

# Berlin Civil Society Center

## Global Perspectives

the international CSO leaders' forum

18 November 2011



## **The Global Power Shift**

**How the Rise of New Economic Powers Affects Civil Society Organisations**

### **OUTCOME**

The third *Global Perspectives* conference focused on how the rise of emerging economies will affect international civil society organisations (ICSOs), and how they may respond to this global shift in power.

Emerging economies such as China, India, Mexico, Indonesia, Brazil and South Korea are increasingly shaping the world's economy and politics, and with their rise a new paradigm is emerging in which traditional powers no longer set the agenda for the rest of the world. In an increasingly complex and multi-dimensional world, the ability of ICSOs to adapt quickly and efficiently will be essential. In order to remain relevant, effective and influential in their work at local, national and global levels, ICSOs will need to review and revise many aspects of their work. *Global Perspectives* identified seven strategies which will be crucial in this process of transformation:

#### **1. Base our work on human rights and people's participation**

The concept of a rights-based approach for poverty alleviation is increasingly challenged by governments and other actors. Emerging economies predominantly focus on economic growth rather than social justice. ICSOs therefore must increase their commitment to a rights based approach and maintain connections with, and advocate on behalf of, citizens and their communities at the local level.

#### **2. Engage more with new forms of civil society activism and social movements**

ICSOs must be more responsive to the emergence of powerful citizens' movements and work harder at incorporating the energy and ideas generated by these movements into their agendas. ICSOs have an important role to play in developing among all citizens a sense of belonging to a global community. Strengthening citizen participation at every level is an important step in this direction.

#### **3. Partner with local stakeholders**

ICSOs must focus on strengthening local partners and establishing legitimate and effective national affiliates, particularly in emerging economies. In order to avoid harming established local and national CSOs in situations of competition, ICSOs must follow ethical guidelines when building national affiliates.

#### **4. Look at the world in a more holistic way and complement each other systematically**

Poverty alleviation, human rights, environmental protection and other sectors of ICSO activity are closely linked and inter-dependent. Approaching these complexities successfully requires ICSOs to think more holistically. As no one ICSO is qualified to address every issue, cooperation between ICSOs of different sectors is increasingly important.

#### **5. Improve our global governance and be more transparent and effective**

Many ICSOs feel that their governance – both nationally and globally – is not optimally serving their mission, and that “traditional” structures and policies, which maintain the dominance of rich countries, are inappropriate. Each organisation must assess its own governance and find the right balance between efficient decision making and democratic and inclusive approaches.

#### **6. Develop stronger, more viable accountability through the INGO Accountability Charter and peer-to-peer review**

ICSOs must develop greater accountability in all areas of their work. The INGO Accountability Charter must be developed into the leading accountability framework for ICSOs and set the gold standard for our sector. In addition, ICSOs should engage in peer-to-peer review processes, both within their own federations as well as with other organisations, to ensure that the standard of accountability continues to rise.

#### **7. Promote systematic talent development and optimise the use of high achievers**

The challenges and opportunities ahead require strong leadership at all levels of governance and management. ICSOs should develop a more explicit leadership – and specifically team leadership – culture and focus strategically on talent development, placement and retention. Another important task for ICSOs is supporting talent development within partners and local operations.

None of these strategies are new and this list is certainly incomplete. Each of the strategies can stand alone, but applied together as an integrated approach they form a powerful change agenda for ICSOs.