

Joint evaluation of civil society engagement in policy dialogue

(On-going joint evaluation)

Background:

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are increasingly recognised as key development actors in their own right and seen as having a key role to play in furthering democratic ownership by engaging in the policy making process, providing voice to marginalized groups, and holding governments accountable to policy goals.

The increased focus on aid effectiveness has also led to a growing interest in how to make the work of CSOs more effective, and to a general demand for more knowledge on the results of CSO work, which goes beyond: i) the activity level to results at the output, outcome and where possible impact level, and ii) beyond the achievements of individual CSOs towards the collective contribution of civil society to development.

In order to gain a better understanding of how CSOs engage in policy dialogue, the contributions they make, and how donors can best support them in this work, a joint evaluation has been initiated by the Donor Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness.

The evaluation is commissioned and managed jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (Danida) (lead), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Austrian Development Agency (ADA), on behalf of a larger group including Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (Finida) and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). The consultancy firms ITAD (UK) and Cowi (DK) will implement the evaluation with three teams of national consultants.

Objectives:

The five specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

- i) gain a better understanding of how CSOs engage in policy dialogue (issues raised, strategies pursued, and the role of the enabling environment).
- ii) assess the achievements – relevance, effectiveness and outcome of their work;
- iii) identify the enabling and disabling factors affecting CSO willingness and ability to play an effective role in policy dialogue;
- iv) discuss strengths and weaknesses of different development partner support strategies;
- v) provide recommendations for future support to CSOs in the area of policy dialogue.

Scope:

The term ‘policy dialogue’ is understood broadly to include CSO involvement in both policy *development* as well as policy *implementation* (holding the government accountable).

The evaluation will be based on three country case-studies in Bangladesh, Mozambique and Uganda. It will focus on two to three policy processes (issues or sectors) in each country. For the sake of comparison one of the chosen policy areas will cut across the three countries.

Evaluation process:

The evaluation is conducted in two phases. Firstly a more open ended process focusing on country context (enabling environment and CSO landscape), policy dialogue, and identification of key policy processes. Secondly a case-study analysis of selected CSOs.

The evaluation started in May 2011 and is expected to be published in September 2012:

- Documentation review: May-June 2011
- 1st round of data collection: July-September 2011
- Inception report: October 2011
- 2nd round of data collection: Nov 2011 – Feb 2012
- Finalise Country Reports: March-April 2012
- Finalise Synthesis Report: May- August 2012
- Publication: September 2012

Data will be collected among DPs, government, fund managers and in particular CSOs, as well as among the media, researchers, think tanks and other informants.

Outputs:

Three Country reports and a cross cutting Synthesis Report will be produced. Emerging findings will be presented and discussed in the three case-study countries and three DP countries, and stakeholders, including national and international CSOs, are invited to comment. The intended users of the evaluation are i) DPs to inform decision making on future programming and funding, ii) the CSO community, government and wider DP community in the three case-study countries, and iii) the aid community at large.

Further information:

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