

Questions&Answers on the Process
“Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of Civil Society Organisations
as Development Actors”¹

This Q&A has been drafted by the CONCORD Secretariat based on discussions held in Brussels, Nairobi and Ottawa². Its purpose is to gather some initial responses to the many questions raised by CSOs and donors in reaction to the concept note “Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of Civil Society Organisations as Development Actors” circulated in late February 2008. It is designed as a tool to give preliminary orientation ahead of the exploratory meeting on CSO effectiveness in Paris on 29 and 30 June 2008. Any comments regarding this Q&A can be sent to cso-effectiveness@concordeurope.org.

| | |
|--|---|
| CLUSTER 1: The basics | 2 |
| What will be addressed by this process? Why do CSOs want to address their effectiveness as development actors? What should be the results of this process? Who can participate? Who is proposed to facilitate the process? When will this process unfold? How will this process work? Will this process have mandatory consequences for all CSOs in development? Is this process purely technical or does it also have a political dimension? | |
| CLUSTER 2: Questions related to involved actors..... | 3 |
| Who is concerned by the CSO Effectiveness process? What is the Global Facilitation Group (GFG)? How is it composed? Why are CONCORD, InterAction and other national and regional platforms so strongly involved in the process? Why does this process rely so heavily on national and regional platforms? What are the roles, opportunities and challenges for national CSO platforms? | |
| CLUSTER 3: Questions related to other processes on aid/development effectiveness | 4 |
| How does the CSO Effectiveness process relate to the Parallel Process led by the International Steering Group (ISG) and other ongoing global processes addressing the effectiveness of development actors? How does this process relate to existing processes addressing CSOs' own effectiveness? How does this CSO process relate to other development actors? | |
| CLUSTER 4: Questions related to relations with official donors, in particular in light of the Accra High-Level Forum (HLF) | 5 |
| To what extent will the HLF in Accra and its results influence the CSO Effectiveness process? Will CSOs sign up to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (PD)? Will there be an institutionalised political dialogue between the CSO Effectiveness process and donors and governments? | |
| CLUSTER 5: Questions related to organisation..... | 6 |
| What will be the working method of the process? How will the local, regional and global dynamics be interconnected? Will the issue of Northern CSOs as donors be addressed? What are the objectives of the exploratory meeting on CSO effectiveness in Paris on 29 and 30 June and who will participate? Who receives information on the CSO Effectiveness process? Is the concept note “Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of Civil Society Organisations as Development Actors”, circulated in February 2008, a final document? | |
| CLUSTER 6: Questions related to the background and underlying principles of the process | 7 |
| Where should this process lead to? What are its possible outputs? Where does this process stem from? Why do we call this process “Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of CSOs as Development Actors”? Which are the possible principles of CSO effectiveness? Why do we launch this process now? | |
| CLUSTER 7: Questions related to the funding of the process | 8 |
| What is the role of CONCORD in fundraising and financial management for the process? What is the role of the European Commission? | |
| CLUSTER 8: Outstanding questions..... | 9 |

¹ To make the text more readable, hereinafter referred to as “CSO Effectiveness process”

² Consultations under the auspices of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness: Northern Regional Workshop on CSO Aid Effectiveness (Brussels, 15-16 October 2007), North-South Civil Society Dialogue (Nairobi, 15-16 November 2007), International Forum on Aid Effectiveness and Civil Society (Ottawa, 3-6 February 2008)

CLUSTER 1: The basics

What will be addressed by this process?

This process will address the effectiveness of CSOs as development actors. A number of concrete issues have been identified by CSOs as influencing their effectiveness, in particular during the consultations held under the auspices of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness. These issues could serve as starting points for this process³.

Why do CSOs want to address their effectiveness as development actors?

Official donors have signed up to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (PD) in March 2005. Consultations carried out by the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG) led to the conclusion that the PD and its five principles, while an important initiative for the reform of aid architecture, are not applicable as such to CSOs⁴. In order to agree on a global framework to address their effectiveness as development actors, CSOs will therefore have to develop their own principles to improve effectiveness and to set up a relevant and inclusive process to carry out this work.

What should be the results of this process?

At the global level: It is proposed that the process results in an agreement on principles on CSO effectiveness shared by all CSOs in development and on guidance to implement these principles.

At the regional level: When relevant, CSOs - through their regional platforms - can decide to carry out specific activities, such as the exchange of good practices, the development of concrete mechanisms (subsidiarity with national levels!) and peer reviews. Global principles could be adapted and further defined (for instance Northern CSOs as donors).

At the national level: Through their national platforms (where existing) or ad hoc networks, CSOs are able to develop specific (capacity building) instruments to address CSO effectiveness.

At the individual level: The final output of all these processes should allow individual CSOs to improve their effectiveness.

Who can participate?

All CSOs engaging in development work can contribute via their national or regional platforms or through their networks.

Who is proposed to facilitate the process?

A Global Facilitation Group (GFG) composed of 25 mandated representatives from CSOs and CSO networks/platforms is proposed to facilitate the global process. The GFG will be representative in terms of geographical regions (in particular North/South), gender and types of CSOs.

When will this process unfold?

The process is divided into two phases: During the preparatory phase up to December 2008, CSOs will create the necessary enabling conditions for the process. The substantive work to deliver the expected results will then be carried out in the main phase of the process up to December 2010.

³ See, for instance, the following documents: Overview Report on the Hanoi Consultations for East Asia, Central Asia and the Pacific (9-12 October 2007); Report on the North-South Civil Society Dialogue (15-16 November 2007); Minutes of the Informal Side-Meeting during the International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (Ottawa, 6 February 2008); some of these and other relevant documents are available on www.realityofaid.org or <http://www.ccic.ca/e/002/aid.shtml>

⁴ See Report of the CSO Aid Effectiveness Northern Regional Workshop (Brussels, 15-16 October 2007)

How will this process work?

The process will build upon existing initiatives and processes on improving the effectiveness of CSOs as development actors on the local, national and regional levels and within individual CSOs and CSO networks/platforms. It will aim at proliferating these initiatives and processes further, and will also provide a global platform where all these initiatives and processes can feed in, in order to inform the proposed agreement on principles suitable to guide CSOs in their efforts to improve their effectiveness as development actors.

Will the process duplicate ongoing work?

No. It fills a gap, as there is not yet an initiative to address CSOs' own effectiveness at a global level and in an inclusive manner.

Will this process have mandatory consequences for all CSOs in development?

This process is supposed to set overarching principles which can apply to all CSOs active in development, while respecting the diversity of CSOs. It is also supposed to provide guidance for CSOs to implement these principles. However, this process can not have the ambition to produce outputs which will be automatically applied by and to all CSOs. This would contradict the voluntary character of civil society.

Is this process purely technical or does it also have a political dimension?

As this process is underpinned by the concept of development effectiveness – a concept which transcends the technical nature of the aid effectiveness agenda – it includes a strong political dimension. Political elements include the promotion of a rights-based approach in development, of participatory democracy and of the empowerment of citizens and civil society vis-à-vis their governments. Empowerment will be one of the benchmarks against which development effectiveness will be measured. Further adding to the political dimension of the process is the fact that it will probably decisively forge civil society's position in the political arena in the years to come.

CLUSTER 2: Questions related to involved actors

Who is concerned by the CSO Effectiveness process?

All CSOs active in development are potentially concerned. In addition, the process will have indirect repercussions on right-holders and on the manner CSOs and donors/governments interact with each other.

What is the Global Facilitation Group (GFG)? How is it composed?

The GFG is a group of mandated CSO representatives that will facilitate the CSO Effectiveness process at the global level.

After a call for interest, launched on 29 February 2008, a preliminary GFG has been created which currently includes ten CSO representatives⁵. The mandate of this preliminary group is limited to preparing the exploratory meeting on CSO effectiveness in Paris on 29 and 30 June 2008. In Paris, this group will give way to the actual GFG that will facilitate the process up to December 2010. The GFG will be balanced in terms of gender, geographical regions (in particular North/South) and types of organisations. Its 25 members will be selected among the Paris participants.

⁵ Conny Lenneberg (ACFID - Australian Council for International Development), Ulf Rickardsson (APRODEV - Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe), Charlotte Imbert (BOND – British Overseas NGOs for Development), Liz Steele (CARE International), Brian Tomlinson (CCIC - Canadian Council for International Cooperation), Andreas Vogt (CONCORD – European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development), Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil (Coordination SUD – French National NGDO Platform), Sylvain Browa (InterAction – American Council for Voluntary International Action), Tony Tujan (IBON Foundation), Jan Dereymaeker (ITUC – International Trade Union Confederation)

Why are CONCORD, InterAction and other national and regional platforms so strongly involved in the process?

On 6 February 2008, at a side meeting during the International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness in Ottawa, CSO representatives invited CONCORD to lead the process, and CONCORD proposed to share this leadership with InterAction and other regional and national platforms⁶.

Why does this process rely so heavily on national and regional platforms?

In order to maximise the impact of the process, it must be judged legitimate by stakeholders and therefore be founded on actors having a high degree of legitimacy within civil society. Representation, expertise and accountability are among the criteria that determine the legitimacy of a CSO network/platform, and these same criteria underpin the important role that national and regional CSO platforms have in facilitating the process.

What are the roles, opportunities and challenges for national CSO platforms?

The role for CSO platforms is to trigger and facilitate national, regional and thematic sub-processes and to link their CSO members to the process. Furthermore, CSO platforms can represent their constituencies where direct involvement of individual CSOs is difficult.

This process is a challenge for CSO platforms because it (1) concerns an issue which may affect and possibly exceed the mandate of many platforms; (2) requires firm agreement between the platforms and their constituencies; and (3) could provide a peer mechanism in which national platforms can have a high degree of responsibility.

The process is an opportunity because it can lead to strengthening the relevance of national CSO platforms, as CSOs will turn to their platforms when looking for advice in matters related to development effectiveness. It will also be an opportunity because the process and its results will make it more difficult for governments not to recognise CSOs as development actors. By leading the process, CSO platforms will be able to strengthen their significance and assert their legitimacy in society.

CLUSTER 3: Questions related to other processes on aid/development effectiveness

How does the CSO Effectiveness process relate to the Parallel Process led by the International Steering Group (ISG) and other ongoing global processes addressing the effectiveness of development actors?

The ISG Parallel Process and other global processes on aid effectiveness have created the momentum for this process and given evidence of the need to address CSOs' own effectiveness. However, while these existing processes target primarily the effectiveness of governments and official donors, the CSO Effectiveness process is entirely focused on CSOs' own effectiveness. The CSO Effectiveness process is therefore not directly linked to these ongoing processes (though there is some overlap and strong coordination among the actors involved).

How does this process relate to existing processes addressing CSOs' own effectiveness?

CONCORD and its partners are well aware that there are a number of existing processes/initiatives addressing CSO effectiveness at the local and national levels and also within CSOs and international CSO networks. One of the first exercises that will be carried out within the CSO Effectiveness process is to map all these existing processes/initiatives.

The CSO Effectiveness process is an inclusive process that will operate at the global level. As such, it will build upon, include and promote existing initiatives/processes. Furthermore, it will aim at promoting and triggering relevant processes where no such initiatives have been initiated thus far.

What will be the link to the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG)?⁷

⁶ See Minutes of the Informal Side-Meeting during the Ottawa Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (6 February 2008)

The link with the AG will have to be determined by the AG itself and together with the AG. This will probably depend on the outcome of the High-Level Forum in Accra and can therefore not be defined yet. Currently, most of the CSOs represented in the AG are members of the Global Facilitation Group.

How does this CSO process relate to other development actors?

This process includes a wide range of actors: trade unions, NGOs, some think tanks, a smaller number of political foundations, grass roots and gender organisations, social movements etc. So far, private businesses, consultancies, local authorities and big international foundations are not participating in this process. This question is yet to be addressed.

CLUSTER 4: Questions related to relations with official donors, in particular in light of the Accra High-Level Forum (HLF)

To what extent will the HLF in Accra and its results influence the CSO Effectiveness process?

CSO effectiveness will play a certain role in the Accra High-Level Forum:

- There will be considerable input by the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness through a Synthesis Report, a Good Practice Paper and a Good Practice Case Book. These documents will also address the effectiveness of CSOs as development actors.
- One of the nine roundtables during the Forum will be on the "Role of Civil Society in Advancing Aid Effectiveness". Its purpose is to, inter alia, bring forward a number of recommendations about how the effectiveness of CSOs can be enhanced.
- The Accra Agenda for Action⁸ that will be endorsed by the Accra HLF will contain language on a stronger involvement of civil society in the official government/donor process. In all likelihood, CSOs will play a more important role in the official donor/government process after Accra.

It can therefore be expected that the deliberations during the Accra HLF and its results will provide valuable input into the CSO effectiveness process.

Also, CSOs could decide to use the Accra HLF (and also the CSO Forum on Aid Effectiveness that takes place immediately before the HLF) as an opportunity to voice and address specific issues related to CSOs' effectiveness as development actors.

Will CSOs sign up to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (PD)?

While CSOs welcome the intention of the PD signatories to improve the technical and management dimensions of aid effectiveness, they do not consider the PD, its five principles or their interpretation applicable as such to them⁹. It is precisely for this reason that CSOs have to embark upon a dedicated process towards agreeing on their own principles to improve their effectiveness as development actors.

Will there be an institutionalised political dialogue between the CSO Effectiveness process and donors and governments?

Today, there are two main channels of dialogue between civil society and official donors and governments on the effectiveness of development actors: the Parallel Process led by the International Steering Group and the multi-stakeholder Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG).

The proposed CSO Effectiveness process will not duplicate existing work and thus not engage in political dialogue with donors on aid effectiveness. However, there will certainly be periodic exchange on the progress of CSOs' own effectiveness with donors/governments where this seems relevant.

⁷ The AG is a multi-stakeholder group composed of three representatives each from official donors (Canada, France, Norway), recipient country governments (Nicaragua, Rwanda, Zambia), CSOs from the North (ActionAid International, Canadian Council for International Cooperation, CONCORD) and CSOs from the South (Afrodad, Reality of Aid, Third World Network). It has a very diverse mandate, including issues relevant to the effectiveness of CSOs as development actors.

⁸ The draft is available on www.accrahlhf.net

⁹ See Report of the CSO Aid Effectiveness Northern Regional Workshop (Brussels, 15-16 October 2007)

The exploratory meeting on CSO effectiveness in Paris on 29 and 30 June 2008 is supposed to come up with concrete proposals on mechanisms and dates for such an exchange. The AG could play a specific role in facilitating this dialogue in case its mandate is extended beyond Accra.

CLUSTER 5: Questions related to organisation

What will be the working method of the process?

Thematic, national and regional processes will have to feed into the global process. This will ensure that principles will not be imposed top-down, but emanate from the field level.

How will the local, regional and global dynamics be interconnected?

A first step in interconnecting all levels will be achieved by the mapping of existing initiatives and processes of CSOs to improve their effectiveness. Depending on the availability of funding, an expert meeting to discuss the mapping and its results will be organised in the second term of 2008. Outreach, transparent communication and capacity building shall also help link all levels together. Moreover, an interactive web site on CSO effectiveness could be a useful tool in this respect.

Will the issue of Northern CSOs as donors be addressed?

The role of Northern CSOs as donors is planned to be one of the regional/thematic sub-processes.

What are the objectives of the exploratory meeting on CSO effectiveness in Paris on 29 and 30 June and who will participate?

The objective of the meeting in Paris is to set the course for the process up to December 2010, including:

- Get endorsement for the criteria, composition and mandate of the Global Facilitation Group that will facilitate the process up to December 2010.
- Develop a work plan and terms of reference for the process until 2010.
- Discuss and update the concept note "Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of Civil Society Organisations as Development Actors".

Participation will be open to mandated representatives from international, North/South, regional and national platforms, thematic networks and CSOs, with preference given to those having a proven interest or strong background in CSO effectiveness (specific selection criteria are yet to be defined). Based on past experience, and subject to logistics and availability of funding, between 50 and 100 participants are expected.

Who receives information on the CSO Effectiveness process?

Based on participation lists for the consultations carried out under the auspices of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness in Ottawa, Brussels and Nairobi, the CONCORD Secretariat has established a mailing list which currently contains about 180 individuals from CSOs from the North and the South. These individuals regularly receive updates on new developments regarding the CSO Effectiveness process.

Is the concept note "Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of Civil Society Organisations as Development Actors", circulated in February 2008, a final document?

No, it is a working document which will be updated based on the deliberations to be held during the exploratory meeting on CSO effectiveness in Paris on 29 and 30 June 2008. The final version of the concept note will be circulated after the Paris meeting and endorsed by the Global Facilitation Group prior to the Accra HLF.

CLUSTER 6: Questions related to the background and underlying principles of the process

Where should this process lead to? What are its possible outputs?

The Paris Declaration will expire in 2010. By the fourth High-Level Forum, proposed by the draft Accra Agenda for Action for December 2011¹⁰, global civil society should be in a position to discuss with donors/governments a more ambitious agenda than the Paris Declaration, where all development actors would agree on principles of development effectiveness which respect the diversity of all actors. In order for civil society to prepare for this, CSOs plan to develop during the period 2008-2010 of the CSO Effectiveness process:

- A set of principles regarding the effectiveness of CSO as development actors. These principles will be different from those enshrined in the Paris Declaration, so as to reflect the diverse roles CSOs play in development. Moreover, these principles will be based on the concept of development effectiveness, a concept that goes beyond the concept of aid effectiveness used by governments and official donors.
- Mechanisms to enhance the individual and collective effectiveness of CSOs as development actors will be promoted, discussed, compared and analysed. At the global level, CSOs will share best practices and explore peer and compliance mechanisms and mutual accountability.
- Effectiveness of CSOs is explicitly addressed by a large number of CSOs around the world. Individual CSOs, networks and national and regional platforms are enabled to actively participate in the promotion of principles and mechanisms.
- Donors and governments will be provided with sufficient elements to strengthen their recognition of the roles and voice of CSOs as development actors in their own right.

Where does this process stem from?

In 2005, official donors and recipient governments signed up to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, where they agreed on five principles¹¹ to address their effectiveness as development actors. Civil society became officially involved in this process in January 2007 when the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG) was created (see footnote 7). While CSOs welcome the intention of the PD signatories to improve the technical and management dimensions of aid effectiveness, they do not consider the PD, its five principles and their interpretation applicable as such to them¹². During the International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, held in Ottawa from 3 to 6 February 2008, CSOs proposed therefore to launch a CSO-driven process for establishing principles and tools to frame and promote their effectiveness as development actors¹³.

To whom is this process accountable?

The process is politically accountable through CSO networks and platforms to individual CSOs, citizens, right-holders and, to a certain extent, to governments and other official donors. It is financially accountable to all stakeholders.

Why do we call this process “Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of CSOs as Development Actors”?

This is a process addressing the effectiveness of CSOs as development actors. It does not address the effectiveness of donors and governments. The concept framing the process is “development effectiveness”, which goes beyond the concept of aid effectiveness enshrined in the Paris Declaration. While the latter is perceived by civil society as being a narrow and technical agenda designed to govern official aid, “development effectiveness” is much broader in scope and frames effectiveness in terms of the impact

¹⁰ The draft Accra Agenda for Action is available on www.accrahlf.net

¹¹ The five principles are: Ownership, Alignment, Harmonisation, Managing for Results, Mutual Accountability.

¹² Report of the CSO Aid Effectiveness Northern Regional Workshop (Brussels, 15-16 October 2008)

¹³ Minutes of the Informal Side-Meeting during the Ottawa International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (6 February 2008)

development has on poor and marginalised communities and territories. It therefore reflects more properly the diverse roles CSOs play in development. Aid effectiveness can be conceived as a part of development effectiveness.

Which are the possible principles of CSO effectiveness?

The consultations under the auspices of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness¹⁴ came up with a first set of principles guiding CSO effectiveness as development actors:

1. CSO actions are focused on poverty eradication and the promotion of human rights: social solidarity with people claiming their rights;
2. CSO actions are people centered: they strive to empower individuals and communities, strengthen democratic ownership and participation;
3. CSO actions are based on approaches rooted in the practice of International Human Rights (Rights based approach) and the promotion of Social Justice;
4. CSO actions are based on genuine and long term partnerships, respect and dialogue, acknowledging at the same time the importance of CSO diversity in democratic practice;
5. CSO actions strive to have sustainable impact and results, based on social processes of empowerment and mutual learning;
6. CSOs ensure their own effectiveness through the continuous enhancement of their:
 - Transparency
 - Accountability at all levels (to right-holders, governments, donors, peers, their constituencies, and the public)
 - Autonomy from States
 - Coordination

Why do we launch this process now?

The High-Level Forum in Accra (2-4 September 2008) has created strong momentum and, together with other ongoing processes such as the ISG Parallel Process and the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, raised awareness for the need for CSOs to address their own effectiveness as development actors. Civil society would like to use this unprecedented 'window of opportunity', to trigger a process which, according to one CSO representative, "could be the largest collective initiative ever undertaken by CSOs".

CLUSTER 7: Questions related to the funding of the process

What is the role of CONCORD in fundraising and financial management for the process?

CONCORD has been asked by CSO participants in Ottawa to facilitate the launch of the CSO Effectiveness process and has therefore circulated the concept note for the process to donors having expressed their interest¹⁵. CONCORD has also, upon request from the governments of Austria, France and Spain, prepared an application form that covers the preparatory phase of the process until December 2008. This application form was circulated to Austria, France and Spain in late April. Furthermore, CONCORD, fulfilling its role as a co-leader of the process, will ensure financial management of the preparatory phase under the oversight of the Global Facilitation Group.

At the exploratory meeting on CSO effectiveness in Paris in June 2008, CSO participants should agree on the governance and the management of the process. For the time being, CONCORD has no mandate from its Board and members to carry on any financial or political responsibility beyond the High-Level Forum in Accra on 2-4 September 2008.

¹⁴ Inter alia the Northern Regional Workshop on CSO Aid Effectiveness in Brussels (15-16 October 2007) and the North-South Civil Society Dialogue in Nairobi (14-15 November 2007)

¹⁵ The concept note was circulated to the European Commission and to the governments of Sweden, Norway, Austria, France, Spain and the Netherlands. The concept note was also received by Switzerland. Representatives to the OECD from the Italian and Canadian governments, present during the International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness in Ottawa, have also received it.

Why has CONCORD approached only some particular donors?

CONCORD has circulated the concept note "Framing and Promoting the Effectiveness of CSOs as Development Actors" only to donors which expressed their interest in receiving further information on the CSO Effectiveness process during the International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness in Ottawa.

What is the role of the European Commission?

EuropeAid informally accepted to coordinate responses to the concept note from interested and potential donors present at the International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness in Ottawa.

CLUSTER 8: Outstanding questions

- Should the CSO Effectiveness process engage with the private sector, local authorities, consultancies or big international foundations? If so, how?
- How can we ensure full integration and active involvement of organisations from the South?
- How can we ensure gender balance in the process and in particular in the Global Facilitation Group? How do we ensure the full and explicit integration of gender into the process?
- How can we ensure the active involvement of practitioners and programme managers in the process?
- How do we ensure the long-term commitment of CSOs to the process?
- What kind of document should be developed from the concept note (an updated version, an application form for donors)? Should it be translated? If so, who will bear the costs?
- In case there will be no funding provided by governments/official donors, who will bear the costs for the meeting in Paris (29 and 30 June 2008)?