

**Local organisations –  
key but neglected agents  
‘at the end of the MDGs delivery chain’**

**PEP-14 Meeting**

**Geneva, 1 April 2009**

**Steve Bass, IIED**

*When making global estimates of costs of reaching the MDGs, we could not cost MDG7.*

*Good environmental management  
depends on locally-specific knowledge and action.*

**Jeffrey Sachs**

## Aid is shifting away from local org'ns (LOs)...

1. Paris emphasises 'country' ownership and systems  
– *not 'local' needs and capacities*
  2. Donor plans now decided with LIC treasuries/ planners  
– *not with diverse actors who really drive change, inc LOs*
  3. Env mainstreaming = 'national experts putting env words into national plans' – *LO perspectives not often sought*
  4. Donors and gov'ts account to each other, not to LOs  
– *donor fashions confuse LOs and erase accountability*
  5. Donors criticize LOs as unaccountable, inefficient, micro, co-opted – *i.e. they see LOs in donor terms only*
- *Is aid's neglect of LOs a problem?*

## IIED/local organisations' joint review

LOs' views on good devt, effective LOs, and supportive aid:

- Pastoralist Women's Council – Tanzania
- Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress – Zimbabwe
- Associates in Research and Development/ARED – Senegal
- Community Organisation Resource Centre – South Africa
- Urban Resource Centre – Pakistan
- Neighbourhood Credit, IIED-America Latina, Argentina
- Association for Nature and Sustainable Development/ANDES – Peru
- North Rupununi District Development Board – Guyana
- Casa Pueblo – Puerto Rico
- Caribbean Natural Resources Institute – Trinidad
- *more to come...*

## IIED's work with local organisations

### To date: Self-profiling by local organisations

- 10x LOs 'telling their own story'
- Peer review workshop, London
- 10x self-reflections published
- 1<sup>st</sup> synthesis – *Understanding LOs in SD*

### Next: Influencing aid and governments

- **Workshop with PEP?**
- Use results for e.g. GEF small grant reviews, guidance on 'decentralising mainstreaming'
- Networking LOs?

## Message: LOs are **development drivers**

1. Effective LOs are **development assets** – local govt, clinics, schools, CSOs ‘deliver the MDGs’, *not* govt or donors
2. Effective LOs **empower** poor people – to relate better to authorities, landlords, employers, service providers...
3. Effective LOs reduce local **risks** and deprivations – delivering food, energy, education, health, water-sanitation, justice...
4. Effective LOs take a **holistic** approach – knowledge and local rules/norms integrate econ, social, and env objectives
5. Effective LOs meet key **‘governance requirements’** identified by WDR
6. LO **long-term presence** and **accountability to poor groups**, plus 1-5, explains much *‘aid effectiveness’*

➤ ***“Aid agencies are only as effective as institutions they fund.”***

## Lessons: from NR-focused LOs

1. **Local culture is the DNA of effective LOs** – but sympathetic cross-fertilisation can produce ‘new ideas that fit locally’
2. **Local rights, or the struggle for rights – drive effective LOs**, especially environmental and/or women’s rights
3. **Emphasis on self-reliance helps LOs to mature** – from e.g. protesting, to developing ideas, to taking responsibility, to establishing policy precedents
4. **Long time horizons are key** – but often need only small funds
5. **Good intermediaries are key** – good resource user groups, NGOs, etc, can be more important than direct links to aid

## The Big Local Organisation Challenge

### **For local organisations:**

Getting recognition/support from donors...

... but avoiding donor 'capture'

### **For donors:**

Using LOs to scale-up proven & new (REDD) dev practice...

... but avoiding big transaction costs

## Early recommendations for donors

### → Funding: Invest in the 'Env Wealth of the Poor' at big scale, through:

1. **Global flexible funds from which LOs can draw e.g.**
  - Community-Led Infrastructure Finance Facility CLIFF (Sida/DFID)
  - International Urban Poor Fund (foundations/IIED)
2. **Local task-specific funds to which urban/rural poor can apply direct e.g.**
  - Funds run by a significant LO/intermediary

### → Aid architecture:

1. **Accra – 'go local' and don't just partner large CSOs**
2. **Post-MDGs Initiative – avoid local-blindness in its design**
3. **UNDP's 'local pillar' work – a key opportunity**

### → **A PEP session to discuss above with some of the local organisations?** Especially if PEP held in a low-income country

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# Understanding and Supporting the Role of Local Organisations in Sustainable Development

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gatekeeper

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The role of local organisations in sustainable development

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