

DEFINITIONS

DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

“[Development effectiveness is] promoting sustainable change that addresses the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty, inequality and marginalisation, i.e. it is change that reduces poverty, that empowers citizens and builds capacity within communities, civil society and government to address their own development priorities.”

Conny Lenneberg, Paris Exploratory Meeting Report, June 2008

PRINCIPLES OF CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Underlying values and qualities of social and organisational relationships that promote development in which those living in poverty, the vulnerable and marginalised populations, may more ably claim their rights.

OUTLINING THE ISSUE

The Open Forum aspires to generate key principles directly applicable and underpinning CSO development effectiveness. These should define fundamental “standards” or “values” conditioning and permeating CSO identity as actors for development change, what they stand for, how they work and the external conditions that affects the impact of this work.

A set of principles of CSO effectiveness were identified by participants at the “Northern Regional Workshop on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness”, held in Brussels in October 2007:

1. CSO actions are people-centred: they strive to empower individuals and communities, strengthen democratic ownership and participation.
2. CSO actions are poverty-focused: solidarity with people claiming their rights.
3. CSO actions are based on human rights and social justice.
4. CSO actions are based on genuine and long-term partnership, respect and dialogue, acknowledging diversity.
5. CSO actions are striving for sustainable impact and results, based on social processes and mutual learning.
6. CSOs ensure their effectiveness through continuous enhancement of their transparency, accountability in all its dimensions (to right-holders, governments, donors, peers, public), autonomy from the states, coordination.

Another set of principles defining CSO effectiveness was developed by participants at the “North-South Civil Society Dialogue” meeting, held in Nairobi in November 2007. The workshop divided into Northern and Southern participants to identify the following key principles:

Principles of Northern CSOs		Principles of Southern CSOs	
1.	Development <i>not</i> aid effectiveness		Bias for poorest, more marginalised
2.	Partnership by Equality		Social Justice
3.	Mutual Accountability – Human Rights		Transparency
4.	Shared Vision – Trust		Social Solidarity
5.	Social Justice – Transparency – Dialogue		Equality
6.	Commitment – Diversity		Democracy
7.	Solidarity – Empowerment – Autonomy		Gender Equality
8.	Common Values		Traceability of Finances
9.			Solidarity
10.			Participation
11.			Inclusion
12.			Mutual respect and accountability
13.			Learning and sharing
14.			Independence from political mainstreaming

Effectiveness can have different meanings for different actors, in different contexts and on different levels. As evident from the Nairobi workshop, effectiveness may have different interpretations by Southern and Northern CSOs as well as in different sectoral, thematic and cultural contexts. While the Open Forum process is intended to identify principles relevant to CSO development effectiveness in many different country contexts, the principles illustrated above may provide a useful starting point for these consultations.

It is important that all principles for CSO development effectiveness be grounded in an appreciation of challenges facing CSOs if they are to genuinely guide their way of working and contribute to continual improvements in CSO development practice. Some possible CSO challenges for achieving development effectiveness are outlined below.

- **Demonstrating legitimacy, safeguarding autonomy and representativeness:** Any principles, and ensuing guidelines, will need to reflect the complex multi-dimensional nature of CSO legitimacy and representativeness. They will also have to be based on the recognition that CSOs are development actors in their own right.

- **Working to realise CSO goals as development actors within an external enabling environment:** Recommendations on minimum standards, and guidelines, for an enabling environment for CSOs should set the benchmark for multi-stakeholder dialogues in the run up to the Fourth High-Level Forum in 2011.
- **Recognising that CSOs are political agents for social change and the centrality of human rights in understanding development effectiveness.** Principles of CSO development effectiveness will have to capture the political dimension of CSO work in development as well as take into account the diversity of CSOs.
- **Mainstreaming women's rights and gender equality:** Realising gender equality and women's rights are a pre-condition for development effectiveness. This should be reflected in any principles of CSO development effectiveness.
- **The centrality of genuine, equitable relationships (partnerships) based on mutual accountability and social solidarity:** These core CSO values must continue to guide CSO partnerships, particularly between Northern and Southern CSOs. Any principles will have to reflect these values. But the principles should also address different relationships in CSO development interventions, whether at local, country or global level.
- **Clarifying and developing accountability mechanisms responsive to CSO primary constituencies:** CSOs should demonstrate their effectiveness primarily to poor and marginalised populations. The challenge is to develop mechanisms that may engage these primary constituents in assessing development results as well as holding donors, governments and CSOs alike to account.
- **Making funding sustainable for local and democratic ownership:** Discussions on CSO development effectiveness principles will necessarily have to take into account the role of CSOs as donors, exploring North / South and South / South CSO relations.
- **Engaging with other development actors – including governments and donors-within a changing aid architecture:** This essential aspect of the nature of CSO work must be reflected in development effectiveness principles as well as in discussions on minimum standards for an enabling environment.

There is no right or wrong way to go about defining principles on CSO development effectiveness. If there are to be principles that are widely applicable they need to make use of inclusive, simple, accessible and encompassing language. A distinction of three different types of principles may be useful.

- **Aspirational:** These principles focus on what civil society actors want the world to become through their development actions. They capture their development vision(s) and their mandate.
- **Operational:** These principles focus on how CSOs must operate, guiding their day-to-day work in implementing projects and programmes on the ground, guiding partnerships and relations with other CSOs, other stakeholders and constituents.

- **Impact related:** Principles can define the impact that CSOs seek to bring about in people's lives according to their mandate, in terms of empowerment, realising human rights and sustainable change.

It is essential that, while being aspirational, principles can be translated into standards against which CSOs can develop guidelines, can hold themselves accountable and that can be easily, and transparently, monitored. In support of the goal of the Open Forum to reach consensus on guiding principles, it will be important that principles identified during consultation workshops be ranked by participants in order to clearly show their level of importance.

SOME GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Taking account of the draft principles outlined above, what are the values and principles (aspirational, operational and impact-related) underpinning the work of your organisation and / or the CSOs in your country / region / sector? How do they relate to your organisation's mission statement and / or mandate?
2. What words would you use to define your organisation's effectiveness?
3. How are your values and principles translated down into the organisation in terms of its day-to-day operations and relationships?
4. How do the most important principles identified in your consultation address the impact of external actors conditioning CSO development effectiveness?

USEFUL RESOURCES

Exploratory Meeting on the Effectiveness of Civil Society Organisations – Meeting Report, Paris, June 2008. Available at: <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-Advisory-Group-on-Civil-Society-.html>

Lenneberg, C. (2008) – “Update on issues and principles for CSO effectiveness”. Available at: http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/Conny_Lenneberg.pdf

Reality Check August 2008, “Civil Society and Development Effectiveness: Another View”, Canadian Council for International Cooperation and Asociacion Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promocion. Available at: <http://www.realityofaid.org/rcheck.php>

Report of the “North-South Civil Society Dialogue”, sponsored by the Advisory Group on Civil Society Aid Effectiveness, Nairobi, November 2007. Available at: <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-Advisory-Group-on-Civil-Society-.html>

Report of the “Northern Regional Workshop”, sponsored by the Advisory Group on Civil Society Aid Effectiveness, Brussels, October 2007. Available at: <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-Advisory-Group-on-Civil-Society-.html>