

Focus :

THE ROLE OF ACTORS

ROUNDTABLE

[RA4]

Grand Auditorium
Palais Brongniart

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WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AHEAD FOR NGOs IN AN EVOLVING DEVELOPMENT SECTOR?

MAIN FINDINGS

The development sector is evolving and presenting new challenges. Among those outlined that particularly stand out are the legislative framework, the emergence of civil society in countries in the Global South and the stabilising of governments, forcing NGOs to adapt. NGOs must therefore learn to collaborate more with stakeholders in the South in order to optimise work carried out on the ground. Key elements of these transformations include transferring skills and creating networks and partnerships.

SPEAKERS

Tom Arnold

CEO, Concern Worldwide

Benoît Miribel

President, Action contre la faim / Director
General, Fondation Mérieux

Frédéric Roussel

Co-founder, ACTED / Founder, Convergences 2015

MODERATOR

Julie Mandoyan

Journalist-Researcher, The Global Journal

SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

The Paris Declaration

Tom Arnold begins by numbering certain new challenges that NGOs must face. Firstly, he speaks about the fact that the current situation means that more and more different stakeholders need to work together, something which is encouraged by governments. Therefore, NGOs have to find new partnership models; they must also adapt their work to the situation of the country they find themselves in and must learn to collaborate to a greater degree with civil society, government services, young people, etc., since they know the area better and can do more with fewer means.

Benoît Miribel presents an extra challenge: when an emergency occurs, what can be done to ensure that societies are able to detach themselves from humanitarian aid afterwards? The key is to anticipate trigger factors, for example water sanitation. This is because it is difficult to make people aware of the deeper rooted issues and to mobilise money when there is no emergency and for reasons that are not clearly visible. According to Benoît Miribel, another element seems to pose a problem: the many audits that have been imposed on NGOs since the 2005 Declaration of Paris, which slow down operations. On this point, he highlights that Action Contre la Faim undergoes three to four audits per week which are carried out between the headquarters and the fieldwork – much higher than the average for businesses.

Frédéric Roussel points out that these audits make up 40% of the work of the headquarters. He deplores excessive checks on organisations and a system which is too bureaucratic and which is tending towards becoming more rigid. Most importantly of all, resources allocated to ensuring conformity are resources which then do not go towards programme effectiveness.

The principle of ownership within the Paris Declaration

Benoît Miribel gives the example of nutrition. Experts on this subject in Africa come together, develop solutions together and civil society becomes active on the topic. At that point, Action contre la Faim is present in order

to provide a different approach and to share information in order to implement programmes in the field.

For **Frédéric Roussel**, the notion of ownership allows one to move away from vertical ways of working (whereby an operator decides something and will make it work from above), and move towards a convergence way of working (consisting of a web of partnerships, civil society involvement and skilled resources coming from different horizons). This notion is a particularly large challenge which will shake up the way work is done, particularly among emergency and post-emergency NGOs.

Medium-term NGO adaptation (5-10 years)

For **Frédéric Roussel**, any organisation which does not put in place a strong bureaucratic strategy (expenditure checks, etc.) will not be able to survive in the medium term. This has of course been the reason why many NGOs have failed in recent years.

Benoît Miribel speaks about the difficult communication among NGOs. Is the great diversity of NGOs a wealth or an obstacle? There is an overabundance of means in some places while in other countries there are considerable problems in reaching the beneficiaries of aid.

Tom Arnold adds that a number of countries, in Africa for example, are becoming more stable and are developing their own development plans, which is a good thing.

NGO funding

Tom Arnold intervenes by saying that the question of funding is a challenge which will probably determine which type of structure will manage to maintain itself and which will not. New types of partnerships must be explored along with the private sector, something which is not easy.

Frédéric Roussel believes that it is a fanciful idea to think that private funding could play a significant role, possibly with the exception of foundations, above all in North America. On the other hand, funding standards, which are mainly led by the Western world, could allow some leeway for funding from the East to lead the way.

REPORTER

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MORE ON THIS TOPIC

- Paris Declaration: www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm