



***CIVIL SOCIETY, PHILANTHROPY AND
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:
PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING THE
COMMON GOOD***

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SYMPOSIUM OVERVIEW

Most people think of society as made up of two sectors, a public sector or government and a for-profit sector or business. Yet in all societies, whether democratic or authoritarian, whether developed, developing or transitional, there is a cluster of institutions that are neither public nor for-profit. It is only in the last 40 years that we have begun to think of these institutions as a third sector. At first we described them by what they were not: non-government or not-for-profit institutions. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the term most often employed to describe the sector these institutions belong to is civil society. The institutions of civil society at times collaborate with the institutions of the other two sectors and at times place themselves in an adversarial position regarding the other two sectors. Philanthropy, both individual and organized, works through the institutions of civil society and resources a significant portion of their revenues. But in addition to their instrumental role of providing services, these institutions play a generic role as Fifth Estate making it more difficult to concentrate and abuse power.

This symposium will review the scope and activities of civil society in a global context. It will delineate what the elements of an enabling environment for civil society are and where the threats to it exist. The symposium will concentrate on the philanthropic slice of civil society, both individual and organized. It will explore some of the issues facing philanthropy and how some of the new forms of philanthropy are dealing with these issues. Finally, the symposium will ask where philanthropy is in facing the big issues of our time such as climate change, poverty alleviation, and human rights. How best can philanthropy position itself to work with the other two sectors to promote development and build a social compact that reflects the common good?