ACUMENTA

Guidelines

for Support to Civil Society

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1. Introduction and purpose of the guidelines

A number of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Tanzania[1] approached development partners in 2006 and asked that guidelines and/or a common framework be written to help coordinate and make more transparent development partners' support to CSOs engaging in advocacy and policy work. They felt that whilst having put a tremendous effort into coordinating their support to, and relations with government under the Joint Assistance Strategy, development partners tended to be more fragmented in their approach to supporting civil society, uncoordinated, short-sighted and often lacking a clear strategic focus.

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) led the process of drawing up such guidelines in collaboration with other development partners. Consultations with civil society organisations were key throughout the process. Their combined efforts define a common framework for support to civil society organisations working mainly in advocacy and engaging in policy processes. The underlying guidelines which depict this common framework follow principles similar to those of the Paris Declaration. The aim is to improve development partner co-ordination and strategic focus, and ultimately to strengthen the demand side accountability, and thus make a greater, more sustainable impact on development in Tanzania[2].

2. Disposition

This document is composed of four sections outlined below, which together create an integrated framework.

Points of departure gives a short summary of main findings from the discussion groups. For further analysis please refer to the Position Paper.

Principles of good donorship explains the role of development partners supporting CSOs engaged in policy advocacy work in the context of new aid architecture.

Criteria for core funding sets out the standards required for a CSO to qualify for core funding. The criteria are divided between formal, organisational and operational.

Donor coordination recommends ways in which development partners could improve their support towards CSOs for more positive results.

An annex called **Next steps** proposes a plan of action including immediate initiatives required to continue the process.

3. Applicability

These guidelines are intended to inspire and promote good practice between development partners and CSOs working in advocacy and engaging with policy development. They include a declaration of intentions and outline a direction for the

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[1] During the Public Expenditure and Accountability Review in 2006, civil society organisations pointed out an imbalance between the considerable effort development partners put into improving their support and relations with the Government of Tanzania, particularly in the context of the Joint Assistance Strategy, and the comparatively limited attention granted to civil society organisations working to strengthen domestic accountability.

[2] See the Position Paper for more details on the background and process.

future. Initially, it may not be possible for all development partners to apply the common framework outlined in these guidelines in full due to various restrictions from donor country head offices. However, all development partners can follow the parts they are able to adopt immediately and gradually work towards the rest as appropriate.

4. Limitations

Supporting civil society is one of several measures designed to deepen democracy, develop a more responsive government and increase domestic accountability. Other mechanisms include support to parliament, political parties, media and rule of law. For effective implementation of the Mkukuta[3], the citizens of Tanzania need to be encouraged to *demand* accountability from their government and its authorities. For further discussion please see the Position Paper.

Providing social services for disadvantaged citizens of Tanzania is a major role of civil society. Many development partners are moving from project to budget support, and are increasingly channelling funds to governments directly to increase spending on public services. Governments may, in turn, opt to enter into agreements with CSOs to make use of local capacity and improve the outreach of services provided. However, as it may be a long time before such arrangements are in place, development partners will need to continue supporting CSOs to deliver social services in the meantime.

Advocacy work versus service delivery

Many of the principles laid down in the framework are equally applicable to CSOs involved in service delivery. Of course, many organisations working with advocacy also have service delivery components within their operational plans[4]. However, **the guidelines have been developed with a view for support provided (or to be provided) to organisations working *mainly* in advocacy and engaging in policy development.**

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5. Definitions

5.1 Civil Society

Civil society is about citizens - men, women, boys and girls organising themselves and acting together for their common interest. There are many definitions of civil society but these guidelines take a practical approach. The following types of organisations are considered to be part of civil society:

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[3] The Swahili name of the Tanzanian national poverty reduction strategy

[4] A study carried out by REPOA revealed that 47% of surveyed organisations covered a mix of service delivery and advocacy. (*REPOA Special paper no. 07.21*)

- membership based organisations, CBOs and NGOs

- voluntary and self-help groups, community based groups and societies

- social movements and networks of organisations

- non-membership associations, professional associations, foundations and non-profit companies

- faith based organisations

- trade unions

- private sector associations

- employers' associations

- co-operatives

- research institutes working in economic and policy analysis

- non-profit media organisations

- multi-party organisations

5.2 Advocacy

The term advocacy means 'a set of techniques for raising awareness, challenging the status quo and calling on different agents to take up their responsibility to bring about change'[5] at national, regional or local levels. Advocacy work should be based on empirical studies and validated information.

6. Points of departure

6.1 The development process of a CSO

Many CSOs in Tanzania are becoming increasingly involved in advocacy work, though how they do so differs. Some respond more or less spontaneously to rights violations of their members or beneficiaries, while others work strategically to change policies, systems and structures over the long-term. The following model illustrates a development process of a CSO becoming involved in advocacy work. It gradually matures throughout the four stages.

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[5] The implications for northern NGOs of adopting rights-based approaches, INTRAC Occasional Papers Series No: 41, 2005
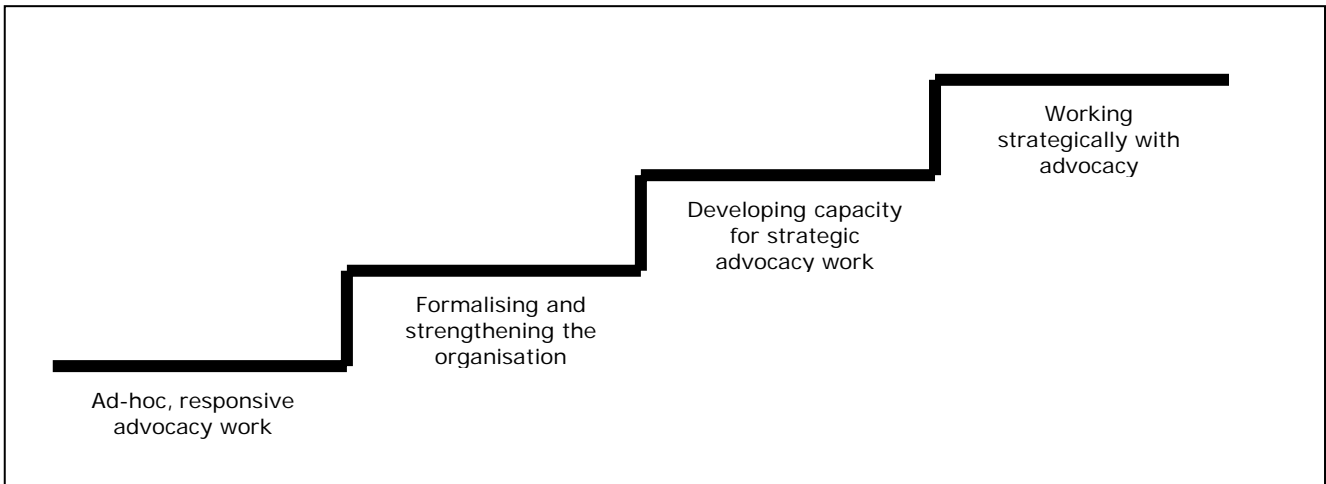
In the first stage, the organisation or group is involved in advocacy and engaging with policy in a spontaneous, reactive manner. It could, for example, be a group of farmers coming together in response to a violation of their land rights. It could be a CSO primarily involved in providing social services which feels obliged to react to a violation of their target group's rights or a CBO concerned about violation of rights within its own organisation. Some CSOs may choose to remain working with advocacy in an ad-hoc manner only.

In the second stage, the organisation develops its legitimacy to claim rights on behalf of its constituency/beneficiaries. It becomes stronger and gains a louder voice by formalising and strengthening its basic internal systems and procedures while ensuring transparency and accountability. An organisation working mainly with service delivery may need to revise its methods and relationship with its beneficiaries.

In the third stage, the organisation develops and strengthens specific skills in advocacy gaining a deeper knowledge of the subject and forming networks and alliances with other organisations to gain a stronger voice. At this stage, it will also have developed its own methods, research techniques and approach to public information.

Finally, a CSO becomes a mature advocacy organisation able to engage in policy development at local or central government level, working strategically over the long-term, empowering people to claim their rights.

6.2 Strategies used by development partners

Strategies used by development partners for supporting CSOs were examined during preparation of the guidelines. There were two main approaches.

1. Support *to* civil society

The first approach is to provide support *to* civil society rather than simply fund its operations. The objective is to promote the development of a strong, diverse and dynamic civil society with increased organisational capacity. The development partners achieve this by nurturing young and relatively weak organisations. They provide generic capacity building to develop internal systems, structures and routines or to improve financial management and leadership.

2. Support *through* civil society

The second approach is to provide support *through* civil society itself. In this instance, development partners see themselves as financiers who are in regular contact with the organisations they support, and are interested in and focused on the work they do. They support CSOs who provide civic education and encourage citizens to claim their rights, as well as organisations who monitor government performance, and demand that obligations and commitments towards all citizens are fulfilled. Generally development partners work with CSOs whose interests correspond with their own.

The illustration below shows a combination of these two approaches with the first model. It reveals how development partners' strategies are distributed in relation to the needs of CSOs in Tanzania today.[6]:
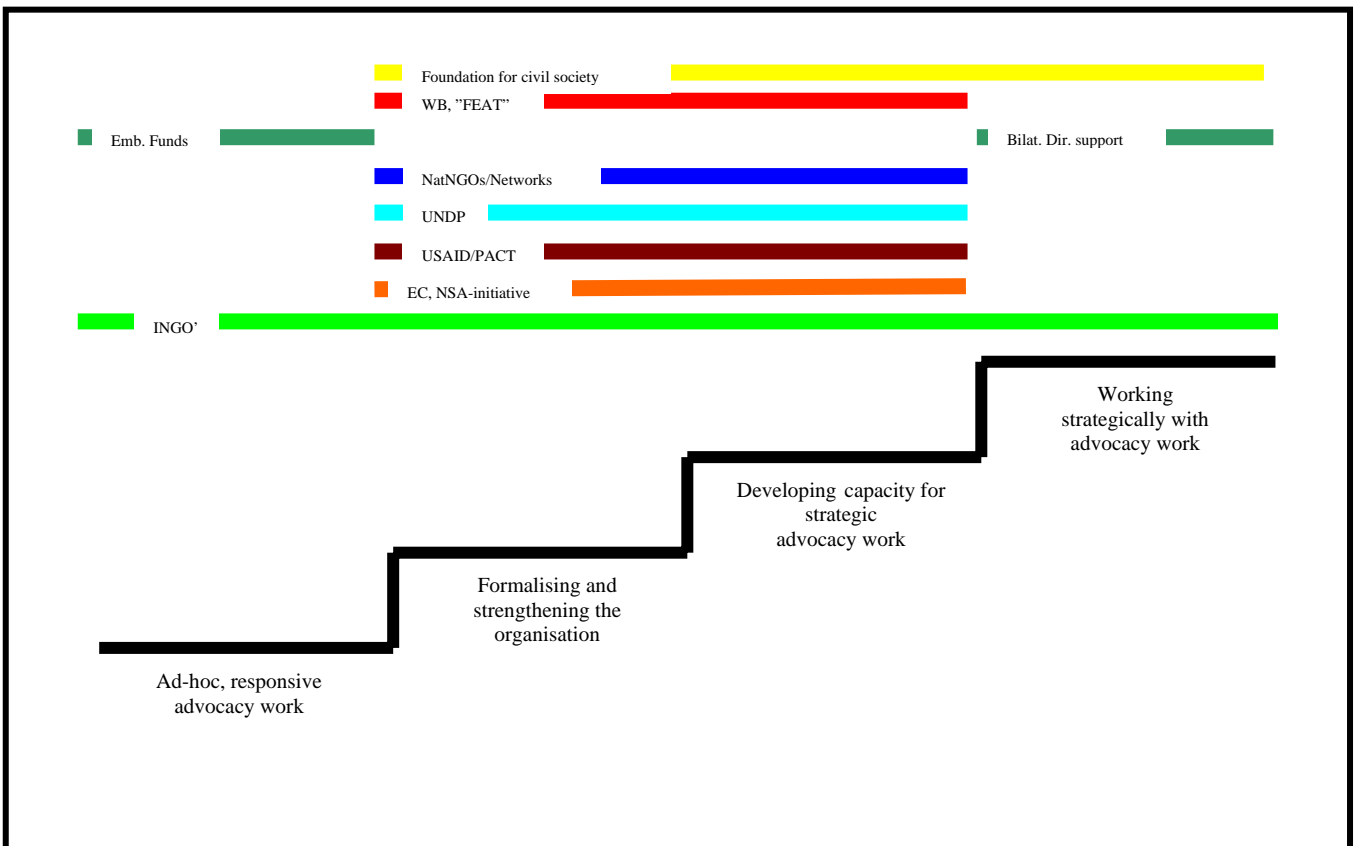
Development partners have different strategies for supporting different stages in the development process of CSOs working in advocacy.

Stage one

In the first stage, CSOs receive project funding for activities and technical support. International NGOs (INGOs), often based in the north, are the main vehicle used by development partners to channel this support. They are seen as particularly efficient for supporting CSOs at the local level. They are also very efficient in identifying and reaching out to a multitude of CSOs, funding a variety of activities and programmes. CSOs often get support for service delivery work in this way and are increasingly being

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[6] A larger picture is provided in an Annex.

encouraged by development partners to link it with advocacy work. The so-called open or small grant funds at embassies are another source of funding.

Stage two and three

The strategies for supporting stage two and three focus on technical assistance for capacity development through various capacity building organisations or projects. These organisations include INGOs working in partnership, promoting capacity exchange with similar local CSOs, larger national NGOs, networks and coalitions. They work with the Foundation for Civil Society or projects such as PACT, the EU/NSA initiative and the World Bank FEAT facility, all of which are set up separately. Some development partners concentrate on one of the two capacity building stages.

Many initiatives are supply oriented, based on development partners' perceptions of what is required, rather than on specific individual needs. This type of support is often not coordinated with other initiatives, and may be given for one-off events like workshops - often with no follow-up.[7]

The increased transparency of development partners on requirements, conditions, and criteria for long-term funding, together with the emergence of a Code of Conduct within civil society[8] aims to improve this situation and will make it easier for organisations to improve their operational planning, their structures, systems and work methods.

Stage four

The strategy for stage four involves both financial support and DPs as competent and experienced dialogue partners. Direct support is given to smaller organisations, mainly bilateral development partners, some INGOs and the Foundation for Civil Society. The majority of development partners support the capacity development stages of an organisations' growth, with only a few development partners granting long-term support focusing on operations.

Ironically, this uncoordinated and much criticized approach has resulted in a healthy diversity in funding strategies. Civil society is by its nature diverse and requires equally diverse strategies. It also has different needs when it comes to support. Some partners focus on the capacity development stages, others choose to focus on the actual work of CSOs. While the diversity of funding strategies should be maintained in a future system, coordination and the quality of support needs improvements.

7. Principles for good donorship

CSOs that seek longer term core-funding from development partners will need to adher to the criteria set out in the chapter below. If they do so successfully, development partners will commit to the following principles for good donorship which follow from the Paris Declaration, and from the research and analysis conducted in Tanzania.

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[7] For further reading, please consult the Position Paper.

[8] E.g. the Code of Conduct developed by Policy Forum and the Code of Conduct for the CSOs supported by the Foundation for Civil Society.

1. Changing attitudes

Development partners will aim to enhance CSOs' ownership of their planning and implementation by using principles similar to those outlined in the Paris Declaration. They will work towards aligning their requirements with the systems and procedures of the respective organisation. Development partners should always fit in with CSOs, not the other way around.

2. Encourage diversity of funding strategies

Development partners should share their respective strategies and develop a greater understanding of how they can contribute to a stronger civil society for social transformation in Tanzania. The diversity of funding strategies should be maintained and made transparent, rather than streamlined into a single mechanism.[9] Development partners need to respond to CSOs' need for a variety of funding opportunities.

3. Mainstream support to civil society

Civil society should not continue to be regarded or treated as one separate sector, but as a parallel system of organisations involved in the same areas as the state. Support to civil society needs to be managed along with other support, not separately by a single civil society programme officer.

4. Apply a rights based approach

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent conventions, together with the Tanzanian constitution and other relevant national legislation are primary reference sources. Development partners should be guided by them when analysing rights' violations and take a rights-based approach. They should focus on engaging citizens in policy formulation and good governance.

5. Prioritise strategic partnerships for direct funding

Some development partners may enter into long-term relationships with CSOs which share common objectives and which are active in the same sectors. These relationships should be based on confidence, respect and the capacity to deliver on both sides. They constitute an important element in the development partners' strategy to support development in Tanzania. CSOs should be considered legitimate by the people they claim to represent and able to make a positive impact on their behalf. Development partner support for both the Government of Tanzania on the supply side, and CSOs in the same sectors or thematic areas on the demand side, will strengthen domestic accountability. The fundament and starting point for the relations shall be set out and found in the strategic plan.[10]

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[9] For further discussion on single mechanisms please consult the Position Paper.

[10] For further reading on strategic partnerships please consult the Position Paper.

6. Engage in long-term commitment

Development partners need to commit to a *minimum* period of the CSO's strategic plan when entering into a strategic relationship (approximately five years). Partners have the option to withdraw from the collaboration after this period. This will be stated in a mutual agreement. Satisfied development partners assess the next strategic plan before deciding whether to enter an agreement for the next period.

7. Move towards core funding

The development partners' aim is to move towards core funding as and when CSOs have reached the requisite maturity. The core funding mechanism allows CSOs to remain loyal to their own plans and not have to diversify because of the requirements of particular funding opportunities.[11] As the financial support becomes predictable, CSOs are more able to plan strategically and long-term while developing and sustaining their organisations. CSOs receiving core funding will require extended auditing[12].

Development partners may find it difficult to engage directly with smaller CSOs, even if they are considered both capable and strategic. They will be able to use intermediaries, such as the Foundation for Civil Society, national NGO networks and INGOs to extend core funding. These organisations will take responsibility for monitoring on behalf of the development partner, though the latter might still be involved in discussions with the CSOs.

It is common for an organisation to be involved in both advocacy and social service delivery work. Development partners need to understand that providing core funding to these CSOs also includes supporting their service delivery work, since holistic funding is given according to the priorities of the organisation.

Core funding can be given in parallel with some capacity development. However, after an initial period of capacity development, the organisation will have to meet criteria mentioned later in this document in order to receive long-term core funding.

8. Steering documents – strategic plan, budget and joint report

Before entering a core funding relationship, a CSO needs to formulate its objectives and strategies in a long-term strategic plan. Known as the CSO's Mkukuta, the choice of priorities should be made independently of development partners, but form the basis of future collaboration with them. The strategic plan will be the centre piece of the agreement between the two parties defining activities, monitoring progress and reporting results. The strategic plan will inform communications between the development partners and CSOs, who should cooperate to ensure that it is fully implemented and achieves the intended results.[13]

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[11] For further reading on core funding please consult the Position Paper.

[12] The organisation's auditing shall be done by an authorized auditor, registered by the National Board of Auditors and Accountants, according to:
- statuary auditing (normal auditing)
- according to international standard of auditing #420 (the auditor's responsibility to discover corruption).
  This needs to specifically be included in the auditor's contract with the organisation.
- Additional assignment to the auditor for annual internal audit of internal governance.

[13] For further reading on the strategic plan please consult the Position Paper.

Initially, a long-term budget corresponding to the strategic plan should be drawn up. Each development partner will commit an agreed amount to this budget which can be revised should more development partners enter the collaboration. The budget will contain the entire funding needs of the organisation: programmes and activities, staff, and administration, investments and organisational capacity development needs. The organisation will provide one joint annual report to both development partners and the public.

9. Support institutional development and growth

Development partners should support weak CSOs by developing institutional capacity through intermediaries such as national or international NGOs, before extending direct financial support. They may also opt to finance the use of local consultants, set up specific projects or support additional capacity development institutions. Some intermediaries will be able to provide small grants for capacity development. Embassy funds should be dissolved and the money channelled through such intermediaries.[14]

The development partners need to improve the quality of their support for capacity development.[15] They should coordinate their efforts to ensure that it is extended throughout the country, avoiding duplication of programmes in the same locations. Sharing information regularly with the group of development partners and increasing transparency towards civil society should encourage common strategies which will better suit the needs of the CSOs.

10. Encourage innovation, results and learning

CSOs will grow stronger through a combination of factors: taking their own decisions, taking responsibility for developing their own programmes and learning from their own successes and failures. Their relationship with development partners needs to be based on regular communication with joint meetings to discuss plans and review progress. Joint learning is particularly needed to measure the impact of the advocacy work, as there is today a lack of methods to do this measuring.

11. Relationships and good communication

Development partners should appoint a competent contact person who would follow developments and matters of support, and be the *first contact* for CSOs and enquiries from other parties. This should make development partners more accessible to CSOs. For discussions and engagement at a more technical level the contact person refers the CSO to a relevant colleague[16]. Direct support to CSOs should be managed by the colleague/s working in the same field / sector as the organisation in question and should encourage a qualified dialogue between the development partner and the supported organisation. It is recommended that a programme officer should manage a maximum

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[14] For further reading on embassy funds please consult the Position Paper.

[15] For further reading on good capacity development please consult the Position Paper.

[16] For example,. if a farmers' association approached the civil society officer s/he could provide general information on how the development partner operates, and how they support civil society, and for further discussions on engagement and developments in the agricultural sector refer the organisation to the agricultural advisor.

of five relationships in order to engage fully and have regular communication. The CSO's Boards of Directors should also be kept well informed on how work develops.

It is not the responsibility of development partners to champion CSOs, or speak on their behalf, if they fall into conflict with government. They may only address government in more general terms regarding concepts such as freedom of expression or association. They should never jeopardize the CSOs independence and legitimacy.

Development partners can not be a channel of communication between government and CSOs. However, they can help facilitate productive discussions between the two parties.

12. Make support through INGOs visible

Development partners need to agree with the INGOs how their respective support to CSOs in-country can be better co-ordinated to create an efficient, effective and complementary division of roles. INGOs contributions need to be made more visible. Based on the type of organisation, mandate, skills and experiences,[17] NGOs in the north may be able to communicate the areas to which they add specific value better.

8. Criteria for core funding

In order to benefit from a long-term, more flexible and development oriented funding arrangement, the CSOs are willing to commit to the following criteria.

8.1 Formal aspects

1. Organisations can not be affiliated to a political party.

2. Organisations must be legally registered as societies, trusts, non-profit companies or trade unions.

3. Organisations must have a constitution or statutes.

4. Organisations must have a physical address.

8.2 Organisational aspects

5. Organisations need their legitimacy demonstrated by:

   - routines and structures that make it accountable to its constituency and/or beneficiaries, defining it as their representative;

   - building strong and regular links with its constituency and/or beneficiaries;

   - collecting empirical evidence for the advocacy work, through research or by having a clear connection between the social service provision and the advocacy work.

6. Organisations need sufficient institutional capacity demonstrated by

   - a skilled staff committed to all areas outlined in the strategy;

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[17] For further reading on the role of INGOs please consult the Position Paper.

- sufficient systems to manage strategic planning, operations, finances, information and personnel;

- close links with like-minded organisations.

7. Organisations need to demonstrate that they are transparent and practice good governance by:

- the organisation executing governance according to its statutes ;

- systems for the appointment of council/AGM, Board of Directors and the Executive Director;

- transparent checks and balances throughout the organisation including at AGM, Board and executive levels;

- a functioning Board of Directors which meets regularly;

- separate authorization of expenditure and handling payments and two signatories for cheques;

- one comprehensive budget in which *all* income is included, regardless of how it is earned;

- an adequate accounting system;

- annual statements audited by an authorized auditor, registered by the National Board of Auditors and Accountants.

8.3 Operational aspects

8. Organisations must have a long-term strategic plan (with a detailed budget), clearly outlining all its objectives. Programmes must be realistic and likely to have a positive impact. One detailed annual report (on both technical and financial progress) should be presented to the Board, development partners and constituency.

9. Organisations need to be substantially involved in at least two of the following four areas of operations:

- advocacy work towards elected authorities;

- monitoring how the state fulfils its commitments and obligations;

- empowering citizens and CSOs to claim their democratic rights and responsibilities, building awareness about national policies, reforms, and entitlements;

- producing publicly accessible independent information on public matters.

10. The organisation needs to recognise and respect the role of the state and the government. The organisation may have a critical position and stance, but should also present alternatives and be constructive, not only complain.

11. In cases where human rights are being violated, the organisation should use a rights-based approach according to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent conventions.

8.4 Organisational assessment

Before a decision on funding is made, an assessment is necessary to determine how well a CSO is complying with the criteria for core funding. It should also serve as a basis for further capacity development. It is important that the CSO is involved in designing the assessment and selecting a consultant. The assessment should be planned jointly with the potential development partner or group of partners.

9. Coordination among development partners

Many CSOs today spend a considerable proportion of their time providing information to, and discussing their work with their different development partners. There is a real need to seek effective coordination and improve efficiency.

Not all development partners are able to participate in more advanced coordination, such as joint agreements for basket funding. Some are bound by their respective domestic legislation and can extend funding only in the form of project support. Most however, are ready to begin sharing more information and the benefits of increased coordination should become plain to all interested parties.

The three-leaf clover illustrated below symbolises three different types of coordination between development partners. Each can choose to participate in one, two or all three.
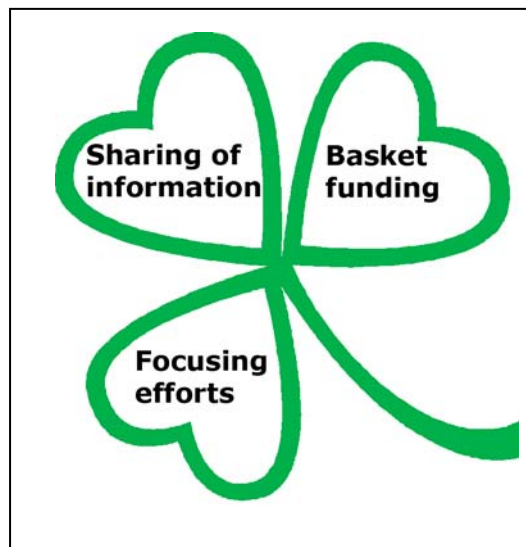
9.1 Leaf one - sharing of information

Creating transparency

The first aspect involves developing a mechanism for compiling and sharing information between the development partners about their support to civil society. A database which is accessible over the internet is probably the most efficient method of holding information. It may include data about organisations supported, how much is spent and for how long, strategies that have been used and total funding figures. Information on conditions and systems for proposal appraisals of each development partner should also be included. CSOs will then know how they need to strengthen their organisations before approaching development partners for the requisite funding.

Such a database would create transparency between development partners, civil society and government allowing each to gain a comprehensive overview of the current and projected situation. It would also avoid funding duplication or overlapping, coordinate joint approaches and identify gaps in both current and potential needs. The database would also be useful for CSOs searching for support. One development partner will need to assume responsibility for developing and maintaining the database.

Increased communication

Support to civil society is not often on the agenda in meetings between development partners. Discussions have tended towards developments in, and relations with Government. Supporting civil society to strengthen the demand side of accountability requires more attention and status than it currently receives. The different DPG[18] sub-groups are an appropriate forum for development partners to hold such discussions

For real progress, developments in, and support to civil society, especially those working in advocacy, should be discussed in all DPG sub-groups regularly. Development partners would then gain a better appreciation of the contribution civil society makes in different sectors gaining a better understanding of their different approaches, strategies, results and joint resources. This should encourage a more holistic view of contributions to a sector, as well as enable a more informed debate with government.

9.2 Leaf two - focusing efforts

Development partners should contribute only where they can add value. Under the Joint Assistance Strategy for Tanzania (JAZT) development partners specialise in particular sectors or areas for the implementation of the Mkukuta. Their contribution to civil society may reflect this focus, thus ensuring a complement of both macro and micro-level support.

Supporting both the supply and demand side of accountability in each sector or area should lead to increased efficiency on both sides and give the development partners better informed strategies for development in Tanzania. It will also mean that greater efforts will be made to support organisations in different parts of the country and help spread contributions to all sectors/areas.

CSOs may be active in more than one sector or area. In these cases the organisation should clearly define which are dominant in its operations and profile.

There is a suggestion that the increased demands for efficiency made on development partners to manage more funds with fewer staff might result in lead/silent partner arrangements. This is *not* recommended. Civil society organisations need relationships with development partners to be vibrant and help make them less vulnerable.

9.3 Leaf three - basket funding

In order to minimize the administration and overheads for CSOs, development partners in a basket funding arrangement need common conditions and requirements. They should agree on joint procedures in a memorandum of understanding including: those for organisational assessment, planning, consultations, disbursement, procurement,

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[18] Development Partner Group

financial management, reporting, auditing, monitoring and evaluation. The financial and administrative management could be handled by one lead development partner on behalf of its colleagues as long as they all participate in the discussions about CSOs' operations, performance and impact.

Annex

Possible next steps to implement the guidelines and their recommendations

The following next steps are suggested to maintain momentum in the process of coordinating and implementing the guidelines.

A. To guarantee the implementation of the guidelines

- The DPG should express its commitment to the guidelines and a joint ambition to implement the intentions outlined.

- The DPG should assign a responsible *watch-dog* (preferably the Accountable Governance Cluster). Its task will be to guarantee and follow up the integration of civil society discussions in the DPG sub-groups.

- The DPG should appoint a *Lead Agency* within the group, and give it a mandate to ensure that the implementation of the guidelines does not come to a halt.

- The lead agency should appoint a responsible person or *coordinator* internally and ensure that s/he has an external consultant for support.

- The steering committee should remain as a virtual reference group to support the coordinator and to be used when consultations are needed.

B. The practical implementation of recommendations

- The DPG should ensure that the integration of civil society issues and discussions are included in the ToRs for every DPG sub-group.

- The DPG should appoint an agent among their number who will develop and maintain the database.

- The responsible agent should write Terms of Reference (ToR) for the database and for the technically responsible person/s.[19]

- The database should be developed under the guidance of the accountable governance cluster and the lead agency.

- The responsible agent should, together with all development partners, draw up a list of civil society contacts who will coordinate between the development partners and the database team.

C. Remaining issues and questions

- The coordinator should initiate a study in which results of successful accountability work are presented and discussed. The study should present

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[19] A similar database developed among development partners in Moldova can serve as inspiration. Please see www.ngodonors.md/en

objectives and verifiable indicators and be undertaken as a joint learning exercise with CSOs.

- Each development partner should review the programmes of individual country INGOs in Tanzania which are working on agreements with their head offices. Their strategies, programmes, partners and volumes of support should be compiled and included in the database.

- The coordinator should use national networks to contact civil society activists in Zanzibar and ask them to assess whether these guidelines are applicable in Zanzibar.

- The DPG should try to include the Government of Tanzania in discussions about how it might support and/or enter into partnerships with Tanzanian CSOs. Such support should be monitored within the framework of the Mkukuta.

- The DPG should decide if a similar common framework should be developed for support to Tanzanian CSOs working mainly with service delivery, and if so, commission the coordinator to lead the process.