



Non-state actors in Guinea

Bridges between a national dialogue process and a thematic platform

Gwénäelle Corre

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

Guinea was one of the first sub-Saharan nations to be granted its independence (in 1958). Following its refusal to remain part of the French Community in Africa, Guinea spent 26 years under an authoritarian, centralising regime, which left the country in a state of political isolation and economic dilapidation that belied its potential wealth. Just a step forward was taken in 1984 when the new government pledged to establish a state of law and a liberal society based on a free market economy. However, poverty remains vivid in Guinea.

Although Guinea is formally a democratic republic, there are various reasons for concluding that maybe not governed entirely as it should be. For example, the signing of the Guinea-EC cooperation agreement funded under the 9th European Development Fund (EDF) has been on hold pending evidence that the government has met certain conditions. As these include liberalising the media, setting up an independent electoral commission and enabling the opposition to play an effective part in presidential elections, there would appear to be every reason for observers to have misgivings about good democratic practice in the country.

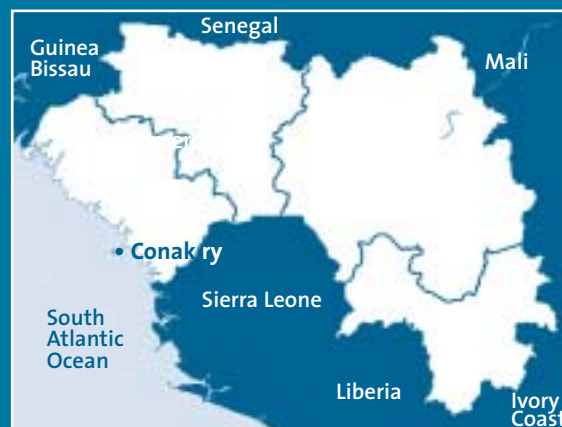
The conflicts which have been raging on Guinea's borders with Liberia and Sierra Leone for the past decade have had a marked impact on the country's internal political situation. Apart from leading to persistent instability, they have also caused

a significant loss of human life and considerable damage in the areas concerned. This situation has engendered a grass-roots reaction, in which citizens (women in particular) have sought to put pressure on the governments of these three countries and promote a dialogue on the resolution of the conflict. This is known as the Mano River Union process. The situation in the region is evolving rapidly and remains unstable: although relations with Sierra Leone were normalised in 2003, for example, the border with the Ivory Coast remains closed.

Over the past ten years, Guinea's real average annual growth rate has been higher than its rate of population growth. A wide-ranging development strategy formulated by the government between 1994 and 1996 sought to improve the population's living conditions by adopting an integrated approach to the problem of poverty alleviation. The government produced a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) explaining how it intended to set about this, and discussed it with various groups of actors including international partners.

Fact file

- Human Development Indicator Rank: 157/173
- Total population (millions), 2001: 8.2
- Urban population (as % of total), 2001: 27.9
- GDP per capita (US\$), 2001: 394
- Life expectancy at birth (years), 2001: 48.5
- Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births), 2001: 109
- ODA received per capita (US\$), 2001: 33
- Total debt service (as % of GDP), 2001: 3.5



Source: Human Development Indicators 2003, UNDP website

Source map: ECDPM

One of the seven objectives of the PRSP, which was officially approved by the World Bank and the IMF in July 2002, is 'to ensure that civil society is given a more intensive, systematic and lasting role, and to establish permanent consultation mechanisms'. It is hoped that the strategy will:

1. improve the definition and organisation of civil society;
2. result in permanent mechanisms for public consultation.¹

Civil society in Guinea

The liberal policies adopted by the new government in 1984 encouraged people that had been stifled during the single-party state to find more appropriate political and legal outlets. The government liberalised individual initiatives, decentralised its own apparatus, reduced the size of the state and laid off a large number of officials, many of whom subsequently joined non profit sector.

Despite this, Guinean society remains highly politicised. For a start, individual involvement in the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is sometimes motivated by a quest for survival and the need to earn a livelihood in the wake of the massive redundancies that have affected the public sector. The growing prominence of Guinean civil-society organisations (CSOs) does not necessarily imply any genuine civic commitment on the same scale. Furthermore, the amount of political latitude available to these actors is greatly limited by the breaches of democratic law committed by a regime that, while republican in name, is nonetheless rife to a certain extent with clientelism, corruption and a desire to take centralised control of all private initiatives.

NGOs and civil-society organisations are supervised by the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralisation through the agency of SACCO², a national body founded in March 1997 whose job it is to assist cooperatives and coordinate NGO activities. SACCO's mission is 'to pursue policies and strategies that are designed to stimulate local development initiatives and to promote methods and programmes that are likely to foster development through the agency of NGOs, cooperatives and other associations in the Republic of Guinea'. SACCO is, however, in crisis because of a lack of financial and logistical resources, and is therefore in a difficult position to effectively discharge its mandate. Moreover, some people regard it as a tool whose principal purpose is to *control non-state actors*. It is indeed curious that the agency should operate under the wings of the Ministry for Regional Development, Decentralisation and Security,

in other words, a kind of Ministry of the Interior which acts as national police force (a highly sensitive political role) rather than being responsible for social affairs, for example. The key question is whether civil servants from this ministry are acting fully independently when they decide to grant or refuse legal and administrative rights to a CSO.

Civil society in Guinea today is both highly diverse and undergoing rapid growth. According to a SACCO survey carried out in 2000, there are 3,500 grass-roots organisations, 700 NGOs and a number of joint chambers (of commerce, farmers, etc.) in Guinea.

Like most of their African counterparts, Guinean CSOs are hampered by a lack of internal resources. The poverty of both the population and the country's national institutions means that they rarely try and raise any funds of their own and are heavily dependent on the funding they receive from public and private donors. Not only does this hamper their growth, but many organisations are also small in size and dominated by a few people, a situation which makes it difficult to set up robust networks. As a result, relations between individuals frequently take precedence over complementarity of actions or objectives.

The consultations held as part of the national dialogue (see page 3 and 5) have sparked off a new debate on the definition of civil society and have raised grass-roots awareness of the problem.

Cooperation between the EC and non-state actors in Guinea

Under the old Lomé Conventions, the participation of non-state actors was confined to very specific situations (i.e. they were allowed to play a role in certain projects if this was appropriate in the light of the sector concerned). Guinean civil society did not therefore play a role of any significance in the implementation of previous European Development Funds.

CSOs were, however, involved on a limited scale, as executive agencies, in certain projects relating to urban health, rural development and decentralisation. But basically, any cooperation which resulted in the involvement of Guinean CSOs was based on partnerships with European NGOs, cofinanced primarily from budget lines from European Commission budget lines and therefore independently of the EDF.

There were no decentralised cooperation programmes in Guinea which, under the Lomé Convention, allowed innovative approaches to be adopted towards civil

society participation. A micro-projects programme - associating non-state actor in its implementation - concluded in 1996. However, this programme did not create any opportunity to test a genuinely participatory management model.

A few attempts to delegate the management of projects to local associations have been made in relation to specific sector programmes, but not all of these have actually led to any result.³

Guinean non-state actors should now be able to benefit from the provisions of the new Cotonou Partnership Agreement on cooperation with the European Union.

Opportunities for non-state actors to participate in Guinea-EC cooperation.

Planning the 9th EDF

Non-state actors were invited to take part in the debate on the programming of cooperation between the EC and Guinea as part of the National Indicative Programme (NIP), and were therefore able to raise comments and questions during the Partnership Forum⁴ that was organised to facilitate the programming exercise. CSOs were consulted on 13 April 2001, when they highlighted the following aspects in particular:

- the need to create mechanisms for providing direct support to their initiatives;
- the need to clarify the matter of access to resources (i.e. whether CSOs need to team up with a European actor or compete with foreign NGOs, and whether local CSOs that are not active in the selected focal sectors of the NIP nonetheless have access to accompanying measures);
- the need for capacity-building, most notably in relation to federations of non-state actors.

The 9th EDF programming exercise was therefore an opportunity to consider the issue of institutional relations with Guinean CSOs and the need to establish a mechanism that would be capable of providing more direct support for CSO initiatives. This analysis was performed as part of the Partnership Forum. In parallel with this, some of the results of the meetings held at the time when the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was produced and during the national dialogue on civil society⁵ were used in planning the Guinea-EU cooperation strategy (9th EDF).

As part of this cooperation strategy, the Guinean government and the European Commission delegation decided to allocate a suitable amount (i.e. approximately

EUR 4 million) from the accompanying measures (EUR 10 million in total) to help strengthen the institutional capacities of the Guinean CSOs and improve their capacity for intervention on a competitive basis.

EC support for NSAs under the 9th EDF⁶

Non-state actors will be supported under the 9th EDF as part of a broad package of accompanying measures (outside the focal sector) to stimulate a participatory approach. These measures are aimed at the various actors of cooperation, i.e. the central government, decentralised state bodies and non-state actors.

Like the other aspects of the special package of accompanying measures, i.e. the private sector, governance, the visibility of cooperation and support for civil society, this tranche will be jointly controlled *a priori* by a management committee made up of the National Authorising Officer (NAO) and the Head of delegation, supported by a secretariat (i.e. an administrator, one specialist for each component, accountants and secretaries). This committee may be enlarged to include representatives of European Member States active in Guinea.

Apart from a component aimed at strengthening the institutional and human capacities of all actors in the partnership, and support measures for raising the profile of EC involvement, the programme would include a specific support fund for initiatives taken by non-state actors.

As regards those aspects of the programme that are aimed at supporting civil society, the accompanying measures for institutional capacity-building should seek to develop organisational, management and operational capacities for alleviating poverty, with particular regard to action aimed at young people, the promotion of citizenship and human rights and the priority sectors listed in the PRSP, such as health. Another objective will be to help strengthen cooperation between Guinean non-state actors and their counterparts in West Africa and the EU.

The entire package of accompanying measures represents a total of EUR 10 million, EUR 4 million of which is to be spent on the 'civil society' component.

An appropriate proportion of the resources earmarked for supporting non-state actors will be set aside for local technical assistance in managing the programme.

Calls for proposals will be launched every six months and will be based on target themes. The programme for strengthening the

capacities of the CSOs will take account of the action plans formulated by the existing coordinating bodies (particularly those of the ACP-EU/Guinea Committee and the National Council of Civil Society Organisations).

The Guinea-EC National Indicative Programme (NIP) has not been signed yet.⁷ Work has not started yet on the package of accompanying measures, which is part of the strategy for cooperation between Guinea and the EU for 2002-2007. Hence, no starting date has been set for the implementation of the accompanying measures.

Structuring and coordination amongst Guinean non-state actors

The process

The first decision taken by the Guinean CSOs was to set up an ACP-EU/Guinea Committee⁸ in March 2001. This was intended to be a body to represent Guinean civil society in the partnership with the EU, and, more directly, for contact with the European Commission delegation in Conakry and the National Authorising Officer (NAO). This committee is now in place and is currently composed of 17 umbrella organisations representing different groups of actors. It is, however, open to other representative bodies.

Shortly afterwards, an initiative⁹ conceived by the IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems) in conjunction with the Guinean Economic and Social Council led to a major national dialogue on civil society and participatory development (national consultations on Guinean civil society and participatory development, June-December 2001). Various members of the ACP-EU/Guinea Committee helped to implement this initiative, e.g. by facilitating the dialogue.

The ACP-EU/Guinea Committee took advantage of the meetings organised as part of this dialogue to inform participants in the regions and prefectures about the Cotonou Partnership Agreement. As a new body with few internal resources, the ACP-EU/Guinea Committee would have taken longer to organise this local information campaign if it had not had the support of the IFES.

Still, no evaluation has ever been conducted of the impact of these information sessions. Plans have been made for a more sustained local information campaign, in order to allow issues of participation to be really discussed. This type of campaign requires the use of specific specialist communication tools and specially trained facilitators, so as

to enable grass-roots organisations to be informed as clearly as possible about the roles they could play in cooperation policies. A local information campaign remains urgently needed.

The results of the national dialogue also lead to the elaboration of an action plan describing:

- the activities that the NSAs plan to undertake with regard to the poverty map of Guinea;
- an analysis of the requirements in terms of strengthening the institutional capacities of Guinean NSAs and the expected activities of donors, particularly the EC.

In parallel, the dynamic generated by the dialogue also led to the emergence of a grass-roots demand for a national representative body for non-state actors. On the basis of the recommendations arising from this national dialogue, a general founding meeting held in February 2002 decided to establish a National Council of Guinean Civil Society Organisations (CNOSCG).¹⁰

Mandate and roles of the ACP-EU/Guinea Committee and the National Council

The mandate of the ACP-EU/Guinea Committee centres on cooperation between Guinea and the European Union. It is to:

- inform the country's NSAs about new developments in Guinea-EC cooperation (under the Cotonou Partnership Agreement); and
- represent civil society vis-à-vis the EU and the government with a view to giving it a more prominent role in the implementation of Guinea-EC cooperation.

The CNOSCG is intended to act as a basic framework for the consultation and coordination of Guinean CSOs (vis-à-vis the government and the donor community as a whole). The Council's chief activities are mobilising resources, providing training, disseminating information, and implementing and monitoring the decisions and recommendations resulting from the dialogue. It has two principal goals: firstly, to improve the take-up of institutional support from donors and, secondly, to create local dialogue mechanisms that can identify problems, adopt standpoints and formulate a joint action plan based on local requirements and skills. Its general mandate consists of three main points:

- to protect and promote the interests of Guinean civil-society actors;
- to promote development and strengthening participatory democracy;

- to promote cooperation and partnership between civil society and other development actors.

The following tables (see below and on page 5) clarify the way in which these two bodies operate alongside each other.

Representativeness

Membership of the ACP-EU/Guinea Committee, the first body to represent Guinean NSAs, was initially open only to collectives and umbrella organisations. The same policy was subsequently adopted for the National Council. It was accompanied by an information campaign aimed at the organisations concerned, and focusing on the need for these bodies to organise themselves (by theme, activity, position or status). When they are federated, they can be represented by a body that would be capable of adopting a common standpoint on particular issues. This way, with prospective

members, both the Committee and the Council prefer to support a prior structuring effort in order to guarantee that they possess the legitimacy and representativeness they need to act as national partners.

The collectives represented on the National Council include various groups of actors (i.e. NGOs, religious movements, farmers' organisations, trade unions, employers, universities, etc.). These bodies have good relations with the Economic and Social Council (ESC), which has arranged meetings between the National Council and various ministries. The ESC may therefore be seen as a communication channel between non-state actors and central government that can help to sanction these actors' legitimacy. Nonetheless, it is not always clear why the ESC – an institutionalised state actor – should provide such support.

These two NSA bodies are now firmly institutionalised, with constitutions, rules of procedure and clearly defined mandates

fully endorsed by their members and provides for a system of rotation in their governance. These two organisations are also officially validated and have a legal status.

Dialogue mechanisms

As part of Guinea-EC cooperation

While there are no institutionalised mechanisms for dialogue between Guinean civil society and the EC, the National Council is increasingly recognised as a special partner of the donor community, whilst the ACP-EU/Guinea Committee is now widely seen as a negotiating partner for the EC.

The ACP-EU Committee has sent its report on the programming of the 9th EDF to the EC delegation and the NAO.¹¹ This is more in the nature of a national action plan prioritising the activities required in each sector and region, than of a commentary on the contents of the strategy paper and the latter's proposals for each sector of the economy. Although the report is groundbreaking in that it is the first attempt to conceive a role for the CSOs in relation to cooperation with the EC, the NSAs clearly find it difficult to offer an analysis that goes beyond their own specific activities and needs. Put another way, an initial hurdle has been overcome: for the first time, NSAs have been involved in the planning process, and have expressed their position on paper. However, they have not yet succeeded in establishing a status for themselves as partners who are capable of formulating an overall strategy for the main development issues affecting each sector. In addition, non-state actors do not know whether this paper actually has any influence on the strategic decisions taken by the government and the European Commission (i.e. there has been no feedback from the NAO or the EC delegation).

In the framework of broader national policies

An original dialogue took place in Guinea. From June to November 2001, a major national dialogue was held on the subject of civil society and participatory development. On the instigation of the IFES, with funding from US Aid and acting in partnership with civil-society actors and the ESC, a series of meetings were organised. The meetings were attended by over 600 people, including civil-society actors, representatives of the government and political parties and Guinea's development partners.

Table 1. ACP-EU/Guinea Committee

Foundation	<i>March 2001</i> It replaces the committee founded in February 1999 whose task was to monitor the negotiations on the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.
Role and mission	Institution representing Guinean civil society in the partnership with the EU.
Mandate and areas of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner for the EU and the Guinean government regarding civil-society participation in the implementation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement; • Collecting and distributing information on aspects of this cooperation; • Support for NSA initiatives relating to the infrastructural and rural development aspects of the NIP (activities focused on priority poverty areas); • Strengthening the institutional capacities of NSAs.
Members	17 umbrella organisations: NGOs, collectives, chamber of commerce, small farmers' federation, unions, universities, journalists, etc. + Economic and Social Council.
Activities (This is not an exhaustive list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping to organise a debate on civil society and participatory development (initiative resulting from the national dialogue); • Informing regional and prefectural actors about the Cotonou Partnership Agreement; • Producing a strategy paper on involving Guinean CSOs in the implementation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement; • Helping to implement the ACP CSO action plan (adopted at the Brussels conference in July 2001); • Organising a seminar on international trade (December 2002); • Representing CSOs in international fora (e.g. African social fora, Addis Ababa, January 2003).

Sources: Rules of procedure, constitution and report of the general founding meeting of the above bodies. General Report on the National Debate on Guinean Civil Society and Participatory Development, December 2001, Conakry. Strategy paper on involving Guinean CSOs in the implementation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, ACP-EU/Guinea Committee, February 2002, Guinea.

Consultations were first held in Guinea's eight administrative regions. Each of these was attended by an average of fifty people from a wide range of backgrounds who were given an opportunity to analyse the problems facing civil society. These consultations generated a broadly accepted definition of civil society, first in each region, and subsequently at a national level. They also identified the main strengths and weaknesses of civil society, and provided an opportunity to debate the role it needs to perform in order to participate fully in Guinea's economic, political and social development. The process was fully documented.¹²

As an apolitical and non-partisan process, the national forum provided an opportunity to debate in a neutral setting (thanks to external facilitation), thus enabling the actors to identify key tools for fostering synergy between the government and civil society in shaping participatory development. This valuable experience helped meet

a broadly felt need for clarifying the concept of civil society in Guinea, where grass-roots organisations have traditionally mushroomed but which at the same time has found it difficult to develop an overall strategy for such organisations. The national dialogue was a unique opportunity to foster a common understanding of the role played by Guinean civil society in development, and also helped to improve cooperation both within and among CSOs.

Generally speaking, the only reason why Guinean civil society used to be consulted during any political dialogue on strategic issues affecting national development was in order to validate government documents. This situation changed, however, during the preparation of the PRSP, when CSOs were invited to help formulate the government's development policy. While these consultations clearly only permitted a brief and superficial form of participation, they nonetheless heralded a change of thinking.

With other donor agencies

The approach envisaged in the identification of the support programme for non-state actors (that is due to be funded under the 9th EDF) could also take account of the experience gained by the French in implementing their social development fund Social Development Fund (SDF), and should strengthen the synergy between the two programmes at the same time (the EU delegation is represented on the executive committee of the French SDF).

The national dialogue mentioned above was financed by US Aid and implemented by the IFES. The series of regional meetings also enabled important data to be collected on the work performed in Guinea by both Guinean and international NGOs. The results are to be incorporated into a mapped donor database (a matrix listing all donor projects in Guinea and stating their locations, fields of intervention, budget and duration). In addition, the Canadian organisation for development cooperation has funded the production of a map of local NGOs and grass-roots organisations in a number of regions.

The matrix of donor activities in Guinea from 2001 to 2006 shows that other funds have been committed to support NSAs and the private sector (i.e. EUR 5.8 million by the African Development Bank, EUR 4.76 million by UN institutions, EUR 1.15 million by France, EUR 0.99 million by Canada, and EUR 3.78 million by Japan).¹³ All these initiatives represent opportunities for the donor community to dialogue with NSAs and government on the participation issue.

The donor community has not succeeded yet in capitalising on the many years of experience gained by various non-governmental development organisations in Guinea (for example, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, which has just pulled out of Guinea after 20 years) in planning its support strategies.

Key issues and Comments

The monitoring of Guinea-EC cooperation formed the starting point for structuring certain non-state actors. Linkage was then assured by a grass-roots information campaign in the form of a national dialogue. This created in return the expression at the grassroots level of a need for NSA representation at national level.

- *The threat of instrumentalisation.* Guinean civil society has not yet succeeded in developing a vernacular of its own. This has made it intellectually dependent on the donor community, whose interests vary depending on the topic that is in

Table 2. National Council of Guinea Civil Society Organisations

Foundation	<i>February 2002</i> Body set up as a result of the recommendations made during the national
Role and mission	Coordinating body and debating forum for Guinean CSOs.
Mandate and areas of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting and promoting the interests of Guinean civil society; • Promoting development and strengthening participatory democracy; • Promoting cooperation and partnership between Guinean civil society and other development actors; • Activities: mobilising resources, providing training, disseminating information, implementing and monitoring the decisions and recommendations made by the national forum on Guinean civil society and participatory development.
Members	Open only to the networks of one component of civil society; 67 founder members.
Activities (This is not an exhaustive list)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information and training (citizenship studies in local languages); • Organising tripartite conferences and debates (for the government, political parties and civil society); • Implementing the action plan developed as a result of the national debate on civil society and participatory development; • Strengthening members' capacities for strategic planning and advocacy; • Sending election observers (e.g. in Sierra Leone, May 2002); • Organising a tripartite dialogue (e.g. in March 2003, round-table meetings on the frameworks for cooperation and development of the national dialogue).

Sources: Rules of procedure, constitution and report of the general founding meeting of the above bodies. General Report on the National Debate on Guinean Civil Society and Participatory Development, December 2001, Conakry. Strategy paper on involving Guinean CSOs in the implementation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, ACP-EU/Guinea Committee, February 2002, Guinea.

vogue at any one time. Guinean CSOs rarely devise any specific plans or overall development strategies and therefore tend to adapt to the vagaries of fashion (taking up themes like good governance as they surface). As a result, there is a risk that CSOs will take their lead from the prevailing doctrines (depending on the source of funding) rather than from priorities actually affecting their local work. It is therefore needed to ensure that NSA organisations develop on the basis of a genuine organisational logic rather than in pursuit of financial growth per se, as this will enable them to become a 'special partner' for the various donors, taking account of their diversity. It is absolutely vital in this respect that the donor community coordinates the different types of support for non-state actors.

- **Limited room for manoeuvre.** The absence of internal resources means that CSOs have very little latitude to plan their own development. They receive their funding from narrowly defined projects, and have to fund any other activities from their own resources, of which they have none. Not only does this situation increase the risk of CSOs losing control of their own destiny, it also encourages resource competition, which limits the vital exchange of experiences and tools amongst them.
- **The risk of elitism.** Thanks to their professional sophistication and experience, it is clear that urban groups (most notably a limited number of Conakry-based NGOs) are able to attract the attention of donors more easily than grass-roots organisations run, for the most part, by people with a lower standard of education. It is absolutely crucial to set up information distribution systems and strategies for communication with grass-roots representative bodies, despite the practical problems involved (i.e. the absence of computer networks and limited telephone coverage outside Conakry).
- **A mental revolution.** The development of a public-private dialogue between the government and civil society requires CSOs to shed their roles as project implementers, assimilate a global development culture, and learn how to engage in a dialogue with government. A familiarity with concepts such as the public good, the defence of collective interests and the capacity for strategic analysis of national development issues cannot be achieved from one day to the next. This holds particularly true for the citizens of a country which has only permitted personal initiative during the past few years, and where such initiative remains to this day subject to major financial and political constraints.

- **Capacity of the representative bodies for internal dialogue.** Representativeness, the definition of strategic goals, the planning of activities, and the risk of politicisation are all issues which these bodies have to contend with. If there is no internal dialogue between these bodies' members and their officials, they risk becoming the tools of the privileged few, whilst at the same time satisfying the donor community's need for a limited number of non-state contacts that can justify the use of participatory methods. These bodies will then become 'intermediaries' between the donor community and the government, rather than representatives of non-state actors with their own, legitimate capacity for planning and advocacy.

- **European cooperation and other issues.** While the ACP-EU Committee was the first organisation to represent Guinean NSAs in the context of cooperation with the European Union, the new inclusive Guinean body, the National Council, targeted wider issues from the outset. The role played by civil society in monitoring Guinea-EU cooperation is based on the cross-cutting issue of inclusive national representation (i.e. embracing different groups of actors) vis-à-vis the donor community on the one hand and the government on the other.

Definition of 'civil society' as formulated during the meetings held as part of the national dialogue:

'Civil society consists of all modern and traditional, apolitical and non-governmental organisations that have a common object, pursue economic, socio-political and cultural development, promote sustainable peace and effective democracy, and act as intermediaries between the government, political parties and citizens, in accordance with the laws and statutory regulations.'

Source: general report, National Consultations on Guinean civil society and participatory development, December 2001, Conakry.

- **The role of the Economic and Social Council.** The political support of the Economic and Social Council is a vital aspect of the Guinean experience. It springs from informal agreement between a consultative state institution and the NSAs, aimed at allowing NSAs undergoing a structuring process to benefit from a 'political ally'. The current president of the ESC appears inclined to support this process. However, this support is fragile insofar as, in a country where the President of the Republic

can propose to hold a referendum for the prime purpose of allowing him to remain in power, one may cast doubt on the genuine independence of the Economic and Social Council. The staff reshuffles that are now customary in Guinea may also lead to a situation where any new president of the ESC is more inclined to regard non-state bodies as 'instruments under his control'.

Challenges

- **Coordination of donor support for CSOs.** Donor support must not become segmented. Instead, donors should concentrate on the opportunities offered by the creation of a national platform (i.e. the National Council). Otherwise, there is a risk that these bodies will be instrumentalised, and that they will seek to respond individually to the various offers of donor support, thereby making a coherent overall approach less likely.
- **Transparent mechanisms of representation.** The process of organising NSAs and structuring their participation would appear, at the outset at least, to revolve around a handful of committed individuals. The leadership and efforts of a small number of individuals were undoubtedly a necessary condition for the emergence of a Guinean dynamic. However, there is a tendency to concentrate responsibilities among these leaders, who are instinctively nominated by the members to occupy the official posts arising from the institutionalisation of the representative bodies. This is mainly due to their knowledge of the politics of cooperation and the donor community. There was an endogenous need in Guinea for structure and representation and for these actors to participate in the national dialogue. Certain individuals were able to take the first steps in a process that requires long-term planning. Furthermore, there are very few qualified people working in this sector. Could there be a means of rotating appointments to executive posts, such as could guarantee permanent support for these bodies and assure their legitimacy? The texts of their constitutions (particularly their rules of procedure) offer a certain guarantee in this respect, such as a revolving presidency of key committees, etc. Some members nevertheless fear that the process is intended to further these individuals' personal ends. Have the constitutions been phrased in such a way as to guarantee good governance? It is crucial for members to be aware that they have a responsibility for ensuring these bodies are transparent organisations.

- *The role of facilitator.* Although it is difficult to design a support model, it would seem that this type of process benefits from external support. In Guinea, the structuring process was fostered by the efforts of the IFES, which conducted a nationwide information campaign centring on the very definition of 'Guinean civil society' as a concept. This, in turn, encouraged the emergence of a grass-roots need for representation. But does this result in a relationship of dependency between the facilitator and local actors? From now on, these bodies should be able to say what it is they expect the facilitator to do, whilst at the same time gradually put in place the conditions that will enable them to operate more autonomously, i.e. internal sources of funding, professionalisation of their staff, etc. Since the National Council was set up, the IFES has carried out a single operation targeted at the members of the Council's board, and aimed at strengthening strategic planning capacities and advocacy techniques. All other support has come from a range of other sources, such as the Canadian and German embassies, Développement et Paix (a Canadian NGO), and US Aid.

- *The funding of the process.* This is a fundamental issue on which depends not only the transparency of the process, but also its autonomy and the ability to resist any attempts at political or individual appropriation. During their early stages, these bodies found themselves in a vicious circle. Although the ability to collect members' subscriptions is vital to the viability of the whole process, the success of internal fundraising depends on the body's ability to interest its members by offering them a range of valuable services. This, in turn, requires the prior mobilisation of resources. The same pattern is seen in relation to the financial support potentially available from the donor community in Guinea, i.e. potential beneficiaries need to 'prove themselves' first before gaining access to funding. The ACP-EU/Guinea Committee, for example, is the only Guinean organisation to distribute information on ACP-EU cooperation. This body is the result of a domestic initiative, and its mandate and activities consist precisely of monitoring ACP-EU cooperation and acting as an intermediary between NSAs, the government and the European Commission. To date, it has not requested any funding from either the government or the European Commission. Would it be worth funding these types of bodies directly, in order to support their development as negotiating partners and trendsetters?

- *The professionalism of those involved.* While the personal involvement of certain key individuals - often on a voluntary basis

- is necessary during the initial stages, an effective and competent representative body cannot operate without the permanent presence of professional, salaried staff. However, the donors' support mechanisms do not necessarily provide for recurring costs of this nature.

- *The capacity for action.* In order both to interest its members, upon whom its legitimacy depends, and also to persuade the government that it is a competent and capable partner, the National Council must start by undertaking a number of activities in order to demonstrate its added value. This will also help it to attract the attention of the donor community and ultimately to obtain their financial support. However, the Council's capacity for action is very much limited during the initial stages, depending as it does on the voluntary commitment of a few individuals who have no resources at their disposal. Since the establishment of the Council, the need for autonomous action has led to the formation of regional, prefectural and sub-prefectural facilitators without requiring any external support. At a national level, the Council has carried out activities aimed at strengthening these same facilitators (i.e. strategic planning, good governance, communication and networking, and advocacy techniques). Among the activities performed to date have been the mobilisation of civil society movements from the Mano River Union and the sending of observers to the presidential elections in Sierra Leone in May 2002. The Council was in charge of organising three round-table meetings in March 2003, involving the government and political parties, development partners, the private sector and the social and economic actors, with the aim of establishing frameworks for cooperation, fostering a national dialogue and discussing international cooperation issues. Creativity, ability to mobilise local pace-makers, and external partnerships therefore remain key to promoting and anchoring a participation process of this type. They are also the best weapons available to these bodies for creating and making use of opportunities for dialogue with central government and the donor community that were previously non-existent in Guinea.

- *Specific challenges for the European Commission?* As regards the issue of coordination between donors, the EC (as the leading donor) will undoubtedly play a strategic role and will provide leadership in coordinating support for Guinean NSAs. The process of planning an EC-Guinea cooperation strategy has demonstrated the institutional weakness of Guinean CSOs. We therefore need to consider how

this situation can be solved by the operational modalities for implementing the capacity-building component of the NSA support programme under the 9th EDF.

Acknowledgements

The ECDPM and the author gratefully thank officials, individuals and organisations interviewed for their availability, and acknowledge their useful suggestions and comments.

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

Notes

- 1 Interim poverty reduction strategy paper, October 2000, pp. 72-73.
- 2 "Service national d'assistance aux coopératives et de coordination des interventions des organisations non gouvernementales".
- 3 For example, regarding the urban health programme, a recent audit revealed that an attempt to partially decentralise the management of projects in favour of local actors by making use of the Cap Santé association failed due to a problem affecting the transfer of funds from the Ministry to the association.
- 4 The Partnership Forum (Forum du Partenariat) is the mechanism for consultation and discussion under the 9th EDF programming exercise. It includes all stakeholders, i.e. the EC Delegation, government representatives, the private sector, civil society and other development actors.
- 5 See page 3 and 5.
- 6 Sources: strategy paper for cooperation with Guinea for the 2002-2007 period adopted in July 2002, Guinea-European Community, 2002-2007 cooperation strategy and indicative programme, final version, 26/06/2002.
- 7 Situation on 1 March 2003.
- 8 Comité ACP/UE Guinée.
- 9 Initiative financed under the 'local government' component of the cooperation programme between US Aid and the Republic of Guinea.
- 10 Conseil national des organisations de la société civile guinéenne.
- 11 Strategy paper on the involvement of Guinean CSOs in the implementation of Cotonou, ACP-EU/Guinea Committee, Republic of Guinea, February 2002.
- 12 General report entitled National Consultations on Guinean civil society and participatory development (December 2001, IFES and Economic and Social Council).
- 13 Source: Appendix 8, Matrix of existing donor commitments in Guinea (2001-2006), p. 76, 'Guinea-European Community, Cooperation Strategy and Indicative Programme 2002-2007', final version, 26 June 2002.

Contact details

Comité ACP/UE Guinée

Phone: (224) 40 45 99
E-mail: acpue@yahoo.fr

Conseil national des organisations de la société civile guinéenne

Phone: (224) 29 69 75
E-mail: cnoscg@yahoo.fr

National Authorising Officer

Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Ministry
P.O. Box 2519
Conakry, Guinea
Phone: (224) 25 72 72
Fax: (224) 41 16 21

Delegation of the European Commission

Rue MA 752, Matam,
Conakry
Phone: (224) 13 40 48 70
Fax: (377) 98 66 35 25
E-mail: mailto@delce.org.gn

IFES, Guinea

International Foundation for Electoral Systems
E-mail: ifes-guinee@biasy.net

Additional Resources

Guinea-Europen Community. Cooperation Strategy and Indicative Programme 2001-2007
http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/csp_rsp/print/gn_csp_fr.pdf#zoom=100

Guinea Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, January 2000.
<http://www.imf.org/External/NP/prsp/2002/gin/01/index.htm>

UNDP Country Office website on Guinea
<http://www.snu-gn.org/pnud/Html/index.htm>

'In Brief' provides summarised background information on the main policy debates and activities in ACP-EC cooperation. These complementary summaries are drawn from consultative processes in which the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) engages with numerous state and non-state actors in the ACP and EU countries. The Centre is a non-partisan organisation that seeks to facilitate international cooperation between the ACP and the EC. Information may be reproduced as long as the source is quoted.

The ECDPM acknowledges the support it receives for the 'In Brief' from the Department for International Development in the United Kingdom, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands, the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation in Belgium, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Instituto Português de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento in Portugal.

European Centre for Development Policy Management
Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21
NL-6211 HE Maastricht
The Netherlands

Tel +31 (0)43 350 29 00 Fax +31 (0)43 350 29 02
info@ecdpm.org www.ecdpm.org

ISSN 1571-7550