Policy Paper

The Role of Citizens in Development

Human beings are not only the most important means of social development, they are also its profoundest end. Being a fine piece of capital is not the most exalted state that can happen to a human being.
Amartya Sen, 1998 (Human Development and Financial Conservatism)

What do we mean when we talk about ‘development’? There are many different concepts and understanding of the term ‘development’, and equally many different dimensions to ‘development’. In general however, the term ‘development’ is still largely referred to in a paternalistic and rather charity-based approach, implying that the rich Western world should help the poor Global South develop. In current times of global financial, environmental and socio-political turmoil, this model can no longer hold. The division of the world into a rich North and a poor, aid-receiving South has changed – the majority of poor people now live in Middle Income Countries; Cyprus has just become the 5th EU Member State to apply for financial assistance from the ‘troika’ – the EC, ECB and IMF; and the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are becoming increasingly important aid donors and re-shape the development discourse. Instead of following the ‘traditional’ concept of development, CYINDEP supports the position of the CONCORD Development Awareness Raising and Education Forum (DARE) that rejects the vertical concept of development and instead suggests a horizontal model, based on a shared human responsibility, based on the thinking of professor Ananta Kumar Giri (Madras Institute of Development Studies):

There is a need to rethink development as an initiative in self-development on the part of both the subjects and the objects of development, and ethics not only as an engagement in care of the other but also as an engagement in care off the self. [...] Development [is] a shared human responsibility, and [...] a shared human possibility.¹

If we look at development as a shared responsibility, it implies that all human beings share this responsibility and are required to take action towards positive and lasting change. By engaging citizens in an active global learning process, they will:

move from basic awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues to personal involvement and informed actions

develop a critical understanding of the global interdependencies and of their own role, responsibilities and lifestyles in relation to a globalised society

be encouraged to participate in world-wide poverty eradication, and the fight against social exclusion by taking responsible and informed actions

promote values such as solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation

foster positive attitudes towards diversity, the respect for human rights, and commitment to social justice and equity

Engaging citizens needs to go beyond engaging the civil society organisations that are already active. In order to achieve social change, the wider public needs to be engaged, the average citizens need to find their own space and role in public debates and the development discourse, as well as in social movements and grassroots initiatives. CYINDEP supports the movement towards a global civil society, which is expressed through shared concerns and visions for a more just and sustainable world.

CYINDEP reaffirms its commitment to the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness, some of which emphasise specifically the engagement of citizens in development:

- (1) CSOs are effective as development actors when they develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people;
- (3) CSOs are effective as development actors when they support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalised;
- (8) CSOs are effective as development actors when they collaborate to realize sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalised populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

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2 CYINDEP supports the CONCORD DARE Forum Definition of Development Education as “an active learning process, founded on values of solidarity, equality, inclusion and co-operation. It enables people to move from basic awareness of international development priorities and sustainable human development, through understanding of the causes and effects of global issues to personal involvement and informed actions. Development Education fosters the full participation of all citizens in world-wide poverty eradication, and the fight against social exclusion. It seeks to influence more just and sustainable economic, social, environmental, human rights based national and international policies.”

The active participation of citizens in the development discourse also contributes to a shift of paradigms – towards a stronger emphasis on the Human Rights Based Approach to Development, to the principles of Development Effectiveness, as well as to greater Policy Coherence for Development. As illustrated very visually by the Irish 5:50:500 Development Education Resource, development aid by non-governmental agencies over the past 10 years has amounted to at least $5 billion; official development assistance (ODA) from governments has amounted to an average of $50 billion per year; but each year over the past 10 years, the developing world loses and average of $500 billion as a result of the current unjust international economic system. This figure reaffirms the urgent need for greater policy coherence to not undermine the efforts of the development agencies and to keep the focus on the Millennium Development Goals; the alleviation of global poverty and inequalities. Citizens can contribute by mobilizing the public, and thus advocating for policy changes at national as well as European level.

The following diagram by the CONCORD DARE Forum illustrates how Development Education and Awareness Raising actions contribute to Development Effectiveness, promote a Human Rights Based Approach as well as greater Policy Coherence for Development:

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4 http://www.developmenteducation.ie/5-50-500/
**Recommendations:**

**CYINDEP calls on Cypriot civil society to:**

- empower citizens to develop a critical understanding of global interdependencies and of their own role and responsibilities in bringing about social change;
- base their activities on universalistic values such as humanism, solidarity, equality and social justice and not undermine these values by contradicting messages serving short-term goals;
- critically analyse and encourage public debate about policies undermining the development focus of global poverty alleviation;
- implement a sustainable development policy within their own organisation by recognising and challenging power inequalities, consumption patterns and by respecting the shared responsibility to safeguarding our planet;
- mainstream a Human Rights Based Approach to development within their own organisation by ensuring a participatory and transformative learning environment that aims at bringing about social change.

**CYINDEP calls on decision-makers to:**

- recognise the added value that citizens and civil society bring to the development discourse and towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- provide citizens with the necessary space and institutional support to participate in the public discourse on development and a new development framework;
- embrace the *Written Declaration of the European Parliament on Development Education and Active Global Citizenship* and actively support development education activities on local and European level.