

The Harare Declaration

Challenging Relationships: Redressing the power imbalances between Northern and Southern NGOs

The Harare declaration was produced at a conference held in Harare 27-29th July 1999, that brought together representatives from 20 African NGOs from Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Southern Sudan and Zimbabwe. These NGOs have been involved in programmes run by Transform for the last 3 years. The purpose of the conference was to reflect critically on development relationships.

The conference took as a starting point that many relationships between NNGOs and SNGOs are parent - child relationships, and that the rhetoric of partnerships has done little to redress this power relationship. Attempts at capacity building by Northern NGOs often reinforce this power relationship rather than re-dress the balance.

HARARE DECLARATION ON DEVELOPMENT RELATIONSHIPS

Southern and Northern NGOs have been working together for a long time. There is dissatisfaction arising from the existing relationships and the aid chain. This includes the way in which relationships are started, funds are disbursed, the needs for over elaborate processes of accountability to funders and in general hidden agendas. Southern NGOs are at different positions of recognising how counterproductive these relationships are. While the South is grappling with these issues, Northern NGOs are also at various stages of accepting the need to engage in a discussion of these issues. Representatives from twenty NGOs in Eastern and Southern Africa and some representatives of their northern partners met in Harare from the 27th – 29th July, 1998 to discuss these relationships. This declaration is the outcome of the intensive conference deliberations.

We, the delegates, declare that;

- the time is ripe for Southern NGOs to take control of the development agenda in their own countries.
- change in development relationships is both necessary and inevitable.
- relationships should be based on mutual transparency and accountability .
- there should be effective and meaningful dialogue between Southern and Northern NGOs.

Southern NGOs should

- be clear and confident of their social mandate, vision, mission and values .
- become more than implementing agencies of Northern NGOs
- be assertive, self-determining and should value their contribution to society
- move beyond provision of basic needs and take a more active role in promoting civic rights and social change
- broaden their financial and support base and aim at self-sufficiency and sustainability
- become more questioning, critical and demand accountability of their northern partners to southern NGOs and moral accountability to southern NGOs' constituencies.
- become more questioning and critical of themselves and more accountable to their stakeholders
- form coalitions and networks for lobbying, advocacy and for sharing experiences

Northern NGOs should

- recognise the legitimacy and autonomy of southern NGOs and stop compromising the southern NGOs' agenda.
- not masquerade as southern NGOs, and be clear of the roles of their Field Offices.

- be open about their policies, structures, functions and funding.
- be prepared to work in local languages, respect and appreciate the culture, the environment and ways of working of their southern partners.
- include southern partners in the development of their policies, structures and procedures.
- be accountable to their southern partners.
- develop a wider range of flexible funding mechanisms that do not disempower their southern partners.
- work together with SNGOs to design appropriate strategies for organisational sustainability of SNGOs
- build their own capacities based on lessons learnt and the experiences drawn from their southern partners.

Achieving this will require significant structural and cultural changes in the way Southern and Northern NGOs work and view themselves and each other. It is imperative that we set new quality standards for both partners based on this new relationship.