



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa

African Centre for Statistics

Statistical Development Section

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# **The Role of Civil Society Organizations in the Statistical Process**

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**Concept note**

June 2017

## 1. Background and justification

Civil Society is an ancient concept. One of the first Roman philosophers talk about Civil Society that is similar to the one we know today was a man called Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-46 BC). He argued that human beings have the capacity to come together voluntarily to work towards a good society (Societas Civilis). The domain of this concept starts to emerge during the Renaissance (1400-1700 AD) when intellectuals thought that Civil Society should be distinct and separated from the state. Distinguishing Civil Society from Political organisations spread to the Developing Countries where governments had failed to deliver “good society”. People realised that all the things they have been doing together voluntarily for the ‘common good’ was actually Civil Society activity<sup>1</sup>. The notion of civil society is attributed to George Hegel who developed civil society as a domain parallel to but separate from the state. Thomas Carothers, (1999) recognized that NGOs are the heart of Civil Society (CS) and that democracy will ensure a strong civil society while a strong civil society ensures democracy<sup>2</sup>

### Definition and dimensions of CS Sector

It is of a paramount for any study concerning CS to adequately define this concept as claims by Laine (2014) who states that “Ambiguity still surrounds the concept. While there is no need to strive for a universal understanding of civil society, it is nevertheless essential to scrutinize the concept thoroughly, for what is understood by it defines largely what can be expected from it”<sup>3</sup> Veneklasen, (1994) defines CS as follow: “Civil society is a sphere of social interaction between the household (family) and the state which is manifested in the norms of community cooperative, structures of voluntary association and networks of public communication ... norms are values of trust, reciprocity, tolerance and inclusion, which are critical to cooperation and community problem solving, structure of association refers to the full range of informal and formal organization through which citizens pursue common interests”<sup>4</sup> Connor, (1999) stresses the importance of partnership between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the market and the state when defines CS as, “Civil society is composed of autonomous associations which develop a dense, diverse and pluralistic network. As it develops, civil society will consist of a range of local groups, specialized organizations and linkages between them to amplify the corrective

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<sup>1</sup>John Onem; Civil society organisations play an important role in developing countries” jonen@ascend-consult.com ; “ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/Letters/Civil-society-organisations-play-an-important-role/806314-1649104-format-xhtml-m5qfwbz/index.html>  
<sup>2</sup> Thomas Carothers, 1999” Think Again: Civil society” <http://www.osf.am/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Carothers-on-Civil-society.pdf>  
<sup>3</sup>Jussi Laine (2014) “Debating Civil Society: Contested Conceptualizations and Development Trajectories” <http://www.icnl.org/research/journal/vol16iss1/debating-civil-society.pdf>  
<sup>4</sup> Veneklasen “West African Civil Society Position on the Millennium Development Goals and Their Implementation”, Paper presented in West African Civil Society Forum on Millennium Development Goals, Dakar, 2003

voices of civil society as a partner in governance and the market”<sup>5</sup>. Onem focuses on how CS enhance the global welfare of the world when defines CS as “All the individuals and organisations that are not part of government, not motivated by profit or political power, but working to make the world a better place”<sup>6</sup>. More broadly according to Ghaus-Pasha (2004)<sup>7</sup>“The key features of successful Civil Societies which emanate from various definitions include the following: separation from the state and the market; formed by people who have common needs, interests and values like tolerance, inclusion, cooperation and equality; and development through a fundamentally endogenous and autonomous process which cannot easily be controlled from outside”?. Accordingly, Ghaus-Pasha(2004) defines CS as “the entire range of organized groups and institutions that are independent of the state, voluntary, and at least to some extent self-generating and self-reliant. This of course includes non-governmental organizations like independent mass media, think tanks, universities, and social and religious groups”.Ghaus-Pasha (2004) elaborated further this definition by observing that: “ To be part of civil society, groups must meet some other conditions as well. In a democracy, civil society groups have respect for the law, for the rights of individuals, and for the rights of other groups to express their interests and opinions. Part of what the word “civil” implies is tolerance and the accommodation of pluralism and diversity”and that “Civil society groups may establish ties to political parties and the state, but they must retain their independence, and they do not seek political power for themselves”; and we need to observe that “Often in transitions, groups arise that seek to monopolize the lives and thinking of their members. These groups do not tolerate the right of their members to dissent, and they do not respect other groups that disagree with them. Some of these groups may merely be fronts for political parties or movements that seek to win control of the state. These groups are not part of civil society and they do not contribute to building a democracy”. Thus, CS in this sense are briefly characterised by “independent, voluntary, law-abiding, tolerant and pluralistic organizations”.

## Significance and role of the Civil Society Sector

Traditionally, CSOs were recognized as providers of relief and promoter of human rights, such organizations are now increasingly viewed as critical contributors to economic growth and civic and social infrastructure essential for a minimum quality of life for the people (Salamon and Anheier, 1997; OECD, 1995)<sup>8</sup>. Civil society activities have expanded from purely service delivery initiatives to **active public policy advocacy work** as a result of global initiatives such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, the former Millennium Development Goals and currently due to both SDGs and agenda 2063.

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<sup>5</sup> Connor, Desmond M. (1999). ‘Public Participation and Civil Society’, an excerpt from Volume 27, Issue 3 of Constructive Citizen Participation, Connor Development Services Ltd, December,

<sup>6</sup>ohn Onem; Civil society organisations play an important role in developing countries” jonen@ascend-consult.com ,“ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/Letters/Civil-society-organisations-play-an-important-role/806314-1649104-format-xhtml-m5qfwbz/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> Aisha Ghaus-Pasha(2004)”Role of Civil Society Organizations in Governance

“. <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan019594.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Salamon, L.M.. and Anheuer, H.K., 1997, “The Third World’s Third Sister in Cooperative Perspective”, Working Paper of John Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project, the John Hopkins University Institute of Policy Studies

The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) which have encouraged and defined the interface between government, donors and civil society organisations (CSOs). The first call to action of the AAA with regards to **CSOs** can be listed as: “ (a) **Civil society organisations (CSOs)** should play a dynamic role in making citizens’ concerns and needs heard.(b) **CSOs** should help ensure that donors and developing countries fulfil their commitments”<sup>9</sup>.Thus,as has been concluded by Jumah (2011), “The AAA has given **CSOs** a renewed impetus and legitimacy as key development actors. **CSOs**’ input in development processes is increasingly valued by donors and government”<sup>10</sup>.

The Busan Action Plan for Statistics <sup>11</sup> which explicitly recognizes the statistical activities necessary to support key global commitments including initiatives such as gender equity and the empowerment of women. The plan has also explicitly supports greater transparency and encourages the use of new methods and technologies to increase the reliability and accessibility of official statistics. The Action Plan call to establishpartnerships of national users and producers of data through **Communities of Practice**at both the national and regional level to enhance communication and encourage innovation. This plan is therefore provide an additional justification to the importance of the proposed study.

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015 : 70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; clearly stated on paragraph 39: *The scale and ambition of the new Agenda requires a revitalized GlobalPartnership to ensure its implementation. We fully commit to this. This Partnershipwill work in a spirit of global solidarity, with the poorest andwith people in vulnerable situations. It will facilitate an intensive global engagementin support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing togetherGovernments, the private sector, **civil society**, the United Nations system and otheractors and mobilizing all available resources.* And on Paragraph 41.... *We acknowledge the role of the diverse private sector, ranging from micro-enterprisesto cooperatives to multinationals, and that of **civil society organizations** andphilanthropic organizations in the implementation of the new Agenda.*

The proposed new version of SHaSA II has considered the role of **CSOs** in most of statistical activities, including building strong partnerships with foundations, **civil society**, partners, users,

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<sup>9</sup> The Accra Agenda for Action 4 September 2008, developed and developing countries came together and endorsed the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA). In doing so, developing countries committed to taking control of their own future, donors pledged to co-ordinate better amongst themselves, and all agreed to be more accountable to each other – and to their citizens.  
<https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/45827311.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Bashiru Jumah (2011) “Towards Democratic Ownership in Ghana: Strong Progress in Civil Society Engagement” [http://www.cooperazioneallosviluppo.esteri.it/pdgcs/documentazione/Report/2011-02-11\\_AllianceGhana.pdf](http://www.cooperazioneallosviluppo.esteri.it/pdgcs/documentazione/Report/2011-02-11_AllianceGhana.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Statistics for Transparency, Accountability, and Results: A Busan Action Plan for Statistics  
[https://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/Busanactionplan\\_nov2011.pdf](https://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/Busanactionplan_nov2011.pdf)

etc; their inclusion as members of specialized technical working groups and recognized CSO as *emerging users of Official Statistics*.

As articulated by Ghaus-Pasha (2004) “The role of Civil Society has been widely recognized as an essential ‘third’ sector. Its strength can have a positive influence on the state and the market. Civil society is therefore seen as an increasingly important agent for promoting good governance like transparency, effectiveness, openness, responsiveness and accountability. Civil society can further good governance, first, by policy analysis and advocacy; second, by regulation and monitoring of state performance and the action and behavior of public officials; third, by building social capital and enabling citizens to identify and articulate their values, beliefs, civic norms and democratic”

Civil society sector is instrumental in promoting local economic development, alleviating poverty, (The first goal of SDGs) advocating policy change, contributing to good governance and campaigning for the SDGs. For CSOs to deliver effectively and efficiently, they need to be strengthened. Critical engagement on the SDGs can increasingly become the approach for many CSOs, adapting, extending, updating, and localizing the goals, as appropriate to their own situation. However; this engagement requires a sustainable inflow of information and official statistics from the statistical authorities simultaneously coupled with a reliable outflow of information from the CSOs to the NSOs, hence an inclusive and broad NSS will be emerged. Moreover, increased advocacy and awareness, dialogue and a true partnership between all development partners including CSOs is vital if eradication of poverty is to be achieved by 2030 according to the SDGs.

### **Open data initiatives and the needs of CSO**

Recalling the first principle United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in regard to relevance, impartiality and equal Access which reads as “Official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the Government, the economy and the public with data about the economic, demographic, social and environmental situation. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information”<sup>12</sup>, it is therefore availing OS to CSOs is viewed according to this principle as public good that guarantees the right of citizens to access official statistics.

There is an opportunity to leverage the increased understanding of the role of technology in enhancing disclosure and public access to information, to build the capacity of the CSOs to connect open data initiatives. This entails to improve the open data ecosystem<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics - [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/Implementation\\_Guidelines\\_FINAL\\_without\\_edit.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/Implementation_Guidelines_FINAL_without_edit.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> World Wide web Foundation “Towards engaging civil society organisations in the open data agenda a case study in the health sector in Tanzania [http://webfoundation.org/docs/2016/12/WF-RP-Engaging-Health-CSOs-in-the-OD-Agenda-Tanzania\\_Update.pdf](http://webfoundation.org/docs/2016/12/WF-RP-Engaging-Health-CSOs-in-the-OD-Agenda-Tanzania_Update.pdf)

These initiatives will promote collaboration between government and CSOs . through the use of open data. The benefits of open data initiatives to CSOs to meets their data needs are associated among other with sharing of experiences through sharing of data amongst CSOs; to avoid duplications and inconsistencies which compromise the quality of the data, hence to reduce the cost and time of conducting field studies; to enhance adequate support from donors,. This proposed study will explore the challenges and suggest ways to improve sharing and reusing datasets within CSOs and between NSOs and CSOs to enlarge the scope of data ecosystem.

## Main challenges of the Civil Society Sector

However as observed by Ghaus-Pasha (2004), “ Despite the growing importance, **Civil Society** organizations in the developing world remain only partially understood. Even basic descriptive information about these institutions – their number, size, area of activity, sources of revenue and the policy framework within which they operate – is not available in any systematic way”.

Moreover, the civil society sector falls in a conceptually complex social terrain that lies mostly outside the market and the state. For much of the recent history, social and political discourse has been dominated by the ‘two sector model’ that acknowledges the existence of only two actors – the market (for profit private sector) and the state. This is reinforced by the statistical conventions that have kept the “third sector” of civil society organizations largely invisible in official economic statistics, as observed by Salamon, Sokolowski and Associates (2004)<sup>14</sup>. Ghaus-Pasha (2004) added that “on top of this, the sector embraces wide range of such organizations, from **large registered formal bodies to informal local organizations**, the latter being far more numerous and less visible to outsiders. These include traditional organizations (e.g. religious organizations and modern groups and organizations, mass movements and action groups, trade and professional associations, non-commercial organizations and community based organizations”. As observed by Ghaus-Pasha (2004), “**Civil Society** should not be equated to non-government organizations (**NGOS**). **NGOs** are a part of **Civil Society** though they play an important and sometimes leading role in activating citizen participation in socio-economic development and politics and in shaping or influencing policy. **Civil society** is a broader concept, encompassing all organizations and associations that exist outside the state and the market”.

## 2. Objectives

The main objective of this note is to guide the production of a handbook, to strengthen mutual and structured collaboration and coordination between NSSs and CSOs that will improve accountability among CSOs, government institutions and citizens, hence extending the scope of use and production of official statistics to promote evidence based **dialogue** and decision making

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<sup>14</sup> Salamon, L.M., Sokolowski, S.W. and Associates, 2004, “Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector”, Volume Two, Kumarian Press, Inc

processes. The envisaged handbook is designed as a blueprint for NSSs, statistical authorities as well as to CSOs.

Specific objectives are:

- (1)..... To integrate, coordinate and mainstream data provided by CSOs into the NSSs and to propose mechanisms of integration and coordination of CSO contribution to NSSs;
- (2)..... To facilitate CSOs to utilizing official statistics to support greater citizen participation in the socio economical and transparent political processes;

More specifically this concept note aims to guide the production of a report in a version of a handbook to assist users within CSOs in an effective and efficient approach to use official statistics in discharging their activities and in critical delivery of their services in the context of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as to officialize statistics provided by CSO to NSSs and statistical authorities.

It is expected that the study generated within the parameters of this concept note will be an essential tool for CSOs for more efficient and effective delivery of their missions in service of their communities and to broaden the scope and promote ownership and enhance sustainability for official statistics in Africa.

### 3. Expected Output

The recruited consultant is expected to draft the report in a version of a handbook that at least includes the following requirements:

- (i) **Extensive literature Review:** This review will mainly focus on the institutional and strategic frameworks of statistics in Africa as they are pertaining to CSO. The review should capture the landscape of CS as an emerging third sector ; identify a sample of CSOs to be considered under this study; define the specific role of CSOs in relation to African strategic statistical frameworks documented within their National Statistical Systems, in National Strategies for the Development of Statistics, in SHaSA and on the implementation of SDGs and Agenda 2063.
- (ii) **Designing a questionnaire and Analysis Plan:** Resulting from the literature review, the consultant is required to design a questionnaire that will answer, among other relevant issues, what role the CSOs can play to enhance the scope of the NSS? what is the benefit the CSOs can gain by effectively and efficiently availing to the official statistics? what type of official statistics these organizations need to access? what about the capacity of NSOs to provide such data? and the capacity status of CSO to channel their data to be a component of

official statistics? and what mechanisms are needed to link CSO to be a component within the NSS? This questionnaire is envisaged to have two core sub sections, the first one to be addressed to the selected CSOs under the proposed study, while the second component to be designed to obtain feedback from a selected sample of NSOs. Based on the outcome of the questionnaire, the consultant is expected to construct an analysis plan that will describe how to measure the impact of CSOs in NSS as well as the impact of NSOs in strengthening the statistical capacity of the CSO.

- (iii) **Designing the Structure of the Handbook:**With close consultation with ACS, as will be detailed in the terms of reference, the consultant will design the structure of the handbook with the help of the outcomes in Paragraph (ii) above. <sup>15</sup>
- (iv) **Drafting of the Handbook:**This activity will follow upon the agreed structure of the handbook .
- (v) **Participating on the EGM :** to enhance the final version of the draft handbook, the consultant will present this draft to an EGM will be organized to take place between 24-26 October 2017. The consultant will contribute in identifying the members of this EGM and will be responsible to incorporate the remarks generated in this meeting in the draft report and submit a final version of the study to ECA as shown in details in the ToR of this consultancy service. Finally the consultant is expected to present the final report during the CoDG meeting

#### 4. Expected results

A draft report on the role of CSOs on statistical process will be produced in a version of a handbook

#### 5. Methodology

A consultant will be recruited to produce a report in a version of handbook on the role of CSOs in statistical process and he/she will perform the activities as described in the expected output: extensive literature review; designing a questionnaire and analysis plan; designing the structure

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<sup>15</sup>This structure needs to consider the standard structure of handbooks (with Comprehensive introduction and the Objectives of the handbook ; an overview of the handbook; covering Methodological and Institutional issues; supplemented by Glossary, references and Metadata to well define all the concepts, terms, introduced in the handbook; and appendix for case studies

of the handbook; drafting of the Handbook; Present the handbook to the EGM organized for its validation; incorporate comments and contribution from the EGM in a final draft.

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