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The Rise and Fall of the Civil Societies: Why the Push for the Right to Development in Kenya Is in Limbo

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THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CIVIL SOCIETIES: WHY THE PUSH FOR RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA IS IN LIMBO

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Sub-Theme: Inclusive Development

Abstract

Before the end of cold war in the 1990s Kenya's civil society was one of the most vibrant in the region. The civil society comprised of the students and university staff intelligentsia, the religious body, and the local non-governmental organizations. From the heydays of political protests and activism of the 90s, a lot of change has taken place. First, this period saw the re-introduction of multiparty politics, lobbying for defense for human rights and several other numerous political transitions. However, since the promulgation of Kenya's new constitution in 2010, the place of civil society organisations has been bogged down by numerous challenges, hampering its reasons for existence. In Kenya, like in other developing countries, the role of civil society is crucial in the quest for social justice, transparency and accountability and most importantly, push for the right to development for all (D4A). Civil society activism has often provided an objective voice to temper political extremism and demand for development. Today the civil society movement has experienced a collapse of representativeness, the rise of dogmatism and sectarianism, and the glorification of violence as a means of social change and political rhetoric. This has significantly affected the agenda of the right to development especially to the marginalized communities. This paper attempts to show how human rights defenders coming from the civil society championed for development and social change in Kenya in the 1990s and reasons they have declined in public affairs in contemporary times leading to underdevelopment in Kenya.

Key Words: *Decline, Civil Society, Human Rights, Under-development in Kenya*

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Ogeto Patrick Michael is a Kenyan human rights activist, researcher and a community development expert. As a human rights activist, Ogeto has had hands-on experience in championing for the rights of marginalized communities, orphans and vulnerable children and youth Kenya.

As a community development expert, he is a member of the board of trustees for a local development organization which supports more than 400 civil society organizations to achieve their mandate.

As a researcher, he is interested in examining a history of human rights violations and crimes against humanity in Kenya well as the efforts by successive presidential regimes to address the question of transitional justice to victims of historical injustices. He is the Programs coordinator for Pacha Research Centre. Ogeto is a PhD Student at both Laikipia University (PhD History) and at the University of Cape Town (PhD African Studies). He holds a Master of Arts in History.