



2019

Guiding Principles for Sida's Engagement with and Support to Civil Society

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FOREWORD

These guiding principles aim at assisting staff at Sida and Swedish missions abroad to engage with and support civil society in more aid and development effective ways. We also hope that they can serve as a source of inspiration for other development partners.

The guiding principles address topics such as overall design of civil society portfolios, selection of partners and funding modalities, methods to follow up support to civil society organisations (CSOs) and how to engage in donor-CSO dialogues. They intend to facilitate the planning, implementing, and follow-up of Swedish development cooperation strategies within a context of shrinking civil society space. The guiding principles can also offer a bridge between Sweden's Aid Policy Framework and Sida's system for management of individual contributions.

The guiding principles were developed through a consultative process including representatives from civil society, Sida and other donors. They were drafted by Sida's then Senior Policy Specialist on Civil Society, Karin Fällman, in cooperation with colleagues at Sida.

The principles constitute an effort to systematize and make more effective the Civil Society Unit's advisory services. They are also part of this unit's assignment to guide Sida towards a more effective cooperation with civil society per the Director General's management response to a review of civil society support modalities at Sida and Swedish missions abroad.¹ The guidance is grounded in the needs identified in the review and requests for advisory support from the Civil Society Unit. It is an attempt to answer the questions most frequently asked, based on good practice, and Sida's interpretation of what constitutes aid and development effective engagement with and support to civil society. The guiding principles were pre-launched in September 2017. Subsequently they were piloted and revised based on feedback from staff of several Swedish missions abroad and units at head office. Thanks to feedback by staff members, the principles were supplemented with real life examples illustrating each principle, and a one page version to facilitate internal and external communication.

As directors with primary responsibility for this guidance, we look forward to constructive cooperation with regards to the implementation and refinement of the guiding principles. We hope that together, we can make our engagement with and support to civil society more effective and relevant.

Alan AtKisson
Assistant Director General
Director, Department for
Partnership and Innovation, Sida

Charlotta Norrby
Head of Civil Society Unit,
Sida

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sweden recognizes the vital contribution of civil society in the areas of sustainable development, human rights, policy making, and social services. Sweden is therefore committed to creating an enabling environment for civil society, fostering a vibrant and pluralistic civil society, and supporting civil society as an integrated part of support toward other development objectives. Consequently, a substantial part of Swedish aid is implemented in cooperation with civil society organisations (CSOs).²

While CSOs are widely recognized as important and independent development actors in their own right, the global landscape is changing, and a variety of CSO-related challenges can be identified in the following areas, in particular with regards to shrinking civic space:

- CSO to state relationships
- Donor CSO support
- CSO governance and sustainability
- New civic activism and alternative forms of organisation

In response, Sida's Civil Society Unit has developed a guidance to assist Sida staff to engage with and support civil society. It attempts to answer the questions most frequently asked about cooperation with civil society. The guidance is based on good practice and Sida's interpretation of effective partnerships with civil society. It centres on the following five guiding principles:

1. Sida should explore the various roles of civil society within their context
2. Sida should strive to support civil society in its own right
3. Sida should provide aid and development effective support to civil society partners
4. Sida should support civil society partners' efforts to strengthen their own development effectiveness, including their transparency and accountability
5. Sida should engage in continuous dialogue with civil society

This guidance explains the rationale behind each principle and how to put them into action within Swedish development cooperation.

BACKGROUND

Sida's Engagement with and Support to Civil Society

Civil society plays a vital role in sustainable development, enabling people to claim their human rights, promoting human rights-based approaches, shaping policies, and providing social services.³ A substantial part of Swedish aid is therefore implemented in cooperation with civil society: the last few years around 40 per cent of Sida's budget was channelled to or through CSOs, according to Sida's annual reports.⁴ Sida provides support to civil society both with the stand-alone objective of strengthening a pluralistic, independent and human rights-based civil society and as an integrated part of support toward other development objectives.

In addition, Sida and the Swedish missions abroad engage in dialogue with and support other actors, especially partner country governments, to promote an enabling environment for civil society.

Framing the Guiding Principles

Sweden's policies for and practice in engaging with civil society are part and parcel of the enabling environment for civil society.⁵ The concept of a CSO enabling environment includes four elements:

1. conducive legal and regulatory framework
2. space for civil society to engage in multi-stakeholder policy processes
3. donor support to and engagement with civil society
4. CSO development effectiveness, including accountability and transparency⁶

For the first element, it is vital to remain consistent with agreed international human rights standards and principles, and with international principles protecting civil society. Of particular importance are the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression; the right to operate free from unwarranted state interference; the right to communicate and cooperate; the right to seek and secure funding; and the state's duty to protect.⁷

Sida also considers the second element, the presence of systematic and inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue fora, as a critical component of the enabling environment. This element has become increasingly important, with development actors committing to "democratic ownership" in the aid and development effectiveness agenda and to inclusion and participation in multi-stakeholder partnerships in the 2030 Agenda.⁸

These two elements of the enabling environment are frequently referred to as civic or democratic space.⁹ Donors have an important role to play at all levels in improving the legal and regulatory environment for CSOs and the space to engage in policy dialogue (*e.g.* providing support to regulatory bodies, supporting an independent media and access to information, and promoting multi-stakeholder dialogues).¹⁰ Sida works with the entire chain of actors and institutions to promote democratic space: both rights holders – people and their representatives in civil society and political parties – and duty bearers – state institutions and actors. How Sida can work more effectively to counteract the shrinking democratic space with duty bearers and other actors who influence civil society space is elaborated on in a Sida report to the Government of Sweden in March 2017. The response to this report will complement the guiding principles.

The focus of the guiding principles and its methodological framework is the cooperation with civil society. Donors' engagement with and support to civil society is the third element of the enabling environment. Given the influence that donors are able to exert on individual CSOs and the civil society sector as a whole donor behaviour is an important component of the enabling environment.

The fourth element, CSO development effectiveness, concerns what the CSOs themselves can do to enhance their effectiveness, accountability and transparency. Although CSO development effectiveness is the responsibility of CSOs, donors usually require and also fund CSO actions in this regard. Thus, it is part of donors' cooperation with civil society. For that reason, recommendations on how Sida can support CSO development effectiveness is also included in this guidance.

It is worth noting that the inter-related nature of the four elements of a CSO enabling environment means that the guiding principles may directly or indirectly affect any one of them. This is for example the case with regard to CSO development effectiveness, where the level of transparency and accountability within civil society can influence legal and regulatory environments and policy space.

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Over the past decade, contrasting developments have taken place. CSOs are now widely recognized as development actors in their own right, with a crucial role in reducing poverty and a particular importance and potential to contribute to democratic development and increased respect for human rights.¹¹ CSOs stand out for their capacity to reach out to, empower, represent, and defend people living in vulnerable situations, and to trigger social innovation. For these reasons, governments in several countries have strengthened their engagement with CSOs.

Civil society to state relationships

The relationship between states and CSOs can be delicate however. Many countries still have a limited tradition of dialogue and cooperation, and far too often, the space for civil society remains narrow or is shrinking. In recent years, there has been a drastic worldwide increase in the number of government restrictions on civil society, as well as threats to and harassment of civil society activists. Restrictions go far beyond limiting space to influence policy (a seat at the table) in that they cut deeply into the political space to organize, to operate, to have a legitimate voice, to protest and to dissent. This entails that *political* society, particularly political parties and party activists in opposition to their governments, are affected as much as *civil* society.

According to a range of knowledge producers civic and political space is shrinking. Autocratization is manifesting in a number of large countries including Brazil, India, Russia, Turkey, and the United States. It affects one third of the world's population – some 2.5 billion people, according to Varieties of Democracy, a global research program¹². Freedom House notes more than a decade of net declines in political rights and civil liberties in countries worldwide¹³. CIVICUS in turn, reports more than a hundred countries characterized by closed, repressed or obstructed civic space, and notes that only around 4 per cent of the global population living in completely open civic spaces.¹⁴ CSOs focused on human rights and advocacy – including women's organisations – are particularly affected by the shrinking available space. Even service delivery CSOs in a growing number of countries face difficulties in carrying out their work and securing funding.¹⁵

Donors' CSO support

Donors' CSO financial support models and broader engagement with civil society also help to determine the environment that affects CSOs' ability to contribute to development. Evidence shows that donors face challenges in navigating and understanding the complex world of civil society and in reaching out to relevant actors. In particular, donors have difficulties reaching civil society at the grassroots level and liaising with or supporting some of the civil society change agents, such as informal social movements and social or not-for-profit enterprises. Donors also face challenges in balancing their respect for the independence of CSOs as development actors in their own right with the conditions they attach to funding.¹⁶ CSO partners to Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors have experienced problems with donor conditionality and inflexibility, as well as a lack of clear donor policies and opportunities for meaningful dialogue.¹⁷ Last but not least, the administrative costs linked to donors' funding requirements tend to be high – for donors and CSOs alike.

CSO governance and sustainability

CSOs acknowledge that they may also face challenges of representativeness, transparency, internal governance and capacity, dependency on international donors, and competition over resources. CSOs' desire to be more predictable, transparent, accountable, and driven by results is behind the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness.¹⁸ This aid- and development-effectiveness agenda drawn up by and for CSOs is a welcome contribution, and is recognized by the international community through the Busan Partnership Agreement and subsequent commitments out of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC)¹⁹. In addition to the Istanbul Principles, interesting initiatives have emerged on both global and national levels, like the Global Standard for CSO Accountability and national-level codes of conduct.²⁰ In the GPEDC monitoring framework, CSO development effectiveness is now seen as the fourth element of a CSO enabling environment.

New civic activism and alternative forms of organisation

Another relevant development within civil society that adds to the complexity of civil society's role in sustainable development and CSO support is the recent rise of more fluid forms of citizen and youth action. These social and cultural movements encompass a more active citizenship with potential to contribute to democratic deepening – but with clear shortcomings as well. In addition to the challenge they present with their fluid organisational forms and accountability, they are often sceptical of the traditional NGO community and can often hold donor funding to be part and parcel of what they are mobilizing against. Moreover, some of these social and cultural movements are neither internally democratic nor pro-democracy. The space and opportunities opened up by digital technology, the internet, and social media are playing a substantial role in driving this change towards more fluid forms of citizen action.²¹ CSOs and donors can take advantage of the opportunities presented by the new civic activism but in so doing they need to be cognisant of the downsides of these protest movements.

Another emerging alternative that is increasingly popular is the social economy organisation, a hybrid entity that aims to increase social inclusion and reduce inequalities while simultaneously creating economic value. These organisations, such as different types of cooperatives, associations, foundations and social enterprises (which are businesses of various legal forms using an entrepreneurial approach in order to respond to an increasing number of social and environmental challenges) are developing at a fast pace around the world. They are increasingly common within development cooperation, but they blur the lines between non-profit and for-profit organisations and thus need to be carefully understood.²²



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SIDA'S RESPONSE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH AND SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY

Sida is finding ways of pushing back against the new inappropriate restrictions being placed on civil society. At the same time, Sida must make sure its own support to civil society does not contribute to the shrinking of space; rather, Sida should support civil society as an independent development actor in its own right. Sida should assist civil society, including in its alternative forms, to be effective and make full use of its potential to contribute to inclusive and sustainable development.

1. Sida should explore the various roles of civil society within their context
2. Sida should strive to support civil society in its own right
3. Sida should provide aid and development effective support to civil society partners
4. Sida should support civil society partners' efforts to strengthen their own development effectiveness, including their transparency and accountability
5. Sida should engage in continuous dialogue with civil society

To make this happen, Sida puts forward the following five guiding principles:

1. Sida should explore the various roles of civil society within their context

Why is this principle important?

A clear, transparent policy that outlines the purpose of supporting civil society and sets out operational objectives helps contribute to predictable, relevant, and effective support and partnerships.²³ Swedish support to civil society is justified in the Aid Policy Framework decided on by the Government of Sweden, and includes:

- developing a democratic culture and enhancing social inclusion, particularly by building more connected communities (this is both a crucial component of societal wellbeing and an outcome with intrinsic merit)
- contributing as change agents to development or humanitarian outcomes by stimulating public debate; supporting citizens to make governments more effective and accountable; and promoting democratic processes, accountability, and good governance
- contributing directly as development or humanitarian actors to development or humanitarian outcomes, for example, by delivering services.

Sida expects that civil society will play one or more of these roles, depending on the context and the develop-

ment cooperation strategy in question. Evaluations of civil society support often identify tension between these different roles²⁴, though at the same time, favouring one role over others can contribute to negative perspectives of civil society's legitimacy and value-added. For example, supporting only the democracy role may contribute to the "foreign agents" accusation. Supporting only the service delivery role may contribute to perceptions that civil society is undermining government service provision or that it takes pressure off the government to perform its role as a duty bearer.

Each role has different implications for the appropriate type of funding support and success measurement. It is therefore important to develop a locally-adapted theory of change for civil society support at the strategy level.

How does Sida put this principle into action?

► Conducting power analyses

To develop a locally-adapted theory of change (ToC) and deep enough knowledge to operationalize and make use of the ToC, Sida staff needs to know the drivers – and resisters – of change in the country or context in question as well as structural conditions and power dynamics in which they act or are restrained.

Power analysis considers the social, economic and political dimensions of power and how they are interrelated. It examines actors, structures, institutions and norms – from the visible and formal to the invisible and informal. However, the focus of a particular power analysis exercise can vary depending on the context, issue or purpose.

The first step is to identify existing knowledge (academic research, national statistics, reports by think tanks, narratives of people's lived-realities, etc.) and any remaining gaps. The second step is to subsequently carry out a power analysis, including an actor's analysis, to fill those gaps and analyse existing knowledge through a power lens. At Sida, this is usually done as part of the preparatory work ahead of a new development cooperation strategy but could also be done at other occasions.

Power analysis, in Sida's view, is a learning process that supports staff, partners and other actors to understand the forms of power that reinforce poverty and marginalisation, and to identify the positive kinds of power that can be mobilised to fight poverty and inequality.

The analysis should among other things clarify the links between (1) support to civil society, democracy, and good governance and (2) pro-poor development. It should also identify civic actors with potential to deliver pro-poor outcomes. Consequently, it is important to analyse the representativeness and legitimacy of potential civil society partners and the extent to which they share the objectives and perspectives of Sweden's policy for global development and international development cooperation.

The power analysis should also set the level of expectation as to what is realistic and achievable through support to civil society. It should be carried out in close collaboration with a range of relevant CSOs and preferably also with other donors, if possible.²⁵ The EU initiative of country roadmaps is an attempt to conduct such joint analyses as a basis for donor coordination of CSO support at the country level.²⁶ Sida's guide includes ideas, recommendations and practical steps, which you can use selectively. More guidance was provided by OECD/DAC/Governance Network which compiled lessons learned on political economy analyses in 2005.²⁷

► **Drafting an intervention logic for the engagement with- and support to civil society**

Next, the theory of change for Sida's civil society support should include an intervention logic that identifies the goal of each scheme, how it will achieve that goal, and how its success will be measured. Key terms, objectives, goals, and principles should all be included, as well as different cooperation modalities for supporting and engaging with civil society.

► **Engaging stakeholders**

A theory of change that is broadly owned by all stakeholders will be more effective than one that is drafted by just one or more donors. Therefore, a locally adapted theory of change for civil society support should ideally be designed in close consultation with CSOs, from the inception to the finalisation of collaboration. Umbrella CSO bodies can play a role in facilitating such consultations. There is also merit in outreach to different levels of government to gather their perspectives on the emerging theory of change and its subsequent management and continuous adaptation.

► **Choosing partners to meet objectives**

Civil society partners should be selected on the basis of their capability to meet the objectives of the Swedish development cooperation strategies, and the extent to which their vision and mission coincide with the strategy's because this maximizes the chances of achieving results.

However, choosing partners to meet objectives can be challenging. Sida may have to find new civil society partners and build trust with them while long-standing partnerships may need to be transformed. To ensure that Sida chooses the most suitable and relevant partners – rather than defaulting to the most familiar – sufficient funding for human resources, time, and research is important.

► **Conducting regular reviews**

Regular reviews of country context and theory of change (including its management and continuous adaptation) are necessary to help Sida and CSOs to ensure that their support to civil society remains relevant and effective. The reviews should clarify which changes CSOs might be able to influence, which are beyond their sphere of influence, and whether their assumptions are still valid.

The mid-term reviews of the Swedish development cooperation strategies present an opportunity to update the analysis and the theory of change/change management. However, with the rapid changes taking place in the environment that affects civil society, and the equally rapid changes within civil society itself, updates should ideally be carried out more frequently.

“With a new bottom-up and collective approach towards results both Sida and our partners have gotten a clearer understanding of the emerging context, theory of change and joint results and impact in different areas.”

Anette Widholm-Bolme, formerly program manager of the Embassy of Sweden in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Read more about this example at Annex, p. 28.

2. Sida should strive to support civil society in its own right

Why is this principle important?

Despite many donors' commitments to a vibrant and robust pluralistic and independent civil society in developing countries (*e.g.* by developing capacity through partnerships), most fund CSOs to primarily deliver development outcomes, often outcomes defined by the donors themselves (*e.g.* to reach sector/theme-specific objectives). Support is provided predominantly through donor country CSOs, with requirements for these organisations to partner with CSOs in recipient countries.²⁸ Many CSOs rebalance their organisations to match donors' oft-shifting priorities in competition with each other for funding. According to the OECD, donors should strive to strike a balance between working towards their own policy goals

and respecting the independent role of CSOs – between supporting CSOs to deliver development results and supporting an independent, diverse civil society as an objective in itself.²⁹

Sida wants to take this ambition further and strive to support civil society in its own right, that is, support a pluralistic and rights-based civil society as an objective in itself in addition to supporting individual CSOs with respect for their independence and right of initiative. The rationale behind supporting civil society as an objective in itself derives from the understanding that a strong, independent civil society is an essential part of a democratic society, and is key to inclusive and sustainable development. This belief is manifested in the Aid Policy Framework and in the previous Swedish Government policy “Pluralism – Policy for Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries within Swedish International Development Cooperation”. Civil society can provide services and give a voice to people who are poor and marginalized, and it can balance and monitor the powers of the public and private sectors. Using CSOs as “implementing organisations” alone will not achieve this, but rather create a plethora of consultancy-oriented CSOs bidding for projects with agendas set by donors. This can undermine the credibility of CSOs, shift their accountability from their constituencies towards the donors, make it difficult for CSOs to engage in longer-term planning, and fuel claims by opponents that certain CSOs are mere donor agents.³⁰

How does Sida put this principle into action?

► Applying a whole-of-agency approach

Strengthening a pluralistic civil society in developing countries requires action that goes beyond funding or capacity development of individual CSOs, towards supporting the civil society sector systemically. What it requires is for a donor to take a strategic “big picture” and “whole-of-agency” approach to civil society where decisions about civil society engagement are made having taken into consideration the implications for individual CSOs and for the sector as a whole, and for their respective abilities to act as effective agents of change.³¹ For example, when designing CSO support at the country-level, funding to individual organisations delivering sector- or theme-specific results can be accompanied by funding to a program with the broader objective to foster a pluralistic and human rights-based civil society.

► Supporting a variety of CSOs working with poverty eradication from a human rights based approach

There is a common misunderstanding that maintaining the objective of promoting a vital and pluralistic society justifies the funding of any civil society actor for any kind of activity, such as civil society actors fighting *against* sexual and reproductive health rights. This is not the case. First and foremost, for Sida, the primary potential CSO partners would be those that focus on opportunities for people living in poverty and under oppression to improve their living conditions and do so based on the perspectives of people living in poverty and a human rights based approach.³² Second, when working towards this objective, the aim is to strengthen civil society: that is, to focus on capacity development.³³ Support is meant to improve the capability of CSOs to contribute to sustainable development, as many collective voices, and as providers of services. Thus support will be provided for both the organizational development of the partner CSO itself, and for activities where the partner CSO develops the capacity of rights holders and accompanies them as they engage in advocacy and assists them to improve their living conditions.³⁴

► Coordinating with other donors for larger outreach

Even with the above criteria applied, there will be many more CSOs in need of support than a single donor can fund. This is why donor coordination is extraordinarily important in pursuit of a pluralistic civil society. Therefore, a power analysis is important as it can contribute to guiding donors in finding the most relevant and effective ways to divide up labour and to support a variety of development actors. As mentioned previously, the EU initiative of country roadmaps is an attempt to facilitate such coordination. Other examples include the EU joint programming and the growing number of multi-donor civil society support programs that are found at country-level.

“Our relations have developed into true partnerships, a ‘win-win’ balance between supporting civil society in its own right and achieving our strategic objectives.”

Louise Bermsjö, program manager of the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi. Read more about this example at Annex, p. 30.

3. Sida should provide aid and development effective support to civil society partners

Why is this principle important?

Donors like Sida exert significant influence on the shape of civil societies in developing countries and on CSO effectiveness through the terms and conditions of donors' support and the strategic choices they make in favour of specific CSOs, CSO networks, or umbrella organisations.

On the political level, most donors have committed to strive for aid and development effective support to civil society, respecting the principles of ownership, alignment, coordination and harmonization, mutual accountability, and appropriate management for results. However, reviews of the aid and development effectiveness agenda in practice show a countertrend: rather than creating an enabling environment for civil society with more aid effective support models and respect for CSO independence and "right of initiative", donors have increased the number of administrative requirements for civil society partners and tightened the focus on short-term and tangible results.³⁵ Sida is often referred to by CSOs as an exception, but also Sida need to be wary of the requirements placed on civil society partners.

Therefore, when designing civil society support at the level of Sida and Swedish missions abroad, Sida should strive to use more coordinated and harmonized support mechanisms that strengthen CSO ownership and development effectiveness.³⁶

How does Sida put this principle into action?

a. Providing flexible and responsive funding to support a variety of civil society actors

First, as mentioned previously, to work in line with aid and development effectiveness commitments, Sida should consider the overall strengthening of civil society at the country, regional, and international level as an objective worth supporting in its own right. Working towards such an objective strengthens civil society independence and CSO ownership significantly. Reaching out to a pluralistic civil society usually requires the donor to provide flexible funding.

The non-formal and spontaneous forms of organization, facilitated by social media and mobile communications, often bypass formal CSOs and present a challenge to donors. Studies on CSO policy engagement suggest that new forms of social mobilization require a readiness on

the part of donors to support more fluid forms of civil society association, unconventional civic alliances, and processes of change rather than individual CSOs. Accordingly, there is need for responsive funding to support informal, temporary coalitions; networks of small, local issue-based groups; and "tipping point" moments that occur during policy influencing processes.³⁷

There are various ways in which Sida can include more responsive funding in the civil society portfolios. The initiative *Doing Development Differently* offers an interesting suggestion towards more adaptive funding, using rapid cycles of planning, action, reflection and revision (drawing on local knowledge, feedback and energy) and managing risks by making 'small bets', where activities with promise are pursued and others are dropped.³⁸ *Thinking and Working Politically* is another initiative underway within the international development community which advocates for fundamental changes to the way development assistance is conceived and implemented. The aim is to help better understand how to translate the evidence that political factors are usually much more important in determining developmental impact than the scale of aid funding or the technical quality of programming *into operationally relevant guidance*. Political engagement is seen as an iterative and adaptive approach that is relevant programmatically, and for broader development policy objectives. This network was initiated in November 2013, by a group of senior officials from major donors, along with leading practitioners and researchers, and now run a bi-monthly newsletter and a website, produce new case studies and synthesis reports, support new working groups, and organise workshops in partnership with members³⁹

Responsive funding could also include providing services in activities such as project management and information for advocacy, resource centres/libraries, or establishing platforms for interaction and cooperation. The latter is becoming increasingly popular as a means of developing the capacity of the civil society sector as a whole and of fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships, both within civil society and between civil society and other sectors.⁴⁰

Last but not least, flexible funding could also include core funding to smaller CSOs, traditional forms of civic association and new, emerging civic actors. Indeed, core funding has proven to be a modality that offers much-welcomed flexibility for the recipient CSO.⁴¹

► Favours core funding

In the interest of flexibility and more importantly, of respecting CSO independence and ownership over pro-

gramming, donors like Sida should also consider the degree to which they steer CSOs by earmarking funds in pursuit of their own specific objectives. In recent years, DAC members have tended to use project or programme support to CSOs that have specific comparative advantages in a certain sector, or that have close links with rights-holders. This puts Southern CSOs at a disadvantage, in that shorter-term funding linked to specific activities does not enable them to invest in their own organizational development and sustainability.⁴² The purest form of un-earmarked funding is core and institutional support, which allows CSOs to pursue their own set priorities and plans, and to implement the strategies and approaches they themselves have defined, in a predictable manner. This form of funding is therefore also most effective in facilitating CSO programming in ways that align with and are owned by their partners and constituents.⁴³

There is also strong evidence to suggest that unrestricted core funding is the most appropriate modality to strengthen organizational systems and processes, provide flexibility to respond to unforeseen events, fund “hard-to-fund” areas of work or geographic regions, invest in innovation, and promote sector networking and sector-wide

learning among other things. Moreover, literature presents a strong message from CSOs that they prefer core, unrestricted funding under almost all circumstances.⁴⁴ For these reasons, core funding is the preferred funding modality at Sida.

b. Taking calculated risks

When supporting civil society, especially in times of shrinking civic space and a new civic activism, donors like Sida need to be prepared to take risks, both financially and in relation to the expected results. This applies when supporting civil society as an objective in itself and when funding CSOs for development outcomes (especially in the area of human rights and democracy). For example, informal social movements and nascent organisations may not have the capacity to provide financial accounting at the level of more established and experienced CSO partners, and targeted human rights actors may be unable to reach the projected outcome because of legal restrictions or threats and harassments.

Sida is breaking ground in the area of effective financial risk-taking with a pilot project testing a number of risk-sharing methods, such as providing guarantees.⁴⁵ Other



Photo: Ylva Sahstrand/Sida

risk-management measures worth exploring are risk-sharing between donors, particularly between official donors and philanthropists. The latter can often take higher risks because they are using private funds.

Another way of managing risks could be to work with financially robust and established CSOs, administering funds for informal or weak CSOs, while developing their capacities. It is important in such cases to avoid pushing informal civil society actors into the blueprint of a formal, fund managing CSO. Donors can mitigate the risk of expected results not being achieved by applying more flexible results frameworks (this is described in more detail below in the paragraph about “management for results”).

c. Preferring direct grant-making to calls for proposals

Another important consideration when supporting civil society support is whether funding should be provided through targeted or competitive approaches, that is, through direct granting or calls for proposals. With the latter, there is often the risk of: professional and already well-funded CSOs winning further grants; of CSOs aligning with donor priorities rather than the other way around; and of CSOs competing rather than cooperating with each other. Therefore, funding support should preferably be granted through contribution systems, where Sida identifies relevant partners for possible cooperation. Such identifications take place within the frame of analyses described in the first guiding principle. Calls for proposals should only be favoured where the services of CSOs (or other actors) are sought to implement donor-defined programs.

► Carefully selecting the intermediary organisations when working with indirect funding

Working with differentiated support to a variety of civil society actors –including weak partners – puts demands on human resources. This is one of the reasons why donors promoting a pluralistic civil society often support civil society via sub-granting intermediaries. The resource-saving argument is also valid for support to CSOs that aim to deliver specific development outcomes, at least where reaching the objective requires support to weak and/or numerous CSOs. Other advantages of the intermediary model include capacity development and the strengthening of partnerships and advocacy. These benefits are commonly referred to as the primary reasons for supporting civil societies in developing countries through CSO intermediaries. There are also risks to account for when working via such intermediaries, like

the creation of power imbalances within civil society and high transactions costs because of several links in the chain of funding.

The many advantages of working via intermediaries make it by far the most common modality for donors’ CSO support. The intermediaries most frequently used by bilateral donors like Sida are donor domestic or international CSOs and multilateral organisations, like the UN.⁴⁶ However, which organisation or entity that is best suited to act as intermediary depends on the context. For example, in one context, international CSO intermediaries may offer protection to developing country partners at risk, and the advocacy support they provide and the international attention they attract can contribute to positive changes, or at least, to the situation not worsening in-country. In another context, or for other targeted CSOs, the affiliation with international CSOs may increase the risk for partners and make them vulnerable to accusations of being “foreign agents” and/or being alienated from their constituencies and target groups in-country. For this reason, it is important that the selection of intermediaries is based on a thorough context analysis, with participation of developing country CSOs, and that both risks and possible advantages of the different intermediaries are accounted for.

CSOs and multilaterals naturally make a mark on the programmes they work with, so it can be best for donors to support more than one programme in the interest of pluralism as a basis for cooperation. When working via intermediaries it is also advisable to pay extra careful attention to the dialogue with CSOs to avoid the risk of reducing dialogue opportunities between back-donors and end-recipient CSOs. This is particularly important in the developing country context.

A relatively new and increasingly popular way of working directly towards the objective of a pluralistic civil society is through *multi-donor civil society funds at the country level*. These funds are usually set up by donors in close cooperation with the CSOs they target, and frequently the aim is for them eventually to become independent from donors and/or owned by these same CSOs. In the interim, they are generally managed by CSOs and multilaterals and sometimes by consultancy companies. Multi-donor civil society funds have the potential to provide extensive outreach, but should be used carefully to avoid the risk of being supply- rather than demand-driven as well as the risk of reducing dialogue opportunities between donors and CSOs.⁴⁷

A less common modality is to *work via developing country CSOs*.⁴⁸ There is a growing demand on donors to provide a larger share of their funding directly to CSOs in developing countries. Since many southern CSOs now have the capacity and the aspiration to be sub-granting entities, this is likely to become a more frequently used model for supporting civil society in developing countries. Studies have also shown that southern CSOs are popular intermediaries among end-recipient CSOs⁴⁹, though again issues of power imbalance and perceptions of lack of neutrality can arise.

► **Supporting developing country CSOs directly**

Another way of strengthening CSO ownership and working towards the objective of a pluralistic and human rights-based civil society is to provide more direct support to developing country CSOs. Current data indicates that donors continue to prefer to work with their domestic CSOs, with requirements for these organisations to partner and develop capacity with developing country CSOs, or with international CSOs. In Sida's case, direct support to CSOs in developing countries⁵⁰ was 7 per cent of disbursements to and through civil society in 2017, compared to 11 per cent in 2015.⁵¹ As mentioned previously however, there is a growing demand for the provision of more direct funding to developing country CSOs.⁵² Joint funding through country-level intermediaries has offered a partial solution for many donors seeking to support developing country CSOs more (if not entirely) directly, but such joint funding is not without its disadvantages, some of which have been previously noted.⁵³

This development is one of the reasons behind the current rethinking and re-organization of many Northern and international CSOs in decentralizing their operations.⁵⁴ However, as donors and CSOs review the relative advantages of direct and indirect funding to developing country CSOs, it is important to avoid undermining inter-CSO relationships or creating unnecessary competition.

► **Coordinating and harmonizing with other donors**

Donors and their CSO partners share the desire to coordinate their support and harmonize their procedures to reduce transaction costs. In the 12 lessons from DAC Peer Reviews, the OECD argues that donors need to develop “strategic, clear, flexible and harmonized approaches for funding and reporting systems ... to make them more strategic, streamlined and flexible.”⁵⁵ Such approaches make it easier for CSOs to manage support from several donors and lessen their administrative burden.

When coordinating and harmonizing CSO support, however, donors must avoid the risk of harmonizing in favour of the lowest common denominator: that is, the donor with the most rigid requirements.⁵⁶ Moreover, it is important that donor coordination and harmonization do not lead to a streamlining of CSO operations; respect should be maintained for CSO ownership, diversity, and innovation. Sida is already often at the fore front of donor coordination, but at the global and country-level. A good practice example that Sida should strive to follow and that can inspire coordination at country-level is the Sida-led *Code of Practice on harmonization of donors' requirements for CSO funding*.⁵⁷

► **Managing for results with appropriate frameworks**

Donors and CSOs also share a common interest in management for results to effectively demonstrate and communicate issues for which civil society support works well. However, they may be less in agreement over what kind of results are expected, and how and to whom they should be communicated. The types of monitoring and reporting systems considered appropriate for civil society support can have a powerful influence on the nature of civil society partnerships. To ensure a mutually beneficial, effective partnership, Sida and the CSO partners need to have a shared understanding of and commitment to⁵⁸:

- the theory of change – that is, the purpose of funding support and the changes it is designed to bring about, as well as appropriate ways of managing, assessing, adapting and communicating these changes over time
- an outcome/impact assessment framework appropriate to the types of programmes supported and the size and nature of the CSO
- systems and processes conducive to ongoing learning and improvement

If the purpose of a partnership is to deliver a specific programme corresponding to Sida's priorities, it makes sense for results frameworks to be clearly defined in advance. If the partnership is geared to support a CSO in its role as an agent of social and institutional change, or to strengthen civil society as an objective in itself, a more iterative approach to results based-management is required.⁵⁹ In such cases, indicators that are qualitative or that assess processes can be more appropriate.⁶⁰ Another option can be to allow flexible indicators or work with a basket of complementary indicators. Such approach has been suggested for adaptive programming, where activities and outputs change over the life of a program.⁶¹ It may also be relevant when working according to the manifesto *Doing Development Differently*, mentioned previously as

a possible model for flexible and responsible funding, or inspired by the knowledge produced by the *Thinking and Working Politically* initiative, mentioned previously.⁶²

Similarly, when supporting civil society engagement in policy processes, or strengthening civil society at large, results frameworks should focus on qualitative results over the medium to long term and consider the added value of the CSO partner's contribution. When expectations are unrealistic in terms of results, CSOs might feel under pressure to invent artificial results, to focus on delivering outputs that are easily measurable, and to keep any challenges they are facing hidden – especially if they risk having their funding cut off. Such an approach also distracts from learning objectives.⁶³ There are examples of instructive, learning-centred approaches to results management and evaluation designs that are underpinned by different logics. These approaches assume that the changes democracy assistance actors seek are political, complex, unpredictable and difficult to assess and measure. The examples collected by International IDEA are all flexible approaches to results management and evaluation with a view to support local ownership and mutual learning.⁶⁴

Finally, results reporting should not only serve to account for results but also facilitate knowledge sharing between CSOs and donors. Reports including information that can be useful for programme design and management are most useful when there are systems in place, such as policy dialogue, and tools that may be used for sharing and applying any learning.

► **Conducting evaluations for learning or accountability**

All donors conduct evaluations of programmes and projects run by the CSOs they support. In line with the *DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*, the specific focus of and approach taken in an evaluation should be chosen based on what is best suited to meeting learning or accountability needs. In the 12 lessons from DAC Peer Reviews, the DAC argues that donors need to move away from “automatic” evaluations of their support to and through CSOs (particularly those that involve high transaction costs for donors and CSOs), and their focus more on financial compliance than on learning about what works, why, and in what context.

Donors like Sida are recommended to collaborate closely with CSOs in selecting evaluation topics and setting an evaluation agenda to identify needs that may be addressed through evaluation. Routine evaluations should be

avoided, and it is important to have a flexible approach to evaluation, adapting the evaluation to the needs, setting, and programmes at hand. According to the OECD, this approach will lead to more useful and instructive evaluations.⁶⁵

“Thanks to our core support the Sarajevo Open Center could seize emerging political and legislative opportunities and actually succeeded in shifting norms with regards to LGBTI issues.”

Pia Hallonsten, then program manager of the Embassy of Sweden in Sarajevo. Read more about this example at Annex, p. 33.

4. Sida should support civil society partners' efforts to strengthen their own development effectiveness, including their transparency and accountability

Why is this principle important?

Ensuring CSO development effectiveness is a critical component of development effectiveness. Success in the pursuit of CSO effectiveness and accountability may not only help to prevent donor and government efforts to over-regulate civil society, but may also strengthen the social support needed to sustain civil society in the long term.⁶⁶

CSOs are addressing internal challenges and making progress in awareness and capacity development toward implementation of the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness,⁶⁷ and CSO-led accountability mechanisms continue to emerge at global and country levels.⁶⁸ Yet, demands for CSO accountability and transparency are still heard, while development cooperation recipient countries struggle to understand CSOs' reach and results.⁶⁹ According to the 2016 progress report of the GPEDC, CSOs need to strengthen the transparency and accountability of their development efforts by improving the coordination of their activities, and strengthen public reporting on their development efforts.⁷⁰ Indeed, CSO development effectiveness is an area needing ongoing attention so that CSOs can better pursue accountability from governments with the strength of having “their own houses in order” and an ability to demonstrate high standards of governance and accountability within their organisations.⁷¹ Sida and other donors can do much to assist CSOs' efforts in this regard.

How does Sida put this principle into action?

► **Providing CSO support in ways that enhances CSO partners' accountability in the developing countries where they operate**

Most importantly, Sida should work in line with the previous guiding principle and the overall applied human rights based approach and hence, support demand-driven initiatives that respond to the priorities of CSOs' constituencies. That way, local ownership and accountability towards constituencies are placed at the centre of Sida's cooperation with civil society. Relatedly, if Sida engages in efforts to streamline and potentially harmonize donors' accountability requirements, that will help avoid that providers' requirements substitute for CSOs' need to advance their accountability in their countries of operation.

► **Supporting CSOs' own efforts to enhance their development effectiveness**

Sida can also support CSOs' own efforts to strengthen their effectiveness, accountability and transparency. At the core of the endeavours are the *Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness*, adopted by thousands of CSOs. The implementation of the Istanbul Principles is supported by various toolkits and guidelines. The Principles are in essence a statement of CSO common values and approaches to guide their work, with adaptability to different contexts and CSO approaches. As the Principles are applied it will be important to continue to pay attention to some of the key outstanding challenges regarding CSO effectiveness and support CSOs to address them. These challenges include CSOs' internal management and governance; coordination and information sharing across CSOs, with governments and with the general public; results monitoring and reporting; and ensuring demand-driven programming.

Another relevant initiative is the Global Standard for CSO Accountability, a common framework that attempts to synthesize all core areas of CSO operations. It aims to be applicable for all CSOs, whether working on human rights, environmental protection, humanitarian responses, sustainable development, etc. As mentioned previously, there are also numerous country-level initiatives to relate to and/or support. Last but not least, the Key Messages from the multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment are noteworthy in this regard.⁷² They offer recommendations on how all actors, including donors like Sida, can support CSO development effectiveness.

"We truly believe in and consistently use demand driven programming to ensure development effectiveness. We do this by bringing more voices into our agency, which in turn increases the trust that others have in our agency and work and reinforces the relationships and collaboration that drives our collective success."

Perry Maddox, CEO, Restless Development. Read more about this example at Annex, p. 34.

5. Sida should engage in continuous dialogue with civil society

Why is this principle important?

Establishing fora for regular dialogue with civil society provides a way for donors to systematically tap into CSOs' knowledge and expertise. In particular, effective dialogue helps Sida to make policies more relevant, development-friendly, demand-driven, and results-focused. Furthermore, open and transparent dialogue with CSOs on civil society policies, partnerships, and programmes fosters trust, improves accountability, helps identify common ground for collaboration, and paves the way for achieving results. For CSOs, dialogue is a means to stay abreast of and potentially influence evolving policy and programmes in donor agencies. Last but not least, dialogue represents an opportunity for learning and exchange for all participants.⁷³

Most donors hold consultations with CSOs on the overall vision and policy for development and civil society policy, guidelines and partnerships. However, in general, donors need to improve how they conduct dialogues and consultations with CSOs to make them more strategic, useful, and meaningful.⁷⁴ Efforts to inform and co-ordinate with CSOs on development policy and programming need to be made more systematic and inclusive. Arrangements also need to allow for identifying the inputs from consultations that are actually taken on board in defining development policies. All too often, consultations are also held on an *ad hoc* basis during the late stages of the policy-making process and do not give CSOs time to prepare their input and position. Such consultations appear as tick box exercises, undermining the donors' credibility.⁷⁵

How does Sida put this principle into action?

► **Conducting strategic and structured dialogues**

In line with the OECD's recommendation to make consultations meaningful, Sida should become more (1)

strategic, reflecting on the different types and purposes of consultations, and (2) organized by preparing and sharing transparent guidelines for consulting with civil society and applying them consistently. Consultations should be regular and announced in time for CSOs to prepare, and should enable a more qualitative, knowledge-sharing, results-oriented dialogue. Follow-up, whether by providing feedback to CSOs or demonstrating the impact of CSOs' contribution, is critical to making the process credible and to maintaining CSO interest in participating in consultations.⁷⁶

Sida should also consider the following⁷⁷:

- soliciting input from CSOs when setting agendas for dialogue, especially when a particular issue may affect civil society directly
- being clear and transparent about how the CSOs participating in policy dialogue should be identified (e.g. representative attendees are selected by CSOs, donor agencies, or both)
- maintaining a dialogue with CSO partners at all levels of the development aid chain – not just with the intermediary agreement partners – to facilitate information sharing and mutual accountability throughout the donor's engagement with and support to CSOs⁷⁸
- evaluating consultations and dialogues for their quality and meaningfulness.

► Making use of existing initiatives

The Swedish country compact, the so-called “Joint commitments for dialogue and co-operation between the Government of Sweden and Swedish CSOs in development cooperation”, is an example of how a policy dialogue can be structured.⁷⁹ This country compact guides the policy dialogue and cooperation between the Government of Sweden and Swedish CSOs both in Sweden and at the level of Swedish missions abroad in developing countries. The EU's Policy Forum on Development and its predecessor, the Structured Dialogue, are other examples of dialogues held between donors and civil society.⁸⁰ In English at <https://www.regeringen.se/49e3a3/contentassets/8ba0ede834a544e782ec5e4e757962e2/joint-commitments.pdf>

“Dialogue is ongoing with a high number of different actors on different issues, including through joint field visits. Thanks to these opportunities, we improve our mutual knowledge and understanding of local realities and our different roles in contributing to progress.”

Martin Hessel, Head of development cooperation, Embassy of Sweden in Guatemala. Read more about this example at Annex, p. 38.



Photo: Semine Lykke Brorson & AYINET

QUICK TIPS

Strategy for aid- and development-effective engagement with and support to civil society⁸¹

Step 1: Conduct a power analysis⁸² with stakeholders and donors.

Step 2: Draft a theory of change with the targeted CSOs, aimed at supporting a pluralistic and rights-based civil society or at least striking a balance between supporting civil society in its own right and funding CSOs to deliver development results.

Step 3: Design aid- and development-effective CSO support that:

- favours flexible contribution systems and core funding to align with CSO partners' programmes and procedures
- tolerates risks, both financially and in relation to results, managing and where possible, sharing these risks with CSO partners and other donors
- assesses the relative advantages of direct and indirect funding to CSOs without undermining inter-CSO relationships and creating unnecessary competition
- coordinates and harmonizes support while respecting diversity and CSO ownership
- manages for results with appropriate monitoring and reporting systems

Step 4: Engage in strategic and well-organized policy dialogues with CSOs to share information, knowledge, and expertise.

Step 5: Commission evaluations for learning or accountability.

Step 6: Conduct regular reviews of the power analysis and update the theory of change when necessary.

ANNEX

Real life examples illustrating the Guiding principles

1. Sida should explore the various roles of civil society within their context

“With a new bottom-up and collective approach towards results both Sida and our partners have gotten a clearer understanding of the emerging context, theory of change and joint results and impact in different areas”, Anette Widholm-Bolme, former program manager of the Embassy of Sweden in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

An urgent need to grasp the impact of civil society initiated the process

The country strategy for Tanzania includes a goal on “Enhanced capacity in civil society to demand accountability and increased awareness of human rights”. During the operationalization of the strategy Anette Widholm-Bolme and other co-workers felt an urgent need to better understand their civil society partners’ common influence and impact. They strongly felt that the result reporting at the time was shallow and consisting of scattered quantitative out-puts rather than showcasing results as civil society sector. Currently, the Embassy of Sweden is working with 13 direct agreements with long-term CSO partners in areas like human rights, children (including education), youth and women rights, and media: The Union of Tanzanian Press Clubs, The Media Council of Tanzania, Tanzania Gender Networking Program, Restless Development, Haki Elimu, Legal and Human Rights Center, Femina Hip, Save the Children, TEN/MET, Twaweza, REPOA, We Effect and Childrens’ Dignity Forum.

At an aggregated level it was found that the Sida partners target change-makers and vulnerable people as they intentionally intervene by investing in their own and others’ organizational health. They use evidence and the mainstream media to educate the public and influence the Government. Partners facilitate participatory processes that support peoples’ learning and help them to take up other perspectives; they strive for a collective voice by encouraging solidarity and reciprocity amongst young people.

Achievements made include a better sense of the larger picture

To the Embassy, the main achievement was a much more solid understanding of the societal changes required to improve accountability and awareness of human rights, and the various roles civil society partners could play in

contributing to such progress. Thanks to the process ignited by the new way of aggregating results, a much more embedded Theory of Change/Intervention logic emerged from below.

Partners, in turn, achieved a much more holistic view of how their respective programs contributed to the larger picture; this sense of being embedded in a wider cause was/is very empowering and inspiring to them. In addition, other donors treat them with more respect because of their broader outlook. Partners achieve and report on results in a completely different way: today, they share engaging narratives about how change for the better is being achieved with their communities. Previously, most reports were much blander and failed in fully conveying the critical improvements that partners contributed to on the ground. Lastly, the Embassy notes that partners have been inspired by each other to make results more visible in their reporting and allow for success stories to take more space, including with regards to the various roles that they can play, which is particularly important under circumstances of shrinking civic space.

Organic process and building a theory of change from below – keys to success

There are several reasons for the relative success of this initiative: The Embassy allowed this to be an organic process and allocated sufficient time for the process to evolve gradually. Moreover, the Embassy found the right person who could develop the framework (see below). The method was piloted and fine-tuned before being rolled out. Further, partners were more excited than the Embassy anticipated at the outset. Yet another success factor was the approach of the Embassy to build a Theory of Change from below, based on existing realities and activities managed by partners. A final success factor was the long-term posting of the responsible program manager, who stayed in the same position for five years, something which facilitated a deeper sense of the local context.

Moving away from scattered examples of results to strategic results management

Previously, the strategy reporting often stopped at giving scattered activity level examples and assumptions of results. It did not at all show if and how CSO support was strategic, or what kind of change all these organizations were possibly contributing to.

– The more I tried to find good examples of what we wanted to see, the more I became certain that we needed to settle for a solid academic qualitative method, to move

away from the temptation of just making a more traditional evaluation. We wanted a system which could be used year by year to be able to compare changes, and enrich our understanding, says Anette Widholm-Bolme.

The grounded theory scholar Kate Mc Alpine, with her extensive knowledge of the CSO landscape in Tanzania, was after a long search identified as the person to help. A key idea was to avoid creating more demands on the organizations but to initially keep it as an internal exercise and use existing annual reports and see how far it would take the work.

The annual reports for 2014 from some 15 organizations, the anticipated results of the Strategy, Sida's Human Rights Based Approach and its Capacity Development Policy jointly formed the base from which to carve out a methodology and identify levels of impact which could be reflected.

All results from the annual reports were coded and aggregated into nodes in a dedicated software. The analytical framework was drawn from Integral Theory (meta-integral framework) which is intended to be used to give a structure to analyze social impact and changes. The methodology for the exercise in 2015 reports was then combined with qualitative interviews with the organizations. The interviews were also coded and added to the results aggregation. The interviews and the joint meetings with all partners when the results are presented annually, also serve as capacity building exercises for the CSO's to sharpen their own results focus. In the Embassy's own result reporting and in the results matrix the whole result aggregation report is being analyzed and merged into four qualitative follow-up questions, giving comparisons over time.

At the end of the Strategy period the Embassy – and its partners – will have six consecutive reports showing results, effects on the ground and change-processes that their civil society partners have been part of. The Embassy's theory of change and understanding of the various roles of civil society will no doubt be continuously evolving to stay contextualized.

Remaining challenges include matching innovations with current systems

Lessons learned mainly relate to the process of initiating – and getting buy-in – for this innovative way of tracing impact at different levels. For instance, drafting terms of references for a researcher to work with the Embassy turned out to be quite a challenge as nobody seemed to

have done something quite similar before. Further, the method is hard to sell as a simple 'one-liner' about the how's and why's. You simply cannot provide a simple answer to how results can be aggregated. Yet another lesson, or rather a remaining challenge, has to do with Sida's internal systems and routines which are not quite up to the task of accommodating results reporting in formats which are 'out of the box'.

In these times, when civic space needs to be reclaimed, it is increasingly important for civil society actors to stay relevant and legitimate to the citizens they are there to serve. To do so, a deeper understanding of the context and which local theory of change is likely to achieve results that affect people's lives, are increasingly essential for development partners and civil society actors alike.

2. Sida should strive towards supporting civil society in own right

“Our relations have developed into true partnerships, a ‘win-win’ balance between supporting civil society in its own right and simultaneously achieving our strategic objectives”,
Louise Bermsjö, program manager of the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi.

Expanding democratic space for alternate voices

Forum Syd, a Swedish framework organization, coordinates the Wajibu Wetu programme (“our responsibility” in Kiswahili) which supports media, cultural and gender focused civil society organizations to reach out to a critical mass of right-holders to deepen democracy, strengthen inclusive citizen participation and accountability while at the same time bringing gender mainstreaming at the forefront of the governance agenda in Kenya.

The programme seeks to expand democratic space for alternate 'voices' that expose and address critical topics like corruption, extra-judicial killings, gender based violence and discrimination. This is done through creative avenues like the use of music, traditional and new media, 'artivism' (art for activism), cultural festivals, documentaries, investigative journalism among others. To achieve these outcomes, Wajibu Wetu programme uses the following strategies: 1) Sub granting projects to national media, cultural and gender focused CSOs; 2) Seed granting to grassroots media, cultural and gender focused CBOs; 3) Activities around civil society collaboration and networking; and 4) Capacity development of the targeted partners to strengthen their role as change actors, supporting

their work and visibility, based on tailor-made plans for capacity developments.

Achievements include solidarity, solid networks and responsiveness

Partly thanks to regular meetings under the program, partners have developed strong networks and a sense of solidarity. An example of this is, when the government temporarily closed broadcast media in the end of January 2018; some 30 organizations got together to protest against the government's action.

The design and content of the program allows for ownership and responsiveness when opportunities that arise, which in turn contribute to supporting civil society in its own right, while at the same fulfilling the strategic objectives of the Embassy: Strengthened democratic institutions at national and local levels; rule of law; media and civil society capacity to promote democratic development and accountability; and capacity among public institutions and civil society organisations that promote gender equality and respect for human rights, with a focus on women and girls.

Since its inception, the Wajibu Wetu Programme has supported 27 Kenyan civil society organisations operating at the national, county and grassroots levels. The Programme, through its partners, has achieved very good results and succeeded in creating momentum around critical issues, such as democracy and women representation in the 2017 elections. The programme has also inspired a combination of innovative and creative initiatives, such as:

Several of the organisations and artists involved in the programme arranged Ni Yetu Walk from Kisumu to Nairobi (350 km) for enhancing the knowledge and awareness around the constitution using music and art. They made stops in villages and towns along the way to talk about the constitution and to perform. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYQGD7YIs3U>

The *Kanjo Kingdom* is a documentary series that exposed the systematic corruption and the direct involvement of the City Council. The series '[followed the money](#),' investigated thousands of mobile money transfer records, and [screened footage and testimony](#) of the human impact of this corruption racket, exposing stabbings, beatings, and murder. The series was shown on national television combines with a social media campaign that engaged millions of Kenyans, which in turn provoked a swift response from the Governor of Nairobi. He immediately suspended five of the identified corrupt officials, that now have pending

court cases. This in turn decreased the extortion in Ngara district, stopping an estimated 63,4 million Khs (app. 5,4 MSEK) being paid by street vendors to corrupt officials. Kanjo Kingdom was a team work with several partner organisations and from both the Forum Syd and the Diakonia Umbrellas.

The edutainment series Tuko Macho that reached and engaged millions of Kenyans. Tuko Macho allowed the audience to expand its imagination on the rights and vulnerabilities of 'other' people and ethical dilemmas. It also gave the audience food for thought and provoked people into thinking and debating about issues challenging a functioning democratic society and the complexity these issues. As an extra bonus Tuko Macho was shown at the Toronto International Film Festival, which is a great acknowledgment of the quality of the production.

Combination of grants, regular meetings and capacity development key to success

There are several reasons for the achievements of the program: combining grants with capacity development and platforms for regular meetings appears to be crucial factor. Partners under the Forum Syd coordinated program meet four times a year in different constellations (ceo meeting, project managers, finance managers). Then two times a year the partners of the Wajibu Wetu meet with the partners of the other civil society umbrella, that is also supported by Sweden in Kenya, which is managed by Diakonia. Forum Syd's partners are mainly newly established or grass roots organizations, while Diakonia's partners are more established human rights and anticorruption organizations on the national scene. When meeting, partners share, learn and inspire each other and identify opportunities for collaboration. Another reason is the effort to improve openness and transparency vis-à-vis the government at all levels.

Voices of community level partners are heard

Advantages for partners include the fact that the voices of partners, particularly at grass root levels, are enhanced. Further, partnerships have evolved between organisations in the centre (Nairobi) and the periphery (Turkana, Wajir) that learn from each other and the different Kenyan realities, including through mentorship between organisations. Providing platforms – When the Embassy were setting up the two umbrellas (Forum Syd Wajibu Wetu and Diakonia Democracy and HR programme) in 2015, we identified the need for platforms of different kinds where organisations could interact and share experiences. Two years down the line, with lessons learnt from the previous event, this has evolved into a festival that this year was attended

by more than 1000 people and over 10 million people were directly reached through social media. The Festival has the ambition to be a platform for Kenyan civil society to freely exchange ideas and provide input to the agenda for the future in dialogue with decision-makers and other stakeholders. The festival is also an arena for organizations to showcase their work and find new collaboration opportunities with others.

Deeper understanding of civil society enriches dialogues with other partners

A key lesson learned, according to Louise, is to stay close to all partners to nurture and sustain genuine partnerships along the whole chain of intermediaries and their grantees. Louise and her colleagues have invested in visiting most partners under the program in their communities across Kenya, something which has made them very well updated on the programme as well as enriched their understanding of the Kenya— providing good input into their analysis of political, social and economic developments in the country. As much as this deeper understanding fulfills the Embassy’s internal needs, it also feeds into multiple dialogues with i.a. the government, donors and creditors which ultimately, it is hoped, also promotes and protects civil society in its own right.

3. Sida should provide aid and development effective support to civil society partners

“Thanks to our core support the Sarajevo Open Center could seize emerging political and legislative opportunities and actually succeeded in shifting norms with regards to LGBTI issues”, Pia Hallonsten, then program manager of the Embassy of Sweden in Sarajevo

Partner focused on community empowerment and activist movement building

The [Sarajevo Open Centre](#) (SOC) is an independent civil society organization that strives to empower lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people and women through community empowerment and activist movement building. SOC also promotes the human rights of LGBTI people and women publicly and advocates on national, European and international level for improved legislation and policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A string of achievements thanks to Sida’s partner’s timely interventions

SOC contributed to visible shifts at several occasions: The House of Representatives of the Parliament of FBiH adopted the initiative to use gender-sensitive language as



Photo: Jason J Mulikita

a follow-up activity to SOC’s Equality Academy; the Anti-discrimination law was updated to include sexual orientation; the law on the Ombudsman Institution was changed to include sexual and gender minorities in its areas of work; SOC introduced the first ever human rights training of public officials in BiH which focused on the human rights of LGBTI people, including i.a. police inspectors and officers, as well as prosecutors and judges; and started the only intensive informal educational programme in BiH for students of law and journalism/media on LGBTI rights, in order to educate and influence the next generation of leaders and stakeholders (see more at <http://soc.ba/en/about-us/>).

Core support allowed for flexible and effective actions

Numerous factors can explain the achievements made to date by SOC, according to Pia Hallonsten: their leadership has been and is very knowledgeable on political actors, institutions and processes and strategic when it comes to who to approach when and how; consecutive successes turned into a virtuous cycle of empowering SOC; they are very open and transparent with their strategy, activities and funders; and their public advocacy and actions, such as a recent March for Love and Peace, make them visible and gradually build their legitimacy. Last, but certainly not least, Pia Hallonsten adds that the climate for LGBTI and women’s human rights used to be quite harsh, but thanks to core support SOC could work in a very flexible manner, seizing emerging opportunities, and succeeded in shifting societal norms.

According to SOC, Sida's core support enabled them "to develop our organisational capacities, be flexible in our advocacy work, react when policies and laws we've been advocating for finally come into focus, or prevent important policies from being reversed, and provide co-funding for projects that needed it." (quote from interview with Emina Bošnjak, Executive Director of Sarajevo Open Center, quoted in "10 Years of Sarajevo Open Centre", p. 6, published September 2017 ([link](#))).

A step by step approach towards core support

Sida initiated the process towards core support by making a system audit to check that the partner was in sufficiently good shape. One recommendation was to put time and effort into a participatory process to develop their strategic plan and results framework. When everything was in order, Sida initiated the new agreement: SOC receive multi-annual core support linked to their annual plan and annual budget.

Core support entailed opportunities to influence other donors

A first lesson learned is that core support enabled us to disburse funds as early as in January, based on their annual plan and budget. A second key lesson was that core support provided us with the opportunity to become the lead donor, which entailed opportunities to substantively influence other donors. Donor coordination, however, turned out to be difficult as most other donors wanted to continue providing project support, according to Pia Hallonsten.

4. Sida should support civil society partners' efforts to strengthen their own development effectiveness, including their transparency and accountability

"We truly believe in and consistently use demand driven programming to ensure development effectiveness. We do this by bringing more voices into our agency, which in turn increases the trust that others have in our agency and work and reinforces the relationships and collaboration that drives our collective success", Perry Maddox, CEO, Restless Development

Young people are changemakers, not 'beneficiaries'
[Restless Development](#) is an agency for youth-led development that works with young people so they can lead in solving the challenges they and their communities face. They operate out of ten hubs in countries across Africa and Asia as well as in the UK and the USA, with a wider

network of youth and civil society partners around the world. Their award winning approach to engaging stakeholders in their work, Dynamic Accountability ([Bond Transparency Award](#) March 2017), is how they deliver demand-led programming. It is centred on, "being an accountable agency and transparently working with and learning from young people and partners in order to increase our impact." They are an active member of Accountable Now, a global platform that supports civil society organisations (CSOs) to be transparent, responsive to stakeholders and focused on delivering impact. The agency works with young people to make lasting change in their communities and countries; young people are changemakers not 'affected stakeholders' or beneficiaries.

Demand-driven programming to build legitimacy

The main achievement of Dynamic Accountability so far was using the approach to shape the direction of Restless Development's new strategy which will guide the agency for the next fifteen years. The organisation sought the views of thousands of young people on how they could take a leading role in tackling the most important global issues. They ran the [Big Conversation](#) – a consultation with over 5000 people from Civil Society, Governments, businesses, partners, communities and young people in 64 countries, seeking to start a global conversation as to how young people can lead transformative change in their own communities.

Led by a Youth Strategy Team – made up of young staff members and volunteers from across the agency – the consultation revealed a set of unified priorities for specific changes that young people are demanding, whatever the challenge – a voice in their communities, the ability to make a living, having ownership over their sexual rights and a leadership role in delivering change. These priorities became the organisation's new goals, and the practice of Dynamic Accountability was fundamental in shaping them and has ensured our approach to programming is demand-driven. By bringing in the ideas of young people and embedding them at the core of their strategy, Restless Development have ensured that their strategy meets the needs of young people and the youth sector in a rapidly changing world, in turn leading to increased legitimacy as an agency and for youth-led development.

Young people at center stage – key factor driving success

Restless Development have had success in ensuring demand-driven programming because the consultative approach used in the [Big Conversation](#) was not a one-off methodology – it was built on the back of the routine

meaningful engagement and empowerment of young people, as developed through three decades of experience in this field. Their work has greater impact because it is not only guided by young people's priorities, it is also driven by young people. All programmes also utilise the agency of young people as leaders in how they measure the impact of their work through robust and appropriate Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning (MEL) systems. They use youth-friendly, creative and appropriate methods (apps, participatory video, youth and gender sensitive tools) to engage key audiences, and to support their broader campaigns and policy work with quality information and evidence.

They operate a methodology through which young people lead all aspects of work on the ground, in collaboration with Restless Development staff and other stakeholders as necessary. This includes flagship youth-led research such as the Case for Space, exploring shrinking civic space led by 18 young researchers, and Youth-Led Action Research in Karamoja, Uganda, where young people lead research exploring themes from agriculture to livelihoods. All Restless Development-led interventions are undertaken through the lens of the Restless Model for Transformative Change. Based on three decades of experience of youth-led programming, the Model for Change is designed around young people leading all aspects of development at the community level in a holistic approach. This includes:

- Young people delivering change directly in their local communities, demonstrating the capacity that they have to drive lasting change
- Young people informing their peers and other key stakeholders on their lived experience in communities across relevant themes, as relatable role models that garner a greater level of respect and engagement than development professionals or others
- Young people influencing stakeholders and decision-makers at the community, regional or national level; pushing for formal or informal change inline with their priorities.

It is through the combination of these three complementary approaches that they believe enabling environments can be brought about at all levels of society, encouraging genuine youth-led transformative change to take hold.

Agency, power and accountability are essential in demand-driven programming

Building agency, power and accountability is at the core of Restless Development's strategy, and is an essential

component to ensuring programmes are demand-driven. Through all of their approaches, they work with young people to ensure ownership, and therefore the power and ability of individuals and communities to build real, sustainable change at the heart of countries and communities. These approaches not only increase trust with young people and communities they work with, but also with the multilateral agencies and governments who are increasingly prioritising young people and their needs within their own agencies and in their policies and approaches.

An example of how they have adapted and used their consultative methodologies include Restless Development being contracted by Danida and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to undertake a review of their youth related engagements, to support the realisation of their new strategy "The World 2030" launched in 2017. Restless Development used a range of methods to review and assess existing capacity in meaningful youth engagement. A central component which ensured young people were active contributors – and not just the subject of – the review, was the creation of an International Youth Panel. The Panel, made up of 6 Danish and 5 international youth representatives were convened twice over the review period and ran an online "Youth Conversation", reviewed drafts of the report, and shaped the seminar launch, attended by the Minister for Development Cooperation. The Youth Panel, supported by Restless Development and a review team which undertook field visits and hosted youth focus groups, helped to identify 19 recommendations to 2017 Restless Development: Meaningful Youth Engagement 4 unleash young people's agency, ensure quality, deliver on DANIDAS thematic priorities, align funding and partnerships and roll out the strategy internally.

Lessons learned point to a need for more focus on youth living with disabilities

Due to the nature of Restless Development's work, we are constantly evaluating and improving the manner in which we engage directly with the key stakeholders of our work; young people themselves. We have recognised the need to actively include and consult young people from as wide a pool as possible to ensure a programme may be truly demand-driven and representative of young people's views. An example includes young people living with disabilities, who constitute roughly one in seven young people worldwide.

We acknowledge that we have not consulted a proportionate number of young people with disabilities in the past across our programmes; due to the following reasons:

- Lack of acceptance or knowledge of the young people with disabilities themselves or their guardians, that their impediment constitutes a disability
- Social and cultural pressures that may prevent young people with disabilities being present in communal spaces or being acknowledged by their communities and families
- Lack of staff training to help them identify the scale of young people with disabilities in an area
- Lack of programme budget and resources to adequately reach and engage those young people with disabilities

We also recognise that bringing young people with disabilities physically into spaces for consultation is only the first step in the effective consultation of young people with disabilities. We will also need to focus on obtaining the trust and engagement of the young people with disabilities, supporting their needs effectively, ensuring physical and online spaces they are engaging in are accessible and suitable; and tailoring approaches in line with their needs.

This is now a key priority of our organisation going forwards; and we are working with donors and partners to increase our disability inclusivity as an agency and spread organisational strengthening across our global agency.

Core support made a huge difference to Restless Development

Restless Development was in a position to conduct the Big Conversation because we were recipients of a Programme Partnership Arrangement (PPA) grant from the UK Department for International Development, which provided core support to selected organisations. Under this grant, we were not only able to actively consult with young people across the world on young people's priorities, we also invested in monitoring, evaluation, learning and programme quality across the agency, substantially increasing our ability to deliver and measure impact. The value to the agency of this core support is recorded in an [external evaluation](#) of the impact of the PPA for Restless Development and consortium partners. We would encourage key actors in international development, such as Sida, to consider the value of the provision of core support such as this to grantees.

Another factor which enabled Restless Development to conduct the Big Conversation was directly linked to our type and model of programming. The model involves young leaders living in communities for the long term, building trust and ensuring long-term, sustainable development. This long term programming has feedback loops and monitoring, evaluation and learning embedded in its approach. Such deep community engagement led by young people enabled us to connect to this network of rural and urban young people through focus groups and



Photo: UN Photo/JC Mclwaine

interviews due to the access the young leaders had and the trust they had developed during the time in that community. Ensuring long term community engagement and presence when assessing development effectiveness is recommended

Restless Development did not receive direct funding from any institution to carry out the Big Conversation. The agency was in a position to conduct this because we were recipients of a Programme Partnership Arrangement (PPA) grant from the UK Department for International Development, which provided core support to selected organisations. Under this grant, we were not only able to actively consult with young people across the world on young people's priorities, we also invested in monitoring, evaluation, learning and programme quality across the agency, substantially increasing our ability to deliver and measure impact. The value to the agency of this core support is recorded in an [external evaluation](#) of the impact of the PPA for Restless Development and consortium partners. We would encourage key actors in international development, such as SIDA, to consider the value of the provision of core support such as this to grantees.

5. Sida should engage in continuous dialogue with civil society

“Dialogue is ongoing with a high number of different actors on different issues, including through joint field visits. Thanks to these opportunities, we improve our mutual knowledge and understanding of local realities and our different roles in contributing to progress.”
Martin Hessel, Head of development cooperation,
Embassy of Sweden in Guatemala

Keeping the door open for civil society partners

The Embassy's communication and dialogue with civil society comes in many different shapes, channels and structures, including meetings, joint field visits, thematic workshops et cetera, but with the common approach to keep the door open for civil society. Most dialogue will take place in flexible manners depending on political developments, implementation of different contributions, visits, workshops and seminars. Dialogue may be more frequent with partners with whom the Embassy has cooperation agreements, and with Swedish civil society organizations in Guatemala. The dialogue would also be more intense during certain processes such as during the preparation of a new strategy.

One example is the regular meetings that are held every six weeks with Swedish civil society organizations in Guatemala. The agenda is flexible, and includes both discussion and analysis of current political context and the situation of human rights defenders, as well as more practical issues related to coordination and communication. The Swedish Government's and Swedish civil society organizations' joint commitments to strengthen dialogue and collaboration in development cooperation are also discussed, and there are different ideas under discussion for further strengthening the dialogue and complementarity between the organizations, local partners and the Embassy. The collaboration with Swedish civil society has also resulted in important exchanges between Guatemala and Sweden, such as the visit of representatives from the Sami parliament to Guatemala, and Guatemalan high-level judges to Sweden, activities that simultaneously increased knowledge and visibility.

Joint field visits to build trust and learning

The Embassy also organizes thematic workshops to which all partners are invited; these have focused on capacity development on Swedish priorities such as gender equality, environment and anti-corruption. In these workshops there have been spaces for group discussions and exchange of ideas, which have generated new collaborations between partners. Joint field visits to various parts of Guatemala are also part and parcel of the Embassy's efforts to build trust and learning through dialogue.

Continued dialogue and communication with civil society over time has contributed to the creation of confidence between actors, and respect for the complementary roles of the different actors. The Embassy has succeeded in developing closer relations with local actors and a more profound knowledge and understanding of these actors, their work, and realities on the ground in general.

Sustaining dialogue channels over time critical to success

Several factors explain the relative success of the Embassy's efforts to build understanding, trust and respect for each other's' roles. One key factor is that the various dialogue channels have been sustained over a long period of time as the Embassy has prioritized to conduct a transparent and continued dialogue with a broad number of actors. Sweden has also maintained a strong focus on human rights and the importance of civil society in the country.

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- 4 Within Swedish development cooperation, civil society is defined as an arena, distinct from the state, the market, and the individual household, in which individuals, groups, and organisations act together to promote common interests (Aid Policy Framework – the Direction of Swedish Aid, Government Communication 2013/14:131, p. 21). CSOs “can be defined to include all non-market and non-state organisations outside of the family in which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. Examples include community-based organisations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organisations, labour unions, cooperatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes and the not-for-profit media” ([Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness: Findings, Recommendations and Good Practice](#), OECD, 2010, p. 25). The media are often included in the concept of civil society, but engaging with and supporting the media may require different approaches to protect media independence and strengthen media professionalism, for example. Sida's annual reports are available at <https://www.sida.se/Svenska/> in Swedish only.
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- 16 There are a number of examples of donors – individually and jointly – actively pursuing good practice in their support to and engagement with civil society. Good practice examples include the Sida-led Code of Practice on donors’ harmonization of funding requirements on CSOs, an effort by around 15 bilateral donors to reduce transaction costs and strengthen CSO ownership over programming (see also Provide aid- and development-effective CSO support in this document). Another is the OECD published [Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#) (2012) which enables a more systematic monitoring of progress in donor practice. A third example is the upcoming Guidance on the civil society enabling environment, which the multi-stakeholder [Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment](#) is developing with Sida participation within the results framework of the [Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation](#).
- 17 Policy dialogue and cooperation between donors and CSOs, and the CSO’s role as an independent watchdog, can also be compromised by relationships that focus narrowly on funding for development projects and programmes – a brief discussion can be found in [Evaluating Development Activities – 12 lessons from the OECD DAC](#). Donors have tended to engage in dialogue with CSOs in an ad hoc manner rather than systematically, and mainly on donor-identified policy priorities ([Good practice in Donor Engagement with Civil Society](#), Tomlinson, 2012, p. 10), often on politically “safe” topics such as specific sector or thematic areas ([Support to Civil Society Engagement in Policy Dialogue, ITAD/COWI, 2012](#)) and not on broader or potentially more contentious issues. CSOs continue to point to insufficient and inadequate mechanisms for systematic and meaningful dialogue with donors, both in donor and developing countries ([CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, 2014, An Enabling Environment for Civil Society Organisations: A synthesis of evidence of progress](#) since Busan 2013, p. 24. Prepared by Brian Tomlinson with the CPDE Working Group on CSO Enabling Environment; CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, 2016, [GPEDC Indicator Two: Civil society operates within an environment that maximizes its engagement in and contribution to development – An assessment of evidence](#), pp. 20-21. Prepared by Brian Tomlinson with the CPDE Working Groups on CSO Enabling Environment and on CSO Development Effectiveness. Such findings are echoed in the GPEDC [2016 Progress Report](#), pp. 86-87).
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- 24 OECD, 2013. [Evaluation Insights: Support to Civil Society: Emerging Evaluation Lessons](#), p. 3
- 25 Recommended terms of reference for political economy analysis and examples of such studies can be found at [CIVICUS Civil Society Index.. \(Retrieved 16-03-2018\)](#). (Thomas Nikolaj Hansen |, 2014) [EU country road maps. \(Retrieved 16-03-2018\)](#).
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- 28 Wood, J. and Fällman, K., 2013. “Official Donors’ Engagement with Civil Society: Key Issues in 2012” in [CIVICUS 2013, State of Civil Society 2013: Creating an enabling environment](#).
- 29 See (OECD, 2011) [How DAC donors work with civil society](#). (Annika Nilsson et al. 2013:15) [The Review of CSO support modalities at Sida HQ and Swedish embassies](#) concluded that during the 2007-2012 period, CSOs were primarily used as means to reach sector specific objectives within Swedish development cooperation strategies. Support towards the objective of a pluralistic civil society was less common but is becoming more frequent.
- 30 Indevalop, 2013. [Review of Civil Society Support Modalities at Sida HQ and Swedish embassies](#), p. 90
- 31 For example, a 2013 review of Sweden’s Civil Society Support Modalities noted that its country strategies and CSO support generally do not reflect the wider aim of the civil society policy. Instead civil society support is mainly a means to achieve global or country level strategic objectives. This report recommends greater collaboration among all those responsible for the civil society policy and for other agency guidelines to help ensure a more strategic approach. (Annika Nilsson et al. 2013:15) [The Review of CSO support modalities at Sida HQ and Swedish embassies](#) pp. 142-

151. For more examples of how to practise a whole-of-agency approach, see Wood, J. and Fällman, K., 2013
- 32 For information about how Sida defines and works with a human rights based approach, click here. (Retrieved 16-03-2018).
- 33 Relevant indicators include: increased awareness, commitment, and capacity of people living in poverty to work for democracy and human rights accountability
- increased diversity within the civil society in developing countries that represent or act for the benefit of people living in poverty
 - number of individuals living in poverty who through Sida's support have access to CSOs that care for their interests, including through awareness-raising and strengthening of individuals' capacities to demand their human rights and by making possible their participation in democratic political processes
- 34 This is the reason why CSO funding for this objective ends up supporting adult education, women's health organisations and farmers' associations, for example, and hence runs the risk of overlapping with CSO support aimed at delivering specific development results in prioritized sectors. Here again, a whole-of-agency approach can help to ensure coherent civil society support.
- 35 A number of civil society studies have identified possible and actual negative outcomes of the ways in which donors' support civil society (see for example: (OECD, 2012) [Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#). (Retrieved 16-03-2018). (International NGO Training and Research Centre, 2013) [Evaluation Insights: Support to Civil Society](#), Wood, J. and Fällman, K., 2013. "Official Donors' Engagement with Civil Society: Key Issues in 2012" in [CIVICUS 2013 State of Civil Society 2013: Creating an Enabling Environment](#)). They include:
- Pressure on CSOs to choose interventions more likely to produce measurable, short-term results may discourage them from focusing on wider development outcomes. DAC Peer Reviews suggest that donors should have reasonable expectations about the time-frame needed to achieve development results.
 - Greater time, energy, and resources are invested in fund administration than on core activities, and on "upward" accountability to donors than on improving "downward" accountability to communities and other national stakeholders, which is vital for strengthening CSO legitimacy.

An over-emphasis on results and administrative capacities may discourage donors supporting civil society actors such as grass roots organisations, traditional and

faith-based groups, and social movements. Donor funding arrangements and reporting requirements may place too high a barrier for such groups to access funding.

- 36 OECD, 2010. [Civil society and aid effectiveness: Findings, Recommendations and Good Practice](#)
- 37 OECD, 2013. [Evaluation Insight: Support to Civil Society](#), p. 7
- 38 [The Doing Development Differently Manifesto](#)
- 39 The website of Thinking and Working Politically, <https://twpccommunity.org>, accessed September 7, 2017
- 40 (Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2012) An [evaluation](#) conducted by Sida, Danida and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) of developing country CSO policy engagement recommended providing "Resources for All" or "public access resources" that can be accessed by the civil society community, including movements and groups not formally registered as CSOs or that may otherwise not meet some of donors' basic funding criteria (ITAD/COWI, 2012:110-111). Such resources could create a hub for "... [as well as] benefit [for small organisations] from bulk-bought services such as printing, accounting or insurance." (ITAD/COWI, 2012:111). The Sida-funded Civil Society Development Centres managed by the OSCE Presence in Albania served such a purpose and contributed to strengthening the civil society sector in Albania. The [Innovation For Change](#) initiative, previously the Civil Society Innovation Initiative, part of Sida's STIP cooperation with USAID, is a current example where such hubs are created at the regional level. Another example is the Sida-funded [Zambian Governance Foundation](#) (Retrieved 16-03-2018), which offers CSO partners a variety of funding mechanisms and tailored capacity building.
- 41 GSDRC, 2015. [Incentives from donor funding mechanisms for civil society organisations](#)
- 42 OECD, 2013. [Evaluation Insights: Support to Civil Society: Emerging Evaluation Lessons](#), p. 9
- 43 In the 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews ([Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#) OECD, 2012), the DAC suggests that members should strive to increase the share of longer-term, core funding support to civil society. This is seen as a cost-effective means of funding CSOs which have the strategic and organizational capacity to deliver results as it:
- promotes local ownership by funding an organization's strategic or operational plan

- enables such “strategic partners” to invest in their own organizational development and learning, and in cross-cutting issues such as gender in development
- reduces the administrative burden for donors and CSOs if reporting is aligned with local partner systems

In Sida’s definition, core funding equals general budget support. When providing core funding, the donor recognizes the strategic plan, budget and annual report as the main steering documents. Prior to entering a core funding relation, a CSO will have formulated its vision, objectives and strategies independently of the development partners in a long-term strategic plan. Such a plan forms the basis for the collaboration between one or a group of donors. The strategic plan will be part of the agreement, the principal tool for endorsing activities, and the basis for result reporting, monitoring, dialogue and evaluation. The donors and the CSO cooperate to ensure that the long-term strategic plan is fully implemented and the intended results achieved.

A long-term budget, corresponding to the strategic plan is established initially. Each donor commits itself to a certain percentage of this strategic budget. Should more donors enter the collaboration, the committed percentages of the donors are revised. The budget contains the entire funding needs of the organization; programmes and activities, staff, overheads and administration, investments, and organizational capacity development needs. The organization reports to the donors and the public with one joint annual report. Core funding can be provided to all CSOs, also to weak, small or new CSOs.

Within the donor community and inside Sida there is a commonly used argument against giving weak or new CSOs core support; they lack the institutional strength to handle core funding. However, the risk of giving weak or new CSOs core support is not higher than the risk of giving such CSOs project or programme support. On the contrary, when providing core support the donor assesses the CSO partner’s overall system for planning, monitoring and follow-up – including the organization’s financial management and control – and when following up the core support, the donor monitors the CSO partner’s use of the entire budget. Thus the donors’ understanding and overview – or control – are greater when providing core support than when working with project support, where focus is only on a part of the CSO’s activities. Moreover when making organizational assessments related to core funding, the CSO partner and the donor can jointly assess overall capacity building needs

and monitor capacity building activities. Such strategic support to CSOs is consistent with the international commitments to support civil society as a development actor in its own right. Compare this to a focus on the structure and staff responsible for handling only one out of many (and one by the donor selected) projects within a partner organization.

Last but not least, core funding does not have to mean more money. Thus the grants at risk do not have to be larger than those provided through project or programme support. In this regard, core support is but a funding modality. However, it is the funding modality best suited to provide for strong local ownership and minimum transaction costs as many evaluations have shown lately, it is the funding modality that most CSOs prefer.

44 GSDRC, 2015. [Incentives from donor funding mechanisms for civil society organisations](#)

45 The pilot project is hosted by Sida’s civil society unit. This initiative is at an initial stage. Sida is hosting planning meetings to co-design the pilot with a number of Swedish Framework Organisations (SFOs). The intent is to adapt Sida’s Loan and Guarantee instrument so that it could be used by the SFOs’ partner organisations in aid recipient countries. By guaranteeing the “investment”, Sida absorbs the risks that SFOs might otherwise hesitate to take in partnering with more nascent CSOs or with informal civic groups. Sources: Communication with Sida Program Manager Specialist, Oct. 4, 2016 [Development loans and guarantees; New Finance Instruments at Sida and Sida’s guarantee instrument](#)

46 OECD-DAC, 2013. [Aid at a Glance, Flows of official development assistance to and through civil society organisations in 2013](#), and Indevalop, 2012. [Review of Civil Society Support Modalities at Sida HQ and Swedish embassies](#)

47 For more about the multi-donor civil society funds and recommendations on how to use this funding modality, see INTRAC, 2014. [Study on Support to Civil Society through Multi-Donors Funds](#)

48 In 2013, DAC members provided around seven and a half times more ODA (USD 12.6 billion) to and through CSOs based in their countries than to developing country-based CSOs (USD 1.6 billion). There has been a small but positive two per cent increase in the share of flows to and through CSOs going to developing country CSOs. [Aid at a Glance, Flows of official development assistance to and through civil society organisations in 2013](#), October 2015, OECD Development Co-operation Directorate.

- 49 Fällman, K., 2010. [Implementation of the Nordic+ conclusions on civil society support: The case of Zambia](#)
- 50 Read low and medium-income countries, in the statistics system stated as “developing countries”.
- 51 Sida, 2018. Sida’s annual report, table 6.20.1, p. 200.
- 52 See for example Sriskandarajah, D., in The Guardian (2015). [Five reasons donors give for not funding local NGOs directly](#); Wood, J. and Fällman, K., 2013. “Official Donors’ Engagement with Civil Society: Key Issues in 2012” in [CIVICUS 2013, State of Civil Society 2013: Creating an enabling environment](#), p. 145.
- 53 Task Team, 2014. [Review of Evidence: Progress on Civil Society-related Commitments of the Busan High Level Forum](#); INTRAC, 2014. [Study on Support to Civil Society through Multi-Donors Funds](#)
- 54 See for example Gnärig, B., 2015. [The Hedgehog and the Beetle – Disruption and Innovation in the Civil Society Sector](#)
- 55 OECD, 2012. [Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#) p.35
- 56 Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment, 2014. [Review of Evidence: Progress on Civil Society-related Commitments of the Busan High Level Forum](#), p.17.
- 57 In the Sida-led Code of Practice initiative, a number of donors in the International Donor Group are committing to harmonizing the conditions and requirements of their partnerships with their domestic CSOs, including through joint application, monitoring and reporting check lists and frequencies. A Code of Practice package has been developed with input from CSOs containing Key Principles, Guidelines for Operationalization, and a Tool for Commitment and Accountability. The Code of Practice is harmonization based on alignment with CSOs’ own systems and procedures. It is a tool that aims at keeping administration at a minimum as well as strengthening CSO ownership. Overall, the Code of Practice offers an opportunity for reducing transaction costs throughout the aid chain, since the same standards and procedures are accepted by a range of donors. CSOs in donor countries and in particular in developing countries will only to a lesser extent be forced to version applications, reports, and accountability to different donor agencies and can instead focus resources on achieving results. But apart from this, the Code of Practice also offers a range of benefits to be gained by the donor agencies: inspiration from best practices, a foundation for joint funding arrangements, harmonization as a joint learning opportunity, reduced transaction costs throughout the aid chain, and so on. The Code of Practice has been introduced to the OECD/DAC for possible take-over and finalization.
- 58 OECD, 2013. [Evaluation Insights: Support to Civil Society: Emerging Evaluation Lessons](#)
- 59 In CSO programming, “sometimes direction is more important than destination” (Christie et al 2012:74), and sometimes a measure of “value added” may be more relevant than that of Value for Money (ITAD/COWI 2012:103). See also Wood, J. and Fällman, K., 2013, op. Cit.
- 60 Wood, J. and Fällman, K., 2013, op. Cit.. There is a growing body of methodologies and tools for monitoring and evaluating change brought on by civil society programming. See for example OECD 2010 for an overview of selected results monitoring approaches. A publication from DFID’s Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, [Methodologies for measuring the value of civil society](#) (GSRDC 2009), provides a brief overview of various methods and their limitations.
- 61 Barr J, 2015 [Monitoring and evaluating flexible and adaptive programming](#)
- 62 [The Doing Development Differently Manifesto](#), <https://twpcommunity.org>.
- 63 OECD, 2012. [Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#)
- 64 See more at <http://www.idea.int/news-media/multi-media-reports/flexibility-learning-and-ownership-hear-practitioners> and the discussion paper [Flexibility, learning and ownership: new trends in democracy assistance, results management and evaluation](#), International IDEA, 2017
- 65 OECD, 2012. [Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#), p. 45
- 66 Task Team, 2014. [Review of Evidence: Progress on Civil Society-related Commitments of the Busan High Level Forum](#), p. 21, citing Sidel, M., 2005. “The Guardians Guarding Themselves: a Comparative Perspective on Nonprofit Self-regulation.” In Chicago-Kent Law Review, Volume 80, pp. 803-835.
- 67 [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness](#)
- 68 See for example CIVICUS, 2016. [State of Civil Society Report 2016](#), Sriskandarajah, D., 2016. [Civil society must change itself before it can change the world](#) and the [Global Standard for CSO Accountability](#)
- 69 Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment, 2016. [Key Messages for the Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation High-Level Meeting in Nairobi](#) p.5

- 70 GPEDC, 2016. [Making Development Co-operation More Effective: 2016 Progress Report](#) p.35
- 71 Task Team, 2014. [Review of Evidence: Progress on Civil Society-related Commitments of the Busan High Level Forum](#), p. 19, citing ITAD/COWI, 2012. [Joint Evaluation of: Support to Civil Society Engagement in Policy](#) p. 97
- 72 Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment, 2016. [Key Messages for the Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation High-Level Meeting in Nairobi](#)
- 73 According to the Task Team's (2014) [Review of Evidence of Progress on Civil Society-related Commitments of the Busan High Level Forum](#), "Donors have tended however to engage in dialogue with CSOs in an ad hoc rather than systematic manner, and mainly on donor-identified policy priorities (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 10), often on politically 'safe' topics such as specific sector or thematic areas (ITAD/COWI, 2012), and not on broader or potentially more contentious issues. CSOs continue to point to insufficient and inadequate mechanisms for systematic and meaningful dialogue with donors, both in donor and developing countries (CPDE, 2013, p. 24)."
- 74 GPEDC, 2016. [Making Development Co-operation More Effective: 2016 Progress Report](#) p.35 and pp. 86-87.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 OECD, 2012. [Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#)
- 77 OECD, 2012. [Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews](#)
- 78 In a number of studies and evaluation, for example INTRAC, 2010. [Civil Society Policy and Practice in Donor Agencies](#) and Scanteam, 2008. In the Norad report, [Support Models for CSOs at Country Level](#), the loss of dialogue opportunities between official donors and end-recipient CSOs has been identified as a downside of indirect, including multi-donor pooled support by both donors and CSOs in developing countries.
- 79 Regeringen, 2015. [Regeringens och svenska civilsamhällesorganisationers gemensamma åtaganden för stärkt dialog och samverkan inom utvecklingssamarbetet](#), In English at <https://www.regeringen.se/49e3a3/contentassets/8ba0ede834a544e782ec5e4e757962e2/joint-commitments.pdf>
- 80 [Policy Forum on Development and The Structured Dialogue](#)
- 81 USAID, 2014. [Stand with Civil Society – Best Practices \(2014\)](#)
- 82 http://www.sida.se/contentassets/83f0232c5404440082c9762ba3107d55/power-analysis-a-practical-guide_3704.pdf

