



Mouvement pour la Coopération Internationale

Membre de la Fédération Genevoise de Coopération

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50
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MCI 50th anniversary / Final Declaration

The international cooperation NGO must adapt its practices

Introduction

In 2012, « Mouvement pour la Coopération Internationale » (MCI) celebrated its 50th anniversary. This was an opportunity for the MCI to evaluate the past half-century of activities with its partners in the South. And to reflect also on its cooperation with NGOs from the North, in particular with those in Geneva.

MCI is one of the NGOs that founded the Fédération Genevoise de Coopération (FGC).

At the time of its creation, like other associations in the same field of activity, MCI did not imagine that this type of cooperation, (conceived to become obsolete in the shortest possible time frame) would still be necessary five decades later.

Why this apparent failure? Many share the same questions. For instance, the taxpayer, who witnesses a continuously growing part of the public communities' budget, dedicated to cooperation and development.

MCI began by analyzing its activities that are considered to be most productive.

It drew up an inventory of its strengths and weaknesses. It looked for "projects" deemed to be the most efficient. Immediately it engaged in a dialogue with its partners.

In March and April, it organized three public debates on topics related to the area of activities of NGOs, such as MCI: the contributions and limits of the United Nations « system »; the role of Switzerland and Geneva in International cooperation, and finally, the reality of Bandung. This 1995 conference promoted the move towards independence of numerous territories under colonial rule, and the emergence of national liberation movements.

During each debate, MCI discussed with the participants 'how to be more efficient in the work of cooperation'.

Finally, in October 2012, MCI brought together its partners to discuss the 'cooperation model' it wishes to develop to improve its efficiency for the future.

The following declaration encompasses the results of these reflections.

Geneva, October 19, 2012

Better cooperation for a different kind of development

We, the participants of the meetings which took place in Geneva from 15th – 19th October 2012, organized by the “Mouvement pour la Coopération Internationale” which celebrates its 50th anniversary, have decided to make public the results of our discussions.

Our aim is to contribute to the betterment of international cooperation as practiced by civil society organisations.

Our acknowledgements

Private colonisation

In the course of the past half-century, the state colonization as previously carried out by several European countries has transformed itself into a private colonization as practiced by large international economic conglomerates. Those groups take advantage of sometimes dubious fiscal loopholes, to evade taxes in the countries where their activities take place. Those practices reduce the resources necessary to many countries to secure a dignified life for its citizens.

Banking secrecy and other fiscal mechanisms, such as many proposed offers to evade taxes, as used in Switzerland and in other parts of the world, have a direct consequence on reducing the resources necessary to improve the standard of living of the population in many countries. These practices facilitate the development of corruption which, in turn, negatively impacts the development of numerous countries.

The international markets for raw materials and basic products are not under the control of national governments. Too often the producing countries do not receive just remuneration for their products. Many peasants in the world live in poverty.

Repeatedly, to solve the debt problem, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has imposed structural adjustment policies, often privatizations, which have dire consequences for the population of countries concerned.

Those practices weaken democracy in numerous states. They reduce the ability of many populations to master their own destiny.

The prevailing development model

The prevailing economic development model causes a deterioration in the quality of life for all who live on the planet. Climate change is one of the disturbing signs. So called “sustained” development often hides an unsustainable development in the long run.

This dominant development model questions the very existence of certain indigenous populations, particularly when large quantities of raw materials or energy resources, which are of significant economic value, lie within their territories.

Civil Society

In the South, as years go by, we can see the emergence of organizations and initiatives from civil society that are capable of meeting the essential needs of the population. To defend their interests, they have converged to work for the common wellbeing of all.

Those organizations constitute a central piece of democracy. They are the first to carry, promote and defend the economic and social rights of the population in their own country.

NGOs in the North cooperating for development.

In the South, this has allowed projects to be implemented by many people, groups and NGOs. And to take actions that would benefit large populations, while improving their conditions of life.

However, when such cooperation is fragmented, (when there are multiple projects, lacking coherence) it is not because there are many foreign NGOs in these countries, that entails sustainable social change, that is likely to make project financing through international cooperation unnecessary.

Our Vision.

The recognition of NGOs in the South

Full recognition of the existence of the civil society organizations in the South, and of their unique/essential role to bring about social change, capable of meeting the economic, social and cultural needs of people.

This has as a consequence, the development of an equal partnership between south and north NGOs. This has implications for instance, with regard to the presentation of projects.

The social change towards common wellness is hardly taken into account in a chronogram. It is often the result of a long work process, obedient to numerous obstacles. Associations which have as objective this social change, must have in their action program the resources of personnel and equipment to insure the continuity of their actions. They have to be supported in the long term.

Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples, in large part have a relationship full of respect and harmony for earth and its environment. The preservation of their traditional cultures is of utmost importance. The Indigenous Territories are genuine sanctuaries of biological diversity. But the indigenous peoples are directly hit by the prevailing development model which injures their life frame: forests, rivers, reduced ancestral territories.

Their existence itself constitutes a strong signal for humanity in its whole.

They are reproached to hinder development. They lead an unyielding fight to defend their rights, often legitimized by official national or international texts, but the application of which is neglected. Support to their claims is of capital importance.

The solidarity economy

This is an alternative to the prevailing economic development model. It situates mankind in the center of the economy, not only for the useful goods and services of quality it offers, but also the manner to produce them, in particular the practice of self-management; when it promotes a sustainable development, respectful of the environment; when it networks itself to support and defend its interests facing public authorities.

Education/Training

We have seen that the mechanisms which cause precariousness are complex. To require the full participation of members of the civil society who want to take into their hand their own destiny suppose an adequate education/training, adapted to each population. This differentiated education/training, written down in the education programs of the civil society NGO bears a capital importance. This is often not supported by the public authorities who prefer not to be called into account by anyone.

The cooperation of NGO in the North

If NGO in the North want to be completely solidary with NGO in the South, they must fight, in their own countries, to prevent the mechanisms by which financial resources which would provide for the needs of the population in the South, from finding a complacent shelter in bank accounts that only benefit cheaters.

Call to NGO and public collectivities in the North

We are calling on NGOs in the North and the public collectivities which support them to pay particular attention to projects and programs of NGOs in the South which, through their action programs, are putting themselves in a network with others to propose and promote public policies, for the realization of recognized rights, susceptible to benefit a large number of groups, a much larger population than the initial beneficiaries.

Those actions, susceptible to promote a social change in the sense of a common wellness, will allow making the international cooperation obsolete.

This practice of cooperation must be done in the long term. Associations in the South which have such objectives must be supported not only for concrete aspects of their programs, but also for their democratic life, their needs in personnel and equipment.

This is the change in ‘practice’ that we wish to promote.

The participants :

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Genève, le 19 octobre 2012