Civil Society Involvement in Ecosystem Management - an African perspective -

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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.

- 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

PES Conference, Berlin 10-12 November 2011
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?