

Panos London

Case Study:

Advocacy for Reporting on Trade issues

BCO meeting Feb 2007

Backstory

- Trade openness is required background to poverty strategies – though many see open competition as unfair, damaging livelihoods of poor
- International trade is key for national economic strategies and performance
- Trade areas currently in debate - agriculture, services - are key for livelihoods and well-being of poor
- Challenges to legitimacy of WTO - lack of participation, “democratic deficit”, weak public support for reforms etc
- Developing country participation in WTO negotiations weak
- Understanding of international trade issues within countries – very low.

Backstory *cont*

- PRSPs project: media engaging public and governments in understanding, debate and monitoring
- 7 southern journalists supported (financial, editorial) for G8, 2005
- 13 southern journalists supported for WTO meeting in Hong Kong, Dec 2005. Produced 26 international print stories, and stories for their own media
- Training workshop for African journalists, Lusaka, May 2006, produced in-country stories on Zambia coffee exports
- Five more international features when Doha round collapsed in July (coffee, tobacco, cotton, northern issues re reform)
- *Trading Places* microsite
- Panos briefings for media on poverty reduction and trade issues
- Feedback from journalists: increased standing, contacts and sources; govts providing more info

WTO grasps the role of media: Public forum, Sept 2006

- Panos organised a panel session at the WTO public forum – 70 participants inc head of WTO media relations division
- Three African journalists (Kenya, Uganda, Zambia) spoke (and filed stories home) (and linked with ICTSD and IATP)
- Debate on importance of, and challenges for, media
- Session will be fully covered in forum report
- Request from UNCTAD for articles in International Trade Forum magazine, by PL and Kenyan journalist John Kamau

Implications for Panos

Successful support to good journalism, but raises questions:

Focus on few journalists, or broader reach, for sustainable results?

Resource intensive support – how to assess its cost-effectiveness?

Good journalism is one element in the discourse needed. Does it work on its own, or do we also need to work for open government, active CSOs, community-focused media?

Successful advocacy for the role of media in democratising trade issues – but how can we assess long-term impact?

Implications for sector

- “Media support” is gaining strength (UK White Paper, WB, GFMD, etc all recognise role of free media in democracy and governance) but often overlooks challenges of strengthening content
- Training journalists is not enough: support to produce good content requires more
- Problem of stressed media in commercial market: how much room is there for serious content? Free media are not automatically or inevitably guardians of democracy.....

Relevance for BCO

- “Deepening democracy” = deeper understanding and debate of issues at policy and expert level, as well as broader reach of participation in simpler issues
- Strengthening Voice on trade policy issues – facilitated by raising awareness and opening up for debate
- Focus is on building capacity of media as institutions (more difficult but more sustainable results than using media as channels for messages)

CSOs as communication intermediaries:
Panos learning project

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Context

- Panos works mainly with traditional mass media (print and radio)
- To fulfil our mission of “Voice” and “Debate” we may need to consider other, more direct communication channels

Hypothesis

- A one-off community discussion may not turn into action
- But the involvement of a CSO can do that
- CSO can channel information up and down, and facilitate debate/action

Hypothesis (2)

- Panos does not sufficiently recognise this role of CSOs: some of our community level work is mining, does not empower people; the information via media lacks specific action focus....
- The impact of Panos projects could be strengthened by building in partnerships with existing CSOs

Hypothesis (3)

There might be interest from development and C4D organisations in some articulation/analysis of this topic.

Activities (2007)

- Survey panos theory and practice
- Literature review
- Gather info – policies, good practice etc – from both development and ICD organisations
- New theory and practice guidelines for Panos
- Possibly, a publication