



SOCIAL WATCH

**LEARNING FROM
SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES**

**ANALYSIS OF FOUR CASE STUDIES FROM THE
SOCIAL WATCH NATIONAL COALITIONS.**

**HOW SUCCESSES AND FAILURES CAN BE VALUABLE AS
LESSONS LEARNT FOR OTHER NATIONAL COALITIONS**

Editor:

Federica Corsi

Researchers:

Larissa Barbosa da Costa

Valerio Cutolo

Caterina Marchioro

Tommaso Rondinella

Ann-Charlotte Sallmann

Proof-reader:

Julienne Vitali

Grafica e impaginazione:

Publistampa Arti grafiche

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◎ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When civil society organizations (CSOs) around the world become part of an international network, like Social Watch, they are enabled to share their mission and their experiences and enhance their impact by implementing actions with organizations in other countries that pursue the same objectives at a national and at a global level.

Why should this be considered as an added value? Are networking activities really effective and do they lead to a stronger impact?

In a world which is always more “interconnected” being part of a network seems to be a “must”: is it just a question of opportunity or is there something more at the back of this choice?

This paper has been conceived to understand what are the driving reasons that lead the organizations belonging to the Social Watch to join this network, by analyzing some of the successful cases of the national platforms that years ago chose to be members of Social Watch and that today may prove the results they achieved in their own country.

One of the major expectations in being part of a network is to have access to and share information in a broad way, while carrying out common activities in order to achieve greater impacts. In a network, one of the main outcomes should be the promotion of a learning process based on each others’ organizational experience able to foster professional capacity development. This kind of learning process is too often under-evaluated while it should be considered as the successful key for any positive change: looking back at the failures and successes by analyzing causes and effects is crucial for any organization that is eager to improve its work, willing to face new challenges and achieve new goals.

The analysis carried out in this paper was thought to give a contribution to the learning process mentioned above by facilitating sharing of experiences, know-how transfer and capacity building among the network members.

Although from this research it clearly emerges that the SW national coalition life depends very much on the specific country context, there are some common crucial factors in their successful stories.

One of the strengths of the Social Watch network is its worldwide membership and its rather unique composition of NGOs, grassroots organizations, trade unions, women’s organizations, research centres coming from both Donor and Beneficiary Countries. This composition allows Social Watch to have a double perspective, from the North as well as from the South, and to actually contribute at analysing local issues by pointing out their relevance and interconnection at a global level often in a cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary way.

On one side managing such a diverse membership is a challenging task, but on the other one the plurality of actors participating in the process enables civil society organizations to join their own expertise and enhance their capacity to carry out a more effective advocacy and lobbying work at national as well as at an international level too.

Despite the different kind of internal organization and structure of each national coalition, the role of a coordinating/facilitating group is essential since it guarantees consistency and coordination in the implementation of the activities among all the coalition members as well as a close relationship with the International Secretariat.

Considering the enormous area of themes the network usually deals with at a global level, it is effective for national platforms to focus on few main issues which are considered most relevant for the national agenda and to find an agreement on a yearly work plan.

Trust, flexibility, mutual respect, high commitment to common objectives: these seem to be the network's features which ensure the wellbeing and satisfaction of its members. The national platform achieves its success when it does not duplicate the work of its members but rather offers them a valuable space for shaping public policies in a more comprehensive way. Indeed, the added value of the network is its capacity to combine different expertise in a single joint action.

The national coalition is required to play a key political role: the consultation process and researches it carries out for its reports is sometimes even more relevant than the report itself. Watchers need to be active at different levels: the alliances with the media and the academic world are critical as well as actions with local communities and ordinary citizens.

Looking at the four national coalitions hereafter analyzed, all these elements have contributed to gain legitimacy and credibility in front of their Governments.

There is no doubt that the reliability and the international dimension of the data and of the analysis provided in the Reports have helped the national coalitions to be a relevant social actor able to attract new members constantly.

All the stories reported in this paper give quite an exhaustive picture of the challenges and the opportunities any other national platform could face.

We would like to use the lessons highlighted in each analysis as a common heritage for the worldwide network in the logic of mutual learning, in order to suggest tips for making global network actions as much effective as possible. ■

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◎ INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses its analysis on four Social Watch national platforms whose performances have been estimated particularly interesting for a deeper investigation. Although it is not a comprehensive study, neither expected to be an academic research, it represents a first survey on the relevant experiences among the SW national coalitions. Far from being an evaluation of the selected Social Watch national platforms, this publication can rather be a useful tool for the whole network in order to identify and suggest, through an in-depth analysis, successful key factors and best practices to be adopted by other coalitions in other national contexts.

Social Watch is a worldwide network with members from over 70 Countries around the world: about 400 citizens' organizations struggling to eradicate poverty and the cause of poverty, to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and the realization of human rights. Social Watch was created in 1995, the same year of two high-level United Nations conferences on Social Development (Copenhagen Summit¹) and on Women (Beijing Conference²).

By participating to those conferences and to their preparatory meetings, civil society organizations understood the importance of creating adequate mechanisms to monitor the Governments and to ensure a follow-up to those Summits. The creation of Social Watch stems from an "obvious" lacuna in which there were hardly any mechanisms to commit Governments to implementing social development policies³.

Indeed, Social Watch was promoted in order to remind Governments and International Organizations of their commitments, to transform their promises of eradicating poverty in reality and to independently track their implementation, country per country and at an international level. Since the adoption of the UN Millennium Declaration⁴, Social Watch is strictly monitoring worldwide Governments policies compliance with the agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): these time bounded targets were conceived as a first very concrete and measurable attempt to render Governments accountable in front of their own citizens and the international community too in regards to the achievement of important development objectives.

As an international NGO watchdog network, from the very beginning Social Watch undertook the task of monitoring the fulfilment of the MDGs and - in a more inclusive and comprehensive perspective - kept its main role to measure social development progresses every year in each country.

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- 1 The 1995 World Summit on Social Development adopted three core objectives (poverty alleviation, expansion of productive employment and social integration) and 11 major social concerns (poverty alleviation, population, health, education, employment, shelter, environment, disaster, crime, social protection, family).
 - 2 The 1995 Beijing conference took into consideration several areas of concern related to women' condition around the world. Among them it deserves to be reminded: the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women, unequal access to education, health care and related services, inequality between men and women in economic structures, in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, in participating in all communication systems, persistent discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child.
 - 3 Mirjam van Reisen, "The Lion's Teeth. The prehistory of Social Watch", Social Watch - Occasional Papers 01, 2001
 - 4 In September 2000 the Millennium Summit adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Summit identified 8 goals to be achieved by the year 2015:
 - 1) Reduction by half of the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and hunger
 - 2) Achievement of universal primary education
 - 3) Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women
 - 4) Reduction of child mortality rates by 2/3
 - 5) Improvement of maternal health and increase access to reproductive health services
 - 6) Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 - 7) Environmental sustainability
 - 8) Promotion of international partnership for development

The four case studies that have been analysed are: *Benin, Brazil, Germany and Philippines*.

Different criteria have been taken into consideration in selecting the Case Studies:

a. equal representation of the four continents where Social Watch is present

This criterion allows to report on the life of SW national coalitions in different contexts: however, the activity carried out in the South is hardly comparable with the one carried out in the North. Therefore, a valuable analysis can not avoid taking into consideration the differences which characterize any worldwide network: that's why this publication wants to give a sample of SW coalition life in its different geographical areas (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America).

b. long-term membership in Social Watch

Being part of the network since its creation (or as in the case of Benin since 2005) is an essential condition for the evaluation of the constitution processes along the years of the national coalitions and of their functioning. Apart from this, national coalitions which have joined for a long time the SW network have a historical background and a valuable experience which contributes to the identification of the best practices developed and consolidated during the years.

c. active membership in the network at the local and at the international level

The last criterion is strictly linked to the capacity of national coalitions to be active at the local as well as the international level. Social Watch network operates according to a very basic and short Memorandum of Understanding (see Annex I) that establishes mutual expectations between the network and its national groups, respecting the autonomy of each national coalition and recognising democratic horizontal decision-making. Thus, most of the activities of the network, stimulated by the SW International Secretariat, rely on the autonomous initiative of SW national coalitions, on their capacities to stimulate debates at a local level and on the interaction with the International Secretariat at the international level⁵.

1st DIMENSION: RELEVANCE

The first dimension aims at evaluating the relevance of the national coalition in its own country through the analysis of the national coalition's constitutional process, its membership and the interest stirred up at the national level.

2nd DIMENSION: EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The second dimension aims at searching the methods of national coalition's internal organisation adopted in order to guarantee work efficiency among the different members and ensure the network's activity in the long period.

3rd DIMENSION: EFFECTIVENESS

The third dimension aims, by looking at the research activities carried out by the coalition, at pointing out the modalities through which the coalition monitors the policies of its Government in promoting social development at the local level.

4th DIMENSION: STRATEGY AND IMPACT

The fourth dimension aims at assessing the national coalition's capacities in influencing the policies of its Government and in raising public opinion awareness on social development issues.

5th DIMENSION: COHERENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITIES

The fifth dimension aims at analyzing the relationship between the national coalition and other networks of civil society organizations already existing in the country and the modalities for getting in touch with the other organizations around the world belonging to the Social Watch network.

5 Four main structures can be identified within Social Watch: the General Assembly, the Coordinating Committee, the International Secretariat and the national coalitions. Alongside these structures, a spontaneous process of regional-level organisation is taking place in different regions. The International Secretariat, which implements the networks policies, is located at the Third World Institute in Montevideo, Uruguay.

The survey was carried out by professional researchers, each of them responsible for investigating one of the four case studies. A common research methodology was agreed upon and taken into account as a guideline by each researcher in order to allow comparability as much as possible among the different case studies.

The investigation of each case study has been developed according to five dimension analysis taking into consideration the main key aspects for the assessment of the national coalition's performance, in order to give a comprehensive picture of the processes that led each national platform to achieve results at the local level. It's important to refer to processes and practices rather than to concrete achievements, since looking at the process is much more interesting than just evaluating the results. The analysis of a process implies understanding why and how such activities were successful or not, and in the logic of learning from each other's experience, this is the most important aspect to investigate.

Please note that this is a qualitative research and that most of the information collected could not be measured through scientific indicators.

The methodology set up at the beginning took into account these limits and opted for an exploratory study through semi-structured interviews (see Annex III) to the focal point and to a few members of each national coalition.

Therefore, the reader is expected to understand that the findings of this paper cannot be scientifically proved but are mostly the result of an objective, even if sometimes personal interpretation of the authors based on the information directly provided by the national coalition's members and collected through other specific sources (websites, publications, internal documents, training materials...).

Finally, it is worth to mention that this publication has been conceived within the implementation of the project funded by the European Commission "*Monitoring Social Development: building capacities of Social Watch Coalitions*"⁶ whose main objective is to enhance capacities of Social Watch national platforms in Italy, Poland and the Czech Republic.

This research and the best practices stressed in this paper, would like to contribute to the inspiration of a debate in the three national coalitions in order to enable them to assess their performance and boost their functioning at all levels. ■

6 The project, whose beneficiaries are the SW national coalitions in Italy, Poland and the Czech Republic is led by Ucodep (IT) in partnership with Karat (PL), EAP (CZ), Mani Tese (IT), Lunaria (IT), Fondazione Culturale Responsabilità Etica (IT), Calre.net (IT), Oxfam Novib (NE), Eurostep (BE).

◎ SOCIAL WATCH BENIN CASE STUDY

Ann-Charlotte Sallmann

1. Introduction: the Beninese context

Social Watch Benin was born as an answer to the lack that some civil society organisations in Benin felt existed in the monitoring of the MDGs. Although Benin had already a rather rich civil society when the national coalition of Social Watch was born, there was no coordinated scrutiny on the implementation of the politics supporting the achievement of the MDGs.¹

The establishment of Social Watch Benin in 2005 occurred when the country had gone through some years of recession and faced growing poverty and was trying to move towards a more transparent and decentralised society.

Benin, a small country in West Africa, has been committed to a pluralist democratic system since 1990. Despite certain problems with transparency and corruption it has emerged as a model democracy in a region where such cases are only a few. Civil liberties are generally regarded as being respected, particularly freedom of expression and press freedom.

Nonetheless, there have been some worrying developments in the last couple of years. In 2006 the Worldwide Press freedom index of *Reporters without Borders* ranked Benin as 23rd out of the 168 countries studied and on the top of the African countries². At the moment, instead, (check 2008 report) the country's ranking has dropped to place 70th!³

Since 2002, Benin's economic and financial situation has deteriorated substantially. Following an average annual increase of almost 5% between years 2000- 2003, the real GDP growth rate slowed down substantially in 2004 (to +3.4%) and 2005 (to +2.9%). The principal factors that undermine Benin's economy are the lack of diversification of production- which depends mainly on the cotton sector- and the dependence of the tertiary sector (accounting for over half of GDP) on the state of the trade relations with Nigeria. The cotton sector, which is a source of income for over 2.5 million people and provides the country's main export, has been in crisis since 2002 as a result of a falling production.⁴

There has been no significant progress in reducing poverty since 2003 and inequalities have increased. In 2004, poverty reached 36.3% in urban areas and 63.7% in rural areas⁵. In its 2007/8 Human Development Report, the United Nations placed Benin as 163rd on its list of countries. Benin has slipped six places because of a slowdown in the human development index between 2000 and 2003. In the Social Watch 2008 report this regression is clearly pointed out: in regards to the Basic Capabilities Index⁶, Benin is placed in the category of countries with a critical BCI level, that has been subject to a major regression.⁷

In this context, Social Watch Benin was established in March 2005 by more than a hundred organisations from Beninese civil society. In accordance with the objectives of Social Watch

1 Interview with Social Watch Benin Executive Secretary, 161008

2 Reporters without borders (2006) Annual report (the index is developed through the compilation of questionnaires with 50 criteria for assessing the state of press freedom in each country. It includes every kind of violation directly affecting journalists (such as murders, imprisonment, physical attacks and threats) and news media (censorship, confiscation of issues, searches and harassment).

3 Reporters without borders (2008) Annual report

4 Ibid.

5 Social Watch (2006) Annual report, page 182

6 For further explanation about Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) see Annex II

7 Social Watch (2007) Annual report, page 82

International, Social Watch Benin has as its main objective the promotion of citizens' scrutiny of public actions, that means promoting the participation of civil society in the elaboration and monitoring of social development policies set out at local, national and international levels. This objective implies monitoring public actions that fit into the framework of the Millennium Development Goals as well as in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).⁸

The creation of the Benin coalition came at a point when the country had embarked on its first experiment of decentralisation and was moving towards a more open society. The presidential election in March 2006 won by Dr Boni Yayi marked a watershed, defining a new political landscape with the creation of new parties around the President. Since the presidential elections of 2006, Benin has continued to express its wish for a profound change based on transparency, integrity and accountability. During the year 2008, the second local elections were organised after a five-year decentralisation experiment in seventy-seven communes.⁹

The government's ambition for transparency and accountability has not always been implemented in reality as can be understood by looking at the statistics presented above on both press freedom and poverty reduction. In spite of the existence of a regulatory and institutional framework, there are major problems for the implementation according to the Social Watch report 2006. These problems are both the result of a shortage of skilled staff in the public administration and of the sense of impunity that prevails there. The report also highlights corruption and the lack of transparency in public administration as one of the main structural problems in Benin.¹⁰

The European Commission's country strategy paper for Benin also stresses the lack of transparency and corruption as key obstacles to the country's development.

The strategy paper goes further and states that only if there is a strong political will this phenomenon can be beaten and it will require a number of practical measures, such as pressing ahead with the reform of the civil service, increasing the capacity for internal and external control, and a truly independent court system. The strategy paper recognises the impact of the decentralisation process that was initiated in 2003 and also recognises that Benin has embarked on a major transformation of its administrative structure, with the gradual transfer of certain powers to dispersed and decentralised levels.¹¹

2. Social Watch Benin: dimension analysis

2.1 First dimension: Relevance

The first dimension aims at evaluating the relevance of the national coalition in its own country through the analysis of the national coalition's constitutional process, its membership and the interest stirred up at the national level.

The constitutional process of the national coalition

As explained above, Social Watch Benin was set up to help reverse the sorry trend of increase in poverty that the country was experiencing, through monitoring the use of the national general budget and the drafting of the poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs). While the government of Benin has prioritised the MDGs in its national development policy, targets are often not met and according to the European Commission, in recent years corruption has risen to unprecedented levels¹².

The initiative to set up a national coalition of Social Watch in Benin was taken by an organisation called "Sœurs Unies à l'Oeuvre (SUO), together with "Centre Afrika Obota" (CAO), Women In Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF/Bénin), "le Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture et le Développement" (GRAPAD), "le Réseau d'Intégration

8 Social Watch Benin (2008) "Livret des textes fondamentaux" page 1. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) are government strategy papers prepared by the developing countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders as well as external development partners, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

9 European Commission, Country Strategy Paper for Benin 2007-2013

10 Social Watch (2006) Annual report, page 182

11 European Commission, Country Strategy Paper for Benin 2007-2013

12 Ibid

des Femmes des ONG et Associations” (RIFONGA/Bénin) and “le Réseau Glégbénu/Chantier Jeunes.” With the objective of promoting a healthy management at the core of the public sector administration, both nationally and locally, Social Watch Benin was created on the 18 March 2005 during a national workshop organised by SUO, with technical and financial advice from both SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) and UNDP. The inspiration to set up a Social Watch coalition in Benin came from the leader of SUO who had attended a conference on the MDGs in Rome. She later got in contact with SNV to work out the proper organisational structure, both internally and externally, for a Beninese network monitoring the government’s progress towards the MDGs. SUO and a resource person from SNV got UNDP - and later the Netherlands Embassy - in Benin aboard the initiative that was to become Social Watch Benin¹³.

Today, Social Watch Benin is a network of more than 130 NGOs, out of which 54 member organisations. Since 2006, perfectly in line with the government’s decentralisation process, a number of 12 municipal Social Watch Benin branches have been set up supported by local civil society organisations throughout the country. This decentralised approach is one of Social Watch Benin’s greatest strengths and has given the network an influential position in the Beninese society.

The members of Social Watch Benin are associations with a status of a legal person recognised by the Beninese authorities. There are two different types of member organisations within the Benin Social Watch coalition: founding members and the members who have joined later in time. The founding members are the six organisations that participated in the founding General Assembly and that have continued to pay the membership fees. The other members are the member organisations that joined later by applying to the Coordination Committee approved by the General Assembly¹⁴.

The criteria for joining the network are very basic and open to all organisations having a legal and non-political status in Benin. Organisations have to agree with the objectives of citizens’ scrutiny concept of Social Watch Benin and must commit themselves to pay the admission subscription and the annual contribution. Member organisations are expected to work on Social Watch’s common interest and to present an annual report of their activities relating to the monitoring of public service administration.¹⁵

In accordance with the official internal rules, Social Watch Benin held its General Assembly in October 2008 in order to choose a new Coordination Committee since the 3-year mandate of the current CC was expiring this year. Twenty candidates presented their applications for the 15 posts in front of the electoral commission according to the internal rules¹⁶. The mandate of the current Coordinator was renewed for a period of 3 years. Additionally a few changes in the set-up of the Committee members were adopted.

Over the years, Social Watch Benin has expanded its membership and has gained the trust of government bodies, of the local authorities and of the international donor community. Social Watch Benin regularly gets invited to consultations with government officials, public administrations and international donors. The coalition collaborates with other actors of civil society and its reach has broadened considerably by investing a lot in capacity building in local communities.

Membership and enlargement process

Coalition’s legitimacy at the national level

2.2 Second dimension: Efficiency and Sustainability

The second dimension aims at searching the methods of national coalition’s internal organisation adopted in order to guarantee work efficiency among the different members and ensure the network’s activity in the long period.

13 Interview with Social Watch Benin Executive Secretary, 161008

14 Social Watch Benin (2008) Livret des textes fondamentaux, page 2

15 Ibid. page 2

16 Le Matinal, 171008, “AG ordinaire à Social Watch Bénin: Un changement en vue aux commandes de la structure downloaded from <http://www.actubenin.com/spip.php?article14047>

The coalition's organizational structure

The Social Watch Benin organisational structure is composed of three decision-making bodies: the General Assembly, the Coordination Committee and the Finance Committee. It also has a number of ad-hoc bodies like the Technical Committee, the thematic groups, the Communication unit, the Budget Analysis unit and the regional and local offices.

The General Assembly

The General Assembly is the supreme body that has as its mission:

- to draw up the overall framework for the orientation of the work on the citizens' scrutiny of public action.
- to elect and support the national Coordination Committee in the implementation of the network's activities.

The General Assembly meets once a year. In 2008, the General Assembly held an extraordinary meeting in order to review part of the SW Benin status and the internal regulations, as well as to adopt a charter on citizens' scrutiny.¹⁷

The Coordination Committee

The Coordination Committee is the network's representative body and is constituted by 15 members, elected for a period of 3 years. The mandate of elected members can be renewed only once. The Coordination Committee prepares the programme of activities and the budget, creates working groups, monitors the production of the national reports and facilitates the communication between members as well as between the network and the state institutions. It is presided by a coordinator acting as the spokesperson for the network and representing it in external situations. The members of the Coordination Committee meet once every two months.¹⁸

The Coordination Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the network's activities, basing its decisions on the developed Action Plan and the strategic orientations adopted by the Social Watch International General Assembly as well as the General Assembly of Social Watch Benin. All members of the Coordination Committee have been designated to follow specific topics and tasks according to their competences and the interests they represent in the network. Every year, members agree to take on certain projects designated in the yearly Work Plan in order for the activities of the Executive Secretariat to be more efficient and better coordinated. The annual Work Plan and the annual budget are later divided into biannual operational plans that need the approval by the Coordination Committee.¹⁹

The Finance committee

The Finance Committee consists of two statutory auditors that are elected by the General Assembly. The auditors are in charge of checking the accounts and legality of the financial operations. They have access to all account information and to all the documents necessary and make annual reports to the General Assembly. The two auditors are chosen from the official list of auditors in Benin.²⁰

The Executive Secretariat

The Executive Secretariat is the operational body of Social Watch Benin and is responsible for the implementation of the different research and community projects. It is not elected but recruited by the Coordination Committee and works independently from all member organisations. It is headed by an Executive Secretary and is currently composed of a programme officer, a public relations officer and an administrative assistant. It reports on its activities to the Coordination Committee once every two months.²¹ The Executive Secretariat also manages several ad hoc bodies like the Technical Committee and its thematic groups, the Communication Unit and the Budget Analysis unit.

- ***The Technical Committee and the thematic groups***

The Technical Committee is a body for reflection and orientation. The principal objective of this body is to be pro-active and take decisions that cannot wait until the next Coordination Committee meeting. It meets once a month and has 2 members from each of the 6 founding

17 Social Watch Benin (2008) Rapport général d'activités mars 2005- juillet 2008, page 9

18 Social Watch Benin (2008) Livret des textes fondamentaux, page 3

19 Interview with Social Watch Benin Executive Secretary, 161208

20 Social Watch Benin (2008) Livret des textes fondamentaux, page 4

21 Ibid.

organisations. At the launch of Social Watch, 12 thematic groups were formed within the Technical Committee in connection to the Millennium Development Goals. In accordance with the recommendations of the coalition's workshop on institutional and organisational analysis, the Technical Committee is now divided into 6 thematic groups instead of 12, in order to increase the effectiveness. Each founding member has the responsibility for a thematic group and all groups are managed by the office of the lead organisation that works in close cooperation with the Executive Secretariat.²²

The groups are:

GROUP	THEMATIC	NGO RESPONSABLE
N°1	Poverty Food sovereignty	SUO
N°2	Education Gender	RIFONGA
N°3	Children's health Maternal health	WILDAF
N°4	HIV-AIDS Malaria	CAO
N°5	Environment Water, Housing	GLEGBENU
N°6	International partnerships	GRAPAD

Source: Social Watch Benin (October 2008) - Rapport général d'activités, mars 2005 - juillet 2008

- **The Communication Unit**

During the coalition's first General Assembly in July 2006, a decision was taken to set up a Communication Unit within the Executive Secretariat. The unit focuses its work on press coverage, relations with the media, press conferences, television production, radio programmes and awareness raising activities. It also produces information material and works to improve both internal and external communication. Due to a lack of resources, the person in charge of the Communication in the Coordination Committee has also taken the responsibility for the work of the Communication unit.

The work of the Communication Unit has proven to be very valuable in spreading the message of Social Watch Benin and making it known both at the national and the international level. The Unit has improved the lay-out of the presentation material, created a functional and informative website and has also managed to sign up contracts with a number of press agencies. However, the Communication Unit still suffers from a lack of financial and human resources, which is limiting its scope.²³

- **The Budget Analysis Unit**

The idea of putting together a Budget Analysis unit emerged during a number of workshops that were held in order to improve the competences of the members of the national coalition and other civil society organisations in Benin. To make this idea operative, an independent consultant was employed to conduct a study to identify the structures and the persons that needed to be involved in the unit's work as well as the work plan for the unit. The Budget Analysis Unit was established in September 2006 and is composed of 18 senior experts with very different backgrounds (sociologists, economists, lawyers...) providing experience in analysing budgets, as well as of the managers of the coalition's thematic groups.²⁴

The regional zones and the local cells of Social Watch Benin

Social Watch Benin works throughout the whole national territory and has divided its work into six regional zones. At the head of each regional area there are zone administrators that are recruited from local organisations. They constitute the link between the Coordination Committee and the regions and present to the Coordination Committee the progress of their work on a biannual basis. The zones themselves are divided into local cells run by 3 organisations active in the targeted commune²⁵. The work of the local cells is supervised by the regional administrators. In 2006, 4 local cells were established in

22 www.socialwatchbenin.org/org_interne.html

23 Social Watch (2008) Rapport general d'activites mars 2005- juillet 2008, page 13

24 Ibid. page 12

25 Ibid. page 11

4 communes as an experiment of the citizens' scrutiny of public action. In view of the positive result of these cells and as a response to the demand raised by several civil society organisations in other communes, more decentralised local cells were established. As a result, between the years 2005 and 2008, 39 local cells were created within the network's core structure.²⁶

The Social Watch Coalition in Benin decided to have a registered legal statute. Although Social Watch Benin handed in its demand for registration at the Cotonou prefecture on the 12th of June 2005, it was only officially registered in January 2008. The registration was published in February 2008 in the official journal of the Republic of Benin. Therefore, during the 2005-2008 period, Social Watch Benin was working under the guardianship of the organisation Soeurs Unies à l'Oeuvre (SUO), which is still responsible for the coordination of the network. However, the official registration marks the independence of the network from SUO²⁷.

Planning and management tools

The organisational structure has been laid out in several fundamental texts such as the statute and the internal rules and the regulations agreed upon the registration in the network²⁸. The network also disposes of a Charter for the citizens' scrutiny and of a Manual of administrative and financial procedures²⁹. The network has monitored its own work thoroughly and has even produced annual "moral reports" to evaluate the mandate of the Coordination Committee's on a yearly basis. Recently, it also produced a General Report on its activities during its first three years 2005-2008³⁰. These documents were drafted by a team of experts and later on were subject to the amendments and to the approval of the General Assembly. According to the Executive Secretary, relations with the International Social Watch network and with the International Secretariat in Montevideo, Uruguay, are good but are also complicated by the language gap. The concept of a citizens' scrutiny is more widespread in Anglophone countries than in the Francophone ones and consequently the international Social Watch network is mainly composed of English or Spanish-speaking organisations. Social Watch Benin has therefore focused its attention on building a stronger network within the francophone sub-region in West Africa³¹. Most of the communication within the network is done via internet but not on a regular basis.

Social Watch Benin is a very extensive and all-inclusive network. As stated above, membership is open to all. However, there have been some internal disputes concerning the membership of certain organisations but, according to the Executive Secretary, the disagreements have, always been solved at the meetings of the Coordination Committee³².

The number of active organisations and individuals is basically limited to the ones active in the Coordination Committee. The new members are often not really involved due to their own time constraints and due to the core of the coalition itself led by the founding members. According to the coalition's recent evaluation on its functioning, the time and the availability of the Coordination Committee members was considered limited and was perceived as a problem for the functioning of internal communication and transparency too³³. Other difficulties that surfaced during the coalition's second General Assembly in 2007 were:

- concentration of power
- work overload
- poor understanding of the mission of the thematic groups and
- a lack of clarity in the relations between the different bodies.

The recommendations of the General Assembly were addressed to review the number of the thematic groups and to revisit also the subscriber procedure in order to link the useful competences to the thematic groups³⁴.

While a core group of seven or eight organisations remained committed to the goals of the net-

26 Social Watch (2008) Rapport moral du mandat du comité de coordination, page 3

27 Ibid. page 1

28 Social Watch Benin (2008) "Livret des Textes fondamentaux"

29 Interview with Social Watch Benin Executive Secretary 161008

30 Social Watch Benin (2008), Rapport général d'activités, mars 2005 à juillet 2008

31 Social Watch Benin (2008), Rapport moral du mandat du Comité de Coordination, page 4

32 Interview with Social Watch Benin Executive Secretary 161008

33 Social Watch Benin (2008), Rapport moral de la Comité de Coordination page 4

34 Social Watch Benin (2007) Rapport d'activités: Deuxième Assemblée Générale ordinaire 29-30 Novembre 2007, Cotonou, Benin page 15

work, the overall impression is that most of the members are primarily motivated by the benefits they can gain from the platform³⁵.

The coalition is funded through membership fees, subventions and through the financial and technical support provided by a few main partners in the framework of the programmes set up to promote good governance. During the years from 2005 to 2008, the focal point of the network managed to mobilise a total sum of approximately 407.861.502 CFA (618 000 Euros). The founding members and the subscribers are obliged to pay 50.000 CFA as a membership fee and thereafter 25.000 CFA each year³⁶.

Since the creation of the coalition, SNV, the Embassy of Netherlands and UNDP have been its most important partners and donors. During its second and third year, other partners such as USAID/RTI (United States Agency of International Development & Research Triangle Institute International), DED (German service for development), OXFAM- QUEBEC (AIDD et Agence Canadienne pour le Développement International), HELVETAS BENIN, HELVETAS MALI and DDC (the Suisse cooperation) have also contributed with financial resources and capacity building. Of all the partners, the Embassy of the Netherlands has been the biggest contributor to the Benin coalition³⁷. This year, the coalition drafted a new joint action plan together with the Embassy, to set out key priorities and the budget for 2008-2010³⁸.

Several financial reports have been reviewed by the technical and financial partners concerned and have been later approved by the General Assembly. In 2008, a private consultancy was hired to do an internal audit for the period going from March 2005 to June 2008 to determine the financial status of the coalition. The audit was carried out in accordance with the terms set between Social Watch Benin and its financial partners and showed a healthy financial administration³⁹.

2.3 Third dimension: Effectiveness

The third dimension aims, by looking at the research activities carried out by the coalition, at pointing out the modalities through which the coalition monitors the policies of its Government in promoting social development at the local level.

Social Watch Benin mobilises civil society around the main themes of the Benin Poverty Reduction Strategy and the MDGs, particularly on poverty reduction issues and on the improvement of basic services. The network seeks to promote transparency and equality by publishing reports and carrying out public information activities. The network also performs a watchdog role by monitoring the performance of civil servants, investigating a broad range of governance issues on behalf of the public, from complaints about the issuing of a birth certificate to inadequate water and electricity supplies⁴⁰.

The main area of intervention is the "Citizens' scrutiny of public action" which is in other terms good governance, fighting corruption, promoting democracy, respecting human rights and gender equality, educating the public to become responsible, active citizens, strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations. Operationally, this has been put into practice through several strategies.

First of all, the Benin coalition regularly contributes to the Annual Report published by Social

Criteria for ensuring sustainability to the network in the long period

Monitoring of the social policies and drafting the national contribution to the SW International Report

35 UNDP (2007) HURITALK Network Issue 1, September 2007, downloaded from http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/voices_01.html

36 Interview with Executive Secretary Social Watch Benin, 161008

37 Social Watch Benin (2008) Rapport general d'activites mars 2005- juillet 2008, page 16

38 Social Watch Benin (2008) Plan d'action triennal 2008-2010

39 Social Watch Benin (2008) Rapport d'audit des comptes periode du 18 mars 2005 au 30 juin 2008)

40 UNDP (2007) HURITALK Network Issue 1, September 2007, downloaded from http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/voices_01.html

Watch International each year with a different topic. The team in charge of drafting the report is set up by the Coordination Committee as soon as the theme is been communicated by the International Secretariat. When necessary, the coalition sometimes hires independent consultants to do the research if none of its members has expertise on the chosen theme. Once it is finalised, the draft has to be approved by the Coordination Committee. So far, the coalition has not organised any launches of the international report yet since it is released only in English or Spanish. The international report is however distributed during the launches of the national reports as well⁴¹.

Specific research activities carried out by the national coalition

Alternative Annual Reports on the progress towards the MDGs in Benin, which include the contribution to the International Annual Report, are also being produced by the coalition on a yearly basis. Thanks to the six thematic groups based on the Millennium Targets, supported by a technical committee of national experts, the network carried out consultations that so far have led to three alternative civil society reports on the progress towards the MDGs. These Alternative Reports are widely disseminated through the media, usually subject to a launch and later sent to the Authorities and international partners. They are also presented throughout the country through local workshops which give the citizens the opportunity to be informed on how the Benin Authorities are doing in pursuing the MDGs. These reports therefore force the politicians to acknowledge their obligations but also highlight the responsibility of the ordinary citizen in making sure these goals are met. There are also plans to have a quarterly report on each specific target that would monitor which targets have improved and which have not⁴².

Apart from the international and alternative Annual Reports, the coalition publishes a quarterly information bulletin called "Benininfo" with information on the progress in reaching the MDGs.

Enhancing and upgrading analytical capacities in researching

Furthermore, the network organises regular training workshops for network members, journalists and local public administrations. The workshops are meant to enhance the capacity of the citizens to analyse and monitor the contents of the national budget, educate them to lobby and investigation techniques and more generally, make them aware of their possibility to influence the national policies on poverty reduction⁴³. The Executive Secretary estimated that the coalition organises around 10 workshops a year, in different regions and communes throughout the country. As mentioned above, an important special unit has been created to deal with the general state budget. The network trains its members on how to monitor the budget, especially the implementation of funds allocated for local communities. In January 2007, the unit produced and released a guide to read and analyse the state budget. This guide was later published in 1000 copies⁴⁴. As a preparation for the work on the budget of 2007, the coalition organised a gathering of information in the local communities. This was followed by a validation workshop in 2008 where the results of the local monitoring were presented.

The workshop also served as an opportunity to develop an action plan for the advocacy activities of the Budget Analysis unit. The workshop was attended by approximately 150 persons from local cells, regional offices, the Coordination Committee and the Executive Secretariat as well as by representatives from regional and local Authorities⁴⁵.

Specific research activities carried out by the national coalition

Parallel to the activities on the budget, Social Watch Benin organised a nationwide participation in the development of the second poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP). In the drafting of the PRSP, the Benin coalition collaborated with other NGOs to organize the data to be collected in all the 77 Municipalities of Benin. The data collected focused on how communities perceive poverty and stated the perception of the main communities needs in regards to their own local development. The network worked together with the National Committee responsible for drafting the National PRSP II originally composed and led only by government representatives with whom, however, after negotiations and advocacy actions, Social Watch Benin was permitted to work with one or two participants⁴⁶.

41 Interview Executive Secretary Social Watch Benin 161008

42 Social Watch Benin (2008) Rapport general d'activites mars 2005 – juillet 2008, page 34

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid. page 26

45 Ibid. page 27-28

46 UNDP (2007) HURITALK Network Issue 1, September 2007, downloaded from http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/voices_01.html

2.4 Fourth dimension: Strategy and Impact

The fourth dimension aims at assessing the national coalition's capacities in influencing the policies of its Government and in raising public opinion awareness on social development issues.

Since year 2005, Social Watch Benin has affirmed itself as an important player in the society of its country. The coalition has succeeded in raising awareness on a number of issues related to the Millennium Development Goals, especially on poverty and gender, education, health, and water. SW has changed the way the Beninese civil society looks at its role and its activities vis-à-vis the government by stressing the concepts of good governance and citizens' participation. Its contribution to redressing gender inequality in Benin is particularly noteworthy: the head of the network is a woman - Huguette Akplogan-Dossa - , and there are many more active women members who - at the same time- have inspired more women to join and put specific 'gender' issues in the agenda priorities ⁴⁷.

Social Watch Benin's capacity to influence the policies of the government can be illustrated in many ways. One of its latest successful actions was lobbying on rising living costs. The coalition asked national deputies to review the taxes registered in the General State Budget on some primary food products. This complaint pushed the Government to subsidise these food products with approximately 120 million Euros ⁴⁸.

The coalition represents civil society in many different situations, by participating, for example, to the national committee preparing the second generation of poverty reduction strategy document or by contributing to the dialogue with government representatives regarding the state budget.

In 2006 and 2007 Social Watch Benin was invited by the Finance Commission of the National Assembly to participate in a consultation process organised by the deputies prior to the adoption of the budgets. The Economic and Social Council as well has shown an interest in the coalition and in 2007 it invited the Budget Analysis unit of the coalition to give its opinion on the general state budget. The Ministry of Development and Evaluation of Public Action is an important strategic partner of the coalition due to converging missions of both entities. The coalition is currently negotiating a partnership with the Evaluation of Public Action department of the Ministry. The Office for the Monitoring of the Economic and Structural Reform Policies (CSPRES) is the public administration agency responsible for elaborating and monitoring the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy papers.

The coalition has a good relationship with the agency mentioned above and was invited to put together the members of the different working groups during the consultation work on the PRSP ⁴⁹.

In its work on corruption, Social Watch Benin works closely with the Observatory for the Fight against Corruption (OLC), a body that gathers public servants, civil society and private sector representatives. The coalition was invited to take part in the validation process of the National Strategy for the fight against corruption and was called to submit a practical action plan for its implementation too. Several members of the coalition were asked by OLC to participate in the election observation of the 2006 presidential elections as well as in the local elections in 2008 ⁵⁰.

As mentioned in the previous section, Social Watch Benin's members collaborated with other NGOs in collecting data in order to participate to the draft of the second poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP II). Afterwards, the national coalition used the data collected in the localities to influence the work of the National Committee. This action was realised by synthesising the data into a document called: "Civil Society's Contributions to the elaboration of the PRSP II in Benin"

Monitoring of the social policies of the national Government and lobbying activities towards it

Advocacy actions through the promotion of the analysis carried out by the SW network

47 UNDP (2007) HURITALK Network Issue 1, September 2007, downloaded from http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/voices_01.html

48 Interview Executive Secretary Social Watch Benin 161008

49 Social Watch Benin (2008) Rapport général d'activités mars 2005 - juillet 2008, page 18-21

50 Ibid.

and by transmitting it to the Committee. This action enabled the information collected from the data to be directly incorporated into the PRSP II. When the first draft of the PRSP II was ready, Social Watch Benin went back to the communities to include their opinions on the document. These opinions were again synthesised and sent to the National Committee to be incorporated into the final document⁵¹.

The result of this work and of the lobbying actions was that most of the suggestions made by the communities were reflected in the final paper. Communities were very happy to know that they were part of the developing process of the PRSP II. More than 700 CSOs in Benin, working in the country's 77 Municipalities, participated in the process and worked with different population categories including the poorest and the marginalised. The document was prepared and discussed with the national committee responsible for the strategy⁵².

Social Watch Benin has also helped to bridge the micro-macro divide in other ways. In March 2006, SW Benin participated in the monitoring process of the presidential elections. With the support of the local civil society organisations, the 12 regional offices of the coalition played a major role in ensuring relatively free and fair elections.

At the local level of Municipalities, the Social Watch members of the civil society have received praise for being involved in 'the localisation' (or decentralisation) of the MDG's. As a result, many mayors in Benin have recognised the importance of the role of Civil Society in monitoring the indicators for the MDG's⁵³.

The media strategy and communication capacity of the national coalition

The coalition's media strategy has also been an important tool in responding to the request for citizens' participation in public actions. The coalition undertook the opportunity to raise awareness on the MDGs, using a variety of channels, including radio and television⁵⁴.

In spite of its lack of human, material and financial resources, the Communication unit has been able to sign contracts with a variety of important media actors, both nationally and locally, in five different languages. displayed through different communication channels (three documentaries on Benin's progress towards the MDGs have been produced as well)⁵⁵.

Impact assessment

The advocacy methods of the coalition are generally well accepted. During its three years of existence, it has developed its lobby activities involving a great number of approaches, as one of its greatest strengths. The decentralised approach, which gathers the opinion of the people at the local level to be presented to the decision makers at the national level, is very much appreciated both by members and external partners. However, due to the sensitivity of the research and to the activities of the coalition's work, it is sometimes regarded with suspicion as if it were coming from the political opposition.

2.5 Fifth dimension: Coherence and Complementarities

The fifth dimension aims at analyzing the relationship between the national coalition and other networks of civil society organizations already existing in the country and the modalities for getting in touch with the other organizations around the world belonging to the Social Watch network.

Added value of belonging to an international network

Social Watch Benin is one of the few members of SW International who decided to institutionalise the coalition being registered as a legal entity. Members of the Social Watch Benin Executive Secretariat feel that the added value of belonging to an international network, such as Social Watch, is having an ideological basis, a common mission and vision and a stronger authority and accountability towards both the national government and the international partners

51 Ibid.

52 Social Watch Benin (2008) Rapport général d'activités mars 2005- juillet 2008, page 30

53 Sociëteit de Witte (2008) Conference programme : "The Missing Link", on the role of civil society in the Paris Declaration on Aid effectiveness. June 5th 2008, The Hague

54 Interview Executive Secretary Social Watch Benin 161008

55 Social Watch Benin (2008) Rapport général d'activités mars 2005- juillet 2008, page 35

thanks to the size and the quality of the network⁵⁶.

The information exchange with the world wide Social Watch Network is mainly done through the website www.socialwatchbenin.org⁵⁷ or via e-mail. However, due to the fact that the network does not contain many francophone countries and that the common language is English, the Benin coalition has experienced difficulty in exchanging experiences with other coalitions. This was one of the reasons why, at the General Assembly of the International network in Sofia (Bulgaria) in 2006, the Benin coalition was mandated with the task of promoting Social Watch in francophone West Africa.

Social Watch Benin takes this role very seriously since francophone countries in Africa seem to fall behind their Anglophone neighbours when it comes to initiatives concerning citizens' scrutiny⁵⁸. The Benin coalition, together with its francophone neighbours, is now in the process of putting together a regional network for citizens' scrutiny in the West African sub-region. In January 2008, a regional conference on the theme "Ownership of the citizens' scrutiny of public action in francophone Africa" was organized in Benin, bringing together nearly 50 organisations from 12 countries. Thanks to the efforts of Social Watch Benin, countries like Senegal and DRC were for the first time able to produce a national report for the international Annual Report 2008.

At a national level, Social Watch Benin has good relationships with the other civil society organizations working together on a number of topics and on lobbying activities regarding the citizens' scrutiny initiative. The Benin coalition confirms the importance of building a strong alliance across a broad range of actors as a key lesson learned. The unity established was critical in mobilizing broad-based public involvement around the MDGs⁵⁹.

Social Watch Benin is member of the network of civil society organisations in Benin, CFRONG (Collectif des Fédérations et Réseau d'ONG du Bénin), where it holds the position of vice-president. It has a seat in the council of the Civil Society House (part of an EU financed programme entitled Oscar). The coalition is also active in the African Union initiative of a peer review mechanism in Africa (MAEP)⁶⁰.

Capacity to encourage relationships with other civil society organizations' networks at the local level

3. Conclusions

Social Watch Benin was established in a crucial moment considering the context of Benin's economic and political situation. In spite of the government commitments to the principles of eradication of poverty, the country has experienced a period of recession with no significant progress in reducing poverty since 2003. However, during the same period, some positive developments regarding transparency and decentralisation were being initiated throughout the country. Although Benin benefits from a rich civil society, some organisations felt there was a lack in public scrutiny on how the government was doing in its fight against poverty, especially concerning the progress towards the MDGs. The establishment of a Social Watch coalition in Benin filled this gap by focusing its actions on establishing a true citizen scrutiny process targeting both the national budget and the country's poverty reduction strategy.

Since its creation in 2005, the coalition has managed to build up a very well organised network of civil society organisation in Benin. Its organisational structure is very detailed and the coalition has produced a number of internal documents clearly defining mandates, decision making structures and tasks. It has set up a permanent secretariat that works fulltime on the management of the coalition's activities through different units with the support of ad hoc bodies. In accordance with the national policies, the coalition has also managed to spread its

56 Interview with Executive Secretary Social Watch Benin 161008

57 The coalition's website has been out of order since the beginning of November 2008 due to problems with the provider. The coalition's secretariat is hoping to address the problem as soon as possible.

58 Social Watch (2008) Rapport général d'activités mars 2005- juillet 2008

59 UNDP (2007) HURITALK Network Issue 1, September 2007, downloaded from http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/voices_01.html

60 Social Watch Benin (2008), Rapport moral du mandat du Comité de Coordination, page 5

activities to the local communities through a decentralised approach that really gives local ownership.

Despite the good intentions, the coalition has of course encountered some difficulties in implementing its ambitious internal organisation. According to the interviews and questionnaires, the coalition has very high scores when it comes to its members' satisfaction with its visibility, the relevance of its work and the capacity building activities. However, some members communicated that there have been some problems with the leadership regarding its transparency and the communication between the leaders and the members. In several of its evaluations reports, the coalition also stresses the heavy workload of the Coordination Committee which has a limited availability and has had to reduce its regular Committee meetings⁶¹. Due to limited financial resources, the network has also experienced problems in setting up additional local cells throughout the country which has caused a lack of activities in certain local communities. However, thanks to an extraordinary General Assembly meeting this year, the coalition agreed to take some measures to improve the work of the Coordination Committee by working on its transparency and communication skills and also to give more financial responsibility to the representatives of the thematic groups.

It also managed to get the thematic groups to install thirty new local cells in six regional departments of the country. The subscription of new members, which had been done in an all-inclusive way at the start, has now changed in order to look more at the competences valuable for the different thematic groups for future adhesion⁶².

The activities of the network have generally proven to be very effective, especially with regards to its work on the national budget and on the poverty strategy paper. Its approach of focusing its effort on only two main issues has proved to be a successful strategy, which has given the coalition great leverage and knowledge in these areas.

The organisation of capacity building workshops is one of the coalition's main tools and assets, making it possible for even small, local organisations to do their own scrutiny of complicated budget documents.

The decentralised approach has further contributed to build an horizontal structure that reaches all the communities.

The process of gathering information in the communities with the perspective of influencing the poverty reduction strategy document was highly appreciated both at the local level and by the government officials⁶³.

It is always very difficult to measure the impact of advocacy actions due to the fact that the results are often not visible and immediate. In the case of the above mentioned consultation process launched by Social Watch Benin for the revision of the PRSP, the results are fairly clear and many of the recommendations made by the coalition are included in the final PRSP. As for other impacts, the fact that the coalition gets numerous invitations to private consultations with government officials, public administration functionaries and international partners can be seen as a sign of the coalition's opinion being valued.

Considering the impact that the coalition's work has had on the local level, many local member organisations can testify that local authorities are now more responsive to the inputs of the civil society. In some cases, local authority representatives have even attended the workshops that the coalition has organised on capacity building and on the national budget and the PRSP process.

During these three years of existence, Social Watch Benin has managed to build a network including many of the most important civil society organisations in Benin. The coalition has also good relations with organisations outside the network, collaborating with them on a number of

61 Social Watch Benin (2008), Rapport moral du mandat du Comité de Coordination and Social Watch Benin (2007) Rapport d'activités: Deuxième Assemblée Générale ordinaire 29-30 Novembre 2007, Cotonou, Benin

62 Social Watch Benin (2007) Rapport d'activités: Deuxième Assemblée Générale ordinaire 29-30 Novembre 2007, page 17

63 SNV (2006) "Supporting NGO Networks – Capacity Development Illustrated"

common priorities and activities. The coalition is itself a member of a couple of other umbrella organisations, bringing together the entirety of Benin's civil society organisations.

The approach of bringing the national agenda to the local level and the local agenda to the national level, has given Social Watch Benin a unique concept and position. Paradoxically, its big success has made the coalition very attractive to, and dependent on, external donors. This is a major concern for the network and for its members since the subscriber fees are not enough to keep the coalition alive⁶⁴. In the near future, the coalition hopes to spread the concept of citizens' scrutiny to other parts of francophone West Africa and to build more local offices in order to cover all corners of Benin. ■

GOOD PRACTICES LEARNT FROM THE BENINESE SOCIAL WATCH COALITION:

- Clear, detailed organisational structure;
- Good network on both the governmental and the local level;
- Great expertise, resourceful people on a number of different areas.

64 Questionnaires to all members

◎ SOCIAL WATCH BRAZIL CASE STUDY

Larissa Barbosa da Costa

1. Introduction: the Brazilian context

Brazil is a country known for its high level of social and economic inequality. Although the country is among the ten wealthiest economies in the world, inequality in Brazil is only comparable to some of the poorest countries in Africa such as Sierra Leone and Namibia. The real problem is definitely not the lack of resources but rather the seriously distorted wealth distribution.

The gap between the rich and the poor can be proved by numbers. According to the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) the richest 1% of the population, less than 2 million people, has 13% of all household income, while the poorest 50%, about 80 million, share approximately the same amount¹. Furthermore, about 30.3% of the population is poor and 11.5% lives in conditions of deprivation. This picture is to be considered highly incoherent considering the size and weight of the Brazilian economy.

As a continental country, Brazil also presents regional disparities. The wealthy southern and south-western regions are in contrast with the more precarious north-western and northern regions, in which the majority of the poor population is concentrated. Today 80% of the Brazilian population lives in the cities, reason why poverty is more pronounced in the urban areas. However, the rural population composed by millions of small farmers and landless rural workers faces serious challenges to overcome poverty as the land concentration in Brazil is also strikingly high. It is estimated that the 10% of properties comprises 78% of the land area available in the country².

Gender and colour discriminations are determinant factors affecting Brazilian people's life chances. For instance, despite women have become more economically active in the last two decades, their recognition in the labour market and their rights to social security are still far from being reality. In 2004, half of the economically active women were not covered by the social security system³. Regarding the colour discrimination, statistics show that among the poor 70% is black⁴.

Moreover, looking at the data on violent deaths in Brazil, it is clear that most of the crimes happen in the favelas (shanty towns) and young, poor, black men are the main victims⁵. Thus, addressing gender and racism issues represents an essential step to overcome poverty and realize rights in Brazil.

Poverty is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon and it is not an easy task to explain it. However, some issues are particularly relevant in the Brazilian case.

It deserves a particular mention what some development experts name as 'conservative modernisation' in order to explain the process of development in which Brazil has gone through: strong economic changes without promoting social inclusion but rather "managing poverty". The land concentration in the rural areas, the lack of labour rights regulation and the segregation or 'social apartheid' in the big cities are part of this model. Racism, low schooling

1 Beghin, N. (2008). Notes on inequality and poverty in Brazil: current situation and challenges, Oxfam International, page 1

2 Ibid.

3 Oliveira, G. (2007) The social security that women want in Bissio, R.(Ed.) Social Watch Report 2007: In dignity and rights Montevideo: ITEM.

4 Paixão, M. (2006) O justo combate: reflexões sobre as relações raciais e o desenvolvimento in Carvalho, F. (Ed.) Observatório da Cidadania 2006: A arquitetura da exclusão Rio de Janeiro: IBASE

5 Ramos, S. and Lemgruber, J. (2005) Violência, insegurança e cidadania: reflexões a partir do Rio de Janeiro in Carvalho, F. (Ed.) Observatório da Cidadania 2005: rugidos e sussurros Rio de Janeiro: IBASE.

levels and the regressive tax system also work as conservative forces maintaining inequality⁶.

In recent years, Brazil has been experiencing some improvement regarding social inequality. According to IPEA, between 2001 and 2006, the GINI index, which measures income inequality, dropped about 6%, a significant drop in a short period of time⁷. Many factors contributed to this positive result, among them a favourable economic period, the real increase in the minimum wage, the Continuous Income Benefit provided to the elder poor and the handicapped, the retirement benefit for rural workers as well as the cash-transfer programmes such as the Bolsa Família (Family Help Benefit) carried out by Luis Inácio Lula da Silva administration⁸. Nevertheless, considering Brazil is the champion of inequality, this reduction is still small and the country is far from realizing economic, social, cultural and environmental (ESCE) rights for the most disadvantaged social groups.

The Social Watch Report of 2008⁹ calls the attention to this issue. Analyzing the Brazilian public budget between the years 2004 and 2007, it is evident how the government has cut off funding for policies that ensure ESCE rights to pay off the debts.

Whilst public budget had an increase of 25.26% in that period, expenditure on ESCE rights rose only by 17.26%, demonstrating that other expenses got priority. Debt interest and amortization payments were double the total expenditure on social work, health, jobs, education and culture, citizen rights, housing, sanitation, environmental management, agricultural organization, sports and entertainment all together. Thus, the public budget is not properly accomplishing its redistributive function, affecting social justice.

In the light of the statements listed above, the challenges for future are many, among them the need to address structural issues such as promoting an effective and fair land development policy; promoting an urban reform that ensure the 'right to the city' and people access to adequate infrastructure and public services; facing the public security and violence issues, carrying out the tax reform; universalizing the social security system, implementing redistributive policies, fostering women and black people inclusion, increasing peoples political rights and promoting participatory democracy.

2. Social Watch Brazil: dimension analysis

2.1 First dimension: Relevance

The first dimension aims at evaluating the relevance of the national coalition in its own country through the analysis of the national coalition's constitutional process, its membership and the interest stirred up at the national level.

The constitutional process of the national coalition

The Social Watch network in Brazil was created as a consequence of the UN Conferences in Copenhagen and Beijing in 1995 by a group of non-governmental organisations internationally linked to other NGOs struggling to influence the positions of the Brazilian government and to affect the results of the Conferences.

To better understand the process and the motivations at the back of the creation of SW Brazil, it is important to look at the historical context in Brazil at that time¹⁰.

6 Beghin, N. (2008). Notes on inequality and poverty in Brazil: current situation and challenges, Oxfam International.

7 Ibid.

8 Between 1995/2005 the minimum wage had a real increase of 40%, generating a significant impact in income inequality reduction (IBASE).

9 Bissio, R. (Ed.). (2007) Social Watch Report 2007: in dignity and rights. Montevideo: ITEM and Bissio, R. (Ed.) (2008) Social Watch Report 2008: Rights is the answer Montevideo: ITEM.

10 For an excellent account on the SW/OC emergence refer to Roque, A. (2004). Building Social Watch National Platforms: the Brazilian Experience in Bissio, R. and Garcé, P.(Eds.), Strategy of Shame: civil society monitoring of the Copenhagen Commitments - Occasional Papers No 3. Montevideo: ITEM

The years at the beginning of the 90's in Brazil were characterised by a lively and effervescent political situation. After more than two decades under a military dictatorship regime and a long and complicated process of political opening, the country was moving back to a democratic track. A re- vitalised civil society, forged during this process, was ready to push for new spaces for people's participation and for social and political changes.

In 1993, a massive mobilisation forced the impeachment of Fernando Collor de Mello, the first elected president in the democratic period, due to corruption accusations. In order to maintain the spirit of the popular mobilization high for 'Ethics in the Politics', Herbert de Souza (Betinho), a very prominent Brazilian civil society leader, initiated the Citizenship Action against Hunger, Misery and for Life (known as the Hunger Campaign).

The Citizenship Action is considered one of the most creative and innovative movements in Brazil, a real landmark in the Brazilian civil society building. Affirming that "democracy and misery are incompatible", Betinho called all citizens to be engaged in building solutions and actions to eradicate hunger and poverty, to build a country in which all people enjoy and exercise citizenship rights and to make social justice a reality. For that to happen, the whole society had to be co-responsible in this effort. Thus, during its initial years, Citizenship Action, organised in Citizenship Committees, mobilised millions of people throughout the country. This collective effort, sustained by diverse partnerships, aimed at fostering citizen's action and mobilization to improve public policies. By doing so, the Citizenship Action gave a contribution to raise the relevance of poverty issues in the Brazilian political agenda, contributed to the reconfiguration of the relationship between civil society and the State and envisioned a new role for individual citizens. This was the spirit animating the Brazilian civil society at the period.

The years at the beginning of the 90s were also a hot political moment for the Brazilian civil society participation in the international debates. During this decade, "a series of high-level United Nations (UN) Conferences, starting with the "Children's Summit" and ending with the "Millennium Summit" 2000, redefined the global social agenda"¹¹. The UN Summit on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Eco 92) triggered a period of great networking between Brazilian NGOs, trade unions, women's organisations, social movements and others. This social energy was strengthened and gained momentum in the preparatory stage of the UN Conferences in Copenhagen and Beijing in 1995, when the network was able to influence directly the position of the Brazilian government, "stressing the need for a strategy that combines poverty eradication and reduction of social and economic inequality"¹².

For the first time, the Conferences in Copenhagen and Beijing "defined poverty eradication and gender equality as universal common objectives and set targets and a time line to achieve them"¹³. Therefore, to keep the process alive, there was the need to follow-up the commitments made by the governments during the conferences. In Brazil, the organisations involved in the process took the challenge to promote the political will necessary to turn these commitments into national priorities.

Thus, the SW/OC creation in Brazil can be defined as a result of these two processes:

- *at the international level*

"The Social Watch initiative, offered a great opportunity to gather different processes of monitoring and analyzing public policies. It provided a framework for those trying it work on national and international dimensions in a coordinated manner"¹⁴.

- *at the national level*

"In Brazil, the creation of the Observatório da Cidadania was very important to adapt the Social Watch idea to the Brazilian reality. The Observatório da Cidadania was born in the context of the Citizenship Action, the Hunger Campaign, between 1993 and 1996, it was forged in this context and heritages its debates and spirit as well as the idea of citizenship. That's why

11 Bissio, R. (Ed.). (2008). Social Watch Report 2008: Rights is the answer Montevideo: ITEM , page XI

12 Roque, A. (2004). Building Social Watch National Platforms: the Brazilian Experience in Bissio, R. and Garcé, P.(Eds.) Strategy of Shame: civil society monitoring of the Copenhagen Commitments - Occasional Papers No 3. Montevideo: ITEM (p:20)

13 Bissio, R. (Ed.). (2008). Social Watch Report 2008: Rights is the answer Montevideo: ITEM, page XI

14 Roque, A. (2004). Building Social Watch National Platforms: the Brazilian Experience in Bissio, R. and Garcé, P.(Eds.) Strategy of Shame: civil society monitoring of the Copenhagen Commitments - Occasional Papers No 3. Montevideo ITEM, page 20

Social Watch in Brazil carries the name Observatório da Cidadania; citizenship meaning that, from one side, people take action, from the other side, they push the state to do a better job” (Cândido Grzybowski –IBASE)¹⁵.

Initially, the establishment of Social Watch/Observatório da Cidadania (SW/OC) in Brazil was led by a group of five NGOs¹⁶ under the coordination of the Brazilian IBASE (Institute of Social and Economic Analysis).

Inspired by the concept of the Citizenship Committees, these organisations formed a collective body called Reference Group (RG) aimed at facilitating and building the SW/OC coalition in Brazil. According to the participants “the challenge was to build this platform as an initiative which does not duplicate the work already done by numerous social actors around social issues, but to offer them, through the establishment of a system of control and monitoring, a way to better impact the public policies”¹⁷.

From the outset, SW/OC intended to deal with challenges posed by the globalisation process while, at the same time, addressing the national issues. In Brazil, a country known for the high level of inequality, poverty and exclusion are not consequences of external factors but rather the results of internal political choices. Thus, tackling poverty in Brazil involves addressing issues of social inequality and prioritising redistributive policies. In order to do that, it is important to monitor and put pressure on the State. Other factors generating exclusion are deeply embedded in the Brazilian society; gender inequality and racism are some examples. Thus, it is also necessary to contribute to changing the society from inside. SW/OC embraced both challenges: on one side, building a system to monitor and analyse the public policies, and on the other side, working to build a favourable environment for social change.

Membership and enlargement process

In 2008, SW/OC network had about 60 members. Since its creation the SW/OC has significantly enlarged its membership. The number of members ranges from 40 to 70 organisations, including NGOs, trade unions, women’s organisations, academic institutions, environmental and youth organisations as well as several social movements and other networks such as human rights coalitions, members of black and indigenous movements, the Landless Movement (MST) and others. The main factor affecting the variation in the number of members is related to what themes and issues are being discussed in a particular period. Themes include poverty eradication, gender, racism, human rights, social protection and welfare, public security, violence, rural and urban issues, and others.

Participation in SW/OC network is entirely voluntary, thus the criteria for membership were never established. Nevertheless, through the years SW/OC has attracted other like minded organisations showing interest in joining the network. The Reference Group, composed by important and historical civil society organisations in Brazil, has a high credibility and strong mobilisation capacities. Thus, the RG is able to quickly gather a large and diverse group of members working on different sides of the social struggles in Brazil. Despite the group functions as a fluid network and the rules are very informal they seem not to face any conflicts in this regards.

Participants declare they feel a strong identification between themselves and have developed solid bonds of trust and a common political project throughout the years. It is clear from their statements that they value this space as a rare opportunity to engage in reflection and dialogue, increasing their understanding of the Brazilian context and of the possibilities and strategies for development and change. Yet, as part of a network, the participants are empowered to build new alliances. According to them, this constitutes one of the most important assets of this network.

“We were able to gather a group of organizations concerned and engaged in the process of building civil society and social movements in Brazil. We bring our competencies, political experiences and critical mass, we are involved in several networks and have stronger power of mobilization (...) furthermore, we feel strong political identification, we share a political project...we did not get together

15 In Portuguese, cidadania means citizenship

16 IBASE, INESC, FASE, CEDEC and SOS Corpo

17 Roque, A. (2004). Building Social Watch National Platforms: the Brazilian Experience in Bissio, R. and Garcé, P.(Eds.) Strategy of Shame: civil society monitoring of the Copenhagen Commitments - Occasional Papers No 3 Montevideo ITEM, page 20

because there were resources available to produce a Report...we have been walking together for a long time...this makes all the difference” (Guacira de Oliveira - CFEMEA)

The diverse structure of SW/OC is also one of the main strengths of this network as it allows the organisation to build a broader vision of the national problems and of the public policies, as well as to respond quickly to conjunctural changes. Due to this reasons, SW/OC has become a space for building new perspectives, knowledge and plural debates on social and development issues. In addition, it enhances the organisations’ analytical capacities and enlases partnerships between different groups and movements. Furthermore, the variety of members helps to build bridges between different debates and social struggles. For instance, gender and racial issues had been confined to the black and women’s movement for a long time, but through the SW/OC network these debates walked beyond these movements, influencing other spaces and organizations. The ‘Dialogues against Racism’¹⁸, for instance, were mentioned by all interviewees as an example of how this process occurs. Yet, SW/OC monitors public policies and contributes to sharpening strategies and influencing the national political agenda.

SW/OC’s capacity to combine its participation in the international network whilst building a strong national agenda is another feature deserving a remark. By doing so, SW/OC builds a bridge between the international and national debates and makes the initiative relevant to local social actors. However, according to the participants, giving priority to the national agenda explains the vitality of the SW/OC experience in Brazil.

Taking into account the historical process up to today, the SW/OC’s external perception in Brazil is clearly consolidated. In 1997, despite their great recognition within the Community, civil society organisations in Brazil were still struggling to participate in public policies discussions. Being part of an international network and publishing a critical, good quality report on the global and national social issues, certainly helped SW/OC to build its credibility and gave it the strength to challenge the policies of the State.

Since 1997, SW/OC has built a strong and reliable reputation. It is composed by many organizations of historical importance in the civil society. Every year, when the SW Report is launched, the network gets a lot of attention and space in the media and due to the strong activism of its members, SW/OC’s voice contributes in shaping the debates in the national political agenda.

“The fact that SW/OC was born as part of an international network was essential in the beginning. If it was not for that, I believe we would not have the same relevance and credibility. In the 90s, if pressure had not come from outside, for instance pushing the Brazilian government in the UN space, they would not have given us much attention. Our critics on the government reports generated conflict and called the media attention. The government was furious and demanded explanations, this opened the rooms for us to go and talk with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Parliamentarians to show our concerns and demands and to explain our views. By doing so, we started gaining space. Today, it is easy for us to dialogue with the government, our credibility and spaces are already consolidated, but SW Network was essential for that to happen” (Fernanda Carvalho SW/OC Secretariat Coordinator).

After 12 years of activities, SW/OC has become a relevant voice and a political space in Brazil. The annual SW/OC Report is not only a system to monitor and control public policies and governments compliance with its commitments, but also expresses the concepts of CSOs and movements in regards to social and development issues, serving as a tool for the mobilisation and the democratization of society. In this sense, SW/OC network presents the characteristics of a space which gathers civil society organizations to dialogue, build and mature their own views in order to advocate and promote social change¹⁹.

18 See details in section 2.3 third dimension: Effectiveness

19 Gaventa classifies ‘spaces’ as: closed (decisions are made by a set of actors behind closed doors), invited (people are invited to participate by authorities, governments, NGO’s and others) and created (organic spaces which emerge from common concerns or identification as a result of popular mobilization). The main difference relates to spaces which are independent, serving to peoples own interests and needs, and spaces which are provided by external actors for different purposes. See Gaventa, J. (2005). Reflections on the use of the ‘Power Cube’, Approach for Analysing the Spaces, Places and Dynamics of Civil Society Participation and Engagement CFP evaluation series 2003-2006: no 4. H. Mfp Breed Netwerk - Cordaid, ICCO, Novib, Plan Nederland.

Coalition’s legitimacy at the national level

These spaces are essential for the strengthening of civil society and for deepening democracy in Brazil.

2.2 Second dimension: Efficiency and Sustainability

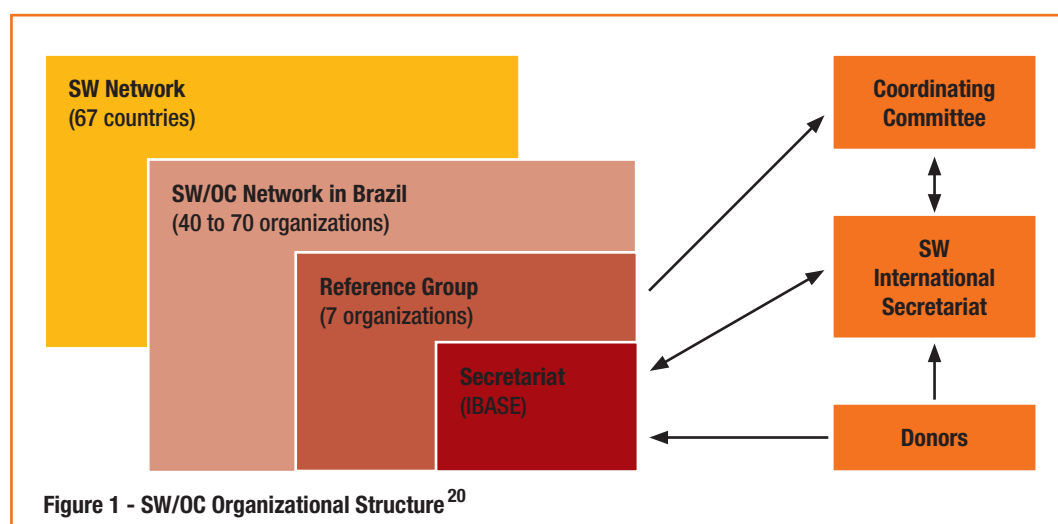
The second dimension aims at searching the methods of national coalition's internal organisation adopted in order to guarantee work efficiency among the different members and ensure the network's activity in the long period.

The coalition's organizational structure

SW/OC in Brazil works as an autonomous initiative even though it is part of the global SW Network. SW/OC defines itself as a network and is not a registered legal entity. This option has been chosen partly to avoid bureaucratisation, partly because it better fits members' aspirations of flexibility, horizontality and equality. So far, members feel no need to move in another direction and show satisfaction with the current informal arrangement.

The network has never drafted any internal document (i.e. statute, terms of reference) laying down the structure and internal rules.

Much of the network's functioning, therefore, is based on trust. The decision making processes are collective and are usually achieved through dialogue and consensus. Furthermore, the network seems to be very flexible and adaptable to the political conjuncture and suggestions from members.



In practice, SW/OC works as a fluid network but presents some formal elements as well²¹. For instance, the network has a name and a collective identity as well as a small secretariat which facilitates its functioning. SW/OC has also developed the ability to synthesize knowledge, to do research and to mobilize the network for joint action.

One special feature of SW/OC is the coordinating/ facilitating group, which is a sort of Committee. Currently, the Reference Group is composed by seven organisations, acting in different fields of social struggles and by IBASE, which plays the role of the Secretariat²². Organisations and members all work on a voluntary basis.

The Reference Group plays a political and strategic role in the network. Since the group is diverse and experienced, it has been able to follow the political debates, identify gaps and pressing social issues and suggest directions for the network. Furthermore, the group links up with other organisations, brings new members and helps to mobilise resources. The Reference

20 The figure illustrates SW/OC organizational structure as described by the interviewees and based on Srilatha Batliwala (unpublished) Case Study of the Governance and Architecture of IANGO: Social Watch.

21 See Taschereau, S., & Bolger, J. (2006). Networks and Capacities: ECDPM.

22 IBASE, INESC, FASE, CRIOLA, CFEMEA, CESEC and Rede DAWN

Group exercises a strong leadership in the SW/OC network and the fact that it is well respected amongst Brazilian civil society organisations contributes to SW/OC network's accountability and power of mobilisation.

Within the organizations composing the Reference Group, IBASE and INESC (Institute for Socioeconomic Studies) perform special functions. IBASE plays the role of the Secretariat since SW/OC's creation, being responsible for all operational issues as well as for the implementation of activities and decisions taken by the RG and members. One of its main responsibilities is to coordinate the elaboration, launch and distribution of the SW Report. In addition, it organises the agenda, national seminars, workshops, campaigns, communication channels and identifies possible synergies between members. INESC is currently responsible for bridging the national and international SW networks, having a seat in the international SW Coordinating Committee (CC).

As a flexible and informal network, RG members are not elected or chosen by any formal rules and - despite the RG works very democratically - they have not developed mechanisms to ensure they are accountable to members. The indicators to measure their legitimacy are related to the member's support and to the appreciation of their leadership. Someone could argue this structure is "weak" in institutional terms but, surprisingly, it seems to work well and to be accepted without conflicts, probably due to the strong political identification among the members and to the credibility of the organizations taking part in the RG (quite a unique feature of SW/OC).

Currently, the RG is composed by four SW/OC's founders while others have joined the group more recently to replace the ones who had to change their terms of engagement with the network²³. The RG members are not elected and the new members are 'brought into' the group by the hands of the ones leaving after the approval of the RG group. For instance, when SOS Corpo, a feminist organisation, had to leave, they consulted other women's organisations and suggested CFEMEA (Feminist Center for Studies and Advisory Services) to join the RG.

The RG facilitates and takes responsibilities for the networks activities but does not represent the members. SW/OC works more as a Forum of debates and a think tank than an advocacy organization and rarely takes part in meetings where they have to assume public positions in the name of the members. When this is the case, for instance to sign a public manifest, they have to consult and get consensus from all members before doing so. The SW/OC Report is the main vehicle to carry SW/OC positions and the network members participate directly in several political spaces.

In the last few years, SW/OC has been facing significant budget constraints which had a direct impact on the Secretariat. The Secretariat used to have four staff members. Today it relies on the Secretariat Coordinator and on one part time researcher. Some members expressed the need for more coordination but they also acknowledge the financial limitations. Despite its reduced capacity, the Secretariat has been able to perform the main activities and to carry on with the elaboration of the SW Report.

One relevant issue regarding the structure of the network refers to funding and autonomy. Before 2003, the SW initiative was supported as an independent project. Thus, despite funds were channelled through IBASE, the Reference Group had great independence to make decisions. More recently, SW/OC activities and funds were merged into IBASE operations²⁴. Since then, IBASE determines how much of its overall budget is allocated for the SW/OC and this kind of decision has created great frustration among RG members. The general feeling is that SW/OC has lost independence to decide upon its priorities as decisions depend on IBASE's approval and resources availability. This change was traumatic and the group says it still is recovering from that.

Looking at this experience, the members learnt that being SW/OC a network, it needs to guarantee its autonomy. However, as they do not want to become a legal entity, it is necessary

²³ Some organisations had to leave the RG for different reasons. For instance, the RG member has taken a position in a governmental body or the organization is going through difficult times and cannot volunteer time to perform the tasks anymore.

²⁴ IBASE explained they were overwhelmed by the management of several different contracts with Oxfam- Novib, each one generating specific obligations. SW/OC member argued for autonomy but after tense debates, IBASE decided for having only one contract with NOVIB. Since then, members feel this has affected SW/OC autonomy.

to explore other possible arrangements. One suggestion was to create a consortium of several organizations receiving funds sharing though the responsibilities for accountability.

***Relationship
with the International
Secretariat and
the Coordinating
Committee***

The relations between the national network and the International Secretariat are based on autonomy and voluntary collaboration. The International Secretariat is expected to animate the SW network, promote synergies, foster partnerships and capacity building as well as to coordinate the elaboration of the Report and implement the decisions taken by the Coordinating Committee (CC). In return, national networks obligations are limited to providing a good quality country report. Sharing information on the country level activities and the results achieved, for instance, is not an obligation nor expected to happen on a regular basis.

On one side, such a fluent and horizontal organizational structure represents a strength, avoiding bureaucratization and leaving space for freedom and autonomy in the national level, but on the other side, it weakens the International Secretariat's capacity to demand for information and to propose collective and high impact actions.

SW/OC faces similar problem as the members of the network in Brazil have no obligations with the RG or with the Secretariat/IBASE and do not have to provide information on their activities or results linked to the SW Report (making it difficult to picture SW/OC achievements and results).

Recently, the Brazilian and Mexican networks were called for a seat in the Coordinating Committee (CC) as representatives of the Latin America coalitions. INESC is playing this role on behalf of SW/OC and frequently shares information or consults the RG members in Brazil. However, consultation with other Latin American coalitions is less frequent, stressing the evidence that links of representation and accountability in the Coordinating Committee (CC) are a little loose as well.

The relations between SW/OC and the Secretariat are considered excellent. Communication and collaboration are constant, especially in the elaboration of the SW Report. Contacts with the team of researchers in Montevideo are frequent and involve discussions on themes, methodologies, assessment of the articles produced for the report and others. More recently, due to budget constraints, the International Secretariat had its team reduced, making the communication and support less frequent.

***Planning and
management tools***

In regards to the planning and management tools, the Reference group is the one proposing the annual work plan. At the beginning of every year the group gets together to discuss current issues, identify priorities and suggest themes to be debated within the broad network. The work plan comprises a number of national seminars and workshops, the elaboration and the launch of the SW Report as well as some other related activities. According to the Secretariat there is no formality required in order to approve the annual work plan. The document works more as guiding plan and it is very flexible and open to the member's suggestions.

The RG meets three times a year as an average. In the past, these meetings used to be more frequent, about five times a year, but due to resource constrains, the frequency had to be reduced. Alternatively, they set meetings attached to other events such as conferences, the World Social Forum (WSF) and communicate through email and telephone. The broad network meets in the national seminars which happen to be once or twice a year. SW/OC also organises dialogues and workshops providing opportunities for members to gather. In addition, members keep in touch through an electronic mailing list, through IBASE's website and through an electronic newsletter.

One aspect deserving attention has to do with the minor involvement of members in planning SW/OC activities. Interviewees acknowledged that members' participation in this regard is limited and that it would be better to involve them more frequently. However, there are no mechanisms to facilitate that yet. Generally, there is a common understanding that fostering higher participation means to invest more time in coordination and the current resources have not been favourable in this sense.

SW/OC member's share some tasks regarding the network functioning but the division is not balanced. It seems that the Secretariat bears too many responsibilities compared to other members' and despite they always remark that all activities are collective, SW/OC is strongly associated to IBASE's initiatives and activities. Other members perform specific tasks accord-

ing to the need and to their expertise. For instance, if the theme of the annual report is related to gender, racism or human rights, the organizations focused on these issues get more involved in the organization of the seminars and in the elaboration of the report.

Relationships between SW/OC members are considered very good. However, this does not mean there are no conflicts. Conflicts are in great part related to the debates and to the different ways members perceive the Brazilian reality, the priorities to face and to what has to be done. In this sense, conflicts are considered necessary and stimulant. They are part of the plural space the network cultivates.

SW/OC Secretariat Coordinator reported that the group has gone through several moments of tension and through strong polarization during debates and dialogues but due to a great respect, maturity and trust among the members, summed to the diversity of personalities, social skills and political experience, they have always managed to evolve together and to build agreements.

Conflicts are managed through dialogues and one of the reasons why members have been able to overcome their differences is because they value the network as an important, unique and enriching space. Moreover, members dedicate time and energy engaging long processes of dialogue and building collective understandings of problems, what seems to be another unique feature of SW/OC.

Considering the way these processes were described, especially the Dialogues against Racisms²⁵, it is possible to find characteristics of social and transformative learning processes, which can possibly lead to higher levels of change and transformation in society²⁶.

“The discussions about racism as something that should be incorporated in the agendas of all organizations and research centres ‘not from’ the black movement, is a decisive contribution for the history of the NGOs in Brazil and the historic struggles against racism in the country” (Silvia Ramos, CESEC)

SW/OC in Brazil has been supported almost entirely by Oxfam-Novib since 1997. The network has tried fund raising with other donors but has only succeeded in mobilizing complementary funds, for instance from the Ford Foundation. Yet, SW/OC does not receive any money from governmental funds to be totally independent. However, the SW/OC situation of dependence from one funding source is considered quite critical.

Members are aware of the financial problems and of the risks for the sustainability of the network. They have been facing budget reductions for some time and trying to adapt to that. SW/OC overall budget used to be around 120.000 Euros/year, but at the moment it is close to 70.000 Euros/year²⁷. The largest part of it is used for the elaboration and printing of the report, a quite expensive activity. In this regards, watchers affirmed that the budget is very limited and is not enough to perform the activities as desired; however, due the to members’ strong commitment they have been able to carry on with the work.

In the last few years, the staff working in the Secretariat has been reduced by 50% and the same happened to the number of meetings, seminars and workshops. The SW National Report itself has been reorganized in order to reduce costs. The number of articles translated into Por-

Conflict management

Criteria for ensuring sustainability to the network in the long period

25 See details in Box 1, section 2.3 third dimension: Effectiveness

26 Transformative learning refers to “the process by which we transform our taken for granted frames of references (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change and reflective so they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide actions take” . See Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Higher. (p:7-8).

Social learning can be defined as process in which groups of stakeholders continuously interact, share knowledge, reflect and learn from their experiences and realities and use these lessons to feed their decisions. It contributes in situation of participatory governance, engagement of multi-stakeholders with different repertoires to explore different points of view and create new solutions to problems and yet to stimulate and guide social change. See Maarleveld, M., and C. Dangbegnon, (2002), Social Learning: Major Concepts and Issues in Leeuwis, C., and R. Pyburn (Eds.), Wheelbarrows Full of Frogs: social learning in rural resources management. Assen Koninklijke Van Gorcum.

27 Oxfam-Novib financial support to SW/OC amounted (Euros): 2002: 133.288 ; 2004: 118.000; 2005: 118.000; 2006: 59.000; 2007: 118.000; 2008: 66.000.

tuguese has been immediately reduced, and part of the printed report was replaced by a CD. The Brazilian Report 2008, for the first time since 1997, will not have any thematic article translated from the international report but will be rather distributed it in Spanish.

Currently, there is no feasible solution. According to watchers, it is difficult to convince donors to fund this type of activity. In Brazil, potential donors tend to invest in projects providing service delivery or projects affecting directly local communities, while resources to support alternative debates and research are very rare and limited.

Furthermore, international aid has been moving away from Latin America in the last decades and many SW/OC core members are facing similar funding constraints while other members have no significant means to support the network through financial contributions. A serious funding crisis is already in course and will possibly get worse in the short and medium terms. Thus, SW/OC sustainability is under serious risk and watchers consider funding as their main threat.

2.3 Third dimension: Effectiveness

The third dimension aims, by looking at the research activities carried out by the coalition, at pointing out the modalities through which the coalition monitors the policies of its Government in promoting social development at the local level.

Monitoring of the social policies and drafting the national contribution to the SW International Report

SW/OC has adopted different strategies in order to influence the Government and the social public policies towards the guarantee of rights, social equality and justice. SW/OC approach is not to duplicate the efforts being done by Brazilian social actors but rather offer them a system of control and monitoring that helps them impact the public policies. In this direction, SW/OC seeks to strengthen civil society organization's capacity in monitoring public policies and proposing alternatives to contribute to build an enabling environment for change to happen.

The first strategy aims at building a plural space of convergence and debates, gathering diverse groups of organisations active in the different sectors of struggle for essential citizenship rights, poverty eradication, social justice and equality, which include NGOs, women's organisations, trade unions, academic research institutions, environmentalist, social movements and other networks.

Secondly, SW/OC organises national seminars and workshops aimed at discussing the national conjuncture and social policies, including the commitments taken in Copenhagen and Beijing. These seminars are good opportunities to establish a dialogue between civil society and governmental representatives as there is an intentional effort to have both sides participating in the discussions. Following the seminars, some workshops are also organized aimed at scrutinising further some set of policies. The whole process is part of the strategy for sensitising and mobilising civil society and government members on specific issues, contributing to raise the profile of relevant themes, to build new perspectives, to identify gaps and to set the ground for the elaboration of the SW/OC Report. By doing so, SW/OC contributes to broaden the debate on public policies both in society and the government.

As a third strategy, SW/OC elaborates a National Report, which is the main advocacy tool produced by the network. The report is a visible and concrete output. However, it's a political process itself where as political process we refer to the effort to gather different social actors, promoting dialogue, building CSOs capacities and influencing the political agenda. Thus, SW Report is both the main result and the main advocacy tool used to give impulse to the necessary changes.

The fourth SW/OC strategy refers to its engagement in developing and/or participating in public campaigns aimed at fostering cultural, political and public policies transformation. Some interesting examples are the Dialogues against Racism and the Global Call against Poverty, the GCAP Campaign.

Talking about some of the SW/OC contributions to the Brazilian society, interviewees stressed three elements:

a) SW/OC is a space of convergence and a sort of think tank which helps civil society organizations build new perspectives regarding social policies and set new political agendas. For instance, the debates on poverty and inequality, racism, public security and violence.

b) SW/OC encourages capacity building and gives inspiration to many organizations in developing their advocacy strategies. For instance, CFEMEA, a feminist organisation, has developed strategies to monitor, analyse and influence the country's Annual Public Budget, under the perspective of gender.

c) SW/OC has strengthened the bonds of trust between organisations and has enabled strategic partnerships. According to one of the interviewees, SW/OC members learn how to work together, giving birth to new initiatives and stimulating the creation of other participatory spaces and networks as well.

Another effect, very evident in the case of the Dialogues against Racism, is that SW/OC has clearly contributed to the change of the organisations from the very inside. Influencing some members to pay more attention and to include the racial variable in their work and advocacy strategies, has been an important contribution towards the strengthening and the democratization of the Brazilian society as a whole.

BOX 1. DIALOGUES AGAINST RACISM

In 2001, as part of the preparation for the UN Conference against Racism in Durban, some black women's organizations participating in the SW/OC network raised the issue of racism as an essential problem to be tackled in society in order to achieve social justice, equality and rights in Brazil. They asked why, if racism is one of the pillar of inequality in Brazil, many 'white' CSOs were not interested or open to discuss this issue.

Racism is a very sensitive topic in the Brazilian society, and initially, SW/OC members expressed radically different perceptions of the problem as well as deep disagreement. Some believed there is no racism in Brazil, others that racism is not the main issue but rather poverty; other strongly demonstrated how racism affects life chances in the country driving or explaining poverty itself. Thus, feeling challenged by this problem SW/OC member initiated a series of dialogues about racism.

It took more than three years and very hot and tense debates, until the group evolved to a collective understanding. SW/OC organizations had to look inside, uncover their own prejudices and limitations and learn how to deal with racism issues. Regarding the dialogues, several interviewees reported how the process has deeply affected them. IBASE and INESC changed their internal policies in order to grant better opportunities for black professionals to join the organization and became more aware of their internal 'barrier' for equality. IBASE for instance, has incorporated this issue on their yearly "Social Balance" Report. CESEC, a research centre focus on public security issues, declared that the dialogues have led them to go deeper in the analysis of the racial variable in all studies they develop.

Moreover, all participants became more aware and matured their ideas on the matter, what also reflect on their advocacy activities. Later on, the Dialogues evolved from an internal debate to a public strategy of tackling it by the creation a national campaign and to the formation of a network gathering 57 organizations.

Surveys carried out by the Perseu Abramo Foundation in Brazil showed that 87% of the Brazilians believe there is racism in Brazil, however only 4% of the interviewees acknowledge they are racists. This has become the focus of the campaign which asks "Where do you keep your racism? Do not keep it, get rid of that"

The campaign, launched in December 2004, aimed at encouraging dialogues about racism by families, neighbours and friends as well as in the schools, workplaces and others. The campaign also comprises radio and TV spots, showing situations of discrimination, testimonies and interviews with ordinary people in all Brazilian regions, has gained a lot of attention from the media, being broadcasted by some of the most important Radio and TV Channels as well as reported by the newspapers. The campaign goes on and is now on its second phase, having reached thousands of people.

See www.dialogoscontraoracismo.org.br

The elaboration of the SW/OC Report is one of the main activities carried out by Brazilian network. SW/OC contributes to the International Report since the first edition in 1996 and since then it prepares country reports regularly, as well as thematic articles discussing international themes²⁸.

The National Reports have been published in Portuguese since 1997. However, the Brazilian edition is not an exact duplicate of the English and the Spanish one. In order to make the Report more meaningful for the local reality and for the local actors, national articles gained more space, attracting more attention in the country level. Nowadays, the Brazilian printed Report is composed by a few international thematic articles (translated into Portuguese), followed by a section dedicated to the national conjuncture and social policies (Panorama Brasileiro), and a small selection of country reports, (Panorama Mundial). Complementary data is made available through a CD accompanying the publication.

The National Report always follows the 'umbrella theme' proposed by SW International, but SW/OC members invest considerable energy in 'translating' these themes into the Brazilian context finding the right connections and perspectives to explore each of them. The title and layout of the report are the same but the fact that 50-60% of the SW Report in Brazil refers to Brazilian issues constitutes one of the most important features and strengths of SW/OC initiative.

Through all these years, the quality of the articles and of the overall report has improved; meanwhile, SW/OC also gained experience and skills to deal with social and development indicators. Furthermore, considering that SW/OC always works in close collaboration with the International Secretariat, it contributes to improve the quality of the International Report itself, by discussing the methodology, the indicators and by commenting the articles during the whole elaboration process.

The contributions to the international Report as well as the elaboration of the country report are coordinated by the Secretariat, IBASE. The process involves the organization of a national seminar aimed at debating relevant policy issues. During the seminar, participants of the network face the theme from different angles, discuss its strategic character and agree upon guidelines for the report. Later on, several workshops are organized to take a deep look at specific policies. Both seminars and workshops constitute an important moment for SW/OC members to meet, exchange experiences, learn and build new perspectives on social struggles and policies, as a real process of social learning.

As the process goes on, the organizations and possibly the collaborators with more expertise on the specific issue SW/OC is working on are identified and they are invited to contribute to the report. In general, they are experienced activists, leaders of civil society organisations and academic researchers. One of them, for instance, Guido Mantega, became the Minister of Finance in the President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva's administration. Yet, since the SW Report has become a very respected and reliable source of information and analysis, it is not difficult to attract high quality contributors.

It deserves remark that SW/OC relations with the academia are very positive and helpful. Having academics as SW/OC members has contributed positively to the network research and to the chance of building critical reflection capacities and can be considered as a good practice.

Research methods and tools

One last aspect contributing to the quality of the Brazilian national report is that Brazil counts on excellent official statistics as well as on qualified researchers and analysts among SW/OC members and academia. The sources used to produce the report are mainly official data, academic bibliography and bibliography produced by SW/OC members themselves or by other respected Brazilian NGOs²⁹.

In 2007, on its 10th edition, the SW/OC Report published a special section analysing its

28 Between 2000 and 2007, SW/OC contributed with four thematic articles to the international SW Report.

29 Some examples of sources consulted during the Report elaboration are: IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), IPEA (Institute of Applied Economic Research), NEAD (Centre of Rural Development Studies), Datasus (Department of Information on the National Health System), which are governmental sources. Other examples are DIEESE (Department of Socio and Economic Research, related to Brazilian labour movement), ABESP (Brazilian Association of Population Studies), ABIA (Brazilian Association of Interdisciplinary studies on HIV), ABONG (Brazilian Association of NGOs); NGOs, Networks and SW/OC members such as Ação Educativa, Geledés, IBASE, INESC, CFEMEA, CESeC, Rede Brasil de Instituições Financeiras Multilaterais (gathering organizations monitoring the IFIs).

intellectual contributions during one decade in the areas related to the monitoring of the governmental commitments and to the Brazilian public policies. In ten years, SW/OC published sixty articles in the *Panorama Brasileiro* as a sample of the reflections of a relevant part of the organised civil society and academia before the contradictions and dilemmas faced by the young Brazilian democracy. For this reason, Paixão (2007) argues the SW Brazilian Report has a historic value itself³⁰. Despite the diversity of the issues discussed, the articles generally emphasise the need for wealth redistribution and for redistributive policies, social justice and people centred (or alternative) development in opposition to the dominant economic growth approach (Paixão, 2007).

The article by Kerstenetzky (2007)³¹ analyses SW/OC influence in the public debates in Brazil in the same period. The author remarks that SW/OC debates are very important to the extent that they clarify the relations between the social and the economic spheres, the effects of different policy choices and the structural link between poverty and inequality in Brazil, not only in economic terms but also under the perspective of citizenship, rights and emancipation.

The effort to assess SW/OC intellectual production within a decade was important to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for further interventions on the public debates. Some suggestions for further exploration refer to looking more at youth issues, informal economy, the role of the media, corruption, environment, development and patterns of consumption, and comparative social analysis. The analysis also pointed out an over emphasis put on economic issues, proposing a compensation by exploring the issue of development under the perspective of freedom and emancipation as well.

In regards to the use of the indicators BCI and GEI³², we would like to stress that despite SW/OC considers them as key elements and powerful tools, allowing comparisons between countries, they have proved to be quite problematic.

Brazil is a middle income country, relatively developed but presenting some of the highest levels of inequality in the world. Therefore, indicators based on statistic average tend to portray Brazil always in a better situation than it really is. Since SW/OC indicators are not very 'sensitive' to inequality they are not very helpful in Brazil. On the contrary, they can even offer a counter-argument, compromising the advocacy work. This is a methodological challenge not yet solved. In addition, when the SW Report is launched at the end of every year, updated data have been already released by the official statistic institutes in Brazil, causing some data disparities and eventually generating negative reaction from the government, questioning on the accuracy of the SW Report.

A couple of years ago, SW/OC used to develop training programmes for member organizations aimed at building their capacities in dealing with indicators. During these workshops SW/OC trainers explained what indicators are, how to build and use them when monitoring the development of a situation or a public policy (progress, regress, stagnation etc) and for advocacy (pushing the government, mobilizing society and generating political action).

The idea was to develop their capacity to create their own indicators to monitor and advocate for issues of their own interest. The participants were social movements, CSOs members and leaders and the training could take from one to four days depending on the case and on the group needs. However, due to funding constraints, these trainings are not provided on regular basis anymore.

One interesting experience in this regards is the FAOR one (Forum da Amazônia Oriental). Inspired by SW/OC technical support, FAOR created the 'Observatório da Cidadania Pará' and since 2001, from time to time, it publishes a Regional Report regarding the public policies in the eastern Amazon³³. This case clearly demonstrates the potential for an adaptation of SW methodologies and strategies in the regional and local levels as well.

Apart from the National Report, SW/OC used to publish a series of papers named *Cadernos*

Use of the Indexes BCI and GEI at the local level

Enhancing and upgrading analytical capacities in researching

30 Paixão, M. (2007). *Querelas do Brasil* in Carvalho, F. (Ed.) (2007) *Observatório da Cidadania 2007: Dignidade e Direitos* Rio de Janeiro: IBASE.

31 Kerstenetzky, C. L. (2007). *O desafio da intervenção criativa* in Carvalho, F. (Ed.) (2007) *Observatório da Cidadania 2007: Dignidade e Direitos* Rio de Janeiro: IBASE.

32 For further explanation about Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) and Gender Equity Index (GEI) see Annex II

33 For more information see <http://www.fao.org.br> (in Portuguese).

do Observatório. These papers had an educational character and were used as training materials³⁴. Currently, SW/OC only produces the National Report which is considered a very dense publication, thus, not accessible to all kinds of public. Thus, SW/OC acknowledges it would be important to publish other materials, using a more simple language and more simple formats as well. The lack of popularized materials constitutes an important limitation to SW/OC expansion, visibility and results.

In regards to other kinds of research, SW/OC rarely develops them but many members of the network do it on a regular basis contributing to the quality of the report as well. Promotional materials or booklets are produced to support the launch of the Report or SW/OC participation on special events, conferences, World Social Forum or others.

SW/OC Report in Brazil mainly targets politicians, policy makers, civil society organisations, social movement's leaders, journalists and others influencing the public opinion. This strategy was considered successful for some years. However, watchers now believe they reach a too limited audience and that this has become a weakness.

Gaining ground at the national level and legitimating the research carried out by the SW national coalition

Overall, the SW Report in Brazil is consolidated as an important source of information and reflection, subsidising lobbying and advocacy activities. Watchers constantly receive positive feedbacks such as the ones coming for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, politicians and CSOs. The report is respected due to its reliable data, the quality of its articles and the critical perspective. Yet, it should be added that SW Report is the only publication of this kind in the Brazilian civil society.

Considering the research and the other activities carried out by SW/OC in Brazil, some strengths refer to: a) the elaboration of the report, which involves rich dialogues and debates; contributes to civil society strengthening and capacity building; b) the quality of the report, which is considered an excellent material for consultation and for building arguments for advocacy.

Regarding the weaknesses, one frequent comment refers to the language used in the report which is still very technical and complex, not accessible to every person. Yet, members believe they need to maximize the use of the Report. They invested a lot of time and energy to produce a very good quality report but do not explore it as much as they could to generate public discussions. Despite the Report reaches its main target group, SW/OC members believe they need to enlarge their audience and to make the report an useful tool for the grass roots organizations as well. For that to happen, SW's Report needs to go through some changes and needs to invest (or encourage members to invest) on popularized materials and to be innovated in its communication with the public.

2.4 Fourth dimension: Strategy and Impact

The fourth dimension aims at assessing the national coalition's capacities in influencing the policies of its Government and in raising public opinion awareness on social development issues.

Advocacy actions through the promotion of the analysis carried out by the SW network

The SW Report has become a useful tool supporting member's activities for what concerns lobbying and advocacy activities. All interviewees affirmed that the process of discussions and the report itself have helped them understand the effects of globalization, the model of development adopted in Brazil and its public policies. Furthermore, watchers remark they gained access to other countries experiences, which provides them of arguments for the advocacy actions .

SW/OC monitors the Brazilian government commitments and the public polices by identifying relevant issues, promoting discussions and publishing the SW Report.

Through the years, SW/OC has identified some broad issues in which to concentrate its advocacy work on the national level, such as counteracting poverty and inequality; promoting gender and racial equality, redistributive policies, rights, the universalization of the public social protection system and other related issues.

The definition of the priorities for the lobbying and advocacy actions depends on the group's interpretation of the political conjuncture and on the identification of the opportunities offered.

34 The list of materials is available at www.socialwatch.org and www.ibase.br

For instance, recently SW has embraced the theme of Public Security as a new and relevant political agenda in Brazil. For many civil society organizations, this issue has not been a priority. However, looking at the situation of violence in several parts of Brazil and at the process of 'criminalization of the poor', specially of the black young men, it is clear that Public Security is an agenda priority connecting poverty, discrimination, inequality, violence, exclusion and, therefore, is essential and urgent. Thus, SW/OC has decided to develop its own capacity in dealing with these issues and to work on this topic for two or three consecutive years, until it is able to set it as a new agenda, like what they did in the case of racism.

Dialogues with government happen in several political spaces. SW/OC has an open channel to dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is responsible for the Brazilian government positions in the international fora like UN. Besides that, SW/OC members participate in public hearing, policy discussions at the national, state and local levels as well. Other institutionalized political channels for dialogue in Brazil are the Public Policy Management Councils which have been implemented in social sectors such as Health, Education, Children and Youth, Social Security and others, in order to discuss and develop public policies and decide on the allocation of public funds. These Councils gather governmental and non-governmental members and today are considered relevant spaces for participation. Generally, SW/OC relations with the government depend on the political context according to the specific moment and can be more or less conflictive depending on the issues discussed.

Another strategy to keep the dialogue open involves inviting government officials to participate to the National Seminars and workshops promoted by SW. For instance, just before the elections in Rio de Janeiro City in 2008, SW organized a debate gathering the Mayor candidates to discuss the public security issue and their plans to face the problems realted.

As a fluent and informal network, SW/OC does not perform lobbying and advocacy actions directly. Rather, it supports the member's initiatives and counts on them to advocate for policies changes. Two members of the Reference Group, INESC and CFEMEA, perform lobbying and advocacy directly in the Brazilian Congress as part of their main activities. Both organizations monitor the country's Annual Budget to make it more inclusive, under the perspective of gender and racial equality.

In 2007, for instance, a historical bill has passed in the Congress creating the countries first law against domestic violence, named as 'Maria da Penha Law'. This has been the result of long years of struggle of the women's movements and their allies. CFEMEA, a very important woman's organizations, part of SW/OC Reference Group, played an important role in this achievement. CFEMEA and some other SW/OC members were the ones suggesting the content of the law to the Secretary of the Women and Racial Relations in the Federal Government. Later on, when the proposal was sent to the congress, CFEMEA advocated for its approval. At the end, the law was promulgated and represents a huge step forward in combating domestic violence against women in Brazil. It can not be said the law is a direct result of SW/OC, but SW/OC members certainly played an important role. Besides this, according to CFEMEA, being part of the SW/OC coalition has increased their social capital and helped them mobilize support for these struggles. Therefore, we could say SW/OC does not exactly carry out coherent advocacy work but rather functions as an enabling space, facilitating policy changes.

Interviewees did not report any case of lobbying actions that went wrong. However, they argued that policy transformation processes take time and depend on complex and uncontrollable factors. For instance, CFEMEA and SW/OC reported an interesting action they have been developing together in regards to the Social Security System Reform promoted by the Brazilian Government.

In 2007, the focus theme chosen for the SW Report was "Making the universal right to social security a reality". At the same time in Brazil, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva's administration created the National Social Security Forum to discuss proposals for changes in the system. However, informal sectors and women's organizations, which were excluded from the public social security system, were not represented in the Forum. Thus, a Parallel and Itinerant Social Security Forum was created aiming at raising the women's voice and advocating for the universalization of the

system for the ones excluded from social security coverage. Women's organizations and SW/OC then organized a series of seminars and workshops on social security policies mobilizing 400 women, including rural workers, peasants and fishery groups, with the objective of contributing to the debate, of building women's capacities and developing alternative proposals.

The process was very rich and the Parallel Forum produced an interesting document proposing forms to extend social security rights to female informal workers. Changes in this regard represent a huge advance against exclusion in Brazil. However, since the participants of the official Forum could not reach any agreement, the process was frozen awaiting for new rounds of discussions. This example shows how social excluded groups still have to struggle to have voice in the political arena. In the short term, the Parallel Forum can be considered as a great success in terms of mobilization, capacity building, empowerment and proposition of alternatives but policy changes will certainly take long and will depend on the actions of several social actors.

When stressing successes and failures in advocacy and lobbying actions, the long story of resistance against the neoliberal reforms is barely ever mentioned. In Brazil, in the last 15 years, there have been at least three attempts to promote Social Security System Reforms towards the privatization of the health and pension systems. Without the struggle and the resistance of the civil society organizations and of the social movements, access to public services and to social security would probably be much more penalizing for the poor.

Impact assessment

Since SW/OC is formed by members who maintain their autonomy and operate in complex political environments, to measure results and impacts is very challenging. SW/OC has not yet developed tools to assess systematically the internal network performance and the external results. Assessments are carried out informally during the meetings but they are not registered and shared with the whole network. Moreover, members do not report their achievements to the Secretariat, making it difficult to make all SW/OC results visible.

Going back to the SW/OC Report, once it is finalised, members dedicate some time to advertise it and distribute it. The amount of the printing edition ranges from 1500 to 2000 copies and is designed in the same fashion and layout used by the International Report.

The media strategy and communication capacity of the national coalition

Every year the report gets great attention from all the media in Brazil. Launching events are organised since 1997 and are valid moments to gather members, collaborators and interested people. Gathering the members for the launching contributes also to engage watchers in the distribution, advertising and use of the report.

However, by experience, SW/OC has learned that the launch event in itself does not generate media coverage. Calling for press conferences rarely works, whilst media coverage depends more on good public relations and press service. Therefore, through the years, SW/OC has been cultivating good relationships with journalists covering political and social agendas in different Medias and has become a credible source of information as well.

Many times, SW Report launch is accompanied by presentations to specific target groups such as parliamentarians or women's movements leaders. For instance, the Report of 2004 was launched at the National Congress, while the 2006 one was launched in the First Brazilian Women Articulation (AMB) National Meeting, reaching about 450 women's leaders from all over Brazil, which was considered a great success.

In the launching period, SW/OC is invited for interviews on TV and Radio programs, reaching large audiences. Furthermore, SW/OC suggests exclusive and special reports for some TV programs and newspapers. Using the above strategies, SW has been able to get a lot of attention. However, the media interest does not last for a long time.

SW/OC undertakes many opportunities to present the report to promote public debates and support lobbying and advocacy activities. However, watchers feel it is not enough yet. Considering the way SW/OC plans its activities, it seems that the network gives too much attention to the process that leads to the debates and to the report elaboration rather than giving attention

to specific strategies for the use of the report once it is published. Planning and promoting the use of the report would be a great improvement; however, this decision may also demand extra resources for its implementation.

2.5 Fifth dimension: Coherence and Complementarities

The fifth dimension aims at analyzing the relationship between the national coalition and other networks of civil society organizations already existing in the country and the modalities for getting in touch with the other organizations around the world belonging to the Social Watch network.

According to watchers in Brazil, the reasons for being engaged with the Social Watch international network, as well as the perception of the benefits of being part of the network, have changed throughout the years.

For many Brazilian civil society organizations, being engaged with SW/OC at the beginning of the 90s has provided an important (external) political support and the right credibility to open new spaces for a dialogue with the government to advocate for social policy changes. In this direction, Social Watch has contributed to the consolidation of these organizations as important political actors in Brazil at that time.

Nowadays, the national political context is totally different and civil society organizations have already built their own space in the political debates. Nonetheless, the fact that SW is such a large and respected international network continues to stir up interest in participating until today.

The collective work carried out through the preparatory stages of the UN Conferences has worked as a "political school" itself providing Brazilian organizations new political experience, maturing their ideas and views, developing their skills. These opportunities were remarked by watchers interviewees as very relevant for their development.

More recently, due to the changes in the international political context and due to the fact that the UN space has lost part of its importance, some Brazilian watchers feel SW International Network is also losing its impact on the international arena, and as a consequence, is missing opportunities for exchanges at the international level.

SW/OC members, specially the ones who had the chance to participate in the Coordinating Committee (CC) and Assemblies or other activities, remark the richness, the quality of the members and the extension of SW network as a unique asset. They perceive SW as a privileged space in which organizations meet and reflect building connections between national/local and international entities struggling for a social change strategy. However, some interviewees expressed the feeling that its richness and potential have been under used. They would like to see SW more active in spaces such the World Social Forum and would appreciate further opportunities for discussions and exchanges between SW members worldwide.

In regards to the elaboration of the SW Reports and to the social indicators, the Secretariat Coordinator in Brazil explained there are intense collaborations between countries coalitions. From the Brazilian side, the coordinator mentioned conversations with Mexico, Bolivia and Philippines among others, as well as daily contacts with the team of researchers located at the International Secretariat.

There is an interesting collaboration between Brazil and Mozambique. Every year SW/OC distributes copies of the SW Report in Portuguese, to be launched and used by the Mozambican coalition. Furthermore, as the language facilitates the mainstreaming of the report, Brazil provides Mozambique of a space to write a more detailed country report.

SW/OC participants exchange experiences with other members across the world, although this happens less frequently than what they desire. Contacts are mostly kept through electronic communications and during the international meetings (for instance, during the SW gathering for the World Social Forum (WSF)).

The relations between the Social Watch coalitions at the regional level are considered to be very limited. SW/OC members believe that cultivating relations among SW platforms in Latin

Added value of belonging to an international network

Regional dimension of the SW network

America could generate great insights, foster collaborations and lead to a regional agenda in the future. However steps in this direction are still hesitant so far. The international Secretariat, in Montevideo, created some opportunities for regional exchanges but since the effort could not be followed up, interactions did not go further.

For Brazilian watchers, regional interactions would demand a facilitation process. The International Secretariat would be the ‘natural candidate’ to play this role. However, they are aware the Secretariat has no capacity to embrace this task due to funding and human resources constraints. Another reason for explaining the limited regional interaction is the busy and more important national political agenda.

Capacity to encourage relationships with other civil society organizations’ networks at the local level

SW/OC is a member of many networks and fora and uses its power of mobilization to support other collective action initiatives. Some examples of the participation of SW/OC are in the Brazilian National Forum of Human Rights, the Interedes, and the Network and Campaign “Dialogues against the Racism”, the Parallel Women’s Forum for the Social Policy Reform and many others.

Some members are building strategic partnerships aimed at increasing their social impact. Thus, we may affirm that SW/OC in Brazil contributes to strengthen the bonds between organizations, serves as inspiration for the creation of other spaces for participation and political action and contributes to the development of strategic partnerships.

3. Conclusions

When considering SW/OC experience in Brazil and the best practices to share with other SW national coalitions, it is important to remark the strengths and weaknesses of SW/OC experience in Brazil and the challenges and opportunities emerging from the analysis.

SW/OC has built a successful path in Brazil in the past 12 years. SW/OC has become a relevant space of convergence of civil society organizations acting on different aspects of the social struggle in Brazil. The network plays the role of a Forum of debates and of a think tank expressing the state of reflection of the CSOs in regards to the international and national political conjuncture, and contributes as well to the setting of the civil society and political agenda related to the social development in Brazil.

Due the diversity of its composition, SW/OC is enabled to interpret the political context, to build a collective understanding of the social issues and to explore alternatives. The national seminars and workshops are a rich and pluralistic space for discussions and work as a space for capacity building and partnerships. The main lesson in this case is that the elaboration of the SW/OC report is not only a technical activity but rather a political process catalyzing policy dialogues and mobilizing people for political action. Furthermore, dedicating time and energy to promote dialogues is a good strategy to enhance the network and the bonds of trust between the members.

The case of the “Dialogues against Racism” is extremely interesting in the sense, SW/OC members were engaged in a deep transformative learning process. This seems to have been possible due to the maturity and the strong bonds of trust among watchers. The methodology used and the lessons learned could be of great interest for other coalitions seeking social transformation. This process also reveals the capacity and the potential of SW/OC members to deal with very complex social issues as well as the involvement in vital processes of cultural change.

Watchers also consider that one of their main strengths refers to the quality of the members. The fact that the Reference Group is composed by experienced organizations is certainly an asset. Their credibility, leadership, expertise and mobilization capacity is a key factor for SW/OC success. In this direction, counting on the right organizations to guide the national network seems to be an important aspect.

Another feature contributing to SW/OC success is related to the development of a strong national agenda. The effort to translate the international issues into the national context proved to be essential to make SW/OC relevant in the national level.

In Brazil, the national agenda is the priority and this partly explains why the network is still very lively after more than a decade.

Regarding the global SW Network, SW/OC contributes to the consolidation of the broad network itself by working in close collaboration with the international Secretariat, participating in meetings, Assemblies and in the Coordination Committee. In addition, SW/OC produces good international analysis, thematic articles and country reports regularly. Yet, SW/OC has been publishing the SW report in Portuguese since 1997.

In regards to the structure and functioning, SW/OC shows some strengths and weaknesses. Organized as a fluid and informal network, SW/OC membership is based on common values, a shared political project and trust. The structure is horizontal and members maintain their autonomy while freely collaborating. Rules and procedures are very fluid; however this has not been a problem for SW/OC to work efficiently. This shows that trust and flexibility are a powerful basis for the organization, combining the spirit of cohesion with the autonomy.

On the other hand, however, accountability links are weak with this kind of structure.

In the SW/OC case, despite the RG takes responsibility for the network, accountability is referred vertically between the Secretariat and the donor and very little from the RG to the members. Furthermore, in fluid networks it is difficult to collect information from the members and to assess the results. For instance, the elaboration of the SW Report is a lively and rich process but once it is launched and distributed, it is difficult to get to know how the Report was exactly used to support advocacy and lobbying actions.

Another point is that the RG, including the Secretariat, is highly involved in the network activities planning while the rest of the members have a minor participation. Exploring mechanisms to facilitate and increase member's participation in planning, implementing and evaluating results, could be very useful for the network. Nowadays, activities are too concentrated in IBASE's hands, which seems to be overwhelmed with responsibilities.

Moreover, fluid networks such as SW/OC preferring an informal profile, though having one of the members working as the Secretariat, have to face the challenge to evolve to an organizational model in which members truly share the costs of accountability. Currently, IBASE has a very dominant position in the network, affecting its autonomy, but it is also the only organization to bear all the responsibilities. Evolving to a more autonomous model, would probably demand the RG and members to assume new positions and responsibilities.

The fact that SW/OC operates mainly on a national level, far from the grass roots of the organisation, was pointed as a weakness. The SW National Report itself is addressed to a limited audience and there are no popularized materials. Thus, despite the Report is a very good quality output, consulted by many civil society organizations, leaders and policy makers, it could be used more intensively. Some watchers have the feeling SW/OC has not yet realized its full potential and believe it could increase its visibility and results by planning and improving the use of the report.

In regards to the challenges, funding seems to be one of the main treats for SW/OC network sustainability in the long term. SW/OC is dependent from one main donor and has not been able to mobilize significant resources from other sources. The network has been facing resources constraints for some time and trying to cope with it. However, shortage of resources has already affected the network capacities and possibilities of improvement. Though the situation is getting critical, alternative solutions have not been found yet and it is not clear if all members are engaged in finding ways out.

Other external factors affecting SW/OC refer to changes in the international and national political environments. At the international level, the UN have lost importance in front of other multilateral institutions and the commitments made during the Conferences seems to have become a limited goal. Thus, Brazilian watchers believe there is a lot of work to be done in terms of repositioning SW Network more strategically in the global political arena. This is a critical moment demanding SW to adapt in order keep on playing a relevant role in advocacy at the global level.

In the national level, president Luis Inácio Lula da Silva government and its new public policies and spaces for participation in policy making have to be better understood and assessed. Scrutinizing the quality of the public policies implementation, its mechanisms of exclusion and gaps should be a new focus of attention as well. Two interviewees said the moment demands an urgent and fast move towards innovation; otherwise, SW/OC might take the risk of becoming obsolete.

Since SW/OC Network is already consolidated as a credible and legitimate initiative and as the SW Report has become a reliable source of information and a valid tool for advocacy, there is the risk members resist to changes. Some watchers manifested their concerns in this regards and believe it is time for SW/OC to explore new possibilities.

The watchers identified some possibilities: to innovate the format and the language of the report in order to reach other publics and audiences and get connected with the local and grass-roots level by building strategic alliances and partnerships.

Embracing new complex issues such as public security, violence, environment and development might lead SW/OC to new horizons, 'refreshing' somehow the network. Increasing SW public profile by taking public position on delicate issues such as the affirmative policies could be an opportunity to make SW/OC more visible.

Recently, SW/OC has identified the need to develop different kinds of indicators, more suitable to monitor the Brazilian policies implementation and context. SW/OC should give priority to the identification of policy gaps and to alternatives. This might represent a great opportunity at the national level, possibly contributing to Innovation in the global SW network.

After 12 years, the general feeling is that SW is going through an 'identity crisis', a moment considered both as a risk and as an opportunity. Brazilian watchers demonstrated awareness and critical reflection on SW/OC strengths and limitations. However, this debate has still to be carried out collectively. The way Brazilian watchers will embrace the new challenges will determine SW/OC vitality and innovation in the coming years. ■

GOOD PRACTICES LEARNT FROM THE BRAZILIAN SOCIAL WATCH COALITION:

- SW/OC has built itself as a space for plural debates and its members dedicate time and energy to promote long term rich dialogues and get engaged in them.
- The diversity of members helps to improve SW/OC's power of mobilization and capacity to build bridges between different segments of the social struggles in Brazil
- The process of the Report elaboration is not only a technical activity but rather a political process that engages SW/OC members in hot political debates as well as maintaining open spaces for a dialogue with the government representatives invited
- The development of a relevant national agenda contributes to maintaining the network lively and active
- SW/OC frequently organizes national seminars and workshops, contributing to members capacity building and to set new political agendas
- SW/OC promotes public campaigns such as the Dialogues against Racism in order to create a better environment for cultural and social change to happen
- The network has developed an impressive ability to manage conflict
- SW/OC contributes regularly to the International SW Report and elaborates a National Report which is very relevant for the Brazilian social actors
- SW/OC relations with the academia are very positive and helpful. Having academics as SW/OC members has contributed to the network research and to the critical reflection capacities. Besides this, several SW/OC members also produce high quality research materials.
- SW/OC has very good relationships with the media
- SW/OC does not directly carry advocacy and lobbying actions but rather supports and counts on the member's activities, thus it does not duplicate or compete with the members efforts
- SW/OC is part of many networks in Brazil and this strategy improves its mobilization capacity
- SW/OC works in close collaboration with the International Secretariat and contributes to the Global network by participating actively in meetings, General Assemblies and in Coordinating Committee (CC)

◎ SOCIAL WATCH GERMANY CASE STUDY

Valerio Cutolo and Tommaso Rondinella

1. Introduction: the German context

The German Social Watch Coalition has contributed with the “national country report” to the International Social Watch Report since 1997. The collection of all these analyses provides a thorough framework of the German context in which the coalition operates. The context is here presented following the themes that Social Watch usually monitors.

Germany stands in the highest positions for both the Basic Capability Index (BCI) and for the Gender Equity Index (GEI)¹. In the case of BCI Germany reaches the top score of 99+ (the “+” meaning that Germany had already reached a BCI value of 99 by the year 2000) though data on basic education is missing, while for the GEI it reaches the fourth position scoring 80 out of 100. The major differences between women and men are to be found in the economic activity gap, that is activity rate and earned income, as well as in the empowerment measure that comprehends the rate of women in technical and management positions, as well as in Parliament and in ministerial posts.

Poverty and income distribution

Poverty and economic and social inequality are increasing more rapidly in Germany than in most other EU countries. Income disparities have increased by 0.3 percentage points in 2007 alone. Without state benefits, the poverty rate would include more than a quarter of the population and a full one-third of children and young people². These disparities provoked an intense debate about social justice in 2007. Employment shifts in particular came under scrutiny, for despite a more buoyant economy³ and a substantial fall in unemployment⁴, the number of people in precarious employment and/or working for very low wages is steadily increasing⁵. While government hand-outs, wages and salaries have stagnated at EUR 1.13 trillion (USD 1.41 trillion), “there has been a substantial rise - 10.4% - in income generated from business activity and capital assets, now amounting to EUR 484 billion (USD 603 billion)”⁶.

Labour and employment

During the third quarter of 2007 the number of ‘mini-jobs’ paying a maximum wage of EUR 400 (USD 632) a month rose by a further 240,000 against the previous year, to around 6.6 million⁷. Since 2002, the number of part-time or temporary jobs has doubled – with women accounting for almost two thirds of these marginal workers⁸. The disproportionately large number of women in marginal employment reflects both a lack of state-funded childcare options as well as the impact of gender discriminatory tax provisions on female workers in the household. Preferential

1 For further explanation about Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) and Gender Equity Index (GEI) see Annex II

2 Spiegel online, <www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/0,1518,529981,00.html>.

3 The German economy achieved a growth rate of 2.9% in 2006 and 2.5% in 2007. Spiegel online, <www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/0,1518,528600,00.html>.

4 In February 2008, the number of registered unemployed had fallen by 630,000 against the previous year. See: <www.arbeitsagentur.de/nn_27908/zentraler-Content/A01-Allgemein-Info/A015-Oeffentlichkeitsarbeit/Allgemein/Arbeitsmarkt-Februar-2008.html>.

5 Social watch (2008), Annual report, page 126

6 Süddeutsche Zeitung, 14 January 2005, page 19

7 For comparison, the official relative poverty line for Western and Eastern Germany in 2002 was EUR 730 and EUR 604 per capita per month respectively. See: <www.taz.de/index.php?id=archivseite&dig=2005/01/15/a0175>.

8 Financial Times Deutschland, <www.ftd.de/politik/deutschland/Zahl%20Minijobs/280194.html>.

tax treatment is still given to the 'male-breadwinner' model of the family, which puts women at a disadvantage in the labour market and makes them dependent on a higher-earning partner.

Welfare state

Germany has a highly complex system of social security. New models to finance social functions have recently been under discussion, such as the 'basic income', which would be funded by the state and guaranteed to every citizen regardless of income, a low wage supplemented with state benefits ('combi-wage'), or the definition of a minimum wage, which is intended to safeguard an adequate level of earned income. In practice, however, it is mainly neoliberal concepts which are being implemented at present, supposedly requiring social security systems to be scaled back even further. The last years' very healthy state of the economy has pushed discussion about poverty in Germany into the background. Nonetheless, major cuts in the safety net provided by the social security systems have been made in recent months. The most significant change has undoubtedly been the raising of the retirement age from 65 to 67 years. The stated objective of this measure was to limit the pension contributions being made, especially by companies, so as not to secure the income replacement ratio. In effect, the raising of the retirement age means a pension cut for anyone retiring from working life before 67⁹.

Gender equity

The at-risk-of-poverty rate for women rose from 13.3% to 14.4% between 1998 and 2002. It is no comfort to learn that the figures for men are now moving closer to those of women, since the percentage of men at-risk-of-poverty has also risen. While 13.3% of women and 10.7% of men were highly at risk of poverty in 1998, these figures had risen to 14.4% and 12.6% for women and men respectively four years later¹⁰. Germany still has considerable ground to make up regarding the gender distribution of income. The metal industry union IG Metall refers to "progress at snail's pace". "If women's wages in West Germany continue to move into line with men's at the same rate as over the last 40 years, it will take another 40 years, at least, for women white-collar workers and far more than 70 years for women with manual jobs, to catch up with their male co-workers"¹¹. Averaged across all occupational groups, women are still paid 20% less than their male co-workers for doing the same work. For female engineers the difference amounts to 30.7%¹².

In recent years the Government have visibly increased the participation of women in the political process, not only because of the «quota» system. Equity has made advances, although deficiencies still exist in various areas. For example, women do not hold an equal share of real positions of political and economic power, and they are grossly under-represented in academic teaching, despite the fact that the student population is distributed almost equally in terms of gender¹³.

Immigration

In its comments on Germany's fifth periodic report on the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the NGO Pax Christi¹⁴ draws attention to "serious failings in the situation of refugees whose deportation has been temporarily suspended and people with no formal residence status, i.e. so-called 'illegals'." As a result of the restrictions imposed on refugees since the asylum laws were tightened up in 1993, says Pax Christi, Germany is violating the prohibition of discrimination enshrined in Article 2 of the Covenant. Although the employment

9 Social Watch (2007), Annual report, page 174

10 "Lebenslagen in Deutschland", op cit, page 17

11 IG Metall. www.igmetall.de/daten_fakten_grafiken/direkt/einkommen/index.html. On 3 March 2004, the Federal Statistical Office (Statistisches Bundesamt, Destatis) published the results of its 2003 comparison of the incomes of men and women. It states that the average income of women in 2003 was even 30% below the average income of men. www.eurofound.eu.int/2004/04/feature/de0404205f.html

12 Social watch (2005), Annual report, page 182

13 Social watch (1999), Annual report, page 135

14 Pax Christi (2006). Asylum Commission. Stellungnahme zum 5. Staatenbericht der Bundesrepublik Deutschland nach Art. 16 und 17 des Internationalen Paktes über wirtschaftliche, soziale und kulturelle Rechte 2006. Available from: <www.paxchristi.de/fix/files/doc/Parallelbericht_AsyI_3_2007.2.pdf>

ban for refugees has been abolished, the new regulations are so rigid that they still violate Article 6 of the Covenant, which guarantees “the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses”¹⁵.

International cooperation

According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) figures, Germany’s official development assistance (ODA) amounted to USD 12.3 billion in 2007, representing the second biggest aid donor after the United States. Nevertheless with an effort of 0,37% of the ratio ODA/GDP, Germany occupies only the 13th position among all international donors.

2. Social Watch Germany: dimension analysis

2.1 First dimension: Relevance

The first dimension aims at evaluating the relevance of the national coalition in its own country through the analysis of the national coalition’s constitutional process, its membership and the interest stirred up at the national level.

Social Watch Germany was initially founded under the name “German NGO Forum for the World Summit for Social Development” in January 1994. After the Copenhagen Summit in 1995, the Forum decided to continue its activities and to monitor the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments by the German Government. The Forum has been involved in the Social Watch activities since the beginning and has continuously contributed to the Social Watch Report (as of 1997).

The Forum changed its name to “Social Watch Germany” in 2002 in order to demonstrate its close relationship with the international Social Watch network.

Most of the promoter organizations still belong to the coalition. Some were more active, e.g.: Weltwirtschaft, Ökologie & Entwicklung (weed), Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Some others belonged to the German NGO Forum for the World Summit for Social Development, but left afterwards, e.g. the German chapter of the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW). This tendency reflects the whole situation in SW Germany; in fact social welfare organizations, very active at the beginning, stepped out in the last years, while development NGOs (e.g. terre des hommes) were getting more and more active. This is demonstrated by the current composition of the national Coordinating Committee that includes only development and women’s organizations and no social welfare organization.

Over the years the coalition has not enlarged its membership that much, opening to very few new members from the development NGOs side like the Philippinenbüro or the Eastern German Network of development groups INKOTA.

Despite the large number of organizations joining it (35), the German coalition has never adopted particular modalities or strategies to involve new members. They have only discussed how to better involve the old ones, in particular social welfare organizations and trade unions (like IG Metall, ver.di and DGB-Bildungswerk), however without the expected results. In fact trade unions are not very active in the coalition’s work, yet sometimes they contribute to the German report with articles or financially support the publication of the reports.

Notwithstanding its name changed to “Social Watch Germany” in 2002, the coalition’s legitimacy has not prominently been strengthened. Starting from the first report launch (2001), the Coalition is used to sending it to the press and the political establishment, but the launching is still not a major event like in other countries. Besides, the coalition’s visibility from outside is quite weak; it is in fact limited to the distribution of the 3.000 report copies.

Trade unions and welfare organizations don’t need SW as they are much more visible in the public than SW; they do their activities (like lobbying or public outreach activities) on their own.

The constitutional process of the national coalition

Membership and enlargement process

Coalition’s legitimacy at the national level

¹⁵ Social watch (2007), Annual report, page 175

Moreover, several organizations already belong to other networks, so SW is something additional in improving their external visibility.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE CURRENT COALITION IS THE FOLLOWING:

Coordinating Committee:	FIAN Sektion der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED)	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Global Policy Forum Europe	IG Metall
terre des hommes Deutschland	Initiative Kirche von Unten
Werkstatt Ökonomie	INKOTA
WOMNET	Kath. Arbeitnehmerbewegung (KAB)
	Lebendige Kommunikation mit Frauen in ihren Kulturen
Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO)	Ökumenischer Trägerkreis Armut/Reichtum – Gerechtigkeit
Asienhaus	Pax Christi
Aktion Brot für die Welt	Peter-Hesse-Stiftung
Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Sozialhilfeinitiativen	Philippinenbüro
Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW)	Pro Asyl
DBB – beamtenbund und tarifunion	ver.di – Vereinigte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft
Deutscher Caritasverband	VSOP – Verein für Sozialplanung
DGB-Bildungswerk	Weltwirtschaft, Ökologie & Entwicklung (weed)
Diakonisches Werk der EKD	
Entwicklungspolitische Gesellschaft	

2.2 Second dimension: Efficiency and Sustainability

The second dimension aims at searching the methods of national coalition's internal organisation adopted in order to guarantee work efficiency among the different members and ensure the network's activity in the long period.

The coalition's organizational structure

The German Coalition has a well defined structure even though not a legally formalized one. In fact the network doesn't have any legal statute in order to keep it as open as possible to other groups and organizations interested in joining. It doesn't even have any formal internal document, but only a very general memorandum describing the origins of the German SW coalition and the main activities. It is not in any way a formalized document nor a binding one. So network's members have only contracted a "Gentlemen's agreement", meaning they ensure that functional rules have always been shared through past experiences. To become a member of the coalition it is sufficient to send a letter or an e-mail declaring the organization's interest in Social Watch activities and promotion.

The whole activity is focused on the annual SW Report and it is an implicit understanding among members that no other activities are undertaken under the name of Social Watch Germany. Everything else, lobbying or press releases on social and development policy in Germany which are not strictly related to the launch of the report are undertaken by other networks. Even if this is not formalized in a written document, it seems to be an easily understandable rule.

Planning and management tools

At the same time the network has a minimal formalized structure; the members gather for the national coalition meeting that takes place twice a year and is open to all participating groups. During the meeting the participants elect the Coordinating Committee members (the committee that discusses everyday work of the German Social Watch) as well as the network's spokesperson.

The current members of the Coordinating Committee are: **Dr. Peter Eisenblätter**, terre des hommes Deutschland; **Sabine Gürtner**, WOMNET; **Klaus Heidel**, Werkstatt Ökonomie, Spokesperson; **Jens Martens**, Global Policy Forum Europe; **Jürgen Reichel**, Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst.

With regards to decision-making, methodological decisions have to be taken by all members in the national coordination meeting. Others decisions, particularly related to the Social Watch Report

are taken by consensus of the Coordinate Committee .

The coalition doesn't have a task-sharing which is formalized into structures. The spokesperson coordinates all network activities, sends invitations for press conferences or meetings.

The annual work plan is strictly focused on the carrying out of the German and the international reports. This is done every year more or less in the same way: after the coordinating committee receives the Secretariat's guidelines for the report it starts a process of discussion, mainly of the substantive themes of the national report and of the German contribution to the international report. The work plan includes the process of writing, editing, printing and launching of the report at a press conference either in Berlin or in Bonn.

In the last two years the launching of the report has been made in the context of an international workshop. In October 2007, taking advantage of a Social Watch Coordinating Committee, a two-day international conference on Financing for Development has been organized in Bonn as a joint activity of Global Policy Forum, Social Watch and terre des hommes. At this conference the international SW Report 2007 was launched together with the German one. In December 2008, the coalition organized a workshop on Budget monitoring and human rights, linked to the launching of the international report in Germany. The workshop was attended by about 25 people. The programs of the two workshops can be found in Box 1 and 2 at the end of this section.

When planning its activity the coalition takes into consideration the strategic framework adopted at the General Assembly by SW members at the international level. The definition of the strategic framework has even been part of the coalition's activity. The German coalition has in fact been consulted during the drafting of the strategic framework, as a first draft circulated in the coalition's mailing list, having the chance to have its comments brought to the international discussion.

Members of the national coalition didn't face serious conflicts among themselves, as there is a clear understanding about the need to avoid conflicts of interest. There is a consensus that Social Watch Germany should not intervene in areas where its individual members or other existing coalitions are most active and most visible. With the exception of the launching of the report at a press conference, during the rest of the year Social Watch Germany is not raising those issues that are covered by member organizations. Those issues range from poverty to labour, from the pension reform to the health system to development policy, leaving in fact very little room for manoeuvre by the coalition. Such strong self limitation is above all a form of conflict prevention within such a broad coalition.

Conflict management

The annual budget is largely related to the editing, printing and launching of the report, and it is around €25.000, funded through voluntary contributions by the individual members. Thus, publishers of the report are not all the members of SW Germany but only those who contribute (financially or in kind), usually around 10 organizations. The budget was managed until 2007 by the Protestant Church Development Service (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst). Now this work is done by WOM-NET.

Criteria for ensuring sustainability to the network in the long period

Under the efficiency dimension, the network faces two major challenges and weaknesses:

- *Keeping the specific political profile*
The difficulty of keeping the bridging function between development NGOs on the one hand, and social welfare organizations and trade unions on the other. The weakness of the Copenhagen process and the dominance of the MDG discourse lead to a decreasing interest of welfare organizations and trade unions in Social Watch. The key challenge is to find themes and to define political strategies which are relevant and interesting enough for all participating organizations.
- *Establishing a sustainable funding base*
Professional networking, advocacy and outreach activities are not possible without sufficient funding and a minimum of organizational structure (secretariat, website, mailing list etc.). The work of Social Watch Germany has been chronically under-funded, and the network therefore could never develop its full potential. The key challenge is to establish a sustainable funding base for future activities thus able to support other activities besides the publication and launching of the report.

BOX 1



International Workshop

Social and Human Rights Budgeting

Budget monitoring, participatory budgeting and human rights

Permanent Representation of Bremen, Hiroshimastrasse 24, 10785 Berlin

9 December 2008

Political declarations or action plans hardly prove whether governments and parliaments really respect, protect and fulfil human rights. What indeed has to be examined is their substantive actions. Fiscal policy plays an important role in this regard because public finance is not at all human-rights neutral.

Raising taxes, dues or fees may promote or violate human rights. Tuition fees at public schools or state universities can violate the right to education. A tax system that neglects gender issues could possibly violate women's rights.

Governments and parliaments can also promote human rights through budget allocation. State-subsidized school lunches can foster the realization of the right to food. Public housing benefits promote the right to adequate housing. Official Development Assistance (ODA) for public health systems strengthens the right to health. In contrast, agricultural export subsidies can destroy the economic basis of peasants in developing countries and endanger food security and the right to food.

In recent years, civil society organisations, particularly in the South, have launched initiatives to examine national budgets with regard to human rights and gender issues. Under the keywords "Human Rights Budgeting" or "Gender Responsive Budgeting", they are analyzing whether fiscal policies promote or violate economic, social and cultural rights as well as women's and children's rights.

With our international workshop, we would like to gain an overview of the broad range of budget monitoring and human rights budgeting initiatives. We want to share experiences with partner organizations from Asia, Africa and Latin America in analyzing and influencing national budgets. What are success stories and what are obstacles and difficulties in their monitoring and advocacy work? We will do this in cooperation with the international network Social Watch. In its 2008 Report national Social Watch coalitions highlight how their governments promote or violate human rights through their economic and fiscal policies. The report will be presented at the workshop.

Finally, we would like to discuss what we in Europe can learn from the various civil society initiatives in the South and whether the time has come to launch an initiative in Germany to monitor public budgets from a human rights perspective. Can fiscal policy thus become an effective human rights policy? We invite you to participate in this joint exchange of experiences and ideas on the day before the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thomas Manz, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung - Jens Martens, Global Policy Forum - Klaus Schilder, terre des hommes

PROGRAMME

9:30	Welcome and Opening Thomas Manz, Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, Germany
9:45	Budget Monitoring and Human Rights Budgeting - Concepts and Experiences Cornelieke Keizer, Equalinrights, Netherlands Monitoring Economic and Fiscal Policies from a Human Rights Perspective – The Social Watch Report 2008 Roberto Bissio, Social Watch, Uruguay <i>Moderator: Peter Lanzet, Weed, Germany</i>
10:45	Coffee break
11:15	Civil Society Monitoring and Advocacy Initiatives – Experiences from the Regions India: Pooja Parvati, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability Philippines: Maria Luz Anigan, Member of Education Cluster, Social Watch Philippines <i>Moderator: Jens Martens, Global Policy Forum Europe, Germany</i>
13:00	Lunch break
14:00	South Africa: Mario Claasen, Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) Argentina: Nuria Becu, Civil Association for Equity and Justice (ACI) <i>Moderator: Klaus Schilder, terre des hommes, Germany</i>
15:45	Coffee break
16:15	Learning from the South: Do we need a Human Rights Budgeting Initiative in Germany? Herta Däubler-Gmelin, Member of the German Parliament Michael Windfuhr, Bread for the World, Germany Marion Böker, Gender Budgeting Initiative Berlin, Germany <i>Moderator: Klaus Heide, Werkstatt Ökonomie/Social Watch Germany</i>
18:00	End of the Workshop

BOX 2



International Seminar

Money may not be everything, but...

Civil Society Perspectives on Financing the International Development Goals

Gustav-Stresemann-Institut, Bonn

15-16 October 2007

PROGRAMME

Monday, 15 October 2007		
11:00am-1:00pm	Opening session Current trends, urgent issues and top priorities in Financing for Development: Spotlights from the regions.	Peter Mucke, terre des hommes Germany Emily Joy Sikazwe, Women for Change, Zambia Ziad Abdel Samad, Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Lebanon Thida Khus, SILAKA, Cambodia Iara Pietricovsky, Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (INESC), Brasil Chair: Jens Martens, Global Policy Forum
1:00pm-2:00pm	Lunch break	
2:00pm-4:00pm	Panel 1 How to strengthen domestic public finance? Taxation, capital flight and budget transparency.	Prof. Leonor Magtolis Briones, Social Watch Philippines Prof. Edward Oyugi, Social Development Network (SODNET), Kenia Chair: NN
4:00pm-4:30pm	Coffee break	
4:30pm-6:30pm	Panel 2 How to count "aid"? Quantity and Quality of ODA	Mirjam van Reisen, Eurostep/EEPA, Belgium Roberto Bissio, Social Watch, Uruguay Stephan K. Ohme, MDG-Commissioner of the German Development Ministry (BMZ), Germany Chair: NN
7:00pm	Dinner	
Tuesday, 16 October 2007		
9:00am-11:00am	Panel 3 Strategies towards "solidarity levies" to fund development and global taxes.	John Foster, North-South-Institute, Canada Eva Hanfstaengl, erlassjahr.de, Germany Chair: NN
11:00am-11:30am	Coffee break	
11:30am – 1:30pm	Panel 4 The "systemic issues" on the FfD agenda. The crisis of the IMF and the role of the UN in global economic governance	Rainer Falk, Editor, World Economy & Development, Luxembourg John Foster, North-South-Institute, Canada Chair: NN
1:30pm-2:30pm	Lunch break	
2:30pm – 4:00pm	Closing session Civil society strategies and benchmarks for the Doha Conference 2008	NN Jens Martens, Global Policy Forum Europe, Germany Chair: NN
4:00pm	End of Conference	

2.3 Third dimension: Effectiveness

The third dimension aims, by looking at the research activities carried out by the coalition, at pointing out the modalities through which the coalition monitors the policies of its Government in promoting social development at the local level.

The coalition has contributed to the International Report regularly since 1997. The quality of the contribution has quite improved in the last two years, indeed there is an improvement compared with the one of 1997, when the contribution to the International Report was less than a page.

The coalition's work for drafting the country report is the following: a journalist (Uwe Kerkow, a free lance journalist who has been contracted for this task in the last years) does the writing

Monitoring of the social policies and drafting the national contribution to the SW International Report

and the editing of the German contribution (of course it's not written only by him) and sends the first draft to the Coordinating Committee to get some feedback; then he finalizes the contribution based on the feedback received and sends it to the International SW Secretariat in Montevideo. It is important to underline that there is no external consultation and nor does the coalition come to a consensus conclusion: members don't have to agree about everything, but only about plot lines and general issues.

Besides contributing to the international report the national coalition has been producing a proper national report since 2001. It is divided into 3 parts:

- *International part:*
it's a translation of both the international report introductory article and some of the most interesting thematic articles.
- *Development policies:*
it includes new articles written by people in the German networks.
- *Social situation in Germany:*
it includes articles from coalition members or sometimes from academics too.

Over the years the statistical part has been reduced because translating and printing of all the statistics of the international report was considered as too expensive and not that necessary, therefore now the statistics are only included on the BCI and the GEI.

In 2009, the German report will have a new format and structure. It will be probably much shorter (about 50 pages) in order to make it more accessible to the key target groups, journalists and political decision makers.

Use of the Indexes BCI and GEI at the local level

Regarding the BCI and GEI calculation at the country level, the coalition just maintains the international indicators without calculating them for lower territorial levels, for example the German Laender. The coalition doesn't use BCI actively in its work while GEI is distributed at meetings and conferences.

The problem with GEI is a lack of statistics in Germany; in fact this country was not on the GEI list at all in the past years and 2008 is the first year that Germany entered the list (in a rather high position, scoring 80, the fourth highest score), thus making it impossible to compare with figures from the past years. In Germany there has been a lack of disaggregated figures for male and female pupils in elementary school, so that GEI simply could not be calculated (this has been a problem for the UNESCO too, but now UNESCO has solved it).

With regard to the BCI, the coalition discussed the building of an alternative and more useful index; moreover there was a proposal to elaborate a kind of solidarity index, like the Commitment for Development Index, by Social Watch, but it is something that has to be done at the international level and not only in Germany. A more adequate index for all those countries that are reaching top positions in the BCI might be useful for many coalitions, not only the German one.

Research methods and tools

In research activity, the German network uses only official statistics and widely recognized sources in an academic way, this being also strictly required by Montevideo's secretariat.

Specific research activities carried out by the national coalition

There are no other major research activities done by the coalition, yet some specific research activity is carried out independently by individual NGOs joining Social Watch Germany.

Enhancing and upgrading analytical capacities in researching

Finally, in order to enhance internal capacities, a workshop on poverty indicators has been organized by member NGOs. The workshop's theme was the measure of poverty and alternative poverty indicators. The workshop hosted various international speakers, including Roberto Bissio and Karina Batthyány from the SW Secretariat in Montevideo and professor Pogge from Columbia University. The workshop was organized by Global Policy Forum and terre des hommes, both active members of SW Germany, and was attended by 30 people.

2.4 Fourth dimension: Strategy and Impact

The fourth dimension aims at assessing the national coalition's capacities in influencing the policies of its Government and in raising public opinion awareness on social development issues.

Lobbying activities have not been a main task for the German coalition and have been quite sporadic. The coalition undertook lobbying activities in the past when the Report was launched; e.g. a meeting in Parliament has been organized, but it was not considered as very successful because only a few parliamentarians and staff people attended.

One of the reasons of the difficulty in reaching the right political interlocutors stands in the national Report structure itself, since it doesn't have a clear target group within the Parliament and the Government. On the one hand the Report is focused on the social situation in Germany, so that the target group could be the Social Committee members or members working on economic policy; but on the other hand the Report is focused on development policy, so the target group would be the Parliamentary Committee on Development Cooperation. The result is that it appears difficult to bring both issues together, and the Report is always between them, thus no target group thinks the Report is specific enough to be interesting for it.

All this conducts us to the second problem, that is the identification of "priority issues". The fact that the report theme changes every year makes it impossible to keep working with the same interlocutors and to have coherent advocacy work. Facing such problem led to the creation of two "thinking groups" within the coalition: one wants to maintain the theme set at the international level trying, if necessary, to influence the initial definition of the theme. The other group thinks the international theme may not automatically be a priority for the network and in this case the coalition should identify its own priority theme for Germany that could be different from the international one. The coalition members are still discussing these two options without having come to a final decision as yet.

With regard to media strategy and capacity of communication the coalition has never adopted a comprehensive communication strategy. A positive experience has been the publication of a 12 page extract from the German Social Watch Report 2006 in a development policy magazine, called "Eins Entwicklungspolitik" (now called "World trends").

The German network has only sporadically succeeded in making the local and national media interested in its activities. The launching of the German SW report is usually organized in form of a press conference resulting in about 5 to 10 press articles. In addition, there have been interviews related to the Report launch with a few radio stations, thus this happens only once a year.

The coalition uses the materials provided by the International Secretariat and produces its own press releases for media communication.

In order to find out how the report is distributed and who actually reads it, SW Germany undertook a small survey in 2008. The coalition tried to assess the impact of the report by specifically observing "who is reading the report and who is working with the report". The small assessment implied, among others, looking for links on internet web-sites, references in academic journals, and newspaper articles referring to the Report. Unfortunately, the survey couldn't bring total clarity about the actual readers and the range of groups reached by the German SW report.

In order to improve the outreach and visibility of the German SW report, the coalition discussed the need to produce other forms of publications, for example an executive summary of 4 to 8 pages to reach a broader public, and to introduce different instruments for different target groups, for instance increasing the use of internet. In addition, it is planned to produce the 2009 report in a new condensed format and structure, more focused to reach journalists and politicians.

Monitoring of the social policies of the national Government and lobbying activities towards it

Advocacy actions through the promotion of the analysis carried out by the SW network

The media strategy and capacity of communication of the national coalition

Impact assessment

2.5 Fifth dimension: Coherence and Complementarities

The fifth dimension aims at analyzing the relationship between the national coalition and other networks of civil society organizations already existing in the country and the modalities for getting in touch with the other organizations around the world belonging to the Social Watch network.

Added value of belonging to an international network

The added value of an international network such as Social Watch is the possible use of its reputation as a global network for the national lobbying and advocacy activities by the national coalitions. Members can be empowered by the chance of speaking in the name of a much larger number of organizations; however, in Germany most of the SW members, namely the big trade unions, welfare organizations and development NGOs, do not need the visibility and renown of Social Watch for their national activities. Nevertheless, quite a few of them continue to be part of the Social Watch network and to support it both at national and international level.

On the contrary, the existence of a broad Social Watch coalition in Germany contributes to the strengthening and visibility of Social Watch at the international level.

As the German network was established in 1994, i.e. before Social Watch was founded, the original intention to become member of the German network was not linked to the international network. Later some members joined the German coalition because of its international dimension; for them it was more attractive to be part of an international network and to influence decisions at international level. On the other side some members left Social Watch Germany because they were not interested in the international dimension and some other members would be more active if the coalition were to focus more on the domestic German situation.

Regional dimension of the SW network

With regard to the relationship with other national Social Watch coalitions, in 2004 SW Germany hosted the first European Social Watch meeting in Berlin. But, due to a lack of capability and funding there has not been a follow up meeting in the years after.

Capacity to encourage relationships with other civil society organizations' networks at the local level

There is a lot of thematic and institutional overlapping of the SW coalition and its members with other networks and platforms in Germany. But there is no formal relationship between Social Watch and these other networks. Up to now the relationship to other networks - like VENRO, the German network of development NGOs - is exclusively through individual Social Watch members.

3. Conclusions

In a logic identification of the German Social Watch coalition's strengths and weaknesses, a few points can be summarized.

Among the strengths the network first of all showed the ability to keep a wide group of organizations ranging from trade unions, to welfare organizations, to development NGOs together for over 10 years. Such a wide and heterogeneous coalition has been able to contribute annually to the international Social Watch report and to publish a national report in German continuously since 2001. Since the actual objective that the network intended to achieve has always merely been the publication of the report, we can say that the minimum objective has been reached.

Moreover, the constant presence and activity of the German coalition itself gave strength to the Social Watch network at the international level.

On the other hand the main weaknesses are identified in its inability in doing anything more besides the publication of the national report as well as not reaching the "policy power" (parliamentarians, ministries, etc.) in a systematic manner so as to implement an effective lobbying and advocacy activity.

Probably because of the size of the coalition, very few parallel activities other than the report and its launching have been organized as Social Watch Germany. When workshops have been carried out to discuss the themes of the report more thoroughly, they have been promoted by some of the members of the coalition, in particular Global Policy Forum and terre des hommes.

The outreach and the public impact of the coalition remains weak as SW appears in the media

just once a year in correspondence to the launching.

In order to represent a tool that is widely used, the report should find its own thematic niche, and Social Watch Germany had to define its own specific identity more clearly. This appears very difficult for two main reasons: the first is the annual changing theme of the international report, the second is the twofold focus on domestic welfare issues as well as on development cooperation policies. The lack of a clear focus and a precisely defined target group represents a major weakness in front of possible interlocutors, starting from members of Parliament and Government. Yet they are just one of the target groups, but not the only one; copies of the SW report are mainly distributed to NGOs, journalists, students and academics.

The definition of the overall issue of SW Germany is also strongly limited by the attempt to avoid overlapping with the themes already covered by member organizations. The presence of unions and social welfare organizations limits the advocacy focus of SW Germany, excluding themes such as poverty, labour, pension reform or health system, while development NGOs would keep the issue of development assistance and the German aid budget for themselves. This doesn't mean that the German Social Watch Coalition is not allowed to speak about those issues and to cover them in the annual reports, but it means that they cannot be the Coalition's reference theme. The space left is therefore minimal and moves from a broader view of poverty and social justice in North and South to the social dimension of globalization. This is a self-imposed restriction that is limiting Social Watch Germany preventing the coalition from becoming a stronger political actor.

The last point we would like to stress here is the inadequacy of BCI for describing the social situation in Germany (as well as in many other countries). BCI is not used at all by the German coalition in its advocacy activity. A more sensitive indicator for developed countries able to take Social Watch priorities into consideration might be a useful tool for many coalitions in order to have a standardized monitoring of the domestic social situation. ■

GOOD PRACTICES LEARNT FROM THE GERMAN SOCIAL WATCH COALITION:

- Ability to maintain a large network always open to new members, even if limiting the space for the themes treated;
- Ensuring the continuous production of a national report;
- Light but effective structure. The presence of a Coordinating committee guarantees a constant discussion and agreement on everyday work without questioning all member organizations;
- Development of tools to be used together with the report (even if occasionally) in order to reach the media more effectively;
- Carrying out of an impact assessment survey to better understand the target group the report is actually reaching.

◎ SOCIAL WATCH PHILIPPINES CASE STUDY

Caterina Marchioro

1. Introduction: the Philippine context¹

Since the end of Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship in 1986, four regimes have governed the Philippines but the country seems always facing the same problems: government corruption, poverty, inequality, social conflicts, human rights violations and environmental decay.

The Transparency International Index ranks the country among the most corrupt in the world and this is exactly how many Filipinos consider their government, especially during Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Even if Philippine economy seems to have grown during the last years, basic social services - such as health and education - are still inaccessible for the majority of poor people. Between 2003 and 2006, the percentage of people in poverty increased from 24.4% to 26.9%. In October 2007, the estimate unemployment rate was 6.3% while underemployment was at 8.1%. The country economic growth is sustained in large part by relevant remittances from the increasing number of overseas workers - around 10 million people, mainly women, supporting about the fourth part of the total Philippine population consisting of about 14 million families. For ordinary citizens, taxes have increased, while a selected group of wealthy Filipinos is able to avoid paying even its reduced tax assessments. The social protection mechanism hardly addresses the most vulnerable household groups among the poor, including the growing number of workers in the informal sector of economy and the overseas Filipinos workers. In Philippines, a very serious problem is also disparity: even though the government guarantees that poverty is being reduced, this must be considered only in terms of national totals, which are pulled up by few rich regions, while a large number of geographical regions is still facing deep poverty.

In budgetary allocations, shares for social development have been decreasing during the last decade. A large part of the national budget goes to debt repayment: in 2008, USD 13.86 billion have been allocated for debt repayment, nearly half of the total 2008 budget (nearly 31 billion USD), while USD 8.08 billion went for social services. Even though local government units are expected to finance and to provide social services, they still rely on national government for financing.

The Philippines has ratified almost all human rights treaties, conventions and agreements of the United Nations. The 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees full respect for civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, with a special attention to the rights of workers, women, children and the aged. Nonetheless, since 2001 the protection of human rights has been deteriorating in the Philippines.

According to the Social Watch 2008 Basic Capability Index (BCI), the Philippines ranks 49th out of 176 Countries in terms of lowest BCI value, and as one of the countries with a very low BCI progress².

In this context, although government reports indicate dramatic accomplishments in terms of poverty reduction and human development, the country is almost certainly doomed to fail in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which set a minimum for the realisation of basic human rights. In order to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, Filipinos

¹ This short introduction of Philippine political, economic and social context is based on the 2008 SW Report (Isagani R. Serrano, Social Watch Philippines, In fear and want).

² The Philippine BCI (Basic Capability Index) 2008 is 77.2 and the Philippine GEI (Gender Equality Index) 2008 is 76 (Education 100, economic activity 63.5, empowerment 65.5). For further explanation about BCI and GEI see Annex II.

should have ensured food, job, health, education and a safe and clean environment to live in.

2. Social Watch Philippines: dimension analysis

2.1 First dimension: Relevance

The first dimension aims at evaluating the relevance of the national coalition in its own country through the analysis of the national coalition's constitutional process, its membership and the interest stirred up at the national level.

The constitutional process of the national coalition

Social Watch Philippines (SWP) was established in 1997, as part of Social Watch International (SWI), in order to monitor and advocate the progress of the government commitments to the social development goals as provided for in the Copenhagen Summit in 1995 and then specified in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. SWP was convened by three organizations: Action for Economic Reforms (AER), Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) and Accessing Support Services and Entrepreneurial Technology Inc (ASSET) with Prof. Leonor Briones as the Lead Convenor and Coordinator of Social Watch Asia. Two among the convenors listed before belong to the group of organizations that created SWI in 1995 at the very beginning. When the convenors established SWP, they already knew each other and were used to collaborating in social development initiatives. In year 2000, the convening organizations were reduced only to AER and PRRM.

Membership and enlargement process

SWP is still led by the two convening organizations - Action for Economic Reforms (AER)³ and Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM)⁴-, Marivic Raquiza⁵ and Prof. Leonor Briones. The convenors are composed by two representatives from AER and one representative from PRRM. Prof. Leonor Briones is one of the key personalities who created Social Watch: former National Treasurer of the country, she is currently teaching Public Administration at the University of the Philippines. She is also a columnist for the Business Mirror. The partnership among the convenors is convenient and simple, as the level of confidence, trust and ability to work together among them was forged through the years.

SWP is a fluid network: it draws its strength from an existing network of advocates. Mutual reciprocity characterizes the relationship among the members: SWP promotes poverty eradication and social development approaching MDGs from a structural perspective. The coalition has not established specific criteria for its membership being open both to non-state organizations and individuals willing to get involved in its activities. From its very first activity in 1997, all the participating organizations were automatically considered part of the SWP network, including those focusing on health, education, environment, agriculture, human rights, gender, women, etc. From its constituency, the coalition has enlarged its membership: the network started with 27 among civil society organizations (CSOs) and individuals and it has grown up to nearly 120 including CSOs and individuals (about 50 at the national level and 70 at the local one).

According to some members of SWP, many advantages can be achieved while being part of the Philippine SW coalition:

- the improvement of the research activities;
- the improvement of the strategies for the engagement of local and national governments;
- the improvement of capacity building and of common learning processes, gaining from the expertise of other organizations;

3 <http://www.aer.ph> Action for Economic Reforms was founded in 1996 by a group of progressive scholars and activists in the Philippines. Its core programs include: Macroeconomic Policy with focus on fiscal issues; Right to Information; Utility Regulation; Monitoring of Millennium Development Goals.

4 <http://www.prrm.org> Founded in 1952, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement is a pioneering NGO in rural/community development with operations in different parts of the Philippines addressing various issues concerning democratic governance and social and environmental justice.

5 Marivic Raquiza was formerly convenor as PRRM representative. Now she remains a convenor in an individual capacity.

- the possibility of bringing together organizations advocating for education, health, environment, agriculture, etc...⁶
- the possibility of sharing resources in events organization;
- the possibility of having a good echo on the media

The aim of SWP is monitoring, lobbying and advocacy in order to eradicate poverty and to improve social development using the MDGs as a framework for engagement with the government. SWP is considered to be a leader in the advocacy on the MDGs at the local, national, regional and international level. Its leadership is widely recognized by civil society organizations, local government units, national agencies and international organizations. The anti-poverty and social development flagship - which includes the MDGs - has inspired other civil society organizations in the Philippines.

The SWP's external perception in the Country got strengthened during the years. Since its constituency, SWP has gained a high credibility as a source of information on human development matters: the organization is a source of important data supported by statistical analyses obtained from data monitoring at a ground level as well as studies and analyses carried out by experts in economic, social science and policy.

A very concrete example of the coalition's legitimacy is shown by the *Alternative Budget Initiative* (ABI): in 2006, 22 NGOs were involved in this initiative: this number increased up to 48 in 2007 and up to 56 in 2008, even though the technical working groups regularly meeting count about fifteen organizations⁷. The credibility of SWP has strengthened not only among NGOs but also with the government, with the legislative representatives and with the media. An increasing number of legislatures support the initiative and many government agencies such as the Department of Health, Agriculture, Environment and Education, have now become receptive towards ABI's proposals.

Another example of SWP's legitimation is the *local monitoring initiative* using the frame of mainstreaming the MDGs at a local level. Involving a limited number of NGOs, this initiative has permitted SWP to become the partner NGO of the government in localizing the MDGs. Together with the local government units, this initiative promotes an evidence-based planning and budgeting using MDGs as a frame. The local government units discovered a handle for local development planning through SWP's introduction of the MDG. The localization projects represent an effort at getting to the base, being visible and accessible.

2.2 Second dimension: Efficiency and Sustainability

The second dimension aims at searching the methods of national coalition's internal organisation adopted in order to guarantee work efficiency among the different members and ensure the network's activity in the long period.

SWP's structure broadly follows the SW International structure, even if in a smaller scale. The group of SWP convenors acts as decision makers which are responsible for the plans and the strategies of the organization. There is a Secretariat with a coordinator and two persons as contractual staff. There are local coordinators for the three main islands of the Philippines: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

SWP is a lean and efficient network, with an in depth relationship between its members. Nevertheless, as for the growing amount of activities carried out by SWP and the increasing number of members becoming part of the network, at the Secretariat level more resources and personnel would be desirable, for the Secretariat itself to be able to give a greater attention and support to the local clusters.

Coalition's legitimacy at the national level

The coalition's organizational structure

⁶ For instance, in the budget advocacy the collaboration among different clusters enables each cluster to put forward demands for its own sector of advocacy without sacrificing demands for other important sectors.

⁷ For instance, Education Network joined the SWP's endeavour of the Alternative Budget Initiative, particularly to make government accountable to its commitments made in the Education for All Plan 2015, related to the MDGs, especially goal n. 2 (Universal Primary Education) and goal n. 3 (Gender Equality), the issues Education Network advocates.

SWP has not received a registered legal statute until now, since the convenors did not consider it an essential issue for the attainment of its objectives. AER and PRRM take turns as a contract holder on SWP initiatives. At the moment, SWP is in the process of exploring the possibility of institutionalizing the Philippine Social Watch network as an entity: the convenors have recognized the value of a legal statute mainly to apply directly for new fundings. Still under discussion, this process will require the drafting of internal documents dealing with coalition's principles, structure and functioning rules. In the formalization process, SWP may consider to accept other members of the coalition in the decision making body. At the moment, among the coalition's members there is not a complete agreement on the functioning rules of the network, but the organizations which regularly participate to its activities agree on the need of implementation of the SWP initiatives.

Planning and management tools

The SWP Secretariat takes care of coordinating the network activity, as guided by the convenors.

There is at least one national consultation every year and regional consultations (Islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao) occur once every two years.

The meeting programs are defined by the convenors together with the local coordinators. Usually these meetings last two days, being organized by the Secretariat. The participants are network members from national and regional organizations. The purpose of these consultations consists in building the agenda, sharing experiences, gathering inputs for future planning and strengthening the relations among members in the network. All SWP's consultations are documented and the highlights shared with the national media.

The relationship among the members of the coalition has been harmonious so far: no conflict has been experienced. SWP consults its members on the framework, the process and the strategies for their common advocacy activities: this is the main reason why these good relations exist.

Coalition's members use email, telephone and websites to communicate among them. The website (www.socialwatchphilippines.org) contains not only a SWP's presentation but also core programs, projects, publications, news and events: a repository of resources to be shared with all the coalition's members⁸. Furthermore, SWP created a Community Site, a password-protected online workshop room and whiteboard where invited members can share information and collaborate. The Community Site was suggested and created by one of the ABI active members as a platform where members could make a direct input in the development of alternative budget proposals. Actually, the Site has not been used much till now, since most of the ABI members usually prefer to give their inputs during cluster meetings. According to the SWP focal point it might be only a question of time for the ABI members to get used to this new communication instrument.

In order to draft the plans, SWP Secretariat gathers inputs from the convenors, local coordinators and other members of the network. Once the draft has been prepared, the Secretariat organizes a planning meeting to organise and approve the plans. Up to year 2006, SWP plans were made on a yearly basis. In 2006, SWP was able to come up with a three-year plan in addition to the annual ones. The result of a one month process of individual consultations with coalition's members, culminating in a two full-day strategic planning meeting, was the 2006-2009 SWP plan which included SWP's vision, mission, program, detailed strategies and activities, outcomes, risks analysis and risks management. The three-year plan gave the required continuity to the advocacy work, trying to receive a three-year financial support. Actually, because of the impossibility to get a pluriannual funding, SWP had to recast its three-year plan back to an annual one. The SWP 2007-June 2008 plan focused on three advocacy initiatives: engaging the government on the midterm review of the MDGs; improving an active participation in global financial and national budget processes⁹; building partnerships on local MDG monitoring. At a global level, for

8 SWP 2007-June 2008 Plan declares that SWP will launch its website for both internal purposes and to support its advocacy campaign. Internally the website will serve as a cost-effective repository of SWP resources, including its monitoring tools, training packages, interactive databases, analytical papers and campaign modules.

9 The initiative includes four components: the Alternative budget advocacy campaign; the local budget engagement; the Official Development Assistance (ODA) engagement; and the Doha Financing for Development International Conference.

2007 SWP decided to interface with the following advocacy initiatives: Review of the Monterrey Consensus (Financing for Development); the Global Call to Action against Poverty; and the World Social Forum. The plan provided also for internal thrusts: forging new partnership to ensure SWP sustainability and exploring alternative financing to lessen its dependence on external support; organizational development; capacity building of its members.

In planning its activity, SWP refers to the International Social Watch strategic framework. The review of Financing for Development is an example of how the Philippine coalition referred to the Strategic Framework 2007-2009 engaging this process at the national, regional and international level.

The Philippine coalition keeps regularly in touch with the International Secretariat and the Coordinating Committee (CC) through emails and through the participation to SWI meetings (assemblies and workshops). The SWP Secretariat is in constant communication with the International Secretariat during the preparation of national reports for the global SW report. Furthermore, SWP Secretariat submits to the International Secretariat its annual report of activities and outputs and provides them with its publications. Prof. Briones of SWP attends as a member the Coordinating Committee meetings which take place at least twice a year and participates in conference calls in between.

A great challenge for SWP is the availability of financial support with implications on the sustainability of its initiatives.

SWP receives its funds by International Organizations: Oxfam Novib funded SWP's activity until June 2008; in June 2007 SWP was able to get funding from UNDP; also Christian Aid and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung offered a partnership with SWP. For the year 2008, SWP has approached other international organizations for a possible support. SWP does not receive funds directly from the network's members even though they financially support its initiatives.

SWP has an average annual budget of about 80.000 USD (about EUR 59.000,00). During the last financial year (July 2007-June 2008) SWP operated for about 90.000 USD (about EUR 66.000,00) distributed as follows:

- MDG advocacy initiatives: 22% (including national and regional consultations to assess the status of the MDGs, information/education campaigns, publications);
- Local Monitoring: 17% (mobilization of local NGOs and government units, training on enumeration, encoding, data processing and analysis);
- Alternative Budget Initiative: 31%;
- Financing for Development Review: 14%;
- Human & Administrative Resources: 10%;
- Participation in international activities, setting-up of web resources, internal capacity building: 6%.

2.3 Third dimension: Effectiveness

The third dimension aims, by looking at the research activities carried out by the coalition, at pointing out the modalities through which the coalition monitors the policies of its Government in promoting social development at the local level.

Since its constitution, SWP has put forward a strategy of monitoring, lobbying, advocacy, awareness building, organizational development and networking.

Since 1996, SWP annually contributes to the Global Social Watch Report with a Philippine Country Report. Once Social Watch International has provided the theme and the guidelines of the annual report, the SWP convenors meet and assign to a writer the task of preparing a draft for the Philippine report, which will be then submitted for initial comments to the convenors.

After this revision, a second draft is distributed among the members.

A third draft might be prepared as well, gathering further comments, and is submitted to SW International for the editing.

Criteria for ensuring sustainability to the network in the long term period

Monitoring of the social policies and drafting the national contribution to the SW International Report

SWP'S CORE PROGRAMS¹⁰**Policy Advocacy and Intervention**

SWP regularly monitors progress and shortfall in social development based on the government's commitment to various international conferences and agreements as consolidated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It evaluates policies, recommends programs and engages government agencies, international financial institutions and the UN System to address key poverty issues and human development concerns. SWP comes out with annual budget analysis and produces an alternative report on the status of social development in the country.

Local Monitoring and Capacity-Building

SWP promotes and popularizes the MDGs in different parts of the country through a series of island consultations and capacity-building activities. SWP developed a Local Monitoring System which was implemented in four pilot areas (Central Luzon, Bicol Region, Western Visayas and Central Mindanao). It partners with local NGOs and academic institutions and networks with Local Governments to support its monitoring and advocacy initiatives.

Networking

SWP is a national network of citizen's groups and alliances that are engaged in various social concerns. It continuously expands the network and harness their active participation in information and engagement activities.

SWP consults the existing studies available on the various topics to draft the country Report. According to the SWP focal point the quality of the national articles has increased during the years.

Moreover, SWP produced its own National Report in 2001 (on the status of social development), in 2003 (on the monitoring of social development), in 2005 (on the status of the Millennium Development Goals) and in 2007 (on midterm assessments of the MDGs)¹¹. As the International Reports, the National ones have thematic articles as well as regional and local reports. A publication team is set up to decide on the content of the book and to identify contributors. Once the first drafts are ready, meetings are made for comments and suggestions to improve and validate the reports.

SWP uses the Global and the National Reports in its engagement with the national and local governments and with other international agencies, as well as in information campaigns. As they declared, some members of the network make an extensive use of the Reports, particularly the national ones, as an overall source of information on the MDGs, contextualising their own advocacy.

In the Philippines, legislators and their staff, academics, researchers, NGOs and students are the most interested in the analysis found in SW reports.

Specific research activities carried out by the national coalition

Apart from the research relating to the topic chosen for the SW International Annual Report and for the National Reports, SWP carries out other main lines of research at the national level, such as:

- Poverty;
- MDGs, focusing on education, health (child, maternal and reproductive health), agricultural livelihood and environment;

¹⁰ <http://socialwatchphilippines.org>

¹¹ List of the SWP Reports:

The SWP Report 2001 – “2001 Report: Social Watch Philippines” http://www.socialwatch.org/en/informelmpreso/tablaDeContenidos2001_phi.htm

The SWP Report 2003 – “Tracking Progress. Accomplishments and Shortfalls in Local Social Development” http://www.socialwatch.org/en/informelmpreso/tablaDeContenidos2003_phi.htm

The SWP Report 2005 – “Race for Survival. Hurdles on the road to meeting the MDGs in 2015” http://www.socialwatch.org/en/informelmpreso/tablaDeContenidos2005_phi.htm

The SWP Report 2007 – “Missing targets. An Alternative MDG Midterm Report Assessment of MDGs”

- The six Financing for Development themes: mobilizing domestic financial resources for development; mobilizing international resources for development; trade; Official Development Assistance (ODA); debt and addressing systematic issues;
- Disparity and equity issues.

SWP has produced the following publications so far¹²:

- Upcoming book – The Five year review of Financing for Development;
- *May Pera Pa Ba?*¹³ *Moving forward with the Millennium Development Goals* (published in 2006): Reports and Analyses by National College of Public Administration graduate students;
- *Alternative budget 2007* (published in 2006): The first alternative budget proposals crafted by civil society groups. The resource book contains situations and data analyses on development issues such as education, health, environment, agriculture, debt and trade;
- *Alternative budget 2008* (published in 2007): Alternative budget proposals for the 2008 national budget; including situations and data analyses on development issues such as education, health, environment, agriculture, debt and trade;
- *Reclaiming the people's purse* (published in 2008): A documentation regarding the second year of the Alternative Budget Initiative campaign. This publication documents the civil society engagements for 2008 national budget and how the Legislature broke traditions to support such effort;
- *Alternative budget 2009* (published in 2008): Alternative budget proposals for the 2008 national budget; including situations and data analyses on development issues such as education, health, environment, agriculture, debt and trade.

SWP's publications and reports are appreciated for being very suitable for advocacy: they are accessible and easily understandable also by ordinary citizens. Even when they deal with technical matters their data are handy and popular.

Action for Economic Reforms, one of the convenors of SWP, developed the Quality of Life Index (QLI)¹⁴, the basis of the Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) which SWI adopted in 2004. The QLI uses a pure capability-based approach in measuring accomplishments in human development. It is based on three basic capabilities: (i) the capability to be well nourished, (ii) the capability to healthy and safe reproduction and (iii) the capability to be educated and to be knowledgeable. Then, the three indicators used to generate the QLI index are: (i) the under-five nutrition status; (ii) the births attended by trained health personnel and (iii) the elementary cohort survival rate. Notwithstanding the variety of poverty measures available and applied in the Philippines, there were compelling reasons for developing an alternative measure: the QLI was meant to offer an alternative way to measure poverty outside of the standard income-based parameters and an easy and simple way of generating data at a local level. From the beginning, the QLI was shared among the SW networks in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao both for information and feedback, even though its full application was prevented by the lack of basic data and information at the local level. The QLI also serves as a framework for planning at the national and local level; it is an effective advocacy tool, as it underlines the importance of human development.

The BCI (which in the Philippines is still also referred to as the QLI) is used quite extensively by SWP. BCI/QLI serves as an alternative measure for the level of poverty and summarizes the overall gains in human development. This index can be a term of comparison for poverty situation which Philippine government claims to be enhanced, on the basis of the official poverty measure. Actually, BCI/QLI index consistently points to a lack of improvement in poverty level. The measure is also very effective in comparing situation in regions and provinces across the country; it effectively speaks about disparity and problems related to the exclusion.

Use of the Indexes BCI and GEI at the local level

12 http://socialwatchphilippines.org/index_files/Page3023.htm

13 Is there still money?

14 Raya, R. (2001). An alternative measure of poverty and human capability: Introducing the Quality of Life Index. Social Watch Philippines Report 2001.

The Gender Equity Index (GEI) is particularly used in monitoring achievements in gender parity according to the MDG 3 (Promote gender equality and empower women). GEI is especially useful because of a lack of effective measure of MDG 3 in the country. This index provides a good basis for analyzing the gender situation as well as other issues related to the condition of women.

**Research methods
and tools**

SWP uses to consult sources and data provided by the government as a starting point for its researches, to elaborate studies on the same basis so that a real comparison becomes possible. Nonetheless, SWP does not restrict to the government data alone but generates its own ones, using also raw databases of official survey to generate analysis of the MDGs. Most of the SWP generated data are based on empirical evidence, including case studies providing a human face to the MDG advocacy and a greater appreciation by community level advocates.

SWP is advocating transparency in government's data and statistical system, but also consultation and participation in developing and adopting specific methodologies. SWP has always underlined to the government the importance of the accuracy and the integrity of official data.

**Enhancing and
upgrading analytical
capacities in
researching, lobby and
advocacy**

Once a year at least, SWP organizes specific seminars, trainings courses, and workshops for enhancing the competencies of national coalition in monitoring and in making researches, lobby and advocacy in social development themes. In particular, SWP has organized so far:

- *Training workshops on budget process, analysis, engagement for NGOs and legislative staff.*

A recent example is the training workshop on the budget process for NGOs ("*Crafting an Alternative Budget: the Journey Continues*") held in two parts, in April and May 2007, which represented a kick-off activity for the preparation of the 2008 alternative budget.

"It is important that we become knowledgeable of the budget process so that we will know how to engage the executive and the legislative starting from the budget preparation to its legislation, implementation and, last but not least, accountability" (from the speech of prof. Briones, SWP, during the workshop)¹⁵.

In 2008, SWP held a Training Need Assessment among the ABI organizations in order to set out a capability building workshop responding to the real needs of budget advocates in the country.

The "*Capacity Building Workshop Towards Greater Participation, Transparency and Accountability in the Budget Process*", held in May 2008, aimed to: (i) provide analytical skills related to national budgeting; (ii) provide understanding on the dynamics of budgeting for social development and the MDGs; (iii) provide a venue for sharing experiences and lessons learned from previous experiences in participatory budgeting; (iv) provide advocacy skills, including lobbying, networking and media advocacy for the alternative budget campaign; (v) help budget advocates crafting their alternative budget proposals for 2009; (vi) help budget advocates creating their advocacy plan for their campaign on the alternative budget for 2009. The workshop was divided into four sessions as follows:

1. Facing the challenges of budget advocacy;
2. Budget process and analyses;
3. Budget advocacy strategies;
4. Media advocacy.

A workshop on reviewing and crafting specific alternative budget proposals was conducted at the end of the first session while a final workshop on planning for ABI 2009 took place at the end of the training. Teambuilding activities were held in order to strengthen good relationships among the civil society organizations involved in the ABI, to foster cooperation, good team working and encouragement.

Among all the workshop's outputs, a detailed plan for the 2009 budget engagement was set out for each cluster, with agreements on key priority issues, workplan, strategies of engagement with the executive and the legislative and media strategy.

- *Orientation with media on budget advocacy.*

Considering mass media as important allies in budget advocacy, SWP organized the "*Orientation seminar on budget advocacies for media*", held in July 2008, with the aim to: (i) help the media

15 SWP Press release 27 April 2007

understand the issues behind the national budget process; (ii) provide information that will allow media to better present the issues to the masses; (iii) build partnerships with reporters covering the national budget and civil society interventions. The seminar was addressed, in particular, to: business reporters and editors, Congress reporters, Senate reporters, Quezon City beat (Department of Agriculture, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Quezon City Hall), reporters assigned to the Department of Health and Department of Education, investigative and in-depth reporters, columnists. Its four sessions dealt with:

1. Understanding the national budget process and the issues behind the process;
2. The people (in the sectors of agriculture, environment, health and education) and their relation to the national budget;
3. Guarding the national budget: budget analysis, budget monitoring, budget accountability;
4. Civil society interventions in the national budget process and how the media can be allies in the Alternative budget initiative.

- *MDG localization and monitoring:*

- trainings on data collection, encoding, processing and analysis;
- workshop on data analysis and preparation of local MDG reports.

These activities target the players at a local level, especially local government officials and local NGOs.

An important training course ("*MDG Monitoring and Localization*"), was held within the project *Local Monitoring System on the Millennium Development Goals*, carried out in 2005 in the Province of Bohol, with the purpose of improving local capacities to localize the MDGs through monitoring, planning and budgeting, equipping participants with knowledge on the MDGs, with tools to localize and finance the MDGs, and with necessary skills in status reporting. The training package consisted of two courses with six sessions each. The first course was on MDG Local Monitoring System while the second one was specifically on MDG Financing and Budgeting. Representatives from the local government (development planners, poverty action officers, information staff, social welfare officers, health officers, education officers, resource managers and financial officers) and local NGOs, active in development work in the area, were the target participants. SWP conducted other important capacity building activities ("*Mainstreaming the MDG in Local Development Planning Project*") for local government organizations and NGOs in the Municipality of Kiangán in Ifugao and in the City of Tabaco in Albay, both in 2007 and in 2008.

Activities were based on two modules:

1. Orientation on the MDG mainstreaming project and Enumerators' training for data collection;
2. Encoders' training for data processing. The orientation part provided an overview of the whole MDG mainstreaming process, including its purpose and context as well as the concepts and processes involved in its implementation.

This also included discussions on the roles of local government officials, civil society organizations and community members in MDG mainstreaming towards developing multi-stakeholder partnership in MDG planning and progress monitoring. The first module on Enumerators' training part focused on the roles and responsibilities of people involved in the census. It provided guidelines on how to conduct a survey and on how to fill up a questionnaire. Participants went through exercises such as mock interviews and editing of filled questionnaires. The second module consisted in a very technical training, wherein after completing the module and training, the participants were expected to: (i) know the basics in file management and encoding and database operations; (ii) familiarize themselves with the encoding and digitizing software; (iii) be equipped with knowledge on how to properly encode accomplished HPQ; (iv) learn how to recognize inconsistent entries and be able to troubleshoot errors encountered; and (v) be able to know how to digitize shape files and manage their own database.

These capacity building initiatives were successful in terms of participation¹⁶. Their outputs

16 In the Municipality of Kiangán, 60 participants attended the Orientation on the MDGs, including local government officials, local legislators, barangay representatives and CSOs leaders; 34 enumerators attended the training; 10 encoders and map digitizers attended the Encoders' training. In Tabaco City, 103 participants attended the Orientation on the MDGs, including barangay chairpersons and representatives with their health workers; 77 participants, mainly health workers from the barangays or from the City Health Office attended the Enumerators' training; 21 participants attended the Encoders' training.

included: the active involvement of LGUs in the MDGs monitoring process; the creation of pools of enumerators chosen among community members able to conduct data gathering activities for MDG mainstreaming and monitoring; the ability to make a proper implementation of the MDG survey/census and the ability to properly fill up MDG survey; the creation of pools of encoders and map digitizers capable of installing and using the encoding and the map digitizing software.

Fair representation between male and female participants is noted in most of the capacity building activities.

Gaining ground at the national level and legitimating the research carried out by the SW national coalition

According to SWP focal point, taking into consideration the research and training activities of the national coalition, the strengths of SWP at this point are:

- having skilled members, consistently active in the initiatives of SWP such as budget engagement and monitoring;
- having a high credibility, acquired through its analyses, used in a critical way to propose alternatives leading to have more supporters from legislators and government agencies.

Indeed, SWP focal point considers that the national coalition still has to build a pool of speakers to meet the increasing demand of sharing information, analysis, proposals and skills of SWP itself.

2.4 Fourth dimension: Strategy and Impact

The fourth dimension aims at assessing the national coalition's capacities in influencing the policies of its Government and in raising public opinion awareness on social development issues.

SWP key strategies¹⁷ include:

- Strengthening organizational capacities for research, information and media work, campaigns, lobby and networking
- Developing partners at national and local levels - among NGOs; between CSOs and government agencies; between CSOs and international agencies
- Building consensus, coalitions and coordinated actions
- Developing champions within key branches and agencies of the government
- Enhancing social development of monitoring tools
- Upgrading monitoring capacity in terms of technology, skills and human resources
- Preparing critical reports; working on and presenting viable alternatives
- Developing an efficient system for information dissemination
- Building the machinery and resources for sustained participation and engagement of local, national, regional and international initiatives

Monitoring of the social policies of the national Government and lobbying activities towards it

In its lobbying activities, SWP has identified some priority issues and main target groups. The former are anti-poverty and social development initiatives, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); for the Alternative Budget Initiative, SWP issues deal with macroeconomic assumptions, basic and higher education, health, environment and agriculture. The main target groups for the alternative budget lobbying activity are people in government, particularly from the executive representatives in the above specified matters, and from the legislative representatives. For the localization and monitoring of the MDGs, the target group includes also the local NGOs and local government units.

The *Alternative Budget Initiative (ABI)* represents the best lobbying action carried out by the Philippine SW network being worldwide recognized as one of the best practices in budget advocacy.

17 2006 three-year program

Year 2006 was very important for ABI since it marked a historical first step in the budget process in the Philippines¹⁸: a major partnership was made between legislators and civil society organizations with the aim of analyzing the budget proposed by the Executive power for the approval of the Legislature and of formulating an alternative budget for MDGs related expenditure.

Through the ABI, civil society groups and their partner legislators were able to achieve P5.3 billion increases in 2007 national budget for basic and tertiary education as well as P6.3 billion increases in 2008 national budget for basic education, higher education, health, agriculture and environment¹⁹.

The ABI is led by SWP which has been campaigning for financing for development for several years, especially underlining the importance of better allocations for expenditures related to the MDGs. During the meetings, SWP provides briefings on budget proposals to the legislators; these briefings are brought together with comprehensive documents on the different proposals. SWP also consistently promotes the achievements of the ABI to the concerned government agencies to attract more supporters from the government.

Each thematic cluster (focusing on specific issues on education²⁰, health, environment and agriculture) identifies allies in the legislative conducting separate briefings for detailed discussions on its proposals. During budget deliberations, clusters also provide technical notes to support legislators in their interpolation with the concerned government agencies²¹. Every time a new key issue arises inside the clusters, the coalition's members have the challenge to make a balance between the participatory process, requiring the gathering of opinions, and the need to urgently respond on behalf of SWP.

A good opportunity for participating in the Committee deliberations on the budget is given by the 2007 approval of the House of Representatives' resolution which allows civil society participation in the budget process. In 2008 the resolution became a bill approved by the Committee on People's Participation at the House of Representatives but it is still subject to the Plenary Assembly for approval. For the Senate deliberation and approval, it has to be sponsored by a Senator.

LESSONS LEARNED BY SWP IN THE ABI

- The need to engage and partner with key players in the budget process (i.e.: legislators and executive)
- The need for NGOs and CSOs with different advocacies to get together
- The need to be familiar with the budget process of the Country
- The need to utilize the alternative budget as an effective tool for advocacy
- The need to strengthen CSO's research and data gathering capabilities and to enhance the packaging of their advocacies.

MDG Localization and Monitoring

Lobbying activities are carried out also at the local level in terms of pursuing the local executives to engage themselves in SWP monitoring using the MDGs as a frame through the installation of an effective monitoring system in specific pilot areas. In 2006, the MDG Monitoring and Localization initiatives combined its SWP monitoring system with the Community Based Monitoring System

18 The Philippine has an executive budget system: the President proposes, approves, implements and monitors the budget. The President prepares the budget and presents it to the House of Representatives; upon approval by the House of Representatives the budget is brought to the Senate; a Bicameral Committee formulates a final version of the budget that is brought back to President for approval. The Legislature can only decrease the level of the proposed expenditures and the President has got the veto power. Finally, during the execution phase, the President controls the release of the budget and can transfer items as deemed necessary.

19 The present ABI for the 2009 budget proposes to increase social development expenditures by P42 billion and to cut over P80 billion in expenditure on items which are deliberately vague, non-specific and give too much discretion to the Executive.

20 For instance Education Network (E-Net), as member of the Philippine coalition, is the head of the Education cluster of the ABI. It contributes to rigorous researches on missing education in the Country, the study of the national budget on education and the proposal of an alternative budget for education based on people's needs. E-Net engages the Department of Education, presents the alternative budget for education and presents to Congress the particular issues and proposals for education budget

21 For the education cluster, Education Network points out a non open attitude of the Department for Education to civil society's participation in the budget process: E-Net, despite it is co-chair of the National Education for All Committee was not allowed to participate in the deliberation on the education budget at the Department/agency level.

(CBMS). This initiative is now called “Mainstreaming the MDGs”²². The monitoring initiatives support SWP advocacy in mainstreaming the MDGs, in building partnership on the MDGs and in monitoring compliance of the government in its international commitments. The results of this monitoring shall support the MDG localization and enhance development planning and financing strategies.

The cases of Northern and Central Luzon and of Bohol in the Visayas island show that the collaboration between local government units and NGOs is crucial to the localization and the implementation of the MDGs, especially if there are local government officials championing the cause. Academics play a steering role in creating synergies between government and non government sectors; furthermore, they represent natural advocates and potential engineers of ground level experiments on MDG localization through their technical capabilities.

Unfortunately, not all the local governments that were approached agreed to take on the mainstreaming initiative of SWP, because of the costs involved, the amount of work and the availability of competing monitoring tools.

Advocacy actions through the promotion of the analysis carried out by the SW network

Priority issues in SWP advocacy activities are: poverty and social development issues, including MDGs, financing for development, importance of monitoring.

In its advocacy of anti-poverty and social development initiatives, SWP provides alternative analysis from a civil society perspective and carries out an education/information campaign.

SWP’s advocacy on the MDGs started with its intense involvement in the Financing for Development (FFD) process, since SWP recognized the close connection between the goals of social development and the need for adequate financing. As early as 1999, SWP started lobbying with the Department of Finance in the Philippines to include an anti-poverty and social development agenda during the preparation of the FFD Summit, both at the national and at the regional level. SWP intended to be an active player in the country preparation for the FFD to focus the attention on the importance of the MDGs and the urgent need for financing. In 2001, supported by UNDP, SWP initiated national consultations among CSOs and civil society experts were asked to write policy papers on each of the themes identified for the FFD Summit. These papers were refined and enriched through a broad-based consultation with civil society. As such, thanks to SWP, Philippine civil society had a consolidated and united civil society agenda for FFD. At the end of 2001, UNDP organized a multisectoral meeting among civil society organizations, business organizations, government and multilateral institutions. Workshops were held on the different themes, with each workshop having one representative from civil society to present the common positions agreed on during the civil society consultation. Thus, a good number of civil society advocacies were adopted during the workshops. Thanks to this multisectoral consultation, a paper was adopted, integrating the different positions of civil society, government and business that served as an important input to the official position held by Philippine government during the preparatory commissions and the actual Summit. Because of its key role at the national level, SWP was invited to be a member of the Philippine delegation to the preparatory commissions at the 2002 FFD Summit in Mexico. In the international context, SWP has shown a high level of professional capacity, earning the respect of government and multilateral agencies.

From the Mexico campaign onwards, SWP has held annual national, regional and island consultations on FFD, as well as information campaigns, media briefings and forums in different parts of the country. It also participates to campaigns promoted by the United Nations, government and private sector.

In 2007, during the preparation of the “Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus” (Doha, November 2008), SWP prepared thematic policy papers on the six FFD themes. The papers were presented by SWP in a national consultation among civil society organizations held in November 2007 that generated a civil society position paper on the FFD themes. Although SWP’s suggestion to convene a multistakeholders consultation (as well as in 2001), including government, busi-

22 The areas that implemented or are implementing the mainstreaming initiative include Municipality of Orion, Bataan, Municipality of Kiangnan, Ifugao, City of Tabaco in Albay and North Cotabato Province. The initiative includes the following trainings: Enumeration or Data Collection; Data Encoding; Map making; Data processing; Data analysis; Data Validation; MDG Report writing; Development of Plans and budget

ness and civil society, did not materialize, SWP tried to mainstream the civil society position into the official Philippine position. SWP presented the results of the FFD review policy papers during the Multisectoral Committee on International Human Development Commitments (MCIHDC) wherein about 35 representatives of government agencies were present. Furthermore, preparing the Doha Conference, SWP organized a CSOs forum wherein the civil society positions were presented both to the representative of the Foreign affairs who was going to participate to the Summit and to the UNDP resident representative.

LESSONS LEARNED BY SWP IN THE MDG/FFD CAMPAIGNS:

- Enhance and accelerate national campaigns. The global and regional campaigns can only be as successful as the national campaign
- Strengthen the role of the UNDP and other UN agencies in the national campaign. International agencies can foster the cooperation among government, civil society organizations and private sector
- Encourage and support civil society campaigns. Civil society organizations have proved to be aggressive and effective in calling attention to MDGs. They have been monitoring governments and pressuring them and they work very closely with MDG beneficiaries.
- Utilize the important role of media
- Link the campaign to urgent national issues and political exercises and national events

As an important instrument in its advocacy, SWP promotes the SW International Reports, the SWP Reports and other publications of the network through the launching of books and their distribution during SWP organized activities such as consultations and forums.

SWP comes out with a National report once every two years, organizing in that occasion media launches. Due to limited funds, in the Philippines the SW global reports are launched together with the national ones. Instead of full-blown national reports, SWP sends out media releases about the global reports. For the reports' media launches, SWP organizes forums, ensuring the presence of media professionals covering the activity.

According to the SWP focal point during the years, the national coalition carried out its advocacy work with coherence. The main critical aspects in advocacy are the reliability of information and the analyses presented.

SWP co-convenor Prof. Leonor Briones plays a crucial role in the success of SWP advocacy and lobby activities: her passion, commitment, credibility and her stature²³ can be considered key factors that encourage other groups to support and participate to SWP initiatives; furthermore they help SWP in engaging people from government, both executive and legislature. This shows the importance of relying on individuals who enjoy the recognition of persons and institutions based on experience and track record²⁴.

Since SWP was established, in 1997, it has been building its credibility through its analysis of the poverty level and social development commitments including the MDGs and its advocacy on financing for development focusing on the analysis of the budget. The economic and policy office of the government (National Economic Development Authority, NEDA), recognized SWP analysis to be the civil society perspective on the issues of social development and financing for development.

Up to now, SWP has always been invited in government²⁵, multilateral institutions (Asian Development Bank, World Bank) and the United Nations' consultations on social development issues. On March 2007, SWP participated to the Philippine Development Forum (PDF), the annual gathering of Official Development Assistance (ODA) partners of the Philippine government

23 Prof. Leonor Briones, professor at the National College of Public Administration and Governance and former national Treasurer.

24 "If it was not for Prof. Briones who is long known to us as budget advocate and former Treasurer of the Philippines, it would not be easy to listen to someone's criticism on the government financial position on social services. But we know that Prof. Briones is an authority to talk about budget" (National Economic and Development Authority, 18 April 2006, Interview for the SWP External Evaluation, 2002-2005)

25 SWP's familiarity with part of the government circuit (like the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW)) has been facilitated by the personal contacts of SWP co-convenor Prof. Leonor Briones.

convened by the Department of Finance, where different stakeholders discuss possible action on development matters. SWP is a partner of UNDP in its programme on achieving MDGs and reducing poverty through a project implemented by NEDA.

For what concerns legislators, SWP established partnership with minority Congressmen and Senators in supporting the ABI; it conducts consultations on the alternative budget proposals. As partners, these legislators sponsor the ABI proposals during budget deliberations.

In terms of monitoring initiatives, SWP local coordinators organize education/information campaigns and consultation workshops with local NGOs on social development issues. The local coordinators also meet local government officials to promote SWP monitoring initiatives.

At the international level, SWP participates in the SWI General Assembly and it is member of the Coordinating Committee; in particular, it contributes to SWI international campaigns and advocacy initiatives. "SWP has made a substantial contribution to international advocacy work through its participation in global decision making forums, like the Monterrey Summit on Financing for development in 2002 or the World Summit of the UN in 2005, where Leonor Briones of SWP was the only civil society voice to address the heads of State"²⁶.

SWP recently participated in the "Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus" (Doha, Qatar, November 29th - December 2nd 2008). This summit was preceded by a meeting of the global civil society organizations, the "Doha Civil Society Forum: Investing in People-Centered Development" (Ramada Plaza Doha November 25th-27th) where many key recommendations and Social Watch Philippines' issues were discussed and included (either in the Doha Outcome Document or in the global recommendations). Among Philippine recommendations, participatory and gender responsive budgets found resonance in the global civil society positions.

SWP's participation in international events offers opportunities to strengthen capacities through learning from other groups' initiatives and sharing experiences in promoting partnerships and cooperation with international groups.

***Social development
and raising awareness
of public opinion***

NGOs, academics, media, youth, government constitute the main target public chosen by the national coalition for raising awareness actions. The involving of academics play a very important role in spreading awareness on public opinion on MDGs.

According to the SWP focal point, besides the traditional printed documents, the more suitable tools for raising awareness of public opinion on poverty and social development issues are regular consultations/forums and partnerships with media.

***The media strategy and
the communication
capacity of the national
coalition***

SWP has adopted a wide communication strategy through press releases, press conferences and media briefings. SWP representatives participate as much as possible to media interviews for television and radio. SWP also arranges television and radio interviews on its own.

SWP has succeeded in making both local and national mass media interested in its activities; SWP's high credibility appears to be the main reason for such a success, being SWP a source of credible information and incisive analysis regarding development, governance, fiscal policies, poverty, etc. from a civil society perspective. SWP has been able to get attention from the media raising relevant and innovative issues as well as brave statements supported by hard core information on economics, society and governance based on data from the ground; it has presented eye opening analyses based on extensive research and great experiences of its pool of experts. SWP's statements are supported by highly credible personalities, very active in government and social movement at national and global levels. SWP also stands as the one voice of many civil society groups nationwide and of organizations in various countries, especially developing nations.

ABI represents a breakthrough in Philippine history, since the media have considered its campaign as an exceptional occasion for exposing to the public credible information on how the national budget is crafted and which are the implications on the population; the ABI provides to media credible data showing the relevance of the national budget process into people's daily lives.

26 Roberto Bissio, Social Watch International, 2006

SWP has not yet developed any tools for assessing both the coalition's internal performance and the external results achieved in carrying out lobbying and advocacy activities. SWP is interested both in a qualitative and a quantitative evaluation of its activities, planning to use questionnaires in order to assess their performance, outputs, outcomes and impact.

In 2006, SWP has begun an evaluation process to evaluate its gains and challenges. SWP commissioned an External Evaluation to verify the effectiveness of its strategies and the impact of the outcomes of SWP's work during the period 2002-2005. Furthermore, the evaluation objective was to recommend advocacy strategies and organizational approaches and process for the future. This evaluation study analysed the genesis and development of SWP, its mandate and objectives, its advocacy strategies and engagement with the various stakeholders – local, national and international ones: SWP resulted in an extensive awareness on the MDGs among various sectors²⁷; an effective monitoring of the official progress on the MDGs; a high level of research, information spreading and publication. The evaluation underlines the effective strategies at the basis of SWP's achievements such as: empirically supported analyses and comparative analyses between official reports and SWP reports; the way of relaying the message in a popular form and a popular version, in a language intelligible to the citizen and the media. The evaluation highlights that the policy change was evident much more at the local level than at the national one and stressed upon good strategies to adopt such as: team efforts of both governmental and non governmental stakeholders, the identification of the right "champions", the presence of a reliable core of academics or other people being trusted on specific topics. In the opinion of the evaluators, SWP did not work hard enough in Congress, resulting in low visibility and minimal absorption of the MDG among legislators²⁸. Furthermore, the evaluation suggests:

- a multi-year funding;
- a strategic, medium term and yearly planning;
- the registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission²⁹;
- the organization of a sub national consultative group between the convenors and the island cluster coordinators.

For what concerns the strategies, the evaluation suggests a soft local approach, nurturing and sustaining the positive gains at the local level together with a wider national approach that means filling in the Congress on the MDG in a language they would be responsive to so that they could continue to challenge the national executive agencies.

2.5 Fifth dimension: Coherence and Complementarities

The fifth dimension aims at analyzing the relationship between the national coalition and other networks of civil society organizations already existing in the country and the modalities for getting in touch with the other organizations around the world belonging to the Social Watch network.

SWP is very proud of being part of the Social Watch International network. The constitution process of the national coalition has been very much encouraged by this belonging to an international network. Being part of Social Watch facilitates SWP's access to international events that the national coalition needs to engage, like the Financing for development. Furthermore, the research that SW International provides through the reports and the indexes that it has developed, gives to SWP a good tool for analysis of comparison between its country and the rest of the world.

Added value of belonging to an international network

27 Primarily among civil society organizations; secondly among local government units; thirdly among national executive agencies and policy making bodies; fourthly among congress, but only through a mediating organization, the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD)

28 The evaluation maintains that notwithstanding the SWP contributions to national and international statements on poverty and the MDG, some national agencies (like NEDA) perceive the SW advocacy as still largely general and lacking in specific, concrete recommendations.

29 The Securities and Exchange Commission is an agency within the Philippine Department of Finance responsible for securities law and regulating the securities industry. Among other functions, it is entitled to supervise all registered business entities in the Country

Even though SWP wants to inform the other national coalitions about its initiatives, this is not a priority issue for the Philippine coalition: SWP is much more concerned about its national activities, focusing on them its efforts. The lack in human resources is actually the main reason for the lack of networking with other national coalitions.

Regional dimension of the SW network

SWP actively contributes to a discourse and advocacy on social development in Asia, using poverty and social development issues, including the MDGs, as a framework of engagement.

Until the end of the year 2006, SWP was the Secretariat of Social Watch Asia. As part of its regional secretariat work, SWP made efforts to organize regional meetings and workshops among the Asian national coalitions at least once every three years. In 1998, 2000, 2003 and 2005, SWP organised Asia-wide consultations, whose objectives were to study and update the situation on the status of poverty and social development on a country level and to assess Asia as a whole. The regional meetings and consultations also served as venue for sharing and learning from other national coalitions experiences.

In 2007, Social Watch International and SILAKA³⁰ (as Secretariat of Social Watch in the region), in collaboration with Oxfam Novib, organized the Workshop “*Building an Asian community of practice on monitoring and budget analysis*”, held in Cambodia on 9th -11th July. The workshop brought together 23 participants from several countries in the region (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam). It was an interactive three-day session in which participants shared their knowledge on the monitoring of social development indicators, the use of Economic Social and Cultural Rights approach, budget analysis and advocacy initiatives. SWP contributed to the workshop with two presentations, the first by Maria Luz Anigan (Action for Economic Reforms), who presented the system developed by SW Philippines to monitor the MDGs at the local level, and the other by Prof. Leonor Briones, who led the third section on Budget Analysis. The purpose of the meeting was to promote the exchange of experiences and the joint work among organizations during and after the workshop. The participants considered the workshop an excellent opportunity to learn from the expertise of their colleagues. Furthermore, the meeting represented also a good occasion for building relationships among national coalitions, useful for the construction of alliances in the region.

In 2008, SWP and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), a political organization in Germany, organized the regional Meeting on Financing for Development, held in Manila³¹. The conference aimed to create an Asian platform to be presented in the conference which would be held in Doha on next November. Through the workshops, leaders of civil society organizations from nine Asian Countries (Philippines, Mongolia, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Thailand, Nepal, India, China, Vietnam), together with the representatives of Social Watch International and the United Nations Development Programme, identified common regional demands, action points addressed to the governments and strategies to strengthen and expand the alliances for Financing for Development. The discussions focused on six themes: trade, foreign direct investments, debt, official direct assistance, domestic resources and systemic issues. During the conference Leonor Briones of SWP provided civil society with regional perspectives on Financing for Development.

Capacity to encourage relationships with other civil society organizations’ networks at the local level

Social Watch Philippines tries as much as possible to be inclusive in all its consultations. Many other national networks were created following the concept of Social Watch (Sustainability Watch, ODA Watch): since Social Watch covers a wide range of poverty and social development issues, other networks with advocacy on specific social development issues (education, health, etc) come together and interact with other groups in social watch initiated activities such as national consultations.

A good example of collaboration between SWP and other networks is the Alternative Budget Initiative: several national networks participate to the initiative giving inputs in terms of strategies and providing information in the conduct of the advocacy.

30 Silaka, a Cambodian training agency, is a member of Social Watch International and Social Watch Asia.

31 Asian Regional Consultation for the follow-up Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development, Philippines, May 8-9, 2008.

3. Conclusions

Social Watch Philippines can certainly be considered a successful national Social Watch experience. Guided by strong, highly professional and very dedicated personalities, SWP has been able to actuate its mandate in an efficient manner, during the years of its active work, becoming a recognised leader in the monitoring and advocacy on the MDGs at the local, national, regional and international levels.

SWP strength derives from being a large network of advocates in which different matters regarding poverty and social development are represented. The in-depth, unless still quite informal, relationship among coalition's members shows an excellent opportunity for a constant capabilities development, not only through trainings, but also through comparison of different experiences and practices among clusters.

With its small and cohesive group of convenors, representing the decision making body of the coalition, SWP decides in an efficient way and creates effective strategies. At the same time, compatibly with its limited human and financial resources, SWP makes a great effort in organizing consultations and meetings among its members at national and local levels, involving them in the definition of the framework, process and strategies for their common activities.

Through the researches carried out by a pool of experts, SWP strong commitment has generated a series of high credible data and analysis regarding development, governance, fiscal policies, poverty, etc. SWP's publications are very suitable for advocacy: using data based on empirical evidence and a language that is accessible and understandable even by ordinary citizens, they provide a human face to the MDGs. Capacity building of the coalitions' members in monitoring, research, data gathering, analysis, lobby and advocacy is considered a key issue. Big efforts are made to organize workshops, seminars and trainings addressed to NGOs, academics, legislative, national government agencies, local government officials and media.

SWP has created a good relationship with mass media which are considered important allies in its activities as an efficient way of getting visibility and raising awareness amongst the public. Media have been attracted by the relevant issues raised by the network and the brave statements from high credible personalities supported by eye opening analyses based on extensive research.

In its lobby activities at the national level SWP has proved to be very effective as the Alternative Budget Initiative shows. Through the analysis of the budget proposed by the Executive and the formulation of an alternative budget for MDGs related expenditures, SWP and other civil society organizations partnering with legislators achieved increases in the national budget for education, health, agriculture and environment. At the local level SWP with the MDG localization and monitoring programme succeeded in promoting with the local government units an evidence-based planning and budgeting using MDGs as frame. The partnership between NGOs and local government and the involvement of academics can be considered key elements in such a success.

At the regional level, SWP as former Secretariat of Social Watch Asia, promoted anti-poverty and social development advocacies, including on the MDGs', through the organization of meetings and venues that represent opportunities to assess the status of regional social development and to share experiences and knowledge among different Countries.

Proud of being part of Social Watch International, SWP actively participates in the SWI general Assembly and is member of the Coordinating Committee. It annually contributes to the global SW Report with a country report. The national coalition largely promotes and utilizes the SWI reports, the BCI and the GEI in its lobby, advocacy and capacity building activities.

SWP is also very active in the international arena. It is often invited to participate to global decision making forums on social development where it brings recommendations coming from its local, national and regional initiatives and consultations. Its recommendations are taken into great consideration thanks to the respect earned by the coalition among the international agencies. ■

GOOD PRACTICES LEARNT FROM THE PHILIPPINE SOCIAL WATCH COALITION:

- Working as a network of NGOs, CSOs and individuals with advocacy on different subjects (education, health, environment, agriculture, human rights, gender etc.)
- Frequent consultations/meetings among the members of the network. These venues offer the possibility to share experience, gather inputs in terms of strategies, strengthen good relationship and foster cooperation
- Involvement of personalities from the academic and political circuits. It helps giving to the network high impact and visibility
- Regular communications with the International Secretariat and the Coordinating Committee
- Active approach to and negotiation with new partners in order to find possible financial support for the network's activities
- Strong commitment in research on poverty and social development matters that generates high credible data and analysis
- Use of an accessible and understandable language in publications
- Regular contribution to the Global SW Report with a Country Report and production of a proper National Report and other publications
- Extensive use of the Reports, the BCI and the GEI in the information campaigns, workshops, seminars etc.
- Frequent organization of specific seminars, trainings, workshops for improving the competencies of national coalition members in monitoring, analyzing and making researches, in the lobby and advocacy activities
- Engagement and partnership with key players in the political arena
- Good relationship with media
- Integration between local, national, regional and international activities. Linking the local with the global gives more effectiveness to the lobby and the advocacy carried out at the different levels

◎ CONCLUSION

Although any generalization would run the risk of hiding the fact that the coalition life mostly depends on the specific country context in which it operates and on the personal high commitment of the national members to make the coalition a lively actor at the local level, it is worth, anyway, to try identifying key factors that made the experiences analysed in this paper successful cases. This could represent a useful exercise for stimulating other SW national coalitions to emulate the best practices, even if adapting them to their own national contexts, as well as reflecting on their own experience by facilitating an organizational learning process crucial for any network which aims at improving its performance.

As already mentioned, while explaining the research methodology of this study, the lack of easily and scientifically measurable indicators along with the differences of country contexts, makes the four case studies hardly comparable. Being aware that this paper does not demand to fulfil academic criteria, the following findings do not represent any scientific evaluation of the performance of the four SW national coalitions analysed, but rather point out basic suggestions for facilitating “know-how transfer” and “capacity building” among the national groups of the SW network.

As far as the “*relevance*” dimension analysis is concerned, in all the four case studies the importance of the constituency process can be stressed. Looking at the country context, the historical moment when the national platform was created is a critical one in all the four case studies: time of political changes, need of influencing the global Agenda towards greater development targets and the very quick growth of the role of civil society organizations (CSOs). The creation of each national platform can be considered as a bottom up process since CSOs felt the need of joining the SW worldwide network and working at the national level by locally contributing at achieving global development goals. Probably Germany can be considered an exception since it comes from a former German NGO Forum which was constituted in preparation of the World Summit for Social Development and from the very beginning of SW creation in 1995 decided to carry on with its tasks by joining this international network. Without decrying the conscious choice made by the German coalition before joining Social Watch, probably in terms of membership commitment the latter is much higher when the decision to join the network is linked to the need of giving birth to a specific national group in the country. Indeed it requires so many more efforts and energy and probably it implies a stronger motivation which ensures better support during future work.

Another feature that deserves to be pointed out is the diversity of membership that can be a strength as well as a weakness at the same time. Looking at the Brazilian case the much varied membership composition has allowed to make the coalition a real “space for plural debates, for building new perspectives, knowledge and discourses on social and development issues”. The plurality of actors participating is seen as a richness, rather than a potential condition of conflict, including the Philippine experience. On the contrary, for the German coalition, the diversity of composition, although considered an important aspect to be preserved, currently hampers a good functioning of the coalition beyond the yearly publication of the Social Watch report, because of the difficulty to find common strategic themes between development NGOs and welfare organizations. Probably this difference in managing the diversity of membership composition needs to be understood considering the country context since it is likely that in Brazil as well as in the Philippines there are many more common working areas among NGOs, trade unions and welfare organizations than in the current German context.

Anyway, from all the four case studies these positive aspects seem to emerge:

- the attitude of the national platform to be inclusive and open to a plurality of organizations that bring into the network their different competence and expertise in the field of development. This makes Social Watch a special opportunity for discussion where the analysis of an issue is hardly confined to a single perspective: the plurality of interests included in the network always allows taking a multi-sector perspective of any theme. .
- the capacity to bridge the local with the global issues ensures a double advantage: at local level by basing the advocacy and awareness building activities on worldwide reliable data and analysis; at the international level by making the perspective of the local communities known thus giving them the exceptional chance of getting their voice heard by the international community.

Both these aspects, often proved by a constant membership increase, have widely contributed in giving great relevance to SW national coalitions in their own countries.

In addition, it clearly emerges, from the Beninese, Brazilian and Philippine case studies, that over the years all these coalitions have reached high levels of legitimacy and credibility demonstrated by the attention given to their actions by media and governments. Above all the Philippine coalition is externally perceived as an important “source of information on human development matters”. The accuracy of its analysis and the reliability of its data earned strong worldwide appreciations.

Regarding the second dimension - “*efficiency and sustainability*” – it is quite interesting to compare how each national coalition settled its own functioning through different levels of formalization of its structure.

Actually, because of the complete autonomy given by the Social Watch network to the national groups so as to determine their own organizational structure and to raise funds for their activities, each coalition is concretely responsible for its good functioning in the country and the solutions found by each of them can be very different.

The analysis of these four cases is a proof of it. There are different levels of formalization: Benin is the example of a very structured coalition with a registered legal statute and several fundamental texts which lay down internal rules. The choice taken by the other coalitions is different.

Brazil opted out of getting a registered legal statute because they preferred informal arrangements which currently guarantee flexibility, horizontality and equality in the functioning of the network at the national level.

The Philippine coalition is currently taking into consideration the possibility of institutionalizing the national coalition by getting a registered legal statute; this is going to be evaluated by the Philippine coalition not because of a need to formalize the internal functioning of the coalition but rather because it could facilitate the process of applying for funding support. Thus, the motivation behind this choice, which is still under discussion, is more linked to making a use out of it rather than to define new internal rules improving the functioning of the national platform.

Even the German coalition chose a minimalist structure: a very low level of formalization is ensured, based on a general memorandum describing the origin of the SW German Coalition and its many activities.

In all the case studies, whether it is a formalized structure or not, there is always one or few organizations in charge of ensuring the coordination of the network both at a strategic level (i.e. Coordination Committee) as well as at an operational level (i.e. Secretariat). This is for sure a key success factor in managing a national platform: indeed being a network involving several organization members, it is essential, although in informal and loose structures, to identify few organizations responsible for the stimulation and coordination of the network activities.

In terms of activity planning, drafting an annual work plan might be deemed an excellent practice; the Beninese, Brazilian and Philippine coalitions work on a wide range of activities at the national level and usually draft one. Also, an annual action plan seems to be a tool in helping the coalition ensure a good performance in implementing different activities. They all refer to the International Social Watch Strategic Framework (adopted at the General Assembly every three years) and consistent to the principle of autonomy which strongly characterises the network, the

plan focuses on the specific activities that the national platform intends promoting locally. The effort of both the Beninese and Philippine coalitions to draft a multi-year plan is noteworthy since it shows their stronger commitment and intention to set up a medium term strategy.

As to sustainability, all the four coalitions experience difficulty in fund raising; obviously this is a worrying aspect which affects the capacity of the network's long term planning. Regarding this aspect it is interesting to compare the different modalities of the members' direct involvement. In Benin members of the coalition are required to contribute to the network with a specific yearly membership fee, while in the other three coalitions there is no such formalization, however members are expected to support the network's activities as best they can. Hardly any optimum practices can be identified on this subject since much depends on the country context but probably there are a few points in the Benin case that deserve being highlighted. Indeed, notwithstanding the difficulty in collecting membership fees, the idea of foreseeing them gives a greater sense of responsibility and ownership among the coalition members. In addition, SW coalition in Benin, probably facilitated by the relevance and uniqueness of its work promoted by local CSOs at the country level, has been able to get financial support from several international organizations, stirring up interest and consolidating the partnership with some of them over the years (i.e. UNDP, Embassy of the Netherlands).

The third and fourth analysis dimensions tackle the core business of the network, its role of monitoring social development issues and of pressing Governments around the world to keep their promises in fighting poverty and ensuring social justice.

Through the "effectiveness" analysis dimension the work done by the national platforms in monitoring governments and analyzing policies, along with stimulating debate and upgrading civil society competencies on social development issues emerges.

Of course all the four national platforms contribute with a yearly country report to the annual Social Watch Global Report, but almost all of them carry out many other additional activities.

Benin is a very good example of national coalition having adapted the mission of Social Watch to the country context: its choice to focus mainly on poverty reduction strategy and on the progress towards MDGs, made the "citizens' scrutiny of public action" (the so-called main activity of the national coalition) extremely relevant and very much appreciated in the country. Indeed the coalition was able, thanks to a wide involvement of local communities, to give its own contribution to the drafting of the second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II) by gathering data and suggestions from citizens at the municipal levels. As to the monitoring of the MDGs, the coalition is annually committed to produce an Alternative Report on the progress of the Millennium Targets. This monitoring is carried out by compiling the analysis made by six thematic groups, each of which competent in specific development issues. This work methodology can be considered as a very good practice since it guarantees an overall and comprehensive analysis based on more specific and ad hoc policy scrutiny made by the competent thematic group.

Similarly to the Beninese coalition, in a certain sense, the Philippines have selected priority issues in research activities. This allows the coalition to deepen its competence on themes relative to financing for development, poverty, MDGs, disparity and equity issues and to produce specific publications in addition to the national Social Watch Report published on a biannual basis since 2001. Another feature that deserves to be mentioned concerning the Philippine coalition is the methodology adopted in researching: the current Basic Capabilities Index, widely used from Social Watch network at global level, come from the Philippine experience. In addition, in carrying out research, the Philippine coalition tries combining official data with empirical ones often supported by case studies which give a human slant to the debate. Such a methodology, together with the use of a language which is also accessible to and comprehensible by ordinary citizens, makes SW Philippine publications very suitable for advocacy.

Both coalitions in the Philippines and Benin are profoundly noteworthy for their effort in training civil society organizations. This can be surely deemed as a very successful experience: upgrading competence of NGOs, journalists, local communities and local public officers is a key factor for getting increasing awareness on social development issues. Training people means en-

abling citizens to really demand for accountable Governments and to boost an active citizenship.

The Brazilian and German coalitions are among the first coalitions that besides contributing to the Social Watch Global Report with the country report, produce a yearly national report since 1997. Both their experiences show the importance of summarizing main findings from the Global Report and focusing the national one mainly on country issues thus stimulating a public national debate through it.

As mentioned in the analysis of the German coalition, creating a more adequate index for all those countries that are reaching top positions in the BCI will be a challenge for the Social Watch network in the coming years, especially for the most developed countries. Brazil - a middle income country characterized by high levels of inequality - also faces a problem with the BCI and calls for the need to make the SW indicator more sensitive to inequality, in order to build a more accurate figure of the national realities.

The Brazilian experience in drafting the national Social Watch Report is extremely interesting: indeed it is a “real process of social learning (...) not a technical activity but rather an inherent political process as it engages SW members in hot political debates”. It is to be hoped that this same practice of mutual learning can be experienced by all the other SW coalitions being this activity in itself a very significant outcome, probably even more noteworthy than the Report in itself.

The fourth dimension - “*strategy and impact*” - focuses more on the external exposure of the national platform by showing good examples of positive interaction between Social Watch and local/national Governments.

Over the years the Brazilian coalition understood the importance of Social Watch in helping Brazilian civil society organizations, which consider it as a “control and monitoring system to create impact on the public policies”. This is a successful approach identified by the Brazilian coalition: it means that SW doesn’t directly work on advocacy and lobbying but enhances the capability of its members to do so. In this way the coalition doesn’t duplicate the work done by Brazilian social actors but offers them space of dialogue and exchange. This is very helpful to understand any issue from different perspectives (the positive experience of dialogues about racism is one evident proof). Moreover, the Brazilian platform often succeeded in inviting government officials to attend national seminars and workshops: this is a good practice for always keeping a dialogue open with decision-makers and getting closer relationships in a more “informal” way as effective as “formal” advocacy or lobbying actions.

The SW coalition in Benin, consistent with its priority issues, continues working on two very relevant initiatives, both of which received great acknowledgments from the Government: the first concerning state budget analysis and its compliance to the MDGs, the second relating to the second generation draft of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). There are two elements that deserve particular attention and which could be considered key factors in allowing the success of both these initiatives. Firstly the Beninese coalition organization: its task-sharing among the member organizations, its attention to deepen each issue according to the competence of each organization (by dividing the work in six thematic groups) and the creation of a Budget Analysis Unit ensuring a thorough analysis that is very much appreciated externally. Indeed the coalition had the chance to be invited by the Government for consultations prior to the adoption of the annual budget. Secondly, the coalition understood the importance of working at the local level to raise awareness among locally active CSOs and local public officers. Working at these micro-levels gave the coalition the possibility to widely involve citizens in the process of defining their needs and priorities for drafting the second PRSP. This is, of course, a very remarkable action which supported the Beninese Government with a proper citizens’ perspective on their own poverty. Without the extensive work at the local level and involvement of nationwide local communities the “Civil Society’s Contributions to the elaboration of the PRSP II in Benin” would not have probably been so influential as it actually was.

Looking at the Philippine coalition there are many aspects that make their experience a successful case. The Alternative Budget Initiative is probably one of the best worldwide practices in budget advocacy. The tangible results achieved in terms of additional funds earmarked for basic services prove the effectiveness of this action. Behind the achievement of those important results there is a successful work modality that other national coalitions should take into account

when implementing similar actions. It is noteworthy the way the budget analysis is carried out, involving different interests and balancing them when defining the alternative budget proposal. The advocacy work then has two phases: firstly advocating on single issues according to the competence of each organization and secondly coordinating the advocacy action in a unique alternative budget proposal. This implies discussions and exchanges among the CSOs involved in the action and as well as among them and the different governmental sectors involved in some component of the State Budget. Involving key players at the political level is surely a critical step for succeeding in this kind of actions. In addition the involvement of media in this initiative deserves to be highlighted. By understanding the importance of having media as allies in the NGOs advocacy work, the Philippine coalition tried to stir up interest among the media also through the organization of thematic seminars properly addressed to them. This action is particularly stimulating for them since it “arms the media with credible data that shows the relevance of the national budget process to the people’s daily lives”.

Besides the Alternative Budget Initiative, the Philippine coalition promotes MDGs localization and monitoring. The importance of facilitating collaboration at the local level between local government and NGOs to enhance development planning and finance strategies can be pointed out as a similarity to the action undertaken by the Benin coalition. In the Philippine experience the crucial role of academics representing “natural advocates and potential engineers of ground level experiments on MDG localization through their technical capabilities” deserves to be highlighted as well.

One last thing about the Philippine coalition is the capability of contributing to the debate on Financing for Development at the national, regional and international level, thanks to the specific competence of some of its members. This work has provided the Philippine Government with Philippine CSOs perspective and analysis on the issues discussed during official international Summits and their preparatory meetings.

A quite interesting initiative is the one promoted by the German Coalition which carried out a small impact assessment survey to better investigate the main target groups of the national report. Despite the survey did not fully achieve the objective to clarify which is the current range of groups reached by the German SW report, the intention of the national platform to better identify its main readers in order to improve its advocacy work accordingly is noteworthy.

In the last dimension - “*coherence and complementarities*” - it is demonstrated how belonging to the international network has supported the national coalition at the country level in terms of reputation and reliability of the analysis carried out.

The international dimension of the network is for sure one of its strengths, even though probably each platform could make better use of and enhance the relationship with the other national coalitions.

As far as the regional dimension is concerned, it is quite well developed in the Asian region where the Philippine coalition has been the focal point for some years. During its mandate SWP organised Asia-wide consultations that have represented important venues for updating the status of social development both at country and regional level, and for sharing and learning from other national coalitions’ experience. It is interesting to observe how the current experience of the Beninese coalition which, having met difficulty (mainly for language constraints) in interacting with the other SW coalitions, is transforming this difficulty into a challenge by promoting a regional debate among CSOs in the Francophone area of West Africa.

All the coalitions have developed good relationships with other civil society networks at the country level. What is highlighted in the Philippine experience is interesting: the uniqueness of Social Watch is to cover a broad range of social development issues, thus other networks with advocacy on specific issues appreciate participating in national consultations promoted by Social Watch considering it a critical moment for interaction with other groups so as to compare their experience in a wider context. The Brazilian SW coalition also attracts other specialized networks to participate in its debates and activities and has contributed even to the creation of new ones, for instance, the *Dialogues against Racism* network.

In conclusion, this paper deserves attention for its intention of reflecting on tangible experiences of SW national platforms and of suggesting to other coalitions a few elements of analysis to initiate their own assessment process. The reader should consider it as a starting point for stimulating an in-depth internal debate that could motivate members to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

If a “network energy index” was built in order to measure its power, probably it should be composed of three elements: capability to observe and reflect on other experiences as well as its own, capability to be creative and capability to attract people (not only in terms of new members but mainly in terms of promoting dialogue with other social actors). As far as all these three components are alive in a network, it will always be able to propose innovative solutions and to adapt to new challenges.

This paper’s objective is to support the aptitude of observing and reflecting: now it is up to Social Watch coalitions around the world to make a good use of it and to give evidence, through their own experiences, of the worldwide power of such a network. ■

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ANNEX I:

Memorandum of Understanding between national groups and the Social Watch network

1. Coalitions must be based in the country and be active in social development issues in that country (not exclusively as academics or consultants).
2. Their basic commitment to the international network is to provide a national report, with their own conclusions and determination of priorities, to be included in the annual publication.
3. They are expected to use their national report and the global report in lobbying activities at a national level.
4. They must be open to the incorporation of other organizations, work actively to broaden awareness of Social Watch and encourage the participation of other organizations.
5. They are responsible for raising funds for their activities. National coalitions are not dependent for funds on, or financially accountable to, the Secretariat or any other international Social Watch entity.
6. Each coalition determines its own organizational structure.
7. Social Watch membership and the exercise of governmental functions are absolutely incompatible.
8. Cooperation with other national platforms should be encouraged at sub-regional, regional and global levels.

The Memorandum of Understanding was adopted during the 1st General Assembly, Rome, 2000.

Available from: <www.socialwatch.org/en/acercaDe/asambleaRoma.htm>.

ANNEX II:

Note on Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) and Gender Equity Index (GEI)

Often in this paper researchers refer to two Indexes created by Social Watch network for monitoring social development at national as well as international level: the BCI, *Basic Capabilities Index*, and the GEI, *Gender Equity Index*.

Both indexes allow Social Watch to rank the countries and compare their trends by measuring every year country by country social development progress/regression.

The Basic Capabilities Index (BCI) is a simple average of three indicators: percentage of children who reach the 5th year of primary education, mortality among children under five, and percentage of child deliveries attended by skilled health personnel.

By not using income as an indicator, the BCI is consistent with a definition of poverty based on capabilities and (the denial of) human rights. At the same time, the index is comparatively easy to compute at sub-national and municipal levels.

The Gender Equity Index (GEI) is based on a selection of indicators relevant to gender inequity in three different dimensions: education (literacy rate gap, primary school enrolment rate gap, secondary school enrolment rate gap, tertiary education enrolment rate gap), participation in the economy (income gap, activity rate gap) and empowerment (percentage of women in technical positions, percentage of women in management and government positions, percentage of women in parliaments, percentage of women in ministerial posts).

ANNEX III:

Semi-structured interviews' guidelines

A) SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW TO THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS

1 st Dimension: relevance	
The Constitutional process of the national coalition	<p>1. Since when your coalition is active?</p> <p>2. How your coalition was created and which organization has been the promoter and why?</p>
Membership and enlargement process	<p>3. What is the current composition of your coalition and who is the leading organization? Which are the former organizations which joined the SW national coalition at the very beginning?</p> <p>4. From its constitution, did the coalition enlarge its membership? <i>If so</i>, what modalities or criteria have been adopted for including new organizations? What ratio has been followed (if any) in the selection of new members? Has the enlargement been stimulated by the organizations already member of the network or new organizations have spontaneously shown their interest in being part of the network? <i>If not</i>, what have been the reasons?</p>
Coalition's legitimacy at the national level	<p>5. Taking into account the historical process up to nowadays, do you think that in your country the external perception of the Social Watch national coalition has been strengthened? <i>If so</i>, could you refer to concrete examples showing that? <i>If not</i>, what are, in your opinion, the reasons which caused this lack of coalition's legitimacy at the national level and how the coalition is going to face this problem?</p>

2nd Dimension: efficiency and sustainability

The coalition's organizational structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the Social Watch Memorandum of Understanding, each group chooses its own organizational structure. Which organizational structure did your coalition choose and why? 2. Does your coalition have a registered legal statute? <i>If not, why not?</i> 3. Has ever been drafted an internal document (i.e. statute, terms of reference...) which lays down the coalition's internal structure and the functioning rules? <i>If so, could you describe the process for drafting and approving this document?</i> <i>If not, how do you ensure that functioning rules are always shared and agreed with all the coalition's members?</i>
Planning and Management Tools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How often do the national coalition's meetings take place? 5. Which kind of communication channels is used? 6. Which are the rules for the decision-making? 7. Do you have a task-sharing among the coalition's members? <i>If so, how is it established?</i> 8. Do you have an yearly work plan? <i>If so, how is it drafted and approved by the national coalition?</i> 9. In planning your activities do you take into consideration the strategic framework adopted at the General Assembly by SW members? <i>If so, could you give us any example about how in the last years did your coalition refer to the current Strategic Framework 2007 -2009?</i> 10. Do you have a Secretariat or proper human resources who take care of coordinating the network activity? <i>If so, who is in charge of the management: a proper management secretariat or one of the organization members? If not, how do you ensure work coherence?</i> 11. How does the national coalition keep in touch with the International Secretariat of Montevideo and the Coordinating Committee? What are the modalities and how often are you in touch with them?
Conflict Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Did you ever experience conflicts among members of the national coalition? <i>If so, how did you try solving the problem?</i>
Criteria for ensuring sustainability to the network in the long period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. How does the national coalition face the funds raising problem in order to support the activities' implementation at the national level? 14. Which is the overall budget managed by your national platform? 15. How is it being funded your coalition? (through fees from their own members, grants from charity foundations, international organizations, Governments...) 16. What are, in your opinion, the challenges the national coalition should face in the next future?

3rd Dimension: effectiveness

Monitoring of the Social Policies and drafting national contribution to the SW International Report	<p>1. Has your coalition regularly contributed to the International Report? How many times? <i>If so</i>, do you think that during the years it has been an improvement of the quality of your national articles? <i>If not</i>, which have been the difficulties that prevented from contributing to the International Report?</p> <p>2. How does the national coalition use to work for drafting the country report to be included in the International Report? Could you describe the process for producing it and how is the work shared among the coalition's members?</p> <p>3. When drafting the country report do you use to consult academia and more competent organizations on the topic?</p> <p>4. Beyond contributing to the International Report, does the national coalition produce a proper national report as well? <i>If so</i>, could you describe how is the national report produced and which structure has it in comparison with the international one. When translating the International Report, do you fully translate it or are there any criteria for selecting the articles? Do you add as well another section focusing more on your country context?</p> <p>5. Do you produce as well promotional materials, booklets, other popularized materials? Could you give us a list and samples of those materials.</p>
Use of the Indexes BCI and GEI at the local level	6. Which kind of use did you develop at the country level for the BCI and GEI?
Research methods and tools	7. About the research activities carried out by the national platform, what sources do you use to consult and how do you verify and compare the truthfulness?
Specific research activities carried out by the national coalition	8. Beyond the research relating to the topic yearly chosen for the SW International Report, do you carry out other lines of research at the national level?
Enhancing and upgrading analytical capacities in researching	9. Have you ever organized specific trainings, seminars, workshops for improving the competencies of national coalition in monitoring, analyzing and making researches about SW themes? If so, how many per year?
Gaining ground at national level and Legitimizing of the research carried out by the SW national coalition	<p>10. Taking into account the work of the national coalition (both research and training activities), what do you consider to be so far the strengths and weaknesses?</p> <p>11. What do you think is in your country the kind of public more interested in the analysis of the report?</p>

4 th Dimension: Strategy and impact	
Monitoring of the social policies of the national Government and lobbying activities towards it	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did you identify priority issues and main target groups for lobbying activities? <i>If so, which ones?</i> 2. How does the national coalition perform lobbying activities towards its own national Government about Social Watch's specific issues? 3. Could you talk about a lobbying action in your country carried out by the SW national platform deemed to have been a successful action? What are the reasons, in your opinion, of such a success? 4. Could you talk about a lobbying action carried out by the SW national platform in your country that failed in achieving the expected results? If this happened, what are the reasons, in your opinion, of such a failure?
Advocacy actions through the promotion of the analysis carried out by the SW network	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Has been able the national coalition to identify priority issues on which to focus its advocacy work at the national level? <i>If so, could you describe the process for making this selection?</i> 6. What modalities and tools do you use for promoting and distributing at the national level the SW International Report and other eventual analysis of the network? 7. Do you organize in your country the launch of the SW International and/or National Report? How many times did you organize a proper launch? <i>If so, how do you organize the launch? Are there press conferences, round tables...?</i> 8. Do you make different presentations of the SW Report according to the target of public you are addressing your promotion (i.e. politicians, academics, journalists, general public...)? 9. Do you think that during the years the national coalition succeeded in carrying out with coherence the advocacy work? <i>If so, what are the results?</i> 10. Has been able the national coalition to establish channels of dialogue with politicians and people from the Government at the local and national level? <i>If so, how did this happen? What kind of relationship do you have with government institutions? In which sectors?</i>
Social Development and raising awareness of public opinion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Which has been the main target of public chosen by the national coalition for raising awareness actions? 12. On the basis of your experience, what tools do you consider most suitable for raising awareness of public opinion on the Social Watch issues?
The media strategy and communication capacity of the national coalition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Has the national coalition adopted a communication strategy? If so, what are the main tools used? 14. Do you use the same materials (logos, graphics, press releases) of the International secretariat or do you have your own? 15. Has the national coalition succeeded in making the local and national media interested in its activities? <i>If so, what modalities were adopted for gaining their attention?</i>
Impact Assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Did you develop any tools for assessing the coalition's internal performance and the external results achieved in carrying out lobbying and advocacy activities?

5th Dimension: coherence and complementarities

<p>Added value of belonging to an international network</p>	<p>1. What in your opinion has been the added value of belonging to an “international” network such as the Social Watch?</p> <p>2. How much being part of an international network did encourage or stir up interest during the constituency process of the national coalition?</p> <p>3. To what extent are you able to communicate and exchange experiences with the other organizations around the world belonging to the Social Watch network? <i>If so</i>, how often does it happen and through which modalities? <i>If not</i>, what are the reasons in your opinion for this lack of relationship among the SW national coalitions?</p>
<p>Regional Dimension of the SW network</p>	<p>4. Did you develop a closer relationship with the national platforms of SW belonging to your same regional area? <i>If so</i>, usually what do you do along with the other coalitions? <i>If not</i>, why in your opinion this didn’t happen so far? Do you think that a closer relationship at the regional level could help the work of your coalition in your country?</p>
<p>Capacity to encourage relationships with other civil society organizations’ networks at the local level</p>	<p>5. How does the Social Watch national coalition interact with other civil society’s networks already existing in the country before its constituency or just developed in the last years? What synergy is there at local level?</p>

ANNEX III:

Semi-structured interviews' guidelines

B) SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW TO SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SW NATIONAL COALITION

1. Since when your Organization belongs to the SW national coalition?
2. What have been the reasons for being part of the network?
3. Which is the specific contribution that your Organizations brings to the SW national coalition?
4. What is, in your opinion, the added value of belonging to the SW network?
5. Does your Organization use the yearly Social Watch Report (the international and/or the national one)?
If so, how does your Organization use it?
6. Do you think that the advocacy and lobbying activities carried out by your national coalition had any impact on your country?
If so, could you give any concrete example?
If not, what are in your opinion the reasons?
7. The work with the Social Watch network has influenced somehow the proper work of your organization?
If so, how did it happen?
8. What are, in your opinion, the greatest difficulties usually faced by your national coalition in your country and what the opportunities that could turn in favour?
9. What are, in your opinion, the main features that make your national coalition a successful example and what should be improved and why?

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR NATIONAL COALITION

Internal factors	
Strenghts	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
External factors	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •

ANNEX III:

Semi-structured interviews' guidelines

C) QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE FILLED IN BY THE NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS AND MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COALITIONS

1. Level of visibility achieved by the national coalition in your country

- Very High - 4
- High - 3
- Low - 2
- Very Low - 1

2. Level of relevance of the issues dealt with by the SW national coalition with the political agenda of the Government

- Very High - 4
- High - 3
- Low - 2
- Very Low - 1

3. Level of consideration and recognition gained by the yearly Social Watch Report in your country

- Very High - 4
- High - 3
- Low - 2
- Very Low - 1

4. Level of involvement of the members of the national coalition in defining and planning the activities at the local level

- Very High - 4
- High - 3
- Low - 2
- Very Low - 1

5. Level of satisfaction about the functioning rules/methods adopted by the national coalition

- Very High - 4
- High - 3
- Low - 2
- Very Low - 1

6. Level of satisfaction about the achievement of the expected results

- Very High - 4
- High - 3
- Low - 2
- Very Low - 1

7. Increase in the degree of exchange of information, know – how, training... thanks to the belonging to the Social Watch network

- Very High - 4
- High - 3
- Low - 2
- Very Low - 1

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