

How is the civil society landscape in Ethiopia today?

A NEW MAPPING STUDY OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN ETHIOPIA

(Addis Ababa, 6 April 2015) A countrywide study of Non-State Actors (NSA) in Ethiopia has been released today. It has been conducted by the Ethiopia-European Union Civil Society Fund II (CSF II), in collaboration with the multi-donor Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP).

Covering the different regional states and city administrations of the country, the study is outlining status, changes, trends and other aspects of NSAs operation and participation in Ethiopia. It brings into light aspects of innovation, operational challenges and opportunities, as well as recommendations that will assist the planning and implementation of ongoing as well as forthcoming NSA capacity strengthening programmes by different stakeholders. This in turn is expected to enhance the NSA contributions to development and democratisation processes at different levels, as well as nourish policy discussions on the enabling environment of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

According to the study, CSOs have mobilised and injected huge development resources in the country, targeting the poor and the disadvantaged section of the Ethiopian society. The CSOs are mostly active in service delivery activities, complementing the Government contributions to development. The different components of health and HIV/AIDS, Children and Women, Education and Training, and Agriculture and livelihoods are the four top priority areas of the 2,604 ongoing CSO projects across the country.

In other areas, as democracy and good governance, however, the CSO contribution is limited. In addition, in order to ensure operational efficiency and sustainability, the CSOs have started to foster innovation through creative strategies, such as community participation and empowerment, income generating activities, as well as new and appropriate technologies.

The study, compared to a similar study undertaken in 2008, shows a slight decrease of the number of Federal-level registered CSOs (3128 in 2008 to 3077 in 2014). It also highlights that the role of network organisations in policy formulation and facilitating joint actions has been diminished. In addition, the number of CSOs with exclusive mandates to work on rights-issues, as well as regionally registered organisations, has significantly declined. The study underlines nevertheless the emergence and expansion, in the last five years, of "new faces" in the NSA landscape, like Self help groups and Community care coalitions.

Today the common problems faced by CSOs relate to regulatory issues, domestic and foreign resource mobilisation, donor accessibility, poor cooperation with governmental agencies and internal capacity of the CSOs themselves. Hence, the study is urging the donor community to allocate more funding for the programmes of CSOs in Ethiopia, in particular for CSOs' participation in addressing the hard-to-reach communities, issues and locations.

The CSOs meanwhile are recommended to further expand geographic coverage, diversify income base (including through domestic resource mobilisation), institute a system for self-regulation, and increasingly work on issues and with target groups that are often hard-to-reach. And finally, the Government of Ethiopia is urged to improve the regulatory environment so that CSOs are able to further enhance their participation as partners in the national development and democratisation process of the country.

Initially discussed in each region, the findings of the study have been validated during a national workshop involving key stakeholders in December 2014. END

For further information, please contact the Technical assistance unit of the CSF II: Tel: 011 618 7530, eccsftau@gmail.com

To learn more about the programme and download your copy of the study report, please visit www.csf2.org.