



European Commission cooperation with civil society & cooperation between Northern and Southern Civil Society Organizations – exploring roles, space and added value



REPORT

of the fifth joint CIDSE – Caritas Europa Forum

Brussels, 2 – 4 March 2010

CIDSE (International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity) is a coalition of 16 Catholic development agencies in Europe and North America working together for global justice.

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to present the report of the fifth joint CIDSE-Caritas Europa Forum. Participants reflected on the challenges and opportunities that the changing global aid environment poses to our work during three intense days of discussions.

The Forum touched on issues that are strongly emphasised by Pope Benedict XVI in his Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*: Para 47 of the encyclical states: “Development programmes, if they are to be adapted to individual situations, need to be flexible; [...] and the people who benefit from them ought to be directly involved in their planning and implementation. The criteria to be applied should aspire towards incremental development in a context of solidarity — with careful monitoring of results — inasmuch as there are no universally valid solutions.”

As Catholic organisations these words should inspire us in our response to current challenges..: The Millennium Development Goals are unlikely to be reached globally without accelerated effort ahead of the 2015 deadline. The financial and economic crisis, which has heavily affected developing countries, resulted in many donors adjusting their international aid commitments downwards and has made it difficult to engage in a progressive debate on development. At the same time, some governments and multilateral donors are challenging us to demonstrate our added value to the development agenda in the framework of the aid effectiveness agenda. CIDSE and Caritas Europa member organisations and our partners worldwide have over the decades built up a form of cooperation, which is based on a spirit of true partnership and rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. The Forum demonstrated once again the healthy and respectful partnership we share, our efforts and commonly held principles to serve development effectiveness. We recognise that we must find ways to make the positive impacts of our work more visible in the lives of poor women and men in the future. We recognise that development cannot be done by one actor alone and therefore realise the need to invest in new innovative partnerships with other development stakeholders.

Initiated by the working group of Co-Financing Officers of the two networks, the event provided a forum for exchange with partners and officials from the European Commission on the changing aid context and funding modalities that govern North-South relations as well as our cooperation with the European Commission. We addressed challenges and opportunities in relation to the future cooperation and came to concrete recommendations.

At network, national and local level, we will continue monitoring these changes and ensure that our input into the aid/development effectiveness debate as well as for the future EU Financial Perspectives from 2014 onward is heard by European decision-makers. We also aim to ensure the involvement of civil society in policy formulation and operational issues.

We would like to acknowledge the work done by the working group members, CIDSE and Caritas Europa Secretariats in organising the Forum. Special thanks go to all participants for coming to Brussels from far away and contributing to the discussions.



Bernd Nilles
CIDSE Secretary General



Marius Wanders
Caritas Europa Secretary General

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SUMMARY OF THE FORUM OUTCOMES

Based on the rich discussions on our respective roles and added value, and many experiences shared by participants, including by officials from the European Commission, the below recommendations were identified. They are the product of discussions in the working groups and plenary and are addressed to the different stakeholders present. All participants from the CIDSE and Caritas Europa networks and partner organisations have undertaken to widely disseminate issues raised during the Forum as 'challenges' and 'opportunities' as well as the Forum's recommendations within our organisations and networks for further reflection and action.

We acknowledge and appreciate the support of the European Union for its ongoing support to development and poverty eradication. We request the European Parliament and European Commission to also reflect on the challenges and opportunities identified at the Forum and implement the recommendations addressed to them. We would appreciate a dialogue with the Commission on the issues and recommendations we have presented.

Challenges

1. Lack of opportunities to present proposals from coalitions and networks due to limitations in the EC's legal frameworks;
2. The lack of sustainability of project-based short-term funding;
3. The complexity of EC application processes, rules and regulations during implementation, especially for southern CSOs;
4. The European Commission's limited investment in policy, analytical, advocacy, and watchdog functions of CSOs;
5. The limited downward accountability to citizens in general and to people in poverty specifically, resulting in lack of ownership
6. The limited and inconsistent policy dialogue between southern Civil Society and their governments and the need for new aid modalities recognising and supporting the role of Civil Society;
7. The lack of ownership of development efforts due to the lack of actual relationships between CSOs and national parliaments and the weakness of parliamentary scrutiny;
8. The limited processes of policy consultation between CSOs and the European Commission in developing countries;
9. The limitations of instruments available to the European Commission at present to strengthen CSOs in their autonomous role and to help create an 'enabling environment' where national governments are responsive to Civil Society and accountable to national parliaments allowing healthy multi-actor approaches to development processes;
10. Overemphasis on quantitative impact indicators in measuring aid effectiveness.

The following opportunities were identified:

1. To counter fragmentation, find alternatives to the traditional one-to-one activity-based funding of CSOs;
2. To stimulate, encourage and support the building of coherent approaches within formal or informal CSO networks;
3. To strengthen coalitions across countries to help create 'enabling environments' at national level that are conducive to civil society and understand their contribution to democratic, just and sustainable development;
4. To strengthen accountability of development actions to people living in poverty by all actors, including governments, donors, CSOs and other actors;
5. To build EC cooperation around funding arrangements that are based on network-like cooperation that help build North – South and South – South cooperation, learning and capacity building;
6. To create sustainable long-term and predictable funding arrangements to enhance the policy, analytical and advocacy capacities of civil society organisations and their roles as a democratic counter-weight;
7. Strengthening CSO networks and platforms to advance the responsiveness of national governments to CSO concerns;

8. To support appropriate roles and responsibilities for different actors in the development process, which go beyond the role of the state, identifying the specific roles of national parliaments, local authorities, CSOs, the private sector, etc;
9. To replace risk averse short-term financial arrangements and a project-based approach by the EC with more flexible mechanisms and long-term investments to structurally strengthen CSOs and; to deepen cooperation between the European Commission, its Delegations and CSOs, in the North and the South;
10. To use existing opportunities for multi-stakeholder dialogue such as the EU Quadriologue/Structured Dialogue and the Open Forum on CSO development effectiveness to deepen mutual understanding of the added value of and the 'enabling environment' needed by each stakeholder.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To CIDSE/CE Member Organisations and for joint actions as networks

1. European NGOs should keep investing in relations with the EC which go beyond a donor-recipient relationship. This will contribute to a common understanding of the added value of the different actors.
2. Facilitate communication between southern CSOs and EC Delegations. Both the EC HQ and northern CSOs, should foster / facilitate more systematic consultations between EC Delegations and CSOs in the South.
3. Invest in building the capacity of southern CSOS, in order to support them in:
 - accessing EC funding
 - undertaking policy dialogue and advocacy, including capacity strengthening for local networks and platforms.
 - strengthening their research capacity, including the interpretation of information
4. Address issues of good governance in multi-stakeholder dialogues. More generally, become more active in the introduction of the multi-stakeholder approach, which is believed to enhance the impact of actual development actions.
5. Disclose what is actually happening in the field and invest in providing accessible information (to donors, partners and constituency). The public disclosure of information is related to different kinds of processes and policy implementation.

To Partner Organisations

1. Invest in relations with the EC which go beyond a donor-recipient relationship. Capitalise on the presence and political weight of the EC and its representations in the field to achieve common goals.
2. Address issues of good governance in multi-stakeholder dialogues.
3. Become more aware and active via multi-stakeholder approaches to enhance the impact and coherence of actual development actions.
4. Build up and invest in knowledge and capacity to access EC funding, for example, through sound management, transparency, accounting and accountability mechanisms, formats, etc.
5. Be prepared to build and invest in knowledge and capacity for local lobby and advocacy towards institutional donors (like the EC) in the field, as well as towards better cooperation – where possible and appropriate – with the own national government, with the goal for better inclusion / visibility in national policy formulation on respective development issues.

6. Be prepared to organise in legitimate networks and platforms (sectoral, regional or otherwise) to increase the impact of lobby and advocacy.
7. Southern CSOs based in the capital city should reach out better to smaller (grassroots and community based) CSOs in the provinces.

Joint actions

1. To increase support for Southern CSOs and their networks, southern and northern CSOs should create or strengthen joint partnerships, networks and platforms:
 - To improve the institutional and political environment in which southern civil society works and; to influence policies.
 - To support organisational development.
 - For risk sharing when accessing and working with EC funds.
 - To enhance collaboration & coordination at national & regional levels in the South and to support CSO networks.
2. Southern and Northern CSOs should build the capacity of and/or represent the views of community based and grassroots organisations in national planning processes.
3. NCSOs and SCSOs should build up common advocacy agendas on commonly supported subjects.

To the European Commission

1. More donor coordination and coherence is needed to enhance an enabling environment for CSOs and for more secure CSO funding in order to;
 - a. Avoid double funding and funding gaps.
 - b. Help strengthen the coordination between CSOs in the South.
2. The European Commission and its representations in Southern countries on the one hand and all donors present in southern countries should create and foster political space for CSO consultations led by CSOs. Bilateral EC-donor agreements should include a clause in that respect so as to ensure multi-stakeholder elements in the national consultations.
3. The EC should provide EU Delegations with some margin of manoeuvre to adapt EC regulations regarding access to EU funding by CSOs to the realities of local CSOs (disabling environment, conflict situations, etc.) and to the needs of CBOs. This includes:
 - i. Building EU Delegations' capacity to reach out to CSOs and CBOs.
 - ii. EC funding modalities should acknowledge that Civil Society development entails risks and that these should not only be borne by CSOs. Furthermore they should support sustainability by amending their policies and Financial Regulations to allow for more flexible time periods and financial mechanisms depending on the size of the grant for development actions with CSOs.
 - iii. , Empower civil society through thematic programmes by creating special envelopes for CBOs (exempting them from having to compete with more established civil society organisations).
 - iv. Providing EC funding for CSO networks in the south and in the north.
4. The EC, donors and governments should ensure meaningful consultations, i.e., ensuring sufficient time to prepare, taking CSO points into consideration, and involving CSOs from the beginning until the end of a process. This includes;

- v. Continuing to closely involve and enhance regular consultation with SNGOs and NNGOs in formulating country strategies.
- vi. Fostering more systematic consultations between Delegations and SNGOs.
- vii. Enhancing cooperation between parliaments and CSOs: highlighting the value of CSOs finding allies in their own parliaments over operating in isolation.

5. EC policy should be designed to make sure there is space for CSO-led CSO consultations as mentioned in Recommendation 2 above. EC policy should also be designed to ensure that grass root organisations – who should be recognised for their ability to articulate their needs and choices- are properly consulted. Sufficient resources should be provided to support NNGOs to build the capacities of SNGOs to this end.

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6. Disclose what is actually happening in the field; public disclosure of information is related to different kinds of processes and policy implementation.

**Extract from the STATEMENT BY THE CIDSE – CARITAS NORTH – SOUTH FORUM ON
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

**EC Cooperation with civil society in the North and the South: creating an enabling environment
for poverty eradication
Conclusions and Recommendations
Brussels, 4 March 2010**

The Forum agrees to the following recommendations:

To the European Commission

1. Ensure the autonomous role of CSOs and strengthen multi-actor approaches, especially in order to support parliamentary scrutiny of government policy and a conducive space for civil society where its role as an independent countervailing power is recognized;
2. Facilitate timely consultation processes between government and CSOs and strengthen consultation processes on policy between the EC and CSOs leading to sustained dialogue;
3. Promote clarification of the role of CSOs in new aid modalities;
4. Support public disclosure of information related to national development policies to allow effective involvement of local CSOs in these processes including roles in monitoring at local and national level;
5. To identify mechanisms for downward accountability to people living in poverty and to capitalize on the grass-root linkages of CSOs to strengthen policy approaches to poverty eradication conducive to the ethnic, cultural and historic realities;
6. To extend mapping exercises to CSO networks and to help strengthen greater coherence between activities through coherence created in development networks, whether between North and South, South – South or within countries;
7. To find modalities other than those based on risk-averse financing arrangements, with greater emphasis on impact of actions on society as a whole and in recognition of the greater political role of the EU in policy coherence and consistency in developing countries;
8. Formulate new, more flexible funding modalities that are met by appropriate funding volumes that allow EC headquarters and delegations to:
 - promote longer term support to provide predictability and facilitate sustainability
 - enable network-based activities that provide coordination and reduce duplication
 - build capacity of civil society organizations and network in developing countries.

To Civil Society Organizations:

1. Manage CSO diversity by engaging in relevant networks, North – South; South – South and at national level;
2. Ensure genuine downward accountability to communities and people living in poverty and provide evidence of such accountability and differences made for communities or societies in networks and strengthen watchdog functions through networks;
3. To strengthen policy, research and analytical capabilities, organize learning in relevant networks;
4. Organize inclusive processes for meaningful dialogues with government at national level;
5. Acknowledge and help strengthen multi-actor processes to development and especially the support to national governments to provide scrutiny and oversight over national development processes to complement upward accountability to donors with stronger downward accountability to citizens;
6. Organize inclusive processes for meaningful dialogues with the European Commission on EU policies, in country and in thematic areas;
7. Identify concrete mechanisms that can replace the risk-averse, project-based funding by the European Commission with other credible alternative arrangements;
8. Strengthen effective communication of the priorities of the communities and people living in poverty and demonstrate the ability of the CSOs to work effectively with these groups of people to help overcome poverty.

NORTH-SOUTH DEVELOPMENT FORUM

From 2-4 March 2010, the CIDSE – Caritas Europa Forum was held in Brussels with 19 Civil Society Organisations from Africa, Asia and Latin America, representatives from 14 CIDSE and Caritas Europa member organisations and 2 representatives from their field offices. The participants came from Afghanistan, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Honduras, India, Ireland, Italy, Malawi, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Rwanda, Spain, the UK and Zambia.

Officials from the European Commission (EC) participated in the second day of the forum and all participants benefited from the rich discussions that their participation brought in. We thank all Commission officials who participated, especially Mr. Aristotelis Bouratsis, Director Thematic Operations, EuropeAid, Ms. Dominique Dellicour, Head of Unit Quality of Operations, EuropeAid, and Mr. Olivier Luyckx, Head of Unit Aid Effectiveness, DG Development.

CONTEXT

The Paris Declaration of 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) of 2008 are donor-led frameworks. Yet they have set the Aid Effectiveness agenda in development cooperation with partner countries. The Paris Declaration implicitly and the AAA through Art. 20 explicitly recognises civil society as an actor in development in its own right. This recognition has triggered thinking and concrete actions to redefine the *roles* and *added value* of Civil Society actors, both in Europe and in the field.

The European Commission is one of the largest actors within the international donor community, and has exhibited keen interest in formulating strategies to implement the official aid effectiveness agenda. It uses policy and funding instruments (geographic, thematic, horizontal, vertical) for this purpose.

Illustrating this effort is the Commission's effort to broaden the eligibility of one of its instruments to implement its external assistance to enable emerging actors in development to access funds in its Financial Perspectives 2007-13, its multi-annual spending plan. Accordingly, eligibility to the thematic programme Non State Actors¹ and Local Authorities (NSA & LA) was extended to Northern civil society organisations, Southern based civil society organisations (CSOs), local authorities, trade unions, business associations and foundations. With this extension came increased competition for the same funding envelope.

Starting in 2009 the European Commission has undertaken midterm evaluations of its Financial Perspectives 2007-2013, including the NSA & LA thematic programme. Evaluations have also been done by the European Court of Auditors (2) and the EC itself (3 4) on EC aid delivered through Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

¹ Definition of the term non-state actors (NSAs) as to the Court of Auditors: The term "covers all aspects of society that do not form part of the private sector or the state. In the field of development cooperation, non-state actors include non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and also community-based organisations, farmers' associations, business or professional associations, environmental groups, universities, trade unions, chambers of commerce, and foundations as well as churches or faith groups." The terms NSA, CSOs and NGOs are used interchangeably in the report. NCSO = northern CSO, SCSO = southern CSO, NNGO = Northern NGO, SNGO = Southern NGO

² European Court of Auditors: "*The Commission's management of Non-State Actors' involvement in EC development cooperation*", Special Report No 4, 2009, 72p. <http://eca.europa.eu/portal/pls/portal/docs/1/2722293.PDF>

³ European Commission: "*Evaluation of EC aid delivery through Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)*." Final Report, December 2008. http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/evaluation_reports/2008/1259_docs_en.htm

The European Commission has responded to these evaluations and looked to redefine its future cooperation with Non State Actors (including CSOs). To this end it has launched a [Structured Dialogue/Quadrilogue](#) between the European Commission, European Parliament, Member States and NSA&LA representatives.

The aim of this process is:

- to build a consensus on civil society organisations' contribution to building, monitoring and delivering EC development policies.
- to explore practical ways to improve future EC funding mechanisms.
- -to strengthen aid effectiveness as defined in the framework of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Harmonisation and the Accra Agenda for Action.

The multi-stakeholder Structured Dialogue was officially launched on 23 March 2010. Consultations will continue through the year with a final conference scheduled in Spring 2011. The outcomes of this process, taking into account the wider context of changes to the EU brought about by the Lisbon Treaty – e.g. the establishment of an European External Actions Service– will define for a great deal the building blocks of future cooperation between CSOs and the European Commission at all levels.

PURPOSE

The Forum was organised to respond to these developments based on the expertise CIDSE and Caritas Europa has built up, with our distinct perspective as faith-based organisations. It aimed to address challenges we encounter due to the new trends in EC co-financing and EC cooperation with civil society in the North and South.

The Forum aimed to develop concrete recommendations for the European Commission and for ourselves to improve EC-CSO cooperation at political and operational levels, in Europe and in the field.

PROCESS & PROGRAMME

Being the fifth joint CIDSE - Caritas Europa Forum, this event also builds upon previous Forums in Brussels (since 2003) and Arusha (2007), all addressing our cooperation with the European Commission and also other donors and current trends in the aid environment.

The Forum's first day allowed for internal exchange of experiences between Northern and Southern NGO partners as to define what the challenges and opportunities are with regard to our cooperation with the EC. On the second day, officials from the European Commission joined the discussions. Participants appreciated the direct exchange during the workshops, which were organised along the lines of the four main topics (see below). In the morning of day three, participants resumed the findings of the previous days and produced a joint statement on the main challenges, opportunities and recommendations for improved EC-CSO cooperation, which was to be presented at the European Parliament in the afternoon. A highlight of the Forum was the public panel discussion organised at the European Parliament where the statement was presented to a wider audience of EU decision-makers

⁴ European Commission: "The European Union's EDF Programme for ACP Countries. Capitalization Study on Capacity Building Support Programmes for Non State Actors under the 9th EDF." Final Report, June 2009, 151p. http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/civil-society/documents/final_rep_capit_study_en.pdf

and CSO stakeholders and handed to Koos Richelle, Director General of EuropeAid, and hosting MEPs Thijs Berman (Socialists) and Anna Záborská (EPP).

Lastly, the final Forum session was devoted to a first exchange with our partners on how change happens and how we could strengthen and better measure the impact of our work. The dynamics created by the international aid effectiveness agenda resulted in CIDSE and Caritas looking closer at CSO development effectiveness and being involved in related processes at network and at the global level.

With the Forum and further advocacy based on its outcomes, we aim to:

- Ensure that future modalities of the European Commission for cooperation with CSOs respond effectively to the needs of the poor and that they allow for strengthened and more effective collaboration between the European Commission and Civil Society actors.
- Ensure that the importance of this debate is fully appreciated by CSOs (whether active in the North or South) in an environment where EC funding is of ever increasing importance and that these stakeholders are fully involved in the debate and have ownership of its conclusions.
- Ensure that the added value of CSOs in development and the partnership ethos they share is fully appreciated by the European Commission in setting its future aid modalities.

2 March

CURRENT TRENDS IN THE AID ENVIRONMENT

Following the opening by the Secretary Generals of CIDSE and Caritas Europa and the presentation of the facilitators, the first day of the Forum started with an exchange among participants on **experiences with EC funding** and an informative session on current aid trends and the resulting challenges and opportunities for CSOs.

In the exchange on experiences with EC funding, recurring issues raised were the **problem of sustainability of project funding** and the **need for capacity building by donors as well as northern CSO partner(s)**. A partner from Afghanistan pointed out: 'health care needs never end, but projects do'. Once an EC grant phases out, there is no possibility to apply for a new grant. Generally, in the case of unsuccessful proposals, there is frustration about the wasted resources and even more so as the criteria for rating applications are often unclear.

A Cambodian partner from Development and Partnership in Action reported on a positive experience of cooperation with the EC where EC officials visit the funded project once a year and give useful feedback; they were open for requests for clarification.

It was underlined that the expertise of northern partners to enhance advocacy capacity was essential in addition to the training provided for by the EC. Caritas Bangladesh also highlighted the important role that CIDSE/CE member organizations played in building their capacity to write proposals to access EC funds, which increases the likelihood of the project being accepted. Another way of strengthening local partners was by relationship-building with the EU Delegation. Also, the trend toward multi-actor applications in EC funding was noted. However, in general, new architecture is needed wherein the South leads instead of taking the lead from the EU.

External dimension: Civil Society Organisations in EC Development Cooperation – Trends and Developments

Izabella Toth, Policy Officer for Institutional Funds with Cordaid, co-convenor of the Working Group of CIDSE and Caritas Europa Co-Financing Officers and Chair of the Financing for Development and Relief Working Group of CONCORD, started by giving an overview of the present aid context.



The aid environment is shaped by the **international aid effectiveness agenda** – the international governmental agreement on aid effectiveness contained in of the Paris Declaration of 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) of 2008, which confirmed the principles of the Paris Declaration: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability. For the first time CSOs are acknowledged as development actors in their own right in Article 20 of the AAA,. There is also an emphasis on new and more effective partnerships to reduce the fragmentation of aid (hence, the EU donor division of labour). The deepening of government and donor engagement with CSOs and the attempt to extend the principles of the official aid effectiveness agenda to CSOs increases the pressure to show factual evidence of their work.

Funds are increasingly channelled through multilateral organisations like the UN and the World Bank; and international foundations, the private sector, civil society donors in southern countries as well as emerging donors (the BRIC) have become more and more important donors. All in all, these trends result in a very **competitive aid environment**. General Budget Support (GBS) decentralised funds (Sector Wide Approaches and thematic instruments of the EC) and multi-actor programmes were new modalities to channel development assistance that were a direct consequence of the aid effectiveness agenda, all with their specific challenges and opportunities for CSOs.

The new EC approach in place since 2007 to directly fund local CSOs poses a number of challenges. Questions arise whether the access is really as direct as it is said to be, also looking at the administrative and financial criteria to apply and how this changes the dynamics of partnerships with northern CSOs. Within this environment, the **opportunities for CSOs** are the following:

- Capitalise on and highlight the niches/added value of the organisation.
- Identify which financing modality best fits the organisation, still allowing space for it to implement its own mission and vision.
- Develop a donor strategy (CSOs in the field should have a pro-active attitude in contacting potential donor organisations).
- Lobby the EC and EU member states (in Europe and the field) for a comprehensive strategy for cooperation with CSOs and for capacity strengthening programmes towards fulfilling a.o. their constructive watchdog role.

Internal dimension: CSO development effectiveness



The following speaker, Blandine Bouniol from Caritas Europa spoke in her position as, representative of Caritas and CIDSE in the GFG of the Open Forum, and co-chair of the CONCORD CSO Development Effectiveness Working Group. She presented the CSO designed alternative aid effectiveness agenda being outlined in the **Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness**. Whilst the Paris Declaration looks at aid effectiveness in a technocratic manner, aid should, be measured against the goals of development cooperation, i.e. determining its contribution to **tangible improvements in people's lives, sustainable impact and social change**. Moreover, aid can only truly serve development in association with other means of seeking justice, such as trade reforms. So far, different CSOs have addressed their effectiveness individually or at network/ platform levels. CIDSE and Caritas together with partners have been working to improve the quality and impact of their work for many decades. Both organisations have joined the Open Forum process as a way to learn from each other on other CSOs, and jointly respond to governments questioning and have a common understanding of development effectiveness.

Launched in June 2008 and supported by the signatories of the Paris Declaration, the Open Forum process has brought together CSOs from around the world to discuss issues and challenges to their effectiveness as development actors. Its objective is to propose, ahead of the 4th High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in December 2011, a **global effectiveness framework for the CSO sector** including:

- Universal principles
- Guidelines how to apply these principles
- Documentation on good practice

A Global Facilitation Group (GFG) facilitates an international bottom-up and open process to reach an agreement on a framework suitable for CSOs by convening a series of national and regional consultations all over the world. Local civil society is invited to participate in their respective country consultations (thematic and sectoral).

3 March

DIALOGUE WITH EUROPEAN COMMISSION OFFICIALS

Opening speeches

On the second Forum day, emphasis was put on relating the outcomes of the first day to the point of view of European Commission officials.



René Grotenhuis, CIDSE's President and Executive Director of Cordaid/Caritas Netherlands, officially opened the Forum. He welcomed EC representatives present and thanked them for their readiness to address matters about quality in our respective work and mutual cooperation. He reiterated that development was never possible based on the intervention of a single actor and that multi-stakeholder involvement was indispensable. Civil Society Organisations like CIDSE, Caritas and partner organisations were executing three roles in development: 1) they help organise social transformation processes 2) they are watchdogs of their government and 3) they provide basic social services, independently and complementarily to government services. By that, they were the living proof and witnesses of what civil society could do in the process of development. However, they also had a number of constraints and limitations: CSOs were sometimes too fragmented, focused on their own projects and programmes, too much entrenched in their ideological positions and not opening up to other actors, such as the private sector. And they were sometimes not rigorous enough in applying scientific evidence.

With regard to the long-lasting relationship between the European Union and CSOs, firstly, there was an urgent need to develop new accountability structures and procedures where upward accountability should be based on downward accountability. Concerned about the effectiveness of their funding, donors set up strict rules and conditions for civil society. Paradoxically, this would decrease the effectiveness and often create high barriers for grass root organisations to access funding. Secondly, the participation of civil society – as the experts in the development of their people – in the programming and in country policy dialogue needed to be enhanced. This conference, he concluded, offered the opportunity to see where we can overcome the gaps between the policies and the practice and how we can strengthen an enabling environment for the EC-CSO dialogue.

On behalf of the European Commission, **Aristotelis Bouratsis, Director of Thematic Operations at the EuropeAid Cooperation office (AIDCO)**, assured participants of the EC's intention to work closely with civil society. While in the past the state was perceived to be the motor of development, the situation had evolved and CSOs – as well as local and national authorities – were now essential actors in the multi-stakeholder approach to development. In fact, both the EC and CIDSE/CE networks would share the same principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. The financial crisis highlighted the need for morality and justice to prevent those instrumental for such crises from benefiting from it, while people in poverty suffered consequences, which were not of their making. In that respect, the watchdog role of civil society was gaining even more importance beyond their ability to be close to the peoples' views and needs.



He recognised that CIDSE/CE were targeting main EC concerns. The four workshop background notes all had bearing on the past and present Quadrilogue processes, which addressed challenges of CSOs in participating in AIDCO programmes. One of the main results of the first Quadrilogue process (Palermo) was the simplification of the call for proposal system and the concept notes/two-stage calls. He expressed his belief that the presently ongoing process will define even better the framework of cooperation between the EC and CSOs (North and South). Yet, the

Quadrilogue was not the only entry point for CSOs; the midterm evaluations of the thematic and geographic programmes were also open for dialogue with CSOs. Successful EC proposals required two things: first, ownership/appropriation of the project participation and second, national legislation needed to be taken into account and complementarity with the Country Strategy be ensured. Although the EC recognised that development was a long-term process, they had to face own constraints in limited project cycles and the Financial Perspectives.

Panel debate: Cooperation between the European Commission and Civil Society Organisations – mutual expectations around roles and responsibilities

For **Dominique Dellicour, Head of Unit Governance, Security, Human Rights and Gender within the Directorate Quality of operations at the EuropeAid Co-operation Office**,



CSOs were not only actors in service delivery but actors in the overall economic and social development. To operationalise the multi-stakeholder approach the European Commission initiated mapping exercises to develop a clear understanding of the local civil society arena, in order to be able to engage with relevant actors at appropriate times. The increased role of southern CSOs would imply an emphasis for northern CSOs in technical cooperation and sharing their advocacy experiences. The EC was also looking to enhance Non-State Actors in the new aid modalities under the Thematic Programme NSA & LA. The added value of faith based organisations (FBO) like CIDSE and Caritas would lie in their strong networking and shared values like self-reliance.

Olivier Luyckx, Head of Unit in charge of Aid effectiveness, Financing for Development, Relations with Civil Society and Local Authorities at DG Development,

stressed that development assistance was not mere charity but also about self interest to have reliable allies – it was a long-term response to long-term challenges. CSOs were indispensable as watchdogs and a critical voice participating in discussions on policy formulation. Yet, despite the recognition of these roles, there was a shared feeling that the present EC-CSO relationship was unsatisfactory. It was a challenge for the EC to see how to better involve CSOs, but also trade unions, youth organisations and private enterprises in priority setting and policy formulation processes. Emerging donors already representing 15% of ODA had become important players and a challenge was how complementarity of their actions could be ensured. The EC as a publicly accountable institution had certain restrictions at political, operational and financial levels; however, creative ideas would be welcome to improve the current cooperation mechanisms.



Alta Suzzane Hooker Blandford, the Rector of URACCAN (University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast), called for development with identity, where indigenous and afro-descendant peoples take ownership of change as defined by them to revitalise cultural identity. She was pointing to the ethnocentric policy and the difficulty this poses to southern organisations trying to work with such documents and applications for EC funding. To improve development outcomes and prospects, EC-CSO cooperation should be based on mutual respect, the building of reciprocal and trustworthy relationships built on the basis of good practices and joint responsibility.

Daniel Verger, Director of the International Action Division with Secours Catholique – Caritas France, reminded participants of the need to strengthen CSO dialogue with the European Parliament (EP), also in the framework of the Quadrilogue. He also pointed to the Cotonou Agreement where full CSO participation still needed to be realised under the 10th and 11th EDF.



To increase downward accountability from the government to the citizens was the main message of **William Chilufya, Advocacy Programme Officer with Civil Society for Poverty**



Reduction (CSPR) in Zambia. He expressed from his own organisations' experience the challenges given that the Zambian government feels more accountable to the donor (the EU) than to the population. CSPR being involved in a project on budget tracking of budget support, experiences the lack of information on the part of the government; the EU could support CSOs by including a clause in the contract with the government requesting that information be provided to CSOs on the spending of

budget support.

WORKING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In the afternoon session of 2nd March participants reflected on challenges and opportunities in the aid set-up in four workshops. Discussions were structured around questions raised in background papers written to guide the exchange. Each working group then reported the conclusions of their discussions in plenary.



In the afternoon sessions of 3rd March, participants again met in four simultaneous workshops where the issues discussed the previous day were debated in more depth, now in conjunction with EC officials, with an overall aim of ascertaining how EC-CSO cooperation could be improved at the policy and operational level. Identified challenges and opportunities were presented to the EC officials and exchanges took place with their input. The main points were then shared in plenary, which provided an additional opportunity for EC officials who had been attending different groups to give input more widely on the breadth of topics covered.

Discussions were structured around the following four topics:

- 1. EC and CSOs: Challenges moving forward together:**
When CSOs are an acknowledged actor, in the spirit of the AAA Art. 20, how far is the EC prepared to sustain an enabling environment for cooperation with CSOs, in Europe AND in developing countries?
- 2. Space for CSOs in Aid Modalities:**
How will the EC be able to provide for this?
- 3. North-South Cooperation:**
Changing roles between Northern and Southern CSOs; value added partnership concepts – ensure that the EC fully appreciates the partnership ethos CSOs share; Proposals for Funding Mechanisms
- 4. Cooperation with other (Non) State Actors: the Multi-Actor Process:**
Division of labour between stakeholders: towards enhanced complementarity and sustainability of actions. How does the Right of Initiative of NGOs / CSOs stand up in this process?

These discussions proved very fruitful and partners valued the opportunity to share their varied experiences of receiving EC funding. Given the different backgrounds and working contexts of the attendees, experiences of working with funding from the EC varied substantially, however they were united in their desire to strengthen their collaboration with the EC in future aid modalities. Consensus was reached in plenary on 4th March on key challenges, opportunities and recommendations. These are fully outlined in this report on pages 4-7.

Working Group 1

EC and CSOs: Challenges moving forward together -

Mutual expectations around roles and responsibilities

BACKGROUND PAPER

Context

For several decades, the European Commission (EC) has recognised the specific role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in development processes and has applied policies and instruments to ensure the involvement of **CSOs as implementing partners, particularly of northern CSOs who used to be the direct recipients of EC funding.** The (Non-Governmental Organisations) NGO co-financing budget line B7-6000 (later 21 02 03, and since 2007 called Non State Actors & Local Authorities in Development) is the EC's main and explicit channel for CSO funding.



In 2002, the EC launched the so-called **Palermo Process**. It took the form of an informal dialogue process between the EC, European NGOs, members of the European Parliament (EP) and representatives of the EU Member States (MS). The process had a **real impact on the procedure of cooperation** and supported the **multi-stakeholder approach**.

The Palermo Process and other important developments (e.g. enhanced role of EC Delegations in the management of CSO/NSA funds, the Accra Agenda for Action etc.) contributed to the introduction of **new EC aid instruments and of access to direct funding for local stakeholders in 2007**: a wider range of CSOs is now eligible for direct funding, including Southern Non State Actors (NSA) and Local Authorities (LAs) worldwide. However, the level of available funds has not increased. In 2007 the EU funds directly attributed to NSA were approximately 915 million Euros and represented 10% of the total aid to developing countries.

In 2010, the EC is re-launching a dialogue process on CSOs and Local Authorities involvement in EC external cooperation. It will again take the form of a dialogue between four parties – Quadrilogue, involving EC, EP, MS and NSA&LA. This time, the basis for the dialogue is broader, as several evaluations of EC commitments towards cooperation with CSOs are available. Also it takes place at a time of economic crisis when aid levels are under threat. **The Quadrilogue Process aims at defining the future building blocks of EC cooperation with CSOs (from the North and South).** CIDSE/Caritas will be represented in the Quadrilogue through its membership to CONCORD – the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development.

Challenges

EC and CSOs attach a number of mutual, challenging expectations to the Quadrilogue process:

- ◆ To ensure that the value-added of both European NGOs, and their Southern partners, and the partnership ethos they share, is fully appreciated by EC in setting its future aid modalities.
- ◆ To ensure that future EC modalities respond effectively to the needs of both European NGOs and their partners in the field, and that these modalities truly allow for strengthened and more effective collaboration between the EC and Civil Society actors.

- ◆ To ensure that the importance of this debate is fully appreciated by European NGOs and their partners in an environment where EC funding is of ever increasing importance and that these stakeholders are fully involved in the debate and have ownership of its conclusions.
- ◆ To better characterise the roles, added value and division of labour between all stakeholders (State & Non State Actors, various categories of CSO & LA like NGOs, trade unions, political foundations, etc.) and to ensure complementarity in approaches and programmes to reach more sustainability.
- ◆ To identify the role of European stakeholders (EC, MS but also northern NGOs) to promote an enabling environment for Civil Society at the country level.
- ◆ To identify possible ways to adapt EC aid delivery mechanisms towards a more strategic use for the CSO & LA channel.



Questions

1. How to support an enabling environment for political cooperation and solidarity between Northern and Southern Civil Society that allows both to maximise their added value?
2. How are subsidiarity and division of labour between all stakeholders (State & Non State Actors, various categories of Civil Society organizations, Local Authorities) worked out in practice? And what particular role do Civil Society organisations play in development – in both, field work and advocacy/campaigning - and how is that complementary to other development actors?
3. How does the EC support the engagement of Civil Society in the country to discuss issues (not just funding) with donors and (especially) with their government?
4. How can European stakeholders (EC, EU Member States but also Northern NGOs) support the development of Civil Society capacity - particularly in the South?
5. Programme design, decision making, monitoring and impact assessment: How can the different actors (European Commission, Civil Society and other Non State Actors, Local Authorities) work transparently and collaboratively together on the development and implementation of the programme?

OUTCOMES WG 1

Challenges

- EC modalities foster competition between Northern and Southern CSOs: More actors are eligible for funding but the amount of funding has not increased.
- It is challenging for Northern and Southern NGOs to develop joint positions to influence the debate on future EC-CSO cooperation.
- EC aid delivery mechanisms for civil society are complex, especially for Southern CSOs and the support provided by In-Country Delegations are not sufficient and varies significantly (perceived as arbitrary).
- Consultative meetings with CSO are organised by the EC, but the level of meaningful dialogue is limited, as these are often just information dissemination sessions.

Challenges mentioned by EC officials

- S-NGOs have with the EC a new partner with a completely different working environment; how much do CSOs want to invest in making it work?
- Challenge for CSOs/CIDSE to develop a common agenda
- Building/strengthening CSO platforms on in-country level (<> not only building public institutions)
- Complexity of EC contractual and other documents.

Opportunities

- There is scope for stronger partnerships between Northern and Southern NGOs as the relationship is less about funding, since partners can get direct funding from EC, and more about accompaniment and representation. The partnership is more like a 'marriage'.
- There is an increasing "watchdog" role for Northern NGOs: They accompany Southern NGOs in fulfilling this "watchdog" role in the South and represent their interests in the North.
- CSOs can influence other emerging actors (such as trade unions, business) to be more pro poor.

Recommendations

1. The EC should be more flexible in relations with S-NGOs to better respond to needs in (unstable) local environments.
2. The EC should help strengthen coordination between NGOs in the South.
3. NGOs should invest in relations with the EC that go beyond a donor-recipient relationship.
4. NNGOs should facilitate the communication between S-NGOs and Delegations.
5. More flexibility is required on the financial mechanisms depending on the size of the grant.
6. Both the EC and NNGOs should foster more systematic consultations between Delegations and S-NGOs.

Working Group 2

Space for CSOs in Aid Modalities

BACKGROUND PAPER

Context

Following the Paris Declaration (2005) and the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action (2008), the international aid environment has been continuously changing, bringing about trends that could include opportunities and challenges for development NGOs (both North and South). Probably the most widely-discussed and important trend in international aid delivery is the growing reliance of the ODA donor community on



General Budget Support (GBS) and **Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs)**.

General Budget Support is a donor to national government funding scheme based on supporting the implementation of a national development plan, via a direct transfer of funds to the treasury of the recipient government, following eligibility by specific conditions (e.g. regarding implementation of national development plans, macro-economic strategies and public financial management reforms).

In 2004, the World bank delivered over half (52,2%), and the European Commission more than one third (35,1%), of their ODA through GBS, with an intention to deliver more than 50% from 2010. GBS appears to be an easily-manageable instrument for donors to comply with commitments to raise ODA, and it is expected to be more effective than program/project aid, especially regarding transaction costs, ownership, accountability and donor coordination. Evaluations of GBS experiences, however, deliver a mixed picture of the performance of GBS as a strategy for development aid, especially in the areas of poverty reduction and democratic governance. Since GBS strengthens the recipient government's role and responsibility, the effectiveness of GBS depends on the quality of the national development strategies to be financed in the recipient countries. Many Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) engaged in development are facing challenges as they see the range of activities they have been traditionally involved in reduced to at best advocacy and empowerment of local civil society.

The **Sector Wide Approach** (SWAPs) encourages local cooperation between different stakeholders (recipient government, donors and CSOs) to develop and implement sector policy in a given country (e.g. health systems strengthening at national levels). The development of a sector programme includes elements of policy and strategy, budget and the sector coordination framework (the latter including coordination between the government, non-state actors and donors, whereby the national government is still the leading party). In some countries and sectors where CSOs play a specific role in policy and service delivery and work in partnership with government, their involvement in sector policy and strategy should be regarded as an essential condition for determining if a proper sectoral policy is in place.

Within various policy documents, the European Commission has made commitments to support and strengthen the role of CSOs (as part of Non State Actors) in development processes, following on the spirit of Article 20 of the Accra Agenda for Action, which recognises CSOs as development actors in their own right, as equal partners, no longer mere beneficiaries or implementers of development projects. As a result, the EC is currently researching its approach to new aid modalities, so that CSOs / NSAs can be included in new aid modalities – from programme design at national level, to implementation and monitoring of results.

Challenges

- ◆ Following the new trends in the aid architecture, CSOs will face (or are already facing) different expectations from the donor community and their governments, that do not always concur with their traditional visions, missions and modus operandi.

- ◆ Whilst CSO participation in policy dialogue on national / sectoral development policies is a precondition for responsible national planning, this prerequisite remains a challenge, since national governments do not feel compelled to dialogue with their own CSOs and / or do not recognise the added value of their participation.



- ◆ At the same time, CSOs are concerned that the new aid modalities as laid out above would weaken the role of CSOs, reduce the space available for them in the decision making process and seriously decrease the funding available to support CSOs development activities.

- ◆ Whilst CSO participation in thematic programs of the EC (NSA&LA, Investing In People, Human Rights etc)

is secured by the very nature of the complementary funding instruments of the European Commission, there is a concern about the possible 'operationalisation' of engagement of CSOs in national strategy planning, due to the reserve of the Government and Donor to include CSOs in these process. Reasons mentioned being the difficulty to include "proper, representative, legitimate" CSO actors, as well as fears about the actual capacity of these actors to fully participate.

- ◆ The successful implementation of new aid modalities can be undermined by limited government capacity. The assumption that government systems can be reinforced and the capacity improved during implementation does not always reflect reality. In these settings, supporting and reinforcing the capacity of CSOs can contribute to more effective implementation.
- ◆ CSOs find it a challenge that the European Commission (along with other donors), relies heavily on the project approach and call for proposals for funding CSOs instead of truly capitalising on the capacity of this strand of actors to be engines for transformation in their own setting.

Questions

1. What impacts do the trends have on NGOs' structures, their missions and visions?
2. Are there other new factors that impact on development NGOs and their conditions for access to funding?
3. What are the opportunities and challenges for NGOs (N and S) if they are to shift activities from service delivery towards capacity-building and advocacy/lobbying? What does this shift require?
4. What changes are needed at the level of the European Commission in order to facilitate proper inclusion of CSOs / NGOs in local processes with Government at times of national strategy formulation?
5. Which modalities can the EC propose for better inclusion? What level of political space does the EC have in developing countries at times of dialogue with Governments, in order to induce the inclusion of CSOs in national policy formulation? How far would you go for that?

OUTCOMES WG 2

Challenges

- For Southern organisations and some organisations with a relatively high proportion of co-financing, changes in aid modalities are a challenge, as they perceive they have to change their own organisations and ways of working in order to respond to the organisational and political requirements of the new frameworks of the modalities.
- The consultation process is perfectly designed, but implementation remains lagging behind. CSO participation is just a window dressing exercise, not meaningful. Agendas are sent in the morning for an afternoon meeting. CSOs do not know what is done with the feedback they are giving.
- The relative difference of weight in views of local small NGOs as compared to northern small NGOs.
- Vocal advocacy organisations are often seen as a threat by the own government.

Opportunities

- CSOs need to reflect on sustainability beyond donors (for southern organisations it could be just about having a core budget insured).
- Involvement of CSOs in monitoring implementation should be a requirement in the donor-government negotiation on direct budget support; CSOs should be in the room when donors are talking to their governments.
- Service delivery organisations that have proven credibility are consulted.

Recommendations

1. Public Disclosure of information related to different kinds of processes and policy implementation: this requires the EC and governments and us to disclose what is actually happening in the field.
 - Need for northern organisations to invest in providing accessible information.
 - Use best practice of the Right to Information Act in India
2. CSOs need support not only at project level, but also for research and reflection, in order to digest the lessons learnt; this falls for a great deal within the realm of organisational development.
3. Create space for consultation with grass root organisations: they can make resolute choices and are very well able to identify their needs.
4. As representativity of a local CSO network is not always clear to those behind them and a target population, it is advisable to be careful with introducing “cascading effects” where the feed-in and feedback mechanisms between CSOs/ NSA are not in place.
5. Donors in southern countries should create space for CSO consultations led by CSOs. Bilateral donor-EC agreements should include a clause in that respect as to ensure multi-stakeholder elements in national consultations.
6. NNGOs can contribute to capacity building also with respect to the interpretation of information.
7. Enhanced cooperation between parliaments and CSOs: the EC and NNGOs should stress more that it is useful for CSOs not to operate in isolation, but to find allies in their own parliaments.

Working Group 3

North South cooperation (changing roles)

BACKGROUND PAPER

Context

Prior to the launch of the 2007-2013 EC financial perspectives, European NGOs and not for profit organisations were the only eligible applicants for EuropeAid CSO funds. As a result of this the type of relationship between Northern and Southern NGOs in connection with EC funds was in large part a funding relationship, with the Northern NGO (NNGO) receiving and then transferring the EC funds to the Southern NGO (SNGO). The NNGO effectively added the EC funding to its own funding of Southern partners.



The term 'added value' was rarely used in the development arena, and more specifically in EC application processes, since the 'value' of the NNGO was clear. The NNGOs provided 'development aid' with the SNGO being the receiver and the NNGO the 'giver'. Often quoted as an 'unequal partnership', it is important to note that as faith-based NGOs, the values of solidarity and being members of 'one family' have helped to promote equality in N-S partnerships, however, it is still true to say that funding was and is often a major feature within this relationship.

Since 2007, when the EC widened its direct funding channels to Southern Non state actors as well as state actors, there has been a change in the roles of both Northern and Southern NGOs. The role of NNGOs is changing from one based more on funding, to one based more on capacity building, on facilitating learning and on representing Southern causes in the North. The role of the SNGOs is evolving into that of implementing agency as well as contract manager, and SNGOs are holding more direct relationships with EC Delegations and representatives.

Although this is no surprise given the role that NNGOs have played to support SNGOs in becoming more independent, the different degrees that the roles have changed across the spectrum of NGOs in development has meant that the actual split between N-S roles is quite murky, and the respective space for N-S CSOs in aid modalities is not clear.

Challenges

This changing context brings with it a number of challenges for both Northern and Southern NGOs. These include:⁵

- NNGOs are establishing themselves in the South, which seriously affects the capacities of indigenous NGOs to exist.
- SNGOs need more institutional support and core sustainable funding, rather than project linked funding – this is increasing the competition for available funds to cover core costs.
- NNGOs need to increasingly demonstrate their added value to access EC funds, such as information sharing and mutual learning, helping Southern voices to be heard in the North, and helping Southern partners interact better with their own Governments. But are these the roles that Southern partners want Northern partners to play?

⁵ Source: 'Approaches to North-South, South-South and North-South-South Collaboration by Peter Rosseel et al

- With roles changing, NNGOs and SNGOs will experience inevitable demands such as:
- increased responsibility on SNGOs to monitor calls for proposals and have in-house expertise on how to develop and plan programmes for EC funding proposals, set up sufficient financial and M&E systems, provide appropriate donor reports and manage funds according to EC requirements.



- more scrutiny and control from their own constituencies and governments, as well as international donors.
- more pressure on the cash flow of SNGOs without the pre-financing contributions sometimes provided by NNGOs.

Questions

At present

1. What characterises Northern-Southern NGO relationships at present?
2. Do the existing EC funding mechanisms enable Northern and Southern NGOs to fulfil their respective roles in development?
3. Does the EC fully appreciate the capacity-building role that NNGOs often play in assisting SNGOs in receipt of EC funds?
4. NNGOs with a partnership ethos: are NNGOs clear on their own added value as legitimate actors in the development chain? Can they move on from focusing on NNGOs and SNGOs to focusing on Global Civil Society, with its strength being in the diversity of its members?

Looking forward

1. How do you see N-S NGO relationships changing in the coming years?
2. What can the new role of NNGOs be in this new environment? Do they need to play more of a capacity-building / technical advisory role vis-à-vis EC funding (eg M&E, EC application procedures, gender, DRR etc)? If so how will such work be funded? Will they have a role of consortia-builder and behind-the-scenes capacity builder?
3. Whilst some SNGOs may be able to go-it-alone, is there a danger that other smaller less experienced ones will be left behind, without the capacity to lead on funding proposals?
4. How can we ensure that SNGO needs feed into donor policies at a local level (ie quality consultation for donor policy setting)?

OUTCOMES WG 3

Challenges

- SNGOs need support to access EC funds as the process is resource and time consuming; in addition, in numerous countries the operational environment is un conducive to CSO operations.
- The lack of resources can induce competition instead of collaboration and capacity development of Southern partners. There is limited funding available for organisational capacity-building.
- Sustainability of projects is limited as EC funding is short term and follow-on grants in the same communities are uncommon.
- Current EC consultation with Civil Society can be excellent but equally can vary in levels of engagement and true partnership.

Opportunities

- NNGOs have experience and good practices to support SNGOs, especially in technical EC programme development and cooperation, as well as advocacy and policy expertise.
- The emerging funding environment provides NNGOs and SNGOs with an opportunity to discover a new focus in their way of working and added values in the development process.
- The EC could demonstrate more effectiveness if their procedures are more adapted to CSO (and development) realities regarding risks and sustainability.
- The acknowledgement by the donor community and other stakeholders of the importance of CSOs as a development actor can be translated into concrete action in the South.

Recommendations

1. To both SNGOs and NNGOs together to reinforce & create:
 - joint ways of collaborating for enhanced support for SNGOs and their networks in improving the institutional and political environment in which they work, and influence policies.
 - joint ways of collaborating for enhanced support for SNGOs for their organisational development and risk sharing when accessing and working with EC funds.
 - increased collaboration & coordination at national & regional levels in the South and support CSO networks. *For example in Honduras NNGOs and SNGOs have worked together on a thematic network basis supporting coordinated EC funding proposals and ensuring that important work not funded by the EC has possibilities to access other funding sources.*
2. EC: policy should encourage and facilitate the two above recommendations, and in particular provide resources to support NNGOs to capacity-build SNGOs
3. EC funding modalities should acknowledge that Civil Society development entails risks and that these should not only be borne by CSOs. Furthermore they should support sustainability by amending their policies and Financial Regulations to allow for more flexible time periods for development actions with CSOs.
4. The EC should continue to closely involve and enhance its regular consultation with SNGOs and NNGOs in formulating country strategies.

Working Group 4

Cooperation with other (Non) State Actors: the Multi-Actor Process / Multi-stakeholder approach (MSA)

Compared to the other working groups, there was seemingly less interest to discuss the multi-stakeholder approach, as for a number of participants, it was the first time they had read about it (thanks to the background paper n° 4). Moreover, the multi-stakeholder issue can be seen in a very broad way. Indeed, MSA can happen on different levels; and different concepts of MSA are possible. Nevertheless, key words mentioned during the discussions were: coordination, cooperation, participation, partnership, dialogue, ownership, good governance and democracy.



On the second day, there was a strong involvement of EC representatives in the debate. They made clear how they see the MSA during the EC consultations. They stressed the fact that for them civil society is an equal partner in a consultation process (although they prefer to talk about dialogue). Finally, the group came up with concrete recommendations on how to increase the quality of this dialogue and on how to generate more impact through the multi-stakeholder approach.

BACKGROUND PAPER

Context

When attempting to define the Multi Stakeholder Approach, one must go back to its origins. The Stakeholder Theory is a theory of organisational management and business ethics that addresses morals and values in managing an organisation. It was originally laid out by R. Edward Freeman in his book "Strategic Management: A stakeholder approach", and identifies models of different actors that are "stakeholders" of a corporation, and gives recommendations as to sound management, attempting to address the idea of "who or what really counts" for the success of an action (towards deliverable measurables). This message from "the basis" is very relevant when trying to elaborate on complex multi stakeholder processes, especially in the context of development cooperation.

Within developmental circles it is widely recognised that long term development very often goes hand in hand with a multi stakeholder approach, whereby different strands of actors, *government, other donors, CSOs, private businesses and others* work together towards a well defined goal, capitalising on the specific added value and strength of the individual stakeholders.

It is recognised that the definition of "one size does not fit all" does not apply for partnerships; hence the success of the action lies in the tailor made formulas of partnerships for specific purposes.

In practice it is often a challenge to formulate a common goal for ALL stakeholders, due to lack of clarity about the inclusion of the right partners, lack of a clear definition of the purpose of working together and uneven power relations between the partners. This debate is even more opportune within the context of the Aid Effectiveness agenda (donors, governments, CSOs, etc).

The European Commission emphasizes within various policy papers the added value of a multi stakeholder approach. This can be capitalized on at times of dialogue between all key actors, with the goal to have a much stronger strategic focus, to harness the added value of all partners and encourage complementarity with schemes at the level of European Member States. During the Paris seminar on Impact (2004) the stakeholders (CSOs, EC, EP and MS) pleaded for *an independent multi-actor "service" of support for impact evaluation and capitalization* that would enable dialogue to be built around concrete practices and make common commitments at different levels of intervention, thereby improving the quality of actions. The same seminar produced the following recommendations for improving impact of actions through multi stakeholders approaches:

- Recognise that cooperation is a means to build a common future in the North and the South.

- Examine the impact of procedures and methods within a process of co-responsibility. Change in representations and approaches are required; support must be given to this.
- Give priority to relations between actors that are based on the junction of "interests" and of expectations, on listening, and dialogue, especially between the North and South, and establish trust.
- Be sustainable and be part of a process (projects → programs → measures). These cooperation processes must incorporate the actions in the South, lobbying/advocacy, and development education.
- Build alliances between NGOs and other non-state actors (North/South) and take into account the specific role of the varied NGOs.

On the Right of Initiative of CSOs:

European NGOs have long pleaded for their and their partners' right of initiative with regard to areas of intervention, with few results. It is therefore important to reflect on *whose right of initiative?* If NGO activities are not properly grounded in local and national strategies, they could be seen as interesting activities, but ones for which legitimacy and sustainability could be questioned. The accountability and transparency of these activities would have to be justified on an increasing basis.



The main point of consensus in the discussion around right of initiative is the need to enhance dialogue with national and local policy makers, including government at every level, so that the voices of civil society are heard at all stages.

On the other hand, CSOs need to engage more deeply in multi-stakeholder processes. This will inevitably also decrease an individual organisation's room for initiative, potentially threatening the space for civil society to act and be an actor in its own right.

Challenges

- How to develop a balanced analysis, incorporating the key principles (including multi-actor approach, taking into account the assessment of impact / result to be achieved)?
- Find a common understanding of the roles and added value of CSOs / NGOs in multistakeholder processes, whilst the basic mission and vision of the actors can be still respected.
- Donor policies and operational mechanisms often strongly drive multistakeholder approaches, leaving little space and choice for reflection at the level of stakeholders.
- Donor regulations are not flexible enough to deliver development impact through multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Questions

1. When the Aid Effectiveness principles are leading the policy debate, how is it possible to translate the policy into viable practice, with mechanisms that allow factual division of labour, and support a multi stakeholders approach? What can the EC concretely do towards this request, in its cooperation with the European Member States and Multilaterals?

2. How compatible is the Right of Initiative of CSOs with the Aid Effectiveness principles and the Paris Declaration / Accra agenda?
3. How to work more closely together with other stakeholders (such as academic / research organisations in the North and the South) directly in response to evolving needs and donor priorities (not always following a natural flow of developments)?
4. When donor regulations are not flexible enough: How to secure funding for the multi stakeholder approach?

OUTCOMES WG 4

Challenges

- Multi-stakeholder (M/S) dialogue is often reduced to one short consultation, where one stakeholder (usually donors) consults all the stakeholders, but there is not always genuine and sustained M/S dialogue after the consultation.
- There is the need to define a common goal for an M/S dialogue. It should be a bottom-up process; the entry point should be the common goal that must be specific enough.
- The local context: the attitude between the different partners is not always positive. There may be a lack of trust between the Governments, CSOs, business, donors. The M/S approach is a new concept in many (non-democratic) environments. NGOs need to become familiar with it also.
- The M/S approach needs to be contextualised so that it is not a concept imposed from outside (no one size fits all): The approach should largely use existing local channels for dialogue and take place at appropriate and different levels (nationals, regional, district, village).
- Different ways of organising M/S dialogue should be implemented depending on the topic that is discussed (easier to agree on health, than on strengthening CSOs).
- Donor regulations have to be adapted to enable M/S partnerships in practice: Multi-stakeholder approaches may be happening for the design of policies and programmes but may be no longer used for implementing these policies and programmes, because donors' funding regulations may not allow any longer the participation of some stakeholders, such as community based organisations, in the implementation phase (because they can't have access to donor's funding – lack of capacity, etc).
 - Lack of flexibility in EC funding to take account of different CSO situations and to take on new initiatives from CSOs.
 - Diversified access to funding: e.g. funding channel should be managed so that the different stakeholders involved in the M/S process have access. Funding should not be monopolised by one single stakeholder,
 - The role of each actor should be clearly defined at the beginning of the M/S process so that the added-value of each actor's contributions is clearly understood and rightly evaluated. This will help enhancing ownership of the M/S process and outcomes and affirm the CSO's right of initiative.

Examples of multistakeholder involvement:

After 1994, the government in **Rwanda** obliged NGOs to get organised (recognised are only those that provide an annual report). Those NGOs in place were then able to feed into the national development strategy. Further, NGOs organised themselves in clusters according to their expertise, e.g. health, in order to be able to advocate on specific issues and hold the government to account.

The health sector in **Afghanistan** is divided among three main donors: the EC, the World Bank and USAID each covering a share of the 34 provinces. The policy-making at the Ministry of Health is carried out with the involvement of donors, NGOs and the Parliament. Each donor pursues a different funding approach; the World Bank is channelling funds through the government in a very flexible way; the EC prefers channelling funds through NGOs, which is much better, however, the challenge for NGOs was that the EC does not make transparent how amounts for a certain population are calculated and that the funding is granted for a short period of time.

Challenges mentioned by EC officials

- The negative side of M/S approach: bureaucratic heaviness, problem of flexibility in case of small organisations (how to integrate them in consultation processes) , time consuming,
- EC policy for alignment on national development strategy. This means a challenge for CSOs when they have not been involved in national strategy planning.

Opportunities

- Genuine M/S approach is necessary and is viewed as an appropriate instrument to maximise impact.
- Genuine M/S approach is an important process to ensure sustainability, effectiveness and coherence.
- Genuine M/S approach should always be based on the principles of coordination, cooperation and participation and be based on the equality of stakeholders.
- Genuine M/S dialogue is a way to develop a democratic culture in the country, because it creates opportunities for sustained dialogue in which all stakeholders are considered equal and development actors in their own right.

Recommendations

1. In order to make the maximum use of resources: More donor coordination and coherence is needed to enhance an enabling environment for CSOs and for more secure funding for CSOs.
 - Traditional donors and governments should include non-traditional stakeholders in M/S dialogue (e.g. the Chinese government, private businesses).
 - The EC and other donors should avoid double funding and funding gaps.
 - CSOs should bring up in the M/S dialogue issues of good governance.
2. Empowered civil society and participation of smaller CSOs in M/S dialogue (for national strategy planning): Increase capacity of S and N CSOs and of CSO networks to engage in M/S and take an active part in policy making and funding programming.
 - Through thematic programmes, the EC should empower civil society by creating special envelopes for CBOs (excluding them from the higher competition).
 - EC funding for CSO networks in the S and in the N is needed.
 - N + S NGO should engage in creating partnerships, networks and platforms.
 - N NGOs should build capacity of S CSO partners for policy dialogue, advocacy and access to EC funding.
 - S CSOS based in the capital city should reach out to smaller CSOs in provinces.
3. For a proper consultation process involving all stakeholders, the quality of the M/S dialogue needs to be improved.
 - The EC, donors and governments should ensure meaningful consultations: sufficient time to prepare, take CSO points into consideration, involve? CSOs from the beginning to the end of a process.

- N+S NGO should build capacity and / or take the views of community based and grassroots organisations up to national planning process.
4. Funding for CSOs to empower civil society to be able to take part in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national strategy, EU policies and EC funding programming: More flexibility in EC funding modalities to ensure participation of CSO's (including CBOs) in the implementation of policies which are a result of M/S dialogue.
- The EC should build the capacity of EU Delegations to reach out to CSOs and CBOs.
 - The EC should provide EU Delegations with some margin of manoeuvre to adapt EC regulations regarding access to EU funding by CSO to the realities of local CSOs (disabling environment, conflict situations, etc) and to the needs of CBOs.
 - S CSOs should build their own knowledge and capacity for accessing EC funding, e.g. sound management, transparency, accounting, accountability mechanism.
 - N CSOs should help S CSOs to build their capacity for accessing EC funding.

4 March

The plenary met in the morning to evaluate and capitalise on the outcomes and recommendations of the two previous Forum days and to formulate a commonly supported [statement](#). Using a system of coloured cards, participants agreed on the most important challenges, opportunities and recommendations towards the EC and CSOs. The group then moved to the European Parliament, where a debate was organised in order to present the outcomes to EU decision-makers and other CSO stakeholders and interested public in development. The event was hosted by the two Members of European Parliament and members of the Development Committee, Thijs Berman (S&D Party) and Anna Záborská (EPP Party), and moderated by Mirjam van Reisen. To give a practical example of successful North-South cooperation, the CIDSE EPLA (Extractives and Poverty in Latin America) project was presented to the audience in the form of the video entitled '[Private wealth, public poverty](#)'. Below is a summary of the contributions of the debate.

CONFERENCE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT “North-South CSO Cooperation: How will the European Commission create an enabling environment?”

René Grotenhuis, CIDSE’s President and Executive Director of Cordaid/Caritas Netherlands, delivered the opening address and handed over the Forum statement to EC and EP panelists. At the outset he admitted that there has been a massive increase in the number of NGOs the EU has to engage with. Official agencies could not be expected to establish relationships with each NGO on an individual basis. The Quadriologue was a welcome mechanism to organise this dialogue between donors, partner governments, northern and southern civil society. The Forum was CIDSE/Caritas Europa’s way of feeding into the Quadriologue directly.

Reflecting on discussions at the Forum, he pointed out that they had once again underlined that development work had to be set in the context of a broader agenda of social issues and increasingly urgent challenges such as climate change, conflict, migration etc. Additionally, the role of ‘non-traditional’ donors was becoming more visible. The aid environment is increasingly complex. The capacity of civil society to face up to this changing environment required investment. This in turn required changing funding mechanisms. Projectised funding, for instance, did not allow for longer term investment, which was necessary for capacity building.

Aid effectiveness, he stressed, was as much a priority for civil society as it was for donors. But CSO views on aid effectiveness did not fully correspond to the official agenda as expressed in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. Our concern was the actual impact of aid on people’s lives. Afghanistan was a good example. A multi-donor Trust Fund has been set up. Questions whether it would benefit the neediest arose given how disbursements under the Fund have actually taken place. The challenge was to demonstrate the first order and second order results of our work. Does aid really have an impact on people’s lives? Additionally, issues of consultation, transparency and accountability were crucial for civil society in relation to aid effectiveness.

In conclusion, he noted that civil society was working to address issues that stood in the way of official development assistance achieving its desired impact. Most important were issues of donor commitments on aid volumes, quality and effectiveness on the one hand. On the other hand, CSOs were promoting political change to ensure that developing countries had access to sufficient resources to become increasingly self-reliant.

The next speaker **Koos Richelle, Director General of Europe Aid Cooperation Office**, acknowledged that the EU valued their relationship with civil society. This relationship had changed. Ownership has become a key word: the people living in a country needed to be the *owners* of the process defining



what was needed for their development. NGOs were not the only stakeholders in this process. Local authorities and parliaments also had a stake in this discussion. The results of the actions were also very important, as impact needed to be demonstrated to prevent the basis of aid from being eroded. A holistic approach was needed for impact to be realised and sustainable. This included multiple forms of cooperation with different NGOs within a sector on a larger scale. This would also require going beyond the eternal debate of grants versus loans. Participation or 'voice' was important. A crucial question in this regard was legitimacy, and he believes that the questions of legitimacy could also be addressed to NGOs.

The EU's division of labour was not a technical discussion as much as it was a political one. Decisions on 'which donors would be active in which countries' were political. Developing countries needed to participate in such a political discussion, whereby accountability remains a key issue.



In his intervention **Mohammad Fareed, Deputy Director of Afghan Health and Development Services**, expressed appreciation for the north-south cooperation he encountered. He acknowledged that the concept of an NGO was new to Afghanistan. The health sector was of a nature that required sustained technical and financial support. He recognised the specific value of the EU support for 10 out of the 30 health centres in the country.

In his intervention, **Pierre Efoé Aholouvi, Executive Director from Caritas Man in Côte d'Ivoire**, welcomed the solidarity he felt between northern and southern civil society. It was reassuring to note that there was no competition on the ground between north and south. On behalf of Caritas Man, he was able to contribute to the Poverty Reduction Strategy and 10th EDF for the region of Man; however, CSOs in other countries would not necessarily be given that opportunity. The EC should be vigilant to see that CSOs were associated in such consultation processes. Also, CSOs working to achieve behavioural changes and positive impact in the long-term were exposed to high financial risk relying on 2-3 year co-funding from the EC. Caritas Man could only exist thanks to the long-term support of the northern CSO partners. This vital question of financial sustainability should be addressed when setting new EC aid modalities.

Describing the Structured Dialogue process, **Aristotelis Bouratsis, Director in Europe Aid Cooperation Office**, pointed out that one aim of the process was to strengthen the dialogue with EU Delegations in-country and to ensure that officials recognise the role of civil society within a commonly agreed agenda. Situating the Quadriologue in a progressive evolution in the quality of dialogue on aid effectiveness, he pointed out that while gains have been booked through the Paris Agenda on Aid Effectiveness and the first round of EU dialogue with different stakeholders on aid issues, it is now essential to involve local actors and national authorities in the debates and the actions.

On the role of the European Parliament in EU's aid discussions, **MEP Thijs Berman**, pointed out that next to the Development Committee, the Budget committee played an important role. Additionally, the EP sought to safeguard the coherence of all EU policies whether on development, trade, agriculture or other fields. It was important for civil society to 'use' the Parliament - being an ally for development - to address their concerns in order to 'give voice to the voiceless'.



Asked about the added value of faith based organisations, **MEP Anna Záborská**, said that she had a lot of admiration for organisations like CIDSE and Caritas, who have a positive impact because they commit themselves either financially or politically and work often in dire circumstances. Furthermore, the added value of being a faith based development organization can be seen in the high degree of personal commitment that individual believes, including religious views can create

in favor of a better world. Also, as member of both the Women's Rights and the Development Committee, concern and space should be given to gender aspects in development taking into account that women are the first victims of poverty.

Regarding the changes to EU aid after the adoption of the Lisbon treaty, MEPs agreed that the value of the Lisbon treaty is that the EU can now speak with one voice on the world stage. There is a possibility that development cooperation would be mainstreamed into the EU's external policy under the new EU External Action Service. Yet, much remains for discussion with respect to the implementation of the treaty. The EU must realise that it must prove itself to be a reliable partner in its development cooperation relationships with developing countries and NGOs. It is important to remain vigilant and critical but optimistic at the same time.

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES (3 MARCH 2010)
CIDSE – Caritas Europa Forum, 2 – 4 March 2010, Brussels/Belgium

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Dominique Dellicour	Europe Aid Cooperation Office	E4 - Quality of Operations for Governance, security, human rights and gender	Head of Unit
Olivier Luyckx	Development and Relations with ACP States	A2 - Aid effectiveness and relations with Member States and EEA States	Head of Unit
Davide Bonvicini	Development and Relations with ACP States	A2 - Aid effectiveness and relations with Member States and EEA States	Policy Officer - Non States Actors and Local Authorities
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André Debongnie	Europe Aid Cooperation Office	E4 - Governance, security, human rights and gender	Civil Society, gender, vulnerable groups
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FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

The feedback given on the evaluation forms and in bilateral talks was generally positive or very positive on all aspects of the Forum – organisationally and content wise. Participants especially liked the friendly atmosphere and ‘open exchange’, also during the dinners and the reception.

Participants appreciated the ‘high level of engagement of EC officials’ and the speeches given by EC officials and the CIDSE President and felt that the debate in the European Parliament was a success. They deemed it an ‘efficient meeting’ providing a lot of food for thought.

By contrast, a number of participants felt that the ambitious agenda did not leave enough space for discussions and/or clarifications during the workshops as well as in plenary. For some, also the ‘Brussels jargon’ spoken was problematic. Still, the workshop background papers provided in English, French and Spanish were a good starting point for the discussions and were good preparation for the terminology to be used.

Outside the Forum programme, several bilateral meetings between EC desk officers and CIDSE-CE partners and staff from member organisations were arranged beforehand. For example, partners from Cambodia, Afghanistan and the DRC had the opportunity to address issues of EC contract management, ongoing projects or as in the case of Cambodia the problem of illegal logging and the need for EU action in that respect. These direct encounters were found to be valuable experiences.

Below is a selection of responses from participants on two open questions from the evaluation form:

What has been the value of this Forum for you/r organisation?

- I learned a better understanding of lobby and advocacy toward an improved cooperation between northern and southern NGOs as well as with the EC.
- The multi-actor approach is important for holistic development.
- To learn from northern NGOs how EC funding works and how to be more effective as an organisation.
- The best way to lobby the EU is to have a consensus as a strong network.
- The information on EC policy trends and EC-CSO cooperation was helpful.

Are you considering next steps with view to the outcomes of the Forum?

- To design new strategies which fit the Forum recommendations; and to implement them at advocacy and programme level.
- To start a dialogue with the EC in coordination with other local organisations at country level and to have the personnel facilitating this process.
- To organise meetings with EU Delegations.
- To give feedback to my own organisation and engage with CIDSE/CE.
- To make sure other partner organisations get the Forum outcomes through member organisations.