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Development in Africa through Governance and Partnerships

A View from East Africa



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- A View from East Africa -

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Commissioned by the Department of Development Policy
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

March 2005





Cover photos: Kari Rissa, Matti Nummelin

ISBN-10: 951-724-580-7

ISBN-13: 978-951-724-580-7

Hakapaino Oy
Helsinki 2006



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Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to all the people who were interviewed for their contributions to a study that aims to improve our understanding of governance and partnership in the context of development cooperation.

Executive Summary

This study of perceptions of governance and partnerships includes material from 76 interviews conducted in Ethiopia and Kenya. One-third of the people interviewed were civil servants, another third represented civil society and the remaining third were employees of intergovernmental organisations and the European Union.

Definitions of governance

The Ethiopians and Kenyans who were interviewed took good governance to be defined as meaning the administration and management of people, funds and resources in a responsible, transparent, accountable and participatory manner. There was a general opinion that governance is a complex and politically sensitive topic that involves a number of principles and practices. There were no major differences between the definitions given by government representatives and those suggested by representatives of civil society, but all interviewees emphasised different dimensions of governance.

The definitions of governance expressed during the interviews can be analysed in terms of three main dimensions: technical, relational, and moral and ethical.

The *technical dimension* comprised free and fair elections, anti-corruption activities, functioning institutions and legal frameworks, and arrangements to ensure the participation of stakeholders and citizens. The technical and administrative aspects of governance seemed to have slightly more relevance to civil servants than to civil society.

The *relational dimension* included the importance of governance in facilitating an appropriate balance of power between government offices in the capital and those in the provinces, and between the state and civil society. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of governance in guiding consultative processes through which citizens are able to understand political decisions and take part in designing and implementing development projects.

The *moral and ethical dimension* particularly included the principles of transparency, accountability, responsibility and predictability.

Local governance

The interviewees representing governments and civil society in Ethiopia and Kenya thought that good governance should be applied throughout the entire society and all its institutions. Besides the need to improve governance in government offices in the

capital, many interviewees also recognised a need to implement governance principles and practices with regard to the provincial and local governmental authorities.

Both groups of interviewees among civil service and civil society had serious concerns about “governance gaps” in the management of projects and the funding of NGOs. Corporate responsibility within the private sector also seemed to be an issue of increasing interest.

Regional governance

Some interviewees wanted to see African governments adopt a much more positive attitude towards governance, because it was thought that this would help civil servants and governments themselves to be more effective, and enhance the legitimacy of their administration and decisions. While the interviewees agreed that governance has to be improved in Africa, the pace and sequencing of governance reforms and the primary areas of focus were all matters of discussion.

Many interviewees wanted to measure the impact of good governance in Africa in terms of its relevance to socio-economic development. The interviewees emphasised governance as being a prerequisite for development, peace and human security. However, they were afraid that wars and political instability could undermine efforts to strengthen good governance in Africa.

International governance

Donors were asked to apply the principles of good governance to their own aid programmes and in their relations with developing countries. Some interviewees said that it was not clear what the international community considers the requirements of good governance to be. For example, technical conditionalities of aid were not regarded as having any linkage to good governance at all, but were mainly perceived as a reflection of the disparity in relations between Africa and the West.

Good governance at the international level was considered to entail that donors should aim to be more consistent and transparent regarding their policies. Donors were also asked to develop a shared understanding of concepts with Africans. Western governments were called on to pay more attention as to which institutions and individuals in Africa have a mandate to speak and sign contracts on behalf of the citizens. Criticism was voiced about the spending of development funds on foreign consultants and conferences.

Future governance challenges

The interviews showed that individual African societies possess a great deal of expertise and knowledge about governance issues. But the information appeared to be scattered within and between different ministries and stakeholders. Governance seemed to represent different aspects to different people, depending on their individual socio-economic status, professional experience and personal aspirations.

A particular challenge was seen in the need to have an understanding of governance that is shared by both rural and urban areas and by both governments and citizens. This was believed to require opening up the democratic space for freedom of expression, genuine political participation and dialogue. It could be concluded that with better training, increased cooperation and the development of partnerships in society all the local knowledge about governance could be pooled to assist the country in its efforts towards development and the eradication of poverty.

Definitions of partnerships

On the basis of the interviews conducted for this study, partnership can be defined as meaning working closely together to reach common targets and, during the process, sharing solutions, responsibility, expertise, experience and resources. The interviewees recognised seven characteristics of good partnership: equality, mutual respect, mutual trust, common interests, dialogue, commitment and fair rules of cooperation.

Inequality in the partners' status was seen to pose the most challenging obstacle for true partnership. There was some confusion as to what equality in partnership should involve.

Local partnerships

Cooperation between governments and civil society was said to be difficult because of the governments' superior access to information, funds and international networks. Foreign aid to local NGOs was thought to create political rivalry and competition over funding between governments and civil society, causing difficulties for their partnering. There was no agreement as to whether there should be permanent institutional mechanisms for consultations between governments and NGOs.

In the private sector, African governments were said to interfere too actively in trying to ensure the dominant position of state-owned companies. Governments were also thought to still lack an appropriate and comprehensive role in facilitating the

development of legal, political and financial environments that are conducive to entrepreneurship. However, there were encouraging examples of national and transnational partnerships launched by African civil society.

Regional partnerships

At the regional level, the existing partnership agreements concerning trade and customs arrangements have not been fully implemented. Cooperation to promote trade, development and peace was thought to be still at an early stage, but many interviewees nevertheless believed that regional integration is the only way for Africa to survive in today's world of globalisation.

The key challenges to regional integration include conflicts and political instability, the impacts of nationalism and the colonial legacy, language barriers, and undeveloped infrastructure and communications networks. Regional partnerships were thought to require efforts in a number of areas, including trade diversification, investments in regional infrastructure, and more commitment by the top leadership.

International partnerships

One of the study's most striking findings was that all the interviewees in Ethiopia and Kenya stated that a partnership between African and European governments does not yet exist. It was thought that political dialogue often functions only at rhetorical and formal levels, while true partnership should go beyond official statements and formal meetings. Nevertheless, some sectors of development cooperation were believed to be developing into partnerships and, on the whole, relations between Africa and Europe were said to be improving.

It was acknowledged to be problematic that it was the stronger partner, Europe, that has been eager to initiate the idea and language of partnership. Some interviewees said they suspected that in this respect Europe is guided by national interests and concealed motives.

Equality and mutual respect were regarded as being critical aspects of the relations between Africa and Europe. There were some remarks that donors at times make funding decisions without taking any responsibility or consulting the aid recipients. Several references were made to the importance of principles of fairness, codes of conduct, and good governance practices in partnerships. Interviewees wanted the same requirements to be applied to the donor community, for instance with regard to transparency, anti-corruption and the effective use of funds.

The study found that civil servants and civil society in Ethiopia and Kenya felt comfortable with being accountable to donors over the expenditure of development funding. Some interviewees wanted donors to exercise even more discipline and control over aid and development programmes, as long as this was not a matter of trivial reporting details but of helping to advance development and eradicate poverty.

Future partnership challenges

The interviewees thought that over time the relationship between donors and developing countries would gradually evolve into partnership. The major test for cooperation and partnership was thought to be trade and international trade negotiations.

Regarding partnership between African and European countries, the main obstacles were perceived to lie in colonial history and in the inequalities in technological development and political and financial power. There was a call for an honest assessment of the economic and political history of the relationship between South and North before partnership could genuinely be fostered.

It was emphasised that in development cooperation partnership should lead to improvements in several areas of cooperation, including the strengthening of local ownership, the recognition of local resources, and the development of common and unconventional visions for cooperation. True partnership was said to require much greater political commitment from all partners. International partnerships should also concentrate more on reducing inequalities in key practical areas.

It was suggested that, particularly at the beginning of their cooperation, partners should focus on practical areas of equality, such as bridging gaps in technological knowledge, information-sharing, building capacities up to the same level, and having an equal voice in meetings, negotiations and decision-making.



1 Introduction

In February 2004, the Government of Finland adopted its White Paper on Development Policy¹, which defines the principles and guidelines to be followed in Finnish development assistance. The Department of Development Policy at Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs therefore called for a number of research projects to further discuss the conceptual and operational aspects of the policy.

This study of governance and partnerships was initiated in response to that invitation, and it aims to improve the understanding of good governance and partnerships from the perspective of development aid recipients in Africa. Both good governance and functional partnerships are regarded as important goals of development in their own right, but they are also considered to be necessary in building a favourable environment and productive overall framework for development.

Issues of governance are significant locally, regionally and internationally.

At the time of the study, governance and partnerships were particularly significant topics, both regionally in Africa and internationally.

Firstly, the Fourth African Development Forum convened in Addis Ababa, on 11-15 October 2004, with the theme of "Governance for a Progressive Africa". The various dimensions of governance in Africa were debated by African governments and civil society. In the Forum, too, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN/ECA) publicised the results of the first governance studies ever conducted in 28 African societies. Secondly, four pilot countries, including Kenya and the Federal Republic of Ethiopia were about to start a voluntary review process on the state of governance in their societies under the African Union's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

At the international level, too, several current and foreseen processes and meetings provided a wider context for the study. The Commission on Africa, established by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, was carrying out consultations for its report on Africa. In addition, a five-year follow-up summit on the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration was to take place at the UN Headquarters in New York in September 2005. In that connection, the progress of the Millennium Development Goals was being evaluated from the point of view of selected individual countries, including Ethiopia and Kenya, during the second part of 2004.

¹ Government Resolution on Development Policy, 5.2.2004. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, http://global.finland.fi/english/publications/pdf/dev_policy2004.pdf

How the study was conducted

This study explores the concepts and spheres of governance and partnerships from the perspective of Africa and particularly that of East Africa, where Ethiopia and Kenya are among the long-term programme countries for the Finnish development cooperation.

The study can be called a listening exercise, because its main focus was on collecting views and opinions in East Africa through interviews with representatives of the Ethiopian and Kenyan governments and of civil society. The interviews were conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Nairobi, Kenya, in October-December 2004.²

The interviewees were selected as representing the views held in government circles and in civil society as widely as possible. The civil servants who were interviewed were mainly senior officials. They worked in six different ministries: foreign affairs, finance, water, trade, education, and justice. The civil society interviewees came from non-governmental organisations and professional associations, chambers of commerce, and academia.

The viewpoints of staff of the intergovernmental organisations and EU offices in Ethiopia and Kenya were also canvassed in order to add to understanding of the current states of affairs in governance and partnerships. Nevertheless, the focus of the study was on the perceptions of Ethiopians and Kenyans.

The study focuses on the views of Ethiopians and Kenyans.

A total of 76 people were interviewed during the study. About one third of them represented African governments, another third represented civil society in Africa and the remaining third worked for intergovernmental organisations and the EU in Ethiopia and Kenya.

The interviews were semi-structured, and the main questions concerned the characteristics of governance and partnership, asking, for example, whether there is a partnership between the African and European governments, what kind of hope there is for future cooperation between Africa and Europe, and what kind of governance and partnership issues currently feature in the policy environment at national, regional and international levels.

² Another set of interviews was conducted amongst the African delegations of Ghana, Benin, the Republic of South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania who participated in a meeting with the Nordic countries in Helsinki in January 2005. The second set of interviews served as a control group to learn to which extent the Africans who were interviewed share their views on good governance and partnerships.

It was agreed with the interviewees that they would be able to speak without their views being directly quoted or attributed in the study. In general, the atmosphere of the interviews was open, perhaps even surprisingly so, taking into account the sensitivity of some features of the topics involved.

Frank views were expressed about the role of the international community.

Many interviewees expressed views that were frankly critical of the role of the donor community in Africa. It seemed, however, to be more complicated to speak about the domestic aspects of governance and partnerships. In Ethiopia, public participation and regional development seemed to be difficult subjects to discuss and study, while in Kenya governance issues could not be touched upon at all without reference being made to the corrupt practices of the previous government and the political reforms of the new government. In Kenya, a couple of civil servants appeared to be suspicious about the purpose of the study and declined to be interviewed.

Issues of governance and partnerships had several points in common. As these two concepts were discussed during same interviews, it was not always possible to differentiate one from the other. In this report, the author has nevertheless organised the findings into two main chapters.

The study does not make a distinction between the opinions of governments and those of civil society, although it could have been interesting to compare the views of different stakeholders in detail. However, this would have required a more comprehensive compilation of interviews over an adequately long period of time.

Aims of the study

The study has two main aims. *Firstly*, it seeks to clarify two concepts – governance and partnership – that are essential to development terminology and have a central role in Finnish development aid activities. *Secondly*, the study aims to find ideas and collect thoughts on how governance and partnerships could be promoted and taken into account by development aid programmes at the national, regional and international levels.

The study aims to improve understanding at both conceptual and operational levels.

It needs to be borne in mind that the overall purpose of this study is to facilitate the building up of common understanding and interests in the challenging and complex

fields of governance and partnerships. The perceptions expressed in the interviews should not be taken as official statements of governments or civil society as a whole but as opinions of individual Africans taking part in an ongoing discussion to comprehend the meaning of these two concepts.

2 Perceptions of Governance

“To me, governance means the rule of law, a good legal and institutional framework, and how a body or entity is administered.”

“It means involving the people in each and every development activity, being accountable to the people at the national level.”

“Governance means certain values of co-existence, with critical core values of openness, accountability, and transparency. It is a process to address correctly our development problems, a system to ensure that the politics is there for the people.”

“It’s a treaty, a comprehensive agreement, which includes instruments for responsible policies and institutions.”

Excerpts from interviews with representatives of African governments and African civil society, October-December 2004.

A number of representatives of African governments and African civil society, including the private sector and academia, were interviewed in Ethiopia and Kenya in October-December 2004. The representatives involved were mostly Ethiopian or Kenyan, but representatives from some other African countries were also interviewed during the Fourth African Development Forum, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in October 2004.

The interviewees were asked to define “governance” on the basis of their own views and fields of expertise and experience. Many of those interviewed emphasised that the concept is politically sensitive and its complexity makes it rather difficult to define

adequately. The conclusion can, however, clearly be drawn that everybody interviewed considered governance to be extremely important for socio-economic development and political stability in society.

There were no major differences between the definitions proposed by representatives of governments and those suggested by representatives of civil society. In fact, both groups shared almost the same perspective on governance. However, the technical aspects of governance were slightly more relevant to the government representatives, whereas governance elements within political culture was emphasized more by the civil society representatives.

2.1. Main characteristics of governance

On the basis of the definitions that people suggested in the interviews, it can be concluded that “governance” means administering people, funds, and resources in a responsible, transparent, accountable and participatory manner.

Governance in African countries was spoken of as starting within the family and the village. It was considered to be both a principle and a practice that need to be applied nationally, regionally and internationally to a wide range of activities, institutions, and sectors. Governance was seen as being a necessary prerequisite for development, peace and security at all levels of social and political life. Both governmental and civil society representatives wanted to measure governance in terms of concrete results in development for the poor.

Governance is strongly linked with levels of development.

One of the interesting findings in this study was that the interviewees perceived governance as being an issue that concerns more than just the central governments in the national capitals. People wanted governance to be taken seriously at all levels by all government offices without any exceptions. Governance was said to embrace the whole machinery of government in all its dimensions, both horizontal and vertical. Demands were addressed to the provincial and local levels to take more active roles in improving governance vertically within the government. It was said that these levels are all too often left out of the primary agendas and visions of development plans, both by the central government and by the donor community.

Another finding was the emphasis that the people being interviewed put on making a clear distinction between “governance” and “the government”. They said that it is important to see the concept of governance in the context of the entire society. The two main traditional areas of governance were addressed, namely economic governance

and political governance, but governance was also seen as a concept to be welcomed in the spheres and daily activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector. In addition, all partnerships amongst national governments and between governments and civil society entities were thought to reflect the type of governance system already in place. It was emphasised that some principles of governance should be included in every partnership as part of the basic rules of cooperation.

Partnerships reflect the system of governance in the country concerned.

The interviewees' perceptions of governance can be summarised in three "dimensions": technical, relational, and moral and ethical.³

Technical Characteristics

- **Rule of law**

In the interviews, some people explained governance as being a comprehensive agreement and a sort of treaty in society. It was said to be important that the rule of law extends to cover all governmental sectors. People wanted the law to specify the chain of decision-making as well as the duties and responsibilities of the government, in order to be sure of having a government ruled by law. Policy decisions and implementation would not then depend on the arbitrary decisions and good will of individual politicians and civil servants.

Some of those interviewed stressed that governments in Africa should show firmness in policy-making processes and in establishing proper codes of conduct. However several of them also expressed strong views to the effect that having a strong government should not mean rule by fear and control, or be a justification for repression and lack of respect for human rights.

³ These three categories as such did not appear in the interviews but were drawn up by the author on the basis of the interviews conducted in East Africa in October-December 2004. In this chapter, all the characteristics of governance are presented as they were explained and defined by the interviewees. No additional literature was used, because the purpose was to gather the actual perceptions of the people in Ethiopia and Kenya.

- **Free, fair and democratic elections**

Many of the people interviewed emphasised that free, fair and democratic elections provide a method for resolving competition in politics and for changing the government peacefully, without violence. Several of those interviewed specifically favoured a multiparty system over one-party dominance.

Free political campaigning was seen as making it easier for voters to choose between political candidates. There were hopes for the provision of quotas for female candidates, and for citizens to be able to cast their votes freely and without fears about their safety.

Some of those interviewed pointed to a need to limit the number of years that individuals could serve in high offices. Politicians were requested to leave their posts peacefully, and to learn to let other people take their places. Politicians were also asked to accept the results of elections, and “not to slaughter their own people because they don’t vote for you.”

Elections were thought to provide a government with legitimacy, helping it to rule the country according to the principles of good governance.

- **Good legal and institutional frameworks**

The instruments of governance were seen to lie in responsible policies and institutions delivering services to citizens and guaranteeing equal treatment for all citizens before the law. It was said that the institutions of governance should be equally strong. Some of those interviewed thought that a functioning legal and political system relies to a great extent on the capacity of civil servants. Civil servants, both junior and senior, should therefore have opportunities to acquire training and further education.

- **Freedom from corruption and nepotism**

In the interviews, governance was said to include efforts by the government to eradicate corruption from its structures and practices, and to avoid favours being granted to fellow party members, relatives and friends. Some of those interviewed supported the establishment of effective mechanisms to monitor possible corruption and nepotism as being a vital element of governance.

Relational Characteristics

- **Balance of political powers**

Some of the people interviewed saw the existence of one-party dominance in African countries as an important issue in governance. Concerns were expressed that when one party hold posts in all key offices and institutions of the executive, government, parliament and judiciary, the political system becomes weak and lacks checks and balances.

Some remarks were made to the effect that governance means a good balance of powers between the various authorities and offices, as a safeguard to ensure impartial treatment for ordinary citizens.

- **Power-sharing**

As a relational concept, governance was believed to be closely linked to the issues of power and power-sharing. Power was said to originate from a number of sources in communities and society. One of the interviewees claimed that people in government have superior economic and political powers, which give them easy access to land, information and international contacts. It was thought that without good governance the ordinary citizens remain powerless and continue to lack prospects of wealth, knowledge, and access to networks.

It was concluded that good governance ensures a political system in which the gap between the resources and capacities of the power-holders and those of the citizens is not too wide. Therefore, good governance would help all stakeholders, including civil society, to have access to land, information, funds, political and economic power, and international networks.

- **Participation**

In many interviews, a participatory democratic system was said to be a foundation of good governance.

Some interviewees stressed governance as a consultative process, in which policies are designed and implemented through involving people at all levels in the development of activities and political processes. In such a consultative process, people from all parts of the country would be able to present their interests in a fair manner and compete equally for use of the limited amount of resources available to the government. Governance was described as being a tool to manage the process of dealing with competing interests and responding to the needs of people.

It was argued that the political leadership should not dictate decisions, but consult and discuss with all stakeholders. In this regard, governance was defined as meaning a political practice in which all points of view can be presented and taken into account.

- **Relations within society**

In many cases, governance was explained as a way of facilitating the development of different kinds of relations and partnerships within society. Firstly, governance was thought to be a device to guide the development of a political system in which different authorities and ministries are able to communicate, cooperate and relate to one another. Secondly, governance was seen as a tool that assists the formation and maintenance of relations between all levels of government in a country, from central government to regional and local governments. Thirdly, it was said that governance helps in creating a mechanism for managing the relationship between those who govern and those who are governed. And, fourthly, governance was said to include a dimension involving the organisation and evolution of relations and partnerships between the government and civil society at large.

Moral and Ethical Characteristics

- **Transparency**

Quite a few of the people interviewed understood governance to connote an administrative practice, in which the real motives and information possessed by governments and international financial institutions are made available to the public in a transparent manner. Governance was seen as being a moral and ethical code that helps citizens and civil society to obtain more knowledge of negotiations and agreements between their governments and bilateral and multilateral donors. Some of the interviewees stressed that governance also means transparency with regard to the availability of more detailed information for parliaments about budgetary processes, loan agreements and the policy backgrounds of new laws.

- **Responsibility**

In the interviews, some emphasised that governance means responsible performance at all levels of civic and political life, nationally, regionally and internationally. Some of the interviewees also stressed that the practice of good governance entails the proper judicial processing and punishment of misconduct, mismanagement and corruption.

- **Accountability**

Some of the interviewees thought that governance includes a will within the government itself to be accountable for the spending of its funds. This was considered to be particularly important, as resources in all societies were seen to be always limited or scarce but people's needs were unlimited.

- **Predictability**

At the national level, predictability was thought to help people to support the work of local and national institutions and cooperate with their government. Predictable policies were believed to lay the foundation for reliable conditions for economic growth and foreign investment.

Predictable political system and culture were also believed to bring peace and stability to society and the interstate relations in Africa. A few of the interviewees defined governance as meaning predictability with regard to how the government reacts at times of crisis and to the kinds of policies it introduces.

With regard to international relations, predictability was said to increase policy coherence that helps to cooperate with partners and with the international community.

2.2. Five areas of governance

Many of the people interviewed emphasised that governance has both political and economic aspects. The interviewees stressed that the principles of governance need to be practised vertically at all levels of the government rule from central to provincial and local offices. It was deemed necessary to implement governance also horizontally in each sector in society.

Quite a few thought that increasingly governance should also play a part in the spheres of civil society and the private sector.

Five practical areas of governance were addressed in the interviews: economic, political, sectoral, NGO, and corporate governance. The following comments were made regarding these areas of governance:

I Economic governance

The characteristics of good economic governance were said to include the principles of consistency, sustainability, and a long-term perspective.

People remarked that economic policies need to be predictable, instead of being “one type of governance today and another type of governance tomorrow”. Predictability was said to be essential for creating an environment that is conducive to economic growth and private sector development, and to the attraction of foreign investment.

Predictability is necessary to create a conducive environment.

Peace and economic development

Some of the interviewees were particularly concerned by the role of wars, conflicts and civil strife in Africa in destroying human life and property and undermining good economic governance.

Sustainable development

Some of those interviewed said that good economic governance should put sustainable development high on its list of priorities, even ranking it as the most important goal of all. This was said to mean bridging inequality gaps by distributing resources fairly and paying attention to gender issues. Therefore it was of utmost importance that economic governance would aim to accommodate a wide range of views in society without creating divisions.

Particular problems were thought to arise if a country constantly wastes resources in failed development projects and “has white elephants one year after another.”

Budgetary processes need to be and transparent.

Budgetary process

The budgetary process was seen as being the main vehicle of economic governance. It was considered extremely important that budgets should be planned and adopted through a participatory decision-making process, and that all major decisions are brought to the parliament for approval. It was suggested that there should be a definite rule that every ministry explains its needs openly during the budgetary process and bids against the other ministries for resources.

Good economic governance was also said to be characterised by ministries always spending financial resources according to their budgets and as approved by the parliament.

II Political governance

It seemed to be more difficult, and politically much more sensitive, for interviewees to define political governance than for them to discuss economic governance. In spite of this, and perhaps surprisingly, the bulk of interviewing time was used to express opinions and thoughts about political governance.

There was, however, a great deal of overlap between descriptions of economic governance and political governance, which seems to show that it is not always possible or even necessary to make a distinction between these two areas of governance.

Policy frameworks and participation are key criteria of political governance.

Policy framework

Good political governance was said to mean first of all a policy framework that is responsive to the needs of the people and the country. In this respect, there seemed to be country-specific differences as to the type of governance that is required.

For example, in Ethiopia it was argued that good political governance should include policies for food security and decentralisation. In Kenya, by contrast, many of the interviewees emphasised the need for policies to eliminate corrupt practices and improve the effectiveness of aid administration.

Participatory decision-making

Good political governance was said to involve ways of designing policies through participatory decision-making, whereby people are able to take their own decisions about their future development, and to experience strong feelings of ownership.

In this context, it was considered vital to have more clarification as to how the various institutions and stakeholders relate to each other.

III Sectoral governance

The views expressed in the interviews showed that governance was regarded as essential for the achievement of successful and sustainable results in all sectors of society.

Governance of services concerns all citizens.

Governance was seen as being a matter that extends well beyond the institutional practices and structural arrangements of economic and political life. Some of the people

interviewed suggested that the practice of governance in society should be further enhanced through a sector-specific approach.

Box 1.

Suggested areas of sectoral governance

The interviews revealed that governance issues were thought to be particularly relevant in the following sectors:

Service delivery

The question of how services are organised, managed, and financed was said to be a governance issue that concerns all citizens. Putting the principles of good governance into effect would directly result in better delivery of services to people at local levels.

The conclusion was also drawn that specific training courses are required for the public servants at the local level outside the capital with regard to practices in budget allocation and participatory development.

Education

The practice of good governance in the educational sector was thought to be critically important, because education was considered to be a highly politicised topic in African societies.

Some interviewees emphasised the administration of schools, and other aspects of the education sector, as being a major governance concern for all citizens.

HIV/Aids

With regard to the health sector, several interviewees were worried about the management of HIV/Aids funds in developing countries. Financial assistance to deal with the epidemic had been seen to reach Africa, but two particular concerns were voiced during the interviews.

Firstly, there were doubts as to whether the HIV/Aids funds are allocated equitably between different population groups. And secondly, the question was raised as to whether the various ministries involved are really capable of achieving the level of coordination required for making holistic plans to prevent the disease and manage the massive amounts of HIV/Aids funds.

Land ownership

Land ownership and tenure policies were said to be a frequent cause of clashes in African societies. For that reason, better governance within the sector was believed to help reducing conflicts in Africa.

In Africa's agriculture-led economies, land and tenure issues were seen as being extremely relevant to people's welfare. They were also thought to have an impact on private sector development and the livelihoods of small enterprises.

The view was expressed that many African governments tend to oppose the schemes for privatisation and liberalisation that are usually introduced and promoted by the international financial institutions. Attitudes towards privatisation and liberalisation also had consequences for land policies.

Management of natural resources

Interviewees wanted to see better management and governance of natural resources in Africa, both nationally and internationally. In particular, it was said that management of the Blue Nile water resources would require better regional governance in East Africa. Some wanted to have a system in which African oil and minerals would benefit the African continent as a whole.

Immigration and relocation

The principles and practice of governance were thought to be very helpful in managing issues concerning cross-border migration and internal migration from the countryside to the cities. The relocation of people was also considered to be a sector that should be administered according to the principles of good governance.

IV NGO governance

Amongst those interviewed, it was recognised that many NGOs have succeeded in producing tangible and valuable results with regard to socio-economic development in Africa.

Accountability of NGOs is a cause for concern.

However, many expressed serious concerns about accountability and governance within the NGO sector. Even some representatives of civil society, both in Ethiopia and in Kenya, referred to the governance of NGOs as being one of the main areas of governance in Africa that needs improving.

Management of funds

Firstly, there was concern about accountability in the use of funds. Some NGOs were said to have serious problems of mismanagement, for example spending most of their funds on office expenses, vehicles, salaries, and travel. It was claimed that some NGOs pay their employees salaries that are higher than those paid to ordinary civil servants by the national governments.

Relevance of activities

Secondly, there was said to be unclarity as to whether the work of NGOs based in national capitals was relevant to the eradication of poverty and improving the living standards of people in the countryside. One interviewee had the impression that aid money reaches the poor much more effectively through the central government than through local NGOs.

Dynamics of external funding

Thirdly, donors were criticised for sponsoring the same NGOs year after year without showing any interest in looking into the types of governance problems that exist within those NGOs.

Donor funding was seen as giving rise to “super-NGOs” and NGO monopolies that were felt to deprive smaller NGOs. The dominance of certain NGOs was said to make it very difficult for new NGOs to get their share of foreign support.

One interviewee thought that foreign funding had generated jealousy and an unhealthy working environment among NGOs, hindering them from cooperating and forming consortiums. Funding could thus even be seen at times as obstacle, preventing local NGOs from becoming stronger, self-sustaining, and more cooperative with each other.

Some of the interviewees felt that donors automatically perceive all NGOs as good and all governments as bad. Donors were also criticised for automatically believing that NGOs are always genuine and trustworthy.

It was said that donors should, instead, be more aware of possible mismanagement and corruption within the NGOs, and check more closely whether their funds really go to the communities through the NGOs involved. Views of this kind were expressed both by government representatives and by civil society representatives.

V Corporate governance

The people who were interviewed saw the private sector in Africa as being relatively free from corruption. They thought that some of the rules and regulations in the business sector make private enterprises and companies more responsible and transparent than the public sector. It was believed that companies are more likely to collapse as a result of competition within the corporate sector, or due to changing market environments, than because of corrupt practices.

Business practices can be harmonised with good governance.

It can be concluded from the interviews that corporate responsibility is a novel topic in Africa, and one that is of rapidly growing interest. Interviewees also emphasised the need for good governance and better management practices in professional associations.

Social responsibility was not thought to be a luxury for the business sector, nor was it seen as a principle that can only be afforded by businesses in the developed world. On the contrary, the advance of corporate responsibility in Africa was said to be extremely important, particularly in view of the serious levels of poverty and underdevelopment.

Awareness of corporate governance is increasing rapidly.

Daily livelihoods

Corporate governance was said to be perhaps more relevant to people's daily livelihoods than any of the policies introduced by the governments. Corporate governance was identified as being an issue that people living in rural areas also needed to understand better and to promote. Companies, associations and cooperatives throughout Africa were said to take decisions that have major impacts on the daily well-being of millions of employees, both in the cities and in the villages.

Working conditions

Interviewees wanted African enterprises and cooperatives to address topics of working conditions, such as working hours, use of chemicals, hygiene and medical care, and arrangements for sick leave and holidays. It was also said that corporate governance must include paying serious attention to the alarmingly low level of salaries, which drives many Africans to take second jobs in order to be able to support their families.

SMEs and state-owned companies

One interviewee wanted the scope of corporate governance to be widened so that it includes not only big companies but also state-owned enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). There was concern that some state-owned companies are poorly managed, because their managers have been appointed by the government on the basis of political criteria.

Small and “micro” enterprises were thought to lack knowledge of regulatory frameworks and financial processes. It was suggested that smaller enterprises needed training courses in bookkeeping, accounting and legal regulations, and in improving their overall management and corporate values.

2.3. Cases of governance

Issues of governance were discussed during the interviews through the concrete cases of Ethiopia and Kenya, as well as at the regional and international levels.

2.3.1. Ethiopia

The representatives of government and civil society who were interviewed perceived two different trends with regard to governance in Ethiopia. These trends seem to involve an evolution in directions that are to some extent mutually contradictory.

In one apparent trend the Ethiopian government has been seen to have a genuine interest in, and commitment to, bringing about change and reducing poverty in the country through improved governance practices. It was said that in some sectors this endeavour had already achieved some improvements in standards of living.

There are some encouraging signs of poverty reduction through better governance.

For example, the policy of decentralisation was thought to be a very positive move by the government to transform the system of governance. Decentralisation was said to benefit the poor by bringing governance closer to the people and allowing more freedom and autonomy in development planning and decision-making at the lower levels of government.

According to another trend that the interviewees perceived, however, the government did not seem to be consistently trying to improve areas of governance, but tended to continue and even increase authoritarian traditions inherited from the previous political

system. In this respect, the government was said to be working against the policy of decentralisation by continuing to exercise strongly centralised power.

Doubts were expressed in a few interviews as to whether it was the right time for Ethiopia to focus on governance issues. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees thought that governance should not be considered as a “luxury”, but as the only way to advance development for the poor and achieve real socio-economic changes. Some strong opinions were expressed to the effect that development would be successful in Africa only if the structures of governance were permanently improved.

The people who were interviewed identified the following areas as constituting the main challenges to the development of governance in Ethiopia:

- **Food security**

Several interviewees said that good governance means the government taking serious long-term action to ensure food security for the people of Ethiopia. This was thought to be a project that would require the government’s commitment for a number of years.

Since drought and famine are common phenomena in Ethiopia, many of those interviewed saw the issue of food security as being the primary challenge. One of the interviewees said that people’s immediate need to have food on their plates was much more important than the “lip service” that was paid in official meetings to the values of democracy, human rights and good governance.

In Ethiopia, good governance means food security.

It was said to be vital that the pastoralist sector be integrated into the national economy because animal herders control significant amounts of livestock in East Africa. The authorities were criticised for ignoring the fact that the pastoralists live outside the formal state governance structures and effectively have their own economy, which does not benefit the country as a whole. The fact that the pastoralists are able to trade their livestock freely across national borders, even during the times of grave famine in some parts of the country, was also seen as a worrisome governance issue.

Lessons learned from previous relocation projects should be studied more carefully.

Some of the interviewees found it distressing that the government was planning to improve food security through relocating people from the poorest villages to areas where farming could be more sustainable. This was a matter of concern because the government was thought to lack knowledge about the consequences of relocation.

There were calls for the lessons learned from previous relocation projects in Ethiopia to be studied more carefully, and for account to be taken of the effects of relocation on the social and cultural fabric.

- **War and conflict**

Reference was made in many of the interviews to the recent border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Although the situation had been stable following the peace settlement and the launching of an international peace monitoring mission, the majority of the people interviewed were clearly worried that the war could break out again.

Public opinion in general also appeared to expect a renewed conflict in the border regions. It was said that the unresolved territorial issues, and the strong sense of territorial pride on both sides, would eventually lead to a new war. One interviewee remarked that Ethiopians are warriors who are inclined “to act before they talk”. It was told that Ethiopians have always been at war and the grassroots culture has “taught a man to live with his rifle”. This culture was said to be deeply embedded, even amongst small children who would “rather play with a gun than with a toy.”

Statements made by the government assuring people of its intention to maintain peace with Eritrea seemed to be met with suspicion by ordinary citizens.

Interviewees were convinced that the international donor community would freeze its aid to Ethiopia if the border war started again. In that context, however, the view was expressed that donors look at the border conflict only from their own perspective, which is very different from the Ethiopian position of claiming sovereign rights over its territory.

Interviewees said that war and conflict would disrupt all the state’s other activities, such as improving governance and the human rights situation. The interviewees were afraid that a war would take resources away from development, and shift the focus still further away from finding solutions for food security, water resources and irrigation, and energy.

War would disrupt governance and be detrimental to human rights.

Fears were also expressed that stability and governance would be disrupted by a conflict in the region. People particularly believed that international terrorist organisations would establish a strong presence and create local cells in parts of the vast country of Ethiopia.

- **Land tenure and ownership**

The tenure and ownership of land was one of the basic themes that arose in the interviews, and was closely related to the topic of building up food security. Therefore, land issues were considered to be particularly relevant to governance in a country where the majority of people lives in farming communities in rural areas and regularly suffers from drought and hunger.

Land issues are relevant to governance.

Interviewees said that under the monarchy people were taught to believe that the monarchy acts for the people and therefore the land belongs to the state. Ordinary people were explained to still misguidedly think that the power-holders have the right to own all the land in Ethiopia. In this respect the government was criticised for deliberately following the old tradition of the monarchy. It was said that good governance practice means that the government should stop claiming full control over all the land under the pretext that it represents the people.

- **Policy framework implementation**

Some of the people interviewed assessed the policy framework in Ethiopia as being good in terms of the African continent as a whole. The government was praised for putting a lot of emphasis on designing relevant new policies.

According to the analysis made by one of the interviewees, today's Ethiopian government can quite easily adopt a pro-poor approach, because the ruling party has its ideological roots in socialism and the impoverished life of peasants. But there was a sense of urgency amongst the interviewees with regard to the next challenge lying ahead. The Government was asked to take firm measures for the implementation of the established policy framework. It was thought that active governance mechanisms are required in order to link the policies to the real livelihoods of the poor themselves in all parts of the country. Views of this type were shared by both government and civil society representatives.

There needs to be a clear focus on policy implementation.

It was also seen as a governance challenge that the international community has its own priorities and policy requirements in Ethiopia. Feelings of frustration were expressed in this connection, because the donor community had been perceived to be too keen on spending money and resources at the policy drafting level and in the

meetings in Addis Ababa. It was thought to be unnecessary for donors to continue to put pressure on the drafting of policies, as relatively good policy papers already existed.

Instead, donors were asked to look more at the implementation of concrete poverty reduction measures as the type of governance needed in Ethiopia.

Interviewees believed that an additional test for governance is to be found in the need to resolve the ongoing debate in Ethiopia as to whether national economic development should be led primarily by the agricultural or by the industrial sector. The policy of Agricultural Development-Led Industrialisation (ADLI) was said to be extremely important in a country where the majority of people live in rural areas.

There should be increased emphasis on the service and industrial sectors.

Nevertheless interviewees requested the government to embrace the strengthening of the service sector and the creation of industrial capacity in the provinces outside the capital. They were concerned that the government is putting all its efforts into agriculture at the expense of neglecting the other productive sectors.

People who were interviewed thought it important to encourage a real entrepreneurial spirit throughout the country. In particular, it was hoped that the authorities would consider exploiting the full potential of tourism and natural resources.

Criticism was expressed regarding the lack of interest to develop the telecommunications sector. The government was said to be too paranoid about the effects of mobile phone networks and the Internet on the balance of political power. Telecommunications was thought to be essential, being of the greatest significance not only for the national economy but also for the advancement of regional integration.

- **Uneven coverage of development projects**

Some of the interviewees expressed the opinion that donors tend to favour certain regions in Ethiopia and overlook the poor border areas. Donors were believed to support specific ethnic groups and focus their work in the more advanced regions, where they can obtain visible results and write good evaluation reports.

Poor regions need more attention from donors.

It was said that the neglected regions are usually weak and underrepresented at meetings in the capital. These regions also lack development budgets and adequate numbers of qualified civil servants. The number of unfilled civil service posts was said to be very high in the provinces concerned. The government was seen to have difficulties also in finding teachers who want to work in these regions.

Box 2.

Decentralisation in Ethiopia

In the interviews, the current policy of the Ethiopian government on decentralisation was viewed positively and with great optimism. The process was said to aim at the construction of a new kind of state through empowering local authorities and ordinary citizens.

The economic aspect of decentralisation was thought to be important, because the regions would gradually start to administer allocations from the national budget. The political aspect of decentralisation was seen as helping to promote democracy, because the local people would have increased rights and be more involved in determining development planning in their region.

Interviewees welcomed decentralisation for promoting the opening of governmental bureaus and sectoral offices in regions that previously lacked permanent governance structures. It was thought that this would help with the delivery of services.

The empowerment of local communities is a novel feature with new dynamics.

Some of the interviewees stressed that decentralisation improves governance throughout the country, because it establishes proper relations between the federal and regional governments. It was said that decentralisation and empowering people are novel features with new dynamics in Ethiopia, because historically the central government has always governed and exercised control. Now, decentralisation was introducing a system of democratic governance. This was considered to be a remarkable change at the local level, where the people and civil servants could have the opportunity to take their own decisions instead of waiting for instructions from above.

However the actual implementation of the policy of decentralisation was seen to be a major challenge. Civil servants were said to be reluctant to move to work in the regional and local offices. It was thought that they should not be sent to provincial offices without training and capacity-building and without an appropriate system being in place.

The policy of decentralisation should be combined with good governance.

Some of the interviewees were concerned about whether the regions would have the capacity to handle their new financial resources and decision-making powers. Therefore, it was important that the policy of decentralisation would be implemented with the help of practices of good governance. Combining decentralisation with good governance was said to help giving communities the opportunity to take decisions in a participatory manner with regard to such issues as water, education and service delivery.

The interviews did not provide any guidance as to how development projects could be launched in the less advanced areas, but interviewees hoped that the donors would break away from the meetings in the capital and travel to the countryside to gain first-hand knowledge about the rural poverty.

- **Aid dependency**

Several of the interviewees were concerned about the implications of Ethiopian dependency on foreign aid. They said that aid dependency dates back several years, and pointed out that Ethiopia has been receiving humanitarian assistance for drought and famine every year for decades.

Aid can make people too passive to help themselves.

Aid dependency was said to be damaging for a country for a number of reasons. Aid was thought to have a psychological impact, making recipients feel powerless and unable to take decisions and initiatives concerning their survival or the future. Aid had created a new culture among people in Ethiopia: leading people to wait for help from the authorities and aid agencies.

It was said that it is difficult to encourage peasants to farm the land as long as free food aid is available. Aid was described as destroying domestic demand and markets for local agricultural products, because potential buyers and consumers would rather take advantage of the food aid.

Humanitarian aid can undermine long-term development.

Many of the interviewees were worried that aid dependency had made long-term development projects impossible. One interviewee was afraid that development in Ethiopia will start to remind us of the history of Tanzania, where donors “dumped resources without any vision or local ownership”. In this respect, the donor community itself was seen to be part of the problem. Donors had been observed to spend a lot of time on bureaucratic activities, such as documentation and collecting figures as statistics.

It was thought that Europeans have a culture of generosity and trust that can sometimes be very damaging for a developing country. One of the interviewees said, for example, that the Live Aid concerts had negative implications of aid dependency that are rarely talked about.

The donor community was criticised for introducing development projects that do not help to diminish aid dependency. The Ethiopian government was said to play along with this, and to agree too easily to the donors’ plans in order to keep aid flowing

into the country. The “aid game” was said to create a situation in which nobody cares about the wider consequences of bad project planning and aid dependency.

The hope was expressed that donors would try to break the cycle of dependency. Interviewees suggested that the Ethiopian government should shift its interest away from the amount of aid and look more at the quality of aid and development projects. The government was thus asked to improve present governance practices and become more concerned about the contents of projects.

Some of the interviewees thought that foreign aid would not help Ethiopia along the road to development because the changes needed must take root through local ownership inside the country. In the opinion of one interviewee, aid should not be given to people without conditions. Instead, it was suggested, people and communities should be asked to demonstrate their commitment and willingness to contribute before they could receive aid. It was even recommended that communities be made to compete for assistance.

Foreign aid should not be a substitute for local initiatives.

- **Cultural constraints**

One line of analysis in the interviews finds a link between underdevelopment in Ethiopia and the country’s culture and religion.

The local culture was said to encourage harmony in society and nurture strong sentiments of patriotism, which makes open political debate difficult. It was said that some topics are highly politicised and others are too sensitive to discuss. Yet national harmony was also said to be partly artificial and the country to be divided along ethnic lines. Interviewees explained that some ethnic groups cannot see eye to eye with each other. There were thought to be struggles for political and economic power between various ethnic groups, which make current power-holders constantly alert to the possibility of losing their dominant position.

Many of the interviewees thought that the authoritarian political culture dates back to the times of the emperor. Authoritarianism was said to still have an impact in Ethiopia, making it hard to create a new culture of good governance.

The Ethiopians were described as being a silent, hungry and voiceless people. To die silently was said to be the last piece of dignity that was left to the poor in Ethiopia. One interviewee said that Ethiopians had not only lost hope in their government and the donor community, but also in themselves. The explanation was given that the local culture leads people to blame themselves for their misfortunes, including their hunger and poverty. There was concern about the way that religion may guide the views of people, and their beliefs may even mislead them. For example, suffering could

be understood as being a destiny that God wants an individual to undergo and accept. So the local culture was not necessarily helping to foster an understanding of socio-economic and political needs as human rights. This could be seen also as a constraint hindering the creation of a culture of good governance.

People may think of poverty as an unavoidable destiny.

- **Water and irrigation schemes**

A number of interviewees said that better management and governance of water resources is essential for ensuring food security. It was believed that no development in Ethiopia would be sustainable without paying attention to water, including an equitable distribution of the water resources among the countries of the Nile basin.

One underlying reason for drought and famine in Ethiopia could be found, it was said, in the old colonial agreements and the peace agreement between Ethiopia and Egypt. It was thought that these agreements inhibited Ethiopia in using the water resources of the Blue Nile. The general tone of the interviews was optimistic with regard to the Nile Basin initiative and negotiations, which, although at times complex, were foreseen to result in the long run in a solution for the equal distribution of water among the Nile Basin countries.

There is some optimism about resolving the management of water resources.

Interviewees also wanted to see improved governance and water projects for other rivers in Ethiopia. The wish was expressed that the old plans for small irrigation projects would be reconsidered by the current government.

Box 3.

Civil service reform in Ethiopia

Civil service reform was one of the recurrent topics concerning governance in Ethiopia. Many of those interviewed said that they had already been able to benefit from the reform, and they put forward several examples of how administrative processes and decisions had been carried out faster than before.

It could be concluded that the reform was not a donor-driven process. Interviewees believed that it reflected the genuine will of the government to increase its capacity. Opinions within the government also showed a high level of awareness of how delays at the federal level come to constitute setbacks at the regional and local levels and in the lives of poor Ethiopians.

One interviewee said that the civil service reform had brought completely new thinking to the government. Because of the reform government employees were starting to see themselves as serving the taxpayers. This was said to be a new concept in Ethiopia.

The idea of serving the taxpayers is a new concept.

According to another interviewee, Ethiopian civil servants are very disciplined and fulfil their duties with care. In this respect the system of government employment was thought to be too unrewarding because there was not a culture of promotion or increase in salary for good service over the years.

The hope was expressed that civil servants would not be employed on the basis of their political affiliation, because former political activists would always agree with the politicians and represent only one perspective. The government should take care to hire the best professionals who would then have the courage to represent a range of different views.

Interviewees thought, however, that it would be difficult to extend the civil service reform process from the capital to the local level. It was said that even at the level of the central administration various ministries lack the basic technology that is necessary for the reform. Also, there had been fears among civil servants that reform would lead to a reduction in the number of posts and so to job losses.

Concerns were also expressed that the reform could become politicised. For instance, it was not yet clear what the practical consequences of the performance evaluation for the civil servants might be. People were worried that evaluation reports could be biased and easily lead to employees being fired for political reasons.

- **Education**

Some of the interviewees wanted to emphasise education as a significant governance issue. The education sector was said to include several political issues that need to be managed carefully. Education was an extremely prominent political issue in Ethiopia, a country with almost ten million primary school students.

According to the interviewees, the education of girls seems to be gathering momentum in Ethiopia. It was said that in some communities the culture of early marriages is an obstacle to sending girls to school, but there had been encouraging results from cooperation between the authorities and the community elders and religious leaders. The government had realised it is important to ensure a feeling of ownership in the beneficiary community, for example by inviting community representatives to participate in the school boards.

There were two major concerns with regard to the education sector. Firstly, the government was called on to face the challenge of making a sombre analysis of the interrelatedness of education and the spread of the HIV/Aids epidemic. This was considered to be a particularly serious issue of governance. The education system in Ethiopia was said to expose school children to the risk of HIV/Aids and make them very vulnerable to becoming infected. Boarding schools in the cities were said to cause young children and teenagers to lose their social safety nets too early and, for example, sometimes making girls turn to prostitution in order to be able to pay their rents.

The boarding school system is thought to increase exposure to HIV/Aids.

Secondly, there was an ongoing debate in Ethiopia as to the practicality and usefulness of the high-tech satellite connections that had been put into secondary schools in autumn 2004. It was not clear whether the new method of centralised teaching via satellite would really improve the quality of education. Some of the people interviewed were afraid that it would destroy the positive outcome of pupil-centred pedagogies, and they questioned the high costs and sustainability of the project.

2.3.2. Kenya

The interviews reflected the fact that the recent history of governance in Kenya is marked by personalised political power linked to high levels of corruption and debasement of the constitution.

In many of the interviews in Kenya, speakers showed that they were very aware of the importance of good governance for obtaining sustainable results in development.

Interviewees thought that governance-related problems in Kenya had serious political and economic consequences for the country.

Poor governance is one of the main reasons for low levels of development.

The country's poor governance record was considered to be one of the main reasons for poverty and lack of development. It was said to be essential for the welfare of the people and the country that the culture of corruption be eradicated if any changes in socio-economic living standards were to be achieved. The amount of external aid was not thought to be a crucial factor, but the government itself was seen to need reforming and restructuring to improve governance. Interviewees called for governance reforms that would affect the whole government, not just some parts of it.

In order to improve governance practices in Kenya the interviewees addressed the following issues:

- **Political atmosphere**

Interviewees recalled how the domestic protests and international pressure for political liberalisation and pluralism intensified during the 1990s.

A new government was elected to office in 2002 with promises of free education, constitutional reform, and good governance. Interviewees said that the overall political atmosphere in Kenya had been reinvigorated with a sense of openness and hope after the new government took office.

Public opinion had been very optimistic that the country would finally start to change and the political system would move from nepotism and corruption towards democracy. People had been confident that the new intake of politicians, coming from academia and civil society outside the traditional political circles, would acknowledge the needs of ordinary people and work honestly to free society from poverty and political mismanagement.

People are disappointed that the positive new atmosphere has faded away in two years.

However, it was said, these positive expectations had faded away during the first two years of the new government and now there was disappointment and fear that the period of openness in government was already over. Some of the interviewees had noticed signs that the political system was turning back to the old ways, in which people in office use their positions to benefit their own material well-being, and that of their friends and closest supporters.

One interviewee remarked that perhaps the public had made a mistake in putting their trust in intellectuals of the new government to rule the country. Others remarked on the difficulty of transforming the old habits and the culture of bad governance that had developed after a long period of malpractice.

Some interviewees thought that donors should continue to withhold aid to Kenya in order to keep up international pressure on the government until real changes had been made to end corruption.

At the time of this study, people were protesting on the streets of Nairobi and demanding that the President should keep his promise to publish a report on corruption related to land ownership in Kenya. Some findings from the report had already been leaked to the media, and articles were appearing in the press about land seizures by politicians in the previous regime.

- **Studies on governance**

The year 2002 was a landmark year for Kenya, not just because of the elections and the change of government but also because of a major governance study that was conducted by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN/ECA) as part of their study of African governance.

Some people in Kenya were unhappy with the results published in the UN/ECA Report on Governance, saying that it did not really reflect the situation in Kenya. One interviewee said that the governance situation in Kenya probably sank to its lowest point in that year, after years of government corruption.

It was said that although Kenya had no record of civil conflict, the security situation during the UN/ECA study was deteriorating to the point where the country was becoming very unstable. The police were too weak and corrupt to take care of the citizens' safety, and people were becoming accustomed to taking the law into their own hands. High levels of crime caused people to turn to mob justice. It was explained that at the time of the UN/ECA study, for example, economic and political governance was so bad that there were four "private armies" terrorising people in Nairobi. These gangs were said to have been operating under the protection of certain senior politicians.

It was argued, however, that the Report is very useful, because it serves as a basis for comparison with the other governance studies, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism in 2005.

The African Union's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), launched in Kenya in autumn 2004, was emphasised in the interviews as being a process in which citizens themselves are invited to specify the principles and practices according to which they would like to be governed. It was also seen as a vehicle for raising people's awareness of

different aspects of governance. Interviewees thought that it was crucial for the APRM studies to have a methodology powerful enough to obtain reliable and useful results from the overall process.

- **Corruption**

People were said to be feeling very frustrated because large amounts of public funds have been misused and lost by the government over the years. Corruption had taken place even though the funds had been properly specified in the budget and allocated to the various departments.⁴

Interviewees explained that corruption occurs because the civil servants and subcontractors learn to manoeuvre and manipulate inside the system as well as to establish chains of favours and exchange. The interviewees provided details about several concrete examples of corruption. For example, it was said that imported goods may be cleared by the Mombasa port customs with lower tariffs, because the official documentation deliberately misidentifies the goods. And another typical case of corruption was said to be the cancellation of a contract when only part of the goods or services have been delivered, even though full payment is made to the supplier.

Retailers, wholesalers and distributors were said to have systematic arrangements whereby each of them takes a share of the funds in addition to their own normal fees and prices. These distribution chain arrangements were described as being closed systems in which everyone gains and therefore nobody will speak out and expose the corruption involved.

Networks of corruption form closed systems that benefit everyone involved.

Middlemen were thought to get directly from the manufacturers prices that are lower than the ones announced in official contracts. It was claimed that insiders' relatives are tipped off about forthcoming tendering processes beforehand. Suppliers were thought to be able to agree about prices with the authorities in secrecy.

The crisis of governance was also said to have affected the NGOs in Kenya. Interviewees cited various stories of misconduct in the NGO sector, although these are not taken up in detail in this study.⁵

⁴ According to some reports, the Government of Kenya lost KSh 475 billion because of corruption from 1991 to 1997.

⁵ At the time of the study there was, for example, a particular case of mismanagement at the National Council of NGOs in Nairobi which had led some donors to freeze their funding. Nine of the Council's fifteen board members had recently resigned from the Council in protest to nepotism and malpractices.

- **Civil service**

Civil servants in government offices were thought to be concerned with matters of prestige and their own vanity in ways that a poor developing country cannot afford. Economic governance issues were said to be apparent in the poor maintenance of public property, such as government vehicles and offices, and the making of new purchases without due consideration.

“A poor country cannot afford to maintain its property badly.”

The salary levels of civil servants were also regarded as raising questions of economic governance. Some interviewees particularly questioned the new government’s decision to raise the salaries of top civil servants. This had caused a loud public outcry and a number of interviewees thought that salary increases at the top level of the civil service would boost corruption at lower levels. They believed that wide income gaps within the same organisation would encourage lower-paid staff to look for compensation by other means, and the search for extra income through “rake-offs” would lead to civil servants continuing to manipulate prices in tendering processes and to use other loopholes in the procurement system.

Lower-level civil servants may seek to supplement their low salaries by corrupt means.

Another major area of concern about the civil service was the slowness of bureaucratic procedures and lack of coordination within the government with regard to handling aid funding. It was said that only about half of the aid funds that are available are actually spent, because funds are blocked at the Treasury pending administrative decisions. People were disappointed that Kenya has lost some of its development funding because of the donors’ withdrawal of unspent aid.

- **Non-institutionalised political governance**

Interviewees said that one of the reasons for corruption and problems of political governance is that politics in Kenya is not institutionalised but based on personalities and single issues.

- **Election campaigns**

Election campaigns were a specific cause for concern amongst the interviewees. It was said to be impossible to be elected in Kenya without using funds to buy votes. Interviewees explained that the “*harambee*” meetings which typically feature in election campaigns are gatherings of people who come together to raise financial resources for

a particular project in a village or region. A guest of honour, usually a politician, is expected to come up with the necessary finance and make a speech that includes an announcement promising to ensure the availability of funds for the project in a village or region. People cast their votes accordingly and elect the politician to the office.

The integration of *harambee* meetings into election campaigns was said to be one of the reasons for the virtual institutionalisation of corruption in Kenya. One interviewee thought that the *harambees* had made people “very confused about money”, because there is no certainty as to whether the money donated by political candidates was acquired legitimately or not. And there was no clarity as to whether the politicians were donating their own money or public funds from the government and the taxpayers.

Interviewees thought that election campaigns have distorted the whole political process of development planning. The view was also expressed that the *harambees* have created an electoral system in which the wrong people get into Parliament. People elect the politicians who promise funds instead of electing those who would articulate the people’s needs and engage in the necessary political debates. As a consequence, people have learned to look to individual politicians, instead of the government or local authorities, to take care of their needs and the funding required for development projects. All this, it was said, has resulted in political campaigns with very weak political substance, and in the lack of any real dialogue between candidates.

Election campaigns have distorted development planning.

It was thought that in recent years there had been some change in the political atmosphere, and especially in the cities people seemed to be more suspicious of the *harambees*. The general public was said to be more active after the 2002 elections, and people voiced their opinions more loudly as there were no longer any “sacred cows” in Kenyan politics. But interviewees believed there were still major differences between the opinions and beliefs of people in urban environments and those of people in some of the rural areas.

Interviewees explained that it would take a long time to change the election campaigns for the better, because people had got used to thinking that it is the responsibility of individual politicians to provide funds for community projects.

The idea of government having a role in development planning and funding was said to be a new concept in Kenya. The country was seen as being in transition, and future years were believed to be critical with regard to altering the attitudes of ordinary citizens. Interviewees supported the idea of “workshop” training courses in civics to educate people and help them become proactively aware of their rights and of the tasks and duties of the government.

- **Parliament**

Interviewees saw the concentration of most of the country's political power in the executive branch as being an important governance issue. It was said that the lack of power within Parliament and the legislative institutions creates a poor balance of governance in Kenya.

It was explained that in Kenya legislation rarely originates within Parliament because almost all bills are introduced by the government. Interviewees thought that a particular governance gap exists in that the government has no obligation to discuss draft laws with any other institutions in advance. Another problematic issue is that some international conventions are ratified only by the cabinet committee, not by the parliament, even though they are of great importance and binding on the whole country.

It is important to try to improve the old ways of doing things practised in Parliament.

The status of the parliament was said to be undermined by the amount of distrust between the people and Parliament. Interviewees were unhappy because of the old practices of decision-making in the parliament involving gifts and money. Ministers would take Members of Parliament to a retreat to induce their support for the government's decisions. It was thought to be absurd that Members of Parliament cannot just discuss a bill and vote accordingly, but need to be bribed to do their jobs and fulfil their responsibilities.

It was considered to be confusing that a Member of Parliament receives funds from the parliamentary budget to assist constituency building. In fact, these funds were said to be frequently misused for electoral campaigning.

The recent increase in parliamentary salaries was itself seen as a governance issue. The reasoning behind the new government's decision to raise Members' salaries was understood to lie in the necessity to make Members of Parliament more independent and reduce their susceptibility to bribes. But the rise in pay seemed to increase public distrust more than ever.

The interviewees generally welcomed the greater openness and freedom established by the new regime since 2002 and thought that the parliamentary committees might have more room to speak openly and criticise the government than before.

- **Political divisions**

Interviewees stressed the need for a functioning opposition to help ensure good governance. There was concern that the political opposition parties are too weak and fragmented to act as a check on the government power-holders.

Recently, difficulties had arisen in Kenyan political life because the new coalition government had started to suffer from internal quarrels and the development of an opposition within the government. The ongoing process of constitutional reform, and the debate on the possibility of establishing a prime ministerial post, had also been seen to cause disagreements within the coalition government.

Box 4.

Kenyan governance reform

Both the Kenyan government and the donor community have recognised that the structure and culture of governance in Kenya is a key area for the political reform and socio-economic improvements.

Reform programme

A comprehensive five-year cross-sectoral Governance, Justice, Law and Order Sector (GJLOS) programme was launched in 2003, under which the Kenyan government and 17 donors work together for governance reform.

The programme is the first of its kind, not only in Kenya but in the whole of the African continent. Depending on how successful it is, the programme is expected to have spillover effects in a number of administrative sectors in Kenya and to have considerable significance for other African countries, too.

The first- year review

The first-year review of governance reform expressed cautious optimism.

The first year of the GJLOS reform programme was taken up with strategic planning through participatory processes. Seven theme-based groups including stakeholders from civil society were established to start up the actual implementation.

Funding for the programme started to arrive as a "basket" of funds in mid-2004. A review of the programme's first year was conducted at a workshop in Mombasa in December 2004, and the views and proposals of all stakeholders were included as recommendations in the final report. Amongst the review's conclusions, it was recognised that the programme had achieved an impact in increasing transparency with regard to the budget and a number of other administrative documents. Further monitoring of different areas of governance had gradually started up. A Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs had been established, and one of its first tasks was to start the reform of the Constitution. Some donors judged the arena of debate on governance issues in Kenya to be more open and honest than for years. There was cautious optimism that the programme had a lot of potential for success.

Future challenges

Despite the positive results of the first-year review some donors and interviewed Kenyans were more critical about the future of the programme. The process of extending governance reform to local and regional levels outside the capital was seen as posing a particular challenge. Some said that in order for any reform to have a pro-poor approach, rural areas would have to be actively involved in the debate, for instance, through improved education in civics.

Another challenge was seen to be posed by the need to engage civil society and the private sector more closely in the implementation of the programme. Their cooperation was still thought to be insufficient because of lack of trust between the government and civil society.

Public expectations

People in Kenya appeared to have become more aware of their civil rights, and had begun to put pressure on the government to reveal some of the worst cases of corruption in the past years and bring their perpetrators to justice.

Some interviewees expressed the hope that the governance reform process would gather strength and result in the identification of specific cases of corruption. It was not yet clear, however, whether the newly established anti-corruption commission would have the power to take cases to the courts for prosecution.

2.3.3. Regional level in Africa

Some of the people who were interviewed found it difficult to assess governance in Africa because many of its aspects are hard to measure in quantitative terms. Evaluation and comparison of levels of governance on an annual basis was seen as being complicated because of the variety of governance areas that would need to be covered, some of them long-term processes.

It is important to identify trends in governance.

Some interviewees thought it would be essential to identify governance trends in African societies in order to facilitate open public debate. They said that governance should be linked to poverty eradication and measured in relation to concrete and visible results in socio-economic development. Many wanted the main focus of the governance debate to be on what good governance would mean in concrete terms for the daily lives of ordinary people in Africa.

Many also thought that the political atmosphere in Africa has changed in recent years, as elections and multiparty systems have become more commonplace. It was recognised that governance structures and democracy are still largely only formalities in some African countries. But there was thought to be a genuine trend of change from one-party systems and autocracy to political liberalism and better accountability.

The African Union (AU)⁶ and its programme for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) were thought to have created platforms for discussing governance at both national and regional levels.

However, some of the interviewees were not satisfied with the analysis made in the Governance Report of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN/ECA). This report, which was presented at the Fourth African Development Forum in Addis Ababa in October 2004, stated that levels of governance have improved in Africa.

Positive results in governance to date can be misleading.

Some of the people interviewed after the Forum thought that the report gave a wrong signal when it emphasised the positive achievements with regard to governance in African countries. These interviewees said that such a conclusion was misleading and, on the contrary, Africa could be perceived as standing still and even regressing, while the rest of the world was moving rapidly forward in every field.

An African renaissance was thought to call for courageous, tough-minded analysis instead of the fine words voiced at the conferences. Donors, too, were asked to provide honest assessments of the state of governance in Africa. It was said that donors should "stop playing games of hide and seek, and speak the truth". At the same time, however, it was understood that donors are often careful with their opinions, because they wish to be polite and avoid making Africans feel frustrated.

A great deal of pessimism was expressed to the effect that it would take a long time for Africa to improve its record of governance. It was thought that some African countries would find it impossible to implement, or even start to address, certain aspects of governance for many years to come.

The success of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was believed to be crucial for governance issues in Africa. It was emphasised that the APRM is a way for Africa to solve its own problems, instead of depending on other countries to review

⁶ In July 2003, the African Union (AU) replaced the Organisation of African Union (OAU), following a decision by the African Heads of State in Durban, South Africa, July 2002. The African Union aims to create an economically, and perhaps politically, unified continent with a shared vision of regional cooperation and integration.

democracy and human rights in Africa. Many of the people interviewed were convinced that Africans have to “do their homework” before they face the rest of the world. It was considered important that African processes first are defined by the Africans themselves. After that the international community could be invited to provide political and financial support.

Some interviewees hoped that Africans would be courageous in continuing to strive for better governance in the continent. They wanted African governments to adopt a positive attitude towards the various aspects of governance, because they thought that in the final analysis those governments could themselves benefit from “getting things right” and having the whole range of governance structures in place.

African governments would themselves benefit from better governance.

Interviewees believed that essential keys to improving governance in African societies lie in overcoming a number of following problems:

1. Lack of understanding of governance

It was said that too many African countries still lack an appropriate understanding of the real meaning of governance and how the principles of governance could assist governments to be run effectively.

Interviewees emphasised that individuals have their own perceptions of governance, and these vary according to the person’s status, socio-economic circumstances and personal aspirations. For example, the understanding of governance amongst the rural poor differs from that of people in urban areas.

One of the challenges mentioned was that most people - politicians, civil servants and ordinary citizens alike – have too little knowledge about the duties and responsibilities of local and national politicians and leaders. It was feared that this lack of knowledge leads too easily to situations where “things can go terribly wrong”.

Interviewees wanted training courses to be organised to increase public awareness of civic rights and raise the overall level of knowledge about economic and political processes. But it was thought to be difficult, and embarrassing, for the senior officials and political leaders to admit openly that they may need further training in conducting affairs of state. Training courses should therefore be carefully designed to accord with the background of the participants.

2. Mismanagement and corruption

Some of the interviewees thought it is in the very nature of African governments to misuse funds and spend them on projects that are irrelevant for the poor and vulnerable. Donor organisations were also blamed for being under-staffed and thus unable to

ensure adequate monitoring of funds and of the quality and effectiveness of development cooperation.

An effective public sector would receive more funds.

The question was raised as to why the cases of corruption and mismanagement that are revealed are not followed up immediately with appropriate action. It was said that the African countries still lack effective monitoring mechanisms despite the existence of some anti-corruption units and related reporting. It was thought that the public sector in Africa would receive more aid and resources if it spent funds more effectively and according to the principles of good governance.

3. Politics of fear and silence

Some interviewees said that in order to understand the challenge of governance in Africa it is necessary to look at the history of African nation states. They explained that at the time of independence freedom was the primary goal for everyone. People had little knowledge of what to expect from the new states and governments. Only recently had the African public started to realise the characteristics of true independence and to become more aware of the tasks and duties of their governments.

One of the interviewees said that Africans should not be taken as ignorant when they submit to the power of powerful politicians and national governments. People's political behaviour results from their having been taught to fear and respect the authorities.

Another interviewee had observed a tendency in Africa to abuse power and authority. African political leaders were criticised for promoting a certain type of "democracy", which they define in terms that enable them to remain in power. Some leaders were said to accept democracy only as long as it does not lead to political struggle, drive people to demonstrate on the streets or open up opportunities for their rivals and the political opposition to "mess the country up."

In this connection, the question was also raised as to how it is that African leaders and politicians who have been educated in the best schools of the West often become dictators or organisers of *coup d'états* after they have returned to their home countries.

Stability is fragile when it is based on fear.

In some interviews the speakers were concerned that the public has become tired of politics, because people have learned the price of politics during times of conflicts and war. For example, it was said that in many homes people still have photographs and mementos of family members who died due to politics and war. So many ordinary

people are very afraid of their governments. The question therefore arises as to how long politicians can rule by fear. Legitimacy and stability were thought to be artificial and fragile if they are based on people's fears.

4. Lack of democratic space

As a particular problem with regard to governance, it was thought that civil society does not have the capacity and "space" to discuss governance issues with the governments. New forms of participation and consultation had been intended to facilitate this relationship, but the new initiatives and structures were believed to be mostly symbolic.

Consultations with civil society are too often only symbolic.

To some interviewees it also seemed that international institutions follow the same pattern as the national governments in Africa. For instance, some civil society representatives described the Civil Society Panel organised during the Fourth African Development Forum as an orchestrated event which did not include any time for questions and comments. Interviewees saw the panel as a "missed opportunity" to meet with the president of the World Bank and have an open discussion on governance between him and representatives of civil society. They said that the civil society hearings arranged under the Commission on Africa had also been carefully organised on the same lines, as events in which the NGOs may even be asked by organizers to keep quiet.

The creation of "democratic space" was thought to include the challenge of motivating and encouraging ordinary citizens to participate in political affairs. A large proportion of the population seemed to focus on day-to-day survival instead of becoming politically active.

It was said that one example of the problem of governance is that the trade union movement has disappeared. Before there had been active trade unions in Africa, which had tried to defend the wages, health issues and socio-economic conditions of workers against the interests of capital investors.

The African trade union movement has disappeared.

It was thought that people with positions in government had opportunities to build up connections and networks throughout the world. International contacts were thought to give people access to a whole range of information and resources, from loan agreements and finance to trade deals and personal benefits. Contacts abroad were also said to provide ways of obtaining weapons and ammunition. Interviewees considered that in this respect there is a huge gap between the people in government

and the people they govern. It was thought to be important that the poor should have the same sort of contacts as the power-holders. Otherwise the poor would remain too marginalised and unable to help themselves.

5. Weakness of institutions

A number of the people interviewed said that institutional history in Africa is a history of poor governance. In terms of economic governance, they said that African countries lack clear mechanisms for managing the allocation of resources. Budgeting processes were perceived as having gaps and deficiencies that made it possible for resources to be lost because of corruption. In terms of political governance, they thought that the undemocratic political culture has led to human rights violations. Many thought that these weaknesses seriously aggravated the problems of poverty and underdevelopment in the continent.

Many interviewees made general remarks to the effect that present instruments of governance in Africa are very weak. The improvement of governance was said to require “top-down” processes, particularly the development of an institutional and legislative framework.

6. Elections

Elections in Africa were a major concern for many of the people interviewed. It was claimed that in Africa the public is not necessarily in a position to choose the best candidates, but is too easily manipulated and cheated during election campaigns. Many vote for the wrong people, because they believe in all the election promises that candidates make. Once in power, however, the winners forget their election speeches and concentrate on securing their own positions. They neglect the needs of the people and start surrounding themselves with groups of loyal friends.

The public is cheated by false election promises.

There was doubt as to whether people in Africa are genuinely free to cast a vote. It was said that outside forces with financial interests in Africa are able to intervene and influence the popular voting process. The votes of the poor were easily manipulated and even bought. So elections fail to reflect reality. Some interviewees therefore concluded that democracy cannot function under conditions of poverty, and democracy and governance are only empty concepts for people who are struggling to survive at minimal economic levels.

The African Union was criticised for not being able to push for democratic elections in African societies. Even in cases where AU observers had been on the ground and observed undemocratic election campaigns and practices, they had been seen to publish

weak reports and communiques. It was said that the AU should have done more, for example with regard to the political turmoil and related events in Zimbabwe. The reason for the AU's inactivity was seen to lie in the African leadership, with leaders who have often themselves gained political power undemocratically. This was described as being a vicious cycle and an obstacle to strengthening governance on the regional agenda.

The African Union should be active in monitoring elections.

7. Social and political instability

The maintenance of peace and security in Africa was believed to be a precondition for governance and development. Fears of war were expressed, for example of a renewed border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Instability was expected to increase in the future because of the high levels of unemployment. Younger generations were thought to be more rebellious than their parents. Young people are better educated, and when "unemployed and on the streets" they become impatient, frustrated and dangerous. Interviewees said that this anger and despair drives the young to look for desperate, even violent, solutions. Young Africans follow the same news as the rest of the world, but their perceptions of the news occur in, and are related to, their own culture. Thus the same news does not necessarily bring people closer to one another, but could underline the differences between opinions in the North and the South. And it was thought that there would be increasing pressure to emigrate to Europe.

Lack of jobs for educated young people can give rise to instability.

Interviewees were also concerned that Islamic fundamentalism could increase in African society. Two of those interviewed were afraid that terrorism could become a problem in black Africa in the future. For these reasons, too, it was considered essential to improve governance and the human rights situation, instead of wasting government budget funds on security systems, policing and prisons. The quality and contents of education were seen as being especially important. It was also recommended that the humanities should continue to keep their place on the curriculum, instead of technical subjects taking over the whole of the educational syllabus.

2.3.4. International level

In the interviews, governance issues at the national level were often linked to governance at the international level. Many interviewees wanted to see the principles of good governance better applied to the management of development cooperation and to the relations between the developing countries and the donor community.

The following issues were thought to require more dialogue at the international level between donors and aid recipients:

1. Shared understanding of concepts

There was a general feeling that representatives from the developing countries do not share a common understanding of governance with representatives from the donor governments and international organisations.

It was thought to be difficult to compare governance in Africa with governance in Europe, because of the different characteristics of each continent's history and culture.

Some interviewees found that the detailed conditions which donors and Western consultants specified for aid and development projects were confusing. It was not clear whether all the specific technical and administrative requirements were to be understood as integral parts of good governance, or whether they were mainly an expression of dominance by more powerful countries and organisations. Interviewees wanted to be able to discuss openly as to how a variety of aid conditionalities are related to the broader framework of good governance.

2. Transparency of development assistance and donor policies

Some interviewees thought that it was unfair for developing countries to be required to record their governance issues, while the Western countries themselves were not transparent with regard to their own governance affairs and political and economic interests.

Representatives of civil society were concerned about people's lack of knowledge of aid, loan and trade agreements.

It was thought that application of the principles of good governance to international aid politics would have a beneficial impact on governance at the national level, for example by making the budgetary process less complicated and increasing transparency between the citizens and the national governments. The wish was expressed that donors would themselves take the initiative and openly publish the contents of their aid programmes and the amounts of financial and technical assistance.

The representatives of civil society considered it to be a serious governance problem that they have very little information about the stages of aid, loan and trade negotiations and the final outcomes of meetings between their governments and the donor community. The World Bank was criticised for holding discussions and negotiations with governments behind closed doors.

The terms of international loans, in particular, were unclear and a cause of concern for the civil society representatives. They had seen loans being signed in Washington and approved by the national parliament, even though the local parliamentarians “lacked even a elementary level of knowledge of economics”. It was claimed that the process of ratifying loans in Parliament was assumed by both donors and African governments to be an automatic procedure in which agreements are accepted without adequate information and analysis of which deals are for the benefit of the country.

3. Consistency of policies

The international system was also said to lack governance because donors were not consistent in their policies. Standards that were applied to poor countries seemed to differ from those applied to rich countries.

Interviewees found it puzzling that donors sometimes shy away from demanding good governance even though they praise it as an international standard. Interviewees were surprised that donors neglect human rights violations in some countries and “continue aid for governments that purchase weapons and kill their own citizens with them”. One interviewee thought that these double standards could be avoided by open reporting about who benefits from the weapons deals.

Donors too often ignore human rights and governance standards.

They also said that there is inconsistency in the manner in which different conflicts and humanitarian crises are treated by the international community. There was disappointment with the international reaction to conflicts in Africa. People did not understand why the West wanted to send a team of experts to Darfur in Sudan to decide on the terminology that should be used to define the crisis, when immediate attention was paid to the conflict in Kosovo, on the doorstep of the European Union. Perspectives were thought to have become blurred when the death of a single soldier in Iraq produces a loud outcry, but the refusal of pharmaceuticals companies to authorise the production of anti-HIV drugs causes thousands of deaths and is met with silence. This neglect of Africa’s concerns was said to have had a major negative impact on domestic politics in Africa. African governments did not have to pay attention to poverty and conflicts because the international community did not put these issues high on their agendas.

It is relatively easy for African governments to ignore African crises and conflicts when the rest of the international community does so.

International governance was said to suffer from “foolish games which every donor is playing.” A great deal of hypocrisy was evident in the relations between developing countries and the developed world, because “each player is trying to make the others happy”. Despite the conditions it attaches, the donor community avoids confrontation with the recipient governments. The United Nations and the World Bank, too, seem to make every effort to please the member states and to avoid taking a stand on anything that could be controversial or disturb the status quo. And for their part the governments of developing countries would do anything to avoid challenging the donor community.

It was confusing that donors act inconsistently with regard to their own programmes. For example, the World Bank had been seen to promote international loans as being good policy in the developing world two decades ago, but today the Bank states that the loan agreements made at that time were bad policy.

Interviewees called on donors to take a firm stand on governance, and not to give aid to governments that manipulate elections and push for unconstitutional changes in order to remain in power.

4. Mandate to represent the people

Concern was expressed that donors only have contacts with developing countries through those countries’ governments. Interviewees thought it to be problematic that, for example, all bilateral and multilateral agreements are agreed with the governments without any consultations with the people.

Donors were asked not to equate governments automatically with the people, and not to assume that there is always a partnership in developing countries between the government and the people. Donors were asked to take into account the fact that even though a government in Africa may technically have been elected by free and fair elections, this does not necessarily make it fully representative of its citizens. Poor people were said to be the foremost victims of this kind of misperception and misunderstanding by the international community.

From another point of view, it was not understood why civil society and NGOs are so important for the donor community and assumed to be close to the people. The international community was asked to check carefully and verify whether an NGO really has a mandate to represent the people or whether it just represents certain interest groups. Some NGOs were said to be very corrupt and therefore insensitive to the needs of the poor.

A further governance issue was seen in the need to clarify which groups and what interests the European NGOs really represent when they lobby for, or against, aid to a developing country.

5. Quality of development assistance

Lack of understanding was expressed as to why the donor community “loves organising expensive seminars and conferences where statements are made all day long”. It was hoped that aid would be channelled into more tangible development projects instead of bureaucracy and formal meetings.

It was also a governance issue that aid money comes to a country and then immediately returns to the donor country in the form of loan payments and consultancy fees.

A critical governance issue was seen in the question of how development assistance and funding could find the right channels to reach poor people as directly as possible. Interviewees suggested that good international governance would pay more attention to ownership issues as a means of improving the quality of aid. “Bottom up” processes starting at the grassroots level were believed to help ensure optimal outcomes of aid programmes. Attention to people’s sense of ownership was also thought to advance the governance of development cooperation.

6. Management of development projects

Interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the management and governance of projects in the field. Management offices were often established to run a specific project, but their communication and coordination links with local governmental offices and authorities were thought to be too weak. As a result different offices might have parallel functions during a project, with little exchange of information between them.

Some interviewees thought that foreign project staff should use the existing offices of the local institutions and authorities. They believed this would reduce project costs and help to strengthen local capacity-building and ownership.

A governance issue was also seen in the phasing out of project offices at the end of projects, which often complicated the efforts to obtain sustained results in the country.

7. Consultants

A lot of the comments in several interviews concerned the work carried out by foreign consultants. Although such consultancy services were appreciated, they seemed to raise many crucial issues with regard to governance and to partnership between donors and aid recipients.

The view was expressed that the predominance of Western consultants in development projects gives rise to confusion, and even to resentment and ill feeling, in the recipient countries. It also seemed that recipient governments might be countering the strong Western influence by exercising intentionally firmer control over various administrative and political aspects of development projects than is necessary.

Many interviewees believed that consultancy agreements between the donors and African governments often undermine local ownership of projects. Development projects that are funded by grants were particularly liable to be designed by foreign staff and consultants outside the country. It was thought that local people and governments have only very limited possibilities to participate in drafting terms of reference and planning project priorities. The role of the local authorities was seen as limited to just reading and signing the contracts. At best they could try to insist on a requirement for hiring local sub-contractors.

Interviewees suggested that developing countries often hire foreign consultants mainly or only to please the donors. One interviewee said it is difficult to refuse a grant-financed project, even if most of the funding then goes back to the donor country through consultancy fees. Another interviewee said that developing countries find it difficult to tell donors that they feel a consultant is unnecessary. African governments appeared to be trapped into accepting, and showing appreciation for, all types of assistance, even with the most one-sided conditions.

Local ownership is undermined when projects are designed by foreign consultants.

Some interviewees wondered why foreign consultants are considered more capable of addressing the problems and choices involved in African development than the Africans themselves. They saw this as a sign that Africans are not allowed to guide their own development.

An issue of ownership was also seen to arise when developing countries are not fully involved in the selection of consultants. Decisions concerning consultants were all too often made in a rush. In the final stage of the recruitment process the recipient government was usually given the names of just two or three candidates. And it was hard for the African parties to see from the résumés of foreign consultants which ones are really competent and whether a consultant is really needed in the project.

Consultants produce “polite” policy papers with poor analysis of development problems.

It was said that the résumés of foreign consultants are always impressive, with long lists of qualifications. Local consultants, however, tend to lose out, because they do not have a government that sponsors them and sends them across the world to gain country-specific work experience. But some interviewees thought that having experience in one or two countries would often be enough, and perhaps even better than having work experience from dozens of countries.

The quality of consultancy services was also an issue. Sometimes foreign consultants' reports seemed to be just “polite” papers without any honest analysis of the local

development problems. Some interviewees had followed the work of highly paid foreign consultants quite closely and claimed that local civil servants often did the bulk of the work. Consultants would collect information from local staff and ask them to track down documents and even to write papers, even though the credit and fees for the job went to the consultants. It was suggested that local people should be able to get the assignments, and foreign consultants could then help with their professional outlook and further analysis.

Problems also arose because individual consultancy contracts were not necessarily signed with the local officials, but with the donor. This made it difficult for the local government and people to have a supervisory role and to monitor whether the project was being implemented in accordance with the terms of reference. European embassies had been seen to have too few personnel to follow up all the ongoing projects. This was said to create a situation in which consultants enjoy a lot of freedom and independence.

Interviewees thought that some foreign consultants show little commitment to development. Consultants had been observed to be unable to get to know the local circumstances, politics and culture during their short field missions. There was concern that consultants leave the project region without helping to upgrade their local partners' know-how and capacities.

Know-how about consultancy projects does not remain in the recipient country.

The donors were criticised for sending consultants to Africa who are too young to act as policy advisers, sending “kids” to guide senior officials. Youth was considered to be a disadvantage, even a problem, in societies where seniority and experience of life are valued highly. Some consultants appeared to dictate their own ideas without first learning from the local people and making the necessary efforts to involve all relevant stakeholders. One interviewee thought that there should be an option to terminate a consultant's contract if the results were proving to be unsatisfactory. Experience seemed to show that donors always stood by their consultants and “gave excuses for the consultant not delivering the intended output.”

**Young consultants and foreign ideas are not always suitable,
and sometimes ignore the local politics and culture.**

The high salaries of foreign consultants were also seen as being a sign of bad governance and as contradicting the principle that the recipient developing country should benefit most from the development aid funds. Bribery connected with tendering

processes was thought to be initiated by government officials and Western consultancy companies alike.

Some interviewees were concerned that project evaluation is often organised by the donor who originally financed and designed the project. They emphasised the need for development cooperation to include impartial and unbiased assessment with the assistance of local consultants.

2.4. Ways of improving governance

The conclusions and recommendations for improving governance that were accumulated during the interviews in Ethiopia and Kenya can be summarised as follows:

▶ Open dialogue on governance

Interviewees asked donors to conduct an honest dialogue with aid recipients in order to develop a shared understanding of governance and common operational methods to improve it. Some interviewees wanted more clarification as to whether all technical aid and project management requirements should be regarded as having a favourable impact on the good governance in an aid-recipient country.

▶ Follow-up of governance studies

Recent governance studies in Africa, namely the UN/ECA Governance Report and the results of the APRM, were seen to serve as good starting points for the planning of future governance projects. Interviewees called on local and international institutions and organisations to take an active role in launching concrete processes to follow the studies up.

▶ Synergy from sub-regional programmes

Interviewees proposed that with regard to sectoral governance the international organisations should aim to benefit more from the synergy of sub-regional programmes. Instead of having individual projects for each country, policy coherence would be improved, and projects better governed, through larger sub-regional programmes. Project governance at the sub-regional level was believed to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned from the experiences of different countries.

▶ Governance training by the Africans themselves

It was believed to be difficult and even embarrassing for African politicians to look for more information about leadership and governance and try to obtain further training

in these subjects. The motives of politicians were said to be easily misinterpreted by the public.

Many of the interviewees recognised the need to inform and train politicians and citizens alike on governance issues. It was recommended that the main responsibility for training should be given to Africans themselves instead of foreign experts and consultants. Donors were invited to give high priority and support to local institutions and organisations that have training abilities and capacities.

► Access to information

Good governance was said to mean better access to information, helping people to be better able to understand, and feel empowered to influence, the policies and politics of development.

Information gaps were identified as being one of the major issues in governance, both national and international. The poor were thought to be unable to participate in promoting better governance in their country, because they lack access to the relevant information. Some of the interviewees believed that Western governments and international financial institutions are able to “govern” the developing world, because they possess massive amounts of information and restrict information channels to civil society and the public in the developing world.

Bilateral development agreements, too, were perceived as being unknown to the general public and as containing elements that should be brought into the public realm. One interviewee invited the Finnish government to provide more information about its aid programmes and projects.

► Exchange of models between the countries of the South

The opinion was expressed that donors too often encourage foreign scholarships and visits only to the Western countries for students, civil servants and NGO representatives from developing countries. But it was believed to be more useful for Africans to travel to learn from good practices in other developing countries. The solutions and models in the South were seen to be more replicable and relevant for Africans than the sophisticated forms in place in the developed countries.

It was also said that people sometimes returned from Europe frustrated after seeing the huge differences in development between Europe and Africa, instead of being encouraged and inspired to further development in Africa. At times, too, the theories and practices in Europe have been found to be much too advanced or expensive to be implemented in Africa.

It was recommended that donors should not make a visit to their own country a condition of their aid funding. They should rather sponsor a triangular South-South-North cooperation. It was further emphasised that all visits and travel programmes should be well designed.

▶ A framework for change and institution building

Interviewees, both from government and from civil society, stressed the need to advance good governance in order to establish a favourable framework for social and political change in Africa.

Democratic elections, respect for human rights, and the rule of law were said to be essential to improve the structures and culture of governance. Governance issues were seen to be important pillars in building a country's institutions and legal framework. It was recommended that training in governance should be given to civil servants and Members of Parliament as part of the capacity-building programmes.

▶ Ensure African ownership of governance

The interviews in this study showed that a high level of expertise on governance issues exists within African governments and civil society, if the knowledge from the various ministries and stakeholders is pooled together. It would be useful to be able to bring all these views together at the country level through national level cooperation and partnerships.

It was recommended that donors should sponsor small workshops on governance at the country level, where the local stakeholders could further define their governance needs and make proposals for their fulfilment. This was believed to be a practical means for the donor community to assist the evolution of African governance, both as a concept and in reality.

▶ Improve governance in specific sectors

Many interviewees considered the principles and practices of good governance not only a matter of the rule of law and the judiciary but wanted them to be applied sector-specifically, for example in all activities and funding in education, health care and HIV/AIDS projects.

▶ Embassy staff training

It was thought that the governance of development cooperation projects would be improved if embassy staff could receive additional training to conduct their work. It was proposed that donors should have some type of informal discussion groups linked by the Internet, in which individual staff members could seek substantive advice from senior officials based in the capital.

▶ Studies of governance within NGOs

Concerns over the accountability and governance of NGOs were expressed by several interviewees. It was stated that Western countries should be able to take the necessary action with regard to cases of corruption or mismanagement of NGOs.

It was recommended that the governance issues within the NGO sector should be examined in detail, for example through local studies.

It was thought to be important that donors should not mix the issues of democracy and NGO participation with the problems of governance and management of NGOs. It was thought to be necessary to apply the same kind of governance principles throughout the society of developing countries, both to governments and to civil society actors.

► **More Nordic donor coordination**

Many interviewees wanted to see the Nordic countries coordinate their projects and development funding more closely and form their own distinct block of donors within the international donor community. It was proposed that the Nordic countries should consider more thoroughly the kinds of projects in Africa they could manage and finance together.

► **More open tendering processes for consultancy projects**

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from the interviews is that more flexibility during the tendering process could improve the quality of a project in the long run.

Multi-year technical consultancy projects should be able to have more components left open during the tendering process. For example, it may be an advantage not to identify all the local partners immediately but only after the project has started. The local organisations could be signed on as partners at a later stage, when local awareness of a project and interest in participating in it have been raised. This would help to avoid a situation arising in which foreign consultancy companies compete over local contacts and local partners who are, however, allowed to take part in only one application. Tendering processes should be governed in such a way that local organisations are not played against off against each other without knowing what kinds of consequences such competition may have at the grassroots level.

► **Closer linkages between research and policy planning**

It was acknowledged that policy planning in many developing countries lacks linkage to broader political and socio-economic analysis. This state of affairs was said to have led to situations in which the implications of policies are often not adequately thought through before a policy is designed and launched. Interviewees thought that better governance at the national level would mean deliberately building linkages between research and policy planning.

In this context, donors and local policymakers were asked to encourage local graduates, scholars and institutes to carry out policy research at the local level in different parts of a country.

It was recommended that policy research projects should take advantage of local researchers and that foreign experts should mainly have a supervisory role. Donors were invited to sponsor short-term local scholarships for research in different parts of the country with the aim of helping the local policy-making processes.

► **More experiments and risk-taking**

Donors and recipient governments alike were said to be often conventional and careful in their decisions and policies. But it was thought that it is vital for development in poor countries that policy-makers, donors and civil society should adopt novel ideas and be willing to take more risks.

Pilot projects were believed to serve as testing grounds and catalysts for finding more sustainable ways to advance development.

Some interviewees hoped that donors would tolerate developing countries and individual communities making mistakes and learning important lessons from their own failures and experiences. On the basis of this study it can be recommended that development agencies should have seed money or a trust fund for innovations, experiments and pilot projects.

3 Perceptions of Partnerships

“Partnership means working very closely together to achieve common targets while sharing solutions, resources, expertise and experience.”

“It means taking responsibility for something together.”

“Partnership means being able to work together as equals and staying loyal to the common goals and objectives. There should be a partnership between the government and civil society as well as between donors and recipients.”

“It’s a process where decisions are taken with a shared understanding of programmes and implementation.”

Excerpts from interviews with representatives of African governments and African civil society, October-December 2004.

The representatives of governments and civil society in East Africa who were interviewed in October-November 2004 were very familiar with the evolving concept of partnership. Development partnerships were said to be of different types and take different forms, varying from limited-period and “one-off” project partnerships to long-term and continuous bilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements.

Every partnership was believed to be different in some way, and it was therefore thought to be difficult to formulate a single comprehensive definition of the concept, or to make comparisons between one partnership and another. Some of the interviewees laid particular emphasis on partners having the necessary special ability and skills to work together. It was regarded as a sign of maturity in a partnership that no distinction is made in it as to whether a partner is governmental or from civil society.

Partnership was considered a method of cooperating and taking decisions together.

On the basis of the views expressed in the interviews, it can be concluded that partnership is defined to mean working closely together to reach common targets, and sharing solutions, resources, expertise and experiences during the process of cooperation.

Partnership was also considered to be a method of taking decisions together and creating a shared understanding of decisions, programmes, and project implementation. It was said that the guiding principle in partnership is to treat others the way that you would like them to treat you.

Some partnerships were said to be informal and loose forms of cooperation in which it is not necessary to define the relationship in detail. It was even said that it is preferable to avoid institutionalising a partnership in cases where the participating parties want to preserve creative and non-bureaucratic ways of cooperating and to have a free and open dialogue. Some of the interviewees were concerned that small, weaker partners could lose their identities and independent opinions in cooperation mechanisms that are too formal and in which the stronger partner dominates.

There was, however, also a recommendation that all major cooperation projects between governments involving substantive amounts of funds or important agendas should be specified in written contracts, agreements, or memoranda of understanding.

The concept of partnership has been mystified and partly abused.

One of the interviewees said that “partnership” has become the most abused word in our globalised world, because all of today’s social relationships are called partnerships. It was said that the emphasis on partnerships has also made the concept into a mysterious and very complex term, which is loaded with connotations and expectations. People

must try to simplify the concept and look for alternative definitions, which would better reflect reality. Some of the interviewees thought that the concept should be used more cautiously and more economically. One of those interviewed called for an honest assessment to determine which relationships could truly be called partnerships.

Concern was voiced that some individuals, authorities and organisations seem to look upon partnership as a conveniently opportune concept which could be useful in improving their access to funding and, perhaps, to economic and political power. For this reason it was feared that the value of partnership as a tool to develop cooperation among stakeholders has already diminished. Talk about partnership was now seen as being part of a politically correct rhetoric that helps to convince the funding organisations. That being the case, the meaning of partnership was seen to have only instrumental and secondary value for some people and organisations.

There is some concern about the diminishing value of partnership in practice.

All in all, however, quite a few of the interviewees referred to positive experiences and thought that the concept of partnership had brought new thinking to policy debates and helped to improve agendas and intergovernmental relations between donors and developing countries.

Some of the interviewees wanted to make a distinction between cooperation and partnership. Cooperation was seen to be a more general relationship, being described as a one-way street from a donor to a recipient with little reciprocity and exchange of information. Partnership, on the other hand, was perceived as a much stronger relationship, in which the parties share their experiences and resources and all partners have a high level of commitment to working together.

3.1. Main characteristics of partnerships

Interviewees identified a number of qualities that they thought necessary for good partnership. Some of these characteristics were closely connected with each other. The views of government and civil society representatives were very similar and can be summarised under the headings of the seven main characteristics they attributed to good partnership: (a) equality, (b) mutual respect, (c) mutual trust, (d) common interests, (e) dialogue, (f) commitment, and (g) fair rules of cooperation.

(a) Equality

Almost all the interviewees identified equality between the partners as being the most important characteristic of an ideal partnership. They particularly wanted to see equality realised in four main areas: status, technology and information, rights and responsibilities, and decision-making.

Most emphasis was placed on the partners having equal status. However, this notion also involved considerable confusion. Some doubts were expressed as to whether true partnerships are possible at all. It was said that Africa had been struggling to improve its status in relation to the rest of the world throughout the history of trade and development cooperation. The history of development cooperation between Europe and Africa was called a relationship between two unequal parties.

Nevertheless, some interviewees argued that, on the contrary, the equal status of partners should not be the primary criterion. These speakers felt that too much weight had been put on equality in partnerships and this had started to mislead the debate. They said it should be accepted that partners often have different kinds of status, but this does not stop them from being partners.

Other sorts of equality were also thought to be easier to achieve than equality in status, and it was suggested that partners should focus on these other aspects, especially at the beginning of their relationship. Interviewees thus called for equality of access to information as well as equality in technical and technological knowledge and capacities.

Partners share losses and benefits.

With regard to rights and responsibilities, many interviewees stressed the importance of partners having an equal voice. It was thought that partnership should provide all partners with the same rights to express their opinions without fear of risking the continuity of cooperation and aid projects. Partnership was also described as being the equal sharing of losses and benefits, failures and successes, based on having mutual responsibilities and common goals.

Most of the interviewees emphasised that each partner should be able to contribute to the final documents and agreements on an equal basis during negotiations and decision-making. It was considered to be extremely important that decisions should not be dictated by one partner.

(b) Mutual respect

A partnership was said to be beneficial only if the partners genuinely respect each other.

Interviewees thought that such respect requires appreciation of each other's background and starting points. However, some of them thought that it may be too difficult to achieve full respect if the disparities between the partners are too great, making the weaker partner feel envious, frustrated and angry while the stronger partner feels superior, powerful and able to dominate.

It was argued that in order for the parties to respect each other there must be a broad understanding of the concept of resources. It is particularly important that the value of partners should not be determined according to their financial contributions. Instead, the whole chain of actors and their roles should be accorded the same kind of value and respect, because each partner brings specific resources according to the partner's own individual capacity.

Different roles and resources should all be respected.

It was recommended that all the human efforts involved should be seen as critically significant resources in a partnership. In this respect, the international donor community was asked to pay more attention to indigenous local knowledge and to the models for cooperation between local authorities and civil society that already exist at grassroots level in African societies.

Social networks existing amongst ordinary people were said to form the most valuable resource for achieving sustainable results in development. These local resources were seen to equate with the financial resources that donors provide. A partnership was said to be dynamic if all the parties are willing to acknowledge the need to pool their different resources and particular skills.

(c) Mutual trust

The level of trust between partners was considered crucial for the creation of a platform for an open and honest exchange of opinions and the development of a real dialogue.

Trust was also needed in order to handle funds and sensitive information within a partnership. Gaps in knowledge and skills can easily generate mistrust among partners and it is necessary to tackle such gaps through carefully planned capacity-building measures.

(d) Common interests

Interviewees believed that genuine partnership is based on the partners sharing a vision and having common aspirations, interests, and objectives.

Some interviewees highlighted the importance of a partnership having clearly defined and specific goals to help keep the partners focused throughout its activities. It was also thought to be imperative that all partners understand and interpret the goals of their partnership in the same way. Some of the partnership's practical targets were seen as representing benchmarks and culmination points, where the partnership is expected to be at its most functional, and both visible and measurable.

Some targets act as benchmarks that measure how far a partnership has developed.

Many interviewees said that there should be no hidden agenda or concealed goals in a partnership, but complete transparency regarding all motives and objectives. Having common interests was believed to be a key sign that partners are bound together and not working selfishly for their own individual personal or national interests.

It was nevertheless understood that each country has some objectives that arise from its own domestic politics and particular needs. These do not necessarily conflict with the aims of a partnership as long as the overall process is driven by the shared goals and common interests.

A partnership was specified as a model for working together in which the various stakeholders contribute their different skills and resources for broader goals. Having common targets was said to reflect unity in the purposes of cooperation and to create a win-win situation whereby all partners gain more together than they could achieve on their own.

Partners gain more by working together than by working alone.

(e) Dialogue

The interviewees called for dialogue to accompany the operational aspects of partnership. They also stressed the importance of dialogue in planning, as a means of testing whether views could be exchanged, decisions taken, and a better understanding among partners created as the partnership develops.

It was emphasised that development cooperation should itself be developed as a consultative process between all stakeholders at the national level and among African and Western governments at the international level.

(f) Commitment

Some interviewees observed that although a number of partnerships have now been established, some of them only function at rhetorical and formal levels. They saw true partnership as going beyond official statements and meetings, and thought it must involve concrete action plans with strong commitment from all partners.

Although they had direct or indirect experience of donor governments, when speaking about the donor's partnerships with developing countries some of the interviewees raised doubts as to whether the donors have really made the necessary political commitment to take partnerships with Africa seriously. The commitment of Western countries with regard to international trade and developing countries' debts was especially questioned.

Partnership between governments requires serious political commitment.

Commitment in a partnership was understood to mean a firm decision to cooperate even during difficult times, and despite any failures or disagreements.

(f) Fair rules of cooperation

In the course of the interviews, several references were made to the need for a principle of fairness and a code of conduct in a partnership. It was said that a partnership without fair play is a source of frustration and generates negative feedback.

A number of the interviewees said successful partnership calls for reliable and responsible behaviour from all the partners. The principles of good governance were seen to be important in all spheres of partnership and at all national, regional and international levels. Accountability and transparency with regard to motives and policy positions were seen as particularly important. It was also said that it is essential that partnership funds be handled responsibly. Many of the interviewees thought that aid recipient partners should be asked to provide regular reports about the aid's implementation.

A code of conduct in a partnership calls for responsible behaviour from all parties.

Partnership was also thought to require individual donors and the international community as a whole being called on to follow the principles and practices of good governance.

3.2. Different levels of partnerships

3.2.1. Government and NGOs

Civil society has played an important role in Africa, since the “third wave” of democratisation and political reforms in the 1990s. NGOs in particular, now have an acknowledged role in democratic societies, providing alternative channels for opinions, information, and popular participation. They have increased rapidly both in number and in influence over the last two decades.

NGOs have played a role in African reform and democratisation.

Interviewees remarked that both the African governments and the donor community have started to expect NGOs to provide alternative ways of achieving sustainable development and of finding solutions for the grave levels of poverty and failures to deliver public goods to the poor in Africa.

The opinion was often expressed that partnerships between government and civil society at the national level can contribute to development “for the good of the country.” Government representatives who were interviewed praised the work of NGOs and said that NGOs have undeniably accomplished positive results regarding development in Africa.

Interviewees recalled that African governments have made a number of commitments to build up cooperation and partnerships with civil society at both national and continent-wide levels in various decisions and protocols of the African Union. However, representatives of governments and of NGOs agreed that the protocols have often remained on paper and have not all been put into practice.

The interviews also revealed that partnerships between governments and civil society, especially partnerships with NGOs, are seen to be the most challenging partnerships of all. Interviewees discussed the following aspects of partnership between governments and NGOs:

Origins of NGOs

Some of the interviewees said that NGOs are a Western phenomenon, deliberately established in Europe to fill the gap between the state and the private sector. It was claimed that NGOs in developing countries are a foreign idea imported by the donors.

Others thought that the Southern NGOs are born out of the donors’ suspicion and mistrust of the respective governments. It was thus thought to be a major challenge for these NGOs to cooperate with their national governments. In some cases it was said

that local NGOs' links to the donor governments have alienated them to such an extent that it is almost impossible for them to have any dialogue with their own national governments.

Differing views were expressed about the origins of civil society.

Further, some of the interviewees considered that in recent years the donor community has clearly demonstrated its belief in the ability of NGOs to deliver development and improve democracy in any given society. And it was also thought that the international financial institutions' Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) had promoted a limited role for the state and a strengthened role for non-state actors. It thus appeared that the growth of civil society in Africa did not always have its origins in the social movements of people at the grassroots level.

Shifts in NGO agendas

During some interviews the view was expressed that the agendas of Northern and Southern NGOs have changed.

In the past, Northern NGOs laid more weight on political agendas and advocacy work, lobbying actively for issues relating to environment and human rights. Today the Northern NGOs are increasingly interested in poverty issues and development. Many of them focus their activities on development projects and receive funding from their governments to work as agents of overseas projects.

NGOs were seen as being a modern phenomenon in Africa today. Civil society started to emerge during the African societies' struggles for independence. Voluntary organisations took up the task of delivering services in the newborn states, together with some of the churches and religious organisations that had already been working in Africa for a longer time.

Southern NGOs have become involved in advocacy work.

In the past decade, Southern NGOs have begun to modify their traditional role of performing tasks in service delivery and humanitarian assistance. Today a number of African NGOs are also interested in monitoring policy-making processes and the work of governments at national, regional and international levels.

Interviewees recognised, however, that some areas of policy advocacy work are very sensitive for governments. It was said that some governments have even directly requested NGOs to limit their work to the field of development only and to avoid becoming too involved with national politics.

Competition for funding

A number of interviewees referred to the significant increase in funding to NGOs that has occurred in the last decade. This development was said to cause confusion because governments may at times feel that they have to compete with their own national NGOs to obtain external assistance.

Governments feel they have to compete with NGOs.

Some of the interviewees said that NGOs are not always independent but are allied to bilateral and international donors, and follow the policies that those donors set. The question was raised as to whether foreign funding makes NGOs more accountable to the donors abroad than to their own countries. It was thought that NGOs are able to “make a lot of noise”, influencing donors’ decisions and even causing donor funding to be diverted from one sector to another.

Political rivalry

Concern was expressed that the foreign funding for NGOs comes with operational and political ties and instructions. It was said that when the roles of NGOs become more visible, and their foreign contacts more extensive, the people in power sometimes become suspicious and envious because NGOs may be rivals for popular support and undermine the authority of local politicians.

One of the interviewees thought that competition could harden attitudes on both sides: NGOs may distance themselves even more from their own governments, and the governments can increase bureaucratic regulations and harden authoritarian attitudes towards civil society in an attempt to limit the activities and influence of NGOs.

Some NGOs have adopted a pragmatic and neutral approach to the government.

Some interviewees had observed signs of adjustment in the relations between governments and NGOs. Many African governments had taken specific initiatives to improve their dialogues with NGOs. But at the same time, it was explained, some NGOs categorically refuse to cooperate with a government that they see as lacking legitimacy and respect for human rights.

Other NGOs, however, were said to have adopted a more pragmatic approach and learned to agree with the government and perform in a “neutral” way that avoids aggravation and enables them to continue their projects.

High expectations for NGOs

Interviewees often called for NGOs to reach out to the remote areas of African countries, where national government and foreign donors are not yet able to operate. But some said that this would be impossible because the legal framework and political environment in Africa is not sufficiently conducive to the work of NGOs.

A number of the interviewees were concerned about the gap between expectations and reality. They pointed out that many African NGOs lack both the experience and the capacity to meet overly high expectations. It was said that such high expectations have unfairly increased the pressure on NGOs to accomplish more than is possible with their limited resources.

NGOs suffer from the pressure of unrealistic expectations.

Diversity in the NGO sector

Interviewees emphasised that in order to understand the NGO sector in Africa it is essential to remember that the role of civil society varies from one country to another. The actual role played in each case appears to depend on the political and legal environment and history of the individual country as well as on the size and capacity of the NGOs in the local society.

National histories and politics affect the role of civil society.

One interviewee also considered that the NGO sector has become diversified because some African governments have deliberately created semi-governmental and governmental NGOs to provide support for government policies and to compete for funding with the other NGOs.

Some of the interviewees thought that partnering with NGOs might be difficult because of the weak identity and structure of many African NGOs. It was remarked that NGOs and civil society still lack a clear understanding of their roles and tasks, especially in relation to the national governments. NGOs were said to be relatively new organisations that do not yet have the experience and ability to represent large parts of the population.

Democracy and good governance within NGOs

Many of the interviewees, both government and civil society representatives, believed that there is increasing concern about issues of good governance within NGOs. NGOs themselves were worried that bad practice and failures of governance in some organisations could damage the credibility of the whole family of NGOs.

Some of the government representatives raised explicit doubts about partnerships with NGOs that have undemocratic decision-making processes and seem only to look for funds without any genuine aim of tackling poverty.

Restrictions on NGOs

Some of the interviewees thought that in many African countries the government exercises rather firm control over the NGO sector through regulations and legislative frameworks.

NGOs in some African countries were said to be seriously afraid of being oppressed by their governments. This has created an atmosphere of extreme caution, in which NGOs spend their time and energy in avoiding encounters with the authorities instead of focusing on the core tasks of their organisations.

New consultative processes

Interviewees thought that in some African countries the drawing up and implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) provides a forum in which serious policy dialogue between governments and civil society is conducted for the first time (See Box 1).

PRSPs have helped to launch new consultative processes.

It was said that the PRSP process had helped to start up other similar kinds of consultative processes in Africa. Government representatives and civil society representatives alike understood that these first consultations were naturally difficult and that some failures had occurred.

Government representatives who were interviewed admitted that since consultations and hearings were fairly new phenomenon it is probable that not all stakeholders are consulted sufficiently. One government official expressed the hope that African governments would not be judged prematurely on the basis of their first attempts to engage more actively with civil society.

Box 5.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are economic strategy documents that were introduced by the international financial institutions in 1999.

The documents aim to create multi-year cross-sectoral frameworks for national poverty reduction policies and programmes. They are linked to debt relief as well as to concessional lending and financial arrangements.

PRSPs are designed and drafted in each country through a consultative and participatory process that involves four stages:

- poverty diagnosis
- poverty policy formulation
- implementation
- monitoring and evaluation.

One of the principles underlying the process is the building up of partnerships between the government and civil society, which involves coordination with the entire donor community.

Case study: Ethiopia

There were only a few NGOs in Ethiopia until the 1970s. Many of them were religious organisations or otherwise closely associated with churches. Their activities usually included social welfare work and the promotion of community development. In most cases their funding came from abroad.

Some of these organisations typically worked in cooperation with the government. At times government officials even held positions in the organisations as chairpersons or members of boards.

Long tradition of voluntarism

Even though no NGO sector had developed, civil society in Ethiopia was organised, active and rich in traditional structures. It has been said that the practice of humanitarian voluntarism in Ethiopia is as old as Ethiopian society itself⁷. The extended family and

⁷ Pankhurst, Richard, 1958. In Zewde, Bahru & Pausewang, Siegfried (eds), Ethiopia. The Challenge of Democracy from Below. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala and Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa, Stockholm, 2002.

indigenous informal social organisations looked after their members, especially on important social occasions and in times of difficulty. These structures continue in being today, co-existing with the more novel phenomena of NGOs.

Impact of humanitarian crises

The two great famines of the 1970s and 1980s brought dramatic changes to the lives of people and to society as a whole. They also changed Ethiopian civil society. The famines received extensive international media coverage, and massive amounts of humanitarian aid were sent to the country.

Humanitarian crises increased the number and tasks of NGOs.

The number and size of NGOs increased rapidly in Ethiopia. However, the interviewees pointed out that many of these NGOs were started up from abroad and lacked a local constituency. The interviewees also considered that problems arose because NGOs were established in response to humanitarian needs and famine conditions, and not as a response to the country's long-term development needs.⁸

NGOs remind Ethiopians of their sense of national humiliation during the great famines.

Policy frameworks under previous regimes

Some interviewees said that the policy environment in Ethiopia has been unfriendly to the operations of NGOs during the past decades. The imperial rule was hostile to the civil society sector except for traditional and informal associations. And then, under the Derg regime, human rights and democratic freedoms were systematically violated, making it almost impossible to establish NGOs and civil associations in Ethiopia.

⁸ According to some analyses, the history of famine complicated the relationship between the government and NGOs. It has been argued that the urban elite in Ethiopia finds it difficult to take a positive view of NGOs, because they mostly entered the country at a time of national humiliation and disaster. According to this line of thought, the authorities see NGOs as a reminder of their own inability to find solutions to massive problems of famine, food insecurity, and poverty. (Rahmato, Dessalegn, 2002: "Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia". In Zewde & Pausewang, *ibid.*)

In spite of this difficult history, with the coming of the new regime in 1991 new types of NGOs had been seen to emerge gradually with an agenda of human rights and democratic values.

However, this later development has not been painless. In the 1990s, some of the new organisations faced difficulties in becoming registered and they had only limited possibilities of influencing government policies. In some cases, the government established rival organisations that were controlled by one of the dominant political parties.

The poor human rights record in combination with the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea led to continued international pressure and reduced amounts of external aid.

Nature of the NGO sector

Interviewees said that the Ethiopian NGO sector is relatively small and weak, particularly in view of the size of the country's population, now over 70 million. It was said that, even in the overall context of the African continent, civil society in Ethiopia is less developed than in several other African countries, and about half the NGOs in Ethiopia are either foreign or branch offices of large international NGOs.

It was also said that ordinary citizens in Ethiopia show little interest in getting involved with politics. The lack of a culture of popular participation was seen to be another major cause of difficulty for NGOs who wish to launch large civic movements.

NGO survival strategies

Within Africa, Ethiopia is seen as being a society where the government has a strong regulative framework and deep-rooted traditions of control over the NGOs. It has been concluded that this background has led to at least some NGOs developing a survival strategy based on fostering close relations with the bureaucracy in the capital.⁹

The interviews confirmed these observations. One interviewee said that the Ethiopian NGOs know the cost of being too vocal and too visible. It was said that the more visible organisations are not the most effective in assisting the poor, because their visibility challenges the government and puts the activities, and even the existence,

⁹ Research indicates that the focus on the relationship with the central level authorities has sometimes been at the expense of building contacts with the people in the rural areas and at the grassroots level. (Tegegne, Teka, 1994: "International NGOs in Rural Development in Ethiopia: The Case of Wolaita Province. PhD.Dissertation, University of Cambridge. In Zewde & Pausewang 2002, *ibid.*)

of the organisation at risk. It was explained that for this reason NGOs have to adopt a strategy of keeping a low profile and avoiding antagonising the government.

Maintaining close relations with the authorities is an important survival strategy.

One interviewee criticised European governments for pressuring Ethiopian NGOs to take a more active role in human rights issues and to start up a more aggressive political dialogue with their government. In the opinion of this interviewee, many of the Ethiopian NGOs prefer to undertake only a small amount of human rights advocacy work in order to avoid difficulties with the local authorities. These NGOs seemed to believe that any change in this approach would make it impossible for them to continue their operations to aid the poor.

An emerging new culture of partnerships

Another interviewee said that there has been a real struggle at different levels of the Ethiopian government to reach today's situation in which NGOs are finally being accepted as real counterparts and potential partners. Interviews carried out amongst Ethiopian NGOs supported this analysis. Many interviewees said that their working relationship with the government has improved a lot, although the political environment was still perceived as being relatively difficult.

Civil service reforms and active lobbying have helped to improve relations between NGOs and the government.

The change in attitudes was thought to originate in the civil service reform within the administration, together with active lobbying by NGOs over the recent years. Some of the interviewees believed that international attention and requests by the donor community had also had an impact on the government's behaviour.

Interviewees thought that changing the attitude of the authorities had been a very slow process, but the final transformation had happened very quickly during the past two or three years. It was said that at the end of the 1990s it still took up to three years to register a new NGO, whereas today the registration process could be carried out in just two or three weeks.

Some interviewees were more critical, saying that even though that the democratic space for civil society in Ethiopia had begun to open, the creation of genuine partnerships between the government and NGOs was still mostly a symbolic gesture.

One interviewee believed that the whole of civil society, including the opposition parties as well as NGOs and the private sector, is still looked upon with suspicion by the authorities. This interviewee said that NGO activists sometimes feel that they are perceived as enemies and outsiders rather than as full citizens in their own country. The same interviewee went so far as to say that at times representatives of NGOs are treated as if they have less value to their government than people in neighbouring states. This kind of attitude and treatment was felt to be particularly surprising because “Ethiopian NGOs are calmer and less aggressive than, for example, Kenyan NGOs”.

Some interviewees provided examples of recent consultation processes involving NGOs. There had been feelings of frustration and disappointment when government officials had not included paragraphs proposed by NGOs in the final versions of policy documents. This was taken to mean that the “ownership” of policy-making is still predominantly, even entirely, in the hands of the government itself.

Opinions were also expressed that the government is not yet open and transparent enough, and that it still lacks a positive will to see NGOs as genuine development partners.

For a number of years some NGOs have lobbied for the government to establish a forum in which all aspects of their cooperation could be openly discussed. Recently the government has started to see the benefits of such meetings and begun to consider launching a forum. But other NGOs have started to resist the concept of partnership, not wishing it to be included, for example, in the preamble of the new NGO legislation. They feel that becoming partners would legitimise a government which they perceive as being corrupt and undemocratic.

The government's ideological background

It was said that the ruling party in Ethiopia has its origins in the rural areas of the country, not in the bureaucracy of the cities. Because the party's ideological roots are based in the peasantry and not in the urban elite, its representatives are thought to know poverty and local circumstances in the countryside at first hand.

But having an ideological background in the poor regions of Ethiopia was also considered to be a disadvantage. A remark was made that because the members of the ruling party who had fought against the previous regime “came from the bush”, their experience in the rebel movement has made them suspicious of new grassroots organisations, and constantly prepared for the day when another movement might rise up in one of the provinces and start to challenge them.

Rivalry between the government and NGOs

The relationship between the government and NGOs seemed to be facing a challenge insofar as many local NGOs receive funding from the donor community. One interviewee said that the government believes that Ethiopian NGOs are “flirting” with the donors and disloyal to their own government.

Ethiopian NGOs are patriotic and loyal to their own country.

The interviews conducted in Ethiopia did not, however, support any such assumption that NGOs have particular loyalties to their external funding sources and take instructions from the West.

The interviewees expressed strong feelings of patriotism and explained proudly how they had succeeded in helping their own government, for example during the national preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. One interviewee explained how NGOs had “invited themselves” to join the PRSP process after they had found out that the government had been criticised for falling short with regard to consultations with civil society. Interviewees said that the government should understand such action taken by NGOs as proof of Ethiopian NGOs’ willingness to stand up as advocates for their government when required.

NGO campaigns

During the interviews it became evident that NGOs had recently taken another independent initiative to promote the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in various parts of Ethiopia. The NGOs had organised a series of workshops, and they also had further plans to monitor the implementation of the MDGs.

In addition to the MDG campaign, Ethiopian NGOs were also conducting another major campaign in food security in Ethiopia. The ultimate goal of the food security campaign was to cut the links of aid dependency and to become self-reliant in financing development programmes in Ethiopia.

Relations with Western NGOs

On the basis of the interviews, it can be concluded that Ethiopian NGOs share many similar experiences with their counterparts in other African countries.

For example, some interviewees said that African NGOs often find it difficult to work with Western NGOs. Rather strong opinions were expressed about Western

NGOs in general. They had been observed to feel themselves superior to African NGOs. The relationship between African and Western NGOs was thus sometimes experienced as being like one “between masters and slaves”.

One interviewee said that European and American NGOs should not take the position that they can dictate to African NGOs about how to conduct development work in Africa.

A trend to “cosmopolitanism”

The NGOs that were interviewed seemed to be quite aware of their own operational limitations and were very self-critical about their inability to engage with policy debates with their government and their lack of capacity to reach out to the countryside.

Cosmopolitanism was recognised as being a matter for concern.

In the interviews, both government officials and NGOs recognised a trend of “cosmopolitanism” within NGOs as being a serious problem. It was said that some NGOs are always present at the “fancy receptions at the Hilton”, without ever visiting the poor people outside the capital.

One interviewee thought it could be unrewarding for NGOs to reach out to remote areas in the countryside, because the government could turn the positive work of NGOs into its advantage during its election campaigns.

Topical issues in public debate

Three particular topics regarding the relations between government and civil society in Ethiopia featured in public debate during the second half of 2004.

Firstly, many people had found a statement on NGOs by a minister on national television upsetting and counterproductive for future relations. The minister had openly criticised NGOs as being useless for development because there is no record of any country ever having been successfully developed through the work of NGOs.

Secondly, the government was in the process of redrafting the law for NGOs and public associations which dates back to the Ethiopian Civil Code of 1960 and a Legal Notice of 1966. A group of NGOs had gathered together to prepare their comments and proposals for legislation. Some government officials had publicly criticised the donors for making the legislative process difficult by getting too involved and “taking the side of NGOs”.

Thirdly, there were plans for the government to start registering the informal neighbourhood associations called *idris*. One interviewee was concerned that the

government aims to use the *idris* for political purposes in the same way as the previous regime had tried to co-opt the peasant cooperatives. The interviewee believed that the government should not try to institutionalise an informal system that had grown up naturally at the grassroots level and had managed to bring “assistance, harmony and patience” to people’s everyday life.¹⁰

Indigenous associations have helped to provide assistance, harmony and patience.

Case study: Kenya

Over the past decades, civil society in Kenya has often openly criticised the government for its corruption and mismanagement, and has played an important role in promoting a change of regime.

The history of Kenyan NGOs

In the 1960s, religious organisations, trade unions and the media were among the leaders of the struggle for independence. After independence was gained in 1963, some of the first political leaders came from these organisations as neither the political landscape nor party politics had yet been institutionalised. During the first two republics, however, political power was concentrated in the hands of a small elite. Several constitutional amendments made by the elite in power weakened respect for human rights, good governance and democracy and turned Kenya into a one-party state.¹¹

When serious governance problems within the government became evident, levels of foreign aid to Kenya were reduced. Because the international donor community wanted to continue assisting the Kenyan people, however, it started to establish links with Kenyan civil society. As a consequence a large number of NGOs and associations were launched both in the cities and the countryside. Civil society in Kenya became very heterogenic. It received remarkable amounts of external aid and played a significant role in the national economy.

¹⁰ The system of *idris* has existed in Ethiopia for centuries and has a high degree of credibility for every Ethiopian. *Idris* are called “the people’s indigenous coping mechanism” because they provide mental and financial support for families and communities during times of difficulty. Almost every Ethiopian belongs to an *idri*, but their memberships and structures are not official. Many believe that the informal nature of the arrangement is one of the reasons why they have managed to survive and be effective in their tasks. Over the years, NGOs have promoted the idea of the *idris* taking a more visible role in community level development programmes.

¹¹ Kibara, Gichira 2004: “Foreword”. In Okello, Duncan (ed), *Civil Society in the Third Republic*. The National Council of NGOs, Nairobi.

Although civil society in Kenya was relatively strong, the legacy of colonial rule was felt in the restrictions on civil society organisations and in the highly centralised bureaucracy. The government was therefore rather successful in its efforts to suppress the political opposition and it also managed to some extent to silence civil society either by deregistering organisations or by co-opting them into the state.

Kenyan NGOs managed to create their own monitoring mechanism.

At the end of 1980s, the government had plans to further limit the freedom of NGOs on the pretext of increased coordination and supervision¹². The NGOs responded by active lobbying and by creating their own commission to monitor all the NGO issues, including regular hearings of complaints. In this way, they managed to avoid coming under the direct government control.

The role of civil society during the transition

Before the multi-party elections in December 2002, civil society engaged in promoting dialogue between the opposition parties and helping to design their programme. In the elections, the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) party lost its hold on the government after almost forty years to the opposition parties' National Rainbow Coalition (NARC).

The new government employed some members of civil society organisations as ministers and senior public officials. The change of political power was a major transition in the country and it resembled the events in the Republic of South Africa after the first general elections in 1994. In South Africa, too, some of the leaders of civil society were recruited into the new government.

Leadership vacuum among NGOs

Interviewees explained that the movement of human resources from civil society to the government created a new situation for the Kenyan civil society. Civil society was perceived to have a leadership vacuum, as some of its most vocal leaders had left the sector and joined the government. The view was expressed that this could be a clever strategy to "keep the shouting lobbyists quiet".

¹² Kanyinga, Karuti 2004: "Civil Society Formations in Kenya: A Growing Role in Development and Democracy". In Okello, *ibid.*

The relationship between civil society and the government was under change and the interviewees said they are not yet sure whether they are a watchdog or a partner for the government. It was believed it would take some years for NGOs to find new leaders and a suitable role in relation to the new coalition in the government. There was some disappointment that the civil society leaders in the government seemed to have turned away from their activism and become more government-minded.

Some of the most vocal NGO leaders were recruited into the new government.

According to some interviewees, civil society in Kenya is less active today than it was two years ago. One interviewee expressed the hope that NGOs in Kenya would remain strong enough to continue challenging the power-holders. Another interviewee also wanted to see civil society adopt a monitoring role and critically follow the performance of the private sector.

Changes in the political atmosphere

Many of the interviewees in Kenya expressed the wish that the new government should not backslide from the reforms it had promised. They said that there was now more open and honest discussion in society than there had been for several years. The dialogue with the donor community was also thought to have improved, because donors had previously acted in an authoritarian way due to the government's poor record of governance.

A few of the interviewees observed that both the discussion and the initiatives to launch new partnerships in society appeared to be moving forward extremely slowly even though the political atmosphere had changed. One interviewee thought that civil society in Kenya is not as strong as it seems, because it is still suffering from the policies of previous governments that aimed to destroy the institutions of civil society. As a consequence civil society was said to be only a weak partner for the government and was in fact in desperate need of capacity building and training to become equally strong.

In order to become a strong partner, civil society needs training and improved capacity:

Corruption in the NGO sector

Many of the interviewees in Kenya were very concerned that governance problems and the culture of corruption would continue to prevail in Kenya because over time they have become deeply rooted in the public sector.

Fear was also expressed that corrupt practices have also penetrated into the civil society sector. For example, some interviewees raised the question as to whether the

huge amounts of external funding to Kenyan NGOs had all been managed according to the best auditing and governance standards. It was therefore thought to be important to address governance problems within the NGO sector without delay.

Box 7.

Key challenges for Government-NGO partnerships

Time limitations

Interviewees understood that from the government's point of view, actual timeframes and deadlines often set limitations for civil society consultations. It was said to be impossible for governments to engage with civil society endlessly, in a single continuous process.

It was therefore considered necessary for the government to have a strategy that helps to build up the various civil society consultations and connect them with each other. It was thought that such a strategy would assist in making use of lessons learned through conducting civil society consultations comprehensively and often.

Institutional mechanisms

The idea of institutionalising consultations between the government and civil society divided people's views in the interviews.

Some interviewees recognised the advantages of having permanent and regular arrangements that could facilitate consultations and speed them up. They thought that the creation of an institutional mechanism for partnership between governments and NGOs would ensure cooperation and the continuation of dialogue at all times, even in cases when the relationship was otherwise in crisis and close to collapse.

However, some of the interviewees from civil society organisations opposed any formal procedures and structures for the relations between the government and NGOs. Their point of view was based on the belief that institutionalisation would bring bureaucracy into consultations, and make the dialogue with civil society just a boring routine or even a mechanism for control.

There were also fears that a formal structure of cooperation might destroy innovation and make it easier for the government to escape from developing a real motivation and interest in cooperating with NGOs. Some of the interviewees also resisted the idea of getting too close to the government and becoming a regular participant in governmental meetings. There were also NGOs who simply did not want to be called partners of the government.

Direct budget aid

In the interviews, some NGOs feared that direct budget aid would make African governments less accountable to their own citizens, and increase civil society's difficulties in monitoring the use of funds. On the other hand, the representatives of governments perceived direct budget aid as an opportunity to increase the sense of ownership and make aid more effective.

3.2.2. Government and the private sector

The interviewees had generally less concerns with regard to governments developing partnerships with the private sector than over relations between governments and NGOs.

Many of those interviewed had nevertheless observed that African governments have recently started to look to the private sector as an engine of economic growth. It was thought that this new interest arose from the acknowledged need to build up economic self-reliance and promote regional trade, as well as helping to cut the cycle of aid dependency.

Interviewees said, however, that governments have not yet developed comprehensive strategies to support the development of the private sector.

Observations on relations between governments and the private sector in Africa focused on three particular aspects:

The structure of the private sector

The private sector in Africa was said to lack opportunities for a genuine entrepreneurial spirit to be channelled into successful operations. One of the major structural problems in developing partnerships between governments and the private sector as a whole was thought to be the dominant position of state-owned enterprises relative to private sector actors.

There was an unhealthy structure within the private sector when quasi-governmental and state-owned companies benefit from their close relationship with governments. Some of these companies were explained to have a monopoly that makes it practically impossible for other companies to be successful.

State-owned companies were said to particularly dominate in such sectors as energy, water, railways, port authorities and telecommunication. Some state companies functioning as regulatory bodies were also said to hold a lot of power in African societies.

State-owned companies were thought to take advantage of their monopoly position by dictating prices and conditions in the markets. They appeared to have easy access to subsidies and information. On top of that, they were seen to receive various kinds of benefits from the government. According to the interviewees, the favour shown to state-owned companies made competition in the domestic markets unfair.

State-owned enterprises dictate prices and conditions in the markets.

State-owned companies were also said to benefit from their position by having stronger finances, which makes it possible for them to attract qualified people and pay higher salaries than other enterprises.

The role of government

African governments were said to lack an appropriate role with regard to private sector development. It was thought that confusion is created if governments themselves take an active part in the private sector.

Government should be a facilitator and create a favourable technical environment for the private sector.

Some interviewees said that African governments should mainly focus on helping the private sector to flourish and on creating political, legal and financial environments that are conducive to business operations. Interviewees particularly referred to the need to adopt new land-ownership laws. Governments were also called on to make efforts to remove technical obstacles to business activities.

Independent initiatives by the private sector

In spite of the difficulties of establishing partnerships with governments, the private sector was said to be relatively active in East Africa and to take its own initiatives to advance transnational partnerships.

For example, the Federation of East African Chambers of Commerce meets three times a year. Another example of cross-border cooperation is the Association of Professional Societies in East Africa.

Box 6.

Private sector partnership in East Africa

The Association of Professional Societies in East Africa (APSEA) is a professional, private sector body in East Africa with its main office in Nairobi, Kenya. It opened branch offices in Uganda and Tanzania in 2005. The association has a membership of around 80 professional societies in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

The history of the association reflects the recent history of East Africa. During its first years of independence, the Kenyan government followed policies that encouraged private sector development. The business sector was mostly in foreign hands. APSEA was established in 1961 with a membership which was mainly composed of British professionals living in Nairobi.

In the 1970s, ideological differences had an impact on private sector development in East Africa. Kenya had a market economy but Tanzania moved towards socialism and Uganda moved from socialism to military rule. Cooperation ran into difficulties and the East African Community broke down in 1977. Most of the regional bodies closed their offices.

APSEA continued its activities in Kenya, but had no significant programmes in the other countries. In Kenya, too, its role was only marginal as the Kenyan policy environment of the 1980-90s was not conducive to private sector development.

In 1999, the East African Cooperation Treaty was signed by the three countries of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This opened a new era of regional partnerships and cooperation. Amongst other developments, APSEA was revitalized and it now holds regional council meetings in Arusha, Tanzania, four times a year.

3.2.3. Regional integration in Africa

Many of the people who were interviewed stressed the urgent need to advance regional and sub-regional integration in Africa as important forms of partnerships.

There were serious concerns that Africa has not been able to respond to the speed and requirements of globalisation, but is lagging behind in comparison with the integration and partnering schemes of other continents.

Interviewees said that the stakes have risen for poor countries due to globalisation and trade liberalisation, but African countries still do not have even the lowest level of trade amongst themselves. The general opinion expressed in the interviews was that integration and better partnerships on the continent are the most critical issues for Africa to survive. It was concluded that regional integration programmes are the only viable alternative for Africa.

Regional integration and partnerships are essential for Africa to survive.

One interviewee made a clear distinction between cooperation and integration among African countries. A lot of cooperation was said to take place in the border areas. It was explained that the Africans have always traded and moved across borders as migrant labourers. But it was claimed to be one thing to “slaughter a cow at the border and eat it together”, and another thing to develop political and economic integration and move it forward to deeper and more complex levels.

The recent history of integration

Some interviewees stressed that the idea of regional partnership is not a new phenomenon in Africa.

Pan-Africanism was a popular ideology during the first years of independence. When the Organisation of African Union (OAU) was established in 1963, it was given the task of safeguarding the territorial boundaries in Africa and promoting respect for them. OAU summit meetings also emphasised the need to advance regional integration and cooperation.

Regional integration has roots in Pan-African ideology.

The treaty of the African Economic Community was adopted in 1991 and ratified three years later. Several other protocols have also been drawn up over the past ten years even though many of them have not been finalised and ratified. All of these developments have led up to today's situation regarding regional partnership.

One interviewee recalled that the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UN/ECA) started to promote the idea of regional partnership actively at the end of 1990s. The New Partnership for Africa was established in 2001, partly on the basis of discussions among member governments at the ECA.

According to a recent report by UN/ECA, integration challenges in Africa must be met by improving coherence among sectoral cooperation programmes, making integration objectives and programmes part of national development plans, and launching effective mechanisms to implement, monitor, and revise the overall integration process¹³.

Existing partnership structures in Africa

Interviewees emphasised that there is a lot of formal partnering in Africa: over a dozen regional economic communities have been established to facilitate trade and remove trade barriers between countries.

Two problems were mentioned in this respect. Firstly, some interviewees wanted more rationalisation of the mandates and memberships of the sub-regional economic communities. At present, a country may belong to several communities at the same

¹³ UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2004: Assessing Regional Integration in Africa. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

time, resulting in overlapping memberships. This was said to create confusion and conflicts of interest. It was difficult to understand tariff policies, because countries can decide for themselves which tariff regime to follow.

There is a need for rationalisation of memberships in regional economic commissions.

And secondly, a number of the regional and sub-regional protocols and agreements have not been put into effect. For example, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) has a long history of negotiations but the protocol has not still been implemented. Interviewees called for both rationalisation and the start-up of implementation.

BOX 8.

Levels of regional integration

Preferential trade area – Members apply lower tariffs for imports from other members and may decide upon similar tariffs on imports from non-members.

Free trade area – Members have no tariffs on imports from other members and may decide upon similar arrangements for imports from non-members.

Customs union – Free trade amongst members, who impose common tariffs on non-members and may also establish a single customs administration.

Common market – A customs union with the right to allow free movement of capital and labour in the area of integration.

Economic union – A common market with unified monetary and fiscal policies, and a common currency.

Political union – Members have common institutions, judicial and legislative processes, and a common parliament.

Source: ElAgra 1997 in Assessing Regional Integration in Africa, Economic Commission for Africa, ECA Policy Research Report, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2004.

Cooperation for Peace

In the field of peace and security, the current peace initiatives and partnerships amongst African governments were said to have their roots in the peace fund of the OAU. The peace fund was established to assist in preventing instability and in seeking peaceful settlements for internal and external conflicts. It was utilised in close cooperation with the UN Security Council, which has the primary role in international peace and security and gives mandates to international peacekeeping missions.

Interviewees said that the discussion about African peace and conflicts has gone through a profound ideological change. In the aftermath of numerous African conflicts, and particularly in reaction to the genocide in Rwanda, African governments concluded that it takes too much time to reach a consensus or agreement at the UN. The governments recognised that Africans cannot wait for solutions to the problems of their continents to evolve through slow international procedures. In the background, too, was the realisation that there could not be any development in Africa without peace. And concern over the spillover effects of conflicts on the integrity of multiethnic African countries encouraged African governments to look for new types of regional cooperation.

The debate about peace and security in Africa has changed profoundly.

It was considered necessary to have a mechanism in Africa that would allow African observers and, perhaps, peacekeeping forces to be sent to conflict areas. Also, the AU has changed the sovereignty clause that previously prevented interference in cases of internal conflicts in African countries.

As a consequence, the roles of African governments and the international community have changed. Whereas the OAU used to have the duty of supporting the taking of decisions by the UN Security Council, today the AU may itself take decisions about operations that the international community is expected to support. Partnership for peace among African countries is still new and under development.

It is important that African countries prove their ability to secure peace in the continent.

Interviewees said that it is important for African countries to prove that they have the political will and ability to take action to prevent conflicts and secure peace by themselves. The African peacekeeping mission in Sudan was thought to be an important test of regional and international partnerships.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a key initiative regarding partnerships in Africa. It aims to change the patterns of governance and partnerships and give Africa a proactive integrated development agenda, which is defined, managed and owned by the Africans.

Several interviewees considered that the NEPAD document provides a framework for all partnerships among the African governments and peoples as well as between Africa and the international community. For some interviewees it has priority over all other international initiatives in Africa to increase regional partnership and foster development.

Nevertheless, there were mixed views amongst the interviewees with regard to the actual substance within NEPAD. There was a lot of support for the programme, because it was seen as originating in Africa and ensuring the ownership of the process for the Africans. Yet, some had doubts over the usefulness of such a programme if it does not win an adequate level of trust, regionally or internationally. Without such trust it was believed that NEPAD would turn into an "academic exercise", or even a failure without any relevance for the people and societies in Africa.

NEPAD may still turn out to be only an academic exercise, or even a complete failure.

One interviewee thought that the programme remains an illusion, because "having the will to do something is not the same as having the capacity and knowledge to do it".

Another interviewee said that NEPAD still constitutes a weak spirit of partnering which has gained only political but not financial support from the international community. The donors were believed not to come forward with finance before the programme had been seen to produce sound and credible policies on regional integration. A further comment was made that NEPAD should focus on building a support base for its activities at the grassroots level, because African leaders themselves are not sufficiently united behind the programme.

Cooperation for trade

With regard to trade issues, many interviewees wanted to emphasise regional trade arrangements as being more important than multilateral trade structures. It was said that the multilateral trade negotiations are progressing disappointingly slowly. It was thought it would be possible to reach results faster in trade agreements at the regional level.

There was a lot of interest in the possibility of making regional trade agreements more effective and implementing them more consistently. Some interviewees believed

that the proportion of agriculture in African national economies should be reduced, releasing labour to other production sectors and promoting diversification. Views were expressed that African countries should invest in education because this would raise productivity in the long run. But African supply side constraints were expected to create difficulties.

Regional public-private partnerships would assist in sharing costs and raising funds.

One interviewee wanted to establish public-private partnerships to cover the whole chain of production and provide a network of support for African governments taking part in trade negotiations. At the regional level, the public-private partnerships were seen to assist in sharing production costs effectively and helping to raise funds for innovations. One interviewee invited the private sector to take up a role in the national forums where the trade strategies are planned and discussed.

Box 9.**Key challenges for regional integration**

One of the main conclusions drawn in the interviews was that the responsibility for achieving regional integration lies with the Africans themselves. In that respect no requests or recommendations were made to donors or the international community. Interviewees mentioned a number of factors that they thought to be important for reaching higher levels of regional partnership in Africa:

Spirit of cooperation

In many interviews, concern was expressed that the African countries still lack the genuine will and spirit required for cooperation. It was said that the NEPAD initiative and the new structure of the AU have not yet been able to overcome the differences which the African countries feel between themselves. Interviewees hoped that the undeveloped spirit of cooperation would improve.

Africans themselves bear the main responsibility for regional integration.

Conflicts and political stability

Internal and cross-border conflicts and political instabilities were perceived as resulting in stagnation in economic and human development. It was said that difficulties regarding regional partnership also arise from African countries being suspicious of each other. African governments seemed to have a habit of accusing each other of harbouring rebels and initiating internal conflicts and coup d'états in neighbouring countries.

Leadership commitment

The interviewees welcomed initiatives by African leaders and governments taking decisive action to improve continental partnerships. For example, the AU was established by a decision of the African heads of states, and a number of new institutional structures and initiatives have brought their countries together.

However, many interviewees thought that further integration would require much more political commitment and solidarity at the leadership level. They were particularly worried that some African leaders have bad relations with each other. This was seen as being partly due to the history of colonialism and partly due to the ideological clash during the Cold War, when some countries adopted socialism and others supported a market economy.

It was said that leaders appeared to become envious during state visits to other African countries if they observed some sectors to be more developed than in their own countries. Leaders and governments should accept their own responsibilities and, for the sake of unity, forget their envies as well as their personal interests and secret agendas.

The colonial legacy

Some of the divisions between countries were seen as originating from colonial times, when people were encouraged to dislike the other ethnic groups. It was said that this legacy continued to influence African cultures and perceptions of other population groups. The fact that former colonial powers have retained their influence and ties in the form of aid, trade, and loans was also seen as a divisive factor.

Nationalism

Some interviewees said that the unique history of nation building in Africa, is a specific constraint on regional partnership. The struggles for independence gained strength from nationalist agendas that continued into the first years of independence. In the long run, nationalism made people turn their attention inside to their communities and societies instead of looking outwards to the regional context and regional cooperation.

Good governance

Free trade, whether regional or multilateral, was said to require practices and cultures of good governance with solid and predictable rules and regulations. Corruption and the self-interest of African leaders were seen as obstacles that prevent governments from implementing the decisions and agreements.

Infrastructure and communication

The need to improve infrastructures by building road networks and bridges, and providing access to telecommunication was emphasised by many interviewees. This was considered to be important both for regional trade and to encourage and increase personal contact between the ordinary citizens of African nations.

Diversification of national economies

The production structure in Africa was seen as being too homogeneous, with the lack of differences between countries creating pointless competition with regard to the same types of products. This lack of diversification was thought to make Africa vulnerable to competition from the cheap products of India and China.

Trade barriers

There was felt to be a need to address all types of barriers and protectionism in regional trade. Some interviewees said that African countries are afraid to open up their own markets, because they think other countries in the region are more advanced and at a higher level of development. In this sense, differences in development were an obstacle to the development of true partnerships within a region or sub-region. It was thought that some countries would be likely to develop faster and benefit more if regional markets were more open.

Private sector partnerships

Many interviewees hoped that the private sector would make more effort to work and cooperate across borders, and increase its influence as one of the stakeholders and regional players.

There were calls for the private sector to coordinate its own position and make concrete proposals that could be lobbied for in connection with government policies for trade and private sector development. In return the governments should also establish partnerships with the private sector.

It was stressed that it is very important that entrepreneurs have some ownership of trade policies and that they have the possibility to share their expertise in the trade negotiations at the WTO and in the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the European Union. Governments were encouraged to consult local business people and include them in trade forums and negotiations.

Language barriers

The continent was seen as being divided both into Anglophone and Francophone Africa and also into language zones of indigenous languages. Language was thought to be one of the main obstacles hindering regional integration.

Viable regional institutions

Interviewees called on the AU to address development problems comprehensively and produce workable strategies to solve them. The AU was believed to be the best channel for promoting economic cooperation and trade facilitation.

3.2.4. African and European governments

Interviewees, both representatives of governments and representatives of civil society, were convinced that the relationship between donors and developing countries should be upgraded into a real partnership.

Interviewees were asked whether they think there is a partnership between Africa and Europe. All interviewees, both from governments and from civil society in Ethiopia and Kenya, replied that such a partnership does not yet exist. Some were even sceptical as to whether there ever could be a genuine partnership between African and European governments. Somewhat more positive remarks were made by a few interviewees from other African countries with long experience of development cooperation.

Interviewees thought that no partnership yet exists between Africa and Europe.

They believed that the present partnership between African and European governments is still mainly a matter of fine-sounding rhetoric from the North which had not been demonstrated into practice. Many said that the history of trade and development cooperation has been the history of an unequal relationship between the West and Africa, between the haves and the have-nots.

On the other hand, representatives of donors seemed to have a more optimistic view and thought that a partnership is already in place. The European donors emphasised the role of the Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries in creating a framework for partnership (See Box 10).

Box 10.

The Cotonou Agreement

The Cotonou agreement between the 77 African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) countries and the European Union was signed in June 2001. It entered into force in April 2003, replacing the preceding Lomé Conventions.

The Cotonou Agreement is a comprehensive framework for trade and development assistance. It emphasises political dialogue and the role of non-state actors. The agreement is designed to extend for twenty years and it includes permanent organs of dialogue and mechanisms for regular reviews.

Interviewees put forward several reasons for thinking that no partnership yet exists between Africa and Europe.

In the first place, many of the interviewees wanted an honest assessment of the economic and political history of the relationship between South and North. The relations existing today were seen as having their roots in the period when European countries ruled parts of Africa as their colonies, so the building up of cooperation and partnerships is not free from the influences of the past. History was thus believed to make equality between Africans and Europeans difficult. There was said to be “a slavery bondage” in which the previous colonial powers still have strong control over their former colonies. It was said to be very difficult to break free from the past when even the geography maps show that Europe is above Africa and Africa is below Europe.

**The difficulty of breaking away from colonial history
is an obstacle to improving cooperation.**

Secondly, the differences in financial, technical, and technological resources were thought to overwhelm efforts to establish an equal partnership. The wealth gap was said to be too wide, and differences in the levels of development too obvious, for full mutual respect to be achieved. Africa was also said to be dependent on Western technology. These disparities were thought to breed feelings of envy and discontent on the one side, and feelings of superiority and dominance on the other side. They were seen as clear obstacles to the creation of harmony and partnership bonds.

Thirdly, it was believed that the donors insist on partnerships because of their own national interests and hidden motives. It was considered to be problematic that it is the stronger and dominant partners who are the ones who eagerly insist on partnership and systematically push it onto the agenda.

The wide gap in resources and capacities creates inequality.

Fourthly, interviewees said that Africans found it hard to engage in dialogue, negotiations, and trade with Europeans, because of their own capacity constraints and weaker levels of political power.

There is mistrust about the motives and interests of the donors.

The interviewees, both from governments and from civil society, were surprisingly unanimous in their perception that there is as yet no partnership between Africa and

Europe. There seemed to be a distinct gap between their views and the opinions of the donors, who said that such a partnership is already in place.

Pessimism and frustration about the inequalities of status and capacities between Africa and Europe, between recipients and donors, were clearly articulated. There seemed, however, to be some degree of optimism at the same time as the feeling of disappointment. Interestingly, both feelings resonated even in the opinions of the very same individuals. There was a strong belief that nothing would inhibit Africa and Europe from entering into a good partnership if there was the political will, a realistic vision, and real commitment. It was said that there was no other choice but to address the current inequalities and gaps together.

Parallel feelings of pessimism and optimism were evident during the interviews.

The division into donors and recipients was still believed to be a fact of life, but it was envisaged that partnerships would evolve and become more comprehensive in the future. It was explained that there is already common ground and motivation to fight hunger, disease, and poverty. These kinds of mutual interests were said to bring countries closer together and increase integration. Reducing the aid dependency of African countries was thought to be in the interest of the whole international community.

Interviewees believed that a common interest in developing a partnership already exists.

Many of the interviewees observed that overall relations between South and North have improved in comparison with past decades. In some fields there seemed to be signs that a true partnership is evolving between Africa and Europe. Some of the donors were thanked for making a serious effort to advance development in Africa. Interviewees generally regarded relations with Europe as being very important for Africa.

It was said that achieving a real partnership between Europe and Africa would require major changes in attitudes as well as in human, financial and technical capacities. At the moment, ideas of partnership with Europe and the sense of ownership were said to be luxury for the Africans. These concepts were considered to be part of the rhetoric of international forums and conferences, but their implementation in real life was very difficult.

One interviewee said that it would be naive to expect a partnership between donors and recipients to evolve while enormous inequalities continue to exist. Some, however, had doubts as to whether donors would really be willing to support and practice actual partnerships with non-state actors.

- **Dialogue and decision-making**

Interviewees thought that partnerships are nurtured and developed through dialogue, but that the dialogue between Southern and Northern governments is often fragmentary, inadequate, or dominated by the donors.

They said that the political dialogue between donors and the African governments has improved, but the agenda is still set almost entirely by the donor community. They considered it to be difficult and almost impossible for aid recipients to introduce their own topics into the agenda. Donors seemed to come to Africa with their own priorities and to pay no attention to the local ones.

Political dialogue has improved, but donors still set the agenda.

Many interviewees were concerned by the quality of discussions, meetings, and conferences. It was said that some meetings are organised just “to have a discussion for the sake of discussion”. The question was raised as to why money earmarked for development is spent on big meetings where the countries cannot express their views frankly, when the same funds could be used instead to feed thousands of hungry children. The two worlds of meetings and poverty were seen as being far apart and it was not clear, whether there is any real linkage between high-level meetings and the welfare of people at the grassroots level.

The relevance of meetings about poverty eradication was questioned.

It was thought that a major problem for African countries is that they cannot discuss matters on an equal footing with donors and do not have the same right to critical opinions as donors. One of the interviewees said that African countries have to “beg for every step forward” with regard to the allocation of funds and the design of development projects. To be a recipient of aid and loans was a problem in itself, because “once you receive, you have to accept everything they say”. Views of this sort were voiced by several of the people interviewed for the study.

Some interviewees were afraid that donors might get angry or withdraw aid if the Africans spoke frankly in official meetings and bilateral negotiations. Others were convinced that there is often a hidden agenda lurking behind the discussions. Donors were thought to have their own preferences, as well as the economic and political power to promote their own interests and development theories. At times, these positions were seen to clash with the opinions of their counterparts in Africa.

Donors were perceived as having the power to advance their own theories and priorities.

It was said that donor countries dictate the policies and projects to be chosen when decisions are made about development assistance, and the developing countries have no other choice but to accept what is offered. In this respect donors just exhibited a “take-it-or-leave-it” attitude.

Some of the interviewees thought that developing countries sometimes feel obliged to follow a set formula during their negotiations with donors. They prolong the negotiations until it becomes clear that donors are not going to compromise any further. It was said that in fact many agreements are unilateral decisions, because developing countries only appear to be agreeing with the opinion of donors.

Developing countries adjust their positions when the donors stand firm.

Some decisions were called “ballroom agreements”, because developing countries have not agreed upon them voluntarily but as a result of persistence of the donors. One interviewee said that developing countries sometimes sign papers and agreements after negotiations even though they know that they will not be able to keep their part of the contract. African governments often leave a meeting without the feeling of ownership and commitment that is necessary to be able to fulfil the agreement. This raised the question of why donors “do not put their ears to the ground to find out why developing countries fail to keep an agreement”.

African countries sometimes feel pressure to make an agreement even though they lack commitment.

One interviewee said that even when developing countries fulfil the requirements of an agreement, they may do so mainly in order to satisfy the donors.

- **Development funding**

One of the findings of this study is that interviewees thought that the quantity of development assistance is neither the primary concern of partnership nor a condition of it.

In a couple of interviews it was stated that Africa’s development problems cannot be solved with money. It was said that millions can be poured into projects but the end

results may still remain unsatisfactory. Too many aid projects were said to be reaching completion without any sustainable results for the years to follow. One of the reasons for this was seen to be a lack of ownership, because the projects contain elements that have been imposed by donors.

An increase in development funds does not guarantee a solution for African development problems.

Aid dependency was identified as being one of the factors making for inequality between Africa and the West. Some interviewees emphasised that Africa does not like to live from handouts and that no nation has yet been developed through humanitarian and emergency assistance. It was thought that food aid to the Darfur region, for example, would do nothing to help to address the original development problems and the reasons for the conflict. There were even several suggestions that all aid should be stopped, because it creates biased structures and may encourage bad governance.

Aid dependency may generate bad governance.

Many interviewees had observed donors taking unilateral decisions about aid funds. According to one interviewee, a recipient country had sometimes been notified that its allocation of funds had been cancelled by just a simple letter, without any consultation or further explanation. This sort of unilateral action creates great practical problems, because the funds have already been taken into account in the recipient country's budget planning. Interviewees pointed out that looking for alternative funding sources is a difficult process.

Sudden favourable funding decisions by donors also caused problems. It was not unusual that a donor, for one reason or another, wanted to find ways to spend a specific amount of funds as quickly as possible. This sometimes appeared to mean that the donor transfers all the risk and responsibility for the expenditure of funds to the recipient, who then has to struggle to find a sustainable way to use new resources within a short period of time. It was frankly admitted that a poor country would find it very hard to decline to receive funds, even when the terms are unreasonable, but it was pointed out that such funding decisions can also create bad governance.

Some funding decisions are made without the donor taking any responsibility.

Interviewees asked donors to take a more holistic approach to aid. In one interview it was said that Africans appreciate external aid, but if it continues on a piecemeal

basis, it will not take development in Africa very far. Two specific points were made in this respect. Firstly, it was thought that mechanisms must be created in cooperation with the donors to ensure that funds are spent on feasible projects that really reach poor people. Secondly, donors were asked to invest in the transfer of technology to Africa. But it was also said that instead of high technology, Africans would appreciate receiving simple technologies which they could pass from one generation to another.

- **Conditionalities**

African governments seemed to accept their accountability to donors regarding the use of funds. Interviewees said that it is only fair to request performance reports from the recipients of aid.

One interviewee wanted to stress that donors themselves have a great responsibility to monitor how aid funds are spent in the field. Some of the interviewees, both representatives of governments and of civil society, called for donors to be even more firm about conditionalities and auditing reports. Hope was expressed that donors would become more involved in every phase of aid. In some cases, donors appeared to be “too lazy and understaffed” to oversee their own projects. This raised questions as to why donors at times just “give the money and walk away without any interest in following matters up”.

Donors were asked to monitor the use of aid funds more closely.

It can be concluded that reporting and accountability were not perceived as being conditionalities, but more as rules for fair play. Nor were they seen as jeopardising a country’s ownership of its development policies. Even though this study does not cover the implications of these findings in practice, it appears that African governments may find follow-up and accountability to be useful tools in meeting standards of governance.

Accountability can be an aspect of fairness in the rules of cooperation.

Some interviewees remarked on the strains involved and resources tied up in preparing multiple reports for different donors. Many of the technicalities and conditionalities that went beyond reporting were thought to be unnecessary, and it was said that requirements sometimes seem to change almost on a daily basis. Donors were said to go to extremes in some cases, with an insistent concern for technical details and deliberate fault-finding. This had been seen to harm cooperation and joint

decision-making. Interviewees wished that donors would understand that certain requirements that are taken for granted in Europe may be perceived completely differently in developing countries.

Donors sometimes impose trivial and unnecessary conditionalities.

Hopes were expressed that donors would recognise the internal dynamics of societies in developing countries, instead of making aid recipients “prisoners of trivial details”. One interviewee said that Africans are genuinely trying to upgrade their administration to meet international standards but the process takes time. Donors should not expect perfection from developing countries which, after all, do not have the same capacity as the donors. Another interviewee asked donors to be more logical with regard to technical conditionalities and to be willing to discuss all guidelines openly with the recipients.

There was concern that the time spent in talking about conditionalities may mean that funds are postponed for long periods. It must be borne in mind that aid delays result in increased human suffering, and even in the deaths of some of the poor.

- **Trade as an indicator of cooperation**

Trade was seen as being an important benchmark for testing how a partnership is evolving, and whether there is genuine interest in promoting equality, common interests and trust between Africans and Europeans. Unfair terms of trade were said to be an increasingly important issue in the relationship between Africa and the developed world.

The European Union has defined trade as being one of the six key priority areas for its development policy, and it has therefore integrated trade issues into country and regional strategy papers and increased trade-related assistance and capacity building.

**Some of the EU standards were believed to be genuine,
but others seemed to be discriminatory.**

Interviewees were concerned that the balance of trade is always heavily in favour of the developed world. The level of technology in Africa was said to be so poor that it is impossible for Africans to produce manufactured goods that could compete against the Western products. The EU’s technical and quality standards are also very strict and difficult to meet. Interviewees said that some of these European standards are genuine, whereas others seemed to be deliberately set to drive developing countries out of the markets. The EU was also criticised for “changing the rules of the game every year”.

Because the African economies rely strongly on agriculture, EU subsidies were seen as a critical issue. But one of the major topics raised in the interviews was the question of how African farmers could become aware of all the productions standards that apply to exports to EU markets. It was thought that only the big farmers are able to comply with the requirements for obtaining export certificates. Some interviewees called for more training and information for people working in the agricultural sector. One said that the EU had not responded to requests for technical help, but just ignored them.

The current negotiations between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) to create Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) raised a lot of comments.¹⁴

The EU was seen as benefiting from having a single team under the EU trade commissioner.

The EPA negotiations take place within six technical clusters dealt with by national negotiation teams. Although the EU has provided training for the clusters, interviewees said that developing countries still experience the problem of unequal capacity in negotiations for a number of reasons. African countries appeared to lack the knowledge required to negotiate technically demanding trade deals. The EU was seen to have an advantage in having a single commissioner and his technical staff concentrating on all aspects of negotiations, while developing countries have to divide their negotiation teams into different sub-groups from six different ministries. It was also said that in many African countries the trade minister has been appointed on the basis of political credentials and not on the basis of expertise or qualifications to deal with trade issues and negotiations.

Individual countries have had different time frames for preparing their national positions for EPA negotiations.

Some interviewees believed that developing countries can benefit from negotiating as part of broader sub-regional negotiation groups. It was thought that this makes it easier to face the EU representing 25 member states. Others had serious concerns that the African countries have not been able to carry out the necessary research and analysis to backup their own negotiation positions and were unprepared when the EPA

¹⁴ The ACP countries negotiate as sub-regional groups in talks that began in September 2002 with the aim of replacing the current non-reciprocal trade preferences by 2008. The new trade agreements need to be compatible with the requirements of the WTO.

negotiations started. One of the reasons for this was thought to be a lack of capacity to collect and analyse data on trade at the national level.

Another difficulty had been the fact that each developing country followed its own timetable in making national preparations. In East Africa, for instance, Kenya was ahead of its sub-regional negotiation partners. It had been difficult to set out a time frame within which individual ACP countries could come together in a sub-regional position when some countries seemed to need much more time than others to identify their national priorities for EPA negotiations.

The capacity of the private sector was also thought to be crucial in the field of trade negotiations. Hopes were expressed that business representatives would participate more and coordinate their own views in the negotiations and national strategies.

There were some worries over the still unknown impact of the EPAs on the national economies in Africa. Interviewees were afraid that African governments might lose much of their tariff revenues when the EPAs enter into force and sub-regional areas become free trade areas. There was concern that the EU would eventually gain more than Africa from the reciprocal trade arrangements.

Some interviewees emphasised the importance of the development aspects of the EPAs. There were hopes that the EU would give further assistance to building up the capacity of institutions and personnel. Another indication that Africa is not equal with the EU was seen in Africa's need to ask for technical assistance, and in the fact that the EU has the role of providing financial assistance for the whole EPA process from negotiations to preparations at the national level and the training of the trade officials in developing countries.

The question was raised as to whether the EU wants to give preference to the element of trade over the element of development.

**Aid programmes were criticised for adopting conventional solutions
and avoiding risk-taking.**

- **Development cooperation**

Some interviewees felt that donors at times lack a vision for development in Africa and are often driven by their own interests. Duplication of foreign aid programmes and lack of coordination among donors were also causes of concern. Many projects and decisions appeared to follow very conventional patterns. It was recommended that donors should be more proactive, flexible and open to risk-taking. The view was expressed that more attention should be paid to rural and community-based development and to capacity-building for local administration.

The relationship between donors and recipients was thought to be very superficial at the level of operations in the field, although there was a lot of communication between different officials. Donors always appeared to “do what they want”, and some interviewees had observed that the practical proposals put forward by recipient governments were not always considered seriously enough. They saw this as meaning that donors do not really see developing countries as development partners in the full meaning of a partnership.

One interviewee thought that diplomats from donor countries sometimes act like the media in looking for problems, crises, and negative news in order to have something exciting to report back to their capitals. The question was raised as to whether there was a good and fair balance of information in the donors’ reports, because these reports influence policies and aid decisions in the European capitals. The wish was expressed that diplomats would take a positive attitude towards African development in their reports. Donors were also advised to visit rural areas more often and observe poverty with their own eyes. Newcomers sometimes seemed to be very open-minded and easy to approach at first, but they then became more critical and difficult to work with after spending some months in a country.

The hesitation shown over direct budget support was mentioned as a typical case of mistrust between European and African countries. Some interviewees said that they fully understand donors’ hesitation because it will be impossible to report how the funds have been used. But direct budget support was also considered to have the potential to help African governments become stronger and more accountable.

Direct budget aid was seen as being a test of trust.

Some interviewees thought that the European Union is a difficult partner because it is inconsistent in its policies and interests. There were questions as to whether the EU itself is transparent regarding its motives, and whether it is really qualified to teach good governance to developing countries.

One interviewee commented that both donors and aid recipients are too often driven by their fear of failing to reach results in development.

Some of the interviewees were afraid that international assistance to the countries afflicted by the Asian tsunami catastrophe would be followed by compassion fatigue, which mean a further increase in the hunger and mute suffering of Africans. There were calls for a better balance in aid flows. Many interviewees also wanted to see more concrete plans for linking development cooperation with trade.

- **Ownership**

Interviewees thought that partnerships would help to develop a sense of ownership in countries receiving aid. It was said that a good partnership can produce new ideas and proposals that a recipient country can adopt and start to implement. Whether or not an idea is originally invented or proposed by a stronger partner was seen as a secondary matter, because the recipient country's ownership will be ensured when it has been sufficiently convinced to start to put the idea into practice. One interviewee thought that even policies could be imported to Africa if they became nationally "owned" and proved to be useful. (See Box 11.)

Similarly, it was believed to be possible to have different types of dialogue between donors and recipients, as long as final decisions are made together and in good understanding as to what is meant. Ownership was defined as meaning the possession of the ability, skill, authority and control required to take decisions. Some of the most critical cases regarding the sense of ownership were believed to be those in which donors insist on implementing a certain type of project even though the recipient is reluctant to launch it.

Ownership means having skills, authority and control with regard to decisions.

Many of the interviewees in Ethiopia and Kenya supported the idea of co-ownership with donors regarding the allocation and use of funds. In addition to being linked to financial decisions, ownership was also seen to be connected with the aid reporting systems. Interviewees suggested having just one standard reporting system, which a recipient government would be able to coordinate and so have the ownership of the overall process.

**Communities should understand projects and be committed to them,
even if they do not finance them.**

The hope was expressed that development cooperation would become more participatory, allowing people to prioritise their own programmes. It was said to be important for people in the developing countries to fully understand the projects that have an impact on their lives, even though they do not possess the financial resources for a project. An important aspect of ownership involves encouraging people at grassroots level to be better aware, informed and convinced about the policies in the development sector. This was said to be even more crucial when the projects are community-based and carried out in impoverished areas.

The sense of ownership was thought to depend to a great extent on the amount of trust a developing country has in its abilities to assess its needs and priorities in development. Donors seemed to forget social and cultural setbacks in Africa and often came to the continent with excessively far-reaching plans. African governments were said to have their own visions and particular practices for advancing development and in most cases lacked only the help needed to build up their capacity for implementation.

The interviewees were very familiar with the concept of ownership. But they thought it was mainly part of the formal language of political dialogue, with no relevance to the actual implementation in the field. It was said that the donors' own attitudes correspond poorly with their latest clichés expressed in the language of ownership. Developing countries were still thought to lack the necessary freedom from the ties and influence of former colonial countries and policies in Africa.

It was thought that Africans lack a sense of ownership of the MDGs.

International development targets and timetables were discussed in some interviews. The ownership of international targets, such as the UN's Millennium Development Goals, was seen to belong much more to the donor community than to developing countries. This was seen as being unfair, because the main responsibility for meeting the planned targets is borne by developing countries. One interviewee thought that the pace of development required to reach the targets was unrealistic and too fast for Africans. Another interviewee thought that the MDGs have fallen short of creating a common vision. Views were expressed to the effect that there is a lack of national ownership with regard to the MDGs.

Box 11.

African perspectives of ownership

In the interviews with representatives of African governments and civil society, four types of ownership were identified as being essential in policy debate, planning, operationalisation and implementation of development activities. Ownership was defined as meaning inclusiveness, capacity-building and shared rights and responsibilities.

Government ownership

The African governments' sense of ownership concerning their countries' development was considered to be an important starting point for dialogue and partnerships with donor governments and with the entire international community. The governments of developing countries should have access to the same information as the donor governments, and an equal voice in decisions taken internationally and through bilateral agreements.

National ownership

At the country level, ownership was seen to mean expanding dialogue and policies to include all stakeholders including organised and unorganised civil society, communities and ordinary people. It was said to be necessary that society as a whole should own the overall policy agenda and individual policies. This type of ownership would mean that people throughout the country were convinced, and committed to striving for development objectives that they had been able to define themselves.

Co-ownership

It was emphasised that all parties should have equal voices and equal accountability with regard to bilateral and multilateral negotiations and agreements, whether legal, financial, technical or trade-related. Some interviewees thought this kind of joint ownership to be the best way to deal with financial assistance. It was also seen to be essential for donors to be accountable and entitled to monitor the use of funds together with the recipients.

Grassroots ownership

In order to achieve sustainable results from development activities and from consultations and dialogue processes at the national level, the people at grassroots level throughout the country need to be invited to participate in designing initiatives and expressing opinions about development agenda. It was thought that this requires facilitation, empowerment and sensitivity to the capacity needs of communities, as well as efforts to bridge information gaps between the capital and other parts of the country.

Many interviewees brought up the issue of civil service capacity. External aid and development challenges were said to involve technical aspects that demand enhanced skills from the public servants who manage public affairs. It was believed that senior officials sometimes find it difficult to keep a position of leadership in their offices, because their staff do not always share their views.

Sometimes, ownership within a ministry belongs only to a minister and a limited number of senior officials. In the worst case a minister owns the policy, but the bureaucracy owns the programme.

Cooperation is based on having common visions.

Interviewees thought that the development of synergy and a common understanding throughout the civil service would give people the will to work towards the same goals. Cooperation would not improve by forcing people to do something. One interviewee called for increased transparency within the administration system to facilitate the flow of information and the sharing of views amongst public employees and also between the government and citizenry.

3.3 Ways of improving partnerships

The following ideas can be taken as conclusions drawn from the interviews in this study, and as recommendations for improving partnerships:

▶ **Need for Africans to become more active partners**

Some self-critical remarks were made in the interviews. It was emphasised that the Africans have to become more active partners and to consider amongst themselves what they can offer in a partnership. Interviewees thought that Africa should not only receive aid, but also give something back in their cooperation with donors. This notion seemed to cause frustration, however, because it was not yet clear what Africa's comparative advantage could be, or how Africa could increase its credibility as a partner to the rest of the world.

▶ **Dialogue about the characteristics of a partnership**

Today, all relationships and forms of cooperation are automatically called partnerships without there necessarily being any process to agree upon the characteristics of a good partnership. There should be a dialogue to agree about the main qualities of cooperation. African countries should have much more of a voice in formulating their partnership with donors, including decisions about what the partnership should mean in practice.

Some interviewees expressed the view that all talk about partnership is a waste of time, because success in a partnership is anyway hard to measure. Still, in the long run a good partnership could save resources by reducing confusion and making discussions about technicalities and agreements more open. For that reason, many interviewees recommended that time should be invested in defining the main terms of a partnership and agreeing on its common goals and visions, as well as on how failure and success are to be assessed, and on realistic expectations and evaluation methods for the partnership.

▶ **Improve the language of dialogue**

In future, the dialogue about partnership should address some specific topics more carefully.

The rhetoric about equality has been poorly argued and should be articulated in a different manner. Too much emphasis has been placed on the equality of partners in a partnership, without any discussion as to what this actually means and how it could be achieved. Western countries, in particular, emphasise in their statements that partnership is always a relationship between two equals. This type of a definition makes partnerships almost impossible to establish in the real world where there are differences in capacity, financial resources and political leverage. It is necessary to discuss how equality between partners can be ensured even when the disparity in capacity and resources remains.

The language of dialogue needs to be changed so that it emphasises equality as one of the goals of a partnership, not as a prerequisite. There should be more careful definition of the meaning of equal status and the ways of achieving it through cooperation.

It seemed to the interviewees that the rhetoric of partnership has been mainly developed and “owned” by the donors, and it is they who have been more eager to have partnerships with developing countries. This has probably been because the donor countries have had to upgrade perceptions of developing countries and raise public awareness of global problems.

▶ **Increasing respect and trust**

Specific concrete actions are required to protect and foster partnership, and to increase respect and trust between the partners. African representatives who were interviewed also wanted to see more consistency and continuity in the policies of donors, both bilateral and multilateral. They wished to improve the transparency of negotiating positions, motives and project planning. Trust would be increased if the rules of cooperation were clear, fair and jointly agreed. The interviews indicated that increasing respect and trust would also assist in making partners feel that they have an equal status in partnership.

▶ **Third party mediation**

An evaluation and analysis carried out by a third party could assist in launching a partnership, or in upgrading a partnership to the next level. An independent mediator could also play a role in facilitating treatment of a specific topic as part of a broader dialogue. It was thought to be extremely important that such a mediator should not be biased and neither be dominated nor sidelined by the strong and powerful partners.

Alternatively, partners could consider nominating a spokesperson for each of them, who would specialise in collecting and presenting their views, including critiques concerning technical and substantive issues in the partnership.

▶ **Create benchmarks**

A partnership culminates in concrete results, such as the transfer of technology, and trade and aid decisions. The path towards achieving the goals of a partnership could be marked and measured by small milestones that the partners choose together. Partnership seemed to be easier at the project level, where it is more concrete and has a limited scope of time and tasks. It appeared to be a more difficult matter in the field of political dialogue.

▶ **Regular evaluation of partnerships**

Partnerships should be evaluated regularly, and a mid-term review was not considered to be enough with regard to projects. It was proposed that project management should include a mechanism for evaluating the nature of the partnership during the process, not just the technical and substantive results defined in the project document. There should also be a process for assessing the partnership component of the links between governments in Africa and Europe.

▶ **Benefit from inequality**

Some interviewees thought that the best partnerships are those created between partners who have very different skills and capacities. It was believed that a partnership between two entities of equal size and strength can be the most difficult one to develop, and it often creates unhealthy competition. It was recommended that partnership should actively aim to benefit from inequality.

▶ **Avoid making partnership a conditionality**

It can be concluded from the interviews that partnership between African and European governments is seen as becoming a conditionality and something imposed by the stronger partner. This is a worrisome trend, which should be halted. It appeared that partnership would only be achieved if it is perceived as a process in which partners actively, deliberately, and gradually build up understanding and equality, and learn to tolerate each others' differences and criticisms.

▶ **Avoid unilateral measures**

It seemed that unilateral measures have created a pattern that should be changed.

Interviewees expressed disappointment over donors taking measures unilaterally, without any explanation, consultation or discussion. Such action indicates that no partnership exists. It was considered important that partners always engage in a dialogue before any major decisions are taken. A meeting should be held if there are any problems. In several interviews the wish was expressed that partners should always "sit down together and take decisions jointly."

Some donors equally remarked that developing countries also take unilateral measures without informing or discussing matters with the donor community.

▶ **Upgrading community experiences**

It was suggested that some simple lessons and models of partnerships from the grassroots level could be adapted to benefit partnerships between governments. This kind of "bottom-up" approach could help to make inter-governmental relations more sustainable in several respects.

In the first place, successful partnerships between community workers and the people were said to start from breaking down the traditional donor-recipient framework. It was said that community workers are often considered to be “saviours” in the villages. Old people had even been seen to kneel down in front of them. In such situations, communication between community workers and the people was not open and natural, because the community tried above all to please the workers and gain approval for future projects. It was thought to be most important that community workers should make special efforts to change this pattern and begin to create real partnerships with the people.

Secondly, interviewees felt it important to realise that each partner has some skills, resources, and knowledge, which the others do not have. Poor people and their communities possess considerable amounts of knowledge relevant to their livelihoods, development, and survival. This fact is often neglected when the community workers bypass the indigenous community’s knowledge and bring in their own values and information.

A community’s informal institutions are a source of innovation and solidarity.

Thirdly, villages and urban communities have informal institutions for solving problems, settling disputes and maintaining solidarity. In disputes, for example, people have their own roles as community members, creating an informal system of people depending on each other. Helping neighbours benefits not only individuals but the entire community. In these informal institutions, the resources and options at the disposal of the community are identified through discussion. The degree of innovation and applicability of solutions can be extremely high, whereas any solutions imported from outside often seemed to be of just one type and are usually based on money and spending outside resources. Interviewees said that it is important to look for assistance primarily from the internal resources actually available.

External aid is secondary to community knowledge.

Fourthly, partnerships in communities were observed to be horizontal, all members being at the same level, and this was recommended as the best format for all partnerships. Such an approach was said to be based on the principle that nobody is doomed to underdevelopment and marginalisation, but everyone has some capital for the whole of society and for the partnership.

It was concluded that in some cases external financial and technical assistance is necessary and part of the solution. But external aid should not be provided at the

expense of communities turning away from their indigenous knowledge, structures and ways of solving problems to satisfy their needs. Community projects need to aim to avoid situations which lead to communities undermining and wasting their own resources.

▶ **More bilateral and small-group meetings**

The building up of a partnership should be made into a deliberate process, and this may be easier to achieve through bilateral cooperation or within small groups of countries. But partnership between governments should not only be developed in closed meetings and at the expense of excluding other stakeholders. It was said that a forum for formal political dialogue is quite different from a forum for informal discussions and consultations.

▶ **Focus on small-scale partnerships**

There was a general perception in the interviews that partnerships between governments had started to dominate the debate, both bilaterally and multilaterally. It seemed that small-scale partnerships are often undermined. It was recommended that activities should focus more on partnerships with other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. The wish was expressed that partnerships would be also be encouraged at the grassroots level and, for example, used to address the issues of different social groups.

▶ **Support for private sector initiatives**

One of the conclusions to be drawn from the interviews is that the private sector in Africa needs more support, for example through chambers of commerce and microfinance institutions. Strengthening the private sector could have an impact on governance at the country level and on the sense of local ownership, as well as linking development and trade issues together.

▶ **Gradually improve government-NGO partnerships**

It was acknowledged that it is important to bridge the gap between governments and NGOs. For that purpose research should be carried out into the issues of accountability and governance on both sides. There was some hope that donors would become less prejudiced in listening to developing countries' problems regarding the NGO sector, and not automatically take the whole of civil society to represent principles of human rights and democracy.

► **Coordination among NGOs**

The lack of coordination among NGOs was seen as being a serious problem, and making it more difficult for local governments to establish partnerships with them. Many interviewees were worried that large areas of the countryside have been almost completely neglected, because NGOs concentrate their work on the national capital and the most accessible and economically strongest regions in a country. Better coordination and governance among local and foreign NGOs is required to avoid duplication of work and the sidelining of some rural areas.

► **Keep the focus on the partnership goals**

It needs to be remembered that partnerships are instruments for achieving better results in development cooperation and developing peaceful reciprocal relations. It should be understood that partnerships are also expressions of the will to try to do things better, and this must be allowed to evolve at its own pace. The equal status of partners should be the aim of the partnership, not a criterion to evaluate whether or not a partnership is in being.

Both good governance and functional partnerships are regarded as important goals of development in their own right. They are also considered to be necessary in building favourable environment and productive overall framework for development. In the Finnish development assistance, governance and partnerships are significant principles in the White Paper on Development Policy.

This study aims to improve understanding of conceptual and operational aspects of governance and partnerships. The perspective is that of development aid recipients in Eastern Africa. The main focus was to listen and collect views and opinions of representatives of Ethiopian and Kenyan governments and of civil society. The civil servants who were interviewed worked in six different ministries: foreign affairs, finance, water, trade, education and justice. The civil society interviewees came from non-governmental organizations and professional associations, chambers of commerce, and academia. One-third of the interviewed were employees of intergovernmental organisations and the European Union. During the study a total of 76 people were interviewed in Ethiopia and Kenya.

The study presents definitions on governance and partnerships. It also includes ideas and thoughts on how those could be promoted by development aid programmes at the national, regional and international levels.



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