

NGOs, CIVIC EDUCATION AND THE NURTURING OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL ORDER: EVIDENCE FROM ZAMBIA

Alex Mwamba Ng'oma
University of Zambia

Abstract

In the post-Cold War World Order, democracy has emerged as a political system sans frontières. In this milieu, NGOs have, in turn, emerged as the mid-wives of transition politics, promoting the political change of countries from authoritarian rule to various forms of democratic governance. This article uses secondary data to document the civic education programmes, campaigns and activities that three indigenous Zambian NGOs have undertaken in support of democratisation in Zambia. The evidence collected seems to indicate that the three NGOs are, indeed, not NGO-pretenders but rather genuine vehicles for nurturing democracy and good governance in the country.

Keywords: NGOs, Civic Education, Democracy, Democratic Political Order, Zambia

Introduction

In the post-cold war world order, democracy has emerged as a political system *sans frontières*. From the Republic of South Africa to Siberia, and from Alaska to Australia, democracy is now regarded as the only game left in town (Democracy Report, 2020; Fukuyama, 2006; Diamond, 1994; Huntington, 1991). Equally, in international relations, democracy is regarded as 'a universal value' (Global Barometer, 1968: 1). This explains, in part, why the term democracy now circulates like a debased currency in the political marketplace (Schmitter and Karl, 1991). Political thinkers of various persuasions tend to appropriate it as the only befitting label for use in descriptions of globally preferred political systems.

In the rich academic literature on post-Cold War democratisation, much ink has been spilt in praise of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the work they do in society (Dorman, 2004; Mercer, 2002; Dicklitch, 1998; Fisher, 1998; Silliman and Noble, 1998; Putnam, 1993; Clark, 1991; Fowler, 1991). Non Governmental Organisations are often portrayed as the midwives of transition politics, or simply as the key agents of democratisation. Their perceived role in processes of democratisation is believed to be that of initiating the citizens of formerly autocratic societies into a liberal democratic culture hitherto unknown to them.

The optimism about the perceived positive role of NGOs in processes of democratisation is concisely summarised by Bratton *et al.*, (1999: 810) who assert that:

Although State agencies responsible for education (in the newly democratising nations) retain some responsibility for nurturing citizenship, the task of inducing a culture of democracy falls mainly on non-governmental institutions (NGOs), particularly those that regard themselves as guardians of public virtue ...

This article is an attempt to collect and document evidence of the contributions of NGOs to democratisation, using the Republic of Zambia, (hereafter referred to simply as Zambia), as a case study. In so doing, the article focuses on the civic education programmes, campaigns and activities conducted by NGOs in Zambia. According to the Commonwealth Foundation (1996), an NGO is a legal entity that is formed voluntarily, owned privately, and functions independently of direct State control and influence. In Zambia, an NGO is defined more comprehensively as:

... a private, voluntary grouping of individuals, or associations - whether corporate or incorporated, not established or operated for profit, for partisan politics, or any commercial purposes, who or which have organised themselves for the promotion of civic education, advocacy, human rights protection, social welfare development, charity, research or other activity or programme, for the benefit or interest of the public, through resources mobilised from sources within or outside Zambia (NGO Act of 2009).

Zambia has a large NGO population. According to Geloo (2004), there were about 600 registered NGOs in Zambia in 2004. A year later, Pact Zambia (2005) estimated that the number of NGOs registered in Zambia had risen to 1000. In 2006, the records held at the Office of the Registrar of Societies (RS) put the number of NGOs registered in Zambia at 1337. At present, there does not seem to exist any official determination of the number of NGOs operating in Zambia.

As stated above, data from three indigenous Zambian NGOs was used to write this article. These are: the Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP), Women for Change (WfC), and the Southern Africa Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (SACCORD). These NGOs have similar characteristics: they are all voluntary, civic, non-partisan, non-profit making, donor-funded, and are indigenously Zambian. Furthermore, the three NGOs are all regarded as the front-runners in the protection and promotion of democracy, good governance and the protection of human rights in Zambia (Wellard and Copestake, 1993). The mission statements of the three NGOs also indicate that their duties, among other things, include to conduct civic education programmes, campaigns and activities as their contribution to democratisation in Zambia (FODEP, 2018; SACCORD, 2015; WfC, 2013). This, then, can be taken as the rationale for their existence.

In this milieu, the key question to ask is whether or not the three NGOs really live up to the stipulations of their mission statements. In other words, what specific civic education programmes, campaigns and activities have FODEP, SACCORD and WfC conducted, and continue to conduct in Zambia's democratic transition and consolidation processes, since their inception? What do their respective score cards actually say about their work? These are, indeed, cardinal questions to ask in an attempt to establish the reality surrounding the role, the work and the performance of NGOs in processes of democratisation.

Theoretical Considerations

What is known as the ‘civil society approach’ postulates that, ‘while NGOs are part of civil society, they also strengthen it through their programmes, campaigns and activities, and thereby support the democratic process’ (Mercer, 2002:7). From this standpoint, NGOs are believed to strengthen civil society through their various programmes, campaigns and activities.

The ‘civil society approach’ contends, further that a strong and vibrant civil society is necessary for the survival and consolidation of democracy (Fisher, 1998). In this sense, NGOs, which are a component of civil society, are ‘regarded as steps towards organisational pluralism’ (Bebbington, 1993: 205). That is to say, NGOs are believed to ‘pluralise and, therefore, strengthen the institutional arena’ (Mercer, 2000: 8). This, they are believed to do, by bringing more actors into the political arena. To say the same thing differently, NGOs are believed to ‘expand the number and range of voices addressing government’ (Silliman and Noble, 1998: 306). Such voices could be those of labour movements, women’s movements, students’ movements, youth movements, movements of the disabled, the Church, and so on.

Secondly, NGOs are regarded as vehicles for alternative development and sustainable development (Fisher, 1998). The term “development” is hereby used in its broadest sense, to encompass social, political and economic dimensions. Through the micro-credit schemes they run, for example, NGOs draw the poor into the mainstream economic system from which they, otherwise, are excluded by discriminatory, profit-oriented, bank lending policies.

In this light, Clifford (2005: 3) praises NGOs as ‘principled’ actors in a global system of nation-states which, ‘according to him, “is empty of morals.” By holding this view, Clifford is possibly referring to the attention that NGOs often pay to victims of political and economic exclusion within their respective societies (Mercer, 2002, Hammond, 2001). Christopher Collier renders support to Clifford’s view when he asserts that NGOs assist the victims of political and economic exclusion by drawing the attention of their respective governments to their plight (Pearce, undated).

Thirdly, NGOs are believed to be watchdogs for the people’s civil and political liberties (Fisher, 1998). Human rights organisations, such as *Human Rights Watch* (HRW), Amnesty International (AI), and Transparency International (TI), despite their own limitations, are known to censure governments that abuse human rights world wide. Bebbington (1997: 44) possibly has this in mind when he asserts that NGOs are vehicles for monitoring both the use and the misuse of ‘State power’ by public officials.

Fourthly, NGOs are regarded as promoters of bottom-up democratisation (Clark, 1991; Ndegwa, 1996). Through the civic educational programmes, campaigns and activities that they conduct, NGOs sensitise the masses, especially the marginalised rural poor, to claim their political space and to get involved in the political processes of their respective countries. In other words, NGOs prepare ‘the poorer sections of society for participation and representation in policy-making’ (Mufune, Mwansa and Siamwiza, 1996: 21). In times of political transition, NGOs mobilise ‘popular

pressure for political change' especially from autocratic rule to democracy (Diamond, 1994: 5).

Fifthly, NGOs are believed to mobilise other non-profit organisations into being of greater service to the communities in which they are located (Fisher, 1998). They are believed to achieve this through the various networks that they form as well as through the information they share on what needs to be done with and for the poor and the marginalised. To borrow the words of one commentator, international NGOs:

using new technologies, leap borders to contact others abroad... and adopt distant causes, volunteering aid, publicising injustices, and pressuring foes ultimately empowering the have-nots... (Hammond, 2001: 105).

Sixth, NGOs are regarded as vehicles for the resolution of political conflict (SACCORD, 2006). This they do by providing the conflicting parties (nations, political parties, etc) with a platform for negotiation.

Finally, NGOs, such as the Carter Center (CC) and the Electoral Institute of South Africa (EISA), claim, in their mission statements that they exist, among other things, to monitor national elections, especially in the emerging democracies of the world. In so doing, they are believed to add credibility to the electoral processes of those countries (FODEP, 2006).

Nonetheless, NGOs are not universally held in high esteem. Contrary to the accolades showered upon them by their defenders, there are theorists who look down upon them. Such theorists assert that the contribution of NGOs to democracy and democratisation has been exaggerated (Clark, 1998; Farrington and Lewis, eds., 1993; Bebbington and Farrington, 1993; Fowler, 1991). In view of these critics, 'the exact role and procedures of NGOs' are not yet well understood (Mercer, 2002: 2).

In the denigration of the role of NGOs, Dorman (1987: 1) is of the view that the discourse on NGOs is still in its infancy and is dominated by 'normative assumptions rather than empirical evidence.' This assumption finds further support in Tvedt's (1998)s claim that the assumptions made about NGOs and their activities are largely Western-centric. For this reason, Tvedt (1998) suggests that the Western-centric assumptions made on NGOs should not be extended to their counterparts of the south which, in his view, are horses of another colour. Similarly, Mercer (2002) admonishes NGO-sympathisers to refrain from using the plethora of NGOs in the emerging democracies as a pointer of the strength and effectiveness of these organisations (Fisher, 1998).

In this rebuttal, furthermore, Clarke (1998) radically believes that strengthening civil society, the way NGOs are believed to do, merely undermines rather than promoting democratic development. Clarke (1998) sees this paradox coming together when, in his view, overzealous elements of civil society, operating under the guise of NGOs, impose radically biased demands on their governments. This, in turn, argues Clare (1998), makes it difficult for the bureaucrats to balance the diverse demands of various interest groups in society. Edwards and Hulme (1996: 1) seem to drive the final nail into the coffin of the NGOs when they assert, in their rebuttal, that the findings of "internal evaluations (of NGO activities) are rarely released

(to the members of the general public), and what is released often comes closer to propaganda rather than rigorous assessment.’

Civic Education Conducted by FODEP, SACCORD and WfC

According to the official documents and publications of FODEP, SACCORD and WfC, civic education is the vehicle through which the three NGOs execute their various programmes, campaigns and activities (FODEP, 2006; FODEP, 2017; SACCORD 2007; SACCORD, 2019; WfC undated; WfC, 2013; WfC, 2018). Even the websites of the three NGOs respectively assert also that FODEP, SACCORD and the WfC have, since their inception, conducted several civic education programmes, campaigns and activities, as their contribution to democracy and democratisation in Zambia.

Civic education, referred to also as democracy education, or citizenship education (Brahm, 2006), is a kind of education that is intended to cultivate the ideals, habits, values, and virtues that are necessary for the preservation and flourishing of a given political order (Bratton, 1999; Lipset, 1997). In a democratic dispensation, civic education is conducted to serve two main purposes. The first is to inculcate democratic patriotism in its participants, especially in liberal democracies where patriotic pride is, or can often be subordinated to individual rights and freedoms (Foster, 1997). The second one is to sensitise the majority of the citizens (whoever they happen to be) on the need to be tolerant to the minority in society (whoever they happen to be), thereby deterring what one commentator has insightfully described as ‘the tyranny of the majority against the minority,’ (Plato, cited in Sabine, 1945: 44).

Civic education often consists of four programmatic components. These are (Michie, 2001; Smelser and Baltes, eds., 2001):

- (a) *Inculcating civic knowledge*: the term ‘civic knowledge’ refers to the kind of knowledge that is concerned with understanding such things as the principles and practice of democracy, the importance of the rule of law in a nation, respect for human rights, gender equality, etc.
- (b) *Developing political skills*: political skills are the kind of skills that one needs in order to develop a convincing and pleasant public personality. Central to political skills is the ability to understand others, and to use that understanding to influence others to act in a certain way that one wants.
- (c) *Engendering participatory skills*: Participatory skills are the kind of skills that one needs in order to develop the kind of confidence that is required to knowledgeably take part in public affairs.
- (d) *Instilling civic dispositions*: Civic dispositions refer to possession of democratic values, such as tolerance for minorities, tolerance for dissenting views, respect for the rights and freedoms of others, and so on.

According to the official documents and publications of the three NGOs in this article, the founders of FODEP, SACCORD and the WfC were motivated to venture into civic education by the fact that Zambia had just embraced liberal democracy in 1991 (FODEP 2004; FODEP 2005; FODEP 2006; SACCORD 2006; SACCORD 2006;

SACCORD 2007; WfC 2001; WfC 2002; WfC 2003; WfC 2004). Their informed judgment was that many Zambians, naturally, needed to be made aware of the rules and principles, or simply the dos and the don'ts of this new political dispensation. That was how they designed their strategic plans to undertake various civic education programmes, campaigns and activities, as their contribution to democratisation in Zambia.

However, the founders of the three NGOs were also concerned that the 1991 voter turn-out of forty-five per cent was much lower than the sixty-five per cent voter turn-out of the election held in the preceding One-party era (FODEP, 2016; SACCORD, 2015; WfC, 2015). Thus, they hoped to boost voter turn-out in future elections by educating the masses on the need for them to become active participants in the political processes of their country.

The Civic Education Programmes, Campaigns and Activities Conducted by FODEP

In pursuance of its mission, FODEP set the following seven 'specific objectives' for itself (FODEP, 2017: 2):

- (a) To monitor all presidential, parliamentary and local government elections and to constantly monitor and lobby for the review of public and legal policies, particularly the electoral law and procedures; in order to ensure free and fair elections;
- (b) To conduct civic and voter education, so as to encourage informed and popular political participation at all levels of the electoral process;
- (c) To promote the evolution of a political culture based on civic responsibility of both the leaders and the citizens, at national and local levels, by instilling a spirit of accountability in all leaders at different levels of governance;
- (d) To promote public awareness of human rights and to ensure that all categories of human rights are respected and enforced;
- (e) To sustain popular commitment to democracy, through programmes of public education and information dissemination;
- (f) To foster in the citizens, a duty of participation in the day to day affairs of national and local government as well as taking part in community-based initiatives;
- (g) To speak out on issues that may threaten the democratic process, including the cross-cutting issues of HIV and AIDS, and the environmental and gender.

These objectives now govern, and explain as well, the behaviour and actions of the officials at FODEP, in their execution of the following four programmes (FODEP, 2016; FODEP, 2017; FODEP, 2019):

- (a) *Elections and Accountability Programmes*: FODEP's greatest contribution to Zambia's emerging democracy has been in the domain of election monitoring (FODEP, 2017). The purpose of election monitoring is to enhance confidence in the electoral process. Election monitors are able to attest whether or not elections are conducted in line with the stipulations of the nation's electoral law and also

whether or not elections meet the internationally set standards of free and fair elections (FODEP, 2016).

Foundation for Democratic Process has been able to monitor all the presidential, parliamentary, local government elections and by-elections that have taken place in Zambia since the country reverted to multipartyism in 1991 (FODEP, 2016). The organisation has also been able to monitor many of the national elections that have taken place in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Tanzania, Namibia, Congo DR, Kenya, and Malawi (FODEP, 2018).

Election monitoring, according to FODEP (2014), entails taking stock, in a non-partisan way, of all the various political activities taking place, firstly, in the pre-election period, secondly, on election day, and thirdly, in the immediate post-election period. In the pre-election period, FODEP's poll watchers (or election monitors) direct their attention more closely to issues such as: the electoral law; the Census of the national population (to determine the number of eligible voters); the delimitation exercise; factors surrounding the election date; the issuance of National Registration Cards (as the only form of identity required for registering as a voter and for actually voting); the entire process of voter registration; candidate nomination or adoption procedures; fairness of the prevailing political environment; media coverage of political parties; electoral campaigns; political corruption and all other forms of electoral fraud; the efficiency of the Electoral Commission of Zambia (the agency in-charge of running elections), and so on (FODEP, 2016; FODEP, [undated]).

On actual election day, FODEP places poll watchers at all the polling places (or polling stations). The poll watchers, who are trained by the organisation, in week-long workshops prior to their deployment, take note of all the proceedings at the polling places, including: the time the polling place is opened; the behaviour of both the electoral officials and the voters; electoral irregularities, if any; the time the polling station is closed; the counting of the votes; and the announcement of the election results (FODEP, 2016).

In the immediate post-election period, FODEP poll watchers pay particular attention to such things as the behaviour of the winning and the losing candidates and their supporters (FODEP, undated). The organisation, thereafter, issues a press statement, presenting its findings and pronouncing its verdict. The organisation also makes proposals or suggestions on how to improve on the electoral processes in the country generally.

In its early years, FODEP focused on the broader subject of democracy education (FODEP, 2000). In so doing, the organisation ran nationwide workshops in which it explained the main tenets of democracy to its participants. The workshop participants included the organisation's own staff and volunteers, members of political parties, elected officials, law enforcement officers, members of the clergy, school teachers and labour leaders. Nonetheless, a few years down the road, FODEP officials came to assume that many people had become acquainted with democracy and its tenets. As such, they shifted their focus to aspects of democratic consolidation, such as electoral law reforms and demanding

transparency and accountability from elected officials (FODEP, 2013). This aspect of FODEP's programmes, thus, appears to fulfill the organisation's stated objectives of monitoring 'all the presidential, parliamentary and local government elections,' providing 'voter education,' and sustaining 'popular commitment to democracy through public education and information dissemination' (FODEP, 2016: 8).

- (b) *Local Development and Civic Participation Programmes:* FODEP (2016) assumes that a vibrant opposition is necessary in a democracy, not only to offer the possibility of an alternative government but also to provide effective checks and balances to the government of the day and its policies and programmes. From this perspective, FODEP runs training workshops to strengthen opposition political parties by teaching their members how to utilise their human, financial and material resources more efficiently (FODEP, 2016).

Foundation for Democratic Process (2016) also assumes that democracy is not a spectator sport. To that effect, the organisation conducts several training workshops to sensitise the masses on the need for them to become active participants in the political processes of their country, at the national, regional, district, constituency and ward levels. The FODEP workshops have tended to attract elected officials (MPs and Councilors), as well as traditional rulers, to underscore the significance of their roles and responsibilities in national development in general and in the lives of the people they serve, in particular.

Beyond that, FODEP has endeavoured to encourage women to become more involved in the politics of Zambia (FODEP, 2017). According to the 1990 national census, only six per cent of Zambian women either held key positions or were involved in decision-making at influential levels despite the fact that women constituted the larger proportion of the country's population (FODEP, 2017). For example, in the national election held in 2006, only fifteen per cent of women candidates were elected to Parliament despite the fact that the majority of the registered voters were women. For this reason, gender issues, the difference between gender and sex roles, the social, cultural and traditional impediments to women's involvement in politics, the plight of the girl-child, as well as the need to protect women against domestic violence were some of the key issues taught by FODEP, in its workshops (FODEP, 2017).

By carrying out the various activities outlined above, FODEP fulfilled its stated objective of conducting civic education programmes, campaigns and activities in order to inculcate a culture of political participation in various sections of the members of society.

- (c) *Human Rights Education and Awareness Programmes:* FODEP conducts human rights education for newly elected public officials, such as MPs and Ward Councilors. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2003) defines human rights as norms or moral principles that are essential for the protection and maintenance of the dignity of individuals simply because they are human.

Other trainees include in FODEP's human rights education are traditional rulers, police officers, church leaders, and political cadres. The purpose of FODEP's workshops is to sensitise the participants on the need to respect and enhance human rights and freedoms as a way of promoting human dignity (FODEP, 2015). The trainees are taught such things as: 'What human rights are;' 'Why human rights are important;' 'The internationalisation of human rights' after WWII; 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;' 'The International Bill of Rights;' and 'Human Rights in Zambia' (FODEP, 2015: 30-36). This aspect of FODEP's activities may, thus, be regarded as evidence that the organisation has truly been involved in promoting awareness of human rights in Zambia.

However, a review of the organisation's human rights programme that was recently conducted by an independent consultant observed that FODEP's 'human rights programme had remained essentially the neglected component of the organisation's programme areas' (Anyangwe [undated]). This assertion appeared to be correct in the sense that FODEP largely talked about human rights in its workshops but practically did very little about human rights once the workshops were over.

- (d) *HIV/AIDS and Governance Programmes*: One unofficial estimate suggests that one in every five adult Zambians is infected with the HIV virus (UNAIDS and WHO, 2006). While disputes about such estimates abound, no disputes exist on the perceived impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic on Zambian society. The labour force had shrunk drastically, due to HIV and AIDS-related deaths. Furthermore, many children whose parents had succumbed to the scourge had become street children, especially in the capital city, Lusaka, and the mining towns of Ndola, Kitwe Chingola, Mufulira and Luanshya (FODEP, 2016).

The response of FODEP to the pandemic had been to integrate HIV and AIDS awareness into its governance and human rights education. Using leaflets, drama shows, concerts, radio and TV discussions and billboards, the organisation had been able to carry its message especially to the people in the squatter compounds of the country's cities. The organisation had also been involved in lobbying the government to formulate laws to criminalise the stigmatisation of HIV and AIDS victims, a vice that was rampant at many work places as well as in public places (FODEP, 2014). By undertaking these activities, FODEP was justified to assert, in its reports and on its website, that the organisation had accomplished its objective of contributing to bringing HIV and AIDS awareness to Zambian communities (FODEP, undated).

In a recent strategic review, FODEP stated that it had conducted successful radio and TV discussion programmes, regional political party debates and provincial discussions on electoral reforms (FODEP, 2017). However, Mulafulafu, a former FODEP president, lamented, in his speech commemorating his organisation's fifteenth anniversary, that 'FODEP had been very successful in two areas (only), Election Monitoring and Civic Education' (Mulafulafu, undated). This view supported Anyangwe's (undated) appraisal report that

FODEP's human rights programme 'had remained essentially the neglected component' of the organisation's programmes. Mulafulafu expressed sadness that FODEP was a donor-dependent organisation, adding that FODEP and other NGOs had lost their militancy and, only came alive at election time and vanished into thin air immediately the elections were over (Mulafulafu, undated). Mulafulafu was quick to point an accusing finger at the love for donor money, by 'NGO-pretenders,' a practice which, he said, was ubiquitous in Zambia, at election time.

The Civic Education Programmes, Campaigns and Activities Conducted by SACCORD

According to SACCORD (undated), SACCORD exists to pursue 'three core objectives', namely;

- (a) To promote peace, security and conflict resolution;
- (b) To foster an honest and just government; and
- (c) To broaden democratic participation.

Southern African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (SACCORD) stated objectives guide and explain the behaviour and actions of its staff in their execution of the following three programmes (see, e.g., SACCORD 2016; SACCORD 2017):

(a) *Peace, security and conflict management*: Under this programme, SACCORD attempted to raise political awareness among Zambian citizens. According to its website, SACCORD also advocated for appropriate legal reforms among the people of Southern Africa, in general, and of Zambia, in particular. The organisation's aim of undertaking these activities was to minimise conflict and, thereby, forge peace, unity and stability in the region.

In Zambia, for example, the Public Order Act which was enacted by the Legislative Council of the colonial administration in 1955, was bequeathed to Zambia at the dawn of political independence nine years later in 1964. In the post-independence era, the Public Order Act has, according to SACCORD (2017), been used by the authorities to stifle the activities of opposition political parties. Thus, following several complaints about the application of the Public Order Act, SACCORD conducted opinion surveys on it. Thereafter, the NGO organised several public meetings as forums at which the people of Zambia could discuss this contentious issue. The NGO led the way in campaigning and lobbying for the reform of the Public Order Act, in line with the people's resolutions at the consultative meetings. The reform of the Act was yet to happen, however, and SACCORD was, thus, justified in claiming that the organisation had contributed to the promotion of peace, unity, harmony and security at home and abroad (SACCORD, 2018).

(b) *Fostering an honest, responsible, transparent and just government*: Under this programme, SACCORD participated in the fight against corruption in high places, both at home and in the whole of Southern Africa generally (SACCORD, undated). By so doing, the organisation contributed to fostering economic development. The NGO did this by, among other things, encouraging whistle-blowing as well as strengthening, through training their officials, the national and regional institutions that existed to combat the scourge (SACCORD, undated).

Furthermore, through this programme, SACCORD campaigned for the adherence to the rule of law, as a way of avoiding injustice and minimising conflict in society. The organisation also conducted training workshops involving ordinary citizens, elected officials and law enforcement officers, to deepen their awareness of the need to protect and enhance the respect for human rights (SACCORD, undated). Furthermore, the organisation lobbies the government for greater social responsibility, especially for the less privileged in society. In this light, SACCORD conducted an appraisal of the government's poverty reduction programmes in 2016, to ensure that the money set aside for the poor was, indeed, used accordingly.

By conducting these and other related activities, SACCORD believed, and genuinely so, that the organisation was truly key in the nation's efforts to create 'an honest and just government' (SACCORD, undated).

(c) *Broadening (political) participation*: Under this programme, SACCORD conducted democracy education, voter education, and human rights education involving ordinary citizens, elected officials, political party cadres and traditional rulers (SACCORD, 2010). The organisation also conducted training workshops to strengthen the organisational capacities of opposition political parties, so that they would be better placed to provide checks and balances to the government of the day.

Beyond that, SACCORD, like FODEP, runs workshops to heighten HIV and AIDS awareness, as well as to address various issues that engender the political and economic exclusion of women, the youth and the disabled from public affairs (SACCORD, 2010). The organisation further encouraged parliamentarians to work closely with, and to support, the care-givers for HIV and AIDS victims. It encouraged them to use government machinery to promote HIV and AIDS awareness, especially among the poor and illiterate.

Other activities that SACCORD had undertaken include: sensitisation of the electronic and print media, on the need to provide balanced election coverage; voter registration encouragement; election monitoring training and actual poll watching; capacity building for women who planned to enter political life, and information dissemination through various publications (SACCORD, 2016).

Additionally, SACCORD boasted of having succeeded in neutralising political tension, nationally and internationally, through its peace efforts, conflict resolution assignments and election monitoring activities (SACCORD, 2016). The organisation also pointed to inter-party alliances it had helped to create, as a

success story of how political parties could actually co-exist and work together harmoniously. The Zambian Government recognised and often consulted SACCORD on matters of peace and conflict resolution.

With regard to funding SACCORD's funders included: Embassies (Danish, American, Canadian); Friedrich Ebert Stiftung; USAID/Pact Zambia; Danish Church Aid; Humanistic Development Organisation; Zambia Election Fund; MS Zambia; African Alliance for Poverty Eradication; Diakonia; and HIVOs (SACCORD, 2016).

The Civic Education Programmes, Campaigns and Activities Conducted by WfC

According to its information packet, WfC existed to pursue the following eight strategic objectives (WfC, undated):

- (a) To promote and support gender sensitivity and human rights activism at community, institutional and national levels;
- (b) To enhance traditional rulers' knowledge of basic human rights and skills to manage their affairs in a democratic and gender-sensitive manner;
- (c) To build the livelihood capacities of rural communities in a gender-balanced manner;
- (d) To advocate for policies and practices that are gender-sensitive, just and effectively respond to the plight of the poor;
- (e) To initiate and enhance overall child and youth development interventions in all WfC operational areas;
- (f) To promote and support interventions aimed at preventing HIV and AIDS and enhancing quality of life for the infected and the affected, especially orphans;
- (g) To document and communicate WfC's experience in its core activities; and
- (h) To enhance the organisational capacity of the WfC.

As is the case with FODEP and SACCORD, WfC's objectives, in turn, guided the behaviour and actions of the organisation's officials in the following six 'core programmes' (WfC, 1998; WfC, 1999; WfC, 2000; WfC, 2001; WfC, 2002; WfC, 2014; WfC, 2019):

- (a) *Gender Analysis and Awareness Raising*: This programme is regarded as WfC's main line of business (WfC, 2014). The NGO's various campaigns and activities that constituted this programme are concentrated in the rural areas of three of Zambia's ten provinces, namely; Southern, Western and Central provinces. The activities in this programme are designed to 'challenge conventional attitudes, traditions and beliefs' that have conspired to consign poor, rural women to the peripheries of political and economic activity (WfC, 1918). By using civic education to raise gender awareness among the poor, rural women, WfC hopes to enable its programme participants to critically re-think their reality so that, with its help, they could devise strategies for self-improvement.

In '*Gender Analysis and Awareness Raising*,' the participants who attended the organisation's training workshops were taught many things, such as: being gender-sensitive and respecting people of both sexes; the differences between

sex roles and gender roles (so that there could be a balanced apportioning of domestic chores between wives and husbands); not tolerating domestic violence (many women in Zambia were beaten by their husbands and they allowed the beatings pass with impunity); the need to abandon the traditional requirement that dowry be paid by the man, as a precondition for marriage, (since dowry appeared to give some Zambian men the impression that they owned the women they married and could thus, do whatever they liked with them); reproductive rights and health for women; the realisation that it is illegal for a deceased man's relatives to grab from his surviving wife, the property he leaves behind (property grabbing); the need to reject outrightly, the practice, by some tribes, of sexually cleansing a woman, by an adult man chosen from the deceased's family, in the belief of permanently 'removing the dead man's ghost' from his surviving wife's life; and to read and write, for participants who are illiterate (WfC, 1995; WfC, 2018; WfC, 2019). These activities suggested that WfC had, indeed, endeavoured to promote gender-sensitivity in the rural areas where it operated and had also contributed to the national effort to contain the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

- (b) *Human Rights Education*: During its first nine years of business (1992-2001), WfC focused largely on fighting poverty, especially in the rural areas, as its contribution to fostering sustainable development in Zambia. However, in 2001, the organisation expanded its operations, to include 'human rights and democracy' education as a core feature of its programmes (WfC, 2001: 2).

Most of WfC's programmes, campaigns and activities were conducted in very remote places where there was no noticeable government influence. There was no government agency or office operating anywhere in such places; there was also no electricity and no running water. Women and girl-children who were responsible for drawing water for their families had to walk long distances in search of the commodity (WfC, 2017). There were also no health centers, no Courts of Law, no schools and no modern roads in these areas. The only authority that the people are aware of is that of their chief or village headperson. By the end of 2001, all the traditional leaders (in Zambia) had been reached, either personally or through their representatives. They signed declarations committing themselves to promote, uphold and protect the human rights of all their subjects, regardless of any social condition (WfC, 2001: 1).

The foregoing activities, taken together, seem to confirm WfC's claims that the organisation had made a significant contribution to the protection and enhancement of human rights in Zambia.

- (c) *Economic Empowerment and Cooperatives Development*: In Zambia, rural poverty was estimated to affect between eighty and ninety per cent of the population (WfC, 2018). Women for Change itself was a vigorous campaigner against poverty in the rural areas of the country. The NGO's assumption was that poverty did not only disempower its victims economically but it also led to their political exclusion (WfC, undated).

Women for Change had thus, embarked on teaching its workshop participants, productive ways of engaging in small-scale agricultural activities such as; animal raising (goats, pigs, cattle), crafts, small-scale trading, timber sawing, cooking-oil production, “vegetable gardening, bee-keeping, and fish-farming” (WfC, 2014: 2) The organisation made farming inputs available and implemented small-scale farming activities (WfC, 2015). It also assisted them to form Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and co-operatives. The latter serve, among other things, as conduits for fertiliser and seed loans (WfC, 2019) and also as agricultural marketing entities. Women for Change has also donated bicycles to the area associations, so that those in the leadership of the associations can use them to monitor the activities of their members (WfC, 2011). The participants in these programmes had formed neighborhood watches, to combat stock thefts and other related social vices.

Women for Change’s splendid fight against rural poverty had not gone unnoticed. In 1997, for example, the organisation’s documentary, *The Forgotten Community*, which was aired on the government-owned ZNBC television on 8 March 1997, won a UNDP award. The documentary highlighted WfC’s ‘struggle to eradicate poverty through equitable distribution of resources, focusing on five basic rights: water, food security, health, education and shelter’ (WfC, 1997: 1).

- (d) *Overall Rural Child and Youth Development*: Women for Change, as an organisation, had been very concerned with issues of children’s welfare in Zambia (WfC, 2017). As such, the NGO had mobilised people in its areas of operation, to build dormitories for local secondary schools, and houses for teachers (WfC, 2018). The NGO had also built training centers, so that children who graduate from the secondary schools which they supported could proceed to college in their localities (WfC, 2018).
- (e) *HIV and AIDS*: Like in all of its other programmes, WfC had been working closely with traditional rulers even in combating the HIV and AIDS pandemic in the remote areas of the country (WfC, undated). The traditional leaders were used to disseminate knowledge and to share experiences on how best to raise HIV and AIDS awareness, how best to arrest its proliferation in their villages and how best to work with families in providing health care for the victims of the scourge. Many chiefdoms engaged in outdated traditional and cultural practices, such as polygamy and sexual cleansing, which were believed to be fueling the HIV and AIDS pandemic (WfC, undated).
- (f) *Advocacy*: According to the WfC’s official records, the organisation also taught its participants how to engage in people-centered policy advocacy (WfC, 2016). People-centered advocacy takes various forms, such as: putting up resistance against the powers that be, whenever this is necessary; engaging the authorities concerned in dialogue; ‘rocking the boat’, so as to create or identify room for change in the system or in the institutions concerned; formulating strategies for

influencing policy changes, and seeking to scale national policy down to the local level where its impact was desired the most (WfC, 2016).

In terms of approach, the WfC used what it was described as ‘popular education methodologies (PEMs)’ (WfC, 2018: 1). In this approach, the organisation did not offer readily available prescriptions as solutions to social and economic challenges faced by its participants. To the contrary, it only created platforms on which the participants were encouraged to critically assess their reality and to understand that they ‘were their own heroes’ (WfC, 2018: 1), and they, thus, need to step up and took responsibility for their lives by formulating strategies that could lift them out of their quagmire.

At the very beginning of its operations, WfC was apprehensive about undertaking civic education. That was because of the ‘negative reactions by government officials who often interpreted it as politics’ (WfC, 1997: 8). Along the way, however, things changed positively; in 1997 alone, WfC conducted 40 workshops in which 10,251 participants were trained (WfC, 1997). The following year, 30,000 more participants underwent WfC civic education programmes, campaigns and activities (WfC, 1998).

The funders of WfC included: NORAD; MS-Zambia; NOVIB; OXFAM; SKIP; CIDA; UNICEF; SNV; Swedish Embassy; Development and Peace of Canada; and the United Church of Canada. A final point to note about the WfC is that, while the organisation, in its programmes, actually worked predominantly with women, it had tended to include men as well, although they were, and might be, in the minority by design (WfC, undated).

Conclusion

The empirical data contained in this article seems to confirm that FODEP, SACCORD and WfC had, since their inception, conducted several civic education programmes, campaigns and activities nationwide (FODEP, 2017; SACCORD, 2016; WfC, 2016). Together, the three NGOs ran numerous training programmes in the following broad areas: democracy education; voter education; human rights education; advocacy; election monitoring; gender awareness; conflict resolution; economic empowerment, rural development; and HIV and AIDS awareness.

From this broad range of their programmes, campaigns and activities, it can be deduced that FODEP, SACCORD and the WfC were, indeed, genuine NGOs which aimed at making a difference, one way or another, not only in the lives of the underprivileged but also in the whole of the Zambian society generally. This, therefore, clears the three NGOs from the lingering suspicion that they could be among what theorists referred to as ‘NGO-pretenders’, that is, NGOs that existed for ulterior motives (Brinkerhoff 2004: 1; Crawford 2001: 22; Fowler 1997: 32).

The literature that had been reviewed in this article further contains evidence that seems to suggest that FODEP, SACCORD and WfC have, since their inception, employed a variety of methods or approaches to carry out their training programmes, campaigns and activities. Some of these methods or approaches were: workshops

and/or seminars; community hall discussion forums; drama shows; radio and TV discussion programmes; newspaper advertisements, press releases and letters to the editor; publications (pamphlets, leaflets, flyers, and magazines); posters; banners; embroidered scarves and t-shirts; badges; and billboards (FODEP, 2017; SACCORD, 2016; WfC, 2016).

However, it is not clear just how effective these methods of conducting civic education had been, or could be. For, while drama shows were popularly used by the three NGOs, for example, they were regarded by the masses simply as entertainment, especially if performed by hired actors. Radio and TV discussions were also irrelevant to the rural poor who did not own radio or TV sets, while publications were useless to people who were illiterate.

Finally, evidence has been found to suggest that FODEP, SACCORD and WfC had to regularly re-orient their programmes, by taking on new activities as well as learning how to teach others to do them. Nonetheless, it must be appreciated that one cannot become a master of a particular subject simply by attending one Training of Trainers' workshop that usually lasts five days or less. Furthermore, teaching other people is, itself, an art that must be learnt separately, and over time, before one can even think of what to teach others. Not many people can, and do, become effective teachers of others without undergoing formal training in teaching. This task is even more daunting if the volunteers who are to be trained as trainers of others have very low foundational education.

Lastly, in the Western world, volunteers generally bring resources (human, financial, and technical) to NGOs. However, the volunteers that FODEP, SACCORD and WfC depend on for the execution of their programmes are sponsored volunteers. Because of high incidences of poverty and unemployment in Zambia, many people join FODEP, SACCORD and WfC (as voluntary members), so that, instead of simply staying home and doing nothing, they are kept busy by the organisations' activities. In the process, they make a little money in sitting allowances. Even those who make it into the Boards of the three NGOs, by virtue of their educational credentials, are also sponsored volunteers in that they, too, must be paid a sitting allowance for every Board meeting they attend. The immediate effect of this practice is that sitting allowances take money away from programmes that are intended to benefit disadvantaged groups and communities. Beyond that, the search, by sponsored volunteers, for better sitting allowances tends to create a state of flux among volunteers in the non-profit sector in Zambia. It is not surprising, therefore, to see voluntary members of one NGO leave and go and seek membership from another NGO which is believed to be paying a higher sitting allowance. Thus, it should be clear that, in the developing world, NGOs serve both internal and external objectives. The internal objectives are the benefits that accrue to the NGO volunteers and full-time staff. On the other hand, the external objectives are the benefits that accrue to the communities in which the NGOs conduct their civic education programmes, campaigns and activities.

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