

NGLS's Civil Society Observer aims to keep readers informed of developments and specific topics related to NGOs and civil society, whether it be through the media; academic and scholarly discourse; civil society position papers or statements at multilateral meetings or events; or analysis and research originating from civil society.

SPECIAL SECTION: ARE THE MDGs WITHIN REACH?

In 2000, UN Member States agreed to the [Millennium Declaration](#) and committed themselves to achieving the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs) by 2015. UN Member States will again come together this September in New York for an "MDG summit" (High-level Plenary Meeting), with the primary objective of accelerating progress towards the achievement of the MDGs by 2015.

As a part of the process leading to the summit, the General Assembly convened [Hearings](#) with representatives of civil society and the private sector on 14-15 June. The summary of these Hearings will be available soon and will be integrated into discussions at the summit. In the lead up to these Hearings, NGLS, with support from the [Millennium Campaign](#), held a global online consultation to make civil society voices heard in global discussions on how to accelerate and sustain progress in meeting the 2015 target for the MDGs. The various inputs and policy recommendations received build on the UN Secretary-General's Report for the MDG summit, [Keeping the Promise](#) and are analyzed and summarized into a [compilation report](#). Click [here](#) for an executive summary of this report.

Two recently released reports, the [Millennium Development Goals Report 2010](#) and the [Millennium Development Goals Report Card](#) show that the MDGs can be reached, but only with the necessary political will. The MDG Report 2010 notes, for example, that the economic crisis took a heavy toll on jobs and incomes around the world, but its impact does not threaten achievement of the MDG target of cutting the rate of extreme poverty in half by 2015. The MDG Report Card demonstrates that many of the world's poorest countries have been making the most overall progress towards achieving the MDGs.



However, not all reports are this positive, as progress has not been uniform across countries, and there have been setbacks and disappointments. To overcome these weaknesses, civil society at large calls for a holistic approach that looks at the interconnectedness and systemic implications of the different challenges faced by the international community. To truly make the MDGs transformative and sustainable – beyond 2015 – more must be done to ensure that MDG implementation is accompanied by a stronger effort to address root causes and transition to more sustainable and equitable development paths.

In this section a selection of views and positions on the MDGs are highlighted. More civil society views are also available on the following website: <http://www.un-ngls.org/mdg2010>

The UN's poverty-fighting programme lacks teeth

[Guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), 15 June 2010, by Mary Robinson

In this opinion piece, Mary Robinson reflects on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) framework. She identifies ongoing discrimination, social exclusion, and a lack of accountability and of participation as structural weaknesses of this framework. She therefore advocates for a human rights approach to poverty: "By accepting that poverty is a violation of human rights and by ensuring that the voices of the poor are heard, we may finally see the kind of progress that holds governments accountable for implementing their human rights obligations and enables poor people to help themselves." [Read More](#)

Civil Society Pushes for Action Ahead of MDG Review

Inter-Press Service, 15 June 2010, by Amanda Bransford

This article focuses on the Hearings and other events recently organized in New York that gave voice to civil society views on the MDG process. It highlights civil society's call for among others: faster progress; a human rights approach towards MDGs; disaggregated data; inclusion and participation of all groups in society. More information is available [here](#).

Read also [UN Seeks Civil Society Input for MDG Summit](#).

Economic growth and the MDGs

Overseas Development Institute (ODI), ODI Briefing Paper 60, June 2010, by Claire Melamed, Kate Higgins and Andy Sumner



This Briefing Paper argues that the link between economic growth and the achievement of the MDGs lies in how the opportunities and benefits created by growth support the human development of the poorest people. It is in favour of an equitable distribution of the benefits of growth through progressive taxation and pro-poor public spending on health, education and social protection. More information can be found [here](#).

Read also other articles by ODI:

- [The Millennium Development Goals: moving forward collectively to 2015](#).
- [The MDGs and gender](#).
- [The MDG fundamentals: improving equity for development](#).

Double the efforts and honour your commitments

The Civic Commission for Africa (CCFA) Civil Society Contribution to the UN MDGs Summit in September 2010 presented to the Second TICAD Ministerial Follow-Up Meeting, 2-3 May 2010, by Maungo Mooki

CCFA notes with concern "that despite some progress made earlier as shown from reports from the UNDP and the World Bank, there is a general regression or a reversal in progress made towards achieving most of the MDGs, and in particular MDG 1 on Poverty and Hunger and Decent Work and MDG 5 on Maternal New Born and Child Health." They call on both the international community and on African governments to honour or scale up their funding pledges to achieve the MDGs and reiterate the need for good governance, accountability and effective delivery of services in realising the MDGs. [Read More](#)

Filling the gaps at the UN civil society consultation on the MDGs

Freshwater Action Network, Opinion Piece, 17 June 2010, by Lajana Manandhar

Lajana Manandhar reports back on her experiences during the Hearings in New York on 14-15 June, and emphasizes that civil society hardly addressed the issue of water and sanitation. She also reflects on the large absence of Members States during the Hearings. [Read More](#)

Civil society not convinced Health MDGs will be achieved in time

Commonwealth Foundation, 2 June 2010

During the Inaugural pre-Commonwealth Health Ministers meeting's debate with civil society, hosted by the Commonwealth Health Professions Alliance, on 15 May, representatives from Commonwealth civil society debated whether the health related MDGs would be achieved by the internationally agreed deadline of 2015. [Read More](#)

Manifesto of the Millennium Development Goals and Policy Coherence Conference: Demands for 2015

On 5-7 May, networks and NGOs from Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin American and the Caribbean met at the Millennium Development Goals and Policy Coherence Conference in Madrid to develop a consensus document highlighting EU actions that need to be put into place to further promote human development. This consensus document or manifesto is available online. [Read More](#)

Towards the UN MDG Review Summit 2010: Recommendations to the EU

Bond/CONCORD Position Paper, March 2010

This paper, compiled by the CONCORD network of 1,600 European Development NGOs, sets out what civil society believes the European Union needs to deliver in order to achieve progress towards meeting the MDGs. It also includes specific recommendations for the UN Review Summit. [Read More](#).

IN THE PRESS

This section aims to demonstrate how the international press reflects opinions, work, achievements and challenges faced by civil society organizations, and to also highlight "global civil society."

Levent Korkut: Strong civil society means strong democracy

Today's Zaman, 6 April 2010, by Ayse Karabat

In this interview, Professor Levent Korkut, chairman of the Civil Society Development Center reflects on the development of civil society in Turkey. Although the focus of the interview is country specific, a number of the issues raised are also experienced by civil society around the world, such as the relatively difficult relationship between State and civil society – which is to some extent based on fear and control. This results in a civil society that has limited influence in political processes, which consequently weakens democracy. For more information, click [here](#).

Civil society or civil club?

Républica, Opinion Piece, 14 April, by Trailokya Ray Aryal

This article questions whether civil society is really representing the ordinary citizens and their concerns. More information can be found [here](#).

The New York Times, Opinion piece , 17 April, by Bono

Africa Reboots

In this opinion piece, Bono reflects on his experience in Africa, where he found that the relationship between business and civil society is improving, even leading to cooperation. "Civil society as a rule sees business as, well, a little uncivil. Business tends to see activists as, well, a little too active. But in Africa, at least from what I've just seen, this is starting to change. The energy of these opposing forces coming together is filling offices, boardrooms and bars. The reason is that both these groups — the private sector and civil society — see poor governance as the biggest obstacle they face. So they are working together on redefining the rules of the African game," he notes. It also shortly addresses the role of international activism. More information can be found ! [here](#).

OurKingdom, 15 June 2010, by Tom Bannister

This article starts off by looking at the UK and the call made by David Cameron for a "Big Society," referring to an expanded role for civil society. However, for civil society to grow, social capital needs to grow first, it argues. According to Bannister, "social capital is the glue that binds society together," and something the UK is still missing. More information can be found [here](#).

TRENDS AND DEBATES

Trends and Debates focuses on academic publications on civil society issues that are (freely) available online.

Making good society

Carnegie UK Trust, March 2010, by the Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in the UK and Ireland

This report explores how civil society can contribute to the growth of a more civil economy; a rapid and just transition to a low carbon economy; the democratisation of media ownership and content; and a growing participatory and deliberative democracy. It finds that civil society “has been pushed to the margins in key areas including politics, finance and the media” and argues that this must change. It is based on the UK and Ireland, but findings are valid for other contexts as well. More information can be found [here](#).



Read also: [Global Civil Society: The role of UK civil society in a rapidly globalising world by Kumi Naidoo, Executive Director of Greenpeace International, March 2010.](#)

“Has civil society helped the poor? – A review of the roles and contributions of civil society to poverty reduction”

Brooks World Poverty Institute, BWPI Working Paper 114, March 2010, by Solava Ibrahim & David Hulme

This Working Paper analyzes civil society's achievements in terms of advocacy, policy change and service delivery to poverty reduction. Drawing on various case studies, “the paper explains the keys to success and reasons for failure of civil society organizations in tackling poverty reduction effectively.” It concludes by pointing out the challenges faced by civil society in the area of poverty reduction and presents recommendations on “what is still missing” for civil society to play a more effective role in poverty reduction.” The working paper can be found [here](#).

Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations

Volume 21, Number 1, March 2010

This international journal in the field of voluntary and nonprofit sector scholarships aims to support the exchange and to cross-fertilize “ideas and knowledge, while building of a common identity for the worldwide third-sector scholar community” (See editor's note). Volume 21, Number 1 is freely accessible online and includes various articles on civil society as well as on democracy. The journal can be found [here](#).

Building or Deconstructing Civil Society? In dialogue with policy makers, academics and practitioners

HIVOS, March 2010, by Marlieke Kieboom

On 23-24 March, the Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD, Uppsala University), in cooperation with the Swedish International Development Cooperative Agency (Sida) hosted the conference “Power to the People? (Con-)Tested Civil Society in Search of Democracy.” During this conference, Marlieke Kieboom interviewed several participants regarding their views on the role of civil society and grassroots organizations, and their need for financial support. More information can be found [here](#).

Read also the related article by the same author: [How Civil is Civil Society? Reflections upon conference in Uppsala, March 2010.](#)

For the outcome document (only available late 2010), click [here](#).

Civil Society: A Missing Link in Health Systems

Transparency + Accountability Program (TAP), 29 March 2010

On 29 March, a seminar took place in Washington DC, featuring civil society's efforts and best practices in

improving health systems. It also explored ways in which CSOs can reinforce their work to strengthen health systems. Presentations made at the seminar are available [online](#).

International Journal of Civil Society Law

Volume VIII, Issue II, April 2010

This issue of the International Journal of Civil Society Law addresses various issues, including charitable giving; regulation of the charitable sector; the rights of religious organizations; and the need for a separate non-profit code. The journal can be found [here](#).

CSOs AND THE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM

This section includes statements and position papers from civil society regarding multilateralism and covers differing views on the relation between multilateral institutions and civil society organizations.

Making the International Monetary Fund Accountable to Human Rights

The Huffington Post, 23 April, by Radhika Balakrishnan and James Heintz

In this article it is argued that the policies set by the IMF be scrutinized by international human rights standards. It notes that the IMF is hardly concerned with human rights. However, considering that the IMF is officially part of the United Nations system, for which human rights do count and that UN Member States are required to contribute to international cooperation in the full realization of human rights, the authors criticize the IMF for not routinely considering whether the conditionalities it attaches to loans may themselves obstruct the efforts of governments to meet their basic human rights obligations. More information available [here](#).

Read also [Why Human Rights are Indispensable to Financial Regulation](#) (29 March) by the same authors.

Reflecting on Our Spaces at the CSW

Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), April 2010, by Margot Baruch & Keely Swan

Baruch and Swam critically reflect on the 54th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and particularly on the role of civil society during this session. They highlight that sharing best practices, analyzing challenges and strategizing a path forward beyond the status-quo were the ways in which this session of the CSW was most successful. However, regarding civil society's proliferation, they warn that women's human rights activists were too focussed on organizing events and panels for "awareness-raising" purposes, rather than for pushing the agenda forward. The article can be found [here](#).

Civil Society Development Forum 2010 – outcome document

CoNGO, Outcome Document, May 2010

On 4 – 5 May, the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) held the New York Component of its Civil Society Development Forum (CSDF) 2010, focussing on the theme "Women's Human Rights and Development: Inclusion, Participation, and Equality." The forum addressed the position of women in relation to the financial and economic crisis, legal and institutional mechanisms; sustainable development; decent work; migration; gender discrimination; and health and reproductive rights. The outcome document of the CSDF concludes that "only under conditions of just and democratic governance within a holistic human rights framework, recognizing fully women's human rights and development via inclusion, participation and equality! , will their realization be ensured." The document can be found [here](#).

FIELD workshop on international decision making following Copenhagen

Foundation of International Environment Law and Development (FIELD), Summary Report, April 2010

FIELD held a workshop on international decision making following Copenhagen on 24-25 March. The workshop, which brought together representatives of governments, research institutes, NGOs, academia and media, was held under the Chatham House Rule of non-attribution. Participants identified approaches used in other UN negotiations that might be of assistance in the current climate change negotiations and considered a

range of other issues, such as the role of COP decisions. The report can be found [here](#).

STOP LAND GRABBING NOW!! Say NO to the principles of “responsible” agro-enterprise investment promoted by the World Bank

Food Crisis and the Global Land Grab, Civil Society Statement, 22 April 2010

Following the World Bank’s promotion of seven principles for socially acceptable land grabbing, civil society launched a statement which argues that no principles can justify land grabbing. It calls for the implementation of genuine agrarian reform; support to agro-ecological peasants, smallholder farming, fishing and pastoralism; overhaul of farm and trade policies to embrace food sovereignty and support local and regional markets; and promotion of community-oriented food and farming systems hinged on local people’s control over land, water and biodiversity. The statement can be found [here](#).

Research and Analysis

This section brings forward new research reports produced by civil society organizations themselves that address global issues.

Women on the Front Lines of Health Care: State of the World’s Mothers 2010

Save the Children, May 2010

This year’s State of the World’s Mothers focuses on women’s limited and often unequal access to basic health care as a result of the current shortage of 4.3 million health workers. This shortage has detrimental effects on women’s reproductive health and on efforts to address maternal and child mortality. The report in particular calls for more female health workers, and provides good practice case studies of countries that have deployed more women within the health sector. It further identifies affordable and effective strategies and solutions to save lives. The report can be accessed [here](#).

The State of the World’s Human Rights

Amnesty International, 27 May 2010

Documenting abuses in 159 countries, The State of the World’s Human Rights warns that 2009 was a year in which accountability and effective justice seemed a remote ideal for many, as people’s lives continued to be torn apart by repression, violence, discrimination, power plays and political stalemates. From a more positive angle, it also demonstrates the courage of the wider human rights movement, which continues to fight for real justice, and notes that consequently it has become harder for perpetrators of the worst crimes to feel confident that they will escape justice.” More information can be found [here](#).

Irregular Migration, Migrant Smuggling and Human Rights: Towards Coherence

International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2010

This report examines the political dilemma that surrounds the issue of irregular migration. It highlights the often xenophobic rhetoric that States maintain on the issue and notes that criminalizing irregular migration is not in fact in the real interest of governments as migration can bring many benefits. As long as wealth and economic opportunities are unequally distributed and that environmental and other forms of insecurity persist, migration will continue to occur, the report adds, something governments need to realize and should make their point of departure when designing new policies. ” More information can be found [here](#).

Her mile: Women’s rights and access to land – the last stretch of road to eradicate hunger

ActionAid, March 2010

This publication argues that “women’s rights to land and natural resources are the missing link in the analysis of the food crisis and women’s empowerment is the factor on which donors have less invested



in their response to the increasing number of hungry and malnourished people." More information can be found [here](#).

IDEAS in ACTION: For Land Rights Advocacy

Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC)

This publication includes various articles on a range of advocacy themes that may be of practical interest to those engaged in enhancing the poor's access to land. To read the report click [here](#).