

THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM

AT

**THE 10TH LOCAL RESOURCE MOBILIZATION WORKSHOP
FOR EASTERN AFRICA**

WHITE SANDS HOTEL
DAR ES SALAAM
1ST DECEMBER 2003

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Chairperson,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today having been invited to make the opening remarks at your workshop which aims at "Diversifying Funding Sources." Resource mobilisation by civil society organisations is a crucial issue for us in Tanzania, as it is for other countries our continent I want to suggest three reasons why I believe it is a crucial issue.

The first of these is the obvious one, the economic imperative whereby civil society organisations need resources to be able to carry out their work. Today, we are witnessing more and more non-profit organisations out there, soliciting for funds, and many of them doing so with increasing professionalism. But, international aid is not growing at the same rate. Indeed, in many places we are seeing it shrinking. Moreover, the world of aid policy has been changing. Those who provide aid are increasingly looking for impact through strategic programmes managed with national governments. The old days when funding for a wide array of 'projects' was encouraged have passed as Donors have questioned the impact of this approach.

Many international NGOs, such as Green Peace, Care, Red Cross, World Vision and Oxfam, to mention a few, have also increasingly narrowed their focus

in pursuit of strategic goals – usually aligned with the Millennium Development Goals. Research and advocacy takes up larger and larger amounts of their budgets and grants to local NGOs have to fall into line with the NGOs priorities. Some international NGOs have also adopted a deliberate strategy of fundraising in the South, or at least of requiring affiliate bodies to raise more of their funding locally.

On top of this, the current economic climate has hit the budgets of foundations like Ford, Kellogg, Mac Arthur, Mott, eBay, and Levi's. Low stock market values means low or even negative returns on investments. While the big foundations plan to some extent for the lean years by building reserves, there is a limit to how long they can sustain historical levels of grant making in the current climate.

The result of all of this is that today in Africa we can no longer rely on grants from international funders as the sole funding source. Yet many African NGOs do just that – they are 100% dependent on international grant making bodies. Not only does this mean that funding is precarious, it also means that incomes can fluctuate from year to year and the mission of local NGOs become distorted as they adapt to following the donors' wishes and interests. This dependency syndrome propels some local NGOs to "dance to the piper's tune." Core costs can be hard to fund.

Amid these turbulences and imponderables in resource mobilization, there are positive signs too. Many of the NGOs are responding to these pressures by trying to develop other sources of income. Recent research in Tanzania, which is being presented at this workshop, shows that amongst the 26 organisations studied, the proportion of income coming from local sources was growing. Income earned through fees and commercial activity, and donations from

individuals were the most important sources. These are trends which should be documented and publicised to encourage others.

The second reason why I believe resource mobilisation is important is because it is about legitimacy and influence. If you believe that in order to solve our social and environmental problems we need to go beyond simply providing assistance. If you believe that wider social change is needed, then the question of who we are and who we represent becomes important. Winning support for our cause from the broader public within our countries enhances our authority and credibility as advocates for change. The more you can demonstrate that your concerns are the concerns of the wider society, the more influence you will have with the media, with officials and politicians and with donors. Developing a base of support from local people and businesses is a very powerful way of demonstrating the relevance of your work. Explaining what you do to the wider society, and persuading people to support you with time and money acts as an important 'accountability' mechanism. It will ensure you are doing work which is needed and it will gain you a hearing with those in positions of influence.

The third reason why we should care about resource mobilization is the most important one. It relates to the fundamentals of what fundraising is all about. Fundraising is about a lot more than money. Obviously, money does come into it but money is the end result of a process which is fundamentally about persuading people to share your vision of a better world. It is about connecting with that spark which exists in each one of us – whether you call this hope, humanity or conscience it doesn't matter – it's there. Every one of us has the ability to empathise with others, and most people when they see that something is wrong, want to do something about it.

As organisations which are confronting social and environmental problems, you potentially offer people a solution. They may not be able to solve all the problems that they are aware of, but at least they can help with some of them – by supporting your work. This is your contribution to them, and it is of immense value. You have the opportunity to help people realise their dreams, through them helping you to realise yours. You can give them a sense of purpose.

When we think of fundraising or resource mobilisation we sometimes think of 'begging'. Many NGOs feel they have to beg donors for funds. But if we see our work as inspiring others, as selling a vision, an idea, then we don't have to feel apologetic about this. We should be proud to be asking because the cause we represent is justified and something we can be proud about. Asking should be positive and confident not a supplication.

Gaining support of course brings with it responsibilities and obligations. The supporter is not simply a donor, but a person moved to share in the dream of a better world for our planet and its people. As such, you need to treat them with respect. Thank them, involve them, make them feel part of what you are doing. Invite their participation in other ways, not just giving money. Many can help you cut costs through their volunteer labour, others will have ideas you will benefit from. Be honest with them – share the challenges as well as the successes. We are not in the business of selling soap powder – we are dealing with something far more important. People don't 'buy' social causes the way they 'buy' a sack of maize or a bag of rice. You are appealing to people at a deeper level – perhaps the deepest level.

People give to people – not to abstract causes. You have to be able to bring the issue down to the human level – how does it affect people. We have

our own deep traditions of philanthropy in Africa, but most of this was directed at family members including the extended family members in need, or the destitute in the local neighbourhood. NGOs need to work harder to command public trust – because they are often remote, don't communicate well and are not transparent. This is not true of all of you – learn from those who have succeeded.

When you think about your organisation, your cause, think about that idea you want people to have of you – focus on solutions as well as needs. Empathy and hope will build long-term support. These are the fundamentals of great fundraising – the compelling cause, powerfully expressed, and a call to action which can be seen will undoubtedly make a difference.

I said this is about touching the spark of humanity in people – and that is where I want to conclude. I don't believe we can solve the problems of our world without people getting involved. Each and every one of us in this workshop room, through the promotion of the causes we work for has the opportunity to touch more of those sparks in people.

If you can touch people's hearts, if you can make them see the issue, and empathise with the people involved, and if you can persuade them they can be part of the solution you light a spark.

I am confident that throughout your three days work in this Workshop you will get to acquaint yourselves with the state of the Civil Society in Eastern Africa. You will dialogue on the basic definitions of local resource mobilization at any setting and focus on challenges that face a local NGO doing local Resource Mobilization. You will also share among yourselves various methodologies of building the capacity of local NGOs to raise local resources.

Keynote Address By Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim
At the 10th Local Resource Mobilization Workshop

I wish you all the best in your deliberations in the coming days. I sincerely hope you will use this workshop as a learning environment, sharing experiences and above all learn the much-needed skills in resource mobilisation. Through this, I hope you will be able to diversify your sources of funding for the sustainability of your organisations.

I hereby declare this workshop officially open.