

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

This evaluation, the '**Joint Evaluation of Support to Civil Society Engagement in Policy Dialogue**' was initiated by the Donor Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness. Specifically it was commissioned by three Development Partners (DPs), ADC/Austria, Danida/Denmark and Sida/Sweden, which form the Management Group. A larger group of bilateral DPs support the evaluation through their participation as the international Reference Group. The evaluation took place between June 2011 and September 2012.

The Evaluation Team was drawn from the consulting firm ITAD Ltd in the UK (lead firm), together with experts from COWI (Denmark) and experts from each of the three countries selected for the fieldwork, Bangladesh, Mozambique and Uganda.

The purpose of this evaluation is *lesson learning*, to help DPs gain a better understanding of how best to support Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the area of policy dialogue. The findings will also have direct relevance to the CSOs in the three countries and the wider CSO community, as well as the Governments and local authorities interacting with Civil Society (CS) representatives. The evaluation focuses on:

1. How CSOs engage in policy dialogue and the relevance and effectiveness of their policy work;
2. the enabling environment, that is the enablers and barriers to CSO engagement; and
3. how different DP support strategies may influence CSOs' ability to engage in policy dialogue, and how best the DPs might support CSO policy dialogue in the future.

However, this evaluation is not a conventional one, but lies somewhere between a classical evaluation and a study, providing an opportunity to learn lessons from DP support strategies on CSOs engagement in policy dialogue and to generate new knowledge from the analysis of the range of 'policy process' case studies in the three selected countries, on CSO effectiveness, whether or not supported by the DPs.

For the purpose of this evaluation **policy dialogue** is as defined in the Accra Agenda for Action as "*open and inclusive dialogue on development policies..*", which goes on to suggest that Governments and local authorities should engage with CSOs "*in preparing, implementing and monitoring national development policies and plans. They will also engage with CSOs...*" This explicitly intends that **policy dialogue** includes all these elements at different stages of the policy cycle including **policy formulation, policy implementation and policy monitoring**.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation design, guided by the Terms of Reference (ToR) was refined by the team during the course of the evaluation. A Conceptual Framework document was drawn up to set out and clarify the key study concepts, and to guide the further development of the evaluation fieldwork methodology and selection of 'policy process' case studies. As part of this process the three country teams developed ex-ante 'theories of change' of CSO involvement in policy dialogue, with the aim that this might better focus the enquiry, help identify key questions and assist in assessing outcomes.

The evaluation design provided for three interlinked phases, (1) Inception and Scoping Study, (2) Main Fieldwork Stage and the preparation of three Country Reports and (3) a Synthesis Report with each of the first phases informing the content, scope and shape of subsequent activities. Within the frame of the overall ToR, the work evolved as lessons were learnt at each stage with opportunities for consultation with stakeholders and informal and formal interaction with the DP Management Group and Reference Group.

This Synthesis Report thus represents the final reporting stage and draws on the findings of the earlier reports, together with a wider body of information in the public sphere, including publications from the Open Forum process on CSO Development Effectiveness.

Selection of policy process case studies

The nine case studies (policy processes) were selected based on criteria covering a range of CSOs and actions, types of funding modalities and levels of effectiveness:

- *Bangladesh* Primary education, local government; minority land rights (in the Chittagong Hill Tracts) and food security.
- *Mozambique* District planning and budget monitoring, and legislation on domestic violence.
- *Uganda* Governance and accountability, focused on anti-corruption; gender responsive legislation, and; sustainable forest management and governance.

Within the three phases the approach and methodological tools comprised a document review, consultations with CS, DP and Government representatives through interviews, focus groups, workshops, online surveys and observation of engagement processes in selected field study areas with local government staff, community stakeholders and CSOs working at grass roots level.

A major event, the global workshop was organised in Kampala in May 2012 for stakeholders from all three case study countries and DPs, to exchange experience and lessons learned and to provide an input into the synthesis work of the evaluation. Three presentation workshops organised by the DP Management Group in Copenhagen, Stockholm and Vienna in September 2012 provided a further opportunity for review and refinement of lessons, conclusions and recommendations.

MAIN FINDINGS

The enabling environment for CSO policy engagement

A fundamental question for the evaluation was to identify and analyse the enablers and barriers to CSO engagement in policy dialogue so that lessons can be learned on how CSOs and DPs can adapt to current conditions and influence the enabling environment. Opportunities and problems associated with *claimed* and *invited spaces* in which CSOs operate are highlighted.

All three countries had provisions within the constitution or in law for freedom of association and expression and facilities for registration of NGOs/CSOs. However, a country's political leaders (rather than its policies *per se*) shape the realities of the enabling environment, so the situation facing CSOs may in practice be very different from the legal provisions. However, *invited space* has been offered for CSO engagement to varying degrees, and

where Governments have a shared interest in the policy (e.g. improving primary education) *invited spaces* are more likely to be provided. Where *invited spaces* are limited, CSOs resort to, or actively use *claimed spaces* such as demonstrations or use of the media.

Registration of CSOs was seen as a particular issue, not just because of the bureaucratic and burdensome requirements, but more because of the often implied threat that if CSOs were perceived as being critical of Government they would not be re-registered. Indeed some CSOs choose not to register to maintain their independence, although this had implications for their ability to receive funding. That said, there is evidence that in Bangladesh and Uganda, the Governments' view was shifting from being largely hostile to one where CSOs' contribution to service delivery and policy development was being recognised. The availability of CSO funds is also a relevant factor in the enabling environment. Funding comes mainly from DPs, from CSOs' own resources, with little evidence of funding from Government. DPs are under pressure to demonstrate value for money, which is often difficult in the case of policy engagement. It was concluded DPs do provide a range of measures to improve the enabling environment, including promoting the establishment of *invited spaces*. However, enhancing the enabling environment remains a high priority for donor support and DP strategies need to seriously tackle the regulatory environment and support CSOs to *claim space* in order to enhance the supply-side aspects of policy engagement.

CSO strategies for policy engagement

Relevance of CSOs engagement: The evaluation of relevance (defined as a CSO's responsiveness to the needs of its constituency and its accountability), found some CSOs working effectively on key national matters, but without a constituency, to examples of more grass roots organisations clearly in touch with their members. Opinions are mixed as to whether CSOs do need a genuine constituency to be effective and whether in some sectors (e.g. climate change) it was not specifically needed. The evaluation found that short-term action (usually in *claimed spaces*) does not seem to necessarily benefit from being constituency-based, while for long-term engagements where CSOs participate in *invited spaces* and involve themselves in sustained monitoring of implementation of policy change, they do benefit from having a clearly-identified constituency.

Analysis of CSO strategies: CSOs have adopted a wide variety of policy engagement methods, although their advocacy activities are rarely articulated in detailed strategic plans and are often responsive and *ad hoc*. Different approaches run sequentially and in parallel which make it difficult to compare approaches in and between different organisations. However, the evaluation found that advocacy and campaigning backed-up by evidence-based research is a well-established feature of CSO strategy.

CSOs when staffed with experienced, professionally-qualified experts are capable of producing research material of high quality which is then used effectively in a range of advocacy processes. DPs are, of course, well aware of the potential for enhancing the effectiveness of these approaches. The majority of the research documents used to support advocacy processes, campaigns or to monitor the outcomes of policies or programmes were funded with DP money.

In Uganda, CSOs regularly monitor implementation of government policies. Elsewhere it is less well developed, although in these cases, the evaluation provided early evidence of CSO-facilitated watchdog groups and other community-based groups taking on this role. But CSOs need to develop this further.

Use of claimed spaces by CSOs: This is crucial where Government is unwilling to engage formally and where CSOs purposely intend to create public interest in their cause.

The use of *claimed spaces* may be part of a deliberate strategy, or may be resorted to where there is no other way. CSOs retain control in these spaces and avoid pitfalls of manipulation or co-option which are features of *invited spaces*. Lobbying is an important but underrated strategy, which often goes unrecorded. Activism, such as public demonstrations is a visible and familiar form of policy engagement. Importantly spontaneous demonstrations will of course include CS, but may not include CSOs, with social media playing an important role in mobilising instant responses. From the DP perspective, because of the risk and unstructured nature of *claimed space* work, it is less easy for DPs to support.

Networks and coalitions: CSOs have established networks and coalitions in a number of sectors, often benefitting from DP support, which were found to play an effective role in many of the policy process case studies. However, considerable time and effort is required to make these alliances work sustainably over the long term, and less formal networking arrangements may sometimes be more effective.

Effectiveness and outcomes: The policy process case studies were purposely selected to analyse effectiveness across diverse policy engagement situations, in terms of different levels of outcomes; process, intermediate, policy change and long-term goals. The case studies provided examples of **process outcomes**, where CSOs (as in the education sector in Bangladesh) had built up such a level of mutual trust that they worked together with Government as 'partners'. Three of the case studies resulted in **policy change outcomes** (new legislation). Compliance monitoring was evident but less well developed.

CSO's contribution to change: There are difficulties in measuring policy influence directly, although this evaluation has attempted to assess CSO contribution to outcomes for the nine case studies. However, there is an urgent need DPs to refine their methods and to develop a robust monitoring framework to measure outcomes.

An increasingly important role for Community-Based Organisations: Importantly CSOs are facilitating the empowerment of citizens and community-based organisations to play a key role in policy engagement, typically lobbying or demonstrating at local level or acting as policy watchdogs. This shift in approach in CS strategy is seen as vital in ensuring **long-term outcomes**. For example, the halting of the destruction of the Mabira Forest in Uganda is attributed, inter alia, to the organised mass protests of CS and community-based groups. This has now evolved into a sustainable network of local community groups determined to achieve forestry management reform.

Policy dialogue and influence may run over many decades: In both Mozambique and Uganda CSOs (and other actors) have been working to introduce and in turn ensure proper implementation of improved gender-related legislation. In Mozambique the process has taken some 15 years and in Uganda some 50 years! In Bangladesh pressure for a new education policy has been exerted for more than two decades. There are clear lessons here for revisions to the time horizons and accommodation of unpredictability in DP support strategies.

Development partners support to CSOs

The assessment covered DP support strategies, channels of support, relevance of support, how well they met the challenges of the operating context and their contribution to planned outcomes. The evaluation, which aimed to review the policy themes holistically, rather than by intervention of the six participating DPs, did not seek to make a direct link between DP support and the assessment of CSO effectiveness. It is recognised that as DPs have adopted their own approaches to support, some of the statements will apply only to some DPs while others will have more general application.

All the commissioning DPs endorse the principle of active participation of CS in development and support the Accra Agenda on Action for Aid Effectiveness (2008) pledge of support.

With regard to the four key accountabilities of: (1) social, (2) transparency and financial, (3) legal accountability and the rule of law, and (4) political accountability, the evaluation found that DP strategies address all the above to a greater or lesser extent. Despite this common understanding, DP strategies differ according to their own country context, support given by the countries, domestic political climate and priorities.

The country case studies point to a need for a better understanding of CSO needs and despite the language of harmonisation there remains gaps in mutual understanding. While the imperatives of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness have led to the common assumption that CSOs should themselves adapt to the harmonisation process, the evaluation has identified cases where their independence and own sphere of influence may be compromised as a result.

DPs have made some very positive and encouraging changes to their strategies. These include adopting a more pluralistic approach to CSOs, by increasing recognition and support beyond the traditional CSOs to include, for example, activist groups, faith-based groups and professional associations; genuine efforts to introduce and test out different funding modalities, and; recognition of the need to work on both sides of the CS-State engagement processes.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The lessons are intended to provide a basis for reflection and consideration by both CSOs and DPs. For CSOs in drawing up their strategies for engagement in policy dialogue and in the way they interact with DPs. A further aim is to enable CSOs and other actors to consider what they can do differently to improve beneficial outcomes from the policy engagement. For DPs, the lessons provide an opportunity to reflect on how best to develop support strategies for CS engagement in policy dialogue in the future.

Lessons on CSO engagement: The evaluation highlights the need for CS engagement beyond representational politics to influence both the formulation of policy and the way it is implemented. CSOs have the advantage over elected representatives of having long-term perspectives, beyond five-year terms of office, as well as a more nuanced understanding of diverse CS opinion. CSOs may represent a wide range of constituencies and provide a conduit for influencing policies. As a group, they may better appreciate the needs of the population as a whole, as well as the needs of minorities. The way CSOs operate and the potential that exists for influencing policy varies greatly from context to context (between countries and within countries) so that this variation and diversity should be borne in mind in interpreting the lessons presented here.

The features of the enabling environment are insufficiently recognised: In both successful and less successful case studies it is clear there was insufficient careful analysis of the power relations, the operating environment and potential for alliances in the way CSOs mounted their campaigns and attempted engagement. The case studies have shown that very different approaches are needed depending on whether the issues are a shared public good or evoke polarised positions, or appear to threaten Government positions.

Policy dialogue themes best championed by CSOs themselves: Issues identified and championed by CSOs themselves have led to committed and sustained action and a higher chance of success than those initiated externally. The Primary education case study in Bangladesh and the two domestic violence cases from Uganda and Mozambique show how indigenous movements grew from initial exposure to international meetings and then took many years to build alliances and support for change in policy. In contrast the 'participation by command' approach of the Poverty Observatories in Mozambique has been disappointing.

Determining if a policy issue is really a priority matter for the common good is difficult: There were concerns regarding the dominance of DP themes in policy dialogue which may not necessarily reflect the CS priority needs. Equally, there is also a problem with CSOs assuming they have a 'right' over determining priority needs. Thus, not all themes pursued by CSOs are necessarily priorities. This may be in part a consequence of 'chasing resources' but it is also a result of the lack of connectedness to the policy dialogue priorities of people living in poverty. It was noted that elites, often based in capital cities with social connections and command of the language of policy dialogue occupy *invited spaces* but do not necessarily represent the issues of ordinary people.

CSOs lack human resource capacity undermining their credibility and effectiveness: While there were exceptions and differences between countries, the evaluation found examples where CSOs lacked the human resource capacity, skills and experience to successfully engage in policy dialogue, particularly outside of the capital or regional centres. DPs meanwhile have high expectations of the ability of CSOs to take policy processes forward without necessarily recognising the need to include capacity building and concomitant equipment provision (in particular communication technology) as an integral part of the support provided.

Financial resources need to be fit for purpose: Advocacy and other related policy dialogue processes do not generally require high levels of financial resources. However, some activities such as conducting research, monitoring (particularly where it requires extensive data collection) and forging strategic alliances, can be costly. Often these costs are wrongly categorised as 'administrative' when they are legitimate policy-related activity costs. This has important implications for enhancing DP funding modalities of policy engagement.

Coalitions and networks are not a panacea, but they can increase effectiveness: The formation of CSO networks can strengthen the effectiveness of an organisation, giving them greater confidence than when working on their own, as well as providing more work opportunities and revenue. Further, they provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and for increasing the influence of the CSO as both status and visibility are enhanced. Networks on the other hand need managing. There are real costs involved and a danger that too many resources are tied to developing systems of coordination and organisation and less to action and influence. Networks often suffer from in-fighting and leadership fatigue which make them ineffective over time. Thus, the conclusion of the evaluation is that the supporting the *process of networking* is more important than the establishment and operation of networks.

Empowering those directly affected by a policy: A number of the case studies pointed to the importance of empowering groups directly affected by a policy to assume their own agency for influencing policy change. CAMPE, a CSO platform in Bangladesh recognises that to ensure compliance to the new education policy, teachers unions, parent teachers associations and school management committees need to be empowered to hold Government to account. In Uganda, CSOs at the national level are re-focusing their efforts towards empowerment of local CBOs coupled with engagement with local government and political bodies to address sustainable forest management issues.

Put simply a change in policy at national level does not imply it will be implemented. Uganda is a case in point where otherwise 'model' policies are simply ignored by those in positions of power when it suits them. Empowerment of local communities is a key factor in addressing this challenge.

Legal provisions for participation do not necessarily work: Progressive laws on participation which mandate citizen participation in local decision-making have been enacted in Bangladesh, but this will not happen unless people feel able to claim the space and are helped to do this productively. The mandated space for engagement in Mozambique district planning and budgeting processes has not been successful as it has been subject to manipulation and was never properly resourced.

Collaboration with the media is of growing importance: The media including the national press, but particularly electronic media, with a growing audience appetite for radio or TV 'talk shows' provides a ready-made 'advocacy opportunity' which CSOs are now exploiting, and which can be expected to play an increasingly significant role in the future.

Governments use CSOs to achieve legitimacy: A joint CSO-Government relationship, while genuine and appropriate in many situations, is deeply flawed in others if CSOs become co-opted onto roles simply to satisfy the perception of dialogue and consultation. DPs could help build mechanisms for institutionalising and regularising frameworks, particularly for engagement on 'sensitive' issues such as corruption.

Providing evidence-based research is a key 'entry point' strategy: There is a dearth of independent research and evidence on which to base sound advocacy strategies. Sometimes such research is sought by government agencies and politicians who do not themselves have the resources to conduct evaluations, or do not want them dismissed as politically biased. There is potential for significant value added through the strengthening of CSO capacity to systematically generate such information in order to raise their profile and build cases for policy change.

CSOs need a high level of professionalism and more transparency: CSOs need to achieve a high level of professionalism both individually, and in terms of the governance standards of their organisations. CSOs often seek to take the 'moral high ground' when it comes to fighting corruption or in holding Government accountable. But they do not necessarily have their own houses in order (as, for example, highlighted in the Bangladesh Transparency International report on NGO governance). The NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism introduced in Uganda in 2006, is a self-regulatory process which is seen as a step in the right direction.

International partnerships can improve effectiveness: The formation of international partnerships can improve effectiveness of engagement and in some cases may be essential

(e.g. the Chittagong Hill Tract land rights issues in Bangladesh). Partnerships provide increased opportunities for funding from DPs, the possibility of building the internal capacity through training and exposure to other ideas and ways of managing CSO activity. Linkage with international champions of the CS community such as BetterAid and Open Forum would ensure that national CSOs are better informed about their relationship with DPs and their obligations to constituencies. CSOs should seek a role where they can first exchange with DPs on a level platform, where joint decisions can be made on funding, documentation requirements, and accountability for costs and deliverables. This implies the need for an improved framework for engagement.

Lessons on development partner support: The lessons learned on current support provided to CSOs to engage in policy dialogue have been subject to review and consultation with key stakeholders. It is important to recognise that progress in tackling these issues is uneven among DPs, with some lessons currently being addressed, with others still representing important gaps.

DPs recognise CSOs' wider role, but funding instruments not yet fully appropriate: Most DPs now acknowledge that CSOs represent the diversity of public expression and contribute to effective democratic governance, recognising that alignment of development aid meant alignment with the priorities of the citizens (not just aid recipient Governments). Despite the increasing importance attached to the provision of support to CSOs, DP policies and funding modalities can limit CSO effectiveness. The pressures to scale-up disbursements, reduce transaction costs and produce short-term development results have affected the financing available for CSOs. Despite clear efforts to respond to the needs of advocacy-type CSOs, it is concluded that the range of DP funding instruments available is not yet fully appropriate.

Changing nature of CS engagement from formal groups to spontaneous action: A recent challenge is posed by CS action worldwide changing from organisation-based to non-formal and spontaneous, with evidence that people increasingly want to engage '*on their own terms*' rather than through conventional CSOs such as women's groups, faith-based groups or Trade Unions. Advances in global communication have demonstrated the power of spontaneous mass demonstrations (e.g. convened through mobile phones or social network sites) and the immediacy of response confirms the efficacy of these approaches. This has huge implications for aid funding to encourage CS engagement, suggesting a necessary shift towards greater attention to supporting the enabling environment for engagement, rather than a focus on support of individual CSOs, alongside greater support to CSO programming that facilitates citizen and community empowerment activism.

Understanding the political economy is crucial in determining support strategies: Effective DP support in terms of determining strategies for engagement and expectations of achievement depends on a better understanding of the context in which CS engages in policy dialogue. Further, the pace of contextual change is accelerating particularly as a result of globalisation. These factors preclude simplistic transfer of best practices from one context to another (even within countries). Another significant lesson is that constellations of CSOs which are not necessarily 'like-minded' may successfully encourage wide public demand for policy change, particularly where there is limited political will or vested interests resisting change. This may require DP strategies to embrace an understanding of potential (and possibly unconventional) strategic alliances and power relations.

Enhancing the enabling environment is of critical importance: An overriding conclusion is that enhancing the enabling environments and safeguarding positive changes from future erosion is of critical importance.

CSO freedoms are often under threat: As a broad generalisation CSO freedoms are under threat when their organisations are perceived as critical of Governments.

CSO regulatory bodies 'not fit for purpose': The regulatory bodies (and frameworks) functioned to limit CSO activities rather than to support them and were under resourced and ill-equipped.

The importance of appropriate legal measures for CS rights: Promotion of legal measures which will ensure the necessary freedoms for CS engagement and the formalisation of space for engagement are critical elements of the enabling environment. DPs have provided support in this regard, including enhancing oversight bodies, but they may be too cautious in challenging diminishing freedoms and the lack of political to support CS engagement.

Support for public education and active citizenship needs to be better targeted: The dissemination of information about participatory democracy through CS, Government and private sector channels are important contributions to CS engagement in policy dialogue which DPs already support. However, there is a need to critically evaluate efforts towards participatory democracy so that information and education programmes are better targeted.

Donor driven agendas may be at variance with CSO priorities: A common concern of CSOs is the dominance of DP agenda in the support provided. This influence is seen as a threat to CS independence and their own initiatives and runs counter to the concept of vibrant CS being a public good or '*end in itself*'. There is overlap in DP support around a small range of themes with other key issues marginalised or ignored. There is a greater need for dialogue between DPs and CSOs in setting agendas, together with an emphasis on supporting the enabling environment as well as on the provision of flexible funding.

Responsiveness of support to processes: *Support tends to be channelled to formally registered CSOs:* Most DP support is channelled to CSOs themselves as organisations responsible for implementing programmes rather than for supporting processes of change. This is partly because funding regulations require recipients to be registered with Government regulatory bodies. CSO stakeholders felt the need for additional support mechanisms which provide resources for informal and temporary coalitions and networks of small, local issue-based groups CSOs, as well as small responsive grants for unpredictable tipping point moments which occur during policy influencing processes.

A long-term commitment and perspective is needed: Policy dialogue outcomes generally take time and the short-term nature of most forms of DP funding is an impediment to building the capacity as well as the social and political capital needed by CSOs to effectively engage in long-term policy dialogue. DP support to advocacy CSOs, which have earned public credibility and trust needs to be secured and should not be subject to the uncertainties of project funding or changing DP priorities.

Focusing on 'results' may lead to less funds for CSO policy dialogue: The evaluation has confirmed the perception that the current demand for results ends up in valuing service delivery over processes of change (which take longer and are more difficult to measure). It also leads to a normative interpretation of results. The measurements methods generally

used for CS engagement in policy dialogue are more suited to logic-driven, service delivery-type programmes. There is a need therefore to measure '*value added*' rather than value for money or cost-effectiveness criteria for processes which are subject to such political and contextual unpredictability outside the control of CSOs.

Different DP conditions are burdensome for CSOs: Many DPs continue to require CSOs to adopt their own conditions with regard to proposals, monitoring and evaluation and reporting. Even in joint-funded arrangements, CSOs are still often required to report separately which leads to high transaction costs. Furthermore CSOs complain that demands are made of small, informal organisations which are inappropriate and detract time away from their core action.

Evidence building is under-resourced: The need to link resource provision directly with MDG outcomes is widely perceived by CS representatives to have dampened DP support for research and evidence building. CSOs shared their concern about the paucity of resources for independent research as well as for building the capacity of staff to undertake effective 21st century lobbying and advocacy work. DPs have a role to play in demanding high standards of research and supporting an environment where contrasting findings can be debated in public.

DPs need to support confrontational as well as collaborative dialogue: CS action cannot be expected to achieve results simply through collaborative actions with Governments. CSOs have often accused DPs of being too soft on recipient Governments and not speaking out on behalf of CS. Similarly DPs have criticised CSOs for not being outspoken enough in *invited spaces*. It is appreciated that DPs operate at the invitation of the host Governments, but DPs should put more effort into examining ways in which they can support controversial issues indirectly rather than side-step them completely.

A reduced connectedness by DPs to grass roots reality: Both CSOs and DPs note that the way aid is managed currently puts huge demands on individual DP officers and it is clear that DP officers are less likely to visit projects and ordinary people than in the past. DP staff need to understand the dynamics of the wider CS in order to advocate on their behalf for appropriate measures such as *invited spaces* and freedom of expression and the current working modalities limit this exposure.

DP accountability is poor in host countries: There is greater perceived accountability of DPs to their own (northern) Governments and taxpayers than to the host country.

As a result, much of the information gathered from the CSOs on DP policy and strategy in the country case studies was based largely on perception and speculation. Although much has been triangulated by discussions with DPs and documentary review, there remains the issue that information about DP policies and practice regarding CSO support is not publicly available and/or accessible in sufficient detail in-country. It was concluded that CSOs had a right to demand greater accountability and to be given more opportunities to engage in policy dialogue matters directly with DPs.

The importance of DP non-financial assistance: The evaluation found that DPs have successfully provided a number of non-financial means of supporting CSOs.

- When a particular theme is highlighted by international conventions and endorsed by international agencies as well as the recipient Governments.

- The diplomatic relationships which DPs retain with recipient Governments are important avenues to ensure political priorities remain focused especially during political transition.
- Through brokering international CS exchange (between international and national CSOs) on capacity building, knowledge sharing and collaborative action.
- DPs can play a key role in the promotion of the role of CSOs to the public of the host country.

It was concluded that DPs should be more aware of the positive impact of non-financial support they provide and ensure it is clearly portrayed as an important contributory element of the overall support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is implicit in these recommendations that changes and enhancements to the support processes will evolve through stakeholder consultation and dialogue. The recommendations are divided into those targeted at both DPs and CSOs (national and international); at national Governments and DPs; those aimed at DPs; then CSOs. Overall, three common elements stand out:

- the need to better understand and accommodate the complex dynamics of policy dialogue processes;
- the need to better understand and support the enabling environment for CS engagement in policy dialogue; and
- the need for better financial and evaluation instruments for supporting and assessing CS engagement in policy dialogue.

Recommendations for DPs and CSOs

Prioritise and communicate themes and issues for policy dialogue

Targeted at: Joint DPs forums, DP Country Offices, policy makers, CSO umbrella organisations and networks CSOs to make more effort to promote local and contextual needs to DPs:

And DPs to become more responsive to these rather than allowing global priorities dominate, to achieve a more balanced support for areas of policy dialogue in line with local priorities.

CSOs need to be proactive in identifying and communicating the important issues: For example, important governance, development, poverty and environmental issues should be championed by CSOs, and communicated more effectively (and more innovatively) to DPs.

DPs to support emerging CSOs with new ideas: In addition to support provided to CSOs with a track record, support should be provided to those promoting alternative ideas, playing watchdog roles and raising critical voices.

More appropriate expectations of CS engagement in policy dialogue and improved monitoring and evaluation

Targeted at: Joint DPs forums, policy makers, DP Country Offices, and CSO umbrella organisations and networks

In relation to the measurement of process and outcome indicators of DP support, it is recommended that DPs (working with CSOs) develop monitoring assessments that:

- Identify and use outcome and results indicators which measure a vibrant CS and the CSO contribution to this (to satisfy the claim that a strong CS is an '*end in itself*').
- Develop good-quality process tracking tools which CSOs can use to demonstrate their direct contributions to policy dialogue which are both public and behind the scenes.
- Draw up and disseminate standards of good practice for measuring changes including standards for quantifiable perception studies as well as for qualitative evaluations.
- Develop good documentation (knowledge management) within CSOs and DPs using web/cloud-based storage systems.

It is recommended that evidence of change is reported and publicised in ways which are appropriate to this type of investment, e.g. where there is public trust in the core competence of any particular CSO, it may be sufficient for it to provide annual audited reports and short narratives of its activities and contributions.

DPs should balance their predominant accountability to their own parliaments and public with accountability to those of the country they support. Information about their funding decisions and how they assess achievement should be made publicly accessible. DPs should explain and justify their support particularly in the sensitive area of policy dialogue.

Likewise, CSOs need to balance their predominant accountability to the DPs with improved accountability to their own constituency (if they have one) and the public at large.

Recommendations for both DPs and national Governments

DPs and national Governments to be more proactive in influencing the enabling environment for policy dialogue

Targeted at: Joint DPs forums, policy makers, DP Country Offices, and relevant government departments providing coordinating or regulatory framework for CSOs

DPs, in dialogue with national Governments to encourage enhancements of the enabling environment more generally including the **CSO regulatory environment**, and the adoption of general **democratic principles** systematically across all sectors, specifically to include:

- *Invited spaces*: directly promote the establishment of *invited spaces* for CS and CSO engagement as a matter of principle in all sectors. These include consultation spaces within development programmes (e.g. planning, annual reviews), in statutory oversight bodies, parliamentary standing committees, commissions (e.g. for human rights, information etc.) and local-level planning and budget review meetings.
- *Continuous monitoring*: Ensure continuous monitoring of the actors and processes of engagement within these spaces with built in opportunities for adjustments.
- *Actions to enhance freedom of speech and access to information*: Through legislative change and compliance with legislation.
- *Provide support to regulatory bodies*: provision of direct support to government CSO regulatory bodies so that they transform into institutions which promote and encourage rather than control and restrict third-sector participation.

- *Make resources available for contemporary platforms for engagement:* e.g. training and exposure to contemporary platforms including: e-governance, productive use of social network and other internet-based forms of CS-State interface.

Recommendations for DPs

Carry out regular contextual and political economy analyses at country level to provide the basis for a systems approach for action

Targeted at: Joint DP forums, policy makers

A country level contextual and political economy analysis should be undertaken at least every five years by **independent research organisations** and are jointly commissioned. The analyses would aim to identify the range of CS action including emerging CS actors and provide a basis for more nuanced **systems** approach for action by CSOs, and support by DPs.

Identify new funding instruments and modalities

Targeted at: Joint DPs forums, finance departments, DP Country Offices

DPs should undertake a more radical re-think of funding approaches, engaging CSOs and INGOs in this process. The recommended political economy study will inform this process, but the needs are likely to include small funds, unrestricted funds, flexible and agile response funds, funds for processes and funds which support the *right to initiative*.^[1]

It is recommended that new funding modalities focus on three types of need:

1. *Long-term support:* DPs funding arrangements which take on a longer-term perspective in order to achieve sustained behaviour change outcomes. Core funding to trusted CSOs should be continued (and expanded where appropriate) for long-term advocacy support.
2. *Specific targeted support:* Funding modalities which are designed to support well-orchestrated action around a single legislative objective e.g. Domestic Violence Act in Mozambique, Right to Information Act in Bangladesh (policy change outcomes).
3. *Opportunistic right moments:* Funding which can be mobilised quickly to respond to seizing 'right moments' to raise issues in the public domain or influence decision makers and these are rarely predictable.

Support for (1) and (2) may be provided through 'project type' funding and is likely to be a mix of support to *invited* and *claimed spaces*. It is recommended that DPs agree to accept that these funding arrangements even though they may incur higher costs.

Provide funds for public access resources, events and processes

Targeted at: Joint DPs forums, finance departments, DP Country Offices

Resources for All: It is recommended that the new funding modalities also address the issue of support to organisations, movements and spontaneous activism which cannot (or prefer not to) be registered but which contributes importantly to policy dialogue to enable (1) off-setting the closure of many small fund windows; (2) provision of resources for local agenda,

'risky' actors and issues; and (3) support to a wider range of CS action including small episodic actions which increasingly prevail.

Specifically it is recommended that DPs examine the potential for the *Resources for All* (or public access to resources approach which are primarily web-based). Such information might include advice about organising action, lobbying, or running campaigns. It side-steps the issue of meeting funding eligibility criteria and has the potential for providing a more '*level playing field*' for a diverse range of CS actors.

Enhanced support to independent media and independent journalism

Targeted at: Joint DPs forums, policy makers, DP Country Offices

It is recommended that DPs provide an enhanced level of support to the media, building on DPs recognition of their key role in policy dialogue and the use CS can make of this channel of communication. This would augment the support some DPs have provided in journalism training, commissioning media coverage of issues, supporting TV chat shows and debate.

Fundamental is the regulatory framework within for the media. The cases show that this is often under threat of increasing state controls. DP support, both in terms of finance and voice, to protect the independence of the media is critical.

Invest in CSO capacity building

Targeted at: Joint DPs forums, policy makers, DP Country Offices

DP support should devote more resources to empower CSO *capacity to engage in policy dialogue*, with a change made to budget directives, so that capacity-building allocations are not linked to a formulaic percentage of total investment (CS programmes being often relatively resource light). The recommendation here includes the need for a major shift in the approach, which would address the importance of up-grading these skills and capacities by investing in capacity building and equipping for *21st century advocacy* (e.g. state-of-the-art computers, internet, mobile telephone and other technological innovations which facilitate information gathering and real-time monitoring of policy dialogue and practice).

Advice could be channelled through a 'Resources for All' window, but also by encouraging interaction between CSOs in developed and developing countries, (e.g. placements of young professionals, exchange visits, mentor arrangements etc.). It is also recommended that volunteers and interns from DP countries under various existing schemes, including corporate social responsibility initiatives, bring their technological expertise to CSO as well as broker effective technical assistance linkages between CSOs in the DP's country, and CSOs in partner countries.

Invest in building capacity among DP staff, particularly in Country Offices

Targeted at: Joint DPs forums, policy makers, DP Country Offices

Improved DP staff with CS engagement experience: It is recommended that DP staff, in particular those in country offices improve their knowledge management in CS engagement processes through appropriately-designed immersions and in-country orientations.

Reduce Staff turnover: Turnover of staff should be reduced, and where new staff are engaged, sufficient time should be provided for hand-over among colleagues.

DP staff, CSO and INGOs to be better connected to the grass roots: And to people living in poverty particularly as the pace of change is accelerating.

Recommendations for CSOs

(A) Operational recommendations

Targeted at: CSO/NGO forums, individual CSOs

CSOs to continue and expand their programmes to educate citizens

It is recommended that CSOs continue and expand their support programmes of educating citizens. This should focus on the need to promote in the young a sense of community responsibility and an awareness of the role CS can play in society, and in this context in particular how it can influence policy.

CSOs to make more use of social media

It is recommended that CSOs actively plan on how best to make most effective use of this technology which is fast penetrating even remote and poor regions and communities. The role of DP support in this instance is seen as one of facilitating strategic thinking among CSOs and their constituents by provide funding for research, workshops and strategy development with follow-up funding of pilot projects resulting from this process.

Improve evidence gathering and research

It is recommended that CSOs seek support to develop skills to commission, use, and critique research studies, and build the evidence case to support informed engagement in policy dialogue. Additionally this support will enhance the credibility and respect granted to CSOs and in turn improve their effectiveness in influencing change.

(B) Organisational and governance recommendations

Targeted at: CSO/NGO forums, CSO/NGO networks (national and international)

Empower CS at grass roots level to take action themselves

It is recommended that CSOs facilitate the process of empowering CS organisations at grass roots level and groups most directly affected by government policy (or perhaps lack of it). This implies supporting the empowerment of the local representatives of the constituents, and follows a radical shift in the strategic thinking of some CSOs. Thus, this approach draws on local motivation and commitment to change and builds capacity to ensure local compliance when new laws and policies are made.

Develop effective strategic alliances

CSOs should develop strategic alliances to harness the range of skills needed for effective policy dialogue and create a critical mass for change. The range of possible alliances includes research bodies, lawyers, media as well as diversity of CSOs including unconventional partners.

In parallel, much can be achieved for national CSOs from greater connection with international CSOs such as Open Forum and BetterAid Forum. Keeping up-to-date with the provisions they have negotiated for DP-CSO relationships will allow for closer monitoring of these at ground level (where translation into practice often lags or becomes distorted).

CSOs to build public confidence in their policy engagement work

Adopt Quality Assurance Standards: CSOs should promote the wider use of codes of practice and Quality Assurance standards as ways to build public confidence in their organisations. The CSO community needs to ensure that its public image is maintained and that the highest levels of transparency and accountability are upheld not only as individual organisations but collectively.

It is also recommended that CSOs:

- Demonstrate the importance of public consultation *themselves*;
- continuously remind Governments to listen to the diverse demands of citizens;
- publicly stand up against abuses of freedoms of speech and association;
- find ways to include political parties (as distinct from Governments) as integral parts of CS in policy dialogue processes; and
- promote the integrity and relevance of the CSO community by encouraging transparency, insisting on public disclosure of financial accounts, adherence to codes of conduct and other means to build public trust in these institutions.

[1] I.e. the right for CSOs to identify their agenda and modus operandi independently of DP policy, priorities and strategy.