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Issues of Civil Society Development in South Africa

Santosh Kumar Singh

Civil society is an important aspect of the democratisation process because it provides a pivotal link between citizens and the state. It also provides an environment that can be used to enhance community cohesion and democratic decision-making. Information is essential to civic participation and also encourages development (Arko-cobbah, 2006, p.353). In this regard, it is important to identify and evaluate the civil society role and development in newly born democratic countries.

Civil society has a deep root in South Africa. During the apartheid era, it performed the significant role to protect the liberty, freedom and justice for the citizens. It has also played a major role during apartheid period and an important post-apartheid period to establish the democracy. The civil society has played an anchoring role in establishment of the constitutional democracy in post-apartheid South Africa. During 1990-1994 period, the civil society organisations actively participated in the building of democracy through legitimate transition, rights, freedom and liberty to the citizens. The CSOs have done a nationwide consultation on the issue of housing, primary health care, labour, women, and youth (Konstantinos, 2008).

In the contemporary period, commentators of a broad ideological spectrum both in South Africa and globally, consider the development of an autonomous civil society critical to the successful implantation of democracy, especially in developing countries (Glaser, 1997). Moreover, since post-apartheid South Africa has experienced quite active numbers of CSOs especially in the areas of formulation and adoption of policies in a range of different fields such as development, fight against poverty, unemployment, women's issues and HIV/AIDS (Konstantinos, 2008, p.1). However, while working at grassroots level and functioning, some of the CSOs deal with issues and challenges in a diverse field.

The paper begins with some brief and general comments about the recent rise to prominence of the concept of civil society, as both an analytical construct and as a policy tool. This paper examines the issues of civil society development in post-apartheid South Africa. Since 1994, South Africa has witnessed some major problems like service delivery, corruption, disease, unemployment, etc.

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