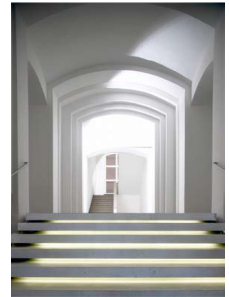


# Berlin Civil Society Center

## 2007 – 2010

01 April 2010



## BUILDING THE JOINT ACTION PLATFORM FOR THE WORLD'S LEADING CSOs

Three years ago, on 2 April 2007, the Berlin Civil Society Center opened its doors: equipped with a donated second hand desk, a truly antique laptop and less than € 20,000 of private money, and based in Berlin rather than New York, London or Geneva, the success of this courageous effort was anything but certain. A few weeks later our first intern contributed her parents' camping table and some old chairs and World Vision International sent us \$ 10,000. However, irrespective of its shaky financial basis, the Center set its aspirations high from the very beginning:

On 24 April we hosted the press conference of the launch of the *Africa Progress Panel* which brought Kofi Annan, Michel Camdessus, Bob Geldof and Peter Eigen (and about 50 journalists and 25 TV cameras) into the Center.

Other guests we welcomed during the first few months were the *UN Millennium Campaign*, the *UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Business and Human Rights*, the global CEOs of *Greenpeace*, *Oxfam* and *WWF*, the

*Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS)*, the *Global Action Network (GAN)* and the *Euclid Network of Third Sector Leaders*.

In September 2007 Peter Eigen and Burkhard Gnärig officially registered the Center as a charity with tax exempt status. Peter Eigen chairs the Center's Board and Burkhard Gnärig is the Center's Executive Director.

On 28 and 29 February 2008, the Center started its own programmes with *Vision Works*, the *global Chairs and CEOs Meeting* focussing on "Good Governance in Voluntary Organisations". For the first time ever the global Chairs and CEOs of many of the leading civil society organisations came together to discuss issues of common concern. The following organisations were represented by their top leaders: Amnesty International, CARE International, ChildFund Alliance, CIVICUS, Greenpeace International, International Federation of Terre des Hommes, International Save the Children Alliance, Oxfam International, Plan International, Transparency International and World Vision International.





An *HR Directors Workshop* on „Global Talent Development” and an *IT Directors Workshop* titled “Digital Futures of Civil Society” followed within the next couple of months.

Also in 2008, the Center hosted a number of important civil society meetings such as the *International Advocacy NGO Meeting (IANGO)*, the *IANGO Accountability Charter Signatories Meeting* and an *Informal Meeting of Global Not-for-Profit Organisations (IGNPO)*.

The highlights among the Center’s workshops in 2009 were *Exploring Mutual Accountability*, an international meeting of accountability experts and the first *Global Perspectives* meeting focusing on “Decisive Action in Times of Global Crisis”. Over 120 participants including 19 global CEOs, 52 national CEOs and more than 40 experts and key stakeholders discussed ways in which civil society organisations can cope with the interdependent challenges of a global finance crisis, increasing poverty and climate change. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus gave the opening speech.

Furthermore, the Center together with the Humboldt-Viadrina School of Governance, conducted the *Berlin Governance Talks*, a series of panel discussions bringing together leaders from business, government and civil society.



Over the past three years the Center has developed highly interactive meeting formats with the clear aim to produce concrete and implementable outcomes. Participants in the Center’s workshops appreciate the quality of the meetings: Of the 260 participants to date 159 (61.2%) filled in an evaluation form. For these the workshop overall was: - “poor”: 0; “average”: 1 (0.6%); “good”: 29 (18.2%), “very good”: 99 (62.3%); “excellent”: 28 (17.6%). 2 participants (1.3%) did not respond to this question. We have recently been asked for advice on how to apply these formats to other civil society organisations.

“Congratulations on all you’ve done to create conditions for greater impact on the part of leading global civil society organizations. I was pleased to be able to be with you and the representatives of so many NGO federations in Berlin. The gathering could not have been more professional and well organized.”

*Charles MacCormack, President and CEO, Save the Children USA*

Besides its role as a convenor the Center provided – and still provides – capacity building support to a number of leading civil society organisations including *Active Philanthropy*, *Amnesty International*, *Care International*, *ChildFund Alliance*, *Greenpeace International*, *IANGO Accountability Charter*, *Oxfam International*, *Save the Children International* and *Transparency International*.

Without the generous support from the following civil society organisations the Center would not have been able to function: Amnesty International, CARE International, CBM, Greenpeace International, Oxfam International, Plan International, Transparency International and World Vision International are *Global Core Supporters*; Terre des Hommes Lausanne is a *National Core Supporter* of the Center.



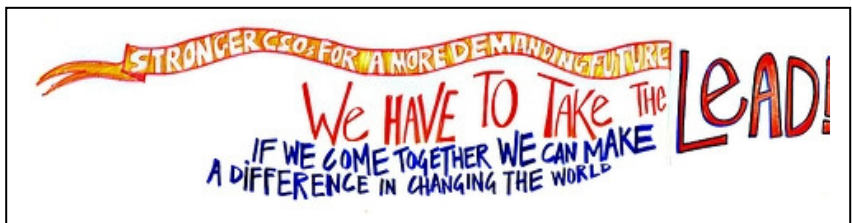
During 2009, *Amnesty International, CBM, Oxfam International, Transparency International and World Vision International* each acquired a 10% share of the Center; *Plan International* is about to take on co-ownership as well. The remaining four 10% shares will be transferred to leading civil society organisations within the next few months.

The Center is also grateful for support from outside the sector. Our thank you goes to the following institutions, organisations and companies: *Accenture, Active Philanthropy, Boston Consulting Group, Dräger Foundation, Egon Zehnder International, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Humboldt-Viadrina School of Governance, Plan B, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Robert Bosch Foundation, The ValueWeb, Vodafone Foundation and Zeit Foundation.*

“Congratulations – this is an essential institution.”  
*Kofi Annan at Berlin Civil Society Center on 24 April 2007*

As the Center has not been able to attract any institutional support, it had to secure its existence mainly through income from its own activities. Nevertheless, the Center’s financial development over the past three years has been encouraging:

Income	
2007	€ 91,839
2008	€ 98,561
2009	€ 381,680



At present the Center is recruiting additional personnel in order to scale up its activities. In 2010 a *Senior Leaders Programme* will be added to the Center’s growing programme. From the middle of the year onwards the Center will take on the administrative support of the INGO Accountability Charter.

Over the past three years, 20 of the world’s top 25 civil society organisations have participated in the Center’s activities, 18 of these with their global Chairs and/or CEOs. Thus the Center has successfully laid the foundations for playing the role of *The Joint Action Platform for the World’s Leading Civil Society Organisations.*

For any updates on the Center’s work, please go to: <http://www.berlin-civil-society-center.org/>

“There is no other platform that does what the Berlin Civil Society Center does for the CSO community; in my viewpoint this platform or vehicle is needed.”  
*Lars Gustavsson, Vice-President, World Vision International*