

## Philisiwe Mazibuko of the Right2Know Campaign on 'NGOs and Ngo-ization'

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One of the ideas behind having non-governmental organisations (NGOs) was born out of the government's failure to keep its promises and satisfy the needs of communities and country. What NGOs were meant to be were places where basic services could be met that wouldn't otherwise be met by government.

Over the years NGOs have been in existence issues and problems have increased giving rise to new NGO's to now tackle those, in the same breath some older NGOs have lost their relevance in current society. Some NGOs begin with good intentions but as funding started flowing in, funders begin to control the agenda which at times differs with what the people on the ground need that organisation to do for them, rendering them useless to that community.

NGO-ization is where organisations lose themselves in the quest to become the best in the business or steadily reach accreditation as a game changer of an NGO. What happens though is that they lose contact with their original supporters and have to ask the question: "How do we work so well to build movements and run campaigns and in a matter of months all that work can be undone"? "Where did we go wrong"?

When NGOs are bitten by the NGO-ization bug outside influences have the opportunity to get in and shape the narrative of the organisation, thus changing the order of the day and the outcome of the work. In all this there is a growing circle of people who make it their job to keep their organisations in check and remain true to their own mission statements and visions for the organisation. This is challenging though: often posing the question about poor management or maladministration of finances for example, will result in responses such as: "we have our people working on internal processes"; "all is well, the hearing will determine the outcome" and most famous of all is when the organisation publically distances itself from a specific member who is accused or found to be defaulting on those values. In my view there's somewhat a crisis because when it comes to NGO internal governance "Nothing is Going On".

NGOs are an important part of our society in keeping government in check and bridging the gap between government and their services and departments, such a useful mechanism needs to be preserved and nurtured to suit times and needs without losing its purpose and mission. An end to NGO-ization and 'Nothing Going On' is needed before it's too late. I think a couple of things should be considered here: the first is that people could work more closely together rather than separately forming organisations – we can shape and mould each other to achieve our overall cause. Second, there needs to be open conversations about curbing NGO-ization and organisational transparency.

**\*All views are author's own.**