

Southern African Civil Society Consultation on the Commission for Africa Report
14th - 15th June 2005
Johannesburg, South Africa

Report by the Expert Group on Culture & Inclusion

Overview of the Culture and Inclusion Chapter:

- Recognition of the role of religious networks - particularly where government and states have not been able to deliver these fill the gap.
- Growing adherence to Christianity and Islam - but the more "fundamentalist" forms.
- Also offer lessons for states - e.g. revenue collection.
- Role of traditional medicine and philosophy in the life of people. Negative aspect is witch craft accusations.
- AU/NEPAD have prioritised culture as a major area of activity and should be an inherent component of development strategies - "a way of working as well as an end in itself"
- Main recommendation = "need for greater efforts to understand the values, norms and allegiances of the cultures of Africa".

Overall comments

Culture was not looked at in an in-depth manner. Need to include:

- A focus on strengthening of indigenous knowledge system.
- African identity - how this was shaped and how culture was defined by colonialism. Re-writing the African history needs to be included because it speaks to identity.
- An acknowledgement of what is already happening on the continent - e.g. African Renaissance movement
- Social and traditional institutions - to what extent are they informing policy processes. Whatever governance system needs to recognise ongoing allegiances to these traditional institutions.
- Needs to touch on how Africans are navigating the tensions between individual versus collective notions of their identity.
- African history and society has always bent backwards to accept other influences in the world - their report must speak to African experiences and talk to what they can learn from us.

How culture and inclusion are interpreted, and whether it shows a western bias. There is an inherent assumption in the jargon used when talking about culture which assumes a "western" perspective. For example when we talk about recognition of social structures in Africa we refer to them as traditional. However, for Africans they are not traditional but the norm. This begs the question of inclusion and what we are attempting to include Africans into. The larger question is whether these "conventional structures" are actually the winners that will take us into the future. We need to question this assumption given trends such as the erosion of the nation state and other global phenomena.

Interpretation of culture and collective identity shows the influences of western liberalism into the African culture. Danger is that this doesn't recognise the importance of key institutions (e.g. who is legitimate to speak on behalf of people). How do we make sure that these institutions are capacitated in a way that will deepen democracy?

We have to stop defining ourselves as per other realities - need other reference and landmark points. In deep rural Africa we are not direct and don't like conflict - express disagreement without it looking like disagreement.

What does the CFA seek to accomplish? How do we see the CFA?

Even though this is an external initiative it must not be rejected outright.

- We live in a global world and the CFA is an attempt by people all over the world to assist Africa - whether or not it has political objectives.
- On face value it seeks to complement NEPAD/AU
- However, those that put together this initiative should begin to learn to do things the way others do things - be sensitive to culture and various people in Africa - engage with them and find out what they want.

The CFA has different meanings and different roles for Africa and the developed world.

- The question of change/inclusion has to be seen not only as a task for Africans but also for those in Europe and America too. How Africa has to change has been documented and must be dealt with by us. The developed world too need to change - way they perceive Africa, their role in Africa and the attitudes of their own institutions, what is said and done in their continents about Africa.
- There is a definite shift in the development discourse from international development organisations. Attempt to appreciate what is happening in Africa and move from there outwards. An African view of doing things is gaining prevalence and no longer just the west determining where Africa is headed.
- Surprised that the report mentioned the word culture and placed it at the centre of the debate. Appreciate the broad manner in which culture has been defined but needs to be defined in African paradigms.

Based on the CFA Report what will the CFA probably achieve?

What the report has already achieved:

- Written to complement NEPAD/AU initiatives
- To a limited extent is allowing Africans themselves to speak their experience, and we must continue to engage the recommendations
- Has managed to consult across a broad range of stakeholders and perspectives
- Recent debt cancellation could be a consequence of the drive this report has brought onto the scene.
- Is a successful vehicle for perpetuating a neo-liberal agenda

Challenges:

- Implementing the recommendations is going to be difficult on both sides - political will and an ability to engage each other's world views.

- Would like to see a mechanism to recognise when things start to go wrong. The monitoring systems should be put in place to track this.
- Need to also be looking at identification of actors and processes and events that help things go right and invest more on those.
- The report has some measurable objectives - but the area of culture doesn't operate with measurable quantitative objectives. Concern that because of the neo-liberal trends - culture should be seen more than something to understand better - but must be seen as ways through which people organise their lives, politics, economy, education and where they resolve their spirituality.

What are the positive and negative implications to our thematic areas in light of the recommendations of the report?

Positive:

- Show a possible interplay between culture and neo-liberalism
- When we talk about culture and inclusion it is about making those African values valued and further boosted.
- See as a positive working toward meeting points rather than dividing points - What are those processes that help develop peace and prosperity
- Recognition of culture as central to African ways is a huge step forward
- More enhanced response because of placing culture so centrally, positive regeneration of African identity and benchmarking that with financial stuff.

Negative:

- What about the many people in Africa who cannot read or write - does the report talk to them, highlight their experience, respond to their reality?
- There is a tendency to create cultural artefacts that are linked to market driven forces which shuts down an avenue of expression.
- Our communities were promised a different world if they followed external programmes (e.g. SAP) but it did not deliver
- Silent on the financial indicators that are directed to develop culture and support it
- Distortion of our cultural norms and values if the parameters of what is considered acceptable are set by others
- Need to entrust these processes to African institutions

What opportunities arise for civil society at the consequence of the CFA and its recommendations?

- Take responsibility and put pressure that actors commit to this and to NEPAD
- Gives CSO an agenda which to engage civil society in the north - make sure your government implements this as well as MDG's and other things that our governments have agreed.
- Have to be more alert than when we were in the past. This predominance of a single party system at world level is dangerous.
- The NGO code of conduct - if we want to play a greater role in shaping outcomes then we need to bring more transparency into our own organisations and model the practices we want to see.

- Assist with economic and legal literacy - and using that opportunity to learn more about local models not just teaching others.
- Will we be ready to stand and ask in a positive manner to government - can we reach the 0.07% within our own countries? Create our own DIFID/USAID
- Civil society has an opportunity to define their role because they are not central to the report implementation.
- Decide on what criteria will be used to hold parties accountable to implementation

Recommend a cultural fund be established to put money into cultural infrastructure

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Chair	Mr Billy N Maseti	Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC)	South Africa
Rap.	Ms Anastasia White	IDASA	South Africa
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	Mr Alvaro Casimiro	LINK FORUM	Mozambique
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