

Speech of Mr. France Mutombo Tshimuanga, founder of Foundation for Africa, Budapest.
Africa Forum June 7 2013



Excellencies! Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen! Today, I think, if I'm not dreaming, I would say that we are assisting in a miracle! As many of us have dreamed about this day. Myself, as one representative of the active NGOs, I can bear testimony that so many civilians, NGOs and other organisations worked to push government and economic actors to open towards Africa with concrete steps and actions. All my gratitude to the Hungarian government, organisers and sponsors who enabled us to have this day. I think that this is just the beginning. I hope we will be able to assist to more miracles in the future.

Excellencies! Distinguished Guest! Ladies and Gentlemen! The title of my presentation is „The role of NGOs as a living link in development and economic cooperation towards Africa”.

Q: Why NGOs are like a living link?

All role players, stakeholders, actors, beneficiary in this cooperation chain represent a link. Some links doesn't have a long life. Some of them are just for short term, some of them became dead link, but NGOs link is still a living link! **How?**

Let us get a historical overview.

We know that several hundred years ago, even nowadays European civilians, researchers, explorers, missionaries, businessmen, and laymen launched expeditions and activities to Africa. Some of them were regrouping in formal and non formal organisations that we call today NGOs. Their experiences, actions and results had multiplier effects and great outputs concerning different areas of life, on their countries of origin, in all Europe of course, and in the entire world as well.

David Livingstone

Allow me to mention one of my favorite ideal and example of great historic personality: **David Livingstone, who as an iconic person incorporates the „living link” idea, what I call for myself the “Livingstone strategy and effect” in development and economic cooperation of Africa.**

Q. What does “Livingstone strategy” and its effect mean?

David Livingstone was a doctor, an explorer, a missionary, and a researcher at the same time. His motto was: „Christianity, commerce and civilization.” The last word we call today development. He was a link between all stakeholders even in Africa, in Europe, in the above mentioned areas. His experiences, research outcomes and the exploration of Africa at this time, was not only useful in education, health development, and evangelism of course, but the British Government also used them in the colonisation process. He raised attention and awareness of many stakeholders towards Africa.

Hungarian context: Let turn to the Hungarian context! In the last 23 years we assisted to a drastic disparate, decreasing the official relationship between Hungary and African countries. Thanks God, that time NGOs, formal and non formal civil society organisations, like African student organisations, churches, and individuals were still active in the matter of Africa, while the Hungarian Government and economic actors were cutting down relationship links with African countries. These organisations were active, implemented activities in Hungary and Africa as well. They're still the „ Living link”. Some of them promoted Africa issues, advocated in behalf of Africa, raised awareness, and implemented projects.

Let me mention some of them:

-1st Africa Day Celebration in Hungary was launched by civilians after diplomats took the organisation role.

- We could assist in the creation of some strong NGOs and umbrella NGOs, like Hungarian Africa Platform, Foundation for Africa that I am representing, the HAND Africa Working Group, and Africa Research Center in Pécs.

- Nowadays these initiatives become more and more successful.

- NGOs contributed a lot in the organisation of *this* forum as well.

- A considerable **Africa development strategy recommendations** document was edited by NGOs last year. The document met the government's expectations.

Excellencies! Distinguished Guests! Ladies and Gentlemen!

Q. Why we are here together? What should this forum bring to us?

The first and important thing is to recognize that it's high time to bring a paradigm shift into our cooperation with Africa. Nowadays things are going faster than ever. We do not live in the age of David Livingstone. We should realise that to be successful in Africa we need collaboration with all stakeholders, and in the process NGOs must play an evidently important role.

- We are here to help the restitution the Hungary-Africa relationship
- We are here to recognise the meaningful role and importance of all actors
- We are here together to show up the capacity of the Hungarian stakeholders
- We are here to find out how can different sectors complete each others' efforts for an effective cooperation. Don't forget the "Livingstone strategy and effect"! It can be used also today.
- All Hungarian NGOs, we are ready to bring our field experiences, know hows, relations as an added value to facilitate and contribute to the success of your activities.

Q. Why is NGOs role still important in this process?

1. NGOs are the "living links" according to statistics in the Africa strategy recommendations. 26,6% of the asked people had relationship with Africa through NGOs (here I mean humanitarian, development and cultural NGOs), 30% through academic and science organisations, 19% through economic organisations, 15% through government relations and at least almost 4% through churches, and 4% through cultural organisations. (Recourse: Morenth Péter-Taróssy István: Stratégiai ajánlások 2011)

Most of the cultural organisations, churches, and academic-science organisations could be counted into the non-governmental organisation category. From this point of view NGOs rate increase up to 66%.

2. SWOT Analysis: If I use the SWOT analysis methodology, the following comments could be added to the characteristic features of the Hungarian NGOs. Our weakness is also our strength.

- Strengths: Low costs, ambitious, motivated, accepted by the population = Big impact
- Weaknesses: Lack of grassroots, small or lack of government assistance = Worth achievements
- Opportunities: Without border, every actors, stakeholders = Like this forum
- Threats: Different opinions from others actors = More human than lucrative

3. More aspects that make NGOs important in the cooperation.

- We have direct contact with local communities
- Genuine information from the source
- Field knowledge and experiences
- NGOs can be pioneers in the development, and involve other stakeholders. How can this happen?

Let me finish my presentation with a very concrete example and best practice.

In 2002 we founded FFA as an NGO to help Africa development. We began to mend Congolese children by supporting their education, finding long term, regular sponsors from Hungary through cultural and public awareness programs. This was the **1st living link between our NGO and the local community in HU and DRC.**

In 2005 we could build a new school in Kinshasa for around 100 000 USD, in the project we involved some companies as sponsors. This was the **2nd living link between NGO and business companies.**

- For example Korax solar panel company donated solar supply of 10 000 USD, in return we made a promotion for their solar panel in DRC at our school opening.
- Korax got some orders from DRC to export some panel solar to the country.

Several projects of our mission are covered by the Hungarian media, and supported by some Hungarian celebrities (Gabi Jakupcsek, Éva Barbás, Robert Karasz etc.). The media doesn't only promote our programs but all Africa issues. This is the **3rd living link between NGO and media**. The **4th living link is when Hungarian and Congolese authorities begin to pay attention to our work**. Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports us not only morally but also financially. For me it's a great opportunity to express here my gratitude for the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as we could take part in a tender and won 10 million HUF for the construction of our school in DRC. Excellencies! Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen! Brothers and Sisters from Africa! Brothers and Sisters from Hungary! This is what I call "living link" or "Livingstone effect".

Conclusion

The more active NGOs we have, the more links in cooperation come into existence. To get this we need a paradigm shift, the continuous change of ideas and conceptions. Nowadays there are more than 30 NGOs working directly and indirectly towards Africa. NGOs are not enemies, nor competitors for each other. NGOs are added value to your work. THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!