

Funding proposal: Summary

Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness

Project duration: 1 June 2009 – 31 December 2011

1. Background and Justification

CSOs acknowledge that there are significant challenges to their effectiveness that stem from their unique roles and responsibilities in international development and in the international aid architecture. These challenges are different from those faced by governments and official donors. While CSOs have developed a multitude of tools and mechanisms to promote their development effectiveness at the level of individual organisations, platforms or coalitions, they have not yet defined or assessed their effectiveness as a stakeholder group.

In the absence of a global framework for CSO development effectiveness, the question of applying the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to CSOs came up. However, given that the Declaration focuses on aid effectiveness from the perspective of official donors and governments, CSOs consider that it responds to the challenges to CSO development effectiveness only partially.

Consequently, CSOs resolved to come together in a dedicated CSO-led process to collectively define and promote their development effectiveness as a stakeholder group, in dialogue with official donors and governments. The process, called the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, was launched in June 2008 at the Exploratory Meeting on CSO Effectiveness in Paris.

2. General and Specific Objectives

The Open Forum is an international, consensus-based CSO process that seeks to address key internal and external factors affecting the effectiveness of CSOs as development actors. Specifically, the Open Forum seeks to:

1. Develop and promote a framework for CSO development effectiveness, to include a set of principles, indicators, implementation guidelines, good practices for accountability mechanisms and minimum standards for enabling conditions.
2. Facilitate a learning environment on CSO development effectiveness.
3. Engage in a political dialogue with donors, governments and other stakeholders to build understanding and support for an enabling environment for CSOs. This engagement is aimed at resulting in an agreement between all stakeholders on a set of minimum enabling conditions critical to the effectiveness of CSOs as development actors.

3. Strategies and Activities

The Open Forum provides a holistic approach towards defining and promoting CSO development effectiveness. The Open Forum is holistic in terms of actor involvement, as it seeks to involve all different types of CSOs from the North and the South. The Open Forum is also holistic in terms of the agenda it seeks to address, as it is not only interested in the efficient management of aid, but in a number of issues that affect CSOs' capacities and abilities to bring about positive sustainable change in the lives of the poor and marginalised (development effectiveness not aid effectiveness).

Strategies

1. Inclusive and representative CSO consultations will provide learning opportunities and enable the Open Forum to solicit the views from CSOs from different backgrounds on the proposed CSO development effectiveness framework.
2. Multi-stakeholder dialogue and exchange at country, regional and international level will build support and understanding for an enabling environment for CSOs. Discussions will address particularly minimum standards for enabling conditions for CSO actions. The multi-stakeholder Working Group on Civil Society Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment is expected to play a facilitating role in this respect.
3. Joint learning from past experience through research and analysis to harness this existing expertise and experiences, the Open Forum will organise a research programme to map existing initiatives and provide preliminary analysis.
4. Facilitating consensus-building: The Open Forum cannot and does not want to impose a global framework on civil society top-down. It will therefore build ownership of the proposed CSO development effectiveness framework among the widest possible range of CSOs.
5. Communication and outreach: All efforts need to be accompanied by awareness raising and/or capacity building activities as appropriate.
6. Gender equality and women's rights: As an essential aspect of CSO development effectiveness, gender and women's rights will be integral part of the consultation process.

Activities

- 50 country consultations with an average number of 30 CSO representatives each
- 4 thematic or sectoral consultations in the following priority areas: CSOs in situation of conflict; gender and women's rights; trade unions, social movements of the most marginalised
- 5 regional preparatory workshops to build CSO capacity in all world regions
- 2 Global Assemblies to finalise and facilitate consensus-building on the proposed framework
- Outreach and consensus-building activities, such as participation in relevant seminars and conferences, information exchange, knowledge sharing
- Multi-stakeholder consultations in particular with official donors and governments
- Research and analysis on existing mechanisms for CSO development effectiveness
- Analysis and policy formulation to draw lessons from consultations
- 1 High-Level Leadership Forum, gathering senior managers of CSOs to build their support for the proposed framework
- Monitoring and evaluation activities on an on-going basis
- Meetings of the Global Facilitation Group, to monitor and evaluate the consultation process
- Information and dissemination activities (inter alia through www.cso-effectiveness.org)

4. Expected Outcomes and Outputs

Outcomes

1. A common understanding, shared by CSOs from around the world, of the challenges to realising CSO development effectiveness.

2. Increased accountability for principles of CSO development effectiveness.
3. Increased awareness and knowledge of existing tools and mechanisms to promote CSO development effectiveness.
4. Partnerships to promote development effectiveness among CSOs and between CSOs and other development stakeholders.
5. Understanding and support among official donors, governments and possibly other development stakeholders for an enabling environment for CSOs.

Outputs

1. A global framework for CSO development effectiveness including a set of principles, indicators, implementation guidelines, good practices for accountability mechanisms and minimum standards for enabling conditions.
2. A minimum number of 50 country, 5 regional, 4 thematic/sectoral and 2 international consultations (Global Assemblies) between 2009 and 2011.
3. A research project on prior frameworks and mechanisms of CSO development effectiveness.
4. A proposal for minimum standards for an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder endorsement at the fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.
5. Engagement in multi-stakeholder dialogues and negotiations in the lead-up to and at the fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness and in other fora that will shape the aid and development effectiveness agendas after 2010.

5. Organisation, Staffing, Administration

Global Facilitation Group

The Global Facilitation Group is a group of 25 member organisations that were nominated and accepted by more than 70 representatives of CSO platforms and networks from around the world at the Exploratory Meeting on CSO Effectiveness in June 2008 in Paris. It is an international body to provide oversight, coordination, leadership and visibility to the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness.

Consortium

A Consortium of six CSOs was mandated by the Global Facilitation Group to implement and manage the Open Forum work programme. The Consortium includes the following organisations: All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN), CIVICUS, European NGO Confederation for Development and Relief (CONCORD), InterAction, Latin American Association of Development Organisations (ALOP).

CONCORD will act as financial manager and programme coordinator, and will need three full-time staff equivalents in the first 12 months of activity and 2.5 full-time staff equivalents afterwards. Other Consortium members will need one full-time staff equivalent to meet its responsibilities within the first 12 months of activity and one half-time staff equivalent afterwards.

6. Budget

The budget requirements of the Open Forum amount to \$ 3.589 million (€ 2.991 million) between June 2009 and December 2011.