



Organisation for International
Dialogue and Conflict Management

Civil Society Involvement in Ecosystem Management - an African perspective -

Dr. Angela Meyer

PES Conference, Berlin 10-12 November 2011



Civil Society Organisations in Africa

- Emerged as a key actor especially since the 90's => Form of self-organisation of the society outside the state and commercial domains.
 - Ex. Regist. NGOs in Kenya - 1996: 511 and 2003: 2511
 - Ex. Regist. NGOs in Tanzania - 1990: 41 and 2000: > 10.000 * (* Hearn 2007)
- Increased global acknowledgement of CSOs as indispensable contributor for sustainable development and environmental protection.
 - ➔ ex. Rio Declaration (1992): "Environmental issues are best handled **with the participation of all concerned citizens**, at the relevant level." (Principle 10)
- Very heterogeneous group: There is no generally accepted set of criteria that define what a CSO actually is.
 - ➔ Therefore a main problem is: what contribution can be expected, with regard to ecosystem management?



Different roles of CSOs

- **Initiator:** promote solutions and governance models to bring into balance environmental protection and socio-economic needs
- **Intermediary:** mediate between different stakeholder groups, in view of adapting solutions and models to local social and institutional conditions
- **Representative:** emphasize the social dimension and give voice to local people that are otherwise often neglected in decision-making processes
- **Knowledge Broker:** 1. assess and translate local concerns to the policy, economic and research level; 2. source of knowledge, know-how and information for local communities
→ support the implementation of solutions and stimulate the replication of best-practices



Strengths and Challenges of Civil Society Organisations in developing countries (e.g. Africa)

STRENGTHS

- + Proximity to local population they are part of (grass-roots level)
- + Know how to “translate” between different stakeholder groups (“speak the same language”)
- + Mainly based on voluntary engagement → Commitment and motivation of members
- + Innovative approaches, “out-of-the-box” thinking
- + Flexibility and ability to adapt to a dynamic environment → creativity to find appropriate governance models

PROBLEMS

- Weakness (institutional, financial)
- Financial dependencies, esp. from foreign donors may question their independence and credibility (“foreign proxies”)
- Problem of limited acknowledgement and trust, esp. from the State, undermines the effectiveness of their work
- Problem of the heterogeneity of CSOs in their size, capacities, scope, affiliation, etc





QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

- How do these roles, strengths and challenges differ from the situation(s) elsewhere, esp. in Europe?
- What role for CSOs in PES? And how could their role in promoting and implementing PES be further enhanced?
- What recommendations can be made?

