Most successful cases of Civil Society strategies for the policy impact in South Africa

OXFAM workshop 2015 – South Africa Group

Civil Society in South Africa prides itself for having a great historical record of achievements for the entire South African Society. Since the apartheid regime, the country witnessed a growing number of organizations working at the bottom of the society, and serving in a variety of societal issues at both the local and national levels. Civil society in South Africa is affected by the global trends but the sector has also faced a particular national context in the form of apartheid and has been profoundly shaped by this. In addition CSOs have had to negotiate a new terrain after the transition to democracy in 1994.¹

The top down approach of policy adoption and implementation in South Africa have created difficulties of civil society participation in the policy and decision making. However, there has been quite a significant success of some Non Governmental organizations to tackle major issues in spite of the governmental insufficient collaboration and support.

Below are the diverse and major strategies adopted by Civil Society organizations to tackle their issues and struggle for influencing the policy-making in South Africa:

1. Labor movement (Cosatu) workers mobilization linking with people and organisations beyond the formal workplace. [http://www.sacsis.org.za/site/article/2336](http://www.sacsis.org.za/site/article/2336) other dual strategies of COSATU:
   - Continuing to find internal ways to strengthen the ANC and bring greater levels of accountability from within the alliance.

• Building a broad base of engagement with civic organizations outside of the ANC.

2. **Protests of the poor**: Usually at the local level, in small cities. **Use of famous people** to mobilize the public.

3. **Forums**: National Anti-Corruption Forum, which brings together civil society, business and government in the fight against corruption. The forum subsequently adopted a comprehensive Anti-Corruption Strategy committing the government to combat corruption within the public service. More anticorruption summits were held in 2005 and 2008 and each time civil society actors have been closely involved. See more at: http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december2013/risecivilsocietygroupsafrica#sthash.k2LRQi3Y.dpuf

• **Example**: Co-founded by investigative journalist Charles Lewis, his researcher Nathaniel Heller, and South African activist Marianne Camerer, **anticorruption group Global Integrity** brings to the fight against corruption a new tool: information sharing in real time through an **online platform** known as Indaba Fieldwork. See more at: http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december2013/risecivilsocietygroupsafrica#sthash.k2LRQi3Y.dpuf

4. More than 50 grassroots women activists gathered from around the region in late January 2015 to stand their ground against Big Coal. Their six-day exchange and strategy meeting involved dozens of organizations in South Africa, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

5. A combination of localized community based organizations, broader sectoral and/or issue based **social movements**, progressive NGOs, some unions as well as variety of other immigrant, religious, youth, LGBTI (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transsexual/intersex) and women’s groups have all contributed to, amongst others: the maintenance of a lively democratic culture; The defense and advancement of crucial human and constitutional rights; Confronting the abuse of political and economic power; And struggling for practical alternatives to the societal status quo.

6. **Civil society government stakeholder meetings**

7. **Marches, protests, payment boycotts, illegal reconnections, political education and test case constitutional litigation.** More at http://seis.bris.ac.uk/~lwbmm/documents/Johannesburg.doc
8. **Women mobilization strategies**: international conferences, workshops, and trainings, women from around the world make new friends, share ideas, and debate regarding what constitutes women’s interests

9. **Use of international law and courts**

### The Fight against HIV epidemic: success stories of Civil Society in South Africa

Civil Society organizations in South Africa serve in diverse areas such as Education, social development, human rights, human development; but the main issue where most NGOs work is the fight of HIV proliferation and treatment. The spread of HIV infection has received the attention of civil society to treat and struggle preventing it; hence, during the past ten years; NGOs worked extensively arrange educational and medical programs for both infected and non-infected patients to raise awareness and try to reduce its proliferation.

The following are the major case studies where Civil Society NGOs succeeded in conducting campaigns which target the prevention and cure of HIV infected people:

1. **The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)**

   This campaign was established in 1998. It is so-to-say a kind of social movement that organizes demonstrations, conduct research, hold seminars and negotiations with the government for the protection and promotion of human rights in several public areas.²

   The TAC achieved great success in the courtroom when it partnered with the government in dealing with copyright laws preventing the use of generic AIDS drugs in 2007. It achieved a second court victory when it forced the minister of health, Dr. Mantho Tshabalala-Msimang, to provide Anti-Retroviral (ARV) drugs for the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV³

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³ ibid
Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) believes that everyone has a role to play in helping to fix this and keeping government accountable for poor service delivery. “If you live in an area where TAC is present, you can consider becoming a member. Or you can find out about your clinic committee or local AIDS council and join that.” TAC addressing the local communities in its annual report in 2014\(^4\). These structures offer a way for people to have a say in how government responds to HIV, TB and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in South African local communities. Local AIDS councils can report to district AIDS councils, district AIDS councils can report to provincial AIDS councils and provincial AIDS councils can then report to the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC). \(^5\)

2. AIDS foundation of South Africa

The AIDS Foundation of South Africa (AFSA), established in 1988, was the first registered AIDS\(\text{Non-Government Organisation in South Africa.}\)

AFSA is a development organization that exists to mitigate the impacts of HIV and AIDS and poverty through the implementation of health and community development projects in vulnerable communities. Therefore the main focus is rural, vulnerable and hard to reach communities. The foundation acts as an interface between donors and community-based organizations (CBOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the HIV and AIDS


\(^5\) ibid
sector, through placing donor funds with strategically selected organizations and providing them with ongoing mentoring, technical support & capacity building.\(^6\)

AFSA’s partnership with civil society organizations proved to be an effective approach to delivering interventions and services to communities, particularly communities in remote rural areas of South Africa. Through their dedication, commitment and insight, civil society organizations provided a range of interventions focusing on:

- **Reducing new** Reduce new HIV through provision of HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT) and primary health care screening services, facilitation of referrals, and enrolment into public health treatment programs.
- **Catalysing and sustaining** behavioral, social, and cultural change to positively influence and shape the health and wellbeing of target populations, which encompassed: community mobilisation and dialogue to address gender inequality, gender based violence and sexual assault.
- **Mitigating the negative impacts** of HIV and AIDS on individuals and households in distress, this encompassed: strengthening of community based child protection and care systems and early childhood development; community and home based care.
- **Influence policy and practice** through research, advocacy, access to justice and legal intervention; which also encompassed addressing impediments and obstacles that negatively affect determinants of health and the realization of health rights.\(^7\)

The following table shows the total beneficiaries of the foundations programs in relation to each intervention area in 2013.\(^8\)

\(^6\) Extracted from the official website of the foundation through the following link: [http://www.aids.org.za/about-us/](http://www.aids.org.za/about-us/)


\(^8\) ibid
We conclude that civil society organizations in South Africa have effectively created a positive image in the society, through diverse strategies of impact and different approached of working. However, impact at the level of policy making is being done in different models whereby civil society collaborate and negotiate with the government, organize advocacy campaigns or sometimes mobilize the masses to influence the government for policy actions.