

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

02.06.20 | WEBINAR

DO WE STILL NEED NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS?

EVENT DETAILS

The Civil Society Study Group held its first webinar for Summer 2020 titled 'Do we still need Non-Government Organizations?' on the 16th of June between 2.00-3.00pm.

It was chaired and moderated by Prof Amit Prakash of Law and Governance at the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Speakers were

- Dr hab. Galia Chimiak, Associate Professor, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences
- Dr Ibrahim Natil, lecturer in politics and business at the Centre for Talented Youth (CTY) Ireland at Dublin City University (DCU).

Both have recently published books on NGOs (see Resource list), and we thought this was a good start to a CSSG webinar series. Participants included post graduates, development practitioners, and academics from across the globe (Ukraine, USA, India, Ireland and Zambia).

OVERVIEW

Discussions ranged from the differences between NGOs in Poland to those in the global South and in West Asia, to the differences in remuneration of the local development official with that of the 'foreign expert' from donor organizations. Dr Natil discussed the barrier to effective functioning of civil society organizations at the local and national level. To what extent have the political and funding shifts influenced the work of civil society organizations at the local and national level? He brought attention to the political, social and funding shifts as main challenges and barriers to CSOs' engagement and contribution to the process of change and development in some countries. Dr Chimiak focused on the emergence and growth of NGOs in the ECE country which used to be the major recipient of Western aid after 1989. The research was conducted among internationalized NGOs, some of which evolved from national/local NGOs overcoming differences and competition. Polish aid was compared to other western European development aid and its 'in-between' natural affinity with partners from the global South. Concepts like "creeping depoliticization" and "the recipient syndrome" were discussed. Success lies in engaging in cooperation and solidarity. A threat to effective CSO work was reduced funding from individual donors for NGOs. NGOs need emergency funding to survive in times of COVID-19 and the state appears to be the reliable partner able to provide this support, which raises issues around risks of losing independence.

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

02.06.20 | WEBINAR

DO WE STILL NEED NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS?

WEBINAR LEARNINGS

As the study group adapt their working to online environments in response to COVID-19, the group reflected on how they would like to work, making best use of the technology as a platform to continue dialogue and through a proposed webinar series. Learnings from collaborating on this first webinar were as follows:

- logistics-- more time for discussions;
- being able to use webinar effectively - plan to continue the series by using one of the speakers as the chair for the next webinar, and so on for continuity of discussions on the subject;
- aid for development & aid for humanitarian causes is a potential topic where we can collaborate;
- there is a lot of interest generated but ultimately not everyone finds time to join in.

HIGHLIGHTS

- There was a discussion around the idea of the Grand Bargain which is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations. Convener directed attention to the need to delineate a difference between Aid for Development and Aid in Humanitarian contexts. This implies that the CSSG could perhaps co-host a discussion with the Humanitarian Aid Study Group.
- Polish aid professionals' affinity with their partners from the Global South, borne from the in-between nature of the country as a nation which still faces various social problems and benefited from Western assistance, that represents their real comparative advantage in development cooperation--- was key to Dr Chimiak's presentation.
- The significance of the 'insider-outsider' in development interventions was highlighted.
- The core to good governance and good development practice was ensuring responsibility and ownership of projects lie with local development practitioners as they are culturally embedded in their development context and have a direct stake in its success.

CIVIL SOCIETY STUDY GROUP

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

02.06.20 | WEBINAR

DO WE STILL NEED NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS?

RESOURCES

Galia Chimiak and Bozena Cierlik (eds). 2020, Polish and Irish Struggles for Self-Determination. Living near Dragons (no publisher cited)

Galia Chimiak. 2016. The Growth of Non-Governmental Development Organisations in Poland and Their Cooperation with Polish Aid. Warsaw: IFiS Publisher

Natil, I., Sai, Y. and V., (2020) Barriers to effective Civil Society Organisations: Political, Social and Funding Shifts. Routledge, Oxford and New York.
<https://www.routledge.com/Barriers-to-Effective-Civil-Society-Organisations-Political-Social-and/Natil-Malila-Sai/p/book/9780367512583>.

Natil, I., Pieroban, C. and Tauber, L. (2019) The Power of Civil Society
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429265006>

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

HIGHLIGHTS

This workshop aimed to share evidence-based development practices of local Irish community-based groups with the academia and Irish policy makers to showcase best practice, possible difficulties and how these were overcome as and when they arose.

- **Main challenges** CSOs faced was fluctuating interests and membership. This was not perceived as negative because people are engaged in multiple activities. Quality of time spent with the CSO was deemed more important than number of hours.
- **Participants found value in connecting with each other** through their work and interests. We plan to have the same groups for a second workshop towards the end of the year to see what progress has been made in terms of linking, learning, and working with each other.
- **Raising awareness through dialogue** and reaching out to other CSOs is key to going forward.
- **The role of a single individual's political will and commitment** is at the core of the success of development initiatives.
- **Interesting to note that civil society groups have a good mix of academics and development practitioners**, as well as academics who are development practitioners themselves and have taken initiatives to challenge different forms of inequalities- income, climate, migration, food insecurity etc.
- **The CSA model is a way to self-organise food distribution systems**. This is more than a model to feed you with healthy, local and organic food; it is a commitment, and encourages learning and community engagement. Although CSAs are a relatively new concept in Ireland, they have been thriving in other parts of the world for many years.

RESOURCES

<https://www.irishaid.ie/media/irishaid/aboutus/abetterworldirelandspolicyforinternationaldevelopment/A-Better-World-Ireland's-Policy-for-International-Development.pdf>

<https://www.communitysupportedagriculture.ie>

<https://www.foodture.ie>

<https://www.facebook.com/Migrant-Artist-Community-103278031215598/>

<https://basicincome.ie/>

<https://akidwa.ie/news/>

<https://www.facebook.com/welcomecafedublin/>