



Non-state actors in Chad

Turning natural partners into effective allies

Charlotte Carlsson

This new series of briefs is designed to facilitate an exchange of information on the role played by non-state actors (NSAs) in implementing the Cotonou Partnership Agreement between the ACP and the EC. Their aim is to cite examples of innovative practices and to demonstrate the challenges facing NSAs as development partners in different countries.

Context

Political and economic perspective

Chad has suffered decades of civil strife and foreign intervention since its independence in 1960. The instability and violence has stemmed mostly from tensions between the Arab-Muslim north and the Christian south and from border disputes with neighbouring countries. President Idriss Déby of the Patriotic Salvation Movement rose to power in 1990 through a coup d'état. In 1996 he oversaw the inauguration of a multiparty constitution and, in 1997, he won the country's first presidential election. Despite movements towards democratic reform, power remains in the hands of a northern ethnic oligarchy.

Although rich in gold, uranium and oil, Chad is among the world's poorest countries. Agriculture, the economic sector that 85 per cent of the population depends upon, generates some 40 per cent of GDP in the form of subsistence farming, animal husbandry and fishing. Cotton is the major cash crop, accounting for at least half of exports, with France as the main trading partner. Crude oil deposits were recently discovered in southern Chad. This has led to a drilling agreement with a consortium of oil companies and the construction of the controversial Chad-Cameroon pipeline.

Chad's economic development is hampered by the country being landlocked, drought, lack of infrastructure and political turmoil. Only 5 per cent of the active population belongs to the salaried workforce, with the state being the largest employer.

Democratisation and decentralisation

Public life in Chad today is characterised by an active involvement of citizens and civil society groupings (associations and cooperatives) to promote economic and social development. Decentralisation is giving rise to new forms of rural communes, districts and regions, which hold the potential to increase public participation and decentralise decision-making.

Nonetheless, Chad is a fledgling democracy. It held its first multiparty elections only in

1997. Since then it has undertaken a number of structural reforms including privatisation of state enterprises and reform of the public administration and social security system. In 2000 it undertook a decentralisation process, which is now in its initial phases of implementation with support from multi-lateral donors like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) along with some bilaterals, most notably Germany. However, as the independent newspaper *Le Progrès* remarked 18 October 2000, "the traditional structures have survived the democratisation process so

Fact file



Source map: ECDPM

- Human Development Indicator Rank: 165/173
- Human Poverty Index Rank: 88/173
- Total population (millions), 2001: 8.1
- Urban population (as % of total), 2001: 24.2
- GDP per capita (US\$), 2001: 202
- Life expectancy at birth (years), 2001: 44.6
- Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births), 2001: 117
- ODA received per capita (US\$), 2001: 22.1
- Total debt service (as % of GDP), 2001: 1.5

Source: Human Development Indicators 2003, UNDP website

well that they are starting to undermine it." The association of traditional leaders, with their strong ties, especially in rural areas, still wields considerable influence in the country's political life.

Chad's National Assembly, with its 125 deputies representing nine political parties, constitutes the government's legislative branch. Civil society at first emerged as a counterweight to the ruling party, a fact which at times has led to difficulties in dialogue and collaboration between the government and civil society, especially on political issues. Even so, Chad's civic sector has grown into a strong and important development partner over time, often fuelled by donor assistance. Despite the vibrant and engaged civil society, only 20 per cent of citizens made it to the voting stations in the last parliamentary elections (April 2002). This demonstrates the challenges ahead for deepening democracy and civic participation in politics in Chad.

Civil society in Chad

The relationship between the government and civil society has historically been marked by suspicion. This is largely due to Chad's history of armed uprising as the main means of accessing power and the widespread problems of corruption and mismanagement of funds. Human rights violations are also still prevalent in conflict zones around clashes between rebels and government forces.¹ Many human rights groups, which are organised in various umbrella networks, still have conflictual relations with the state.

Nonetheless, civil society has emerged as a strong societal force since the 1990s, when a semblance of peace was finally restored. "During times of war and chaos, people organise themselves to cope," explained a

civil society representative. Especially in rural areas, the level of association in more or less formalised groupings is high. Political space for civil society participation opened up and manifested further with the participatory process around the elaboration of Chad's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Civil society umbrella organisations and national platforms were also involved in drawing up a national strategy for good governance, and they participated in the writing of the Country Strategy Paper for ACP-EC cooperation under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. Even so, involvement of non-state actors in formulating and implementing development policy has often been ad hoc at best.

One recent success of civil society structuring and influence is the consultation group formed around the petrol project and the World Bank-backed Chad-Cameroon pipeline. In this case, civil society organisations were able to mobilise a committee to monitor government use of oil revenues. This also led to the creation of an action committee for people living in the affected areas (*Entente des Populations des Zones Pétrolières*), which acts as an intermediary for government and donor agencies.

Around 85 per cent of all non-state organisations and associations in Chad belong to some sort of higher level grouping, such as a platform, an umbrella organisation or a formalised special-interest network.² A recent typology³ refers to three levels of organisations that make up the country's civil society. The first level comprises grass-roots and special-interest groups, the second level is the umbrella organisations and platforms, and the third level is an overarching representative body for the different special interests and groupings, the Organisation for Non-State Actors (OANET from its French acronym).

This elaborate three-tiered structure is quite a recent one, and though politically and strategically important, its practical value and sustainability still have to be tested over time.

EC cooperation in Chad

Since 1986, the European Commission has provided Chad with more than EUR 530 million in aid. These funds have been used to fight poverty, build roads, improve health-care, promote rural development, provide macro-economic support, compensate for failing export earnings and provide emergency relief. Non-state actor involvement was initiated on a small scale under the 5th and 6th European Development Fund (EDF) with the creation of village committees for the management of local water engineering projects.

This limited involvement of non-state actors is foreseen to change under the current 9th EDF. In early 2002, the European Commission and the Government of the Republic of Chad signed a Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for a EUR 202 million cooperation programme for the period 2002-07. Involvement of non-state actors as development partners and a support for an independent non-state actor platform (OANET) are specifically mentioned and described in the strategy paper.

The Cotonou process

New openings for participation of non-state actors

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process opened new political space to involve non-state actors in national development cooperation. EDF money was used to co-finance nationwide civil society consultations. However, some non-state actors felt that the process was dominated by the interests of the international financial institutions and that civil society representatives were hand-picked by the government. Some non-state actors regretted not having a platform for discussing issues amongst themselves, both before the consultations with government and donor representatives and on an ongoing basis.

The Cotonou Agreement establishes participation as a fundamental principle of cooperation and hence has provided a further incentive to support an independent platform enabling more structured and ongoing consultations amongst Chad non-state actors.

Box 1: Civil society in Chad

- **Number of registered associations:** around 2,000
- **Number of registered NGOs:** 215, of which 96 are operational
- 46% of NGOs are foreign
- 75% of national NGOs are non-operational due to lack of resources
- 85% of associations/organisations belong to a higher level platform or network
- **Number of cooperative groupings:** some 20,000, of which 778 are officially registered
- **Number of trade unions:** 5
- **Media:** 13 newspapers with regular distribution, 11 with irregular distribution, 13 community radio stations

Source: Floridi, M., Sanz Corella, B., *Etude de faisabilité d'un Programme d'Appui à la Bonne Gouvernance*, Mission Conjointe UE-PNUD, April 2003.

The programming process for the 9th EDF

Preparations for the Chad-EC country strategy began with a general country assessment, followed by an information seminar organised by the National Authorising Officer (NAO) of the Government of Chad and the EC delegation (2001). During this seminar attended by government representatives, donors and non-state actors, the latter were asked to organise themselves in order to fully participate in the consultation and dialogue process. To this end, a steering committee was appointed to initiate the structuring of non-state actors into a platform – later launched as OANET (l'Organisation des Acteurs Non-étatiques du Tchad).

Negotiations between the Government of Chad and the EC resulted in a EUR 202 million cooperation programme (2002-2007). The CSP calls for full use of all participatory modes of cooperation, particularly decentralised cooperation and the establishment of a support programme for non-state actors. Tripartite dialogue mechanisms involving OANET, government and donors (see Figure 1) were put forward to ensure coordination and dialogue between partners. Non-state actors are to have permanent seats on the consultative bodies. Of the EUR 18 million facility for "non-concentration areas", a maximum of EUR 5 million (around 2.5% of envelope A) was earmarked for activities that support non-state actors.

Coordination and structuring within the Cotonou context

The process

Following the EC-Chad information seminar (see above), non-state actor participants present elected a steering committee to draw up statutes and formulate the mandate of OANET, the new representative body. The EC delegation supported the committee by providing one international and one national consultant to help set up OANET's basic organisational structure. Box 2 outlines the practical steps taken in creating OANET.

The EC delegation's recognition of non-state actors as the cornerstone of Chad's development was confirmed by Ambassador Joel Fessaguet, head of the EC delegation in Chad, at a regional civil society seminar in 2002:⁴ "It is through a true partnership between government and civil society that the most impoverished countries will be able to break away from poverty. ...I would like to see Chad become the champion of

this idea." However, the exact modalities to support this goal must still be worked out in practice. Wide buy-in is certainly required, not just from the European Commission, but also from other multilateral and bilateral donors, government and civil society alike.

Mandate and roles

The Chad CSP defines OANET's roles as follows:

- provide orientation and advice on issues related to cooperation and development;
- designate appropriate non-state actor representatives for the different phases of dialogue;
- participate in the consultative body of development parties, the newly created *Conférence Permanente des Partenaires au Développement*, whose advice is fed into the government's national technical and consultative organ (CONTEC);
- facilitate exchanges and consultations between different groups of non-state actors and help them develop their capacity as development partners.

OANET members emphasise their role in sensitising and mobilising civil society actors around development issues and providing an autonomous platform for discussions on development topics. It is through these roles that it might potentially help members to build coalitions and partnerships across the different groupings. Donors and development agencies see OANET value-added in

capacity to help them navigate the complex non-state actor scene and find implementing partners for development projects. However, some donors are sceptical of the value of having an "extra layer" of non-state actors to deal with.

Among OANET guiding principles are the following:

- clear, limited and transparent responsibilities of the OANET steering group members and mandate of the organisation as a whole;
- complementarity, not substitution of state actors;
- open dialogue rather than use of the platform to defend a narrow set of ideas or special interests;
- an apolitical stand, with the unifying goal of opening space and influence of non-state actors in development policy.

Representativeness

The statutes of OANET set out its mandate and procedures related to its general assembly. This assembly elects the steering committee, including its president, for a two-year term. A permanent secretariat with one full-time staff member is in charge of day-to-day operations. Most of OANET's members are urban and capital-city based. However, each organisation is asked to pass on information and gather inputs and feedback from its (rural) members as well. Nonetheless, improvements are still needed in internal

Box 2: Practical steps in creating OANET

- **The EC delegation and the NAO of the Government of Chad hold an information seminar on the Country Strategy Paper, which determines funding priorities for the 9th European Development Fund (EDF).**
- **Representatives of non-state actors hold a general assembly to elect a steering group for the representative platform and to approve its statutes. Eight members of the steering group (including its president) are elected to represent different aspects of civil society (private sector, media, trade unions, technical experts and the environmental and women's movements) for a two-year term. Together they form the Organisation of Non State Actors (OANET) Steering Committee.**
- **Two consultants – one national and one international – are hired by the EC delegation to help mobilise non-state actor participation at the information seminar and later to set up an organisational structure for a national non-state actor platform. The consultants assist in establishing OANET over an initial two year period, from the set-up phase through to the end of its first year of operations.**
- **The platform, OANET, is launched at a meeting with international donors, government officials and non-state actors in June 2001, seeking buy-in from other development partners as well.**
- **In April 2002, a small EC grant (from STABEX funds) enables the platform to employ a full-time coordinator. A member organisation of the steering group hosts a permanent office for the platform.**
- **In May 2002, OANET participates in EC consultations on the Regional Indicative Programme and hosts a regional meeting for civil society in Central Africa.**

communications within the OANET steering committee and in mobilisation mechanisms for liaison with members of the umbrella networks. These weaknesses have severely hampered OANET's credibility and remain key issues for its future survival and usefulness as a non-state actor structure (more on this in 'key issues and challenges').

Dialogue mechanisms

Within ACP-EC cooperation

Since its launch in 2001, OANET has facilitated a number of dialogue initiatives that gather representatives from non-state actors, the European Commission, the National Authorising Officer and other donors. The EC delegation and the members of the OANET steering group also maintain contact on a regular basis. For example, OANET hosted a regional workshop in N'Djamena at which the Regional Indicative Programme and issues related to regional integration and cooperation between non-state actors were discussed. OANET also participated in European fact-finding missions to Libreville to help introduce a non-state actor component in the Regional Indicative Programme.

In the framework of broader national policies

A structure has been proposed to include OANET in a tripartite dialogue on national policy. The idea is to bring non-state actors, in addition to government and donors, into debates around development policy options. To this due, a technical advisory committee was set up within the Ministry of Development and Economic Affairs (MPED). This committee, CONTEC (*Collège Nationale Technique et Consultatif*), regularly gathers six representatives from each of the three dialoguing parties (NAO and government representatives, donors and non-state actors) to formulate recommendations. This group holds consultations with the ministry's unit in charge of development, the CPD (*Cellule de Promotion pour le Développement*), which then reports jointly with CONTEC back to the MPED (Figure 1).

Another channel for influencing national debate, the legislature, is as yet under-explored. According to the secretary general of the National Assembly, more information and sensitisation is needed among parliamentarians to encourage them to engage more actively on issues related to the Cotonou Agreement.

Non-state actor representatives use other, existing mechanisms of dialogue with the government and international development agencies. Examples are the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper follow-up process, the civil society committee for oil revenue monitoring and informal contacts. Regarding bilateral donor agencies, some have long-standing development partners in the country and still prefer to 'hand-pick' their local cooperation interlocutors and the interests they represent, rather than consulting with an autonomous and elected body of non-state actor representatives like OANET.

With other donors

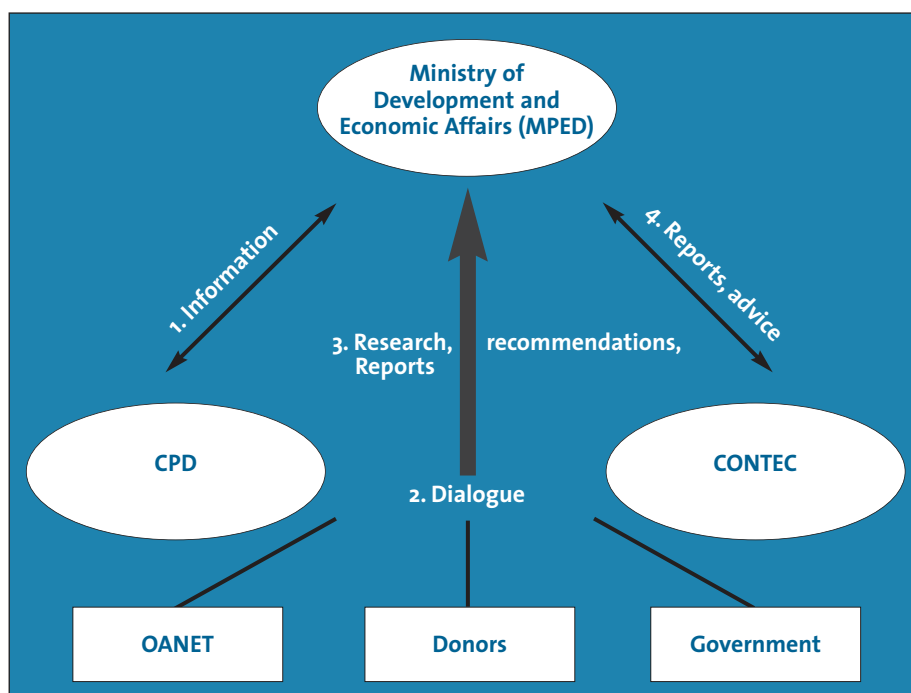
The national PRSP sets out the framework and priorities for cooperation between the Government of Chad and international donors. The EC cooperation programme for the 9th EDF also uses the PRSP as its main framework for cooperation. According to Cotonou Agreement provisions, non-state actors must be able to comment not only on priority areas for EC cooperation, but also on the *complementarity* of EC aid in relation to other donors' initiatives. This calls for more

harmonised consultation mechanisms for donors and non-state actors.

New dialogue mechanisms, such as those illustrated in Figure 1, are being set up to facilitate such harmonisation. However, so far reactions from the donor community have been mixed. Especially some bilateral donors have a more strategic interest in civil society, based on their own cooperation tradition or the nature of their involvement in the country. This may mean they are less willing to open up to more broad-based civil society consultations. As pointed out in June 2002 by *Le Monde Diplomatique*, cooperation with Chad has long been dominated by geopolitical interests, including the hosting of a number of foreign military forces (*Le continent noir en quête d'un véritable partenariat*). This has tended to skew development cooperation towards strategic *realpolitik*.

Some development agencies fear the creation of parallel processes, with donors backing different structures for non-state actor consultations. Concerns have perhaps been most notable in relation to the committees set up to monitor the implementation of the PRSP, for which individual

Figure 1 Proposed structure for OANET involvement in tripartite dialogue



1 Information is exchanged between the Ministry of Development and Economic Affairs (MPED) and its unit for development, the CPD (*Cellule de Promotion pour le Développement*).

2 Dialogue ensues with members of CONTEC (*Collège Nationale Technique et Consultatif*) and the CPD.

3 CPD and CONTEC prepare reports and conduct further research to arrive at detailed recommendations.

4 Jointly they submit more detailed recommendations to the MPED.

Source: Report from the launch workshop of OANET, N'Djamena 8-10 November 2001. EC Delegation & MPED, Chad.

non-state actors and OANET have been invited. With parallel civil society consultation structures in place, some fear this could lead to duplication of efforts and increase the burden on the already overstretched non-state actor representatives to follow and be present at several different consultation processes at once. It also runs the risk of instrumentalising civil society according to different donor's needs rather than building up a strong common platform for consultations with non-state actors on development policies more generally.

Key issues and challenges

Some lessons emerge from the creation of OANET and the innovative attempts in Chad to strengthen the role and potential of non-state actors as national development partners. The spirit of partnership with non-state actors, as expressed in the Cotonou Agreement, has been taken on board in Chad thanks largely to the EC delegation's strong support and the government's endorsement. OANET and its members have in a relatively short time become natural partners in government commissions and in negotiations with the international donor community. While this is a promising start, there are also challenges ahead.

• *Internal dialogue mechanisms for non-state actors at different levels of association*

Dialogue mechanisms at the national policy level have so far received a great deal of attention from donors and policy-makers in order to facilitate interaction and participation of non-state actors in donor-led consultations. However, mechanisms for dialogue within civil society have been neglected, as have modalities for linking the different levels of civil society (better representation and knowledge sharing within, existing networks).

Institutional support to strengthen communication linkages between the umbrella organisations and their members (second- and first-level organisations), must go hand in hand with the establishment of a third-level representative body, such as OANET, that donors can call on for consultations.

Indeed, such internal linkages *among the non-state actors themselves* are necessary for OANET to fulfil its intermediary and catalyst role on behalf of other organisations. By paying insufficient attention to internal communication mechanisms, OANET now finds itself in a deadlock in which confusion about its mandate and role

prevents it from effectively intervening on behalf of its members.

• *The role and mandate of a 'third level non-state actor intermediary*

The creation of OANET was an important and strategic step in the manifestation of non-state actor participation in national development dialogue. Nonetheless, such an all-encompassing body risks over-simplifying the extreme complexity of civil society and the differing (and often conflicting) interests of various groups of non-state actors. This calls, again, for strengthening non-state actors at each level of engagement as well as the linkages between them. OANET - and similar organisations - also need to clarify its role as to facilitate, not to replace, direct dialogue and interaction with policy-makers and donors. Otherwise it might be perceived as evolving into a 'super-organisation' and an additional level of bureaucracy (even if unintended) instead of a catalyst for action. Furthermore, capacity-building is needed on how to work in and with networks, since this is a relatively recent phenomenon.

• *Wider definition of 'civil society'*

New ways of involving non-state actors in development cooperation call for a wider definition of 'who qualifies'. More or less formalised non-state actor groupings are common in Chad, especially in rural areas. Yet, the concept of 'civil society' currently dominant among donors and the government fails to capture the multitude of unofficial rural groupings and registered cooperatives at the provincial level. Few of these associations make it into the national directories. Most receive support on an ad hoc basis, mainly from international NGOs that set their agenda together with donors. Yet the structured involvement of these rural groupings and cooperatives as development partners offers a great potential, especially for decentralised EC cooperation.

• *Financial support and donor roles*

Because of uncertainty and hesitation among the donor community at large, only small and short-term start-up grants were made available to support OANET creation. This limited funding prevented the organisation from presenting a long-term plan and vision to its members, including information on how members could benefit from OANET services. This contributed to its tentative start, low profile among non-state actors and confusion regarding the value it could add to other organisations and thematic platforms.

The EC delegation, too, was hesitant to be OANET sole financial supporter. Wider donor buy-in is considered critical to avoid it becoming an 'EC creation' and a parallel structure to, for instance, the World Bank-supported Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper follow-up committee. Regrettably, many bilaterals still apply a more instrumental approach to non-state actor and civil society support. An isolation of organisations and a vertical relationship with their donors, rather than strengthened horizontal linkages between non-state actors, could follow as a consequence.

External support will be needed to maintain the type of donor and government interface for non-state actors that OANET represents. Most non-state actors in Chad have quite a low revenue base. Moreover, many of the country's financially viable organisations are still under political guardianship, and more than 75 per cent of registered Chadian NGOs are non-operational due to lack of resources. Their international counterparts do not suffer from the same resource scarcity since they have closer links to international sources of finance.

• *Facilitator and watchdog*

OANET members represent a broad array of sectors and themes, including the media. The organisation might therefore prove able to play a key role in establishing coalitions for advocacy and in pressing for increased transparency and accountability of other development actors, such as government and international donors. So far, experiences in fulfilling this watchdog function have been mixed. In 2001, OANET participated as one of the civil observers of the presidential elections and registered some irregularities. However, a number of bilateral donors resisted its participation and prevented OANET from repeating its involvement in the legislative elections held in April 2002.

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This series is coordinated by Gwénaëlle Corre. For any comments please e-mail: gc@ecdpm.org

Notes

- 1 National Report on Human Development - Chad 2000. Government Civil Society Partnership Chad Republic/UNDP.
- 2 Société civile: *Définition, typologie, critères, d'accès au don institutionnel et ébauche d'un code déontologie*. SENAREC. Cellule Economique. Ministry of Plan, Cooperation and Development.
- 3 Floridi, M., Sanz Corella, B., *Etude de faisabilité d'un Programme d'Appui a la Bonne Gouvernance*, Joint mission EU-UNDP, April 2003.
- 4 Speech at the Workshop of Central African Civil Society, organised by the *Forum de la Société Civile Afrique-Europe*, N'Djamena, Chad, 13-15 May, 2002.

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Additional Resources

Chad-EU country strategy and cooperation document 2001-2007:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/csp_rsp/csp_en.cfm#

Chad Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper preparation - Status report:
<http://www.imf.org/External/NP/prsp/2001/tcd/01/113001.pdf>

The Courier, No 175, Country report, Chad:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/publications/courier/index_175_en.htm

UNDP N'Djamena:
<http://www.td.undp.org/>

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