# The Journey from Istanbul

## Evidences on the implementation of the CSO DE Principles

CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness

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## Evidences on the implementation of the CSO Development Effectiveness Principles

CSOPartnership for Development Effectiveness

2014

The Journey from Istanbul:
Evidences on the implementation of the CSO DE *Principles*

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# Acknowledgement

*The Journey from Istanbul: Evidences on the implementation of the CSO DE Principles* is a compilation of stories of good practices, challenges faced and gaps identified in the implementation of the *Istanbul Principles* in different country contexts. The case stories are from 19 organizations from 17 countries spanning the different global regions. This is the first attempt of the CPDE Working Group on CSO Development Effectiveness to document such initiatives in strengthening CSO work in promoting their own effectiveness. This document, together with the first Global Training of Trainers on CSO DE held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2013, are evidences demonstrating CSOs contribution to the *Principles* articulated in the Busan Partnership Document, despite difficult socio-political, economic and cultural situation in the countries and communities they work in. Initiatives such as these are proofs that a shrinking space and other challenges do not and will not deter CSOs from persevering – from service delivery to advocacy – in serving the people.

First, thank you very much to the 19 organizations for sharing their stories of successes and challenges in implementing the *Istanbul Principles*. This would definitely be an inspiration to the many more organizations, networks and platforms that we will be reaching out to in time.

We also thank all the WG members for taking part in a meaningful collective discussion, exchange of ideas and efforts in mobilizing colleagues for contributions to the project, despite a very tight schedule and resources. We thank the CSO facilitators and trainers who took part in the Global Training of Trainers, whose work on the *Istanbul Principles* and CSO development effectiveness in their countries and communities are expected to bear more fruit in the period to come.

We acknowledge the support of the CPDE Global and Regional Secretariats, especially in mobilizing contributors. We also extend our sincerest appreciation to Brian Tomlinson, for his generosity and commitment in writing the synthesis of trends in CSO development effectiveness work. We thank Tetet Lauron, who co-chairs the WG, for devoting time, effort and knowledge in copy editing all the nineteen submissions.

This project would also not have been possible without the invaluable contribution of the Secretariat of the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) in managing the project, as well as to Ron Villegas for the layout.

**Jodel Dacara**
Project coordinator

# Preface

The 2011 Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF4) was a historic landmark for a new and a more inclusive arena for civil society engagement. It offered a new model of partnership among different stakeholders and explored the possibilities of what may be achieved in a continuing process of dialogue among governments, international institutions, development agencies and civil society, as co-equal partners in development.

With the multiple roles that civil society organizations undertake – from service delivery, community organizing, information and education, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation, to research and policy advocacy – it is indeed a huge challenge and an enormous pressure to become effective development actors. And civil society acknowledges that these actions for development will only be effective if it brings about sustainable change that addresses the root causes, as well as the symptoms, of poverty, inequality and marginalisation.

Civil society embarked on a three-year process between 2009 and 2011, and reached out to thousands of CSOs across the globe through national, regional and thematic consultations. These consultations aimed at identifying the shared principles that guide the work of civil society and the standards for an environment where they can operate most effectively. This worldwide process enabled the greatest possible number of CSOs, with diverse mandates for development, to contribute to the articulation of the *Istanbul Principles* and the *Siem Reap Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness*. The *Istanbul Principles* are not new – they are an affirmation of the core values and beliefs that civil society upholds as development actors working for positive sustainable change to empower the marginalised to claim their rights.

Governments and other stakeholders endorsed these *Principles* and *Framework* at the Busan HLF4, together with a number of other commitments to bring about effective development cooperation.

More than two years since, slow progress in meeting the commitments made in Busan has been undeniable. Commitments to a human rights-based approach to development, inclusive partnerships and mutual accountability among stakeholders have been side lined, and even violated in different country contexts. Two years since Busan, the challenges of enabling a favourable environment for CSOs have been noticeable in Northern and Southern countries alike. These steps, among others, prove that the momentum achieved in Busan has not been sustained.

Despite these many disturbing challenges, CSOs stepped up and laid the ground for making good on the commitments they made in Busan, one of which is to continue to work on their own effectiveness and accountability as independent development actors.

Under the banner of the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE), the WG on CSO DE launched this documentation project '*The Journey from Istanbul*', a review of evidence reaffirming CSOs' diverse and integral roles as development actors in their own right, working towards maximizing their impact to the people they are accountable to. These stories are evidences showing CSOs' serious work to promote their own effectiveness despite the lack of an enabling environment from other stakeholders. Despite threats of shrinking democratic spaces for civil society participation in political discourse and other state affairs, CSOs persevere to make their work more effective in improving the lives of the people they serve.

These case stories may serve as references for other organisations to look into their own praxis, to work on their own effectiveness, and to continue the call for an enabling environment for civil society. Two years since Busan, development stakeholders will again meet to take stock on what has happened. This document, along with many other initiatives, is proof

that indeed, progress is happening among our ranks, despite the lack of political will among other stakeholders in realizing the vision of Busan.

We invite everyone to celebrate these success stories of CSO development effectiveness, as we also encourage everyone to reflect on our own core values, beliefs and practices.

These are our stories, as we journey from Istanbul to our countries.

**Maria Theresa Nera-Lauron**
Co-chair, WG on CSO Development Effectiveness
March 2014

# List of Acronyms Used

**AAA:** Accra Agenda for Action (Outcome Document for HLF3)
**ACODEV:** Fédération francophone et germanophone des associations de coopération au développement
**AG:** Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness
**ANND:** Arab NGO Network for Development
**APRN:** Asia Pacific Research Network (co-chair of the WG on CSO DE)
**BA:** Better Aid
**BPd:** Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, sometimes referred to as the Busan Partnership Document (Outcome Document for HLF 4)
**CBMES:** Community-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System
**CCC:** Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
**CCIC:** Canadian Council for International Cooperation
**CEAAL:** Consejo de Educación Popular de America Latina y El Caribe
**CoC:** Code of Conduct
**CONCORD:** European NGO Confederation
**CPDE:** CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness
**CSI:** Civil Society Institute
**CSO DE:** CSO Development Effectiveness
**CSOs:** Civil Society Organizations
**DC:** Dynamique Citoyenne
**DEEEP:** 'Developing Europeans' Engagement for the Eradication of Global Poverty
**EFQM:** European Foundation for Quality Management
**EU:** European Union
**F3E:** Fonds pour la promotion des Etudes préalables, des Etudes transversales et des
**FES:** Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
**FoRS:** Czech Forum for Development Cooperation
**HLF 3:** Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness
**HLF 4:** Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness
**HRBA:** Human Rights-Based Approach
**IAA:** Iraqi Al-amal Association
**ICNL:** International Center for Non-profit Law
**ICSOs:** International Civil Society Organizations
**IDRC:** International Development Research Center
**INGOs:** International Non-governmental Organizations, also referred to as ICSOs, International Civil Society Organizations
**JANIC:** Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation
**JASID:** Japan Society for International Development
**LWF:** Libyan Women Forum
**MOU:** Memorandum of Understanding
**NFN:** NGO Federation of Nepal
**NIDAA:** Sudanese Development Call Organization
**ODA:** Official Development Assistance
**PLANOSCAM:** National Civil Society Platform for Cameroon
**UACKSD:** UNESCO ALECSO Club Knowledge and Sustainable Development
**UNITAS:** Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social
**UNNGOF:** Uganda National NGO Forum
**VANI:** Voluntary Action Network India
**VIPFE:** Vice Ministry of Public Investment and External Financing (Bolivia)
**VOs:** Voluntary Organizations

Dan H via Flickr used under Creative Commons

# The Journey from Istanbul: A Synthesis of Evidence on the implementation of the CSO DE Principles

## Summary Overview

**Brian Tomlinson**
***CSO Co-chair, Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment***

At the 2011 High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan, Republic of Korea, all stakeholders reaffirmed the principle that civil society organizations (CSOs) are independent actors in their own right. Consistent with this principle, CSOs brought to Busan their commitment to the *Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness*, as a set of standards that should govern CSO development work around the globe.

These *Principles* were the result of a three-year CSO-led process involving more than 3500 CSOs in country, regional and sectoral consultations. They are a statement of common values and approaches to guide CSO work, adaptable to highly diverse and different country contexts and CSO approaches. They are a vision for development and a foundation for CSOs to reflect upon, evaluate, and continuously improve their development effectiveness and practice. At Busan, stakeholders acknowledged the *Principles* and their accompanying *International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness* as the basis and guide to CSO accountability and development effectiveness.

In the two years since Busan, CSOs around the world have taken seriously their commitment to strengthen their development effectiveness. They have been actively promoting the *Principles* and *International Framework* among hundreds of CSOs at the country level, developing initiatives to assess and improve CSO practice and take measures to strengthen accountability.

The 19 case stories published in this booklet should be read as a snapshot of these efforts. In a synthesis of the case stories, the CSO Partnership for Effective Development (CPDE)'s Working Group on CSO Development Effectiveness highlights some of the successes and strategies to date, as well as some challenges and gaps, for CSOs in realizing more effective development impact on the lives of people living in poverty or otherwise marginalized.

### CSO development effectiveness and a external enabling environment closely linked

The case stories must be read within a broader CSO context in an increasing number of countries, where evidence points to persistent narrowing of the legal, regulatory and policy spaces for many CSOs. The CPDE's Working Group on CSO Enabling Environment has published a companion synthesis of this evidence, documenting an environment in which initiatives for CSOs is becoming increasingly difficult and undermined by government policies, laws and regulations. Efforts to strengthen CSO development effectiveness, particularly among CSOs in developing countries, are not sustainable in the absence of a favourable environment.

Since Busan CSOs have worked through the CPDE as well as sectoral and country level CSO platforms on initiatives promoting the *Istanbul Principles* with CSOs and encouraging practices consistent with the eight *Principles*. These have included:

1 The complete Synthesis of Evidence: can be found on Page 60

- A Training of Trainers workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa involving 45 trainers from around the world to develop regional plans to advance CSO development effectiveness in their region;
- Efforts to increase awareness and exposure to the *Principles* and their implications for practice through translation, adoption by platforms and Codes of Conduct, workshops and learning tools adapted to country contexts;
- Promotion of the *Principles* with official aid provider agencies and partner country governments;
- Workshops to strengthen Human Rights Based Approaches to development cooperation, given the importance of human rights standards for all eight *Istanbul Principles*;
- Promoting development cooperation embodying gender equality as an essential condition for CSO development effectiveness;
- Developing tools and workshops to strengthen understanding and development relationships that reflect equitable partnerships; and
- Advancing CSO initiatives to be more transparent and be fully accountable for their development efforts.

The cases are representative of important progress on the part of CSOs to work with the *Istanbul Principles*, often in increasingly disabling environments. But they also raise significant challenges in fully embedding the *Principles* in the day-to-day practices of CSOs. The challenges can be grouped in several areas:

- Relating the eight seemingly abstract principles to the day-to-day practice of CSOs, particularly small and medium sized organizations and relatively new CSOs. Due to the diversity of CSOs and their geographic contexts, the *Principles* require deliberate programming to interpret and facilitate dialogue on the application in specific countries and organizations. Such efforts require dedicated resources from aid providers and CSOs;
- Enabling policies and practices of governments that limit CSO capacities to reflect the Principles in their practice, such as equitable partnerships constrained by contractual obligations to aid providers and the implementation of highly restrictive laws and regulations in many developing countries;
- Challenges in applying individual principles such as human rights based approaches in the context of inappropriate funding models, human resource capacities, and other external factors;
- Giving priority to strengthening local CSOs as an essential condition for realizing CSO development effectiveness on the ground. More systematic investment in institutional strengthening is urgently needed; and
- Complex relationships affecting CSO capacities to strengthen accountability and transparency.

**Box One: The Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness**

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice.
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls rights.
3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation.
4. Promote environmental sustainability.
5. Practice transparency and accountability.
6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity.
7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning.
8. Commit to realize positive sustainable change.

The case studies in this booklet, reflecting trends in the approaches and challenges for strengthening CSO development effectiveness, give added weight to several key messages from CSOs for the Global Partnership:

- All development actors should commit to and work to mainstream human rights based approaches at all levels of development policy, partnerships and modalities of development cooperation;
- All development actors should come together in multi-stakeholder dialogue and initiatives, including financing, to raise awareness and build capacities to advance CSO development practice, consistent with the *Istanbul Principles*.

- CSOs must continue to strengthen practices and processes in relation to their own accountability as independent development actors.
- All development actors should work towards the implementation in law, policy and practice, an enabling environment framework for CSOs, consistent with internationally agreed human rights, including for example, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, among other human rights and fundamental freedoms. The sustainability of CSO development effectiveness depends on such enabling conditions.

# Good practices on implementing the Istanbul Principles in Belgium

**Fédération francophone et germanophone des associations de coopération au développement (ACODEV)**

Belgian NGOs did not take an active part in the Open Forum process. At the time the government was under pressure from their DAC peers to better implement the Paris Declaration. Late 2008, the Minister for Development Cooperation decided to try to mainstream the Paris Declaration to all Belgian cooperation channels, including NGOs, even though NGOs, in Belgium like anywhere else, did not feel bound by those principles negotiated between governments without involving the civil society. It was a though challenge to reach a compromise with the Minister and Belgian NGOs used the negotiation to leverage other political progress such as Policy Coherence for Development. As a result, Belgian NGOs focused on the local issues and were not involved in the global process of the Open Forum.

Nonetheless, the agenda of Development Effectiveness has been a top priority since 2008 for the two Belgian NGO federations (ACODEV & NGO-Federatie) and their 107 members. While the awareness of the *Istanbul Principles* and Siem Reap Consensus has only been recent in Belgium (starting in 2012 and gaining momentum in 2013), the *Principles* retrofit quite well in the strategic planning of the federations which focuses on:

- Doing better things (IP1 → IP4)
- Doing things better (IP5 → IP8)
- Promoting a supportive regulatory framework (Enabling environment)

The main lesson learned on improving development effectiveness and implementing the *Istanbul Principles* is that a set of effectiveness principles, whatever they are, should not be used mechanically or as easy to reach targets. The principles should be viewed as giving the general direction of where to aim for, not as targets themselves. The following showcases some of the efforts collectively made by Belgian NGOs to improve their own effectiveness as development actors.

## Quality management system / organizational learning (IP7 and IP8)

In 2011, NGOs in Belgium opted for a quality management system, the EFQM model, which is strongly built on organizational learning. The EFQM model (for European Foundation for Quality Management, www.efqm.org) proposes a common framework for assessing organizational strengths and areas for improvement and for setting improvements in motion, based on the best practices of private, public and social profit organizations. So far, about half of the Belgian NGOs have started using this model with positive results not only in their management practices but also in the way they address their results. For example, they are encouraged of adding satisfaction audits to their monitoring and evaluation system which are usually based solely on quantitative or qualitative effectiveness indicators (see also below). The next step is to better share good organizational practices and expertise among NGOs so that the whole sector can benefit of the individual lessons. One of the advantages of using a common organizational quality framework is that all organizations share the same vocabulary and the same set of areas of attention. Dialogue is made easier between organizations who often feel their ideological differences make it irrelevant to learn from one another. The EFQM model is by nature non-prescriptive (it has been used in a very wide array of organizations) and is a

good complement to the *Istanbul Principles* who look more precisely into how to reach development results.

### Belgian website for Inter-NGO collaboration (IP7)

Belgian federations have setup a database and website where NGO interventions are categorized based on geographic coverage, thematic focus and partners. NGOs are able to check which other CSOs (in the system) are also active on topics/regions close or complementary to theirs. Online dating-like algorithms propose matches between organizations and or interventions to further build synergies or complementarities. This database is part of a wider program aimed at enabling synergies between NGOs.

### Satisfaction survey among partners of Belgian NGOs (IP6)

NGOs in Belgium have been invited by their federations to participate in partner satisfaction surveys. So far 11 Belgian NGOs have taken part in such a process which concerned over 500 partner organizations altogether. Each NGO received a private, anonymous assessment of how their partners see them. Some of the NGOs have started engaging with their partners on how to improve their relationships based on the results of the survey. This is a difficult task because the priorities of one partner will not be the same as for another one. For example, the question of improving downwards accountability is important, but its priority varies across partners. A sector level report is used to leverage policy changes (Enabling environment).[1] On average, Belgian NGOs are rated high for the quality of their partner relationships. The challenges of Belgian NGOs is 1) to be more effectively building the capacities of their partners, through sharing lessons and experiences and 2) to be better at developing joint strategies and 3) to better promote their partners' work. The ambition is to repeat these surveys every couple of years to see the change in performance and to broaden the coverage.

### Belgian website for NGO transparency (IP5)

Websites www.ngo-openboek.be and www.ong-livreouvert.be are transparency portals set up by the Belgian NGO federations where their members publish their financial data (income & expenditures) and operational strategies (themes, countries, human resources). Data from the last 5 years is available for most of the NGOs and it has become the central point for NGO accountability information to the Belgian public. This is an illustration of how there are sometimes advantages to address some of the principles collectively.

### Challenges of IP implementation in Belgium

In early 2013, Belgian CSOs participated in a wide study about their practices for development effectiveness and the challenges they encountered. The study[2] shows that the *Istanbul Principles* are not well appropriated by Belgian development CSOs (since they did not take an active part in the Open Forum). Nonetheless, they find the principles relevant although maybe a little too generic. Belgian CSOs fear that the effectiveness agenda might be an opportunity taken by the donors to limit their role in development. In other words, they fear being instrumentalized by a certain vision on effectiveness and a mechanical use of effectiveness principles. The *Principles* that Belgian CSOs feel they have the most difficulties to apply in their internal functioning are IP 2, 4 and 7. The ones they have the hardest to cope with in their actions are IP 2,4, 6 and 8. ■

1 This report is available in English at http://www.acodev.be/system/files/ressources/2013_partner_survey_acodev_cohort_report_final.pdf
2 Available in French at http://www.cota.be/exaequo/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/RapportIstanbulCOTA_VF.pdf

# Istanbul Principles in Bolivia

## Unión Nacional de Instituciones para el Trabajo de Acción Social (UNITAS)

The National Union of Institutions for Social Action Work or UNITAS was founded during the military dictatorship in 1976, with the main commitment of collective action towards the observance of human rights, the restoration of democracy and support for social organizations.

Work for the last 38 years has given UNITAS the possibility of building strong partnerships with social organizations. Its 25 members are present in rural and urban areas across the country, to keep providing creative responses to the changes taking place in Bolivia.

While UNITAS has always promoted transparency within the network, the process of defining specific policies of transparency and accountability began with the Code of Ethics approved in 2002. Its commitment to the *International Framework* for CSO Development Effectiveness provided the motivation to further UNITAS' work around Istanbul Principle 5 (*practicing transparency and accountability*).

In 2010, UNITAS launched the 'Transparency and Accountability Information System' to extend the mechanisms for development effectiveness of civil society organizations within a more restrictive context for NGO. This Information System required the annual presentation from its members of the following:

a. Recognition of legal personality
b. Status of the NGO
c. The specific power or Legal Representative
d. Identity document of the legal representative of the NGO
e. Copy of NGO Registration (Form presented to the official authorities)
f. Government bodies and its members (Assembly, Directory)
g. Organizational structure
h. Sources of funding for the organization
i. Financial Statements (Balance Sheet and Annual External Audit Report)
j. Annual Report to the Internal Revenue
k. External evaluations of plans, programs or projects

In 2013, UNITAS took a step further in the policy and practice of transparency with publication of the Collective Accountability Report, a more comprehensive report of member organizations that covered: (a) network information, the structure and policies of the institution, government bodies, strategic objectives and actions of the network and programs; (b) information of UNITAS member institutions such as identification and characterization of member institutions, government bodies, areas of action, financial information and staff; and (c) results achieved by UNITAS and its affiliates in 2012, reflecting the diversity of people and communities the institution works with as well as the areas contributing to the development. This report provided information beyond those previously collected under the Transparency and Accountability Information System within UNITAS, and information externally required by Vice Ministry of Public Investment and External Financing (VIPFE).

It also organized simultaneous public presentations of the Collective Accountability Report in the 9 departments of Bolivia. According to UNITAS Executive Director Susana Eróstegui, this national activity aimed 'to contribute to the building of a society with ethics and responsibility, be publicly clear about who we are, what we intend, what we do and how we do it.'

## Success and good practice of public accountability and transparency

It was the first time in Bolivia that, in a public and collective way, NGOs submitted a complete report of their actions, resources and development achievements. UNITAS members organized and presented the report to different NGOs, grassroots organizations, local, subnational and national authorities, donors and INGO representatives, and the public. This meant a joint effort of coordinated work between UNITAS and its affiliates to strengthen their collective links and capacities to 'build a culture of accountability.'

As the first national public accountability report by NGOs, this exercise has greatly increased the profile of NGOs as development actors to the general public. The media coverage obtained by the report has also enabled to make visible the practices of transparency and self-regulation by the sector. It should be noted that the Ministry for Transparency and Fight against Corruption and other public authorities have mentioned the initiative as a reference for other NGOs as they work on their accountability.

## Challenges

The presence of mass media favored the impact of this exercise on public opinion, but the challenge lies in further efforts to ensure the presence of more state actors and the commitment of more NGOs to amplify impacts. It is necessary to repeat the CSO exercise and create more reliable public information systems to demonstrate compliance and accountability to multiple stakeholders, and contribute to building a society with ethics and social and political responsibility. In this respect, UNITAS' Public Accountability 2013 has set a precedent of transparency, from which many organizations have expressed their intention to join.

## Learning, recommendations and ways forward on improving CSO DE work

Transparency and accountability is a prerequisite for the creation of an enabling environment for NGOs to continue their actions legitimately and demonstrate their contribution to development. It is important to encourage CSOs on the importance of putting in practice our own self-regulatory mechanisms, to prevent legal, political and financial restrictions.

It is necessary to overcome the tendency of "imposed transparency" to continue strengthening self-regulation and internal transparency exercises and mechanisms of institutions that reinforce democracy and an enabling environment to safeguard institutional actions. ■

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The complete report and mass media dossier are available at www.redunitas.org

# Case story of Cambodia's implementation of the Istanbul Principles

## Cooperation Committee of Cambodia (CCC)

The Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) is a well-established and highly-respected coalition of international and local non-government organizations in Cambodia. More than 160 local and international NGOs are currently members of CCC.

In order to stay relevant, more effective, and responding to new development paradigms happening nationally and internationally, since 2011, CCC revisited its strategic direction and adopted a new vision called 'Vision 2018' with its overarching vision for a sustainable development for Cambodia. Its goal is a strong and capable civil society, cooperating and responsive to Cambodia's development challenges.

CCC put a lot of resources and efforts to engage with regional and global movements on the matter of aid and development effectiveness. Besides engagement with regional and global consultations on CSOs Development Effectiveness, CCC co-hosted the 2nd Global Assembly of the former Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness in 2011 which came up with the *Siem Reap Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness*, with guidance to implement the *Istanbul Principles*. CCC also was a local host on testing IP training methodologies in cooperation with the Open Forum in 2012. It was also part of the doing the Practitioner's Guide to support CSO practitioners in working on the concepts and collective experience behind the *Principles*, and to help CSOs take those first conceptual and planning steps on the path to improving their own effectiveness.

CCC integrated information on the *Istanbul Principles* in their sub-national and national consultations, as well as in it straining programs to popularize these to other CSOs in Cambodia.

The *Istanbul Principles* were translated into the local language, making it easier for Cambodian CSOs to comprehend. By integrating the *Principles* into the programs of CCC, the IPs has been raised through meetings and other consultations both at the national and sub-national levels.

- Nineteen percent (19%) of 1,162 CSOs surveyed responded that they are working to promote and protect human rights in the country, which means CSOs are working in response to Istanbul Principle 1, on human rights and social justice. These CSOs empower people to find their voice and secure their rights using holistic approaches, including holding governments accountable to respect, protect and fulfill rights for all people. CSOs support each other by working together and endorsing the joint statement to the draft Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations. CSOs also work with people to exercise their right to peaceful demonstration and rallies to protect their property and demand social services.

- The Code of Ethical *Principles* and Minimum Standards for NGOs in Cambodia has been developed for and by the NGO community to support NGOs work on their own organizational practices. The Governance & Professional Practices is one of only two self- regulation systems operating in Southeast Asia that responds to Istanbul Principle 5 on practicing transparency and accountability for CSOs.

- The survey also revealed that forty-two percent (42%) of Cambodian CSOs are 'learning' organizations with knowledge creation, sharing and implementation as key strategies and ways

of working. For its part, CCC has developed a component that focuses on improving quality of organizational development and program delivery of CCC members and other organizations to effectively respond to the needs of their communities. This was done through development and implementation of a national agenda for CSO capacity development and learning, training courses on governance, professionalism and accountability, and the creation and facilitation of Communities of Practice. Moreover, NGO leaders have been equipped to ensure effectiveness and sustainability of their organizations through the introduction and application of new working approaches such as Assets Based Community Development (ABCD) and application of the IP.

Despite some successes on implementing the *Principles*, CCC still identified some challenges and gaps in the implementation of these, including:

- The lack of resources to spearhead capacity-building and awareness-raising activities on IPs. The principles are relatively new to CSOs, thus, they need more time to learn the *Principles* and find ways how to integrate these into their programs.

- Much of CSO work in Cambodia are either still project-based or issue-based,making it hard to integrate all IPs into their projects because of the need to fulfill donor requirements, especially as regards outputs and outcomes.

- There are no clear guidelines on how to integrate IPs into practice. There is also a relative lack of donor commitment in support of the implementation of IPs in Cambodia making it harder for CSOs to put the *Principles* into practice.

CCC has some recommendations in the better implementation of the *Principles*:

- Continue to raise awareness on IPs among all CSOs to have better understanding, and to chart ways in integrating these to their programs and projects. Resources need to be allocated in order that awareness raising and information sharing may continue at the national and sub-national levels.

- Link with regional and global meeting or consultation to get up-to-date information.

- Development partners should implement what they have committed in each consultation and continue to support CSOs at country level in implementing the *Principles*.

- Development partners should support and promote the Code of Ethical *Principles* and Minimum Standards for NGOs in Cambodia which is the best way to improve the quality of CSOs as well as to align with the global standard such as *Istanbul Principles*. ■

# Promoting CSO Development Effectiveness:

## The story of the National Civil Society Platform for Cameroon (PLANOSCAM)

### PLANOSCAM and the Istanbul Principles

In its 2010 charter, the National Civil Society Platform for Cameroon (PLANOSCAM) communicates its vision of Cameroon as a country where 'civil society exercises its legitimate role of citizenship oversight in order to foster key public policies that comply with the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights'.

Inspired by the 8 *Istanbul Principles* for CSO Development Effectiveness, PLANOSCAM has, since December 2010, adopted the following principles (in Article 6 Core Values and *Principles*) for its actions, and which also guided its own praxis:

- Local level commitment to defend and sensitise people on human rights and social justice
- Information development and sharing
- Lobby for dialogue with Public Authorities at all levels
- Democratic participation
- Tolerance and mutual respect
- Transparent management and responsibility
- Independence regarding policies and partners
- Gender equality and equity
- Sustainable development and CSOs' effectiveness
- Sustainable and positive social change

**Successes** and good practices in the implementation of these principles

*Mainstreaming Istanbul Principles* in CSOs' constitutions (with focus on Istanbul Principle 3 on democratic participation and people's empowerment)

Since 2012, PLANOSCAM has accompanied CSOs to realign their goals in consonance with the *Istanbul Principles*. One such example would be the case of Dynamique Citoyenne (DC) established in 2005 to monitor public policies and development cooperation strategies. Between September 2013 and January 2014, DC has been accompanied by PLANOSCAM in the redrafting of its charters to incorporate principles drawn from the *Istanbul Principles*.

The chart below shows Dynamique Citoyenne's statement of core values and principles (Article 5), before and after consolidating this with the *Istanbul Principles*:

| 2009 | 2014 |
|---|---|
| 1. The defense and promotion of the interests of the voiceless regarding public policy debates that positively affect their lives. | 1. Human rights and particularly the right to effective participation in public affairs |
| 2. The rights and particularly the right to effective participation in public policy affairs. | 2. Participatory democracy |
| 3. The citizenship control of public policy and in particular the management of public resources at local, national and international regional | 3. Equity |
| 4. Participatory democracy | 4. Social justice |
| | 5. Honesty |
| | 6. Activism |

## Strengthening communities in key programs

PLANOSCAM participated in a 2012 workshop on political communication organized by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in Yaoundé, together with 14 other participants, including 12 from political parties.

The workshop aimed to familiarize participants with the principles of political communication which must be based on a good knowledge of the electoral district of the actors regarding their expectations and needs; and fostering good ownership of campaign programs by citizens so that they can hold local politicians to account. Promoting a mastery of key elements of political communication is key to success in the democratization process of Cameroon during the election periods (presidential in 2011 and the parliamentary and municipal elections in 2013). This period also became an opening for PLANOSCAM to conduct activities to build the capacities of CSOs.

Towards this end, PLANOSCAM undertook the following:

a. Strengthened the capacity of grassroots communities, particularly on Local Council development plans and democratic participation; and
b. Established citizens' councils in five cities of Cameroon: Buea, Douala, Maroua, Pouma and Yaoundé.

PLANOSCAM organized two capacity building initiatives to prepare the ground for effective citizen participation in the implementation of municipal action plans and to hold municipal executive accountable for their promises. They educated politicians on accountability to the people as well on the citizens' role in promoting this. Fifty participants (10 CSOs and 40 from political parties) were provided technical training on tracking the messages of those running for public office for the 2013 twin elections (parliamentary and municipal levels).

PLANOSCAM identified many hubs for political communication across the 10 regional capitals. It organized the monitoring of campaign messages for 60 candidates from all participating political parties with a particular attention to the candidates from all 10 regions of Cameroon. The key outcome was a report produced in November 2013 disseminated to candidates that granted an opportunity for political parties to engage in dialogue between elected officials and their respective constituencies.

PLANOSCAM extended support for the establishment of citizens' councils - a group of ten volunteer representatives from each municipality selected from CSOs, women, vulnerable groups, young people, community leaders, local business community, religious, students / scholars, and others.

These citizens' council focused on 2 or 3 concerns related to the well-being of local people which included: health and sanitation (Pouma), access to drinking water (Maroua), alcoholism and drugs (Yaoundé), management of natural resources (Buea), and pollution (Douala). The work of the citizens' council consisted of: a) identifying a particular issue; b) reviewing the Local Council Development Plan; c) dialogue with the municipal executive around the problems identified, either at municipal councils, either during meetings prepared by the citizens' councils where citizens are invited as councilors; d) monitor the measures taken by the municipal executive to find a practical solution to the problems identified; and e) In the case of inertia, conduct advocacy with the grassroots communities as a concrete solution to aforementioned issues.

## Challenges faced and gaps identified by PLANOSCAM in implementing the principles

At the municipal executive level, the network identified some resistance to dialogue with ordinary citizens, while at the electorate level, there was an identified low awareness of their role in monitoring governance issues.

## Learning, recommendations and ways forward on improving of CSO work

The effectiveness of civil society is measured by the degree of empowerment of local communities so that they are capable of monitoring public affairs for the development of their communities. Special attention should be given to CSOs in general and CPDE, especially at the local level, needs to allocate appropriate resources to further the cause. ■

# From an end comes a new beginning: Canadian implementation of the Istanbul Principles


## Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)


In Canada, like other countries, the recognition of the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness in Busan marked a high point in global norm-setting for civil society organizations (CSOs). It also marked the end of a long process that began, supported by the Canadian government, with the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG). And with that end came a new beginning - implementation at the national level.

### Socializing the principles

In Canada, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) worked in collaboration with Provincial and Regional Councils (PRCs) to raise awareness around three key concepts: development effectiveness and how it differs from aid effectiveness; the *Istanbul Principles* and why they matter; and how an enabling environment is a key pre-condition for CSOs to realize their full potential as independent development actors in their own right.

In 2012, CCIC spoke on these themes in five workshops, numerous seminars and webinars in provinces across the country, and to more than 200 organizations. The workshops used the Implementation Toolkit developed by the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness. CCIC also conducted brown bag lunches and seminars to raise awareness among Canadian International Development Agency officials and to flag CCIC's follow-up plans among Canadian International Development Agency officials and to flag CCIC's follow-up plans. As a result of engaging with CIDA officials, and thanks to their own active engagement in the Busan process, the *Istanbul Principles* is starting to get referenced in some official government documents.[1]

Many of the other Councils also played an important role in raising awareness. The Alberta Council released a series of podcasts[2] on the *Principles*. The British Colombia Council conducted a series of learning exchanges on each of the *Principles*. The Manitoba Council integrated the *Istanbul Principles* into their Development *Principles* - to which all of their respective members subscribe.

To help generate greater global recognition of the *Principles*, the Ontario Council collaborated with CCIC and the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, to create a set of nine icons[3] (the eight *Principles* and enabling environment) available in open access format.

### From Principles to Practice

Since CCIC member organizations were having trouble translating a set of abstract principles into practice, in 2012, CCIC also developed a set of thirty English[4] and French[5] case studies that profiled the work of range of organizations from across the country against each of the *Principles*. Many of these same organizations were featured in a popular education calendar, produced in collaboration with the Alberta Council and the other PRCs, that was distributed to 4000 organizations and key decision-makers in Canada and internationally.

2 See for example a new Guidance Note on "Taking account the voices of the poor" which references the Istanbul Principles. On-line: http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/acdi-cida.nsf/eng/NAT-24113434-MFP

3 https://itunes.apple.com/ca/podcast/acgc-connect/id455809608?mt=2

4 http://wiki.cso-effectiveness.org/

5 http://www.ccic.ca/what_we_do/IP-case-studies_e.php

6 http://www.ccic.ca/what_we_do/IP-case-studies_f.php

Beyond case studies, one clear request from member organizations was for very practical tools to help staff translate the principles into programmatic realities. In response, CCIC partnered with the Coady International Institute and Equitas – International Centre for Human Rights Education on a workshop, using participatory and adult education approaches to learning, to provide some concrete and useful tools for organizations. The workshops focused on helping groups to integrate a human rights-based approach (HRBA) into their development programming and to identify a process to help organizations intentionally develop equitable partnerships – two of the key *Istanbul Principles*. Feedback from the pilot workshop helped further expand and refine the tools and French[6] and English[7] Facilitator Guide and Reference Manual.

## Why HRBA and equitable partnerships?

Human rights and HRBA are at the cornerstone of all eight *Istanbul Principles*. HRBA seeks to analyze inequalities that lie at the heart of development problems and to redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede sustainable and equitable progress in development. Furthermore, parties to the Busan Partnership for Effective Development, noted that "Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a vital role in enabling people to claim their rights [and] in promoting rights-based approaches" (Para 22). Human rights were a logical starting point.

Just as HRBA addresses much of the 'how' of CSO development practice, equitable partnership focuses on the 'who' we work with (and how we going about doing it). Partnership is a core element of the work of CSOs, and long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship have long defined our work in international development. From a Canadian perspective, strong principles of partnership are part of what makes CCIC's Code of Ethics and Operational Standards[8] such a unique contribution relative to codes that define the work of other sectors.

In 2014, CCIC will tackle another key principle - transparency and accountability.

## Key challenges ahead

In mid-2013, CCIC conducted an evaluation[9] of its work on implementing the *Istanbul Principles* in Canada. The survey acknowledged a high degree of recognition and awareness among organizations of the *Principles*. But there seemed to be a much more limited understanding of the concept of enabling environment, or at least the broader framework that underscores it: basic civil and political rights and freedoms, supportive legislative and policy environment, meaningful engagement with government, and the right to access and seek funding.

Despite the findings of the CIVICUS Index, which ranked Canada 2nd on its Enabling Environment Index (albeit on a set of indicators that rank participatory democracy rather than enabling environment), the enabling environment in Canada has gotten steadily worse in the past five years, with no group unaffected. There have been attacks on environmental NGOs and scientific research; defunding of policy, international development and women's rights organizations; increasing restrictions placed on charitable organizations; enhanced monitoring of advocacy by all groups, leading to a chill on speaking out, and personal defamatory attacks by Ministers on individual organizations.[10] Like many organizations in the South, Canadian civil society is beginning to feel deeply under threat. In 2014, raising awareness across all sectors of the issue of enabling environment will be a key focus for CCIC. ■

7 http://www.ccic.ca/what_we_do/hrba_partnership_workshops_f.php
8 http://www.ccic.ca/what_we_do/hrba_partnership_workshops_e.php
9 http://www.ccic.ca/about/ethics_e.php
10 http://www.ccic.ca/_files/en/what_we_do/2013_10_29_CPDE%20_Report_of_Findings.pdf
11 The Coalition VOICES-VOIX, of which CCIC is a founding member, has done an excellent job to document these attacks. See also "Silencing Voices and Dissent in Canada"< CIVICUS, 2013, on-line: http://socs.civicus.org/?p=3825

# The Istanbul Principles in Czech Republic:

## Czech Forum for Development Co-operation (FoRS)

### Implementing the Principles: An introduction

Czech Forum for Development Co-operation (FoRS) is a Czech platform of about 50 development, humanitarian and educational CSOs. FoRS was established in 2002 by 15 founding NGOs. At that time, Czech Republic was still a development aid recipient and had just renewed its international development programme as a donor. The Czech Republic's accession to European Union in 2004 brought an important impetus for advancing changes in its development cooperation programme. The government officially acknowledged international commitments related to aid/development effectiveness. By 2012, it finalized a successful process of aid system transformation to centralize its coordination and increase its effectiveness.

In the course of the time, Czech CSOs have been recognized as important development actors - as implementing agencies, as well as partners in policy dialogue and global development education. FoRS has developed its role as a platform and built a fairly open relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Czech Development Agency and other stakeholders. FoRS also became an observing member of the inter-ministerial Council on Development Cooperation (key policy coordination body) in 2008. At the global level, Czech CSOs were engaged in the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness since its establishment. The Czech EU Presidency in 2009 brought an important momentum as FoRS put CSO development effectiveness among the key priorities for its programme. The platform conducted case studies[1] of concrete development effectiveness principles in 5 different sectors. The FoRS EU Presidency programme outcome[2] later contributed to the *Istanbul Principles* for CSO Development Effectiveness in Turkey, endorsed in 2010.

In 2011, FoRS adopted its own Code on Effectiveness.[3] Five key areas were identified and linked to the *Istanbul Principles* (IP): Grassroots knowledge (IP No. 3), Transparency and accountability (IP No. 5), Partnership (IP No. 6 and 7), Respect to human rights and gender equality (IP No. 1 and 2) and Accountability for impacts and their sustainability (IP No. 4 and 8). The Code is to help FoRS members to jointly enhance quality and development effectiveness of their operations. FoRS prepared members several tools supporting the implementation of this Code and related IPs. FoRS members also agreed that breaching of so-called 'key indicators' (e.g. corruption) could eventually result in exclusion of a member from FoRS. This is also stated in the FoRS Statute.

### Successes and good practices in the implementation of the Principles

FoRS members carry out an annual self-assessment[4] according to a series of indicators related to each Principle. The 2011 findings serve as a baseline, and the FoRS Secretariat monitors the annual changes and reflects learning needs in its capacity building plans. The findings are shared at the annual FoRS General Assembly and discussed in-depth by the FoRS Working Group on Effectiveness. Some CSOs have reported using the Code for reflecting concrete principles at the board level, while others used it for strategic

1 http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/CSO_devel-eff._FoRS.pdf
2 http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/FoRSCSO-Deff-Conference_-Proclamation.pdf
3 http://www.fors.cz/user_files/fors_code_on_effectiveness_en.pdf
4 http://www.fors.cz/sebehodnotici-dotaznik-fors/

planning. Several CSOs reported they considered some principles as relatively new and useful to create changes in their organizations (for example, public sharing of strategic objectives).

The self-assessment questionnaire provides an easy hands-on tool for any organisation to reflect its own performance in development effectiveness. Peer Reviews among two or more organisations were introduced to make up for some weaknesses in the tool. The peers find a match according to their own choice and provide a constructive and appreciative feedback while using the Code (IPs). Then they prioritize learning needs, set a concrete plan of action and revise the progress after a certain time (ideally in 6 months). The first peer review among FoRS members was piloted in 2012. Subsequently, a toolkit for peer reviews[5] (available only in Czech) was prepared to support either a strategic review of the whole organisation, or a less extensive peer review based on the Code. In 2013, FoRS Secretariat and its member - Fairtrade Czech Republic Association - went through another peer review according to the Code. This exercise supported their exchange on their roles as platforms and sharing on how to increase members' engagement in joint actions. It is deemed a success that FoRS peer reviews were replicated in the Czech Evaluation Society and contributed to the European peer reviews of the European NGO Confederation, CONCORD.

In addition to peer reviews, developmentcoffee.org was initiated in 2011 as an open space for debates among different CSOs (not only FoRS members), volunteers and other actors.

FoRS members have also focused on individual *Istanbul Principles*. Three members came together in 2013 to assess and develop their Partnership (IP No. 6) using the Practitioner's Guide, resulting in the design of 10 guidelines for future partnerships, and concrete agreements on follow-up collaboration made. FoRS members active on gender (IP No. 2) developed a Resource Book and a training kit for development practitioners called 'Gender in Development Matters'[6] in November 2011. The FoRS Working Group on Gender continues to promote the Toolkit at different occasions, including holding Training of Trainers to mainstream gender in the work of development CSOs.

Finally, *Istanbul Principles* were also used to reflect an oncological project in Georgia[7]. For example, it respected human rights (IP1) as it focused on all women, not just on internally-displaced ones like other projects in the region. Further, to foster empowerment and participation (IP3), it managed to engage community peer trainers and local medical staff in prevention. On the other hand, it has neglected to reflect the enabling environment and the focus on positive change (IP8) as women diagnosed with cancer lacked access to proper treatment. The FoRS representative, who is also the EU representative to the Global Council of the CPDE (CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness), shared this example at the Black Sea Forum in 2013 and at CONCORD Working Group on CSO Development Effectiveness. This helped to show how IPs can be relevant to CSOs on the operational level and to create an interest among CSOs in engaging more in development effectiveness.

## Challenges faced and gaps identified

The Czech development CSO sector is still young and many challenges arise from limited capacities, size and extent of operations, resources and access to proven know-how by the Czech CSOs.

A continuous challenge for the FoRS platform is to maintain the ownership of the self-assessment and learning process including peer reviews among its members. Despite its efforts, over one half of all platform members face 'capacity gaps' or lack interest to undergo the annual self-assessment or to improve their performance. Their participation in the self-assessment has been decreasing (from around 60 % in 2011 to around 40 % in 2013).

5 http://www.fors.cz/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Metodika_Peer_Review_SIRIRI_WEB6.3..pdf
6 http://al.odu.edu/gpis/docs/gender_in_development_matters.pdf
7 See presentation http://www.slideshare.net/InkaPibilova/using-istanbul-cso-development-effectiveness-principles-to-evaluate-a-health-project-in-georgia and a full evaluation report in English for details http://www.evaluace.com/portfolio-item/prevention-and-early-detection-of-women-with-cancer-in-georgia/.

Despite a relatively high interest in peer reviews, only 2-4 members actually do it yearly. The challenges were several: a lack of matching partners, insufficient capacities to undergo the whole process, as well as limited understanding how to adopt the process to own reality and practices. The toolkit was found too general to tackle individual needs and more guidance was requested to prepare solutions. Most peer-reviewed organisations reported they would need more time to finalize the peer review properly. Further, one organisation shared: "Peer Review reminded us what we forgot, it opened questions we did not ask ourselves and mapped different experiences that we may utilise. The challenge was the low ownership at all levels of the organisation and commitment of the new management to implement suggested changes." The new round of peer reviews will thus try to reflect these issues.

In respect of the diversity of FoRS members, the acknowledgement of guidelines and toolkits and level of ownership among members varies. While the members engaged in the FoRS Working Groups on Effectiveness and Gender are relatively acquainted with the tools, smaller or less involved CSOs find it more challenging to allocate capacities to follow joint initiatives. Geography plays a role as well, with the experience of Development Coffee reaching mainly capital city-based actors.

## Learning, recommendations and ways forward on improving CSO DE work

FoRS has some experience in innovative ways of bringing the topic of development effectiveness closer to the CSOs' daily work and contribute to their capacity building. The peer reviews and peer-sharing meetings (working groups or "Development Coffees") represent bottom-up voluntary approaches and can help bring the *Istanbul Principles* more at the core of CSOs´ work.

FoRS sees a big potential especially in peer reviews. They can increase the respect to diversity and help foster mutual learning by bringing in other perspectives. They can be also less costly than other tools, and can be undertaken with more flexibility depending on the goals and depth of the review. However, they require strong ownership at all levels of the organisation and willingness to devote sufficient internal capacities for the process itself as well as for implementation of changes. FoRS is open to share its experience of introducing peer reviews.

Overall, there has been some progress in applying the CSO Development Effectiveness *Principles* in comparison to the 2011 baseline data. However, the question is if the progress reflects rather a self-image of CSOs or real changes on the ground. A more objective evaluation mechanism and systematic verifications are needed especially to look into the qualitative change. FoRS and its members are still in the process of learning about appropriate ways how to make CSO DE work in practice. It found that any way forward needs to be built on open and fair relationship, peer learning, willingness to improve, sufficient capacities, resources and time. Exchange of know-how with other CSOs, platforms and bodies like CPDE were also found critical. ■

# Case study on the implementation of the Istanbul Principles

## Fonds pour la promotion des Etudes préalables, des Etudes transversales et des Evaluations (F3E)

F3E is a French not-for-profit network dedicated to the evaluation, impact and quality of the development activities implemented by its members. It is currently made up of approximately 100 members, mostly NGOs, local governments and hospital centres, all conducting international solidarity, decentralised cooperation or inter-hospital activities. Through its members, F3E is implementing all the *Istanbul Principles*, but as a structure, F3E addresses in particular 4 of 8 *Istanbul Principles*, namely: Principle 3, on people's empowerment and democratic participation; Principle 5, on transparency and accountability; Principle 7, on knowledge-sharing and mutual learning; and Principle 8, on positive and sustainable change.

### Successes and good practices in the implementation of the Principles

**Principle 3**

F3E, in support of its members, focuses on the capacity development of the people, and democratic ownership of the evaluative tools, e.g. funding monitoring and evaluation. It also works for the participation of other stakeholders such as donors, partners and beneficiaries.

F3E through its working groups and formations, also works to strengthen the capacities of its members through information exchanges and development debates and discussions. In 2014, F3E is launching a program with 14 members to experiment and develop innovative change-oriented methodologies for planning, monitoring and evaluation. These approaches focus on formalizing by "local" actors the vision of change they want to contribute to and implement monitoring and evaluation of the processes of change. In doing so, they strengthen their empowerment: political vision, better understanding of the context in general and the stakeholders system in particular.

**Principle 5**

F3E also practices transparency. The accompanying study of F3E is made possible through a fund which permit to propose to our member some co-funding in evaluation, monitoring and evaluation, capitalisation or impact studies. A review committee ensure the transparency practice in the selection process of co-funding. Subsequently, the review committee actively participates in the selection of consultants. F3E also posts the full reports and synthesis of each studies on its website.

F3E addresses the issue of accountability, not only vis -à-vis donors but also with respect to beneficiaries. Moreover, a guiding principle in its accompanying studies, including evaluations, strikes the right balance between accountability and learning.

**Principle 7**

F3E makes learning and sharing at the heart of its mission. Being a network of NGOs and local authorities, F3E benefits from the collective exchange of information and experiences among different types of development actors. F3E strives to be a learning network, and promotes the exchange between its members in working groups through workshops, seminars, and other activities which seek to create and disseminate collective knowledge.

**Principle 8**

F3E caters to Principle 8 as it promotes organizational learning through the analyses of actions. F3E seeks to foster lasting and positive change. It ressources center (studies, working group and seminars productions, etc.) aims at adapt, advance, improve the impact and quality of development action, and also to advance the organization, its strategy and positions.

F3E, together with Coordination Sud, also experimented on the EFQM model (European Framework for Quality Management) implemented to NGOs with the aim of analyzing results as well as the practices of the organization for their continuous improvement, in a comprehensive and systemic approach to quality (see below).

In recent years, F3E led two action researches on change in order to better understand its complexity and how to support such processes: one is on the impact of Education for Development (Impact des *actions d'Education au Développement*) and the other is on supporting change processes in development actions. These two dynamics are the subject of publications downlable on F3E website.[1]

These two action-researches (as well as two others on capacity development), led to the PRISME pilot program working around complex change-oriented methodological approaches (see above Principle 3). This program will allow to share lessons and produce knowledge in order to feed the international, european and national (The French Agency for Development (AFD) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be closely involved) development sector..

F3E works closely with governments and in particular with the French Agency for Development (AFD), with whom we organizes an evaluation seminar to deepen and to deliver messages on issues related to development effectiveness every two years. In 2014, the seminar will focus on the evaluation of social change.

Finally, F3E participates in the Barefoot Guide Connection[2] that focuses on social change by creating a dialectic between what is intended and what is done on the ground to better aim for sustainable positive change.

## Focus on the process held by F3E and Coordination SUD around quality management framework for NGOs

International NGOs provide efforts to improve their practices and the quality of their work in order to strengthen the impact of their actions and the effectiveness of their contribution to development. In France, the F3E network and the national NGO platform Coordination SUD have engaged in a collective reflection with their members on the processes and tools to align and amplify initiatives around quality, to increase both their visibility and impact.

Following their jointly commissioned study, *Approaches to quality in international solidarity NGOs*, F3E and Coordination SUD shared and discussed the results with their members at a workshop in May 2011. The development of a model incorporating the institutional, organizational and operational dimensions of quality emerged as a way to support and strengthen the efforts of international NGOs in terms of continuous improvement of their practices.

F3E and Coordination SUD looked at various existing quality standards and exchanged with the Belgian federation of French and German NGOs, ACODEV, about their experience of using the EFQM tool in Belgium.

Those analyses and discussions led F3E and Coordination SUD to uphold the EFQM model as a basis to develop a self- assessment tool for French international solidarity NGOs.

A combination of factors led to this choice:

- Adequacy regarding the particularities of the NGO sector, ability to analyze different levels of action, multi-stakeholder approach;
- Relevance regarding the type of approach that French NGOs wanted to take:
  - » A non- normative approach, no requirements or standards but a tool that allows a structured questioning in the organisation
  - » Comprehensive approach to quality, going from the project to the overall organisational level
  - » Striving towards continuous improvement
  - » An inclusive tool that ensures other approaches and tools already implemented in an organisation can be taken into account;
- Adaptability and pattern recognition, ability to foster exchanges between organisations based on a common approach ; and

1 http://f3e.asso.fr/-Guides-et-outils-F3E-html
2 http://www.barefootguide.org/

- Positive feedback from Belgian NGOs which adapted and started to use the EFQM model in 2010.

Between the latter part of 2012, up to the early part of 2013, 22 members of F3E and Coordination SUD participated in a critical analysis workshops of the EFQM model, to examine its relevance to the French NGO sector. The conclusions and recommendations they have made have led to the development of an adapted tool, EFQM–NGO, between March and September 2013. Between December 2013 and March 2014, five NGOs have started piloting the adapted tool EFQM-NGO, accompanied by F3E and Coordination SUD. This pilot phase has the following objectives :

- Testing the practical relevance of the model 'EFQM – NGOs';
- Gaining feedback from NGOs on the usefulness of the approach, the difficulties encountered, the conditions for success, and the type of support needed.

The results from the pilot phase will be used to make adjustments to the EFQM -NGO tool and to the accompanying process. Ultimately, the tool will remain a living document which can be adjusted regularly on the basis of users' feedback.

No promotion will be made by F3E and Coordination SUD of any kind of external validation around the adapted tool. ■

# Implementing the Istanbul Principles: Case stories from Georgia

## Civil Society Institute (CSI)

As a member of Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, the Civil Society Institute (CSI) took leadership to adopt and implement the Istanbul Principles in Georgia. A CSO Development Effectiveness sub-group was established under the Georgian National Platform of Eastern Partnership as a main domain for promoting the Principles and advocating for enabling environment. The sub-group, together with CSI has performed tremendous work and achieved a lot.

### Endorsement of Istanbul Principles by the Parliament

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed on December 2013 between the Parliament and civil society organizations endorsing the *Istanbul Principles*. The article 3 of the memorandum stated:

> *"The Parliament of Georgia acknowledges the Istanbul Principles and the Siem Reap Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness as the basis for dialogue between the Parliament and civil society organizations".*

The MOU corresponds to Istanbul Principle 6 – Pursue Equitable Partnerships and Solidarity. The document confines the base for the institutionalization of a policy dialogue: mutual respect, trust and fair cooperation between legislative body and the civil society committing to transparent relationships with these two development actors. The Parliament of Georgia acknowledges CSOs as independent actors in the formation of a balanced democratic political system, human rights protection and the social and economic development of the country.

### CSO Georgia web portal

The portal www.csogeorgia.org was officially opened in May 2012, with the aim of providing space for exchanging information and resources among Georgian CSOs and ensuring access to development trends in the sector and international standards of accountability and transparency. User-friendly and simple navigation gives all visitors a possibility to obtain full-fledged information about Georgian civil society. This ensures the increased accountability of the sector towards the public. In addition to providing a full picture of the environment, trends, legislation and standards in the sector, the portal reports on individual activities of organizations in the country. To date, 947 Georgian CSOs and 15 networks are registered in the portal's online database. CSO-Georgia sends out regular newsletters and information to its subscribers and uploads news and up-to-date resources to the website and its Facebook page in both Georgian and English.

The portal promotes all eight *Istanbul Principles* for CSO Development Effectiveness. In particular, the portal:

- promotes individual and collective human rights by providing an access to legal documents and national and international treaties, along with online legal aid opportunities;
- provides visibility of gender-focused organizations and their activities; announces civil campaigns and lists the number of tools and resources and space for supporting empowerment and inclusive participation, especially for small and inexperienced CSOs, grassroots and initiative groups;
- provides link to environmental networks and platforms and ensures their visibility;

- is a mechanism of accountability and transparency as it provides detailed information on Georgian civil society sector - who works where and how;
- provides access to daily updated information on events, ongoing projects, networks, platforms, grant opportunities, contest and job openings;
- along with the Facebook page, offers space for sharing and exchanging resources and information and point of views in civil sector;
- via POINT OF VIEW section promotes positive sustainable changes gained through the CSO activities in Georgia. ■

# Practicing Transparency and Accountability in India: Istanbul Principle #5

## Voluntary Action Network India (VANI)

### VANI's advocacy on Model Policies on Internal Good Governance

Advocacy on Internal Good Governance is an issue of much importance and priority as it confirms an organization's commitment to accountability and transparency towards its various stakeholders. Since its inception, VANI has been active on the issue of good internal governance of the voluntary organizations. Part of its initiative around internal good governance is the production of annual reports and audited statement of accounts for public use.

The importance of having an organization's own internal governance policies were realized through VANI's various state, regional and national level meetings, since most of the small and medium- sized organizations do not have enough resources and technical capacity to invest in developing the same. Donors are also increasingly requiring organizations to have internal policies in place as part of their funding criteria. VANI's model on Good governance got underway in 2012, a year later than the launch of *Istanbul Principles* in Cambodia in 2011. One of the *Principles* mention about practicing transparency and accountability (Principle 5) and that is what these models talk about. The models were designed especially for the small and medium NGOs to imbibe and modify according to their needs and requirements since they are not capable of writing their own policies.

Thus, VANI aimed to provide a model document for such organizations named as 'Model Policies for Internal for Good Governance in Voluntary Organizations', released on 2013. VANI, being the apex body and voice of the voluntary sector, decided to facilitate this process by preparing basic guidelines and draft documents on the topics.

The document lists down policies for human resource, financial management and fundamental rights of staff, e.g. against sexual harassment. There are other policies listed in this document which are optional but are important for achieving the mission and vision of organizations. The policies outlined in this document are recommendations, in the form of guidelines. Organizations are free to adopt and adapt the content in the pages of the document based on their needs and requirements. Modifications made could depend on the size, nature, scope and thematic focus of the organization. In order to provide intensive support to small and medium organizations, VANI organizes state level workshops and provides support on a case-to-case basis from its secretariat. The objective is not only to facilitate the smooth functioning of small and medium organizations, but also help in adoption of self-regulation methods like accreditation or self-certification. The document has been translated into Hindi language as well since most of the grassroots-level organizations in India are not comfortable with English. One can see the entire document on http://vaniindia.org/pdf/Model%20Policies.pdf

Following are the lists of policies in the book:

1. Human Resource Policy
2. Financial Manual
3. Gender Policy
4. Anti- Sexual harassment Policy
5. Conflict of Interest Policy
6. Child Protection Policy

### Providing Accreditation to the CSOs by Credibility Alliance

Credibility Alliance is a consortium of Voluntary Organizations (VOs) committed towards enhancing Accountability and Transparency in the voluntary sector through good governance. Registered in May 2004 as an

independent, not-for-profit organization, CA emerged as an initiative from within the Sector. The organization was formed after an extensive consultative process over a period of two years involving more than 500 VOs all over India. As an organization, CA aspires to build trust among all stakeholders through improving governance and accountability practices within the Voluntary Sector.

Credibility Alliance is akin to a professional body that set norms or standards of Governance. These norms operate on the principle of self-regulation that respects the autonomy and seeks to preserve the spirit of innovation in the Voluntary Sector. As an initiative whose hallmark has been the participatory approach, Credibility Alliance develops suitable norms through wide-ranging consultation with and participation of diverse organizations within the Sector. It plans to achieve this by developing a large membership base. The members participate in the process of evolving suitable guidelines based on voluntary disclosure of information and adhere to them. This helps in promoting the ideals of Accountability and Transparency within the Voluntary Sector. In addition, Credibility Alliance has developed an Accreditation System and Peer Group Review Model based on the norms to strengthen and enhance the legitimacy and the credibility of individual organizations in the Sector. Capacity Building initiatives required to equip VOs to meet the norms are also promoted. ■

# Implementation of the Istanbul Principles in Iraq

**Iraqi Al-amal Association (IAA)**

Iraqi civil society has enjoyed relative freedom, despite difficulties and work interference after the U.S. occupation in 2003.

The 2010 NGO Law No. 12 has a number of provisions supportive of civil society organizations in Iraq. It upholds the right of civil society organizations to operate free from state intervention. In particular, the law recognizes NGO independence, internally and administratively, including to access internal and external funding without prior approval from the government or from the NGOs Registration Directorate (on the condition that NGOs should have a bank account in order to avoid money laundering or use the funds for terrorism). The law also states that the government has no right to dissolve any NGO except by judicial decision, or an internal decision by the NGO itself.

But while there are indeed positive provisions, the law is not being applied appropriately, especially when it comes to the NGO registration process. The law was supposed to facilitate the registration process, but a number of administrative obstacles hinder the effective and efficient NGO registration.

On the other hand, in the Kurdistan region, NGOs have more freedom, as well as an easier registration process, with the implementation of Law No. 1 of 2011.Since 2012 too, two drafts of the Charter of Cooperation between public authorities and NGOs have been discussed at the federal and Kurdistan regional levels. This Charter allows for: (a) the participation of NGOs in the formulation of policies, legislation and laws,as well as in the process of monitoring the performance of government and parliament; and (b) the provision of services and the allocation of funds to support NGOs projects and activities to contribute to the process of the development of the local community in particular, and the Iraqi society, in general. However, political leaders are still reluctant to give a more important role to civil society in policy making. Indeed, they fear that a more potent civil society (given the current regional repercussions, after the Arab Spring) will end up in a weakened state. In 2013, this document was adopted in Iraqi Kurdistan region, despite still being under discussion, after having been finalized by a committee composed of members of parliament, high-level government officials and NGOs.

There are still a lot of apprehension from the government and parliament in recognizing the active and independent role of NGOs in the development process and democracy in the country. A number of NGOs in the country working the relief sector also suffer from weak institutional building and questionable transparency as they have rather weak relations and interactions with the public. This is mainly due to government's attempts to portray NGOs as extensions of foreign policies and agendas, inconsistent or even as contrary to the local needs and situation.

## Development Effectiveness and Iraqi CSOs

Iraqi Al-Amal Association (IAA) is one of the NGOs actively involved in the enactment of the NGO Law in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. The association's engagement on the aid and development effectiveness agenda could be rooted back in 2007, and since then been involved in the discourse, together with the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) and the International Center for Non-profit Law (ICNL). Even before the *Istanbul Principles*, the association has tried to give women, and more broadly the different layers of the society, active roles in policy-making, especially the democratic process. The fact that the IAA and other NGOs organized several events inside the parliament and in other government institutions is an indicator of our success. The *Principles* of both Istanbul and Busan were used to

pressure public institutions and even foreign organizations to recognize that CSOs also look into their effectiveness and they should also do the same.

Specifically, *Istanbul Principles* 2 (on gender equality and equity), 3 (on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation) and 6 (on equitable partnership and solidarity) were essential in the association's relationships with other organizations. IAA also urged local and international NGOs operating in Iraq to adhere to the *Istanbul Principles* in their current work and even in designing future programs and projects in Iraq.

Principle 2, which is about gender equality and women's rights, helped IAA to formulate its strategy to combat violence against women that was sent to the government for approval. There was also a draft law on the protection from domestic violence that has been finalized in cooperation with representatives from government and parliament. IAA also contributed to two campaigns on women empowerment in politics, which included empowering 1,000 female candidates in the elections for the Iraqi Council of Representatives. The association provided a space for exchange of experiences of women's participation in Iraqi political life in general, and in parliament in particular. However, factors such as religious conservatism and patriarchy remain challenges to the effective involvement of women in the political process. It must also be noted that IAA was an active member in drafting the Human Development Report two years ago and also assisted in drafting the policies on population, anti-poverty, and child rights.

## Challenges faced

Iraq NGOs face many significant challenges in their work towards effectiveness notably in the areas of policy advocacy, engagement with different stakeholders, and in joint actions. In particular, the nature of the relationship between foreign organizations operating in Iraq and local NGOs is also a big challenge for the implementation of the *Principles*. These relationships rarely depend on genuine equitable partnership to strengthen the local community, and many of these foreign organizations are design and implement programs and projects without the involvement of local NGOs and the local community.

## Learning and recommendations forward

The *Istanbul Principles* cannot be properly implemented in the absence of a legal environment that allows NGOs to operate freely and independently. Public authorities have to provide laws and an environment that allows for joint actions between NGOs and state institutions to take place.

Strengthening local NGOs is a central and essential issue in improving and developing the *Istanbul Principles*. In order to move forward in the best possible way, policies have to be approved by foreign organizations and state institutions, but this is not the case in Iraq. Attempts in this area were limited to capacity development activities, but they did not help in developing institutional building and improving relations with the general public and with public institutions.

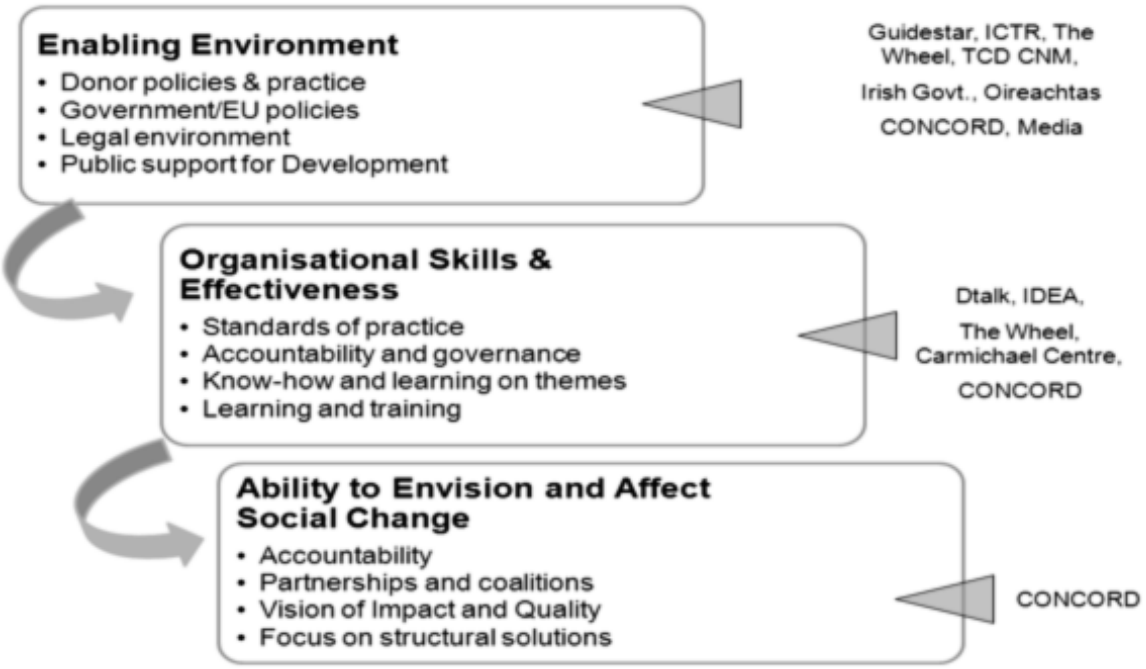
The sustainability of the work of local NGOs is not their exclusive responsibility, but also includes foreign organizations operating in Iraq, which are supposed to expand their role to develop local NGOs' structure. Foreign organizations should provide local organizations with financial support, including coverage of administrative costs,including monitoring and evaluation (M & E). Assistance to local organizations on how to deal with the private sector is crucial for their sustainability. This would also help strengthen the legal environment and prevent tax exemptions for companies involved in community works. ■

# Implementation of the Istanbul Principles in Irish CSOs

**Dóchas, Irish NGO Network**

Dóchas (or hope in English) is the network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in development and relief overseas and development education in Ireland. Formed in 1974, Dóchas is an umbrella group for a diverse range of organisations - large and small, young and old, secular or faith-based – that share their commitment to tackle poverty and inequality in the world. Through Dóchas, Irish NGOs work together on issues that are done better together than alone. Dóchas provides a space for NGOs to come together and exchange their experiences, and to use those experiences to come up with more effective ways to end all forms of poverty and injustice. Dóchas is the Irish member of CONCORD.

The *Istanbul Principles* have provided an overarching framework for Dóchas' work on aid effectiveness and has meant working at 3 levels.




## Successes and good practice in the implementation of the principles

### Gaining consensus through sector wide events

In January 2011, Dóchas hosted an event on the *Istanbul Principles* at which Irish NGOs formally declared they would build on the principles of their effectiveness work. Many of the principles reflect the values already adopted by Dóchas members, through their work on NGO Accountability[1] which started in 2004 and which saw Irish NGOs develop codes of conduct on public communications[2]

and NGO governance[3], and undertake a piece of research into experiences of Kenyan CSOs of working with Irish NGOs.[4]

The meeting concluded that the effectiveness of NGOs is closely related to their ability and willingness to listen. And this willingness to really listen to stakeholders, to create space for feedback and to account for the organisation's choices needs to start at the top: the organisation's Board. For that reason, Irish NGOs, through Dóchas, will focus on the following *Istanbul Principles*:

#5: Practice transparency & accountability;
#6: Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity;
#7: Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning;
#8: Commit to realising positive sustainable change.

**Developing key tools**

The principles prompted Irish NGOs to reflect on the central role of "partnerships" in their work. This led to a process of reflection and study, resulting in the Partnership Guidelines[5], published in 2013. The development of guidelines is seen as a starting point in ensuring that Irish NGO partners from civil society organisations in the global South can have an equal voice in debate.

The impact of these guidelines will be assessed in 2014 but indicative information suggests that they are assisting organisations in developing and implementing high quality partnerships with Southern CSOs at field level.

**Promoting the Principles**

Dóchas has also long advocated an approach to global development that is based on human rights. To try and help clarify what such an approach might look like, Dóchas developed a short web guide introducing "the rights based approach to development".[6] This was shared with other European NGOs within the CONCORD Working Group on CSO DE in order to inspire the implementation of *Istanbul Principles*.

This tool had a very significant impact, with Dóchas members collectively and individually calling on Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations to revise the country's policy and advance a rights-based approach to foreign policy and external relations.

## Challenges faced and gaps identified

In developing the Dóchas partnership guidelines, power dynamics were cited as a key challenge. While the partnership guidelines assist in addressing this issue, organisations have stated that lack of time and resources required to invest in equitable relationships are issues that need to be addressed.

There is also fear amongst Dóchas members that the results agenda encourages donors to focus overly on 'fast gains' and tangible results, neglecting the long-term systemic changes that are core to the *Istanbul Principles* – and core to good development practice. Such donor behaviour would dis-incentivise programmes in the hard-to-measure areas of citizen participation and governance, and focus more on hardware type programmes. Dóchas members are concerned that pressure is increasing to evidence short-term results in processes that do not necessarily produce results over short time period.

In numerous events, Dóchas members have also raised concern on the lack of clear, time-bound implementation targets for the *Istanbul Principles*, noting that political commitments that are not accompanied by clear interim targets tend to lose momentum.

## Learning and realizations on the IPs

1. Acknowledge diversity amongst CSOs. Dóchas members continue to be at the fore in Ireland's efforts to combat global poverty, and are rightly proud of their diversity and different approaches. The Irish aid agencies that comprise Dóchas are

1 http://dochas.ie/Pages/Resources/Viewer.aspx?id=129
2 http://dochas.ie/Code/Default.aspx
3 http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Guidelines_web.pdf
4 http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/4/Partnership_in_Practice_Dochas_Kenya_research_report.pdf
5 http://dochas.ie/Shared/Files/4/dochas-partnerships.pdf
6 http://www.dochas.ie/RBA/index.htm

Keith Bacongco

# Integrating HRBA and Equitable Partnerships into Development Programming: Operationalizing the Istanbul Principles

*A Practical Guide to Help Facilitators Run Participatory Workshops and a Resource Manual for Participants*

CCIC CCCI

equitas

COADY

Victor Villanueva

diverse groups - large and small, young and old, secular and missionary - and bring different priorities and approaches to development. From the Dóchas experience,the *Istanbul Principles* must be interpreted and applied locally and uniquely to each CSO, and supported through national level standards and incentives.

2. Understand the issues and challenges faced by CSOs and develop appropriate tools to help them become more effective.
3. The importance of seeing Accountability as a learning exercise, not a tick-box exercise. For Irish NGOs, true accountability is based on a combination of explicit professional standards, transparency (disclosure of information) and participation (creating the space for anyone affected by the organisation's work to have a say).

## Recommendations and ways forward on improving CSO DE work

1. Take NGO governance seriously. And invest in it.
2. Promote the power of technology and new media for accountability and development.
3. NGOs must set out clear criteria for determining what makes good development work. And to build an enabling environment for such high quality work, they must empower supporters to judge the NGOs' performance against relevant criteria. By assisting people to ask questions of charities, NGOs can gain supporters that help them work in a smart, strategic way, addressing the causes – not only the symptoms – of poverty and vulnerability. ■

# Implementing the Istanbul Principles: Japan country report


## Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC)


After the HLF4 in Busan, South Korea in 2011, JANIC, in collaboration with CSO platforms in Kansai and Nagoya regions, has worked on promoting the implementation of the Istanbul Principles among Japanese CSOs. Through related workshops/seminars and researches after the HLF4, JANIC decided to focus on the following three principles which are considered challenging for JCSOs in Japan:

- *Principle 1 (human rights and social justice):* Although human rights is embodied in the visions and goals of many CSOs, HRBA is still "new" to most CSOs, which tend to be charity-oriented.
- *Principle 2 (gender equality):* Although gender equality is embodied in the visions and missions of many CSOs, the number of CSOs that actually work on gender and women's rights is smaller than other Northern countries. Many CSOs have struggled how to integrate gender equality and women's rights in their practices. In addition, gender inequality is domestically a serious issue in Japan. JANIC considers it important to emphasize and raise awareness on gender equality as agenda for both international development and the Japanese society.
- *Principle 6 (partnership):* There is still a preference among Japanese CSOs and their constituency to directly work in the fields or on the ground instead of supporting Southern CSOs.

JANIC's efforts included domestic and overseas research, disseminating the *Istanbul Principles* and the Siem Reap Consensus, and organizing workshops and seminars on CSO development effectiveness.

## JANIC'S work on the Principles

**Research**

The research project aimed to: (a) find out the major challenges Japanese CSOs face in improving their development effectiveness; and (b) learn from the experiences in other countries. The organization interviewed Japanese CSOs how they review and evaluate their respective activities, where they learned that while many Japanese CSOs have already embodied most of the *Istanbul Principles* in their existing visions, missions, goals, programming guidelines, evaluation criteria and other documents that guide their activities, small organizations tend to find it difficult to embody the *Principles* in their activities as many of them lack explicitly written strategies and programming guidelines.

Research teams visited Cambodia and the Republic of Korea to learn the efforts of CSO platforms in promoting the implementation of the *Istanbul Principles* in their respective contexts. The results of overseas research significantly contributed to JANIC's efforts in creating learning materials.

**Disseminating the Istanbul Principles and the International Framework: Publishing a Learning Material**

In March 2013, JANIC published a learning material on CSO development effectiveness that included a brief introduction on the Open Forum process, the *Istanbul Principles* and detailed explanation of the three priority principles. The material was aimed at publicizing the *Istanbul Principles* among Japanese CSOs and other stakeholders, especially the government's aid agencies, working on international development. The material also included "checklists," a toolkit developed with reference to the Japanese context that supported Japanese CSOs' analysis of their respective strategies and activities based on the *Principles*.

As part of advocacy work, the material was distributed to the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and aid agency officials at NGO-Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and NGO-JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency, implementing agency of Japan's ODA) consultations. A revised version of the learning material covering all the eight principles is to be published in March 2014.

**Organizing workshops and seminars**

JANIC has organized four workshops and seminars on CSO development effectiveness after the HLF4. The first workshop held in September 2012 aimed to promote understanding of Japanese CSOs on the *Istanbul Principles* and the *International Framework* in general, and to discuss and identify the challenges for Japanese CSOs in implementing these.

The second workshop held in February 2013 focused on Principle 1 (human rights). After introductory lectures on human rights-based approaches (HRBA) and sharing of experiences of Save the Children Japan and Japan International Volunteer Center, Japanese CSOs practicing HRBA, participants, in break-out groups, applied a rights holders-duty bearers' analysis of their own organizations.

At the meeting of regional network CSOs in September 2013 attended by 27 participants from nine regions all over Japan, JANIC organized a session on CSO development effectiveness. It became an opportunity for regional networks to deepen understanding on the *Istanbul Principles* and the *International Framework*.

Another seminar was held in February 2014, focusing on Principle 6 (equitable partnerships). Shapla Neer shared its experience of transition from direct programming to supporting partners. This was followed by a break-out group work identifying advantages and disadvantages of partnership support and direct programming. JANIC will continue providing opportunities for mutual learning among Japanese CSOs with the vision of deepening understandings on and promoting the implementation of the *Istanbul Principles* in Japan.

**Others**

A member organization invited JANIC staff to give a lecture on CSO development effectiveness in their annual staff training meeting. JANIC President and policy advisors presented papers on CSO development effectiveness at conferences of academic associations such as Japan Society for International Development (JASID).

## What were achieved

As it had only been a few years since the *International Framework* including the *Istanbul Principles* was adopted at the Open Forum Global Assembly, it is too early to find concrete examples of visible changes in Japanese CSOs, either in their strategies or day-to-day practices. The *Istanbul Principles*, however, have apparently stimulated discussions and mutual learning among CSOs in Japan on measures to review and improve their development effectiveness. The *Principles* are also increasingly becoming important standards for Japanese CSOs to jointly review their organizational strategies and practices.

HRBA has already been practiced by some Japanese CSOs, especially among affiliates of international CSOs (ICSOs). Istanbul Principle 1 has prompted an increased number of CSOs to embody HRBA in their strategies and practices. Principle 6 on partnerships has also stimulated CSOs to review their practices in the fields and relationships with Southern CSOs.

As a result of distributing our learning material to aid agencies' officials, JICA President Akihiko Tanaka, at the NGO-JICA regular consultation, expressed his respect to the CSOs' efforts to improve the quality and effectiveness of their work and reconfirmed the JICA's policy to collaborate with CSOs as equal partners.

## Challenges faced

There is a considerable gap between CSOs interested in *Istanbul Principles* and those that are not. There are many new CSOs that have started paying attention to the development effectiveness issue and attending the above-mentioned workshops and seminars. However, there are still a number of groups with little interest. Especially for small organizations, many of which are run by a small secretariat or by volunteers, international norms and standards like the *Istanbul Principles* are felt as "something up in the sky." Reaching out to these small groups remains a big challenge.

The second challenge is that the *Istanbul Principles* remain "too conceptual" for many CSOs who find it difficult to apply the principles in their day-to-day activities. In many countries, case studies have been considered useful tools for translating the principles into practice. There is a need to work harder in compiling good practices. Conservative people in Japan tend to consider human rights and gender equality as something "Western" and alien to Japanese values. Some CSOs, especially those in rural part of Japan where conservatism is strong, find it difficult to persuade their constituencies that human rights and gender equality are universal values.

## Recommendations and ways forward for improving CSO Development Effectiveness work

JANIC welcomes this initiative by CPDE to compile experiences in implementing *Istanbul Principles* in different countries. Sharing experiences and good practices are indispensable, and it is important to understand the different contexts of each county. Sharing different country (and thematic and regional) experiences and mutual learning through publications and, if feasible, holding international conferences or workshop would be effective. Sharing of good practices at the global level could become an important measure to support CSOs to translate the principles into practice. ■

# Libyan experience in implementing the Istanbul Principles

**Libyan Women Forum (LWF)**

Over 2,000 civil society organizations (CSOs) have been officially registered under the Ministry of Culture and Civil Society in Libya. However, despite numerous efforts by activists to push for approving the draft Civil Society law, none have succeeded. Most of the CSOs work from home and are unable to have sustainable funding to implement any of their projects. There are few International NGOs, mostly implementing their own programs with the exception of some offering trainings to local CSOs. Despite all the shortcomings, local CSOs have played vital and significant roles for people's participation.

In 2012, CSOs initiated a campaign on voters' education in time for the National Elections of the same year. CSOs also played important roles in monitoring the functions of the government, including calls for improving CSO services. These roles, among others, were recognized as successful by other stakeholders, including media.

## Istanbul Principles and LWF

The *Istanbul Principles* were recently introduced to the Aid and Development Effectiveness agenda through the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND). Since the introduction to the *Principles*, LWF has been willing to participate in the processes that would enhance networking and engagement with relevant organizations, working on the same field. The organization have also managed to find synergies in their current work with the *Principles*, especially around *Principles* 1 (human rights and social justice), 2 (gender equality), 3 (people's empowerment), 6 (equitable partnerships) and 8 (sustainable change).

## Example of CSO good practice

LWF has been implementing a comprehensive civic education training program exclusively to women from all ethnic groups, including marginalized/vulnerable groups. The main purpose of the training program is to empower and enable these women to voice their concerns and potentially effect a positive change in society. In addition to expanding their opportunities to confidently fulfill their ambitions.

The project was set to a nationwide civic education strategy and to establish a centre of excellence to mainstream women's participation in the democratization process. The centre, launched in April 2013, provides a comprehensive free training and capacity building program for Libyan women. The curriculum developed for this purpose comprises of three training modules on: (a) gender concepts and analysis, human rights, and women's rights; (b) democratic processes and institutions and rule of law leadership; and (c) advocacy methods and tools. The three modules received official recognition and were endorsed by the Ministry of Culture and Civil Society Department in Libya. The plan is to roll out the centre of excellence to other regions, and implement advocacy campaign in the community level.

A good number of women who successfully completed the training have indicated that they have gained new knowledge and concepts about democracy processes, gender, human rights, and international conventions and treaties. According to some women who attended the training, they felt a significant and positive change, particularly in their ability to analyze gender concepts in terms of relations, roles, and power structures that are based

on the gender stereotypes that led them to significantly and positively change their perception of themselves and others around them within their family surroundings and/or at the work place.

## Challenges faced, and ways forward

Since the LWF was recently established, the forum needs to undertake more trainings and to be exposed to other experiences. Core funding also poses a serious challenge, especially in keeping staff and volunteers, since international NGOs offer higher salaries which local CSOs cannot afford. The forum also sees the need to adopt a Code of Conduct for the guidance of all members and staff, as well as local, national and international NGOs. In addition international donors with offices in Libya should also have their own Code.

In improving CSO development effectiveness work, CSOs should be involved in making collective decisions, with respect to diverse opinions. CSO processes should continue to promote equality and ensure accountability and performance improvement. ■

# En route to materializing the Istanbul Principles

## NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN)

The NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) is the national NGO platform of Nepalese NGOs, established in 1991 as an autonomous, non-profit, non-partisan, voluntary, and associated organization. The NFN, apart from defending NGOs' rights and autonomy, is working to promote human rights, social justice and development in the country.

NFN's statute focuses on empowerment and institutional strengthening of NGOs, social development, creating an inclusive and democratic society based on overall development of the nation, social justice and equality. The statute of NFN has clearly mentioned the provision of at least 33 percent women's representation and has also ensured representation of various social groups such as the marginalized, disadvantaged and differently-abled people in different committees. NFN has been constantly encouraging its members for the adoption of a human rights-based approach in their every endeavor and initiative.

NFN is the first organization in the country to work in line with the *Istanbul Principles* endorsed by First Global Assembly of the Open Forum held in Istanbul, Turkey in 2010. NFN amended its own Code of Conduct (CoC) in line with *Istanbul Principles* to foster greater accountability and transparency of NGOs.

To promote the *Istanbul Principles* throughout the platform, NFN has translated the principles in Nepali language so that these can be better communicated. It has also included a special section on the *Principles* in the NFN publication, the NGO Governance Resource Book, and is expected to be an important resource in improving the internal governance and social accountability of Nepalese NGOs.

NFN has also been continuously organizing trainings and orientation programmes aimed at reaching out not only to high-level NGO activists in the country's center, but also including NGOs working at district level. These capacity development initiatives have motivated NFN members to streamline and apply the principles in their own organizations.

The Federation is currently embarking on the project 'Promoting NGOs' Governance and Management in Nepal (NGMP)', focused on building an enabling environment in the country for the NGO sector, enhancing the watchdog roles of CSOs, and improving the institutional good governance and management for their own effectiveness in terms of delivery and sustainability. Towards this, NFN has been organizing civil society conferences at national and district levels, providing opportunities for CSOs to get together, discuss and share their experiences, lessons and challenges. Also, these forums are gradually becoming instrumental to develop the strategies for improvement of CSOs' own practices.

Coordination meetings are also being organized among government agencies, political parties, CSOs and media in the hopes of building mutual trusts, harmony and cooperation among the different actors.

### Challenges and recommendations

Despite having some good initiatives regarding implementation of *Istanbul Principles*, still some NGOs seem to be unaware of the *Principles* in the country, which has been realized as a major gap. Similarly, many organizations face challenges in integrating the *Principles* into their own organizational culture.

Deeper understanding of the entire framework is required so it could easily be delivered among CSOs. Even government officials also need some orientations about this agenda, so that they can show their keen interest in partnering with non-government sector. ■

# The experience of NIDAA in implementing the Istanbul Principles

## Sudanese Development Call Organization (NIDAA)

Civil society in Sudan has been engaging in different aspects of public affairs since 1970s. It is a growing sector and many CBOs, NGOs, and individual activists are engaging effectively in dealing with public issues. In fact, the impact of this sector is tangible in the area of development, especially in rural areas and conflict zones. Civil society's advocacy role is somehow weak. In the area of advocacy for human rights and legislative reforms, civil society is severely constrained by government policies and a lack of capacity from civil society itself. However, the role of civil society is increasingly appreciated even by the government in areas of conflict resolution and peace building. Therefore, the activities undertaken by CSOs in this area are highly welcomed and demanded.

Sudanese Development Call Organization (NIDDA) is one of the organizations with activities mainly centered on the community's needs. For instance, communities are usually engaged in the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of the projects. Also, governmental authorities are engaging in approval and monitoring phases of the projects. NIDAA came to know about the *Istanbul Principles* in a training workshop organized by ANND that tackled the effectiveness of development aid. Subsequently, NIDDA acknowledged the added value and importance of these principles to CSOs, and has tried to incorporate them in every aspect of its work ever since. In fact, the essence of the *Istanbul Principles* is deeply rooted in NIDAA's values and principles. *Istanbul Principles* serve as guidance to the organization's staff when they design and implement their activities. Through knowledge dissemination at different managerial levels in the organization, NIDAA was able to ensure employees' commitment to the Istanbul principles as well as that of our partners.

### Good practices

NIDAA easily identified with Principle 3, on people empowerment, democratic ownership and participation. In the last two years, NIDAA projects were mainly handed over to community where the project has been implemented. This practice is directly enhancing people's democratic ownership of development initiatives. Such initiative tries to guarantee people's democratic ownership over their projects by allowing them to freely elect project committees that oversee the implementation of the project and liaise with the organization. For instance, NIDAA handed over to Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) to tow communal committees that were elected to take care of these spaces on behalf of the community. As a success story, the committees were able to organize the work of these CFSs in a very good manner and even generated their own financial resources.

On another note, NIDAA strategizes working with CSOs in both rural and urban areas. NIDAA is part of some forums and networks doing different development and advocacy work. On an annual basis, NIDAA organizes several training workshops and sessions to build and strengthen the capacity of CSOs. The main purpose of such capacity building programs is to empower the grassroots in order for them to take the lead and start their own development initiatives.

Another method to ensure the application of the abovementioned principle is done through formation of CSOs associations. NIDAA tried this method in a food security project when 20 women associations were formed and officially registered. Same method explored the feasibility of the practice, and repeated it for an economic recovery project.

Based on experience, implementing such *Principles* would ensure the rules of good practice in development work, and that deliverables will be more sustainable. Another essential conclusion based on NIDAA's experience, is that *Principles* enabled them to look for ways to deliver tasks assigned. This lesson was very helpful especially in implementing human rights and democracy promotion activities.

## Challenges and ways forward

The main challenge facing NIDAA regarding this principle is around sensitization, capacity building and self-esteem building so that community-based organizations could identify and easily adapt the *Principles*. There is recognition that this requires NIDAA to work with other organizations to strategize a holistic approach. Also an important prerequisite to implement the *Istanbul Principles* is achieving freedom of association, assembly, and expression. Therefore, to guarantee more success in the implementation of the *Istanbul Principles*, these conditions [or enabling environment] must exist in the country. ■

# Implementation of the Istanbul Principles: The experience of UACKSD Tunis

## UNESCO ALECSO Club Knowledge and Sustainable Development (UACKSD Tunis)

After the January 14, 2011 revolution, Tunisia witnessed drastic changes on its political landscape. To date, around 3,000 new associations were formed and are still under formation. Existing associations are operating on different levels and in several domains: certain themes are new and target short-term issues (those linked to democratic transition, for instance), while others are relatively older and have mobilized an equally strong popular basis, i.e., culture, the environment, and women's rights.

A new law about associations was adopted in September 2011. It is remarkable for its exclusion of privative sanctions on the freedom of association and the simplification of the procedures required for creating and managing an association. Despite efforts in empowering CSOs, an issue that needs to deal in the country is the fragmentation of the CSO community, which was further fueled by the schism between modernists and traditionalists. Therefore, networking and joint actions are necessary to address this division. Additionally, some CSOs lack firm popular basis and proper footing among the most disadvantaged layers of society, thus restricting their social impact to those only reached by their services.

Since its foundation, UACKSD Tunis has adopted the IDRC Canada methodologies for consultation based on the logical framework and the planning by objectives. This initiative has received substantial support from the experts of the IDRC to set up a project, in Tunisia, involving in the IDRC Urban Poverty and Environment program. Reflection workshops are regularly organized with the various stakeholders in the activities of the club. Monitoring and evaluation of the various activities based on the "Outcome Mapping" methodology.

### Engagement on ADE agenda and the Implementation of the Principles

After the 2011 revolution, several grants and funding started pouring into the country, given that it was the instigator of the Arab Spring. UACKSD Tunis has appropriated part of the process of monitoring official development assistance (ODA) to maximize effectiveness in the use of external aid. The UACKSD Tunis started its engagement by applying to the BetterAid to attend the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.

Since then, the UACKSD Tunis has started disseminating information about the topic of development effectiveness to CSOs in different events. In parallel, the club has continued the process of linking up with other globally, in coordination with ANND.

In December 2012, the UACKSD organized a series of workshops to raise awareness about these new international standards for civil society and on the subject of development effectiveness, in collaboration with the City of Sciences of Tunis. CSO participation was modest as the majority of associations consider that the theme is beyond their priority. Indeed, being new associations they first seek a minimum level of resources to survive. Participating organizations have repeatedly indicated that the most useful tool to help them translate the *Principles* into practice would be a series of case studies that list the best and most innovative practices related to each Istanbul principle.

After the adoption of *Istanbul Principles* at the global level, the club has implemented a consultative approach focused on Principle 6, promoting transparency and accountability, which is different from current practices at the national level.

In planning projects and programs, the club plans to reach significant impacts related to *Istanbul Principles*, including youth and women integration in their environment, employment, capacity building, and mutual learning, among others. Daily practices of projects also facilitate the exchange of ideas with partners and the analyses of objectives that have not been planned in advance were achieved.

## Challenges to the implementation of the Principles

Even with the conviction of the relevance of the *Istanbul Principles*, some members of the club manifest a resistance to adopt the principles. This is particular to organizations which believe that their pretext is far from common practices at the national level. Majority of CSOs consider that the application of the *Istanbul Principles* is not part of their priorities as new associations. Indeed, seeing as they are new associations, they first need to ensure the availability and sustainability of financial resources.

## Learning, recommendation and ways forward

Important work to increase the awareness of Tunis CSOs awareness of the *Principles* is needed. Out of 13,000 active associations, only a maximum of 10 are following the international process of development effectiveness. Work on shifting the paradigm on CSO effectiveness must be prioritized so organizations could easily identify with the *Principles*, and make it one of their priorities. More activities towards CSOs and stakeholders must also be organized around the relation of the IPs and Enabling Environment as two equally important topics for Tunis CSOs. ■

# Community-Based Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Practice: Case Study of Monitoring National Agricultural Advisory Services

## Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF)

Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF), through the auspices of the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) remains a key promoter of the implementation of the Istanbul Principles (IPs) among CSOs in Uganda.

UNNGOF was active in the former Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness (OF) process, which facilitated the development of the IPs. UNNGOF convened sub-regional and national consultations in 2010 to capture CSOs' understanding of their own development effectiveness. The platform also engaged in the two OF Global Assemblies in Istanbul, Turkey and Siem Reap, Cambodia that endorsed the *Istanbul Principles* and the *International Framework* for CSO Development Effectiveness, respectively. UNNGOF also organized CSO meetings to share and reflect on the principles and participated in the finalization of the Practitioners' Guide for the Implementation of the *Principles*.

The impact of the implementation of the *Istanbul Principles* on the platform's organizational ethics, practices and procedures is enormous. UNNGOF has positioned itself as a learning organization and therefore made sharing and implementation of knowledge key components of its new strategic plan. The *Principles* also enabled protection and promotion of staff human rights at the work place; collaboration and inclusion of other development actors such as the media and academia for new perspectives and learning; build staff capacity through participation in gender mainstreaming trainings and amplifying the people's voices in national policy and development through the creation of sub-national infrastructure across the country to act as a link for collating local-level issues among others. This case study illustrates how UNNGOF has succeeded in implementing Principle no. 3, people's empowerment and democratic participation, through one of its projects.

### Monitoring National Agricultural Advisory Services

Following a Rapid Participatory Assessment of Governance Needs in Uganda carried out by Oxfam GB in 2011, it was realized that there are: (a) weak accountability mechanisms at the local level; (b) inadequate interface between citizens and governments authorities, and; (c) limited capacities of CSOs to hold the government to account, as key factors contributing to poor governance and accountability.

UNNGOF, in partnership with Oxfam GB, Foundation for Urban and Rural Advancement and Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative with support from the European Union, initiated a Community-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES) to promote evidence-based policy making and programme implementation while empowering communities in process. The overall objective of the initiative was to foster active participation of citizens and enhances access of poor communities to government services. The focus of the initiative was to improve the National Agricultural Advisory Services programme's service delivery through community monitoring of

the overall implementation process but specifically, procurement, enterprise selection, capacity development, budgeting and planning.

CBMES supports communities to identify problems and find solutions, including taking matters they cannot solve to different levels of government for redress. The initiative entails local communities to play an oversight role to ensure that government programmes are implemented to the direct benefit of the intended beneficiaries. The process solicits user perceptions on quality, efficiency and transparency on agreed government programmes/projects. It also uses the community as a unit of analysis, and focuses on monitoring at local level.

There are five major steps in the CBMES: first, is the participatory selection of 'community monitors', based on gender representation, and equal representation of people from the parishes and villages. Community monitors must be people of integrity, could understand English (since documents are still in English), and willing to volunteer in the project.

Step two involves training the community to monitor different topic including identifying issues, selection of monitoring indicators and introduction of the process to the local leaders. Step three is the actual monitoring--community monitors collected, processed and validated data. For step four, the monitors document the findings and reflect on the results to generate solutions for influencing change. Dialogues are organized right from the community to district level through to the national level on the generated issues for Step Five. At the different levels solutions are proposed to address the gaps.

## Challenges

The lack of timely action on the monitored issues may deter the communities from providing further support to the initiative. In some instances local government officials were not willing to provide information on funds allocated to the programme (NAADs) and yet this is critical for the community monitoring exercise.

## Strategies

In order to ensure successful participatory planning, there is need for an effective communication process particularly regarding availability and access to resources; indicative planning figures; bottom up/top up feedback mechanism; and an effective and continuous civic education process. This ultimately enhances citizen involvement and ownership of CSO initiatives.

Furthermore, CBMEs not only provide opportunities for tracking, and monitoring, but also involves communities in research, empowers and facilitates in-depth learning on issues that concern them.

The project produced a brief highlighting results and lessons learned from using the Community-Based Monitoring Evaluation System on the implementation of NAADs. The brief was shared with the NAADs secretariat and the local government officials. Following the initiative, the NAADs secretariat has integrated a community participatory approach in its programmes.

## Learning, recommendations and way forward

UNNGOF will continue to promote and implement the *Istanbul Principles* through its programme. Starting March 2014, UNNGOF will organize sessions with some of its members to guide them on the operationalization of the *Principles*. With this, the platform intends to have a cohort of organizations that can report on the process in Uganda. ■

# DEEEP: CONCORD Europe's transformative action experiment on citizen's emancipation for global justice

## CONCORD: The European NGO Confederation

CONCORD, the European Development NGO Confederation, set up the DEEEP4 Project in 2013 as an action experiment on "Citizens empowerment for global justice", with the ambition to "practice what we preach" also in internal functioning, and hopefully to scale up its experience in the wider confederation.

DEEEP is an EC-funded, project-based support mechanism created by the confederation's development education working group (the DARE Forum) 11 years ago. In its current three years project phase, DEEEP resolutely embraces a transformative and systemic change agenda, both in its public activities as in its internal functioning. The *Istanbul Principles* were an essential reference when setting up the project, and their spirit is largely reflected in DEEEP's Vision and Mission and the objectives of the organisational development strategy:

**Overall objective:**

*While delivering effectively on the projects objectives and planned activities, DEEEP is set up as a space for experimentation and organisational learning, that contributes to developing new organisational approaches towards a just and great transition.*

**Specific objectives:**

*Establish DEEEP as a transformational action experiment*

*Ensure transparent, accountable, value based and sound project and contract management*

*Ensure genuine ownership and participation of project stakeholders*

Embracing the *Istanbul Principles* in an early phase of the project had concrete effects and impact in the implementation. In particular, DEEEP works towards a paradigm shift in development policies -- a "great transition" (Principle 8, positive sustainable change), and organisational learning is at the very heart of the project (Principle 7, e.g. through the hiring of a "critical friend" – a continuous critical observer and advice-giver, instead of a ex-post project evaluator). DEEEP seeks cross-sectoral co-operation (e.g. with research sector or CSO platforms of other sectors like health or culture) and tries to implement sustainable procurement policies (e.g. systematic climate impact monitoring and compensation of air travel) in organisational policies (*Principles* 6 and 4). People's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation (principle 3) is at the very heart of DEEEP's work, for example through activities supporting the emergence of a Global Citizens Movement, but also regarding internal organisation and HR policies (e.g. appraisals of portfolios together with internal and external stakeholders instead of bilateral appraisals of employees, or team decision making instead of steep hierarchies). The *Istanbul Principles*, together with the thinking of the "Smart CSOs lab" – a community of practice on CSO contributions to systemic change - have been and are a key inspiration for DEEEP.

The following table provides an overview on the application and challenges regarding the *Istanbul Principles* and DEEEP:

| Principle | Application | Challenge |
|---|---|---|
| Respect and promote human rights and social justice | DEEEP embraces a justice and rights-based vision and discourse, not only on its core issue – education and citizen participation – but also on development at large, moving from an aid & charity to a rights & justice logic. | The aid discourse is still largely based on a "powerful giver – grateful receiver" paradigm, which is difficult to overcome. Also, our own organisations are part, and often depend financially, of a potentially patronising aid system. |
| Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girl's rights | Promoting and monitoring of women's participation in events. | Involve women, in particular non-European women, in leadership structures. |
| Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation | Citizen's participation is DEEEP's core topic, which is reflected in all activities, for example the global process supporting the emergence of a Global Citizens Movement.<br><br>Also: Participative and empowering internal mechanisms, e.g. flat hierarchies, collective decision-making, 360 degrees appraisals. | Balance between leadership and participation has to be constantly questioned and defined. |
| Promote Environmental Sustainability | Guidelines to monitor and reduce environmental impact of activities<br><br>Sustainable procurement policies (e.g. 100% green energy cloud server, sustainable stationary supply, organic/vegetarian catering at events)<br><br>Systematic climate impact monitoring and compensation mechanisms (e.g. reimbursement of air travel costs only if carbon offset certificate is delivered) | Difficult to avoid or even reduce air travel in a transnational network.<br><br>Mainstreaming green thinking in the development sector is difficult (implicit "environment vs. social agenda" thinking) |
| Practice transparency and accountability | Transparency & accountability is one of three objectives of the organisational development strategy.<br><br>Mechanisms for continuous monitoring of books and activities by project stakeholders are in place. | Availability of monitoring tools for broader public still to be clarified. Balance of transparency and protection of (personal) data. |
| Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity | Transparency & accountability is one of three objectives of the organisational development strategy.<br><br>Mechanisms for continuous monitoring of books and activities by project stakeholders are in place. | Availability of monitoring tools for broader public still to be clarified. Balance of transparency and protection of (personal) data. |

| Principle | Application | Challenge |
|---|---|---|
| Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity | DEEEP is committed to and practices new and cross-sectoral partnerships, which go beyond the usual stakeholder groups.<br><br>DEEEP applies solidarity principles wherever possible (e.g. through self selected participation fees). | Setting up new (esp. cross-sectoral) partnerships takes time<br><br>Lack of clarification of expectations and responsibilities and harm the partnership<br><br>How to balance limits of resources with solidarity? |
| Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning | Organisational learning is at the very heart of DEEEP organisational development strategy: "DEEEP establishes culture and practice of a transformational learning community, including sharing and critical exposure of its experiences":<br><br>Learning based, continuous evaluation mechanism (critical friend)<br><br>Internal feedback and learning mechanisms: bi-annual team days, weekly team meetings<br><br>Appraisals of portfolios, not of individuals, with a focus on learning and including 4 co-selected individuals (instead of bilateral assessments between employee and line manager)<br><br>Training for staff<br><br>Documentation and sharing of experiences<br><br>Stakeholder retreats<br><br>Peer learning group on organisational change (as part of the Smart CSOs network) | There is an inner learning community in DEEEP. Outreach to and participation of the wider circle of stakeholders is still a challenge. |
| Commit to realizing positive sustainable change | DEEEP is committed to promote a paradigm shift and systemic change towards a "great transition". Monitoring of and research on quality and impact of DEEEP and global education at large is a central element (e.g. yearly "progress report" by DEEEP's critical friend, yearly "quality & impact" research report). | Impact and change is difficult to measure, in particular in the context of education and political processes, which are often long term, and where causes and consequences are difficult to untie. |

For DEEEP, the *Istanbul Principles* provide a useful reflection and reference frame. In order to put them in practice, it seems recommendable to build them into the heart of organisational strategies, and to make sure that the principles result in concrete mechanisms and organisational practices.

DEEEP believes that the *Istanbul Principles* propose a radical reconsideration of NGO practices in order to stimulate a system shift towards a more just and sustainable world. This is quite a challenge for NGOs, busy with daily policy business, trapped in topical silos and steered by the aspiration of short term wins, when the inclusion of our momentary buzz words in an official policy paper becomes the success story of the year. Getting out of the business as usual and starting to address the essence of the *Principles* in our own organisational practice, such as moving from charity to justice, addressing systemic change or cross-sectoral partnerships, real participation and transparency is a major strategic shift for most CSOs, which still requires a lot of learning and questioning. ■

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More on DEEEP as transformative action experiment in this article in Policy & Practice:
http://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue17-perspectives1

# Aspects and Learning in the implementation of the Istanbul Principles and CSO Development Effectiveness

## Consejo de Educación Popular de America Latina y El Caribe (CEAAL)

Consejo de Educación Popular de America Latina y El Caribe (CEAAL), a network of NGOs in 23 countries of the region, initiated a gradual process of introduction and implementation of the Istanbul Principles and CSO development effectiveness agenda. This process began with the participation of CEAAL in the Global Training of Trainers on CSO DE in Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2013.

CEAAL is relatively new in the CSO DE process with only seven months' experience of active engagement. However, the organization has already launched WEB Institucional de la Guía del Profesional para los Manuales de Puesta en Práctica y Promoción del Foro (Spanish versión of the Practitioners' Guide) along with a brief description of the nature and scope of the *Principles*, disseminated through the CEAAL Newsletter.

CEAAL shares the following insights and learnings in its effort to promote the *Istanbul Principles* and CSO development effectiveness work in the region:

1. The expansion and implementation of the *Istanbul Principles* and Effectiveness for Development has been slow in Latin American organizations linked to CEAAL, mainly due to two factors. On one hand, NGOs in Latin America and the Caribbean face huge challenges in their environment that ensuring institutional survival becomes of utmost priority. Management principles and procedures often take a back seat or even become 'invisible.'

   Second, more work is needed to strengthen the regional and national rootedness and application of the current tools used. In Latin America, there are still discussions about the notions and differences of the terms NGOs, CSOs (where NGOs are generally a typology) and social movements. However, the Principles and the Practitioners' Guide did not address these ambiguities, and rather put a single definition for all.

2. CSO development effectiveness lies heavily on external factors, in particular the political environment associated with their institutional objectives of these CSOs. Identifying with the *Istanbul Principles* then should also have reference to these external factors.

   Transparency and accountability is an important aspect of the Principles. The issue of the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of CSOs have both external (transparency in international cooperation, and CSOs), and internal dimensions (each institution has its own concept or notion of transparency or accountability).

3. There is a need to contextualize the Principles by characterizing and considering the external dimensions and realities in LAC. This means identifying the legal status of CSOs in each country of the region and the rules governing them, as well as the challenges of scope and feasibility to develop and implement the guiding Principles. In a region where there is repression of CSO activities, legal, fiscal and political conditions play very integral part in adapting the Principles. The question to be addressed which the Practitioner's

Guide needs to answer is: what does it mean to be civil society in the current Latin American context?

4. The concept of CSOs as development actors, as espoused in the *Istanbul Principles*, may elicit some interesting debates. Historically, CSOs and social movements in the region came from a history of struggles. They have a distinct public agenda in each country, which implies that they assume different strategies to advance these. It would be a continuing challenge to promote the *Istanbul Principles*, since some CSOs have a different conception of change and development.

5. From an operational point of view of the Practitioner's Guide, it is necessary to move forward in ways that go beyond the steps and exercises given as examples. While recognizing that the Guide is an initial, even introductory course, CSO development effectiveness work must go beyond this. It is a work in progress, a continuing journey in itself. CSOs must not be restricted to what is stipulated in the Guide, and should be encouraged to develop more instruments that would reflect regional and local contexts and realities.

6. From a methodological point of view, one learning is the need to differentiate between the processes of monitoring and enforcement of the *Istanbul Principles* in relation to their impact. The first aims at developing a set of indicators and the second are indicators of impact. In this, the institutions need to place both aspects at different levels of processing. ■

# The Journey from Istanbul: A Synthesis of Evidence on the implementation of the CSO DE Principles

**Brian Tomlinson**
***CSO Co-chair, Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment***

## 1. A Framework for Improving and Assessing CSO Development Effectiveness

In June 2011, 240 civil society organization (CSOs) representatives from more than 70 countries met in Siem Reap, Cambodia, to launch the *Siem Reap Consensus on a Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness*. CSO endorsement of this Framework signifies the first-ever global civil society consensus on a set of standards that should govern CSO development work around the globe.[1] This consensus is formed around eight *Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness*, the outcome of a three-year CSO-led process in the lead-up to Busan, involving more than 3500 CSOs in country, regional and sectoral consultations across the world.

The *Istanbul Principles* are a statement of common values and approaches to guide CSO work, with adaptability to highly diverse and different country context and CSO approaches. They have universal application to CSO roles and practices in all settings, including conflict situations, in different areas of work from service delivery to policy advocacy, and along a continuum from humanitarian emergencies to long-term development. They are a vision for development and a foundation for CSOs to reflect upon, evaluate, and continuously improve, their development effectiveness and practice. Given the many thousands of CSOs around the world engaged in development, with very different capacities and varied contexts, initiatives to implement the *Principles* will reflect these diverse realities.

**Box One: The Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness**

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice.
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls rights.
3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation.
4. Promote environmental sustainability.
5. Practice transparency and accountability.
6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity.
7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning.
8. Commit to realize positive sustainable change.

CSOs committed in Siem Reap to take pro-active actions to improve and be fully accountable for their development practices. The Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, which coordinated the three-year process to develop the *Principles* and Framework, also produced a number of toolkits and guidelines to assist in their implementation. [2]

All stakeholders at the 2011 Fourth High Level Forum (HLF4) in Busan, Republic of Korea, reaffirmed the Accra HLF3 principle that CSOs are independent development

1 CSOs are commonly defined to include all non-market and non-state organizations outside of the family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. Examples include community-based organizations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organizations, labour unions, cooperatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes, and the not-for-profit media.

2 The relevant human rights standards include freedom of association, freedom of expression, the right to operate free from unwarranted state interference, the right to communicate and cooperate, the right to seek and secure funding, and the state's duty to protect

actors in their own right. In Busan they went further with a commitment to use the *Principles* and *Framework* to hold CSOs accountable as effective development actors. Stakeholders,

> *"encourage CSOs to implement practices that strengthen their accountability and their contribution to development effectiveness, guided by the* Istanbul Principles *and the* International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness." *[§22b]*

Busan was also a breakthrough in the acknowledged link between the standards set out in international human rights agreements and the conditions that enable CSOs to maximize their contributions to development.[3] The policies and practices of developing country governments, donors and the private sector affect and shape the capacities of CSOs to engage in development. Progress in realizing the *Istanbul Principles* in practice, therefore, depends not only on CSO initiative, but in equal measure on enabling government policies, laws and regulations that are consistent with the intent of the *Principles*. In regard an enabling environment for CSOs, all stakeholders made an essential commitment in Busan to

> *"implement fully our respective commitments to enable CSOs to exercise their roles as independent development actors, with a particular focus on an enabling environment, consistent with agreed international rights, that maximises the contributions of CSOs to development." [§22(a)]*

Finally, Busan expanded the notion of CSOs as "development actors in their own right." CSOs were affirmed in Busan as organizations that "play a vital role in enabling people to claim their rights, in promoting rights-based approaches, in shaping development policies and partnerships, and in overseeing their implementation." [§22]

The application of the *Istanbul Principles*, in the context of an enabling environment, must take into account

**Box Two: CSO Roles in Development Cooperation**

Provision of services: CSOs have a strong agile on-the-ground presence in service delivery, with some working directly with difficult-to-reach communities of poor people, while also acknowledging the primary role and responsibility of the State to provide health, education and other essential services to its citizens.

First responders in humanitarian emergencies: CSOs are able to organize effective rapid responses in humanitarian crises through specialized humanitarian capacities and highly trained personnel.

Effective channels in conflict-affected countries: CSOs can be very effective in supporting conflict-affected populations, which may be inaccessible to government aid-providers or multilateral donors, often working with local counterparts and communities to begin to rebuild social relations and trust.

Enrich the public policy agenda: CSOs offer knowledge, perspectives on issues and proposals based on a wealth of development experiences.

Strengthening accountability: CSOs act together to assist affected communities and citizens to hold governments at all levels to account for policies and programs, promoting transparency and accountability. They can also act as a counter-weight to tendencies toward corruption.

Expanding public support for development cooperation and leveraging financial resources: CSOs in aid-providing countries play an important role in sensitizing citizens in these countries to global issues and facilitating peoples' action for global citizenship and solidarity.

3 The Principles and Framework along with toolkits for their application can be found at http://cso-effectiveness.org/InternationalFramework. CSOs define "development effectiveness" as policies and practices by development actors that deepen the impact of aid and development cooperation on the capacities of the poor and marginalized people to realize their rights and achieve internationally-agreed development goals. It places human rights, social justice, gender equality and ecological sustainability at the core of aid relations and the development process more broadly. Development actions will be effective when together they bring about sustainable change that addresses the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty, inequality and marginalization

the full range of CSO roles in development. Thousands of organizations, working at all levels, promote development and poverty reduction, strengthen peoples' voices in governance, and respond to humanitarian emergencies.

CSO roles often combine engagement with communities, poor and marginalized groups for service provision and development innovation, empowerment of affected populations to claim their rights, making connections and linking people across the globe, enrichment of development policy agendas at all levels, and the monitoring of government and donor implementation of development policies, plans and practices.

In the two years since Busan, CSOs around the world have taken seriously their commitment to strengthen their development effectiveness. They have been actively promoting the *Istanbul Principles* among hundreds of CSOs at the country level, developing initiatives to assess CSO practice against these principles, and taking measures to improve their accountability.

## 2. Documenting Progress in CSO Development Effectiveness

This casebook brings together case stories documenting a global CSO commitment to improving their effectiveness, contributed by 19 CSOs from different countries and sectoral experiences. It should be read as a snapshot of different CSO initiatives, and by no means an exhaustive review of evidence, particularly at the organizational level. The cases come from both national CSO coordinating platforms and sectoral CSOs.

This chapter is a synthesis that highlights some of the successes and strategies to date in addressing CSO practices, consistent with the *Istanbul Principles*. But it also points to the challenges and gaps CSO face in improving these practices. These cases must also be read within a broader context for many CSOs in an increasing number of countries, where evidence points to a persistent and alarming narrowing of the legal, regulatory and policy space for CSOs.

### Box Three: A Civil Society Framework for Assessing a CSO Enabling Environment

**Area One:** Universally accepted human rights and freedoms affecting CSOs

- **Dimension One:** Constitutional/legal recognition of rights and freedoms directly affecting CSOs.
- **Dimension Two:** Effective laws and regulations that implement and protect rights and freedoms affecting CSOs.
- **Dimension Three:** Rights of specific highly vulnerable groups (indigenous people, women and girls, trade unions, human rights defenders, rural peoples' organizations, etc.).

**Area Two:** Spaces for Policy Influencing

- **Dimension Four:** Effective spaces for dialogue with government and policy influencing.
- **Dimension Five:** Access to government information.

**Area Three:** Donor-CSO relationshipsin support of CSO roles in development.

## 3. A Challenging Environment for CSO Development Effectiveness

As noted above, an enabling environment for CSOs is a crucial condition for the strengthening of CSO effectiveness in contributing to development. CPDE's Working Group on CSO Enabling Environment has developed an overarching rights-based framework identifying three essential areas and five dimensions affecting CSOs' capacities to organize and act for development through peoples' participation in their communities and engagement with their governments (see Box Three). CPDE has brought together evidence in relation to this framework for the legal and regulatory environment for CSOs, the spaces for policy influencing, and changing donor-CSO relationships.

Despite the commitments of Busan to an enabling environment, the CPDE's review of evidence, parallel CSOs country level studies and collection of data, independent observers, such as Maina Kiai, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, all confirm deteriorating conditions, in which "repressive legislation, often shared between states, is becoming a threat

to civil society as Member States make laws criminalizing or restricting [civil society] work. … Restrictions on funding have become a major existential threat to associations around the world."[4] A CIVICUS' *2013 State of Civil Society Report* documents this narrowing of space in over 30 contributions.[5] Another recent CIVICUS report points to 413 threats to civil society in 87 countries between January 2012 and October 2013.[6] CPDE's *An Assessment of the Enabling Environment for Civil Society: A synthesis of evidence of progress since Busan*, submitted to the OECD's team monitoring progress for the Busan commitments, is an essential companion to the case studies presented in this booklet. Together these reports document an environment in which initiatives for CSO development effectiveness is becoming increasingly difficult and undermined by government policies, laws and regulations.

## 4. An Overview of CSO Initiatives in Strengthening CSO Development Effectiveness

Since Busan, CSOs around the world have been working with regional and country level platforms and individual CSOs on awareness building, training initiatives, and improvements in CSO practice, guided by the *Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness*. Hundreds of CSOs have adopted the *Istanbul Principles*, and are now taking advantage of various toolkits and guidelines prepared by the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness.[7] At the end of 2012, the mandate for sustaining momentum with respect to CSO development effectiveness and the *Principles* passed from the Open Forum to the CSO Partnership for Effective Development (CPDE).

In June 2013, the CPDE's Working Group on CSO Development Effectiveness organized its first activity, a 'Training of Trainers' workshop in Johannesburg. The purpose of this workshop was to develop capacities to reach out and encourage more civil society organizations at the country level to look closely into their organization's praxis as accountable and effective independent development actors. Forty-five civil society educators, facilitators and trainers attended from across the globe. The participants worked together to develop regional plans to bring forward CSO development effectiveness work in their region. Most plans centered on three areas, namely capacity development, outreach and expansion, and advocacy and engagement.

Parallel to this workshop, initiatives related to the *Istanbul Principles* have been taken up in numerous countries and organizations. The stories in this casebook highlight some of these efforts and provide a good overview of the nature of these initiatives in six important areas.[8]

### 4.1 Increasing awareness and exposure to the *Principles* and their implications for practice

The case stories indicate the importance of building awareness and understanding of the *Principles*. While many thousands of CSOs were consulted and have contributed to the adoption of the *Principles*, during the past two years it has been essential to bring the *Principles* back to the country level in order to deepen and broaden an appreciation for their meaning among a highly diverse community of CSOs. This has meant, *inter alia*,

- Translating the *Principles* and the *International Framework* into working languages at the country level (e.g. Finland, Greece, Republic of Korea, Japan, Nepal, Cambodia).
- Formal adoption of the *Principles* by CSO country platforms, as guidance for work by these platforms with their members on improving CSO practice and in framing new and revised Codes of Conduct for their members (e.g. Czech Republic, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, Pacific Region [PIANGO]).

4 Maina Kiai, "Sounding the Alarm: emerging threats to civil society and the need for a coordinated international response, " The High Level Event on Supporting Civil Society, New York, 23 September 2013, accessible at http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/FAssociation/StatementCivilSocietyRoundtable23092013.pdf

5 CIVICUS 2013. State of Civil Society 2013: Creating an enabling environment. Andrew Firmin, Ciana-Marie Pegus, Brian Tomlinson editors. Accessible online at http://socs.civicus.org/?page_id=4289

6 CIVICUS 2013. "Global Trends on Civil Society Restrictions: Mounting restrictions on civil society – the gap between rhetoric and reality," A report co-authored by Tor Hodenfield and Ciana-Marie Pegus. October 2013, accessible at https://civicus.org/images/GlobalTrendsonCivilSocietyRestrictons2013.pdf.

7 The Open Forum led the process for the development of the Istanbul Principles and International Framework. In its final year it developed several practical and comprehensive resources to support their dissemination and implementation in many different organizational and national contexts. These include the Practitioners' Activity Guide, the Implementation Toolkit, and the Advocacy Toolkit. These resources are available in English, French and Spanish.

8 The identification of countries below is based on the case studies in this booklet and other sources (e.g. the Open Forum web site). They are by no means complete. The CPDE's Working Group on CSO Development Effectiveness will continue to develop its monitoring capacities to have a more comprehensive overview of activities related to CSO development effectiveness.

- Creating tools and learning materials adapting the implementation guides to the local context (e.g. United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, International Trade Union Confederation, Nepal, European Union [CONCORD]). Some examples include BOND (UK)'s NGO Health Check and Impact Builder, ITUC's Trade Union Development Effectiveness Profile Tool, Concord [EU]'s DEEEP action experiment on citizens' empowerment for global justice, and CCIC (Canada)'s case studies and 2013 calendar.
- Workshops / Webinars with CSOs in membership-based CSO platforms to deepen understanding of the *Principles* and develop country-specific strategies for affecting the practices of CSOs (e.g. Australia, Canada, Ireland, Tunisia, Nepal, Japan, Cambodia, MENA Regional Workshop [Iraq]). The Austrian CSO platform offers in-house workshops for individual CSOs on issues of development effectiveness and the *Istanbul Principles*.
- Focused workshops and processes on individual *Principles* (e.g. CCIC [Canada] – human rights based approaches; CONCORD [EU] – peoples' empowerment; JANIC [Japan] – human rights, gender equality and equitable partnerships).

**4.2 Promotion with official aid provider agencies and partner country governments**

At Busan, governments agreed to be guided by the *Istanbul Principles* and *International Framework in assessing CSO development effectiveness*. Since 2012 national CSO platforms have worked with a number of governments to integrate the *Principles* into official policies. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) guidance to official donors on *Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews* suggests that donors "should take into account CSO-defined effectiveness standards such as the *Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness* as well as other relevant CSO capacity standards." [page 32] They should also "assess CSOs' accountability systems and capacity as a whole, taking into consideration the *Istanbul Principles* for CSO Development Effectiveness." [page 36]

KEPA (Finland) has promoted the *Principles* with the Finnish government and the latter noted in its 2012 Development Policy Programme that greater CSO effectiveness will be assured in accordance with the guidelines established by the *Principles*. A December 2013 Memorandum of Understanding between CSOs in Georgia and the Parliament endorsed the *Principles* and *Framework* as the basis for dialogue. The government of the Republic of Korea was one of the first governments to endorse the *Principles* in the lead-up to Busan. In Canada, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) in 2014 published guidelines for the implementation of the ODA Accountability Act, which calls on the Minister to be assured that the perspectives of the poor have been taken into account in all approved ODA projects. The guidance questions include whether "civil society organizations involved in the [proposed] initiative align their practices with the *Istanbul Principles*."

The case studies also point to a number of CSOs that have used the *Principles* as the basis for dialogue with their government. Examples include JANIC in Japan, IAA in Iraq, PLANOSCAM in Cameroon (with local government), and PIANGO in the Pacific.

**4.3 Strengthening Human Rights Approaches (HRBAs) to development cooperation**

The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation notes, "CSOs play a vital role in enabling people to claim their rights, in promoting rights-based approaches, in shaping development policies and partnerships, and in overseeing their implementation." [§22] The first *Istanbul Principle* affirms, "CSOs are effective when they develop and implement activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people." A human rights perspective infuses all eight *Principles*.

In an October 2013 survey of members of CCIC (Canada) and InterAction (United States) documenting understanding of the *Principles* and their implementation, a large majority indicated that components of a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) was part of their operations, with 30% indicating specific tools and resources that guided the organization in implementing a HRBA. CCIC (Canada) has followed up with the testing of a training resource to assist CSOs to integrate HRBA into their development practice. Dóchas (Ireland) developed a short web guide introducing the rights-based approach and witnessed members

advancing this approach with the Irish government. Both KEPA (Finland) and JANIC (Japan) have organized specific training sessions on HRBAs and development cooperation.

**4.4 Promoting development cooperation embodying gender equality**

Achieving gender equality, through addressing unequal power relations and fulfilling women and girls' rights – in all their dimensions – is essential for realizing sustainable development outcomes. These goals are not only embedded in the *Istanbul Principles*, they are also reflected in the Busan Partnership document (§20).

The case studies highlight several initiatives. FoRS (Czech Republic) has developed a resource and training kit, *Gender in Development Matters*. This platform is working with its members to assess gender equality in programming through workshops using the training resource. The Uganda National NGO Forum is building member capacities in Uganda for gender mainstreaming. In Iraq, IAA has been working with the *Principles* to assure women a more active role in policy making and the democratic process as well as in drafting a strategy to combat violence against women. The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is a key member of CPDE. AWID has produced an important series of influential reports, based on surveys of its members, on the financing of women's rights organizations.

**4.5 Strengthening equitable partnerships for effective development**

Rooted in a HRBA, equitable partnerships are based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment and global citizenship. Such partnerships strengthen essential aspects of solidarity and are a core dimension of development cooperation that defines the work of CSOs, often distinguishing CSOs from other development actors.

While many CSOs have long struggled with the dynamics and challenges of equitable partnerships, the case stories point to several initiatives since Busan, which arise from a reflection on the *Istanbul Principles*. KEPA has developed *Compass for Partners*, a partnership checklist, intended for KEPA members and their developing country counterparts to strengthen their dialogue and realize more equitable partnerships. ACODEV (Belgium) and PARTOS (the Netherlands) have together implemented partners' satisfaction surveys with almost 4000 partners, which will be the basis for further dialogue on issues identified.

Both CCIC (Canada) and Dóchas (Ireland) have linked work on partnerships with HRBAs. In 2013, members of Dóchas adopted Partnership Guidelines for Irish CSOs, and CCIC has been working with its principles of partnership in its Code of Ethics and Operational Standards for a number of years. In 2014 JANIC (Japan) carried out a workshop with members on issues in equitable partnerships with case studies. Finally, in 2013 members of FoRS (Czech Republic) came together to assess and develop their understanding of how to implement equitable partnerships using the Open Forum's Practitioners' Activity Guide.

CIVICUS, an international alliance of CSOs, is working with the International Civil Society Center[9] to develop a basic set of principles for CSO cooperation. These partnership principles, which are compatible with the *Istanbul Principles*, attempt to address a number of shortcomings in the relationship between local and national CSOs on one side and international CSOs on the other. The ICSC also acts as the secretariat for the INGO Accountability Charter, which is a rigorous accountability mechanism for 22 large international CSOs.

**4.6 Practicing accountability and transparency**

CSOs are often called upon to demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, accountability in multiple relationships (particularly to beneficiary populations), and integrity in their internal operations.

Recognizing that transparency is an essential condition for accountability, CSOs have become increasingly aware of the importance and challenges in being more transparent. More than 145 CSOs have begun to publish their aid information to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Standard, which provides access to aid transactions information at the activity level. CSOs have formed a CSO IATI Working Group that is working closely with the IATI Secretariat and several CSOs are members of the IATI Steering Committee. The Working Group has developed a Protocol to guide aid providers, developing country

9 The International Civil Society Center is a forum for large international CSOs.

governments and CSOs in identifying issues and challenges for CSOs publishing to the IATI Standard. Platforms in the United Kingdom (BOND), the United States (InterAction), the Netherlands (PARTOS) and Canada (CCIC) have an active program introducing their members to the IATI Standard and assisting in publishing their data.

Beyond IATI, there are several initiatives with CSOs in developing countries. Rendir Cuentas, a regional initiative in Latin America, brings together 25 civil society networks in eight countries to improve standards of national CSO transparency and accountability, in sometimes-difficult political environments. CSI (Georgia) describes an initiative that publishes information on more than 950 Georgian CSOs and 15 networks on a web portal. In France, F3E works with CSOs to publish their full evaluation reports on its web site.

As development actors, CSOs enjoy significant trust by the public and local stakeholders. Most CSOs practice high standards of management and probity. While there are acknowledged issues in CSO accountability, CSO are continually improving their accountability through oversight of their Boards of Directors, ongoing and transparent dialogue with programming counterparts, clear communications with constituencies, accessible program reports and external financial audits, compliance with government regulatory oversight and through a variety of CSO-managed Codes of Conduct.

The stories in this casebook and related information describe some initiatives that have been developed since Busan:

- BOND (United Kingdom) has a major program with its members focusing on frameworks for assuring quality CSO engagement in development and humanitarian assistance;
- UNITAS (Bolivia) in 2013 implemented a Collective Accountability Report [Spanish] in the nine Departments of the country, providing detailed information on members' activities and financial information;
- The Uganda National NGO Forum is developing a program to train community monitors to create greater accountability for all development actors, including CSOs, to the community, and through dialogue at various levels. Since 2006 this platform and its members have been working with the NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism (QuAM), a self-regulation initiative developed by NGOs and for NGOs in Uganda to promote the adherence to generally acceptable ethical standards and operational norms;
- VANI (India) has a program for its members to provide a model policy document in several Hindi languages to facilitate the operations of small and medium sized organizations, and to help them in self-regulating accreditation;
- Credibility Alliance (India) has developed a CSO Accreditation System and Peer Review Model, involving more than 500 voluntary organizations across India. It works to strengthen and enhance the legitimacy and credibility of organizations in the sector by equipping them to meet the accreditation norms; and
- NFN (Nepal) has amended and endorsed its Code of Conduct in line with the *Istanbul Principles*. It works with its members in a program Promoting NGOs' Governance and Management in Nepal.

Through the *Istanbul Principles*, CSOs stress the fundamental importance of voluntary accountability mechanisms, not government-imposed 'policing regulations'. Given the diversity of CSOs worldwide and in any given country, voluntary mechanisms have the requisite flexibility to safeguard CSO autonomy and independence. But to continue to be credible, such mechanisms need to evolve and strengthen in innovative ways that demonstrate CSO compliance and growth as organizations.

## 5. Challenges and Issues in Implementing the Istanbul Principles

The case stories are representative of important progress on the part of CSOs, and in particular CSO platforms in many countries, to work with the *Istanbul Principles* and *International Framework*. Nevertheless, several of the case stories also raise significant challenges in fully embedding the *Principles* in the practice of CSOs, particularly at country level where the potential impact on development results is greatest. In the words of Concord (EU)'s DEEEP case study,

*"…[T]he* Istanbul Principles *propose a radical reconsideration of NGO practices in order to stimulate a shift towards a more just and sustainable world. This is quite a challenge for NGOs busy with daily policy business… Getting out of the business-as-usual and starting to address the essence of the* Principles *in our own organisational practice, such as moving from charity to justice, addressing systemic change or cross-sectorial partnerships, real participation and transparency is a major strategic shift for most CSOs, which still requires a lot of learning and questioning."*

These challenges can be grouped in several areas.

**5.1 Putting abstract principles into practice**

While many CSOs in both aid providing and partner countries still need to be first introduced to the *Principles* by country CSO platforms, CSOs sometimes react to the seemingly abstract nature of the *Principles* (i.e. too difficult to apply to everyday practice) and/or suggest that their current practices and development relationships already reflects these *Principles* (Finland, Belgium, Japan, Nepal, Tunisia). Small and medium sized organizations and relatively new CSOs in the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe point to difficulties interpreting the *Principles* into day-to-day activities.

The *Principles* are abstract by design. Unlike most other development actors, CSOs are numerous, highly diverse and autonomous organizations working in many different roles in all countries of the world. They include many involved in development who are not aid actors. In broad terms, CSOs are voluntary democratic spaces for people to organize themselves as agents of their own development. CSO development effectiveness therefore involves CSOs engaging in many expressions of development alternatives, CSOs making choices and taking sides in highly unequal societies, and CSOs coalescing in support of the human rights of poor and marginalized populations. The *Principles* respond to this diversity.

In the words of the *International Framework*,

*"Although the* Istanbul Principles *are a consensus on essential CSO values that inform their practice, they cannot fully take account the great diversity in numbers, geographic locales, purposes and challenges faced by thousands of CSOs involved in development activities. The* Istanbul Principles *must be interpreted and applied locally in the CSO's country and organizational context.*

*"[They] are, likewise, not intended to duplicate or replace exiting CSO country or sector specific principles or various accountability frameworks. But rather the adoption of the* Istanbul Principles *is a means to stimulate structured reflection, deeper understanding, and accountability for enhanced CSO development effectiveness."*

Implementation of the *Principles* therefore requires deliberate programming to interpret and facilitate dialogue on their application in specific country and organizational contexts. The case stories identify not only the importance of the guidance documents prepared by the Open Forum (see above), but also other resources that

- popularize the *Principles* (the use of icons and a calendar in Canada);
- present concrete examples of the expression of individual principles in practice through short case studies (Japan, Canada, Tunisia);
- integrate the *Principles* into ongoing learning events and dialogues with members and government on the part of a platform (Finland, Japan);
- demonstrate initiatives consistent with the *Principles* that then draw others to a dialogue on the expansion of the initiative among other CSOs (Bolivia and its Accountability Report); and
- work through a "bottom-up" approach that brings the *Principles* into discussions on the day-to-day activities of specific organizations, particularly small and medium sized organizations (Czech Republic's Code and peer review process).

As the Belgium case study suggests, the *Istanbul Principles* should not be used as a mechanical accountability framework or turned into easy-to-reach targets; rather they should be viewed as giving the general direction of where to aim for, not as targets themselves. For the Irish platform, Dóchas, they must be applied locally and uniquely to each

CSO, and supported through national level standards and incentives.

**5.2 Policies and practices of governments that limit CSO capacities to reflect the Principles in their practice**

The shrinking space for civil society organizations in an increasing number of countries has already been noted. Many CSOs, while accepting their obligations and own limitations in improving their practices, point to the importance of enabling conditions for CSO development effectiveness. All stakeholders acknowledged (see §22 above) this essential inter-dependence in the Busan High Level Forum.

Several of the case stories highlight some of the challenges of a "disabling environment." The Cambodian case study identifies the negative impact of contracts between aid providers and local CSOs, which determine for these CSOs particular ways of working: "It is hard to integrate all of *Istanbul Principles* into their projects because they need to fulfill what they have agreed with their donors." Dóchas points to pressure from donors for "fast results," while the *Principles* often focus on processes that do not necessarily produce results over short time periods. The contribution from CEAAL in the Americas suggests that concerns about institutional survival, resulting from changing aid-provider priorities moving resources out of the region, affect both capacities and interest to address the *Principles* in the region. Similarly CCIC attests that "the enabling environment in Canada has gotten steadily worse in the past five years, with no group unaffected. … Like many organizations in the South, Canadian civil society is beginning to feel deeply under threat."

**5.3 Challenges with individual Principles**

**Human Rights-Based Approaches:** Human rights approaches are the cornerstone for all eight *Principles*. As noted above, a growing number of CSOs identify their organizational values with human rights and are considering a HRBA in their day-to-day practices. Yet many also identify challenges in making HRBAs more explicit in these practices:

> *"Key themes include difficulty in finding funding models and support for HRBA work, limited organizational capacity to implement HRBA effectively and broadly, the challenge of measuring and mainstreaming HRBA, and other external factors (such as government policies and practices, and working in conflict situations)."* [10]

As noted in the previous section, several CSO platforms have developed training resources, including case studies, to enable the integration of HRBAs into regular practice. It has also been suggested that CSOs need to undertake public awareness campaigns to shape how governments, aid providers and public constituencies perceive HRBAs.

**Equitable partnerships:** Several case stories highlight the continuing challenges in implementing equitable partnerships, some of which are structural resulting from unequal power relationships; others are attitudinal, requiring overcoming assumptions and a charitable aid paradigm. The International NGO (INGO) model has been very successful in raising private resources for development, but has also concentrated these resources in a few very large global organizations. The Iraq case study highlights the nature of the relationship between foreign organizations operating in Iraq and local NGOs: "These relationships rarely depend on partnership to strengthen the local community, and many of these foreign organizations are implementing projects by direct action without the involvement of local NGOs and the local community."

Inequitable partnerships have been a long-standing issue for CSOs, as it is for other aid providers. More recently CSOs have focused more deliberate attention to codes of conduct and approaches that might mitigate some of the structural barriers – due diligence guides for partnership principles noted in section 4, metrics for measuring equitable relationships in the *International Framework*, an emphasis on transparency, and a deliberate investing of time and resources to build effective and equitable partnerships. But for all but the largest INGOs, it is often the case that the modalities of (unequal) partnership are often locked-into exclusive accountability frameworks for resources from aid providers and an increasingly skeptical pubic.

10 CCIC and Interaction, 2013. "Two years on from Busan: Looking back, looking forward," An analysis of a survey on the implementation of the Istanbul Principles, October 2013, accessible at www.ccic.ca/_files/.../2013_10_29_CPDE%20_Report_of_Findings.pdf.

**Other *Principles*:** While the case studies do not provide an in-depth analysis, several cases mention challenges with transforming principles relating to gender equality, sustainable development, and sharing knowledge and learning into CSO practices.

**5.4 Strengthening local CSOs**

Several of the case stories mention the importance of strengthening local CSOs as a central and essential issue in effectively implementing the *Istanbul Principles* (Iraq, Libya, Cameroon, Cambodia, Czech Republic). IAA in Iraq points to a common approach to strengthening local CSOs with episodic training, which does not help in sustainable institution building and in improving the ongoing relations between CSOs and public institutions. Several of the case stories are from countries characterized by relatively recent growth of new CSOs involved in development cooperation. In these contexts, more systematic investment in institutional strengthening is urgently required.

Smaller and local CSOs will require significant ongoing investment through local country CSO platforms in capacity development consistent with the *Principles* (Nepal). FoRS in the Czech Republic notes the importance of judging the impact of the *Principles* through evaluations of change among CSOs on the ground. In their view, "any way forward needs to be built on open and fair relationships, peer learning, willingness to improve, the provision of sufficient capacities, resources and time." For PLANOSCAN in Cameroon, the effectiveness of civil society is measured by the degree of empowerment of local communities so that the latter are capable of monitoring public affairs for the development of their communities. They note the lack of sufficient resources for this goal.

Are official and CSO funding mechanisms that are accessible to local CSOs taking account of the need for resources for local institutional strengthening consistent with the *Principles*? Cambodia's CCC asks for greater awareness of the need to allocate budgets from regional and global levels in support of awareness and implementation strategies with local CSOs.

**5.5 Complex relationships affecting capacities to strengthen accountability**

Dóchas affirms, "Being accountable helps us improve the quality and relevance of our programs." For the CSO of the future, accountability, learning and innovation are closely tied together, requiring, "having the courage to examine your daily routines and the assumptions about your work."[11] Strengthening accountability has been a strong emphasis in CSO work in relation to the *Istanbul Principles*. CSOs involved in these efforts nevertheless raise a number of challenges:

- Maintaining interest in self-assessment requirements for Codes of Conduct in the context of other local CSO priorities (Czech Republic, Canada). Such assessments are in part the basis for determining priorities for platforms working with the Principles with their members;
- A peer review mechanism addresses some of the concerns with a self-managed accountability framework. But such processes demand a significant investment of finance and human resources. According to FoRS in the Czech Republic it is important to directly link peer reviews with the implementation of a Code of Conduct, tailor the reviews to local and organizational contexts, and offer support for peers in the process.
- There is an ongoing tension between accountability and attribution. These are particularly challenging for CSOs where the issues are complex, are linked to complex interventions (such as governance reform), and are taking place in highly dynamic environments.

Finally, the orientation of accountability mechanisms remains a large challenge, resulting from binding legal contracts with aid providers and the emphasis on fiduciary accountability. On the other hand, CSO accountability towards the constituencies with whom CSOs work, i.e. communities of people living in poverty or otherwise marginalized, could positively affect the challenges of CSO legitimacy raised by other development actors. A recent

11 "Future-proofing Irish NGOs – Thoughts after the BOND conference," Dochasnetwork Blog, November 7, 2013, accessible at http://dochasnetwork.wordpress.com/2013/11/07/future-proofing- -ngos-thoughts-after-the-bond-conference/.

report by CSOs to the UN Development Cooperation Forum, notes that such mechanisms "would be an important demonstration of the essential roles of CSOs in development while confronting the realities of shrinking democratic spaces for these roles, especially in a growing number of Southern countries where reforms of outdated NGO laws are regulating CSO activities in ways that are highly restrictive and/or repressive."[12]

## 6. The Way Forward

Despite strong evidence in many countries of shrinking space for CSOs as development actors, the stories in this casebook demonstrate that CSOs have given practical expression to their commitment to work in development cooperation in ways that are consistent with the *Istanbul Principles*. Clearly challenges remain, and much more progress is needed, as is the case for all who are party to the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC). Additional examples of these stories are available at http://wiki.cso-effectiveness.org.

Endorsed in Busan, the *Istanbul Principles* provide an important path to strengthen development effectiveness through policies and practices that adhere to human rights standards. This is true not only for CSOs, but also for all actors in the Global Partnership. With a human rights framework embedded in the *Principles*, their implementation in CSO practices requires an enabling policy and regulatory environment consistent with human rights agreements and standards.

The CPDE's Working Group on CSO Development Effectiveness has been established as a platform to encourage and share good practices in the implementation of the *Istanbul Principles* at the country level, among the hundreds of CSOs that are part of CPDE and beyond. In assessing lessons learnt and socializing tools for practical application of the *Principles*, the Working Group supports the development of capacities to advocate, implement and track progress on CSO development effectiveness.

The CPDE is engaged with the Global Partnership to strengthen inclusive development. All actors for development are inter-dependent – be they CSOs, aid providers, or partner governments – and must collaborate to realize effective development outcomes for poor and marginalized populations. All have a shared interest in a dynamic and effective sector.

To advance CSO development effectiveness in the coming year, the CPDE Working Group will be initiating regional and sub-regional 'training of trainers' workshops that will focus on issues in CSO accountability, promoting CSO accountability charters in countries where there are no such mechanisms. The Working Group will also provide outreach support and continue to map, draw lessons and synthesize country level experience of initiatives to improve CSO development effectiveness, guided by the *Istanbul Principles* and the *International Framework*. Members of the Working Group are active participants in the multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment and contribute to its agenda in support of CSO development effectiveness alongside aid-provider and partner country representatives.

The stories in this casebook, reflecting trends in the approaches and challenges for strengthening CSO development effectiveness, give added weight to several key messages from CSOs for the Global Partnership:

1. All development actors should commit to and work to mainstream human rights-based approaches at all levels of development policy, partnerships and modalities for development cooperation. HRBAs strengthen inclusive democratic ownership as a core aid and development effectiveness principle and create an enabling environment for implementing the *Istanbul Principles*.

2. All development actors should come together in multi-stakeholder dialogue and initiatives to raise awareness and build capacities to advance CSO development practice consistent with the *Istanbul Principles*. In this regard, both official and CSO aid-providers, alongside governments, should

12 IBON International, AidWatch Canada and Asia Pacific Research Network, "Civil Society Accountability: To whom and for whom," a policy brief for the 2014 DCF Germany High-Level Symposium on Accountable and effective development cooperation in a post-2014 era, March 2014.

work closely with country-level CSO platforms, providing dedicated financing for outreach and engagement to adapt and adopt the *Principles* in a context-specific manner.

3. CSOs must continue to work to strengthen practices and processes in relation to their own accountability as development actors. Accountability mechanisms for CSOs need to address the challenges of the diversity of CSO actors, the limits of voluntary mechanisms, and the increasingly difficult environments in which CSOs work. All CSOs should work to improve their transparency as an essential condition of their accountability, including publishing to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Standard, consistent with the CSO Protocol for implementing IATI, including informed consent of CSO partners in aid recipient countries.

4. All development actors should work towards the implementation, in law, policy and practice, an enabling environment framework for CSOs, consistent with internationally agreed human rights, including for example, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, among other human rights and fundamental freedoms. ■

# ANNEX 1.
# Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness[1]

Civil society organizations are a vibrant and essential feature in the democratic life of countries across the globe. CSOs collaborate with the full diversity of people and promote their rights. The essential characteristics of CSOs as distinct development actors – that they are voluntary, diverse, non-partisan, autonomous, non-violent, working and collaborating for change – are the foundation for the Istanbul principles for CSO development effectiveness. These principles guide the work and practices of civil society organizations in both peaceful and conflict situations, in different areas of work from grassroots to policy advocacy, and in a continuum from humanitarian emergencies to long-term development.

### 1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice

CSOs are effective as development actors when they develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.

### 2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights

CSOs are effective as development actors when they promote and practice development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.

### 3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation

CSOs are effective as development actors when they support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalized.

### 4. Promote Environmental Sustainability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they develop and implement priorities and approaches that promote environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crises, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.

### 5. Practice transparency and accountability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.

1 The Istanbul Principles, as agreed at the Open Forum's Global Assembly in Istanbul, September 28 -30, 2010, are the foundation of the Open Forum's Draft *International Framework on CSO Development Effectiveness*. These principles are further elaborated in Version 2 of this Framework, which is being updated and will be found on the Open Forum's web site, www.cso-effectiveness.org.

### 6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity

CSOs are effective as development actors when they commit to transparent relationships with CSOs and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.

### 7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning

CSOs are effective as development actors when they enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other CSOs and development actors, integrating evidence from development practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.

### 8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

CSOs are effective as development actors when they collaborate to realize sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalized populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

Guided by these Istanbul principles, CSOs are committed to take pro-active actions to improve and be fully accountable for their development practices. Equally important will be enabling policies and practices by all actors. Through actions consistent with these principles, donor and partner country governments demonstrate their Accra Agenda for Action pledge that they "share an interest in ensuring that CSO contributions to development reach their full potential". All governments have an obligation to uphold basic human rights – among others, the right to association, the right to assembly, and the freedom of expression. Together these are pre-conditions for effective development.

Istanbul, Turkey
September 29, 2010

# ANNEX 2.
# List of contributors

| Country | Region | Organization | Acronym | Contributor |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium | Europe | Fédération francophone et germanophone des associations de coopération au développement | ACODEV | Denis Dubuisson |
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Two years have passed since the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which serves as a landmark for a new and inclusive arena for development. Commitments made by governments, donors, and other stakeholders, including civil society, will now be evaluated in Mexico. Two years since Busan, progress on the commitments to human rights-based approach, inclusive partnerships, mutual accountability and enabling environment have undeniably been slow and unremarkable. Despite these, civil society organizations stepped up and laid ground for owning and fulfilling their Busan commitments as effective and independent development actors. CSOs continued to work on their own effectiveness and accountability bringing the Istanbul Principles closer to local organizations, improving their own praxis, while also advocating for an environment favourable for their operations. Momentum set in Busan has not been sustained by other stakeholders, but CSOs continued to reaffirm their diverse and integral roles as development actors in their own right, working towards maximizing their impact to the people they are accountable to.

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