

BACKGROUND NOTE 4

THE OPEN FORUM: HOW IS IT GOVERNED BY CSOs? HOW IS IT FUNDED? WHAT IS ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CSO BETTER AID PLATFORM?

DETERMINING AND MANAGING THE OPEN FORUM PROCESS

The Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness, launched at the June 2008 CSO Exploratory Conference, is an ambitious process mobilizing a wide range of CSOs, CSO networks and international NGOs (INGOs). The aim of the Open Forum is to establish an *International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness*. One of the outcomes of the Exploratory Conference was the selection of a representative governing body for the Open Forum. This **Global Facilitating Group** (GFG) is comprised of 25 member networks, platforms and INGOs from around the world (see Annex 1).

The GFG co-chairs, Azra Sayeed (Asia Pacific Women and Law in Development, based in Pakistan) and Deepali Sood (Plan International based in Brussels), were elected in March 2009 for a one year renewable term. CCIC (Brian Tomlinson) is a member of the GFG and has participated in the development of the Open Forum concept, work plan and financing documents.

The GFG, having met twice (Kuala Lumpur and Prague) as of September 2009, has already defined its organizational structure and mandate. It has developed a two-year work plan for the Open Forum process, coordinated engagement with donors and inter-governmental bodies and undertaken negotiations with official donors on financial contributions to and participation in the Open Forum.

A **Consortium** of six CSOs has been mandated by the GFG to provide daily administrative and programmatic support (see Annex 2). The European CSO platform, CONCORD, is responsible for overall coordination of the GFG and the Consortium. CONCORD is also coordinating the European Open Forum process. Four regional networks are responsible for integrating regional and country-level consultations into the process – the All African Conference of Churches, the Latin American Association of Development Organizations (ALOP), the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN), and InterAction (for North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand). CIVICUS, in its capacity as an international CSO network of global reach, is tasked with involving international NGOs (e.g. OXFAM International, World Vision International, etc.) in the process.

Consortium members with a regional mandate will be given resources to organize outreach, communication and other support to CSOs in their region. More specifically, the Consortium members are expected to help implement country level consultations, raise awareness and mobilize CSOs around issues related to CSO development effectiveness.

THE GLOBAL FACILITATION GROUP

The GFG will meet biannually to monitor and provide direction for the implementation of the Open Forum work plan. Together with the Consortium, the GFG will also monitor the results and quality of the consultations, identify and address problem areas, and draw lessons and conclusions from the consultation process. The GFG will ensure that consultation results are synthesized and used to build a commonly owned CSO development effectiveness framework. Finally, the GFG will lead, at the international level, a dialogue and exchange process with official donors, governments and other non-CSO development actors.

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

An Outreach Toolkit is available on the Open Forum web site (www.cso-effectiveness.org). The web site will also post reports from Open Forum–sponsored consultations, activities and other relevant initiatives and processes. CSOs can contribute to the Open Forum newsletter where information on CSO experiences of development effectiveness will be shared.

FINANCING THE OPEN FORUM

The Open Forum has a two-year budget of US\$3.6 million for the global process. This budget will fund 50 country-level consultations in the South, two Global Assemblies, and support multi-stakeholder dialogues. Northern platforms and INGOs are expected to raise and contribute their own resources for additional consultations and engagement with the Open Forum in the North. CCIC has sought funding for the Canadian process through the Canadian Partnerships Program of IDRC.

The financing of the global budget has been negotiated through an innovative pool funding arrangement with a consortium of donors. All donors in the consortium have agreed to the same financing and reporting terms outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding. This pooled fund arrangement covers the work of both the Open Forum and the Better Aid Platform. The Better Aid Platform is coordinating global CSO monitoring of the implementation of the *Paris Declaration*, CSO participation in the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, and multi-stakeholder preparations for the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF4) to be held in Seoul, South Korea, in October 2011.

THE OPEN FORUM AND THE BETTER AID PLATFORM

The Better Aid Platform and the Open Forum are two distinct, yet complementary global CSO-led processes (see Box 1). More than 700 CSOs have come together globally to form the Better Aid Platform. The Platform is coordinated by a 30-member Better Aid Coordinating Group (BACG). Whereas the Open Forum focuses on how CSOs can improve their effectiveness as development actors, the role of the BACG is to monitor and influence the implementation of the *Accra Agenda for Action* (AAA). BACG's aim is to broaden the aid effectiveness agenda of the HLF4 to a development effectiveness agenda with a focus on democratic ownership. BACG is co-chaired by Tony Tujan (IBON Foundation) and Cecilia Alemany (AWID). Tujan and Alemany are also the CSO members of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness.

Both the Open Forum and the BACG will look at enabling environments / conditions for development effectiveness. The Open Forum / GFG will explore how conditions, set by donors, governments and other development actors, affect CSO development effectiveness, while BACG will, more broadly, address issues related to an enabling environment, as part of its focus on democratic ownership. The Better Aid Platform and the Open Forum are mutually reinforcing processes. To the extent to which the Open Forum addresses the conditions under which CSOs participate in the development process, it contributes to the BACG agenda of promoting democratic ownership as a fundamental or enabling condition for development effectiveness.

The Open Forum and BACG processes will build on CSO-led country and global consultation. Although each process has its distinct objectives, the Open Forum and Better Aid Platform will coordinate in organizing dialogue with official donors, governments and possibly other development stakeholders. These two streams of CSO engagement will be managed to maximise the efficient use of resources and minimize burdens on all development actors. There is some cross-membership between the GFG and BACG and the co-chairs of each process will meet regularly to share information. CCIC is a member of both the GFG and the BACG.

THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORK STREAM ON CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

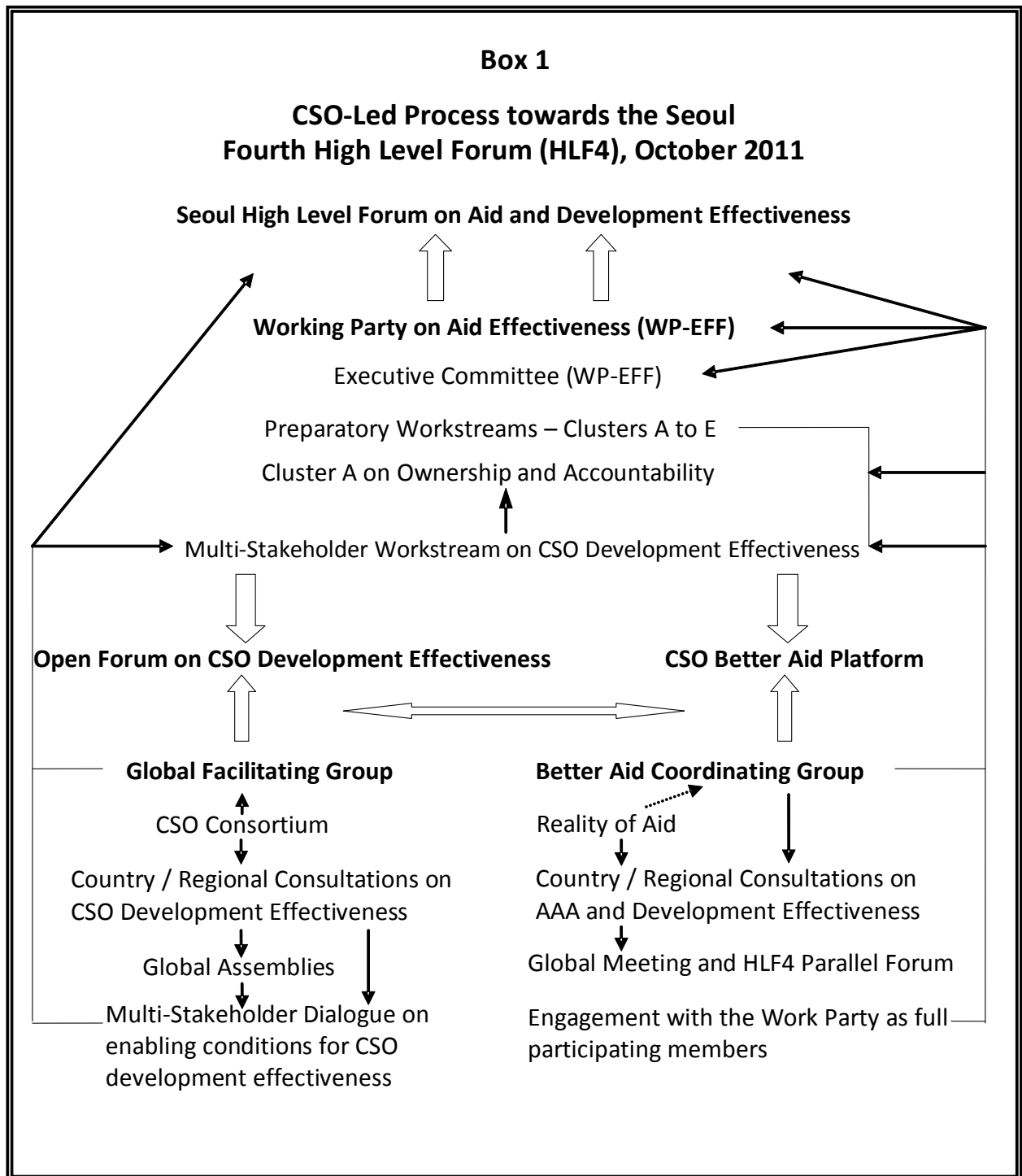
Under CIDA's leadership the multi-stakeholder Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness worked on issues of CSO participation in and outcomes for the 3rd High Level Forum (HLF3) held in Accra in 2008. The Advisory Group's mandate ended at the HLF3. The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), with the support of CIDA, has now brought together donors, developing country governments and CSOs to form a multi-stakeholder Workstream on CSO Development Effectiveness and the Enabling Environment. The Workstream, initiated in early 2009, is focusing on the implementation of civil society relevant clauses of the *Accra Agenda for Action* (AAA), particularly paragraph 20 (Background Note 2, *The Open Forum: Vision, Objectives and Expected Outcomes*). The Workstream is also looking at recommendations from the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness. The Workstream is co-chaired by SIDA, the Office of the President of Mali and CCIC (Brian Tomlinson).

Currently, representatives from 17 donor countries, 3 developing countries and 8 CSOs (from both the GFG and the BACG) support the work of the Workstream. Based on a mandate derived from paragraph 20 of the *Accra Agenda for Action*, Workstream objectives include:

1. Translating CSO-relevant AAA commitments into measurable benchmarks to track progress;
2. Promoting and analyzing pilot programs implementing commitments relating to CSO found in the AAA and coming out of the 3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness;
3. Supporting and encouraging participation in the CSO-led *Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness* and country-level implementation of the AAA (including a pooled funding mechanism for this work);

4. Promoting and tracking progress on an enabling environment for CSO development effectiveness; and
5. Sharing analysis of donor models of support that enable CSO development effectiveness.

The Workstream is part of the preparatory processes for the 2011 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, under Cluster A (ownership and accountability) of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness. It is the expectation of CSOs that the Workstream will, both formally and informally, enable stronger donor and government participation in the CSO-led Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness and BACG multi-stakeholder processes. BACG's overall focus on enabling conditions complements the Open Forum's mandate to negotiate a multi-stakeholder agreement on minimum enabling conditions for CSO development effectiveness.



ANNEX 1

OPEN FORUM GLOBAL FACILITATING GROUP MEMBERS

Africa (4)

Federation of NGO Platforms of Mali (FECONG) (www.fecong.org)
African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD) (www.afrodad.org)
Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) (www.cspr.org.zm)
Network of National NGO Platforms of Western and Central Africa (REPAOC) (www.repaoc.org)

Asia (4)

South Asian Network for Social and Agricultural Development (SANSAD) (www.sansad.org.in)
IBON International (IBON) (www.international.ibon.org)
Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) (www.aprnet.org)
People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS) (www.foodsov.org)

Europe (3)

European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD) (www.concordeurope.org)
Nordic+ Group (KEPA and ForumSud) (www.kepa.fi)
European Union Presidency Group (www.fors.cz)

Latin America and the Caribbean (3)

Latin American Association of Development Organisations (ALOP) (www.alop.or.cr)
Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social Bolivia (UNITAS) (www.redunitas.org)
Coordinadora Civil de Nicaragua (CC) (www.ccer.org.ni)

Middle East and North Africa (1)

Arab NGOs Network for Development (ANND) (www.annd.org)

North America (2)

InterAction – American Council for Voluntary International Action (www.interaction.org)
Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) (www.ccic.ca)

Pacific (1)

Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) (www.acfid.asn.au)

International CSO Networks (6)

Plan International (www.plan-international.org)
CARE International (www.care-international.org)
International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (www.ituc-csi.org)
Action by Churches Together (ACT) (www.actdevelopment.org)
Caritas Internationalis and CIDSE (www.caritas.org and www.cidse.org)
CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation (www.civicus.org)

Women's Organisations (1)

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APFWLD) (www.apwld.org)

ANNEX 2
OPEN FORUM CONSORTIUM MEMBERS

| Organization | Region |
|---|---|
| All African Conference of Churches (AACC) | Africa |
| Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) | Asia |
| European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD) | Europe and Consortium Lead Organization |
| InterAction – American Council for Voluntary International Action | North America and Pacific |
| Latin American Association of Development Organisations (ALOP) | Latin America and the Caribbean |
| CIVICUS – World Alliance for Citizen Participation | International NGOs |