

Regional Report on Consultations in
North America and Oceania

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I. Introduction

A. Purpose and Objectives

This Open Forum region includes the countries of Canada and the United States in North America, and Australia, New Zealand and the island nations in the Pacific Ocean. This report includes information on where and when consultations have taken place in the region and synthesizes results achieved in these consultations regarding CSO development effectiveness principles, implementation guidelines, performance indicators, accountability mechanisms. It also includes results from engagement with government representatives in each consultation on key elements for an enabling environment for CSO development work.

B. Consultations Held

Dates, locations, and total participants in consultations are included on the next page. Australia is the one country in the region that did not hold an Open Forum consultation using the same format as all others. The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) has been engaged in a national-level process that was used to contribute to the Open Forum process and its outcomes. Workshops and consultations on key elements of development effectiveness were held in July 2010 and focused on human rights-based development and CSO accountability to communities with whom ACFID members work.

ACFID's development effectiveness work has been informed by a Development Effectiveness Framework resulting from a wide consultation process and from a 2010 review of its Code of Conduct. To conduct this review, ACFID consulted with a wide range of aid and development CSOs and the Australian Government. Through this process, Australian CSOs have identified effective aid and development principles, obligations and guidance. These principles are included in Section II of this report.

Consultations Held in North America and Oceania

Dates	Place	CSO Platform	No. of Participants*	Type of Consultation
March 16-18, 2010	Gatineau, Quebec, Canada	Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)	118	National
April 14-15, 2010	Suva, Fiji	Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO)	37 (estimate)	National
May 5-7, 2010	Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga	PIANGO	30 (estimate) from 12 countries	Regional
May 12-13, 2010	Wellington, New Zealand	Council for International Development (CID)	46	National
April 27, 2010, May 26-27, 2010, June 9, 2010	Washington, DC and Seattle, Washington	American Council for Voluntary International Action (InterAction) and Global Washington	100	National

*Number includes CSO representatives, government representatives and any others attending the consultation.

C. Characteristics of the Consultations

Representatives of civil society organizations involved in the consultations were enthusiastic about the opportunity to come together to discuss the work of their organizations and to discuss and debate the various elements of the development effectiveness framework. For the most part, organizations represented were non-governmental organizations (NGOs). No social movements were represented. Representatives of labor unions or the labor union movement who participated included five in Canada, two in Tonga and one in the US.

In the consultations in Fiji and Tonga, the vast majority of CSOs represented were Fijian or Pacific Islander. Only two international NGOs were represented in either of the consultations (Church of Latter Day Saints and Save the Children in the Fiji consultation).

In all five consultations, senior or mid-level government representatives participated. In Fiji and Tonga, representatives of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) spoke as well. In Tonga, the Minister for Finance, Planning and

Development opened the consultation; the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and an adviser to the Prime Minister spoke later. In Canada, the President of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) spoke as did the Vice President of the Canadian Partnership Branch of CIDA and the Deputy Director of the Democracy and Governance Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. In the United States, the counselor to the Administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) gave the morning keynote address devoted to the enabling environment. The Special Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor at the Department of State, and the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance at USAID both gave panel presentations. In New Zealand, the Director of the Strategy, Advisory and Evaluation Group of the International Development Group of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs spoke. In Fiji, a representative of the Ministry of Provincial Development spoke.

Although governments were represented in all five consultations, in countries where CSOs presently are experiencing an unfriendly government environment, participation by these representatives was limited. For example, in Canada, both the President of CIDA and the Vice President of the Canadian Partnership Branch of CIDA took some questions but were unable to discuss the current issues and difficulties CSOs were encountering with the Government as at that stage the Government had not provided any CSO policy guidance. In New Zealand, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade made a presentation about the Government's current orientation to development but had difficulty justifying its approach to skeptical CSO participants.

D. Value of the Consultations to CSOs in Particular Countries

The opportunity to hold a national or regional consultation in the countries of this region carried with it special benefits in all cases. For PIANGO, the consultations were, in a certain sense, a lifeline. PIANGO had been on the brink of collapse a year ago due to poor accountability (due to a lack of capacity) and defunding by donors, as a result. This was coupled with the change in funding priorities of the New Zealand government. The platform members wanted to resuscitate PIANGO and were fortunate to engage Emele Duituturaga as Interim Executive Director on a volunteer basis for a year. However, with very little funding, it was difficult for PIANGO to regain its footing. The opportunity to participate in the Open Forum and to hold two consultations enabled PIANGO to re-energize itself, bring its members together for the discussions on development effectiveness and the enabling environment, and to chart a way forward for the membership and the platform.

Given the funding crises and difficulties with the governments in both Canada and New Zealand, the Open Forum consultations were times when the membership of CCIC and CID could meet, discuss their predicaments, gain strength from one another and make plans going forward. Part of the Open Forum consultation is engaging with government which gave each platform and its members the opportunity to hear from their

governments about their thoughts regarding CSOs, their orientation toward development and to become more informed about CSO perspectives on the future and what to expect.

For the US, the Open Forum consultation represented the first time in several years that the US community of CSOs had the opportunity to come together to discuss development effectiveness principles as part of a global process and to see how their thinking has evolved over these years. Changes in roles of CSOs in industrialized countries and their growing commitment to rights-based development have led to more enthusiastic embrace of certain concepts such as local ownership.

For Australian CSOs, the engagement in the Open Forum is providing them with an opportunity to share their work on key aspects of CSO effectiveness, including rights-based development and accountability to the communities CSOs are working to assist, as well as to benefit from discussion with CSOs from other countries.

E. Political Context of the Region and the Environment for CSOs

The North America and Oceania region comprises four industrialized democracies (Australia, Canada New Zealand and the United States) and numerous island states in the Pacific Ocean including nations in Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia.

While four of the countries in the region are industrialized democracies, the political context for CSO development work at the present time is different in each country. In Canada, where CSOs and their government historically have enjoyed a relationship through which they openly debated development policies for many years, regardless of the party in power, the current Canadian government has signaled that it does not want the policy dialogue with CSOs that existed in the past. They have intervened increasingly to ask CSOs to remove language related to human rights and advocacy from programs submitted for government funding. The Canadian Government has stopped funding several Canadian CSOs that work on advocacy, human rights and gender equality. For some groups that work on gender equality, they have been asked to frame their work using language focusing on children and youth. Perhaps most damaging to the CSO community as a whole, was in July 2010, when the government ended its long-standing funding relationship with CCIC, thereby reducing the platform's budget by 75% and necessitating drastic lay-offs and reductions in operations. The Government is emphasizing focus, efficiency and effectiveness in its development operations and has made a narrow list of 20 priority countries for funding, reducing the number of African countries by half and adding some middle income countries instead.

In New Zealand, the Government cancelled its core funding agreement with CID in January 2010, resulting in an 80% decrease in CID's budget and reducing its staff level to 3 persons. The current political environment is uncertain and CSOs have had very limited consultation with their government in recent times regarding policy development. CSOs feel there is now a lack of a respectful partnership with the government and that the Government does not value what they do. The Government's orientation seems to be shifting more toward a core focus on the Pacific and sustainable economic development.

This new orientation has also impacted on the withdrawal of NZAID funding for human rights and gender equality programs in the Pacific Islands.

In the United States, the CSO community is emerging from several years when the US Government was engaged in a limited way with CSOs and provided little funding through them. Several onerous security regulations were put in place in the years following the attacks on the US on September 11, 2001 that require US CSOs to collect information on their local staff in certain developing countries and on local CSOs with whom they work. With a new presidential administration in place, the CSO community is experiencing a revitalized interest in CSO engagement by the Government on a variety of development topics. The Government also has expressed its desire to reform the way it does development work including procurement reform that may mean a return to more direct engagement with CSOs. Whereas most government funding was channeled through contractors in the past several years, this may now change to provide funding through CSOs once again, as had been the case in the more distant past. However, security regulations remain in place and few actual changes have yet occurred. While CSOs are hopeful, they remain concerned at the slow pace of reform.

Australia seems to be enjoying the most positive relationship between its government and CSOs in the region although it remains to be seen whether the recent election in late August 2010 will change that. ACFID negotiated a partnership agreement with its government in 2009. The agreement describes a joint commitment by the government and CSOs to work closely to increase Australia's impact in promoting sustainable development and outlines a number of shared principles of cooperation.

Turning to the Pacific Islands, there are varying degrees of openness to CSOs, depending on the particular nation. In Fiji, a military takeover occurred in December 2006 and continues to this day. Parliament was dissolved following the coup, and in 2009, the Constitution was suspended. In July 2009, Fiji was the first nation ever to be expelled from the Pacific Islands Forum because of its failure to hold elections by that date. Subsequently, in September 2009, Fiji was expelled from the Commonwealth because of its refusal to hold elections by 2010. This political atmosphere makes it extremely difficult for CSOs to operate. These tensions seemed apparent in the Fiji national consultation for the Open Forum, in particular regarding the advocacy of human rights and democracy. Most discussion focused on CSOs and their efforts to improve their accountability and performance. There was almost no discussion on the role of government. The main message from the government representative was the expectation that CSOs should commit themselves to the government's integrated rural development approach through community mobilization prior to implementation of government projects. As stated in the consultation report, "He highlighted the need for CSOs to strengthen their linkages with government departments through engagement and provision of information on CSO projects and programmes at divisional level." (p. 14)

In the Kingdom of Tonga, ruled exclusively by the King until now, the country will undergo political reform in November 2010. A newly-formed Parliament will be established and elections will be held on November 25, 2010. The King is then expected

to devolve his authority to the elected Parliament and government. The Tongan Government had engaged with the CSO platform, the Civil Society Forum of Tonga in working on the reform process, and the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development opened the PIANGO regional consultation.

Other Pacific Island nations whose CSO representatives attended the consultation in Tonga represent a spectrum of political arrangements. Some island nations such as Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Samoa are parliamentary republics. The Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea are constitutional monarchies. The Cook Islands is a self-governing democracy and is in free association with New Zealand. This means Cook Islanders are nationals of New Zealand.¹ Niue is also in free association with New Zealand and lacks full sovereignty.² American Samoa is still a part of the United States, and French Polynesia remains an overseas territory of France. All of these island countries have CSO platforms called National Liaison Units (NLUs) that share information, coordinate CSO activities and conduct advocacy. Engagement with government varies from island to island. Samoa has an activist CSO platform that engages regularly in advocacy towards its government. The Tuvalu CSO platform created the Tuvalu Climate Action Network (TUCAN) that advocates for a more assertive political stance by Pacific Islands governments on climate change. Populations vary, ranging from less than two thousand in Niue to well over six million in Papua New Guinea, the largest Pacific Island country.

II. Principles of CSO Development Effectiveness

On the following page can be seen the principles chosen in each of the six consultations in the region (and includes the work of ACFID in its own process which will be referred to as a consultation in this report). Australia had as few as eight principles, Canada and Tonga had nine, Fiji had ten, the US had 12, and New Zealand had 14. For the principles chosen in Canada and New Zealand, they are listed in order of priority according to consultation participants, with #1 as most important.

¹ [www.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook_Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cook_Islands)

² [www.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niue)

Australia	Canada	Fiji	New Zealand	Tonga	United States
1. Sustainable, fair and equitable solutions that address the root causes and symptoms of poverty and disadvantage.	1. Embody gender equality and women's rights.	1. People-centered, holistic development.	1. Respect for human rights.	1. Preserve key cultural values, particularly in the context of the spirituality of the region.	1. Strive for positive results and do no harm.
2. Accountability to all stakeholders for performance and integrity.	2. Are people-centered and responsive.	2. Focus on climate change and ecological justice.	2. Effective development prioritizes the most vulnerable.	2. People-centered, holistic and sustainable development that envisions and nurtures a Community of God's creation for a prosperous and compassionate Pacific.	2. Utilize a rights-based approach to development.
3. Build creative and trusting relationships with the communities in which they work.	3. Are transparent and held to account.	3. Transparency through effective financial and legal frameworks.	3. Ownership, self-determination and community focused.		3. Promote gender equality and women's rights.
4. Active learning, innovating and continuously improving their aid and development work.	4. Maintain commitment to ecological justice throughout all activities.	4. Good governance and effective leadership.	4. Sustainability.	3. Creation of an enabling environment.	4. Ensure full, fair and inclusive participation and ownership by primary stakeholders in development initiatives.
			5. Respectful partnership.	4. Ownership.	
5. Honesty and transparency in all dealings.	5. Promote global solidarity.	5. Respect, appreciation and nurturing of spiritual and cultural diversity.	6. Environmental responsibilities.	5. Social justice and fairness.	5. Foster and practice mutually respectful and equitable partnerships.
			7. The Treaty of Waitangi.		
6. Respecting, protecting, promoting and fulfilling internationally recognized human rights including civil and political, economic, social and cultural rights, with particular emphasis on gender equality, protection of children, people with a disability and the rights of minorities and vulnerable and marginalized groups.	6. Build sustained, committed relationships based on mutuality, shared mission and common goals.	6. Ownership, national and civic pride.	8. Sharing power.	6. Good governance, effective and accountable leadership.	6. Strengthen capacity for local ownership and leadership of development activities.
			9. Strengths-based approach.	7. Promotion of Democratic Practices.	
	7. Facilitate and build strategic collaboration.	7. Capacity building, activism and advocacy.	10. Focus on the MDGs.	8. Managing for results.	7. Amplify voices of the poor and marginalized in the U.S. and globally.
			8. Cultivation of an environment of peace, trust and security.		11. Independence and dignity.
7. Environmental sustainability in both aid and development and domestic operations.	8. Promote justice based on appreciation, respect and application of diverse experiences and aspirations.	9. Promotion of sustained dialogue between donor agencies, government and CSOs.	12. Builds on strengths and aspirations.	9. Climate change and ecological sensitivity and justice.	9. Be transparent.
	9. Create and apply knowledge on an ongoing, intentional and reflective manner.				10. Promotion of equal and fair access to employment and health.
8. Strengthening civil society in Australia and the countries where they work.					
			14. Complementarity.		

A. Consolidated Development Effectiveness Principles

Participants in all consultations chose three of the following principles or included language that was close enough to be considered the same principle. The other two principles were chosen by the majority of the consultations.

Commitment to ecological justice. All six consultations chose a commitment to and/or promotion of ecological justice as a principle. New Zealand used the words “environmental responsibilities” and included in their explanation was the implication of ecological justice. Australia used the words “environmental sustainability”. In addition to ecological justice, the US included the concept of environmental stewardship, saying that without nurturing the planet and its capacity to nurture us, we cannot improve the condition of humanity. The consultations in Fiji and Tonga both included a principle on climate change, given the catastrophic implications of a rise in sea level in that region due to carbon emissions worldwide.

Sustainable development, results and impact. Four consultations chose sustainability as a specific principle related to development initiatives beyond the concept of environmental sustainability (Australia, New Zealand, Tonga and the US). In Canada, a principle called for building sustained, committed relationships and in Fiji, a principle called for sustained dialogue between donor agencies, government and CSOs but in neither case did they call for sustainable results overall.

People-centered holistic development. Three of the consultations (Canada, Fiji and Tonga) included a principle specifically calling for people-centered development. New Zealand called for development that prioritizes the most vulnerable and in a separate principle called for self determination and a community focus. The US called for full, fair and inclusive participation and ownership by primary stakeholders, implying a people-centered orientation. Australia included giving priority to the interests of communities in one of their principles.

Ownership. Four of the six consultations included a principle about ownership, and a fifth did so by implication in another principle. In Tonga, New Zealand and the United States, the principle of ownership was defined in similar ways. In Tonga, it was clearly related to development that is grounded in the needs and issues of the people and that allows beneficiaries to achieve their own development goals. In New Zealand, ownership was related to self determination with a community focus, and recognition that local people know best about their needs and aspirations within the cultural context. In the US, ownership meant local ownership linked to leadership by local people and communities in development activities and committed US CSOs to strengthen the capacity of local people to achieve such ownership. In Fiji, ownership was grouped with national and civic pride, not surprising in an environment where people are limited by military control. Canada did not have a principle that focused on ownership per se but in their explanation of the principle on a people-centered approach, they spoke of people’s agency and empowerment to strengthen their participation in the social, economic cultural and political life of their community and nation. Although Australia did not include a

principle that focused on ownership, a principle called for creative and trusting relationships with communities that give priority to their interests and involve them to the maximum extent possible in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects and programs, encouraging self reliance.

Promoting human rights and social justice. Five of the six consultations (all but Fiji) called for either a rights-based approach to development (US), or respect for human rights (New Zealand and Australia) or promoting social justice and fairness (Canada and Tonga). The adoption of this principle, particularly by CSOs in industrialized countries represents an evolution in thinking over time. In the US, for example, ten years ago, a few CSOs were committed to a rights-based approach to development but most were still perceiving their work more in the realm of service delivery, capacity strengthening and advocacy but not acknowledging that development work should be guided by citizens' rights and responsibilities and that citizens are rights holders rather than beneficiaries. Now CSOs in most countries are saying that human rights are the moral norms, and standards of accountability in the struggle for social justice must be met as they provide the potential to alleviate injustice, inequality and poverty.

B. Development Effectiveness Principles without Consensus

Promote gender equality and women's rights. Four consultations chose this as a principle and all four were in industrialized countries. Although impassioned presentations on gender equality were made in the Tongan consultation, no such principle was included, perhaps reflecting the traditional and patriarchal society that was the setting for the consultation. However, gender diversity was included in a principle calling for preservation of key values respecting diversity. In Fiji, there was a presentation made by the National Council of Women but it was on how accountability is practiced in the organization rather than on the purpose of the organization. The Fijian consultation included a principle that calls for respect, appreciation and nurturing of spiritual and cultural diversity. It's possible that "cultural diversity" might imply a focus on gender but, if so, it's likely not to be understood that way by most. At the end of the first day of the consultation in Fiji, diversity and inclusiveness was mentioned as an important theme arising from the day's discussions but gender equality ultimately did not get included as a principle.

Foster and practice mutually respectful and equitable partnerships. Both New Zealand and the US called specifically for such partnerships and Canada called for "sustained, committed relationships based on a mutuality, shared mission and common goals". It is noteworthy that these were consultations in donor countries where CSOs struggle to create equitable relationships with local CSOs they work with in developing countries. The details of Australia's principle on relationships included the need for relationships with partners to reflect mutual respect and support as well as mutually agreed objectives and respective roles and responsibilities. Neither Fiji nor Tonga included such a principle although in Fiji, the CSOs called for promotion of sustained dialogue between donor agencies, government and CSOs. However, they may not have had international CSOs in mind when creating this principle.

Facilitate and build strategic collaboration – or complementarity. In addition to calling for equitable relationships, Canada called for the principle to facilitate and build strategic collaboration and New Zealand called for complementarity. In Canada’s principle, the intention is to promote synergy and coherence to enhance contributions by Canadian CSOs and other actors (presumably stakeholders in addition to local CSO partners) in order to achieve a deeper effectiveness and more durable impact. These same ideas were implied in New Zealand’s principle of complementarity and included the idea of reciprocity and enrichment from being engaged with other actors.

Be transparent. Five consultations adopted principles on transparency (all but New Zealand) although Fiji only called for transparency in effective financial and legal frameworks, and Tonga noted the need for transparency only in the explanation for its principle on good governance, effective and accountable leadership. New Zealand has an extremely transparent political system. Given that access to official information and transparency are generally assumed, this may explain why it was not formally identified as a principle.

Be accountable. Four consultations created a principle on accountability (Australia, Canada, the US and Tonga), although Tonga only called for accountable leadership in the principle, itself, and didn’t include a broader need for accountability. New Zealand and Fiji did not include such a principle. In the case of Fiji, accountability was embraced in the principle about transparency that called for effective financial and legal frameworks, and good governance.

Innovate, adapt and learn. Three consultations, in Australia, Canada and the US created a principle that valued learning from experience, from partners and from other stakeholders; sharing knowledge among partners and other actors; and continued analysis, learning and adaptation in order to achieve the best development results and impact.

Promote global solidarity. In two countries, Canada and the US, a principle was included to educate and mobilize the public in order to encourage donors, decision makers and political leaders to play a constructive role in the fulfillment of the human rights and development priorities of the poor and marginalized. In New Zealand, its consultation included the Treaty of Waitangi as a principle that should serve as a framework through which development practitioners “can recognize the value of different worldviews and knowledge systems other than their own.” While not exactly promoting global solidarity, the inclusion of the treaty reminds New Zealand development practitioners to value different worldviews such as that of Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand.³

³ The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840, was the founding document of New Zealand. It promised the Maori that they could keep their land and would enjoy all rights as British subjects in exchange for their recognition of the sovereignty of Queen Victoria over New Zealand. The treaty was not honored but in recent years, the New Zealand government apologized to Maori and made many settlements with them over

Preserve key values of cultures, particularly in the context of spirituality of the region. Fiji and Tonga included a principle that emphasized the spirituality of the region which is very important throughout the Pacific islands. The principle adopted in the regional consultation in Tonga affirmed the need for Pacific people to “embrace, appreciate, respect and nurture cultural, religious, spiritual and gender diversity and to foster a culture of peace and security”.

Capacity building. This principle was included by Australia, Fiji, and the United States. Australia wrote of strengthening CSOs in Australia and “where we work”, Fiji linked capacity building together with activism and advocacy, and the US focused on capacity strengthening for local ownership and leadership of development activities. Although not including a capacity building principle, New Zealand spoke of the need to “assist and empower” people living in poverty.

Other principles included in the consultations that have not already been mentioned included the following, with the specific consultation noted in parentheses.

- Strive for positive results and do no harm (United States)
- Cultivation of an environment of peace, trust and security (Fiji)
- Promotion of sustained dialogue between donor agencies, government and CSOs (Fiji)
- Promotion of equal and fair access to employment (Fiji)
- Creation of an enabling environment (Tonga)
- Promotion of democratic practices (Tonga)
- Managing for results (Tonga)
- Sharing power (New Zealand)
- Strengths-based approach (New Zealand)
- Focus on the MDGs (New Zealand)
- Independence and dignity (New Zealand)

stolen land. The Treaty has come to exemplify New Zealand’s efforts to have all its citizens live in harmony and enjoy equal rights.

- Build on strengths and aspirations (New Zealand)

III. Implementing the Principles: Standards, Guidelines and Indicators

A. Implementation Guidelines and Performance Indicators

Canada and the United States undertook the most extensive development of implementation guidelines and performance indicators, including several recommendations in both categories for all principles included in their consultations. Australia focused particularly on how to ensure implementation of a rights-based approach to development by creating accountability recommendations that could also be defined as implementation guidelines. New Zealand did some very preliminary work on implementation guidelines and performance indicators. The consultation document included a few implementation guidelines for six principles and a few performance indicators for two of their twelve principles but participants did not have sufficient time in the consultation to complete this work.

In the two consultations where the most extensive work on guidelines and indicators took place (Canada and the US), guidelines for each principle focused primarily on ensuring incorporation of the principle into the constitution and/or mandate of CSOs, into institutional goals and policies, and into programs and practice, including monitoring and evaluation to ensure accountability. Depending on the principle, appropriate tools necessary to incorporate the principle into CSO work were recommended as performance indicators, such as gender impact assessments for gender equality and written negotiated partnership agreements for equitable partnerships between CSOs.

Neither of the consultations in Fiji or Tonga had sessions that examined implementation guidelines and performance indicators. However, the Fiji consultation did extensive work on CSO accountability challenges, including panel presentations on particular accountability issues and further discussion on these issues in plenary sessions. Accountability issues undertaken in the Fiji consultation included the following:

- Information and communication
- Money and finances
- Lack of systems
- Guidelines and regulation for AGM participation and voting
- Reporting system
- Participation, consultation and ownership of strategic plan
- Clash of structures
- Audit problems
- Lack of monitoring
- Managing volunteers

Although the consultation in Tonga did not focus specifically on implementation guidelines or performance indicators, some were included in the explanatory notes for the

principles. For example, for the principle of social justice and fairness, what could be considered an implementation guideline was the need to advocate for gender equity and inclusive representation of groups in policy dialogue and high level meetings.

Specific implementation guidelines and performance indicators are included in each of the national reports of the consultations.

B. Accountability Mechanisms

In all consultations, CSO participants acknowledged the need to focus on and improve accountability mechanisms for CSO development work. However, it should be noted that CSOs in many countries have already spent years carrying out evaluations and research in order to improve their work. Many CSOs have well established monitoring and evaluation departments as an important part of their operations. In addition to program evaluations, CSOs regularly undertake external audits in order to maintain high standards of professional management. (Such audits are generally included as a requirement in codes of conduct that many CSO platforms have in place.) In the Fiji consultation, a significant part of the two-day meeting was devoted to an examination of CSO accountability challenges, including panel presentations and subsequent plenary discussions on how different CSOs practice accountability in their organizations.

The most common accountability mechanisms discussed in the consultations in this region were:

Codes of conduct. CSO platforms in four of the countries of the region (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) already have well-established codes of conduct that have been in place for several years. These codes include standards that are requirements for membership in all instances. Members of the platforms adhere to these standards through a process of self-certification. The codes are regularly reviewed and have been updated over the years. CID in New Zealand is in the process of reviewing its code of conduct to determine what it has achieved in terms of members' experience in development and to see how it can be strengthened in light of the development effectiveness principles discussed in the consultation.

In both the Fijian and Tongan consultations, participants talked of the possibility of developing a code of conduct for PIANGO as a way to improve CSO accountability. As a spin-off from these consultations, PIANGO is in discussions with ACFID about adapting the ACFID Code of Conduct.

Evaluation. Program and project evaluations were discussed in several of the consultations, especially participatory evaluations that involve primary stakeholders and evaluations that emphasize mutual accountability of CSOs to all stakeholders.

Best practices. In many countries, CSOs have been involved in developing and promoting best practices in particular sectors and fields of endeavor for several years. This is in order to improve the design and implementation of development programs and

projects. These may be published and circulated widely in order to assist CSOs in their work. While best practices serve as an important tool in the improvement of development practice, they do not usually carry with them regulations or standards to which CSOs are required to adhere. In the Canadian consultation, *Sphere – the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* was an example of a set of best practices that was examined by participants. With this set of best practices, those who sign on to them are responsible for adjudicating their own adherence to the guidelines.

Peer evaluation. While peer evaluations are a common practice among government donors (conducted through the OECD/Development Assistance Committee), they are quite rare in the CSO community. In three of the consultations (Canada, New Zealand and the US), participants raised them as a mechanism to be explored.

Self-regulating associations. In one consultation (Canada), one such association was explored, the *Canadian Nurses Association*. A member of the association gave a panel presentation on its operation. As the Canadian report states, these “are most relevant to professional groups whose members work in the public or semi-public realm, and to whom governments have ceded a regulatory mandate to adjudicate conduct and to hold members accountable to specific professional and ethical standards. Tools developed include regulatory standards (mandatory) and ethical guideline (aspirational).”

In the US consultation, specific mechanisms for rights-based development (used by the International Labor Organization and other United Nations compliance reporting mechanisms) were mentioned as worthy of exploration, as well as certain mechanisms for promoting global solidarity (e.g. public opinion polling and evaluation of CSO coordination).

In one of the consultations (Canada), the need to develop accountability mechanisms that examine aggregated results of CSO development work at different levels was noted as becoming increasingly important. The CSO sector needs to focus attention on how to demonstrate long-term sustainable outcomes.

Several of the consultations in the region noted the limitations imposed on CSO development work by donor accountability frameworks, especially results-based management. While participants did not argue for their elimination, many called for continuing efforts to make these systems more flexible and dynamic and to augment them with other strategies.

IV. Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Enabling Conditions

Participants at all consultations spent time examining the question of key elements for an enabling environment for CSO development work. As noted earlier, all consultations had government representatives speak at the meetings. Some engaged in discussion and question and answer sessions with CSO participants, and some did not.

There are three categories to consider when examining key elements of an enabling environment for CSO development work:

- A. Elements of an enabling environment provided by a government in any country in the world, regardless of whether it is a developing or industrialized country.
- B. Elements of an enabling environment provided by donor governments to CSOs in the donor country and to CSOs in developing countries (through funding mechanisms);
- C. Elements of an enabling environment provided to CSOs by recipient, or partner, governments in developing countries.

Regarding Category A, (the elements of an enabling environment provided by a government in any country in the world, regardless of whether it is a developing or industrialized country), the following elements of an enabling environment should be present:

- A legal and regulatory framework that enables CSOs to operate freely, that recognizes the right of CSOs to operate and be publicly valued and equal before the law, and that provides fiscal incentives to operate, e.g. exemption from income tax;
- Freedom of association that allows CSOs to operate without fear of intimidation;
- Freedom of expression that enables CSOs to speak out on issues of concern to them, including governmental policies;
- Access to information from government (transparency);
- Opportunities to participate with government in development activities such as participation in the development of the national development strategy and the ability to coordinate and cooperate with government;
- The sovereignty of people and the ability of CSOs to be non-partisan political actors and take stands for people's rights.

As reflected in the consultations in this region, two of the industrialized countries (Australia and the United States) provide all of the elements listed above. However, for US CSOs, several onerous security regulations put in place in the years following the attacks on the US on September 11, 2001, require US CSOs to collect information on their local staff and on local CSOs with whom they work in certain developing countries (e.g. in Iraq and Afghanistan). Such regulations create dangers for US CSOs, their local staff and local partners in these countries.

In Canada and New Zealand today, CSOs and the CSO platforms, CCIC and CID, are not experiencing all the rights associated with an enabling environment because of the political stance of their governments. In Canada, as noted in the report of the consultation, “Recent policy and funding decisions in the current Canadian enabling environment has been undermining the confidence of Canadian CSOs, and their public, that due process, sound judgment and transparency continue to inform governmental decisions concerning Canadian civil society organizations.” (p. 6) A central question in the Canadian consultation concerned how Canadian CSOs could fulfill their role as “independent development actors in their own right” (as stated in Paragraph 20 of the Accra Agenda for Action) if many “were defunded and restricted by their own government for such actions, and for speaking critically about aid and development policy in Canada.” (p. 6)

In New Zealand, CSOs had similar concerns to those expressed in Canada. As stated in the New Zealand report, “the NGO community feels there is a lack of respectful partnership, and that Government does not value what NGOs do. This lack of information is also impacting upon our partners in developing countries.” (p. 14)

Given the current political context in Fiji, CSOs participating in the consultation in that country needed to be quite circumspect in their discussions about an enabling environment. Clearly, they do not enjoy all the elements of an enabling environment listed above in Item A. Participants included several development effectiveness principles that could be interpreted as calls for an enabling environment. These included:

- cultivation of an environment of peace, trust and security;
- promotion of equal and fair access to employment;
- promotion of sustained dialogue between donor agencies, government and CSOs;
- transparency through effective financial and legal frameworks.

In Tonga, while CSOs in many of the island nations represented in the consultation enjoy more of the elements of an enabling environment than Fiji at the present time, the consultation included as a development effectiveness principle the creation of an enabling environment, thereby signaling their desire for full access to the elements listed in Item A above. The consultation also noted the need for an “independent judiciary and media, open engagement with governments, development partners and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, including Pacific Island Forum leaders and/or their representatives with a view to ensure meaningful, sustained and long-term commitments and strengthening partnerships between donors, governments and CSOs.” (p. 19)

In terms of Category B, (the elements of an enabling environment provided by donor governments to CSOs in the donor country and to CSOs in developing countries), these elements are more about donor policies, the government donor agency's relationship with CSOs, its funding arrangements, and policy dialogue

At the present time, Australia has the best enabling environment of the four industrialized countries in the region in terms of the relationship between the government donor agency and ACFID. ACFID, the CSO platform in Australia, has a partnership agreement with AusAID that was negotiated in March 2009. It includes a joint commitment to work closely to increase Australia's impact on promoting sustainable development.

As noted earlier in this paper, in the US, the CSO community is emerging from several years when the US Government was less engaged with CSOs and provided little funding through them. With a new presidential administration in place, there is a renewed interest in CSO engagement on a variety of topics. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has expressed its desire to reform the way it does development work including procurement reform that may mean a return to more direct engagement with CSOs. In the past several years, most USAID funding was channeled through large contractors but this may change to provide funding through CSOs once again as had been the case in the more distant past. However, there have been no concrete changes yet in the CSO relationship with government other than more consultations. Moreover, because of vastly diminished engagement with CSOs over the past several years, much of USAID's expertise regarding CSOs was lost and has to be learned anew.

In both Canada and New Zealand, the CSO platforms (CCIC in Canada and CID in New Zealand) have been defunded by the respective aid agency in each country (CIDA and NZAID). In both countries, the CSO platforms had enjoyed many years of adequate funding for their operations, and an open policy dialogue between government and CSOs had gone on. In Canada, virtually all policy dialogue has ceased. In New Zealand, CSOs have greatly reduced opportunities to engage in policy dialogue although there is communication in relation to the new funding schemes that Government has created to replace ones that it eliminated in June 2010.

In the discussions at the consultations, participants focused primarily on the following issues as related to elements of an enabling environment for CSOs provided by government donor agencies to CSOs:

- Strategic engagement by CSOs with their government donor agencies and the extent to which CSOs are considered as partners in the development enterprise. This includes the extent to which CSOs from industrialized countries and their local CSO partners will be consulted actively as country planning is done by donor missions;

- Funding arrangements between donors and CSOs and the extent to which they help or hinder CSO development effectiveness. This includes kinds of funding instruments, length of funding, flexibility, funds for capacity strengthening of local CSOs, and core institutional funding for local CSOs;
- Appropriate forms of accountability and reporting on funding agreements. This includes willingness to consider a range of reporting formats beyond results-based management (RBM) and logical framework analysis (LFA) to allow for more effective reporting on conditions, challenges and successes of CSO specific and collective development efforts;
- Policy dialogue and public engagement. This includes donor support for inclusion of CSOs in policy dialogue, donor funding to CSOs for education and involvement of the public in industrialized countries, and participation of local CSOs in preparation of national development strategies.

Regarding Category C, (the elements of an enabling environment provided to CSOs by recipient, or partner, governments in developing countries), participants in the Fiji consultation were constrained from discussing this topic in any detail given the current political context. The regional consultation in Tonga called for open engagement and the need for sustained dialogue with governments. Identifying these as critical elements of an enabling environment, they went on to say that they recognize “that governments and CSOs are mutually accountable for development results, that there is need to create essential linkages between public, private and CSO sectors including alignment and linkages to national development plans and action on existing policy commitments made at national, regional and international levels.” (p. 19) Beyond specific development projects and programs in their countries, Pacific Island CSOs are particularly concerned that their governments (through the Pacific Islands Forum) have not presented a strong united front in negotiations with other governments regarding climate change which CSOs view as a life or death issue for their countries.

V. Evaluation of the National Consultation Process in the North America and Oceania Region

A. Analysis of Evaluation Results

Generally speaking, CSO representatives who participated in Open Forum consultations were enthusiastic about the opportunity to discuss the CSO development effectiveness framework, issues specific to their own functioning in their countries, and to engage with their governments on the issue of the enabling environment for CSO development work. For some, in Fiji and Tonga, the topic of CSO development effectiveness was a new area but they found that the process enabled them to reflect on, and evaluate, their work. They also valued the panel presentations and “discussions

around accountability mechanisms, trade, climate change and donor expectations in terms of accountability”. (PIANGO evaluation summary, August 13, 2010).

In countries where participants completed evaluation questionnaires, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, averaging in the range of 4 out of 5 for most questions asked. Consultations were viewed as having been well planned and carried out, with very useful background information provided, very good discussions and participant engagement. Many people expressed frustration that there was inadequate time to do justice to the task and some in certain countries expressed the desire to have further discussions in the near future.

In New Zealand, where CSOs are experiencing considerable difficulties with the Government, participants saw the consultation as a vital opportunity to have dialogue with the Government, given “the significant role that the New Zealand government plays in creating the enabling environment for New Zealand NGOs involved in international development and its role in influencing the sector’s capacity to operate”. They were, however, not satisfied with the discussions with their government and expressed frustration at the lack of a sound process or clarity about what would be changed by the government and how these changes would affect CSO partners. (CID evaluation summary, August 12, 2010). Likewise, in Canada, where CSOs have similar problems, there was a common critical observation that “the process was better at identifying factors and conditions inherent in the CSO-donor relationship that **impeded** CSO effectiveness, than elaborating concrete measures to create and nurture an “enabling” environment”. (p. 9, Canadian consultation report; bold in original)

In at least three consultations, participants expressed disappointment that more CSOs were not present in the consultations, especially international NGOs in one country, and national and regional organizations in another.

B. Key Successes, Challenges and Lessons Learned

Although most participants in the consultations were pleased with the opportunity to come together to discuss these important issues, some expressed the following concerns:

- More time should have been allocated for group work and discussions, especially on CSO management and leadership;
- It will be challenging in future to apply the principles identified with clear and visible accountability;
- Not enough time was available in the consultations to develop practical guidelines and performance indicators;

- Developing common understanding and agreement on principles was easier to do than determining concrete measures to improve CSO accountability;
- The meaning of some terms was too vague and should be made more explicit;
- In one country, participants felt more time was needed with their government to discuss elements of the enabling environment.

VI. Conclusions and Ways Forward

A. National or Regional Initiatives Brewing

Since the end of the consultations in this region, the CSO platform that has done the most to take advantage of their meetings has been PIANGO. During the Tongan regional consultation, a speaker, who is an advisor to the Prime Minister and a former CSO staff member, noted in his remarks that the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat had dismantled the position of Non-State Actor Liaison Officer. This information was included in a PIANGO press release and received an immediate response from the PIFS Secretary General who promised to re-instate the position. Subsequently, an invitation was given to PIANGO's Executive Director to speak at a regional meeting for governments on aid effectiveness as the sole representative of CSOs where she made a presentation. Finally, in mid-August, PIANGO's Executive Director was interviewed on Radio Australia Pacific Beat where she reported that in July PIANGO had had a meeting with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretary General. Subsequently, the Secretary General reported to the same radio program that he wants a partnership strategy with civil society. Prior to a July meeting of Pacific Island government leaders in Port Vila, CSOs had been critical of the Forum secretariat for not consulting with them. This led to the Secretary General's later comments acknowledging the "enormous grassroots skills, knowledge and staying power of civil society organizations and called on regional bodies to build a partnership with them." (Radio Australia Pacific Beat, August 18, 2010)

In the United States, following its consultation in which a half-day was dedicated to presentations and discussion with US Governmental officials on the enabling environment, senior officials at USAID told InterAction representatives in a July meeting that it wished to work closely with InterAction as it develops its strategy for the Fourth High Level Forum in Korea in late 2011.

The concern in New Zealand is that long-established, well-scrutinized funding schemes for community development, implemented through partners in developing countries, have been terminated and replaced with funding schemes at a similar level, but oriented strongly towards promoting sustainable economic development. These new schemes are not yet operational, so the extent to which good development practice and a rights-based approach can be sustained has yet to be tested. Meanwhile, CID has faced

up to the challenge of operating with less government support and has committed to a higher level of member support and engagement.

In Canada, since the consultation, the Government has set out a renewed mandate for engaging Canadians in development. While this mandate for CIDA has some worrying directions (which could continue arbitrary decisions by the Minister for Development Cooperation with respect to individual organizations), it has created a category of “knowledge partners”. So, although the Government has defunded CCIC completely, it is possible that CCIC may receive some new funding from the Government under this window in the future. In the meantime, CCIC’s membership has re-asserted its commitment to the organization and is examining ways to strengthen its financial independence.

Following the Australian federal election in late August, a minority government is yet to be formed. Importantly, both the major political parties have provided bipartisan support for allocating 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) by 2015. ACFID’s four-year partnership agreement with AusAID extends to 2012-12 and will help mitigate any potentially significant impact of a change in government.

B. Summary

The consultations in the North America and Oceania region have proven to be dynamic meetings in all countries where examination and discussion on the various elements of the CSO development effectiveness framework have been energetically and enthusiastically embraced by participants. The challenge now going forward will be to continue the internal CSO dialogue on development effectiveness and CSO accountability as well as the CSO – governmental engagement on elements of the enabling environment in each country and among the Pacific Island states. In addition, representatives from each CSO platform will participate in the Global Assembly in Istanbul in late September where consensus on a CSO development effectiveness framework will be sought among all CSOs from around the world. Participants will also have the opportunity to engage with donor government representatives about enabling environment issues, and an advocacy strategy will be developed to promote the overall CSO development effectiveness framework in the year preceding the Fourth High Level Forum in South Korea in late 2011.