



INVITATION

Contemplating Civil Society Building

A reflection series, 5 sessions over 2010/ 2011

Civil society has become a coin of worldwide circulation, usually referred to in an unequivocally positive sense by those who strive for social change. Once hailed as a magic bullet for development, a sword for democratization and a shield against the excesses of power, the transformative power of civil society is increasingly being questioned. After two decades of civil society promotion, how many improvements have really been made? When trying to answer this question, it is important to address another question: How do different development actors envisage social change through civil society conceptually and how do interventions play out in practice?

Based on these questions, HIVOS and PSO present five learning and reflection sessions.

‘Hot issues’ in global Civil Society building debates:

- **Sessions 1 and 2:** **Civil society building and theories of change**
- **Session 3:** **Understanding social movements**
- **Session 4:** **Civil society versus political society?**
- **Session 5:** **Concluding session on civil society support, theory and practice**

For details on planning and content of these sessions, please read more on the next page

Practical information

What: Reflection series on Civil Society building (5 sessions)
For whom: PSO members and development practitioners
When: 23 March, 20 April, 9 June, 4 November 2010 and January 2011 (date to be determined)
Registration: aanmelding@pso.nl
Information: For more information, please contact Johan te Velde velde@pso.nl

Sessions 1 and 2: Civil society building and theories of change

23 March and 28 May 2010

Social change is a complex process. Its course and outcomes depend on many different forces, actors and contexts. But how do we actually envisage processes of change through civil society promotion, especially in relation to programme interventions or partner support? In this workshop, aimed at senior staff of PSO member organisations, participants will develop a shared understanding about what theories of change are, explore assumptions on how change happens, and discuss implications for practices in civil society strengthening. The workshop will be facilitated by Rosalind Eyben and Katy Oswald from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS).

Organised by: PSO

Facilitated by: IDS

Read the [report](#)**Session 3: Understanding social movements**

9 June 2010

Social movements figure prominently as actors of social change. Their structure and potential make them both an inspiring and complex target for support. Questions addressed during this session are: How do social movements work? How do they evolve? And what are the do's and don'ts of supporting them? The Institute of Social Studies (ISS) will facilitate this learning and reflection day on the phenomenon of social movements, based on recent findings from theory and practice. Hivos will present case studies.

Organised by: PSO-HIVOS and facilitated by: ISS

Read the [report](#)**Session 4: Civil society versus political society?**

4 November 2010

The role of civil society in development processes is commonly framed in relation to the state. This obscures the political role that civil society can play and often indeed plays in societal change processes. Moreover, it obscures the importance of 'political society', defined as a sphere of actors and institutions between the state and civil society. Political society typically includes political parties and affiliated organizations. In processes of societal transformation, actors and agents of social change migrate across these two spheres. How do these dynamics work? And what are the implications for civil society support?

Organised by: PSO-HIVOS

Session 5: Concluding session on civil society support, theory and practice

January 2011

In this final session, different aspects of the preceding sessions are revisited. What is the relation between supporting civil society, the workings of social movements and political spheres of influence? This inspiring session will go back to the idea that civil society support is based on theories of change. These theories are based on world views on how change happens, which, in turn, leads to different policies and practices. The final session will deal with sometimes quite philosophical, but also very practical issues.

Organised by: PSO-HIVOS