



Building a Strong Civil Society Sector: The NGO Resource Centre in Zanzibar

“Civil society organisations need to reach for the highest levels of competence to justify their support. The sector combines energy and creativity, with a social conscience. Together, these constitute a powerful impulse and should be nurtured. At the same time, capacities for management, programme design and implementation, fund-raising and self-study and evaluation need to be strengthened.”

-- His Highness the Aga Khan, speaking at the EBRD Annual Meeting, Tashkent, May 2003.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a vital role in providing services and a voice to poor populations in developing countries. To be effective, CSOs must be well run and well governed, operating under a code of ethics that stresses accountability and integrity, so as to ensure resources are properly and effectively used. To help these organisations become successful and self-reliant, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) assists communities lobbying for change, by facilitating the organisation of community-based groups with strong administrative and implementation skills.

The Non-Governmental Organisation Resource Centre (NGORC) was established by AKF in 1996, in response to a limited ability of civil society in Zanzibar to contribute to the national development process. Since then, NGORC has been guided by its mission to enhance the competence and credibility of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and grassroots CSOs, build the capacity of young men and women, and catalyse the emergence of an enabling environment for civil society, so as to yield a human

development whose benefits are enjoyed by all.

In 2007, NGORC developed a new five-year strategic plan to guide its work. The plan highlights four key areas for continued support and new interventions.

- Improving the knowledge base, organisational effectiveness and efficiency of community-based organisations
- Helping establish mutually beneficial partnerships between government, civil society and the business sector on matters of local development
- Increasing access to development information for community members
- Encouraging youth participation in civil society through leadership training programmes, volunteer assignments and job opportunities

Over the course of the next five years, NGORC will also expand its geographical focus to coastal East Africa, and transition

NGORC provides opportunities for members of civil society to engage with policymakers on a diverse range of issues, in public forums such as this one in North B, Unguja.



Development Partners

Association of Non-Governmental Organisations in Zanzibar (ANGOZA)
 Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
 Foundation for Civil Society
 Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar
 Tanzania Association of Non Governmental Organisations (TANGO)
 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
 United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

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Cover photo: Members of Tusife Moyo, a women's cooperative in Kidoti, Unguja, display their organically made soaps. NGORC links their products to local hotels, so that they can earn income to support their families and community.

to an independent, self-sustaining centre that benefits communities in their efforts to improve their well-being in the long term.

NGORC offers training programmes, advisory services and opportunities for its beneficiaries to link with key development partners, by working in three main programme areas:

- **Capacity Building and Organisational Management:** NGORC supports civil society organisations in addressing gaps in capacity. NGORC has developed, piloted and implemented eight training modules on topics relevant to CSOs: (i) community planning, (ii) leadership development, (iii) mobilising and managing resources, (iv) reporting, (v) record keeping, (vi) monitoring and evaluation, (vii) developing strong governance structures and (viii) strategic planning. Additional modules are being developed to illustrate best practices in creating public-private partnerships between CSOs and the government.

As of 2007, 156 Community Based Organisations, 64 Village Development Committees and 56 NGOs from Pemba and Unguja islands in Zanzibar have benefited from modular training and post-training support. These organisations serve a total membership of approximately 520 people and a beneficiary population of over 12,000 individuals.

- **Policy Engagement:** NGORC creates platforms and opportunities for civil society organisations to engage with policymakers on a diverse range of issues. This is accomplished through hosting dialogue forums with local administrators at the village level, and simplifying existing policies that have a strong bearing on civil society.

NGORC also played an active role in developing the Zanzibar Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction (MKUZA), by mobilising civil society participation in the review process and overseeing its implementation at the grassroots level.

- **Development Communications:** NGORC offers a reservoir of development information, in Kiswahili and English, to civil society organisations and individuals through a resource centre in Stone Town. The goal of the centre is to help bridge the information divide between all sectors of society. Its books, magazines, newspapers and field training materials and manuals have so far served the needs of over 60,000 individuals. Between 2007 and 2011, pilot projects mirroring the Stone Town resource centre will be run in rural areas across Unguja, to disseminate information based on identified needs.

All NGORC interventions encourage sustainability and a balanced utilisation of natural resources.

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a group of private development agencies working to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, to improve living conditions and opportunities, especially in Africa and Asia. Its agencies work in over 30 countries for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion. Its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable in society.

