.
- Formal marketing support is largely absent.
- More than half of farmers reported the loss of crops and cattle.
- Citizens pointed out the following weaknesses in agricultural policy:
  - Given the critical nature of agriculture in Ethiopia, the expansion of the network of agents should be considered.
  - The present level of support for marketing and access to credit facilities is a concern.
  - The high proportion of farmers reporting the loss of crops and cattle points to a need to introduce insurance schemes.

### **Conclusions**

Les following issues were highlighted as conclusions and lessons learned:

- The PRSP process has brought an added opportunity for CSOs in Ethiopia.
- The use of the CRC has enhanced social accountability in Ethiopia.
- The CRC study strengthened CSOs partnership with government, donors and communities.
- The CRC process has also empowered and strengthened PANE & other CSOs, by developing confidence and capacity to conduct the CRCs.

- The CRC is also found to be very useful in the PRSP process (planning, implementation & M&E);
- CRC findings were used as an input to the SDPRP/PASDEP (Ethiopian PRSP).
- CRC also contributed to the empowerment of citizens & community groups.
- CRCs helped in building capacities of communities by facilitating discussions among themselves and service providing agencies.

**For more information on this event: please contact:**

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