ENABLING CIVIL SOCIETY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: SELECT SURVEY FINDINGS

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Abstract

Civil society and civil society organisations (CSOs) are important to development co-operation, both as implementing partners for members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and as development actors in their own right. Agenda 2030 is clear on the necessity of mobilising CSOs to implement, and uphold accountability for, the Sustainable Development Goals. The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation has committed to ensuring effectiveness in relation to CSOs in development co-operation, inclusive of the provision of CSO enabling environments.

Recognising that how DAC members work with CSOs is part of CSO enabling environments, in 2017 the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) established a work stream on civil society to provide guidance on DAC member support for civil society and a strategy for engaging with civil society. Under the work stream, a study on how DAC members work with CSOs was launched to identify areas of DAC member support to and engagement with CSOs for which guidance is needed. This paper introduces a selection of key findings and recommendations from two 2018-2019 surveys complemented with DAC statistical data.

The paper points to evidence of member effort to work with CSOs in ways that enable CSOs to maximise their contribution to development. However, evidence also shows that members need to continuously examine their practices to ensure coherence between objectives and the many advantages that CSOs are seen to bring to development, and the members' means of support to and engagement with CSOs.

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All errors and omissions are those of the authors.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
AECID	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (Spain)
AFD	Agence Française de Développement (France)
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
Camões	Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua (Portugal)
CLA	Collaborating, learning, and adapting
CRS	Creditor Reporting System
CSO	Civil society organisation
DCD	Development Co-operation Directorate
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DfID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbei (Germany)
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MFEA	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (Slovak Republic)
MEAE	Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères (France)
MDC	Ministry of Development Cooperation (Belgium)
MFA	Ministry of/for Foreign Affairs (various)
MFAIC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (Italy)
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia, Hungary)
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAIDC	Slovak Aid

SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
Task Team CSO	Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Executive summary

Agenda 2030 is clear on the necessity of mobilising civil society organisations (CSOs) in implementing and upholding accountability for the Sustainable Development Goals. CSOs are important to development co-operation, both as development actors in their own right, and as implementing partners for members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC). Figures from the DAC show that in 2017, DAC members allocated close to USD 20 billion for CSOs, amounting to 15% of total bilateral aid. Between 2010 and 2017 this amount increased by 15%.

The multi-stakeholder constituency of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) has committed to ensuring effectiveness in relation to CSOs in development co-operation, inclusive of the provision of CSO enabling environments and the promotion of CSO development effectiveness. Yet, there remain gaps to making good on these commitments. Legal and regulatory frameworks and space for policy dialogue inclusive of CSOs is shrinking worldwide, gaps in CSOs' effectiveness and accountability continue to be felt, and there is room to ensure support provided by DAC members is more development effective.

In this context the OECD-DAC has undertaken a study of how DAC members work with CSOs to identify areas of DAC member support to and engagement with CSOs for which guidance is needed. This paper is part of that study, introducing a selection of key findings and considerations from a 2018-2019 survey, complemented by DAC statistical data on official development assistance (ODA). The DAC intends to draw from the study's findings and recommendations to develop, in consultation with DAC members, CSOs, and other stakeholders, guidance for DAC members in their work with civil society.

Study findings show that DAC members' policies and practices in working with civil society are ever-evolving. On the whole, progress is being made towards the type of support that enables CSOs to maximise their contribution to development, though progress is uneven across members. There also remain some tensions that create a gap between aspirations for enabling civil society, through effective development co-operation, and members' practices in their CSO support. However, these tensions are not unfeasible for DAC members to reconcile.

Members have come a long way in establishing civil society or CSO policies or strategies that articulate members' purpose, objectives and modes of working with CSOs. The majority of members have policies in place, with a few in progress. Many of what members consider as CSO policies are however generic development co-operation policies. Further effort is needed to establish CSO-specific policies across the full complement of members.

Objectives for members' CSO support increasingly recognise the dual perspective of CSOs as partners in implementing service and humanitarian programmes, or human rights and democracy programmes, on DAC members' behalf, and as development actors in their own right, with strengthening civil society in partner countries also an objective for a majority of DAC members.

However, DAC members' financial support tends more toward utilisation of CSOs, particularly member country CSOs, as programme implementing partners rather than as development actors in their own right. This is evident from the disproportionate share of

ODA flowing *through* CSOs relative to the amount flowing *to* CSOs. It is also clear from the dominance of financial support mechanisms involving project/programme support and support allocated via competitive calls for proposals over partnership/framework support, (i.e. core support. Members are tending to favour working with CSOs as a *means* to reach specific development objectives, and not as an *end*, despite that a strong civil society sector is valuable in and of itself and is a stated objective of members.

The objective of strengthening civil society in partner countries is still pursued within project/programme/calls support, such as in human rights and democratisation programming, capacity development of partner country CSOs, or a degree of respect for CSOs' right of initiative within project/programme/calls support. Additional effort could be made however to ensure that members' financial support for CSOs more fully reflects members' objectives. This implies urging members to: ensure the prominence of strengthening civil society in partner countries not solely as a stated objective but within the practice of their funding mechanisms; better define what results of strengthening civil society look like; increase core support as the most effective form of supporting CSOs as development actors in their own right and of strengthening civil society in partner countries; and augment direct funding for CSOs and a broader range of civil society actors in partner countries. As regards the latter, members are using multi-donor funds as well as facilitating South-South or triangular co-operation to reach partner country civil society, and more could be done in this regard.

Members are more than ever engaging CSOs in dialogue and consultation, including through systematic, advance-planned dialogue fora as well as dialogue done on an ad hoc basis. The continuation of systematic dialogue and its expansion across members is encouraged, while, ad hoc dialogue is also welcome for the opportunities it provides for responsive, strategic, and often more informal dialogue. Effort is needed to augment the dialogue, systematic and ad hoc, happening with CSOs at partner country level. Overall, the quality of dialogue and consultation with CSOs could be improved with, for example reasonable timelines, and better reflection of CSO inputs into consultation outcomes.

The administrative requirements associated with DAC member proposals, monitoring, and reporting, remain overly-burdensome, even as some members seek to reduce the transaction costs of these requirements. Efforts to streamline these processes to focus on essential information requirements are needed. CSOs are often involved in defining results and indicators during the development of monitoring frameworks. However, more could be done to apply genuinely iterative and adaptive approaches to monitoring and evaluation, which requires receptivity to learning not solely for the purpose of learning but to inform and improve programme directions.

Members can take further steps to support CSOs in strengthening their accountability in the partner countries they work in. CSO accountability is essential leverage to counter the trend to restrict the space for civil society in those countries. Important also as a point of leverage is members' own transparency when it comes to their CSO flows. Consideration needs to be given to how members can make country-disaggregated information about their CSO flows readily accessible to partner country stakeholders.

All told, there is evidence of member effort to work with CSOs in ways that enable CSOs to maximise their contribution to development. Each member needs to continuously examine its practices however to ensure coherence between objectives and the many advantages that CSOs are seen to bring to development, and the members' means of support to and engagement with CSOs.

1. Introduction

Civil society and civil society organisations (CSOs) are widely recognised as important development actors. They fulfil roles as providers of services in development and humanitarian situations. They contribute to policy development through dialogue and advocacy. They are leaders in the promotion and protection of human rights and democratisation. In development co-operation, and in Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member countries, CSOs are known for their experience and expertise, for their quick and flexible response, and for their ability to identify new or long-standing, often systemic obstacles to social, economic, and democratic development, and to elaborate solutions. CSOs are also known for their ability to reach poor and marginalised communities and individuals. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 2018 *Development Co-operation Report* highlights CSOs' capacity to bring the voices of those on the frontlines of poverty, inequality and vulnerability into development processes, and as such, to help meet Agenda 2030's promise of leaving no one behind (OECD, 2018).

Since the 2008 High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, stakeholders in development co-operation have recognised CSOs both as partners, and as independent actors in their own right. At the most recent High-Level Meeting in Nairobi in 2016 the multi-stakeholder constituency of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation reaffirmed commitments to provide enabling environments for CSOs and to promote CSOs' development effectiveness.

Yet around the world efforts by various governments to restrict the civic and political space in which civil society operates have grown. Increasingly, governments are using laws, policies, and practices to limit the possibilities for people to come together to improve everyday lives. At the same time, there remain gaps in CSOs' effectiveness and accountability with concerns raised about their representativeness, their results, and challenges of co-ordination among themselves and with governments. Equally there are indications that, while there is considerable scope for DAC members to leverage CSO knowledge and capabilities and their influential role as public advocates for sustainable development, DAC members are still far from offering development effective support to CSOs as part of the enabling environment for civil society.[1]

In this context, in 2017 the OECD-DAC Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) established a work stream on civil society to provide guidance on DAC member support for civil society and a strategy for engaging with civil society. Under this work stream, the current study on How DAC Members work with CSOs has been implemented to identify how DAC members are supporting and engaging with civil society and CSOs in DAC member and partner countries.[2] The study is also intended to reveal areas for which guidance is needed to improve on DAC members' contribution to the promotion of

[1] Task Team CSO (2014), *Review of Progress on Civil Society-related Commitments of the Busan High Level Forum*; OECD & UNDP (2016), *Making Development Co-operation More Effective: 2016 Progress Report*; and internal OECD-DAC/Development Co-operation Directorate synthesis of findings from Peer Reviews.

[2] The study survey and this paper use the term "partner country" to denote an ODA-recipient country.

enabling environments for civil society through their own policies and practices. The current working paper is a first analysis for the study and subsequent guidance. It draws primarily from surveys launched in 2018 as well as from DAC statistics on official development assistance (ODA).[3] All thirty DAC members responded to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society, and six CSOs responded to a separate but related survey.

The study is in follow-up to the OECD's 2011 *How DAC Members work with Civil Society Organisations* publication and subsequent 2012 document, *Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews* (OECD, 2011; OECD, 2012).

[3] See the methodological note in Annex A.

2. Civil society and CSOs

- Civil society includes CSOs, NGOs, and other forms of formal or non-formal peoples' associations. CSOs are diverse.
- CSOs are significant actors in development co-operation. 15% of members' bilateral ODA is for CSOs.
- CSOs are perceived in two ways: as independent development actors in their own right, and as implementers of programmes on behalf of members.
- Members share quite similar definitions of CSOs, with nuanced differences.

2.1. Defining civil society and CSOs

Civil society is often characterised as one of three spheres of action along with government and the private sector. It has been defined as a "sphere of uncoerced human association" within which individuals implement collective action to address needs, ideas and interests that they have identified in common (Edwards, 2011, p. 4). CSOs are a formal manifestation of civil society. Civil society is thus considered both as the collection of CSOs and of other, non-formal forms of peoples' associations, and as a sphere in which they interact with each other and others (Kohler-Koch & Quittkat, 2009).

Within the OECD, CSOs are defined as "non-market and non-state organisations outside of the family in which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. They cover a wide range of organisations that include membership-based CSOs, cause-based CSOs and service-oriented CSOs. Examples include community-based organisations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organisations, labour unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes, and the not-for-profit media" (OECD, 2010, p. 26).

The DAC's reporting directives issued to DAC members refer not to CSOs but to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Box 2.1), though in recent years DAC publications use the more current term of CSO.[4]

Box 2.1. DAC definition of NGO

The DAC reporting directives' definition of NGOs is equivalent to how the term CSO is today understood in that it includes a variety of different association types. The DAC defines an NGO as "any non-profit entity in which people organise themselves on a local, national or international level to pursue shared objectives and ideals, without significant government-controlled participation or representation. NGOs include foundations, co-operative societies, trade unions, faith-based organisations, and ad-hoc entities set up to

[4] See for example OECD (2019a) *Aid for Civil Society Organisations* and OECD (2018) *Development Co-operation Report 2018: Joining forces to leave no one behind*.

collect funds for a specific purpose. NGO umbrella organisations and NGO networks are also included" (DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics, 2018, pp. 47-48).

This report uses the terms CSO and civil society. The term NGO is also used when citing a DAC member or other source that uses it.[5]

2.2. CSOs in the development co-operation context

CSOs have long been a feature in the domestic landscape of many member countries, where they contribute to social, economic, cultural, and democratic development. They have been involved in development co-operation for as long as that co-operation has existed. In 2017 members allocated close to USD 20 billion for CSOs, amounting to 15% of total bilateral aid (OECD, 2019a, p. 8). Between 2010 and 2017 this amount increased by 15% (OECD, 2019a, p. 5).[6] These figures alone show that CSOs' significance in development co-operation cannot be underestimated.

That CSOs make up a very diverse sector is evident in the various sizes, mandates, approaches and governance structures seen in the millions of CSOs across the globe representing or working with diverse groups of people. Both in member countries and partner countries, CSOs are engaged in a multitude of roles, from service delivery to advocacy on issues of public policy, from research to the promotion of human rights.[7]

In the context of international development co-operation, CSOs are seen in two ways. First, they are considered as independent development actors in their own right. This means that they have their own priorities, plans, and approaches to achieving them. Their legitimacy as independent actors is derived from varied sources: from their constituents, which may be CSO members, or groups or individuals that they serve or represent; from their governance and accountability systems; from their expertise and experience; from the development results they achieve; and from the civic values that guide them (OECD, 2010, p. 27; Van Rooy, 2004).[8] The ability of CSOs to operate as independent development actors is also embedded in international law, particularly in the right to freedom of association and the principles that flow from it (World Movement for Democracy & International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2012).

As independent actors CSOs may engage in development outside of or within the official aid system. They raise financial resources for development and as such, are themselves aid donors. Figures from the DAC show CSOs raised USD 42 billion in private contributions to development co-operation in 2017, a figure amounting to approximately 30% of DAC members' total bilateral aid (OECD, 2019a, p. 8).[9] As independent actors CSOs may also be recipients of DAC member ODA. This is the case when CSOs receive funding from DAC members in support of the CSOs

[5] Through the remainder of this paper the term member is used to denote DAC member.

[6] Calculations are based on 2016 constant prices.

[7] The term partner country is used to denote an ODA-recipient country. The term developing country is occasionally used in this report when that is the term used in the source. For example, DAC reporting directives refer to developing country-based NGOs.

[8] That not all of civil society or CSOs hold and/or operate by what might be considered positive social values is also recognised (OECD, 2010, p. 26; Edwards, 2009, pp. 53-54). Legitimacy claims cannot be based on normative values alone.

[9] The DAC figure on contributions from CSOs is considered an under-estimate; the figures are reported not from CSOs themselves but from DAC members (OECD, 2011, p. 10).

themselves, to implement CSOs' own-defined programmes or activities. This type of flow is referred to by the DAC as aid *to* CSOs.

Second, CSOs are considered as implementers for DAC members. As such they are a channel for DAC members' financial support to implement programmes for reaching specific objectives on behalf of the member. This type of flow is referred to by the DAC as aid *through* CSOs. See Box 4.1 for the DAC distinction between flows *to* and *through* CSOs. Figure 4.1 shows the relative share of flows *to* and *through* CSOs between 2010 and 2017.[10]

2.3. How DAC members refer to civil society and CSOs

A distinction between civil society and CSOs is not always made in members' policies or survey responses. For many, civil society seems to be understood as the collection of CSOs. For others, civil society is seen as a broader sphere, a "field of human activity" (Finland), of initiatives and social movements (Germany, Canada, Ireland), and of the individuals engaging in this sphere such as volunteers, artists, journalists (Czech Republic), and beyond.

Member definitions of CSOs are quite similar. Recurring themes in members' CSO definitions include that they are distinct from state and private sector, and non-profit. For a few (Germany, Iceland, Canada, Ireland), voluntarism is stated as a distinguishing feature of CSOs while for others voluntarism is implicit in the concept of CSOs as a 'coming together' of people (or citizens) on a voluntary basis in the pursuit of shared objectives, interests or ideals.

As noted in section 2.1, there are many examples of types of organisations considered as CSOs. Examples of CSO types are at times specific to the individuals, communities or causes represented, such as diaspora or migrant organisations (Belgium), gender and LGBT organisations (EC), or non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) (Belgium and Portugal). Some organisations fall in a grey area with select members considering them as CSOs and others not. Research and academic institutions for example are a separate organisational category for some members (Belgium, Agence Française de Développement (AFD)). Occasionally members' CSO definition includes non-formal associations of civil society (EC, Czech Republic, USAID). Members' CSO definitions also commonly refer to the activity arenas CSOs engage in: cultural, environmental, social and economic, civic and political. Three members (EC, Spain, Lithuania) specify the non-partisan nature of CSOs and their activities.

To define CSOs, two members (Australia, Canada) refer to the above-referenced OECD (2010) definition, also used in the OECD's 2011 *How DAC Members Work with CSOs* (p. 10). The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) refers to the DAC definition as seen in the OECD's *Aid for Civil Society Orgnaisations* publication and DAC reporting directives. USAID refers to the definition constructed by Johns Hopkins University of CSOs as: separate from government, non-profit distributing, self-governing, formal or informal, and in which participation is voluntary.

For three members, their CSO definition is enacted in their laws on international development co-operation. Italian Law 125/2014 sets out 6 categories of CSOs considered part of the "Italian Development Co-operation System", inclusive of a category dedicated to of Italian CSOs awarded advisor status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in the last four years. Spanish law (Law 23/1998 and Royal Decree

[10] Flows *to* and *through* CSOs by member between 2010 and 2017 are provided in Annex B.

193/2015) stipulates that in order to receive official aid funds, CSOs must be registered under the Registry of Non-Governmental Organizations of Development. An NGDO is defined to include in its purposes, promotion of the principles and objectives of international co-operation as stipulated in Law 23/1998. The Belgian Law on Development Cooperation (2013 modified 2016, Article 2) defines civil society actors as "non-state and non-profit entities in which people organize themselves to pursue common goals or ideal", distinguishing them from institutional actors which are "founded by a public authority or controlled or managed directly or indirectly by it".

That there is some variance in the way members refer to CSOs and civil society is not surprising. Attempts to define or classify civil society and CSOs have been referred to as akin to "nailing jelly to the wall" (Edwards, 2009, p. 4). However, there is enough commonality among DAC references such that, combined with the DAC and others' definitions of NGOs, CSOs and civil society provided above, the subject matter of this paper is clear.

3. Why members work with CSOs and civil society: Policies and objectives

- The kind of document members consider as a policy for working with CSOs and civil society varies considerably including legislation, policies, strategies, guidelines, principles, and action plans.
- 22 members have some form of CSO/civil society policy, of which, 14 are CSO/civil society-specific. Four members are developing policies.
- The majority of members identify dual objectives for working with civil society: to reach a specific development objective (implement programmes), and to strengthen civil society in partner countries, including CSOs as independent development actors.
- However, data on flows to and through CSOs as well as members' other financial support mechanisms do not necessarily match these objectives.
- Members more commonly identify advantages from working with CSOs than disadvantages, though both are seen.

3.1. Policies and strategies for working with CSOs and civil society

As seen in the OECD's 2012 *Partnering with Civil Society*, members are advised to have a CSO policy or strategy in place to provide a transparent and evidence-based overarching framework for members' work with CSOs and civil society (lesson 1). A policy can lay out the purpose of supporting and working with CSOs and civil society, set out priorities and objectives, and thus guide planning, implementation, and evaluation. The existence of a CSO or civil society policy is increasingly evaluated through DAC peer reviews of its members' development efforts. The 2019-2020 *Peer Review Reference Guide* contains more coverage than previously on the need for members' policy frameworks to provide sufficient guidance for decision-making on channels and engagements with CSOs. Under the Inclusive Development Partnerships component, members are expected to articulate a vision of different actors', including CSOs', roles; support enabling environments and space for civil society; and engage with CSOs at strategic and operational levels (OECD, 2019b p. 11).

Evident from survey findings is that the kind of document that members consider as a policy or strategy for working with CSOs and civil society varies considerably.[11] Some have CSO or civil society-specific policies in the form of legislation (e.g. Portugal's NGDO Charter), multi-year or annual plans (e.g. Poland); policies (e.g. Canada), strategies (e.g. Germany), principles (e.g. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)), or guidelines (e.g. Finland).

According to survey responses, the majority of members (22, 73%) have some form of a policy for working with CSOs and civil society in place.[12] For 14 of them, the policy they

[11] For ease of reading, in the remainder of this document reference will be made to policies, though the How DAC Members work with Civil Society survey upon which this paper is based asks about members' policies *or* strategies.

[12] This is one more member than had a policy in place as reported in the 2011 *How DAC Members work with CSOs*. (OECD, 2011, p. 18). However, with a smaller number of members in the DAC in 2011, the percentage of members with policies has decreased from 87%

refer to is specific to CSOs or civil society in development, with evidence suggesting the policies were developed in a consultative way with CSOs.[13] In the case of the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) 2014 CSO policy, "*Dialogue and Dissent*", it is not only CSO-specific but is exclusive to partnerships with CSOs in a lobbying and advocacy role. For 7 of the 22 members, the policies referred to are broader development policies in which CSOs or civil society is addressed.[14]

Four members indicate they are in the process of developing policies. These include Irish Aid, which is updating its 2008 policy, and Switzerland's SDC which is developing a policy, with both anticipated in 2019. The Spanish Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo's (AECID) master plan for development co-operation (2018-2021) is committed to elaborating a strategy for collaboration with CSOs. For Belgium, Royal Decree of 11th of September 2016 addresses the practical and political implementation of the Ministry of Development Cooperation's support for CSOs, and Theory of Change for this support, under finalisation will, with the Royal Decree, make up Belgium's CSO policy.

Box 3.1. Status of member CSO policies

22 members have some form of CSO policy

4 members are developing policies

4 members do not have a policy

Of the 22 members with some form of CSO policy:

14 have CSO or civil society-specific policies

Source: Member policies or strategies provided in response to the survey How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

Another four members indicate that do not have a CSO or civil society policy. Among them, New Zealand is revisiting its approach to CSOs following a 2018 evaluation, while Hungary does not indicate that a policy is planned for. The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) has the 2018 *Guiding Principles for Support to Civil Society* but because Norad does not have the authority to make policy per se, Norway considers it does not have a CSO policy. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) indicates that it does not have a CSO-specific policy, however the importance of civil society and CSOs is recognised in various sector-specific policies, as well as in broad Government policies that guide the United States' work.

Some members which, like the United States, do not have a CSO or civil society-specific policy, unlike the United States, consider the coverage of CSOs and civil society in broader legislative or policy documents, or sector-specific policies, as providing adequate coverage to constitute their CSO policy. Thus, based on their survey responses, these members are considered among the 22 having a CSO or civil society policy. They tend to be newer members and/or those with smaller ODA budgets than longer-standing members. Poland

[13] At the time of writing, only 21 of the 22 policies was available for review. Thus, the final total number of CSO or civil society-specific policies may, after verification of this policy's content, increase to 15.

[14] Or possibly for 8 of them per the above footnote.

for example refers to its CSO policy as being covered within the *Multi-Annual Development Cooperation Programme (2016-2020)* and associated Annual Plans. Lithuania considers its 2013 Law on the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, complemented by its 2017 *Inter-institutional Action Plan on Development Cooperation* as providing adequate coverage of CSOs and civil society to constitute a civil society policy. For Luxembourg, coverage of CSOs in its 1996 Law on Development Cooperation, alongside legislative amendments (2012, 2017) addressing CSO partnerships, constitute their CSO policy, supported by CSO coverage in their 2018 *The Road to 2030: General Development Cooperation Strategy*.

Having a CSO policy does not preclude coverage of CSOs or civil society in wider development co-operation or in sector-specific policies (or legislation) too. The European Commission's (EC) 2012 Communication, *The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations* is complemented by the 2017 *European Consensus on Development*. The Czech Republic considers its annual *Resolution on Main Areas of State Subsidy Policy Towards Non-governmental Non-profit Organizations* (which covers all NGOs supported by the Czech Government, not solely those involved in development co-operation), alongside reference to these actors in the Czech *International Development Cooperation Strategy*, *Human Rights and Transition Policy Strategy*, and *Annual Humanitarian Assistance Strategy*, as constituting their CSO policy.

Sweden effectively has two CSO-specific policies while also integrating civil society-related issues in other policies. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' 2017 *Strategy for Support via Swedish Civil Society Organisations* governs Sweden's core support to framework CSOs, while Sida's 2017 *Guiding Principles for Sida's Engagement with and Support to Civil Society* covers all CSO and civil society support. Additionally, civil society features in the Government's over-arching *Policy Framework for Swedish Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance* of 2016, as well as sector strategies such as the 2018 *Strategy for Sweden's Development Cooperation in the Areas of Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law*.

All told, and in keeping with Peer Review guidance, all members would do well to have some form of CSO or civil society-specific policy document in place; to integrate civil society considerations in other policies, and to engage CSOs in the policy-making process.

3.2. Objectives of working with CSOs and civil society

In their policies and survey responses, members identify multiple objectives for working with CSOs and civil society, and articulate these objectives in a multitude of ways. Ideally, member objectives should reflect both that CSOs are both recipients and channels of aid, that they are development actors in their own right as well as programme implementers on behalf of members. The 2012 *Partnering with Civil Society* articulates this through its recommendation that members include strengthening civil society in developing countries as an objective (lesson 2); while also partnering with CSOs to implement programmes aimed at specific development objectives (lesson 4).

USAID articulates this well in their survey response. They work with civil society both as a *means* for achieving specific development objectives, and as an *end*, recognising the intrinsic importance of civil society and the critical role that strong, vibrant and independent CSOs play in development. Sida's 2017 *Guiding Principles* also clearly reflect this perspective, calling for a balance between support for CSOs as implementing agents for

donors, with support for fostering a pluralistic civil society in developing countries as an objective in itself (pp. 8-9).

According to member survey responses (Figure. 3.1), the majority are balancing these two types of objectives. The objective *to reach a specific development objective (implement programmes) linked to service delivery* is most frequently selected by members. *Strengthening civil society in partner countrie*s, *including CSOs as independent development actors* ranks a close second. This is followed by the objective *to reach a specific development objective (implement programmes) linked to human rights and democratization*, then by the objectives of *enhancing CSOs' capacity in partner countries*, and in *member countries*. When asked about their main objective for working with CSOs and civil society, all but three members selected multiple main objectives.[15]

That said, figures on ODA flows to and through CSOs, and the funding mechanisms members tend to prefer, contradict that a balance between the two types of objectives – of working with CSOs as a means (programme implementers), or toward an end of a strong and pluralistic civil society – is in fact being struck. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

For reasons of logical narrative flow, the objectives are treated below in the following order: programme implementation in service delivery, programme implementation in human rights and democratisation, strengthening civil society in partner countries, and enhancing CSO capacity, with an additional objective of public awareness-raising also covered. Limited coverage of members' treatment of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is also provided.

Before proceeding, it is worth underlining that members' development co-operation policies, strategies, and objectives, inclusive of those for working with civil society, are not static. What is presented in this paper is a snapshot from late 2018 into early 2019.

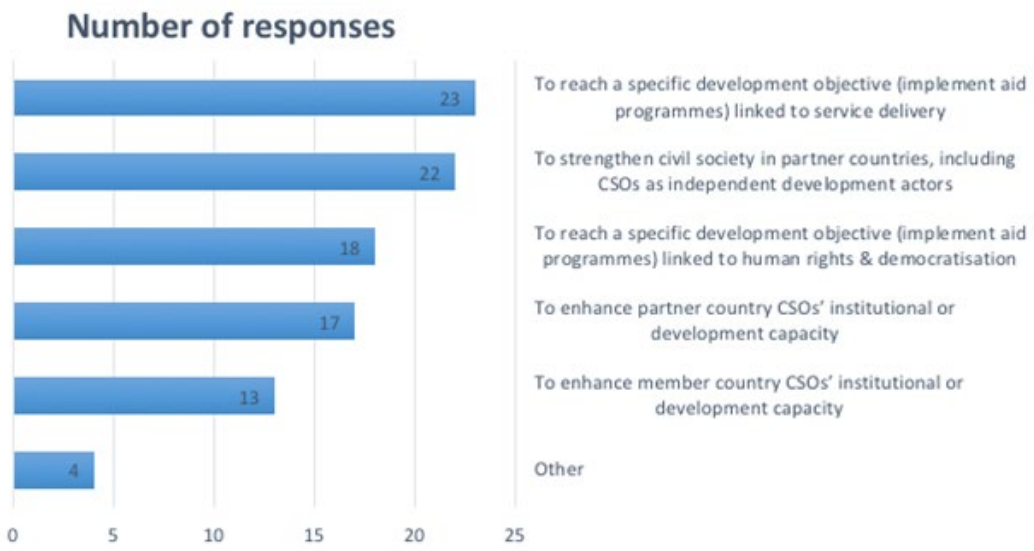
Box 3.2. Changing objectives for working with CSOs and civil society

Eleven members state that their objectives for working with CSOs and civil society have changed in the past five years. Changes are mainly linked to new over-arching development policy directions; lessons drawn from programme implementation and evaluations; and since 2015, emphasis on the SDGs. The priorities of Ireland's 2015 The Global Island: Ireland's Foreign Policy for a Changing World as well as their One World, One Future international development policy of 2013 have influenced their objectives. Both SDC and New Zealand are updating their objectives based on recent evaluations of their CSO partnership programmes. Japan's CSO partnerships are increasingly focused on CSOs' contribution to the SDGs as reflected in Japan's (2016) SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles and Action Plan.

Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

[15] All 30 members responded to this survey question, with one selecting none of the objective options provided but instead identifying an alternate objective.

Figure 3.1. Member objectives for working with CSOs and civil society



Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

3.2.1. Programme implementation – Service delivery

The largest number of members, 23, representing approximately three-quarters of members, identify *to reach a specific development objective linked to service delivery* as a main objective for working with CSOs and civil society. Comparatively, one-third of CSO survey respondents, identified this as DAC members' main objective. However, DAC member policies and narrative responses to the survey rarely refer to service delivery as an objective per se. Rather, they speak to objectives aimed, for example, at promoting sustainable development and realising humanitarianism (Korea), reducing poverty and improving living conditions (e.g. Austrian Development Agency (ADA)), reducing inequalities (e.g. Italy), improving economic livelihoods (e.g. Australia), and protecting the planet (e.g. SDC), amongst others. References to CSOs' as important partners in SDG achievement are also common. Sometimes members articulate that their support to CSO service provision outside of the humanitarian realm is based on the principle of subsidiarity, that is that CSOs have a role in complementing, but not replacing, service provision by government (e.g. ADA, Germany, Italy).

Of course, aims such as reducing poverty can also be achieved when members partner with CSOs in the area of human rights and democratisation, where underlying, systemic causes of poverty and inequality can be addressed. But the prominence given to the service delivery objective reflects that members' approaches to development co-operation continue to emphasise services as a way to address members' development mandates.

It also reflects the high level of members' funding for CSOs as partners in implementation of service delivery-related programming, inclusive of various forms of humanitarian assistance. This is evident from the figures on the volume of ODA channelled *through* CSOs by sector in Annex C. The bulk of this funding, approximately 83%, goes to sub-sectors such as emergency response, health, education, and agriculture, where service is the likely form of intervention.

Examples from member policies show a variety of ways that CSOs are seen as implementing partners in service delivery. Ireland's *Policy for International Development* points to Irish NGOs "pivotal role in responding to humanitarian emergencies, providing services where they are needed most, and supporting vulnerable people in developing countries to come together and participate in the development of their communities" (Government of Ireland, 2013, p. 32). For the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID), supporting CSOs to "deliver goods, services and improvements in people's lives across DFID's work - from fragile and conflict affected states and emergency and humanitarian situations to long term development activities" is one strategy amongst others in the *Civil Society Partnership Review* (DfID, 2016, p. 10). In the Slovak Republic's *Medium-term Strategy for Development Cooperation 2019-2023*, NGDOs are seen to play "a crucial role, mainly when it comes to implementing development co-operation projects in partner countries" (MFEA of the Slovak Republic, 2019, p. 37).

3.2.2. Programme implementation – Human rights and democratisation

Eighteen members' survey responses, just under two-thirds, identify *to reach a specific development objective (implement programmes) linked to human rights and democratisation* as a main objective of their work with CSOs.[16] Only one-third of CSO respondents identified this as members' main objective however.

The role of CSOs as member partners in human rights and democratisation features prominently in member policies and survey responses. For example, SDC anticipates that its policy, in progress, will include building peaceful, just and inclusive societies as a goal, reflective of SDG 16. Norad's objectives for its CSO support include democratisation and human rights, with CSOs encouraged to work toward inclusion, and holding governments to account for upholding human rights. An objective of Italy's CSO support is to reinforce CSOs' role and capacity to implement Italy's development co-operation priorities which include promotion of human rights, gender equality and women empowerment, and support for democracy under the rule of law. Luxembourg's Law of 18 December 2017 articulates parameters for CSO human rights initiatives that Luxembourg will support including that target human rights institutions and laws, dialogue and awareness-raising on rights, and the work of human rights defenders, amongst others (Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 2017, Art. 4(5)).

3.2.3. Strengthening civil society in partner countries

Strengthening civil society in partner countries, including CSOs as independent development actors, is a main objective for 22 members, representing almost three-quarters of members. Equally two-thirds of CSO survey respondents selected this as a main objective of DAC members. Some DAC members' policies are more explicit than others in the way they articulate this objective. As an example of more explicit uptake, according to the European Commission's (EC) *The Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development* Communication, the aim of the EC's support is to contribute to the development of a dynamic, pluralistic and competent civil society (EC, 2012a, p. 4). The purpose of Global Affairs Canada's (GAC) *Civil Society Partnerships Policy* is enhancing effective co-operation with Canadian, international and partner country ("local") CSOs, "to maximise the results of Canada's International Assistance and foster a strong and vibrant

[16] Members' selection of human rights and democratisation as an objective is complemented by, though not the same as, the use of a human rights-based approach to development.

civil society sector" including supporting "a robust CSO ecosystem" (Government of Canada, 2017, pp. 1 and 8). AFD's *Partnerships with Civil Society* strategy includes as a strategic objective the strengthening and empowering of "local civil societies" (AFD, 2018, p. 6).

Members pursue various means to strengthen civil society in partner countries. The most common practices, pursued by around two-thirds of members are, first, *promoting enabling environments for CSOs and civil society in partner countries* (20 members),[17] and second, providing financial *support to CSOs as independent development actors in their own right*[18] (19 members). Half of members (15) *require the member country and international CSOs* that the member financially supports *to work with partner country CSOs in ways that respond to the specific demands and priorities of these partner country CSOs*. Just over half (16) provide *resources* not for specific CSOs but that are intended to be accessible to the *civil society sector writ large* (e.g. resource centres, training, co-ordination fora, etc.).

CSO survey respondents confirm that members use these methods for civil society strengthening. However, CSOs highlight shortfalls that hinder effective implementation, in particular the design and requirements of funding mechanisms, and that implementation is haphazard when a CSO or civil society-specific policy or strategy is absent.

When it comes to the most-selected means to strengthen civil society in partner countries - the promotion of enabling environments for CSOs and civil society in partner countries – members use various financial and non-financial methods (Figure 3.2). The most-used method, selected by 23 members, is providing *support (financial and otherwise) to CSOs and civil society, including human rights defenders, in partner countries with disenabling environments*.[19] An implication is that members' efforts to strengthen civil society in partner countries most likely includes supporting CSOs for programme implementation in the area of human rights and democratisation.

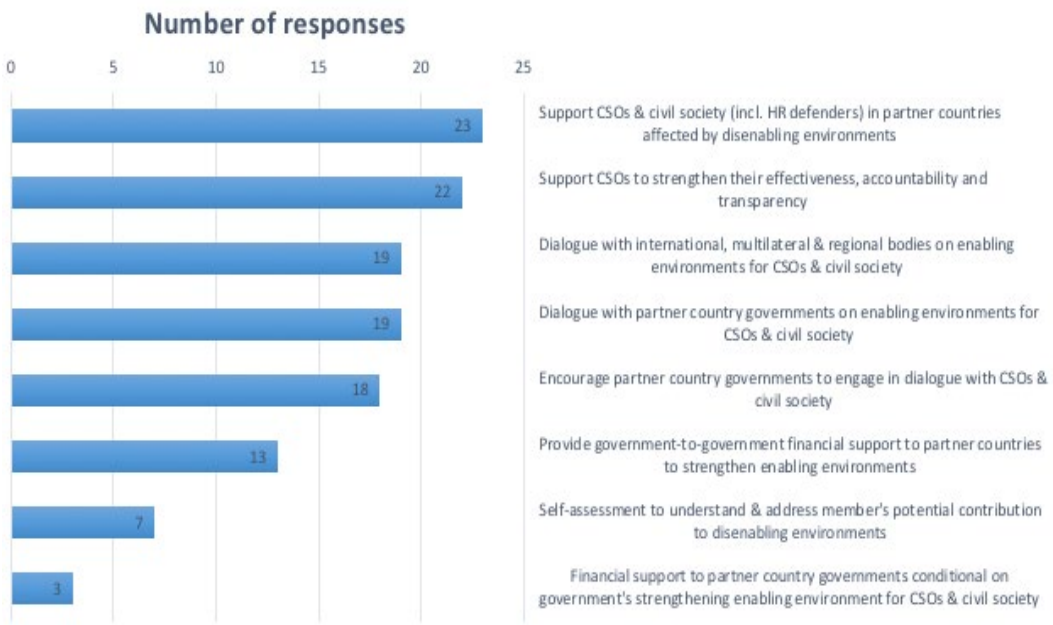
The method of providing support to CSOs in partner countries with disenabling environments, is followed closely by provision of *support to CSOs to strengthen their own effectiveness, accountability and transparency*, selected by 22 members. Nineteen members engage in *dialogue both at the international level and with partner country governments about the need for enabling environments for CSOs*. A lesser-used method, selected by only 7 members, is *self-assessment to better understand how the members' own practices may contribute to disenabling environments for CSOs*.

[17] Environments are considered enabling for CSOs in partner countries when legal and regulatory frameworks for the CSO sector facilitate CSOs' ability to exist and operate and there is space for CSOs to engage in policy processes. In such environments, the rights to freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly are respected and CSOs have access to institutionalised multi-stakeholder spaces for dialogue where they can contribute to defining and monitoring development policy and planning.

[18] See OECD (2012) *Partnering with Civil Society* lessons 1 and 2. Supporting CSOs as development actors in their own right involves supporting the development activities of CSOs themselves, that is, CSO-defined priorities, plans and approaches. This is also referred to as support to CSOs' 'right of initiative' and is discussed further in Chapter 4.

[19] The total number of member respondents to this survey question is 25, i.e. 5 members did not respond.

Figure 3.2. Member practices promoting enabling environments in partner countries



Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

3.2.4. Enhance partner country CSOs' capacity

Enhancing partner country CSOs' capacity is also a means of strengthening partner country civil society, but it is also identified by members as a specific objective. Returning to Figure 3.1, just over half of members (17) *have enhancing partner country CSOs' institutional or development capacity* as one of their main objectives of working with CSOs and civil society. Of the 13 that did not select this as a *main* objective, seven selected strengthening civil society in partners countries as a main objective, and most do so in part through enhancement of partner country CSO capacity. An example is the EC, whose aim of contributing to a dynamic, pluralist and competent civil society is to be achieved through: promoting a conducive environment for CSOs in partner countries; promoting participation of CSOs in partner countries' policy; increasing partner country CSOs' capacity as independent development actors (EC, 2012a, p. 4)

Capacity development of partner country CSOs, most often done via member country or international CSOs, is a long-standing CSO and member practice with mixed results. For example, Finland's 2017 evaluation of CSOs receiving programme-based and humanitarian assistance support states: "The relationships of CSO's with their partner CSOs are often directive rather than aiming at greater independence of local civil society, as relations with local partners are more sub-contracting than consultative" (Brusset et al., 2017, p. 14). As a result, capacity development of partner country CSOs is focused on effective project implementation and not on organisational capacity development or, for example on building accountability through constituency feedback mechanisms or other means (Brusset et al., 2017, pp. 45-46). A 2018 Icelandic CSO evaluation finds similarly that some CSO projects covered had "done little to strengthen the partner CSOs at country level" (Ljungman & Nilsson, 2018, p. 10).

Members are taking steps to address these challenges however. For Denmark, one means their *Policy for Danish Support to Civil Society* identifies for strengthening a strong, independent, vocal and diverse civil society, amongst other aims, is to support capacity development of civil society actors in partner countries in ways that "promote their agendas for change" (MFA of Denmark & Danida, 2014, p. 8). Capacity development requires an accompaniment approach in which "one civil society actor follows and guides the other through important change processes", with the organisation whose capacity is developing in the lead and owning the process (MFA of Denmark & Danida, 2014, p. 22). Denmark's *Policy* also commits to work with its CSO partners toward more systematic monitoring and reporting of capacity development processes and results (MFA of Denmark & Danida, 2014, p. 21).

Other members too refer to capacity development approaches that reflect interest in more equitable relationship between member country CSOs and their local partners. For AFD, strengthening local civil societies will happen in part through "dynamics based on enhanced reciprocity" between French and partner country CSOs (AFD, 2018, pp. 6 and 10). Austria's *NGO Cooperation: Austrian Development Cooperation Policy* commits to strengthening partner country NGOs both via knowledge transfer and support from Austrian NGOs, and greater transfer of responsibility and resources to partner country CSOs where conditions allow (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs & ADA, 2007, pp. 8 and 10). For USAID, capacity development includes support to the more traditional organisational development, but also to what they call "capacity development 2.0", with greater emphasis on assisting CSOs to improve performance, to strengthen networks and relationships among CSOs, and to understand their role in the broader system.

3.2.5. Enhance member country CSOs' capacity

For less than half of members (13 responses), *enhancing member country CSOs' capacity* is a main objective for working with CSOs and civil society amongst other objectives. According to its *Development Cooperation Charter*, Japan supports the development co-operation projects of Japanese NGOs and CSOs and their capacity development, with emphasis on human resources and systems development (Government of Japan, 2015, III (2) B (e)). Strengthening the technical and operational capacity of non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) is an objective of Portugal's work with CSOs. Australia's *DFAT and NGOs* policy contains an objective of enhancing NGO performance and effectiveness which includes enhancing capabilities of Australian NGOs as development partners, and building the capacity of partner country CSOs as agents of change (DFAT of Australia, 2015, p. 14).

3.2.6. Public awareness-raising

Partnering with Civil Society (2012) (lesson 3) highlights that promotion and support to CSOs' *public awareness-raising about development* needs to be an objective of members' CSO support, as well as being part of members' wider communication and development education investments. From survey responses and policy documents it is clear that this objective, also referred to as development education or citizen engagement, is very important for members. Only two members do not provide financial support to CSOs for this objective. Seventeen members include their support to CSOs' public awareness-raising within CSOs' development project/programme budgets and 21 fund CSOs' public awareness-specific projects/programmes. Fourteen members support CSOs' public awareness-raising in both ways.

According to Lithuania's *Law on the Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid*, CSOs are supported in part to inform and educate the public on development co-operation, as well as to foster positive attitudes towards development co-operation and encourage society's contribution to it (Republic of Lithuania, 2013, Art. 7(10)). Japan's *Development Cooperation Charter* commits to encouraging "participation of its people from all walks of life if development co-operation", including through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) volunteers (Government of Japan, 2015, III (2) B (e)). The Slovak Republic's development co-operation strategy also sees that deployment of volunteers offers not only a form of assistance to partner countries, but builds Slovakia's development co-operation capacities (MFEA of the Slovak Republic, 2019, p. 26). An objective in Australia's *DFAT and NGOs* policy sees Australian NGOs as "a bridge between the Australian aid program and the Australian community" and thus a participant in "public diplomacy" at home (DFAT Australia, 2015, p. 10).

3.2.7. Humanitarian – Development – Peace Nexus

In 2019 the *DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus* was adopted (OECD, 2019c). The *Recommendation* requires members to strengthen policy and operational coherence between humanitarian, development and peace efforts. An aspect of this involves members finding ways to incentivise the CSOs they work with to be cognisant of the nexus and address the dilemma of co-ordination and consistency between development, humanitarian and peace work.

The nexus challenge, long faced by members, is well illustrated in Finland's 2017 evaluation of six Finnish CSOs receiving both programme-based and humanitarian assistance support. A key evaluation finding is the limited ability of CSOs to operate in the development-humanitarian nexus given separate windows and time frames of members' funding and an absence of flexibility to frame programming around the nexus, and the short duration of humanitarian funding cycles (Brusset et al., 2017, pp. 3, 15 and 19). CSOs' own siloed operating modalities and limited long-term consideration or exit strategies in humanitarian programming are a related impediment that, combined with member conditions, result in a compartmentalisation rather than co-ordination and coherence (Brusset et al., 2017, pp. 15 and 16).

While an assessment of the state of members' efforts to address the nexus is beyond the scope of the current study, impressions can be gleaned from coverage in select members' CSO policies.[20]

The nexus is well integrated into Poland's *Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme for 2016-2020*. The *Programme* speaks to Poland's approach, working with Polish NGOs and other actors, that combines addressing urgent humanitarian needs with lasting and structural developmental measures so that these dovetail with each other (MFA of Poland, 2018, pp. 10, 18 and 34). For other members the need to better address the nexus is more implied than stated outright. For Australia, amongst the objectives of their engagement with NGOs is one that is specific to working with CSOs to enhance their emergency response, alongside recovery, building resilience and preparedness of

[20] The design of the How DAC Members work with CSOs study preceded the *Recommendation*'s adoption, and coverage of the nexus was not part of the study survey. The commentary provided here on members' treatment of the *Recommendation*'s recognises that DAC members' CSO policies are not where the most comprehensive coverage of how they are addressing the nexus is likely to be found.

communities and governments, and harnessing traditional knowledge to mitigate disaster risk (DFAT of Australia, 2015, pp. 12-13). AFD has taken steps to better accommodate not just crisis but post-crisis contexts and resilience, with specific funding mechanisms including Calls for Crisis and Post-Crisis Projects, a Vulnerability Mitigation and Crisis Response Facility, and integration of the Relief-Rehabilitation-Development continuum in operations (AFD, 2018, pp. 16-17). These examples suggest a growing awareness of the need to address the nexus specifically within the context of members' CSO support.

3.3. Advantages and disadvantages of working with CSOs

In many respects the objectives members identify for working with CSOs mirror the advantages that they identify for working with CSOs. At the same time, these advantages are counter-balanced by some shortcomings of CSOs as experienced by members.

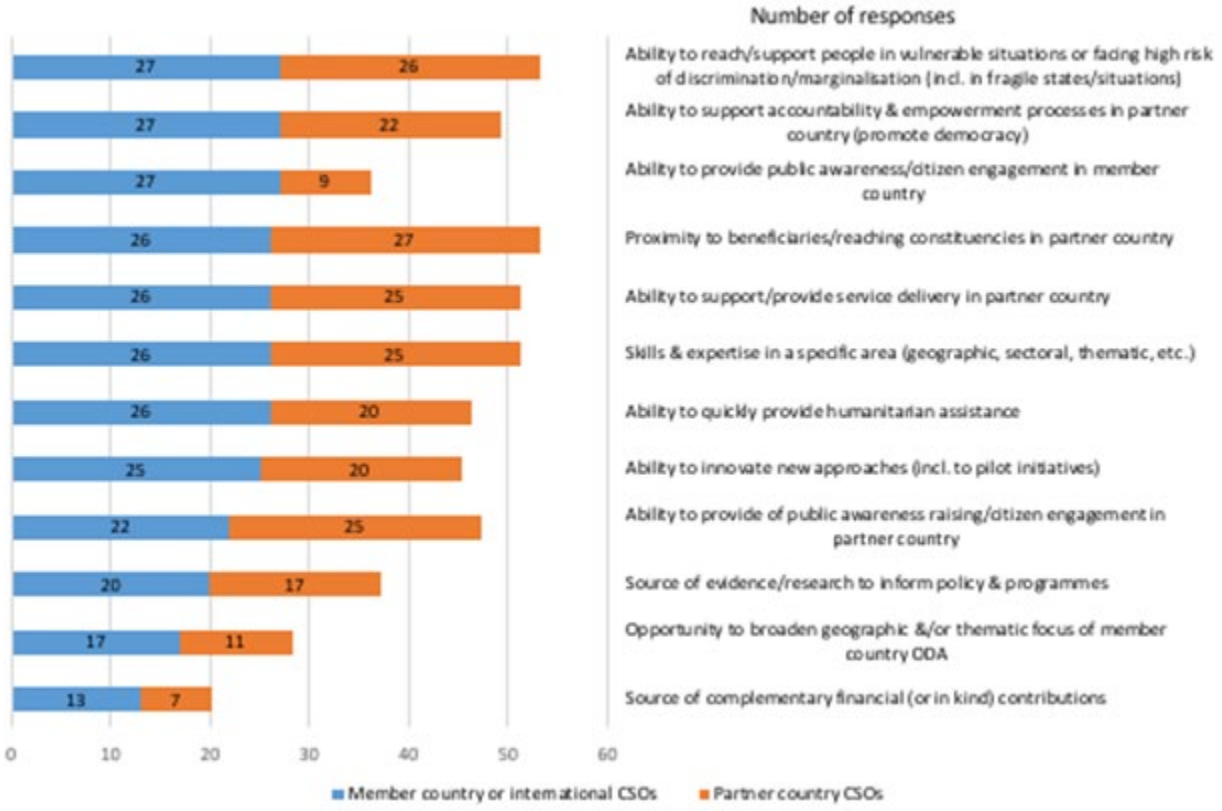
3.3.1. Advantages of working with CSOs

Highlights of the most frequently selected advantages of working with CSOs include the ability of CSOs to *reach people in vulnerable situations or facing high risk of discrimination or marginalisation*, a top comparative advantage of both member country and international CSOs, and partner country CSOs, as is the related advantage of these CSOs' *proximity to beneficiaries and constituencies in partner countries* (Figure 3.3). The ability of member country and international CSOs, and partner country CSOs, to *support (or provide) service delivery* in partner countries is another important comparative advantage, as is their ability to *support accountability and empowerment processes in partner countries* (promote democracy), with the latter attribute of partner country CSOs selected by fewer members.

Additional noteworthy comparative advantages are the *specific skills and expertise* of CSOs, and the ability to *quickly provide humanitarian assistance*, again with the latter selected by fewer members when it comes to partner country CSOs.[21] The ability to provide *public awareness and engage citizens in member countries* is deemed a significant comparative advantage of member country and international CSOs, while the ability to provide *public awareness raising and engage citizens in partner countries* is more frequently deemed a significant comparative advantage of partner country CSOs than of member country and international CSOs.

[21] More members ascribe comparative advantages to member country and international CSOs than to partner country CSOs in all but two comparative advantage areas. That some members do not support partner country CSOs directly does not explain this difference as only two of the members not supporting partner country CSOs directly chose to not select any comparative advantages for partner country CSOs.

Figure 3.3. Advantages of member country and international CSOs, and of partner country CSOs



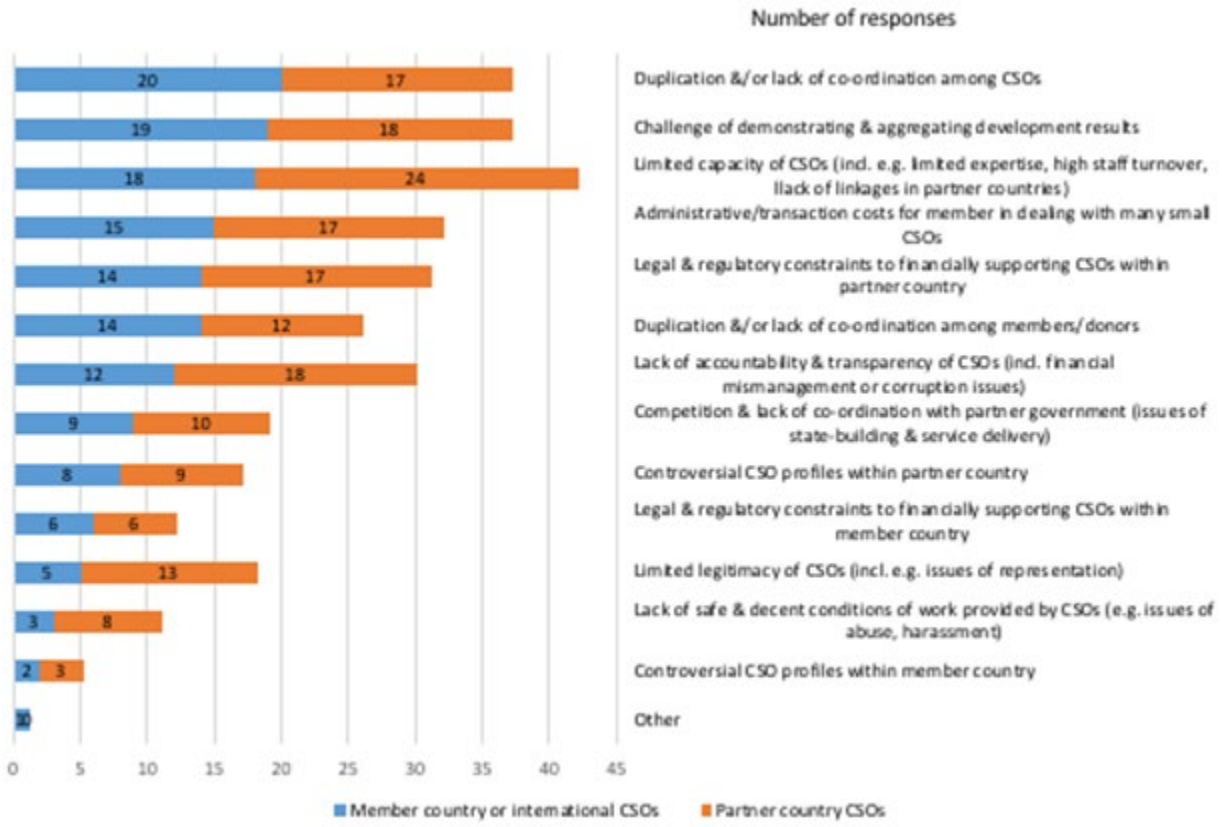
Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

3.3.2. Disadvantages of working with CSOs

The most commonly identified disadvantage of working with member country and international CSOs is that of *duplication and/or lack of co-ordination among CSOs*, also selected for partner country CSOs but less frequently (Figure 3.4). The most commonly identified disadvantage of working with partner country CSOs is *limitations in capacity*, again also selected for member country and international CSOs but less frequently. The *challenge of demonstrating and aggregating development results* is attributed to working with member country and international CSOs, and with partner country CSOs, almost equally.

Administrative and transaction costs is an issue for half of members when it comes to member country and international CSOs, and just over half when it comes to partner country CSOs. *Legal and regulatory constraints* to financially supporting CSOs within partner countries features prominently for partner country CSOs but also for member country and international CSOs. *Lack of accountability and transparency of CSOs* is noted more so for partner country CSOs than for member country and international CSOs. Members also identify issues of *duplication and lack of co-ordination among themselves and with other donors* as a disadvantage in both their partnerships with member country and international CSOs, and partner country CSOs.

Figure 3.4. Disadvantages of member country and international CSOs, and of partner country CSOs



Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

It is evident that, just as many members appreciate CSOs for their multiple attributes, members are also challenged by some shortcomings of CSOs. On the whole however, the balance tips toward an appreciation of attributes over shortcomings, with the former much more commonly identified than the latter.[22]

[22] This is seen simply by looking at the frequency with which members identify advantages over disadvantages. In total, members identify advantages of working with member country and international CSOs 282 times, compared to the 146 times that they select disadvantages of working with these same CSOs. In total, members select advantages of working with partner country CSOs 232 times, compared to the 172 times they select disadvantages of working with these same CSOs.

4. Financial and non-financial support and engagement with CSOs and civil society

- The majority of members maintain multiple funding mechanisms to support CSOs.
- The most commonly-identified mechanisms for supporting CSOs are calls for proposals, and project/programme support. Partnership/framework/core support is less common, though increasing incrementally.
- DAC statistics confirm this as most funding flows through CSOs as programme implementers, not to CSOs as independent development actors, though members may be pursuing the objective of strengthening civil society in partner countries via their through support.
- Members' financial support practices may be, indirectly, undermining CSOs' legitimacy in partner countries and as such, rather than strengthening civil society and enabling environments for civil society, having a counter-effect.
- Support flows primarily for member country and international CSOs rather than for partner country CSOs, though direct member funding for partner country CSOs is increasing incrementally.
- All members consult with CSOs in relation to the member's policies, strategies, or other strategic orientations. Regular, advance-scheduled (i.e. systematic) dialogue with CSOs is undertaken by a majority of members, especially with member country CSOs. Less frequent, ad hoc dialogue is undertaken with CSOs at partner country level.

4.1. Funding mechanisms/modalities[23] *to* and *through* CSOs

The 2012 *Partnering with Civil Society* publication recommends that members maintain a mix of financial support mechanisms for CSOs (lesson 7). Having a mix of mechanisms in place helps make funding available to a range of CSO types and can aid members to meet a range of objectives in different contexts. *Partnering with Civil Society* also stipulates that members' funding mechanisms should match their stated purpose or objectives of working with CSOs (lesson 7), in other words, the form of the support mechanism should follow the intended function, or objectives, of the support.

Also recommended in *Partnering with Civil Society* is that in their CSO funding mechanisms members find a balance between the conditions they attach to funding and respect for the role of CSOs as independent development actors (lesson 6). Support that is provided with requirements for CSOs to align with member-defined priorities and objectives can hinder CSOs' ability to operate in ways that are demand-driven and responsive to the priorities of CSOs' partners and constituents on-the ground. Project and programme support, and support through calls for proposals, are the primary mechanisms used when members seek to work with CSOs to meet specific, member-defined objectives. That is, this type of support tends to focus on the CSO implementing programmes on behalf of the member.

[23] The survey questionnaire refers to funding mechanisms/modalities to accommodate members' different use of these different terms. For ease of reading this paper will simply use the term mechanism.

What is called partnership or framework support, which includes core support, is the main mechanism for supporting CSOs as independent development actors and by extension, for strengthening civil society. It is organisational support that allows CSOs to pursue their own objectives, priorities and approaches, and is thus more likely to be demand-driven, responding to and owned at the partner country level.

This distinction was put forward in sections 2.2 and 3.2 as being the difference between working with CSOs as a *means* to reach specific development objectives, and as an *end* given that a strong civil society sector, comprised of CSOs and beyond, is valuable in and of itself. In DAC terms the distinction is between support *to* and *through* CSOs, between CSOs as aid recipients (*to*) or channels (*through*).

Box 4.1. Distinguishing support to and through CSOs

Aid to NGOs covers official funds paid over to non-governmental organisations for use at the latter's discretion. Aid through NGOs covers official funds made available to NGOs for use on behalf of the official sector, in connection with purposes designated by the official sector, or known to and approved by the official sector.

Aid to NGOs means official contributions to programmes and activities which NGOs have developed themselves, and which they implement on their own authority and responsibility. Aid through NGOs means payments by the official sector for NGOs to implement projects and programmes which the official sector has developed, and for which it is ultimately responsible. The latter includes "joint financing" schemes where government agencies and NGOs consult about activities, jointly approve them and/or share their funding.

Source: DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (2018), Converged Statistical Reporting Directives for the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) and the Annual DAC Questionnaire, p. 58.

Survey findings show that members do tend to maintain *multiple funding mechanisms* for their CSO support. Twenty-six members maintain at least two CSO support mechanisms at headquarters level, with only three having just one mechanism.[24] Additionally, 19 members maintain at least two CSO support mechanisms at partner country level.

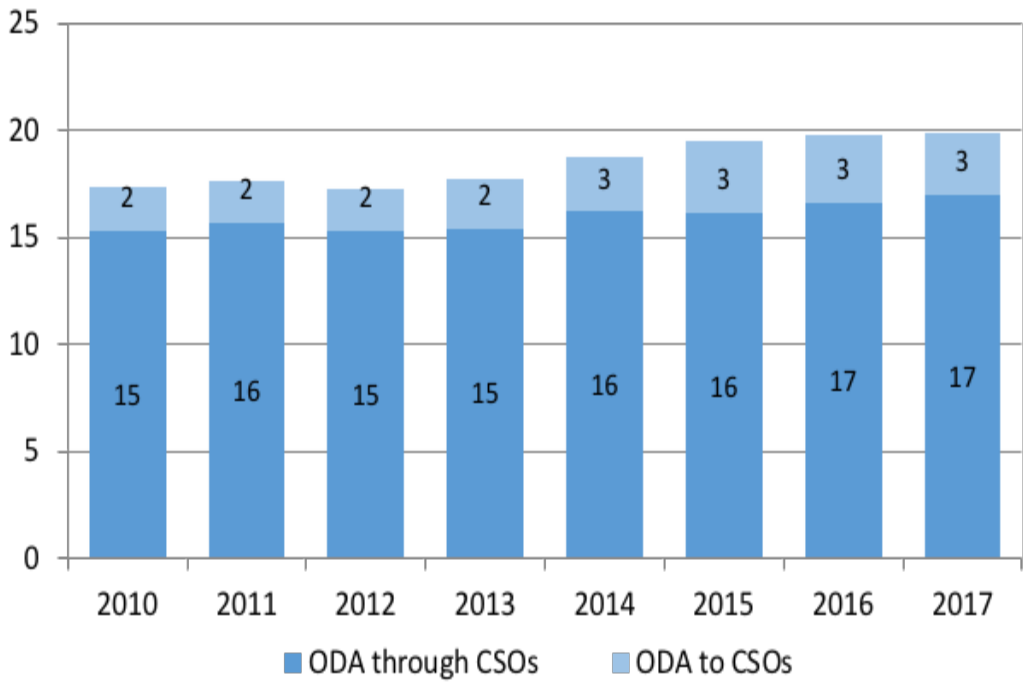
As seen in Figure 3.1, reaching a specific development objective related to service delivery, or to human rights and democracy (i.e. implementing aid programmes), are members' top and third most-often selected objectives of working with civil society. Survey findings on members' CSO support mechanisms reflect the priority given to these objectives. When it comes to support mechanisms managed at *headquarters* level, those selected most by members are *calls for proposals available to member country CSOs* (selected by 25 members), *project/programme support* also *available to member country CSOs* (23 members), and *calls for proposals available to international CSOs* (17 members). *Partnership/framework/core support* at *headquarters* level available to *member country CSOs* is selected by almost half (14) of members. When it comes to support mechanisms managed at partner country level, those selected most by members are *project/programme support available to partner country CSOs* (17 members), followed by *calls for proposals available to partner country CSOs*, and *support provided via partner country governments* also available to *partner country CSOs*, and to *international/regional CSOs* (each selected

[24] One member did not reply to this survey question.

by 16 members). *Partnership/framework/core support* at *partner country* level available for *partner country CSOs* is selected by only 7 members.

Figures from the DAC on member flows *to* and *through* CSOs also bear out that supporting CSOs as implementers (*through*) rather than as independent development actors (*to*) is by far members' preferred modus operandi (Figure 4.1). In 2017 flows *through* CSOs were almost six times the amount of flows *to* CSOs. This represents an incremental reduction in the relative share of flows through CSOs since 2010 when flows *through* CSOs were almost eight times the amount of flows *to* CSOs.

Figure 4.1. Total aid to to and through CSOs, 2010-2017, USD Billion, 2016 constant prices



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, as seen in OECD (2019a), *Aid for CSOs*.

Recall from Figure 3.1 that in between the two implementing aid programmes objectives, members' second-most selected objective is *strengthening civil society in partner countries, including CSOs as independent development actors* (Figure 3.1). Yet, while a full 22 members select this objective, the dominant funding mechanisms and DAC figures show that members' CSO support is predominantly channelled *through* CSOs as programme implementers on behalf of members. There is thus a contradiction between stated objectives, and financial flows and mechanisms.

There are a number of possible reasons for this contradiction. First, service delivery-related programming inclusive of humanitarian assistance, is generally more cost-heavy than organisational support in the form of core funding. It follows that the absolute amount of flows will therefore be greater for service delivery programming *through* CSOs.

Second, as touched upon in Chapter 3's discussion of objectives, members' results pressures inclines them more toward support to CSOs as implementing partners to meet specific development objectives, especially service-oriented objectives which are relatively easier to demonstrate than the results of than civil society strengthening objectives.

Third, members may be pursuing the strengthening civil society in partner countries objective in part via programme or project support (including calls for proposals), i.e. with funding *through* CSOs. As seen in Chapter 3, members' use of support *through* CSOs is also aimed at human rights and democratisation, under which the objective of strengthening civil society fits well. It may be that this objective is, at least in part, aimed at via the considerable portion of flows *through* CSOs going to the "Government and Civil Society" sub-sector (see table in Annex C).

Further, there are 19 members who consider they are strengthening civil society by supporting CSOs' 'right of initiative', and that may be doing so within the framework of programme or project support and calls for proposals, where CSOs are invited to submit proposals for self-defined initiatives, even as these initiatives must meet member-defined priorities. For while financial support mechanisms can rigidly steer CSOs to member-defined sectors, themes, countries, or even specific results, or it can steer them to members' higher-level objectives, the latter leaving more room to support CSOs' right of initiative (Task Team CSO, 2014, p. 15). Further, if a mechanism of support *through* CSOs is designed so that the CSOs it supports are directed to an objective of strengthening civil society in partner countries, then that *through* funding can still attain that objective.

Survey responses from CSOs help understand these variations in the degree to which members' mechanisms steer or are responsive to CSOs. When asked whether they consider that member mechanisms are effective and appropriate for supporting and facilitating the work of CSOs, two CSOs responded negatively.[25] In one instance, the dominant use of call for proposals is seen as "overwhelmingly directive' and thus inconsistent with CSOs' right of initiative, while also fostering competition rather than collaboration among CSOs. In the second instance, the dominant use of project funding is seen as a "narrow approach", lacking flexibility, and funding projects of too short a duration (maximum three years) to allow for long-term capacity building of partners and sustainable change in partner countries, amongst other criticisms. On the other hand, a CSO responding positively notes that the framework/partnership/core support provided has as its main objective to strengthen civil society in partner countries, and beyond that allows receiving CSOs to carry out work in keeping with their self-defined sectoral or thematic areas of focus.

Findings from member survey responses shed additional light on this grey area. When asked the degree to which members' financial support for CSOs must align to member-defined priority areas or themes, 15 members replied that *all* of their CSO support must align to the member's stated priority areas or themes; 12 replied that *most* of their CSO support must so align; and three replied that only *some* of their CSO support must so align. When asked if strengthening civil society in partner countries is one of their priorities/themes, the majority of members (26) responded positively.[26]

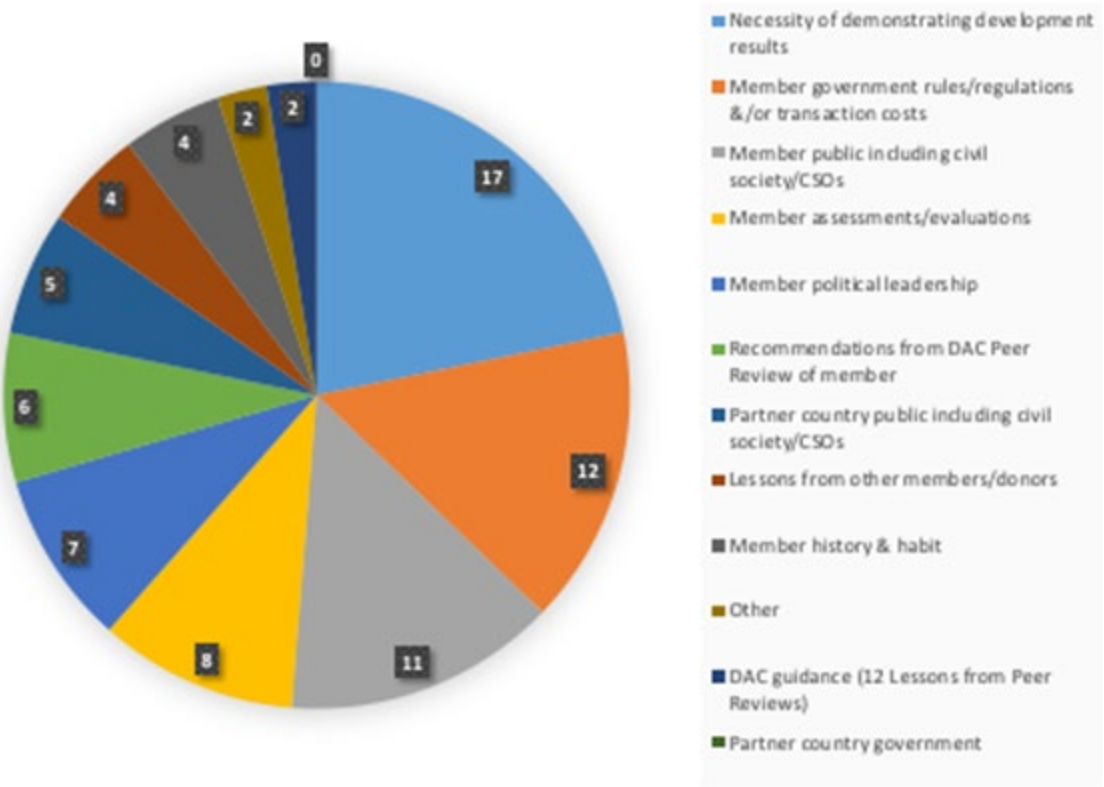
Worth noting also are members' responses to the survey question regarding the main influence on their decisions regarding financial support mechanisms for CSOs (Figure 4.2). The most frequently selected influence is the *necessity of demonstrating development results* (17 members), followed by *member government rules and regulations and/or transaction cost considerations* (12 members), then the *influence of member country public including civil society/CSOs* (11 members).[27]

[25] Two out of the total of six CSO respondents.

[26] All 30 members responded to the survey question on requirements to align with member priority areas/themes.

[27] Eight members did not respond to this survey question.

Figure 4.2. Main influences on members' decisions regarding financial support mechanisms



Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

That members' results pressures inclines them more toward support to CSOs as implementing partners to meet specific development objectives is noted above. That member publics including CSO are an influencing factor is not surprising given that this domestic constituency has an interest in accessing development co-operation funds, which is relatively easier to access and more frequently available when project/programme funding and calls for proposals mechanisms are used. DfID's 2016 *Civil Society Partnerships Review* exemplify these influences. As a result of the Review, DfID switched its (headquarters-based) CSO funding from framework/partnership/core support to competitive, calls for proposals support. The aims were, in part, to better be able to assess CSO proposals on "value for money", that is, results achieved for money spent, and, to make funding available for a broader range of CSOs including smaller ones that struggled to meet the core funding requirements (DfID, 2016, pp. 9 and 11).

Somewhat surprising is that member rules and regulations and/or transaction costs considerations ranks high here. On one hand, agreement and disbursement rules and regulations can limit members' ability to enter into core support arrangements, deemed higher risk than programme/project arrangements. On the other hand, though core support

comes with what might be perceived as higher transaction costs due to the level due diligence assessments required, in the long term, core support generally comes with reduced transaction costs as these are longer-term arrangements.

We can see from the findings of this section that while there are a number of valid and not surprising reasons for it, members' mechanisms for supporting CSOs are not fully reconciled to their stated dual objectives of working with CSOs as programme implementers (*means*) and to strengthen civil society in partner countries (*end*), the latter requiring support to CSOs as independent development actors. As seen in Chapter 3, the majority of members are committed to the promotion of enabling environments in partner countries as one method for strengthening civil society in partner countries. Yet too few members self-assess to understand how their practices may, indirectly, lead to disenabling environments. CSOs are increasingly perceived, if not by members, by wider publics (and partner country governments) as short on the legitimacy that derives from connectedness and solidarity with local partners and beneficiaries.[28] As such, members need absolutely to ensure that the way they financially support CSOs does not contribute to a legitimacy crisis for CSOs.

Members can, and many do and should continue to, promote enabling environments in partner countries through dialogue with partner country governments, and at the international level, on the importance of providing enabling environments for CSOs. But this is a one-sided approach unless members are equally willing to address their own less-than-enabling practices. The issue is not simply that members' CSO support practices may be less than ideal or convenient for CSOs. These practices affect how the many CSOs that are enticed by member funding and the support received are experienced and perceived in partner countries – as sustainable or not, legitimate, based on grounding and connectedness to local constituents and needs, or not, accountable at partner country level or not – which in turn makes them vulnerable to disenabling tactics by partner country governments.[29]

4.2. Types of CSOs financially supported

4.2.1. Member country, international, and partner country-based CSOs

Members' financial support flows to CSOs based in members' own countries, to international or regional CSOs, and to partner country-based CSOs (see Box 4.2). Survey findings show that all 30 members *support CSOs based in their own countries*. All but one member also *supports international (or regional) CSOs*. Twenty-six members support *partner country-based CSOs*, and nine support *informal associations or movements in partner countries*. This partner country-based support recorded in survey responses does not distinguish between direct and indirect support via member country and international CSOs. DAC data shows that 22 members financially supported developing country-based based CSOs directly in 2017(OECD, 2019a, p. 7).[30]

It is a positive development that almost 75% of members are supporting partner country CSOs directly. According to DAC data however, member country CSOs receive the bulk

[28] See for example CIVICUS (2011), Goldsmith (2015) and Edelman Trust (2017).

[29] Other issues related to how members' policies and practices affect partner country governments' attitude toward and treatment of CSOs are about more than simply how members support CSOs, but are beyond the remit of this paper. See for example Wood (2016) and Wood (2019).

[30] The term "developing country-based" is used here and elsewhere when referring to DAC statistics since that is the term used in the DAC statistical reporting directives.

of members' financial support followed by international CSOs then developing country-based CSOs (Figure 4.3). In 2017 members provided around 10 times more support to member country CSOs than to developing country-based CSOs, compared to 13 times more in 2010.

Box 4.2. Types of CSOs by geographic location

Donor country-based NGO: An NGO organised at the national level, based and operated either in the donor country or another developed (non-ODA eligible) country.

International NGO: An NGO organised on an international level, i.e. either there is an international coordinating body facilitating the work of its members on the international level or the NGO has an extensive network of country/regional offices in the field; and the NGO has internationally diversified sources of revenue.

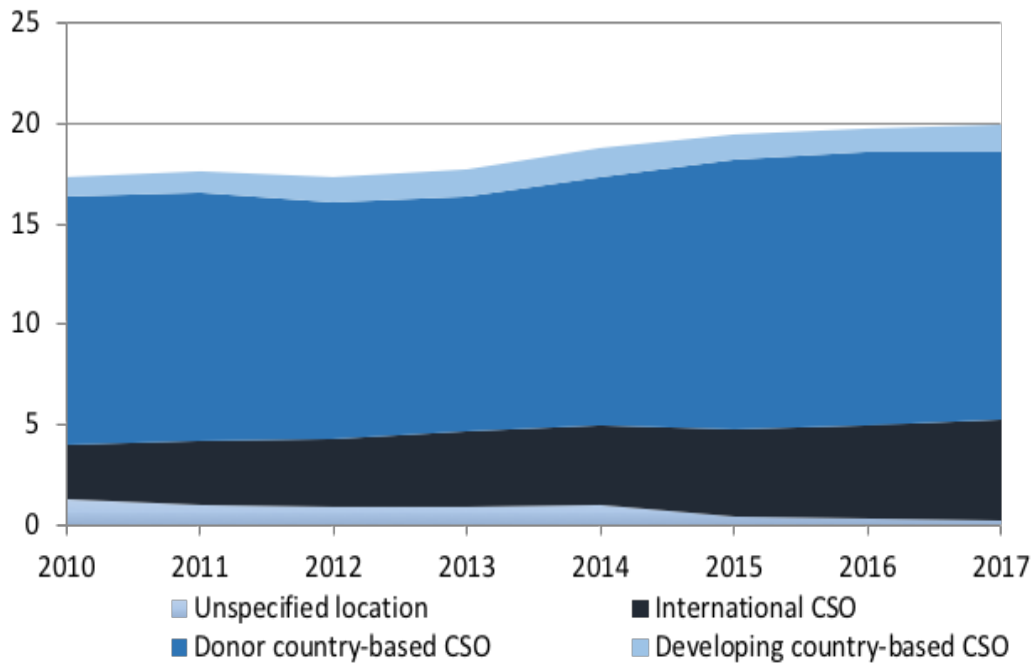
Developing country-based NGO: An NGO organised at the national level, based and operated in a developing (ODA-eligible) country.

Source: DCD/DAC/STAT (2018)9/FINAL, Converged statistical reporting directives for the Creditor Reporting

This data points to an incremental shift toward more direct support to partner country CSOs. Indeed, between 2010 and 2017 the volume of direct financial support for developing country-based CSOs increased by 33% whereas for member country CSOs it increased by 8%. Figures from the DAC also show a slight increase in the number of members funding partner country-based CSOs directly, from 19 members in 2010 to 22 in 2017 (OECD, 2019a, p. 7). At the same time, the support for international CSOs increased by 83% between 2010 and 2017. A small portion (1% in 2017) of members' CSO flows are not allocated to a specific CSO type.[31]

[31] That the share of non-specified flows decreased from 7% of total flows for CSOs in 2010 to 1% in 2017 may account for a small portion of the increase in flows for developing country-based and international CSOs.

Figure 4.3. ODA allocations to and through CSOs by type of CSO, 2010-2017, USD Billion, 2016 constant prices



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, as seen in OECD (2019a), *Aid for CSOs*.

These shifts in the breakdown of financial flows for member country, international and partner country CSOs are happening within a context of increasing ODA for CSOs overall. As seen, member flows for CSOs increased by 15% between 2010 and 2017. Some of this increase thus seems to be directed toward partner country CSOs, as well as to international CSOs.

It needs to be noted that, for the most part, members' financial support to member country and international CSOs is based on a partnership model through which these CSOs work with partner country-based CSOs. Thus, some of the funds received by member country and international CSOs are re-allocated by these CSOs to their developing country-based CSO partners. Still, the disproportionate amount of flows for member country and international CSOs, even with incremental increases, raises the question of whether more could be done by members to directly support partner country-based CSOs, particularly to meet an objective of strengthening civil society in partner countries.

There are indications of member efforts to channel more funds directly to partner-country based CSOs. AFD is one such member which, according to its *Strategy*, intends, together with the Ministry of European and External Affairs and with CSOs (via Coordination SUD), to reflect on financing methods and conditions for direct support to local CSOs (AFD, 2018, p. 30). Norway is another example that, under its guiding principle of enhancing different types of partnerships to which every partner adds value, will explore ways of shifting more financial support and decision-making to local or partner country level (Norad, 2018, p. 7). Italy and Canada are seeking to provide more direct humanitarian

response funding to partner country CSOs in keeping with the Grand Bargain.[32] The EC has also tailored its funding to allow greater direct access for partner country CSOs (EC, 2012, p. 10), and according to survey responses, is the primary member, along with the United States, providing such direct support.

Channeling support to *South-South or Triangular co-operation* is a method that members are using to expand reach to partner country-based CSOs. The survey indicates that 11 members include such support in their modalities or in specific partnership agreements. Spain draws attention to the importance of this type of co-operation support in the more developed partner countries that Spanish development co-operation flows to. DfID's UK Aid Connect funding mechanism supports coalitions of CSOs, think tanks, public, private and third sector organisations, including those in partner countries, to work together to find and share innovative and flexible solutions to the most important and difficult development challenges.

Multi-donor pooled funds are another way to reach partner country CSOs directly. Nine members participate in such funds accessible to partner country CSOs established at partner country level, and five in funds established among member headquarters, also accessible to partner country CSOs. Eight members also contribute to multilateral/global funds that are available to partner country CSOs.

Through pooled funds members can share, or delegate, responsibility for management of the partnership relationships. Where members perceive and are averse to risks they associate with direct support to partner country CSOs, pooled funding allows them to share the risk across participating members. Further, as noted by USAID in their survey response, in partner countries where environments for civil society are less than enabling multi-donor funds can demonstrate greater solidarity for civil society groups compared to individually funded programmes. If they take on an identity separate from the funding sources, this independent image can also help improve the fund's legitimacy.

Multi-donor funds can have broad reach with modest budgets. There are women's funds for example, the primary purpose of which is to mobilise resources for distribution to women's rights organisations and movements. They are able to reach small local women's organisations and movement, providing small grants to these civil society actors that DAC members or multilateral donors may be unable to directly support for administrative reasons.

Members' primary rationale for participating in multi-donor pooled funds however is not so much to *increase the reach and diversity of CSOs supported* (6 survey responses), but to *enhance effective development co-operation through co-ordination and harmonisation* (10 responses); find *synergies and build on comparative advantages* of members (8 responses); and *increase the funding* for specific programmes or CSOs (8 responses).

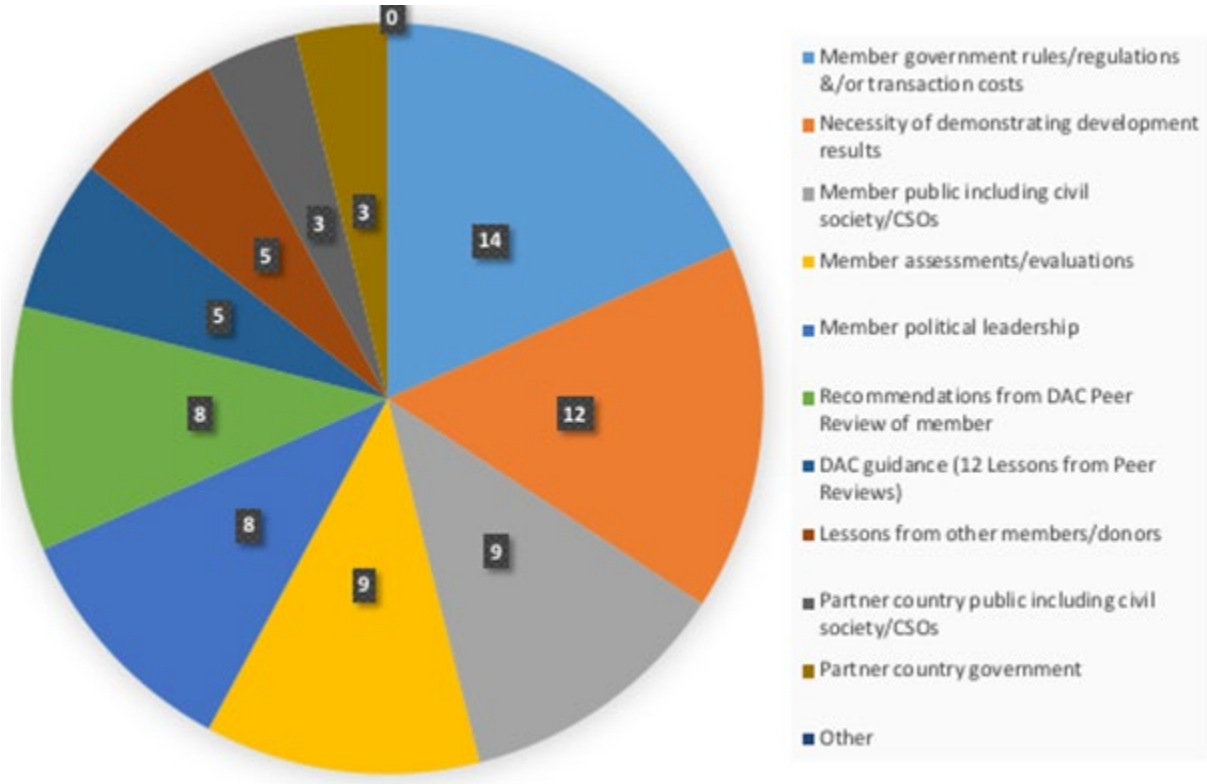
As seen, for most of the top comparative advantages attributed to CSOs (Figure 3.3) members find their country CSOs (and international CSOs) and partner country CSOs similarly advantaged including in areas such as ability to reach the most vulnerable, proximity to beneficiaries, service provision capabilities, skills and expertise. Yet members' survey responses and policy documents also point to pragmatic rationales for

[32] The Grand Bargain is an agreement, launched in 2016, between the largest funders and humanitarian aid organisations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action. See https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc.

their tendency to favour working with member country CSOs. Rationales are generally three-fold, the first two of which also apply to international CSOs.

A key rationale regards members' legal, regulatory and administrative requirements, and relatedly, their capacity to administer and monitor their CSO support. When asked to identify the main influence on their decisions regarding the type of CSOs supported and on their policies and strategies related to CSO support more broadly, *rules and regulations of member governments alongside consideration of transaction costs* is most selected by members in their survey responses (14 survey responses, see Figure 4.4).[33]

Figure 4.4. Main influences on members' decisions regarding the type of CSOs supported, and members' policies, strategies and priorities[34]



For some members such as Belgium, Germany, the Czech Republic, Portugal and Spain, their legal frameworks for development co-operation limit the type of CSO that can be directly supported.[35] For others, though survey responses show that the administrative/transaction cost challenge is considered a disadvantage both for partnerships with member country and partner country CSOs (15 and 17 members respectively, see Figure 3.4), support to fewer larger, often more experienced member country or

[33] Seven members did not reply to this survey question.

[34] In hindsight this survey question would have been more informative had been separated into two separate queries, one on type of CSOs supported, and a second on policies, strategies and priorities.

[35] Noting however that for such members other means can be used to reach partner country-based CSOs. So while Germany's BMZ does not directly support partner country CSOs, German implementing agencies such as GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbei) or KfW do. The Czech Republic notes their contribution to multi-donor pooled funds, and funding via the EU and UN bodies as ways they reach partner country-based CSOs.

international CSOs is a way for them to manage the administrative burden that comes with direct support to a greater number of smaller, often (though not necessarily) more nascent partner country CSOs.

In their survey response Finland points to their government's 2016 development policy report's emphasis on the need for Finnish aid to support "more extensive wholes in order to diminish the relative share of administrative work", which reinforced the appropriateness of Finland's programme support – primarily granted to the multi-annual programmes of experienced Finnish CSOs (and foundations) – in that context. Belgium, Iceland and Slovenia also draw attention to limited member capacity to perform due diligence and follow up on direct partnerships with partner country CSOs, the latter noting the convenience of working with partners in the member country language. Others note that partnering with member country (and international) CSOs is a risk management strategy as member country legal measures are more easily applied in the event needed.

A second but related rationale is the experience and expertise that member country CSOs have acquired over decades of development co-operation, aided by members' financial support. Evaluations of members' CSO support, including the above-referenced Finnish report, and members' policies attest to this. DfID's *Civil Society Partnership Review* sees the "expertise, skills and experience" of Britain's CSOs as "second to none" (DfID, 2016, p. 4). Member country CSOs have built considerable knowledge and networks of relationships in partner countries. Australia's *DFAT and NGOs: Effective Development Partners* points to international and Australian NGOs' long-established connections and commitment to local communities, local networks and knowledge, and trusted relationships with local actors (DFAT Australia, 2015, pp. 4-5).

As seen, partner country CSOs are valued by members almost equally to member country CSOs for their skills and expertise in specific geographic, sectoral or thematic areas (Figure 3.3). As also seen, *CSO capacity constraints* (including *expertise*) are identified as a disadvantage both of member country CSOs (18 survey responses) and partner country CSOs, but more so for the latter (24 responses) (Figure 3.4). The difference in member CSOs' skills and expertise seems to be that it extends to meeting member requirements, including in monitoring and reporting on results in keeping with members' most current methods. The second-most selected influence on members' decisions regarding the type of CSOs supported and their CSO policies more broadly is the *necessity of demonstrating development results* (12 responses).[36] Norad's *Guiding Principles for Support to Civil Society* acknowledge this, stating that "Civil society actors who represent or have greater access to those left behind, may lack the necessary financial or technical skills to meet Norad's and other donors' demands for direct support. Partnerships with Norwegian or international organisations, South-South partnerships, or trust fund mechanisms are a means to reaching these actors" (Norad, 2018, p. 6). Also noteworthy is that member country CSOs, due to their extensive experience, have, on the whole, built up a level of trust with member country publics.[37]

The third rationale, already noted, relates to the weight given to member country CSOs' role in public awareness-raising and engagement in the member country. For many members their CSO support is a key, if not the primary, mode of raising public awareness

[36] As per the previous footnote, seven members did not respond to this survey question.

[37] Of course, the level of public trust in CSOs varies by member country, by CSO, and over time, but can be said to be higher than public trust in partner country CSOs as the latter are less directly connected to and known by member country publics.

and support for development co-operation, and mobilising domestic engagement, including financial support, for development co-operation and global issues more broadly. Public engagement by CSOs offers a means for members to demonstrate development results (an important influence on decision-making as noted above), that is, the results achieved by their CSO partners, to the public.

Box 4.3. Finnish CSOs' role in awareness-raising and citizen engagement

Finland's Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy provides a coherent explanation for working with Finnish CSOs: "The participation of Finnish CSOs in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance adds to the Finns' understanding of and competencies in development issues. The organisations' activities in developing countries and the opportunities for participation and volunteering they provide forge contacts between Finns and the citizens of other countries. Successful communication concerning development is instrumental in that the Finns are ready to be actively involved in the promotion of global justice and burden-sharing. Understanding global problems can also reduce xenophobia and the social tensions arising from it in Finland. This is where Finnish civil society actors play an important role alongside official communications" (MFA Finland, 2017, p. 12).

The value that members place on CSOs in these areas is confirmed by the 27 out of 30 members (90%) identifying in their survey responses *member country CSOs' public awareness and citizen engagement* work as a comparative advantage of these organisations. A not always clearly articulated element of this is member country CSOs' role in informal diplomacy. For AFD, French CSOs' participation in development co-operation is deemed "an essential driver for France's diplomacy" abroad (AFD, 2018, p. 12). For DfID, a vibrant and effective civil society sector is considered part of Britain's "soft power" around the globe (DfID, 2016, p. 4).

It need also be noted that just as member country CSOs are an important public engagement ally for members and a source of support for development co-operation budgets, they are equally able to be a source of political outcry when their funding from members is squeezed (OECD, 2012; p. 21; Wood & Fällman, 2013, p. 145). The *voice of member country CSOs and the public* are also an influencing factor in determining the type of CSO members support and member policies. Their voice is ranked by members as the third most important influence in this regard (9 survey responses).[38,39]

4.2.2. Broader civil society

Beyond the geographic location of CSOs there are other variations in CSO type. The 2012 *12 Lessons for Partnering with Civil Society* and member evaluations note the tendency for members to support CSOs they are most familiar with, i.e. well-established international development or rights and democracy-oriented CSOs, and encourage outreach to a broader swath of civil society (OECD, 2012, p. 21; ITAD & COWI, 2012, pp. 106; International NGO Training and Research Centre, 2013, p. 7; AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness, 2012). Support to and engagement with diverse civil society actors can help

[38] Noting again that seven members did not respond to this survey question on influences.

[39] This influence of member country CSOs and the public tied in third place with the influence of recommendations from members' *evaluations*.

members to work with the most appropriate organisations (formal or otherwise) in a given context for reaching a given objective. It is also relevant to reflect forms of civil society that may otherwise be overlooked such as traditional forms (e.g. faith-based, trade unions, professional associations, etc.), the growing body of hybrid forms such as social enterprises,[40] and more informal, fluid forms of civil society action.

Survey responses show that in the past five years a number of members have upped their efforts to broaden the reach of their support to a diversity of CSOs and civil society. Since its 2016 *Civil Society Partnership Review* DfID has altered its funding approach in ways that reflect a new emphasis on widening the range of civil society partners they work with, including a new mechanism for small to medium-sized UK-based CSOs. Italy too has widened eligibility to allow funding of smaller CSOs when they enter into partnerships and consortia with other CSOs, as well as to international and partner country CSOs. AFD is considering opening access to Social and Solidarity Economy organisations (i.e. social enterprise organisations) (AFD, 2018. pp. 6 and 29). Denmark encourages its Danish and international CSO partners to themselves work with excluded groups, informal movements, and new types of civil society actors, while itself reaching out to newer actors in addition to those well-established (MFA of Denmark & Danida, 2014, pp. 19-20).

Support for informal forms of civil society is challenging for members as their rules and regulations require some form of formal agreement to be entered into with a legally registered organisation. USAID is host to such rules and regulations but is exploring mechanisms to enable support to ad hoc/informal groups and movements, and to foster linkages between these actors and more formal CSOs. Sida is also looking into ways to increase support provided to civil society actors such as social movements, digital networks and other informal forms of organisation.

All told, DAC data and survey data on the main types of CSOs supported by members raise the question of whether more could be done to increase direct support to partner country CSOs, and other civil society forms, that make up civil society in partner countries. If members are serious about reaching an objective of strengthening civil society in partner countries, such direct support could be a good way to do so.

4.3. Non-financial support and engagement

When it comes to *non-financial support such as training and knowledge-sharing*, members still engage with a wide range of CSOs and civil society, though fewer members implement this type of support. While all as noted members provide financial support to their own country CSOs, 26 provide non-financial support to these same CSOs. While 29 members provide financial support to international (or regional) CSOs, 21 provide them with non-financial support. Nineteen provide non-financial support to partner country CSOs compared to the 26 that provide financial support to these CSOs. Eight provide non-financial support to informal associations or movements in partner countries compared to the nine that provide them with financial support.

A significant non-financial support and engagement aspect of members' work with CSOs and civil society is in the form of dialogue and consultation. Among the 12 lessons included in the 2012 *Partnering with Civil Society*, lesson 5 calls on members to make their policy dialogue with CSOs more strategic, useful and meaningful. Dialogue with CSOs not only

[40] Social enterprises are those that provide goods and services in the market but have social impact as their primary objective (OECD & EU, 2017, p. 22).

allows members to tap into the knowledge and experience of CSOs but is also a way to build trust and mutual accountability. CSO responses to the survey point to the significant value of consultation and dialogue between members and CSOs. Advantages for members include direct access to information and knowledge, experiences, and analysis that is based on closer contacts to partner country organisations (formal and informal), and opportunities to improve policy and programmes through these inputs and outside scrutiny. Advantages for CSOs include not only access to member information and knowledge, but opportunities for their from-the-ground perspectives and knowledge, and their values, taken into account in development policy.

Survey findings show that all members consult with CSOs in relation to the member's policies, strategies, or other strategic orientations. As Table 4.1 illustrates, the type of policy consulted on and the type of CSO consulted varies across members. Across all types of member policies[41] that are consulted on, members *consult most with CSOs from their own countries*. This is consistent with the findings from the 2011 study. Still, some members *consult with partner country CSOs* across all or most of their policies. These include the EC, Spain's AECID, Slovakia, DfID, and USAID.[42] USAID frequently engages country partner CSOs in dialogue on CSO/civil society policies at partner country level as well as during the country strategy development process and the design phase for new activities. AECID's manual for development, monitoring and evaluation of country partnership frameworks is clear on the need to consult with stakeholders, inclusive of CSOs, in the framework country (AECID, 2015).

Table 4.1 Types of policies consulted on and CSOs consulted with

Type of policy/strategy	Member country CSOs	Other member country CSOs	International/regional CSOs	Partner country CSOs
Member's policies/strategies at headquarters	27	2	9	6
Member's policies/strategies at partner country level	19	4	11	16
Member's multilateral policies/strategies &/or strategic positions	20	2	9	5
Member's CSO/civil society policies/strategies at headquarters	27	4	9	8
Member's CSO/civil society policies/strategies at partner country level	9	3	7	13

Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

Twenty members hold *regular, advance-scheduled consultations with CSOs at headquarters level*, while 7 hold *regular, advance-scheduled consultations with CSOs at partner country level*. Twenty-seven members hold consultations on *an ad hoc, as needed basis at headquarters level*, while twenty hold *ad hoc, as needed consultations at partner country level*.

[41] Policies will be referred to from here on rather than the longer policies, strategies, or other strategic orientations.

[42] Each of these members consult with partner country CSOs on at least four of the five policy areas in Table 4.1.

Notably, 14 members state that their approach to consultation has changed in the last five years with more members undertaking systematic dialogue with CSOs. The three most selected main influences on the members' decisions regarding their approach to consultation with CSOs are first, the *influence of the public, including CSOs, in the member country* (selected by 12 members), followed by *member history and habit* (11 members), and third, by *the necessity of demonstrating development results* (10 members).[43,44] Wider transparency and stakeholder engagement agendas are also an influence on members' consultation uptake. Three members, ADA, Portugal and Slovenia, point specifically to the positive influence of the Global Education Network Europe in which they participate, which uses structured networking, strategy sharing, and a peer learning approach – across participating members and CSOs – toward improving the quality and provision of Global Education in Europe.

Box 4.4. Member practices of dialogue and consultation with CSOs

- The European Union's Policy Forum for Development (PFD) was established in 2013 following an extensive Structured Dialogue with civil society actors and local authorities. It involves a regular cycle of global, regional and stakeholder dialogues. Governed by a jointly-agreed "PFD Charter", its objectives are to facilitate dialogue on cross-cutting issues; promote policy debate and exchange of information and experiences; and support and follow-up on the Structured Dialogue's recommendations (Policy Forum on Development Review 2016: Executive Summary, 2016).
- An NGO representative is included in the Republic of Slovenia's Expert Council for Development Cooperation. Slovenia's effort to include NGOs and civil society in development cooperation planning, implementation and evaluation also involves at least twice-yearly structured dialogue between the MFA and the NGO Platform, while working exchanges between the MFA and the platform are also encouraged (MFA Slovenia, 2013, p. 1; Republic of Slovenia, 2017, para. 25).
- France has a National Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI) which meets three times a year. CNDSI is the body for dialogue between the French Government and "development and international solidarity actors" inclusive of groupings of "NGOs, trade unions, employers, companies, parliamentarians, territorial authorities, universities and research institutes, and high-level foreign figures" (AFD, 2018, pp. 11 and 15). This high-level, institutionalised dialogue platform is complemented by additional strategic dialogue with CSOs, some of which is institutionalised and thus systematic, others more informal and ad hoc, on broad development cooperation policy, sector and thematic issues, and on CSO funding mechanisms.
- Luxembourg's Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs - NGO Working Group meets at least 6 times year to discuss not only policy but CSOs' programme implementation and members' operations. Topics ranging from progress in CSOs' programmes, the status of funding opportunities and partnership agreements, plans for annual development roundtables, and even staffing changes in the Ministry are covered (Groupe de travail MAEE-ONG, 2018).

[43] Five members did not respond to this survey question.

[44] These responses included influences on members' decisions regarding public awareness/ development education/citizen engagement, of which more is said in the next section.

Increasingly members are hosting some form of platform on development co-operation in which CSOs participate alongside the member government and/or elected representatives. Platforms are diverse in their composition, set up and the scope of their subject matter. Common to each of them all is the inclusion of CSOs, that they are institutionalised, rather than ad hoc, and that they address strategic and policy directions. A sampling of examples (Box 4.4) shows the diversity of member approaches to dialogue and consultation with CSOs.

Members also have systematic dialogue fora on specific issues. Denmark has established clusters for dialogue on specific development themes. For its 2015 evaluation of the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, Australia's DFAT used the Australian Council for International Development's Development Practice Committee as a reference group to obtain feedback on findings and recommendations along the way (DFAT of Australia & Coffey International Development, 2015, pp. iii and 24).[45] Following the launch of its *Civil Society Partnerships Policy*, in 2018 Canada initiated a joint GAC – CSO Advisory Group to advise on a shared approach, vision and priorities to support the policy's implementation. Comprised of four GAC officials and eight CSOs selected by the sector, and guided by the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness, this CSO Policy Advisory Group (CPAG) is developing an implementation plan for the policy ("Advisory Group to support implementation of the Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance Policy: A Feminist Approach," n.d.).

Twenty-four members indicate in their survey responses that, overall, *CSOs are satisfied* with the member's consultation processes at headquarters level.[46] Of the twenty members that hold consultations at partner country level, nine indicate that, overall, *CSOs are satisfied* with the member's consultation processes.[47]

Survey responses from CSOs suggest a level of satisfaction with members' consultation processes but tend more toward being *partially* than *fully satisfied*. CSOs suggest that timing and timelines for consultation are not always reasonable, leaving CSOs with insufficient time to prepare or ensure appropriate representation. In member countries where consultation is given priority, CSOs, absent the capacity of government ministries or departments, can struggle to meet the volume of consultation demands that are based on schedules set unilaterally by government. There is also a suggestion that consultation outcomes, where evident, do not always reflect nor are they commensurate with the investment of time, energy, and insights provided by CSOs. Beyond the high-level dialogue platforms on development co-operation, CSOs appreciate the less formal working groups existing in some member countries for more frequent exchange with members for example on sector and thematic topics.

CSOs would like to see more systematic dialogues established with CSOs in partner countries as well as dialogue inclusive of CSOs that are not necessarily members' direct funding partners. Finally, there is some concern arising from one CSO survey response and from a recent study by the United Kingdom network of development and humanitarian CSOs, Bond, that there are negative pressures reducing the amount and systematic nature

[45] The Australian Council for International Development is the network of Australian development CSOs.

[46] One member, the EC, indicates CSOs are *very satisfied* with the EC's consultation process; 16 indicate CSOs are *satisfied*, and seven indicate they are *partially satisfied*.

[47] Four members indicate CSOs are *satisfied* with consultations at partner country level, five indicate they are *partially satisfied*. Ten indicate that information on CSOs' level of satisfaction is not available. One member did not complete this section of the survey.

of consultation they undertake with CSOs on development matters (Abrahamson, Godfrey, Popplewell, & Wright, 2019).

On the whole, members are consulting more, and more systematically, on all types of policies and strategies. However, consultation and dialogue with member country CSOs receives greater emphasis than with partner country CSOs, while improvement in dialogue accessibility and quality is still needed.

5. Requirements for proposals, monitoring and reporting accountability

- Members are making some efforts to reduce the administrative burden of proposal applications, monitoring and reporting. However, there is a risk that new requirements cancel out these efforts.
- There is minimal allowance for the use of CSOs' own templates, though defining results is often done by or with CSOs.
- The necessity of demonstrating results of their CSO support is an ongoing pressure on members.
- Some use of iterative or adaptive approaches to results and performance management, with an emphasis on learning to inform decision-making on programme directions, is seen.
- A majority of members indicate that they encourage CSOs to foster relationships of accountability in partner countries CSOs work in. Members use multiple means to do so, though insufficiently examine how their methods of financial support for CSOs emphasise upward accountability.
- Members are practicing transparency by making information about their financial flows to CSOs publicly accessible, though accessibility to partner country stakeholders is insufficiently addressed.

5.1. Administrative requirements for proposals, monitoring and reporting

Partnering with Civil Society (2012) recommends that members work to reduce the transaction costs, both for them and for CSOs, that are associated with sometimes heavy procedures and requirements of related to proposals and funding applications, monitoring and reporting (lesson 8). As with CSO support mechanisms themselves, ideally requirements would be designed incorporating responsiveness to CSO applicants' priorities and approaches, themselves responsive to priorities and approaches identified with partners and communities at partner country level (lesson 7).

Survey findings indicate that members are making some effort to meet these recommendations, though remain largely tied to traditional requirements.

According to survey responses regarding proposal formats, the bulk of members (16), require that proposals be submitted in a *format provided by the institution*.[48] Ten members use formats that *combine sections pre-defined by the member with inputs chosen by CSOs themselves*. Iceland for example applies the combined approach whereby applicants must fill out a relatively short, four-page application form detailing the funding need, timeline and project outline, with proposals detailed separately in a format the CSO chooses. A small few (4) accept proposal submissions in *CSOs' chosen format*. When providing core

[48] The figure of 16 represents just over half of the total of 30 members, but three-quarters of the 21 members that responded to this question.

support *to* CSOs, SDC accepts such proposals, though for support *through* CSOs, SDC's format must be used.

Half of CSO respondents view member proposal formats and procedures as appropriate, while the other half find they place an undue burden on CSOs. Among the latter respondents there is a sense that the information requirements in proposal formats tend to require a level of detail that is not clearly of benefit to programme planning. Further, the high level of time and financial resources investment required for CSOs to respond to calls for proposals in particular is noted, with successful submissions far from guaranteed. A positive development noted however is where members use a two-stage process involving a preliminary, less-heavy concept note, followed by a full proposal for partially approved candidates, akin to the above-referenced Iceland approach.

Various types of arrangements are used by members providing the basis for monitoring, reporting and learning by and between supported CSOs and members (Box 5.1). Nearly half of members use more than one type of arrangement for the different funding mechanisms they have in place.[49]

Box 5.1. Basis for monitoring, reporting and learning

- 21 members use agreements or contracts with a results framework, for example a logical framework or a results matrix with indicators
- 17 members use agreements or contracts with (adaptive) results frameworks, for example a theory of change, logical framework or a results-matrix with indicators
- 10 members use agreements or contracts aligning to CSOs' strategic objectives and internal systems and approaches to planning, monitoring and evaluation
- 8 members use agreements or contracts with objectives or milestones, but no results framework with indicators; and
- 0 members use agreements or contracted with no specific objectives, milestones or results framework with indicators.

Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

When it comes to reporting formats, members show less flexibility than they do for proposal formats due to the accounting standards they must meet. Twenty-one members require that reporting be done in a *template provided by the member*.[50] Twelve members are open to *reporting that combines member-defined sections and sections chosen by CSOs*.

CSO survey respondents are split in their opinions of whether members' reporting formats and requirements are overly-burdensome or not. Those that see formats and requirements as overly-burdensome note again the high level of staff time required to comply, and frustrations related to oft-changing formats and new requirements. In one instance, recently revised reporting formats and newly introduced requirements such as sign-off on "integrity charters" and the obligation to report to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)

[49] Two members did not respond to this survey question.

[50] Only two members did not respond to this question. Thus, the figure of 21 represents just over two-thirds of all members, but three-quarters of responding members.

standard, all demand a large time investment. When it comes more generally to the administrative burden of requirements placed on CSOs there is a sense among CSOs of mixed messages from members. On the one hand, members make official statements about reducing the administrative burden, and take some steps in that regard such as extending programme durations or simplifying reporting formats. On the other hand, detailed rules such as on budget adjustments, or additional requirements added to simplified reporting formats, are felt to cancel out administrative cost savings.

5.2. Monitoring for results and learning

For some time, members have been under pressure to demonstrate that the ODA they are responsible for is achieving development results. When asked about the main influences on their decision-making regarding policies, funding mechanisms, monitoring and reporting, and even consultations with CSOs, the *necessity of demonstrating development results* consistently features in the top three most selected influences. *Partnering with Civil Society*'s lesson 10 reinforces the necessity of demonstrating the results of members' funding for CSO, and calls for results that are relevant and useful to the CSO funding recipients. It also encourages the use of monitoring and reporting not solely for accountability purposes but also for learning, by members and by CSOs.

Box 5.2. Defining results indicators

- 16 members frameworks/matrices for CSOs' monitoring and reporting contain both CSO-defined and member-defined indicators
- 15 members allow for the indicators to be defined by CSOs
- 9 members work together with CSOs to jointly define indicators
- 3 members define the indicators for CSOs

Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

One strategy used by members to strengthen the relevance of monitoring and reporting for supported CSOs and ownership of programmmes is through the use of CSO-defined indicators in performance results frameworks or matrices. Survey responses show that at least half of members use this approach, with ten members using more than one approach (Box 5.2).[51]

Members' approaches to monitoring and evaluation of results are constantly evolving, with ever-renewed emphasis. Some members refer to ways in which they are placing greater emphasis on learning and knowledge-sharing as integral to results monitoring and performance enhancement. The results-based management method has always meant to allow for iterative programme planning and implementation, that is, for a cycle of learning from monitoring and adjusting accordingly. As seen in the Finnish MFA's 2015 guidance to support results-based management across Finland's development co-operation, the use information from results monitoring for the purposes of learning and improving

[51] Only two members did not respond to this question.

performance is one of the results-based management principles (MFA of Finland, 2015, p. 8).

In other examples, learning and knowledge-sharing has been integrated into Belgium's five-year support programmes for CSOs. The use of theories of change has encouraged more flexibility to modify programmes based on learning through implementation, while mid-term "learning evaluations" precede the final accountability evaluation of these programmes. In the case of ADA, programme evaluations are led by CSOs themselves, but the Civil Society and Evaluation units are consulted and provide quality assurance through the process in a collaborative spirit which allows for joint learning while increasing the evaluation's use and quality. Ireland prioritises monitoring visits of partners, both by staff and drawing from a pool of consultants. A Terms of Reference template is used for these monitoring visits in order to maximise lesson learning and enrich comparative findings. The Netherlands MFA brings their "Dialogue and Dissent" partners together annually to discuss results progress, implementation challenges and success strategies.

Others members are adopting new and innovative methods across their institutions. At the agency level, USAID is increasingly using what is called a Collaborating, Learning, & Adapting (CLA) approach. Amongst other benefits, CLA is seen to reduce duplication through knowledge-sharing and co-ordination, within USAID and with other development actors, improve effectiveness by grounding programmes in evidence and proven or promising practices, and enabling adaptive course corrections during implementation to shorten the path to results achievement.

Adaptive management has been gaining profile as a new method of results management. One member beginning to apply the method to its work with CSOs is Sida. For Sida, inherent in adaptive management is recognition that development results are not always, perhaps rarely, achieved via a linear path. Adaptive management is a way to provide Sida staff and partners "more leeway to adjust their efforts based on their judgement and it encourages them to reconsider their strategies" (Sida, 2019, para. 7).

All that said, a recent OECD Working Paper on learning from results-based management evaluations and reviews concludes that among members there is uneven progress on the use of monitoring information to inform decisions and provide programming direction (Vähämäki & Verger, 2019). In the experience of the majority of CSO survey respondents,[52] members are not using monitoring and reporting of CSOs' supported initiatives as a source of learning for members, for the supported CSOs, or for the wider CSO community. Though the logic of learning may be built into "lessons learned" sections of reporting format, effective learning on the basis of these lessons does not have much uptake. It is felt that there is a missed opportunity for sharing outcomes, successes, and good practices based on CSOs' monitoring and reporting.

5.3. Transparency and accountability of CSOs and members

Over four decades of members' development co-operation with CSOs concern has grown over the tendency for CSOs to prioritise their relationship of "upward" accountability with their primary funders, which for a vast majority of CSOs involved in development co-operation, are members.[53] Yet having effective CSOs invested in

[52] Four of the six respondents.

[53] See for example Ebrahim (2003), Burger and Seabe (2014), and Atia and Herrold (2018), amongst others.

accountability at the partner country level where they work is necessary for building and maintaining the public trust so critical to CSOs' legitimacy, and strengthens the case against regulatory over-reach by partner country governments. Recall from Chapter 3 (Figure 3.2) that the second most-frequently selected practice for promoting enabling environments for CSOs in partner countries is supporting CSOs to strengthen their effectiveness, accountability and transparency.

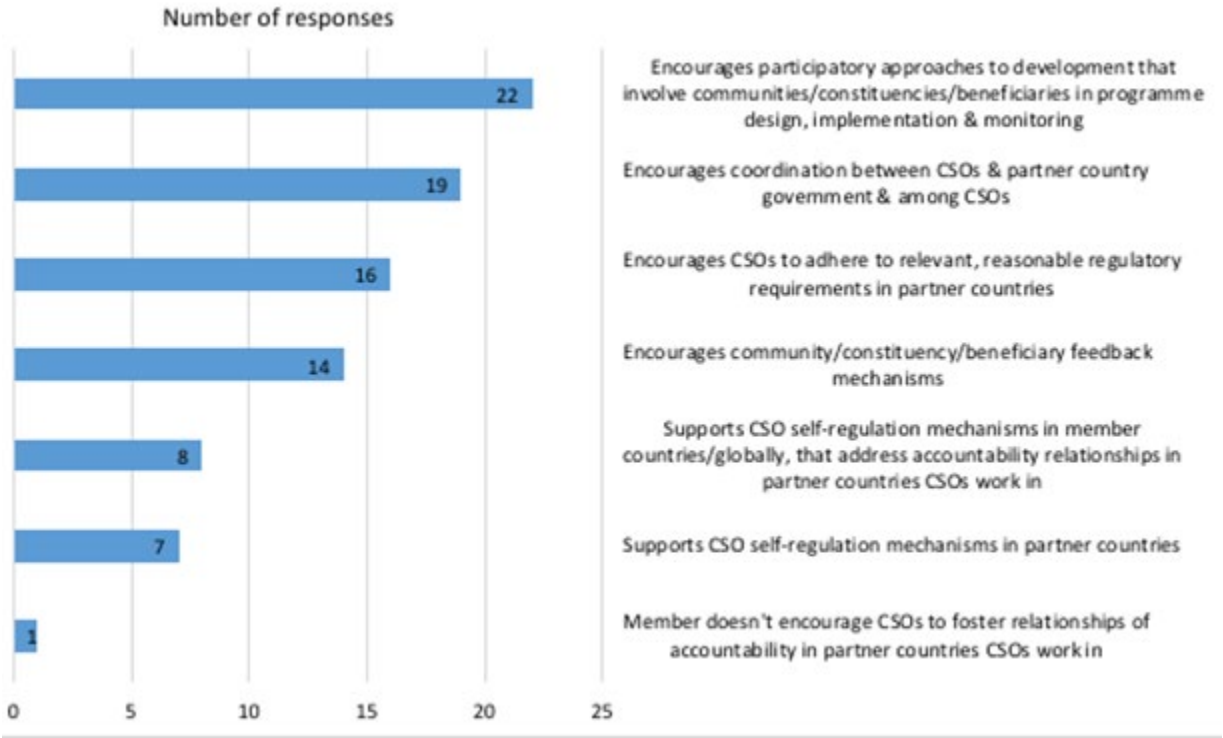
A majority of members indicate that they encourage CSOs to foster relationships of accountability in the partner countries CSOs work in, and all but one use multiple means to do so (Figure 5.1).[54]

The most frequently selected method, that of encouraging *participatory approaches* (22 survey responses), is a long-standing one used by CSOs, with members' support. That members are also encouraging *co-ordination between CSOs and partner country governments* (19 responses), and encouraging *CSOs to adhere to reasonable regulatory requirements in partner countries* (16 responses), are positive, if relatively more recent developments. Fewer members indicate that they provide *support to CSO self-regulation mechanisms* either at member country or partner country level (8 and 7 responses respectively).[55]

[54] Six members did not respond to this survey question.

[55] In hindsight, this survey question would more appropriately have asked whether members *urge* CSOs to participate in such self-regulation mechanisms, possibly leading to a more positive responses from members.

Figure 5.1. Members' approaches to fostering CSO accountability in partner countries



Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

Some members' CSO-specific policies do speak to a gamut of CSO effectiveness and accountability issues that members encourage CSOs to address, sometimes also committing to assist CSOs in addressing them. For example, for the EC, issues of CSOs' representativeness, internal governance, transparency and co-ordination with national or local authorities are all areas of CSO responsibility that, indirectly, form part of the enabling environment for CSOs needing attention (EC, 2012, p. 6). The EC's *Roots of Democracy and Sustainable Development*, Sida's *Guiding Principles*, and Canada's *Policy for Civil Society Partnerships* are three policies that specifically urge CSOs to participate in self-regulation initiatives such as the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness.

A relatively more recent accountability area of concern relates to the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Though the survey did not query specifically on this topic, a few responses point to the emergence of new requirements from members for safeguarding. One example is a new financial and moral integrity charter in Belgium, another is DfID's new safeguarding standards applied through the programme management cycle, described in the 2018 *Enhanced Due Diligence: Safeguarding for External Partners* document (DfID, 2018).

CSO accountability is clearly recognised by members as an important component of enabling environments for CSOs in partner countries. While survey findings show that members use a mix of methods to support CSOs to enhance their accountability in partner countries, there is room for more practical, and relatively straightforward steps to be taken, by more members. As discussed in Chapter 3, the promotion of enabling environments in

partner countries also requires that members self-assess to ensure that their interest in strengthening CSO accountability is not undermined by their own methods of financial support for CSOs. For example, stipulating the use of participatory methods in CSOs' programming, as many members do, is a useful accountability approach. However, participation occurs as CSOs are being used as implementers of member-defined projects and programmes (i.e. support *through* CSOs), it is an insufficient approach to ensuring the type of genuinely locally-owned and demand-driven initiatives that are key to CSO accountability in partner countries.

Given the transparency and open government uptick, members are also increasingly taking steps to address their own accountability by making information about their CSO support publicly accessible (Box 5.3).

Box 5.3. Member transparency on flows to CSOs

- 15 members: annual reports to the public;
- 15 members: reports to member country parliaments;
- 10 members: open access database covering all CSO support;
- 8 members: requiring CSOs to report to the IATI standard;
- 6 members: open access database covering CSO support in specific partner countries; and
- 2 members: reports to partner country governments

Source: Responses to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society (November 2018-March 2019).

However, members tend to favour tools such as *annual reports to the public and to member country parliaments* (15 survey responses) for the purpose of making information about their CSO support publicly accessible.[56] While some have established *open access databases of their CSO suppor*t (10 responses), these are not necessarily disaggregated by partner country nor are partner country stakeholders necessarily aware of their existence. Few members participate in *open access databases of their CSO support in specific partner countries* (6 responses). Transparency regarding members' country-specific flows for CSOs is a long-standing request of partner country stakeholders, particularly but not exclusively of partner country governments, and as such could be further developed.

[56] Five members did not respond to this survey question.

6. Considerations going forward

Members of the DAC belong to the international community that has committed to Agenda 2030. Clear from that ambitious agenda is that its achievement requires active engagement of all actors and their significant resources. Much attention is being paid to relatively new actors and financing forms such as the private sector, public-private partnerships, and blended finance. A 2018 OECD report dedicated to blended finance notes that 17 members engage in blended financing for development (OECD, 2018b, p. 16). Whereas, CSOs are valued development partners, supported and engaged with by all 30 members, and through which on average 15% of members' bilateral ODA flows, as well as being a significant source of private contributions to development co-operation. They are also agents of change, drawing attention to issues that might not otherwise be addressed, channelling the voices of poor and otherwise marginalised people, and pushing for accountability from all development actors. Effective CSO support is an opportunity to facilitate CSOs' role in making sure that no one is left behind. It is crucial that flows for CSOs be a point of member focus.

Data gathered from the How DAC Members work with CSOs study shows that members have been and continue to make changes, to their policy frameworks, their financial and non-financial engagement with CSOs, and their approaches to monitoring and learning. More can be done. The study data collected in this working paper provides food for thought on ways forward to further strengthen the effectiveness of members' support for and engagement with CSOs and civil society. Steps that members need to take can be urged by through the DAC guidance that will build on this study.

6.1. Conclusions and suggested next steps for DAC members to improve how they work with CSOs

Policies for working with CSOs and civil society are needed

In focus - suggested next steps for members:

- Have CSO or civil society-specific policies addressing CSOs both as implementing partners and as development actors in their own right
- Integrate CSO or civil society issues in other development co-operation policies
- Develop such policies in consultation with CSOs.

A policy is important to provide an over-arching framework for members' support to and engagement with CSOs in development co-operation. As per the *Peer Review Reference Guide 2019-2020*, a policy needs to provide sufficient guidance for the members' decision-making as regards its channels of support and engagements with CSOs. Currently just under half of DAC members have a CSO or civil society-specific policy, though four members intend to have policies in the near future.

Such a document does not have to be a policy per se but can if needed be a strategy, principles, guidance, or even legislation, amongst other options. What is important is to have a dedicated, CSO or civil society-specific document that provides a vision of civil society and CSOs' both as development actors in their own right and as implementing

partners in development, and clarity of purpose and objectives of the partnership relationship. It may contain information on other things too: principles, financial support mechanisms, non-financial engagements, and monitoring and evaluation approaches. If there is a lack of certainty on certain directions, it can commit to exploring options for directions.

In addition to having a dedicated CSO or civil society policy, members would do well to reinforce their vision of civil society by integrating civil society-related issues in their broader development co-operation policies. Without doubt, CSO-specific policies and broader development co-operation policies need to be developed in consultation with CSOs.

Dual objectives for working with CSOs and civil society should be encouraged

In focus - suggested next steps for members:

- Embrace the dual objectives of support for CSOs both as a means of programme implementation and to strengthen civil society in partner countries
- Reconcile the gap between these stated dual objectives and how CSOs are financially supported and engaged with
- Identify and implement ways to incentivise supported CSOs to address the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in their work

Almost all members have multiple objectives for working with CSOs and civil society. For a strong majority of members their main objective for working with CSOs and civil society is to implement programmes related to service delivery. For almost the same majority, strengthening civil society in partner countries, including CSOs as independent development actors, is also a main objective. At the level of objectives then, these members seem to understand the potential for their CSO support to not only be a means of implementing specific development programmes on behalf of members, but also to contribute to vibrant, diverse and pluralistic civil societies in partner countries. Members need to continue to embrace, or take up if they are not already doing so, this dual conception of objectives.

However, in so doing, members need to ensure that reaching both objectives is reflected in the ways that they financially support and engage with CSOs. Recall that the most commonly identified method members employ to strengthen civil society in partner countries is the promotion of enabling environments in those countries. This is a critical means in this era of shrinking legal and regulatory space for CSOs worldwide and members would do well to continue to invest in this area. Yet, the least commonly identified method members employ to promote enabling environments is that of self-assessment to better understand how their own practices may contribute to disenabling environments in partner countries. Whereas, the ways in which members provide support, and who they support, has profound effects on CSOs and civil society sectors in partner countries that can counter the good intentions of strengthening civil society objectives. Members need to avoid that the ways in which they financially support and engage with CSOs do not contradict the stated objective of strengthening civil society in partner countries.

In light of the 2019 DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus, members' CSO support and humanitarian divisions will also need to work together to identify ways to incentivise supported CSOs to address the nexus in their work.

Financial support mechanisms need to be balanced and reflect objectives

In focus - suggested next steps for members:

- Continue to maintain multiple financial support mechanisms

  Rectify the imbalance between support *through* CSOs as programme implementers and *to* CSOs as independent development actors, in order to reflect dual objectives
- Reinforce the dual objectives within support *through* CSOs, including design of *through* support to meet the strengthening civil society in partner countries objective
- Shift additional financial support directly to partner country CSOs, sharing practical lessons on tackling obstacles

As stated, members' financial support mechanisms, both in terms of how they support CSOs and which CSOs they support, need to reflect their objectives of working with CSOs. However, DAC statistics show that the dominant form of support is *through* CSOs, that is, support to CSOs as programme implementers on behalf of members, rather than *to* CSOs, that is, support to CSOs as independent development actors in their own right. The preponderance of mechanisms geared toward project and programme support and the use of calls for proposals over partnership/framework/core support mechanisms affirms this.

Certainly, there is value in each of these forms of support, as well as others that members are using such as multi-donor pooled funds, and funding via multilateral institutions or partner country governments. Members are encouraged to continue to maintain multiple funding mechanisms offering different types of support, accessible to different types of CSOs. However, a better balance needs to be struck between steering CSOs in member-defined directions via support *through* CSOs, and facilitating CSOs as independent development actors with their own objectives and approaches to achieving them via support *to* CSOs.

Core support is not the only means of strengthening civil society in partner countries. Outside of rectifying the *to* and *through* balance are other considerations for how members support CSOs. If members are constrained, for legal, administrative, risk aversion, results-pressures, or other reasons, from providing core support, they can still strike a balance within their *through* support to be no more directive of CSOs than is reasonably necessary. They can still respect CSOs' right of initiative, giving CSOs space to identify programme priorities with their partner country level constituents, partners and beneficiaries. However, that only half of the members require that CSOs receiving funds work with *their* partners in ways that respond to the priorities and demands of these partners is detrimental to members' objective to strengthen civil society in these countries.

Members can also provide support *through* CSOs that is designed specifically to meet the objective of strengthening civil society in partner countries.

If the pressure members feel to demonstrate development results impedes the adoption of financial support specifically targeting the strengthening civil society in partner countries objective, then members need to invest in better defining, with CSOs, what strengthening civil society results look like. Such results would include, but not be limited to, those related to capacity development of individual CSOs. Applying of the type of accompaniment, enhanced reciprocity attitudes and approaches and systems-oriented methods as used by some members is conducive to strengthening civil society as independent development actors.

The bulk of members' CSO support by far continues to flow mainly for member country, and international, CSOs, though there has been an incremental increase in direct flows to partner country CSOs. This again begs the question of whether the objective of strengthening civil society in partner countries is best met via CSOs originating from outside of partner countries. That many of the advantages of member country CSOs and partner country CSOs are ranked by members' relatively similarly suggests that there is room to further shift the balance toward more direct support to partner country CSOs.

There are real and justifiable reasons for the disproportionate investment in member country and international CSOs that will persist, not least of which member country CSOs' critical role in public awareness and citizen engagement at home. But this should not preclude more direct support to partner country CSOs and civil society. Members need to make concerted effort to shift some, or more, of their support to partner country CSOs. Those making progress in this realm can share lessons from the practical steps they are taking to minimise the real and perceived obstacles.

Dialogue and consultation is advantageous, including in partner countries

In focus – suggested next steps for members:

- Continue to engage in systematic dialogue with member country CSOs
- Increase systematic dialogue with CSOs in partner countries
- Combine systematic and ad hoc dialogue
- Pay attention to accessibility and quality of dialogue

Dialogue and consultation between members and CSOs is advantageous to both. Amongst other benefits it provides opportunities to learn from each other, and ultimately to enhance policy and programme directions. All members consult with CSOs in relation to members' policies, strategies or other strategic orientations. Members are increasingly consulting with CSOs in a systematic way through regular, advance-planned dialogue fora, though this is much more common at headquarters level than partner country level where consultations, still implemented by a majority of members, take place on an ad hoc, as needed basis.

Members should continue to foster dialogue and consultation with CSOs but need to place additional emphasis on dialogue with CSOs in partner countries. Both systematic and ad hoc dialogue is welcome, with the latter allowing both members and CSOs to talk to each other on emerging issues, often in fora that are more open and potentially inclusive of CSOs other than those financially supported by members, and less formal, than those for systematic dialogue. Members could also foster dialogue between CSOs and other actors like the private sector, and government actors in partner countries.

Members need to continue to consider other aspects of how they implement dialogue with CSOs, recognising that CSOs do not have the same staff and financial resources to invest in consulting as member institutions have. Generous timelines for consultation are needed. In addition, CSOs must be able to see that they are taken seriously, that their investments and contributions actually have an influence on member policy and programme directions, and that their inputs are not dismissed or side-lined because they do not align with member's positions, general thinking and commonly-used language.

Further flexibility in administrative requirements for proposals, monitoring and reporting, and a commitment to learning

In focus - suggested next steps for members:

- Integrate flexibility in proposal, monitoring and reporting formats so these are realistic and relevant to CSO priorities and approaches, defined with partner country level partners and beneficiaries
- Apply iterative approaches to results management with greater emphasis on learning to inform adaptive programming directions
- Continuously assess and seek to minimise the transaction cost burden on CSO partners

There is quite an array of different approaches among members to the requirements for funding proposals and reports. Some flexibility is seen, for example with proposal formats that combine member-required sections with inputs initiated by CSOs. The majority of members use traditional agreements or contracts with results frameworks, with a sizable portion of members also using adaptive results frameworks, as well as less linear theories of change. Members need to go further in embracing CSO-defined results and indicators to help ensure relevance and realism in planning and monitoring, the pursuit of results that are meaningful to partners and beneficiaries in partner countries, and adaptability to CSO capacities. Members need to consider being open to results that are qualitative and process-oriented, including experimenting with results and indicators reflective of the objective of strengthening civil society (not just CSOs), in partner countries.

Whatever results and performance management approach members use – the more traditional results-based management, or more recent adaptive management – there is need to ensure that monitoring and reporting by and of CSOs' initiatives is done in a genuinely iterative way. Lessons drawn from results progress (or lack thereof) need to inform dialogue and decision-making on the most effective directions forward, with adjustments allowed based on those learnings.

On the whole, despite stated commitments and some effort to reduce the administrative burden that comes with CSO support, new requirements seem to cancel out transaction cost savings in short order. Concerted effort is needed by members to strike a better balance between requirements that are absolutely necessary for due diligence and those that are recommended. Requirements need also to be adapted to the level of funding and perceived risk of the initiative and/or CSO.

Don't forget accountability and transparency of CSOs and of members

In focus - suggested next steps for members:

- Support the use of a mix of methods to address CSO accountability in partner countries, as central to promoting civil society enabling environments
- Self-assess to ensure members' methods of support for CSOs does not undermine CSOs' accountability in partner countries
- Enhance transparency of funding for CSOs disaggregated by and accessible to partner county stakeholders

Many members identify that supporting CSOs to strengthen their effectiveness, accountability and transparency is an important, if indirect means of promoting enabling environments for civil society in partner countries. It is increasingly recognised as the "other side of the enabling environment coin" (Ceelen, Wood, & Huesken, 2019, p. 13). Members need to bear this in mind continuously, and do more to promote CSO accountability at partner country level. In particular, members must reflect on whether their methods of financial support for CSOs within which this participation takes place are themselves conducive to CSOs' pursuit of accountability toward partner country stakeholders, that is, to their beneficiaries and constituents, their partners, the public, and governments in partner countries

Members could also do more to urge and support CSOs to participate in CSO self-regulation mechanisms at partner country level, recognising that members' own accountability mechanisms are not a substitute for in-partner country accountability. Co-ordination among CSOs, and between CSOs and governments, as well as adherence to reasonable regulatory requirements in partner countries, could be further encouraged.

At the same time, there is ample room for members to do more to enhance transparency in relation to their CSO support at partner country level. Ideally this would include pro-active measures to ensure partner country stakeholders are aware of the existence of and can readily access the information. In other words, taking steps that minimise the necessity for partner country stakeholders to have to search websites or databases for the country-specific information that is of interest to them.

6.2. Suggested next steps for the DAC

In focus - suggested next steps for the DAC:

- Implement the plan to develop up-to-date guidance on how DAC members need to work with CSOs and a community of practice to support implementation
- Consider issuing a Recommendation on how DAC members need to work with CSOs
- Investigate the possibility of DAC collaboration with other OECD committees on good practice in enabling civil society
- Use the DAC-CSO Dialogue to advance dialogue on the guidance

One telling study finding is that the main influences on member decision-making are more from domestic sources than from the OECD-DAC. The 2012 *Partnering with Civil Societ*y document doesn't feature among the most-oft identified main influences, though recommendations from DAC Peer Reviews are more frequently identified as a main influence. Rather more influential are the necessity of demonstrating results for example, member country rules and regulations, and the influence of member country publics and CSOs.

Recognising that each member will face various influences in their country contexts, this suggests that it may be time for the DAC to issue clear and up-to-date guidance. There is support within the DAC, including at leadership level, for this. Elaboration of such guidance is one step forward. Another is the establishment of a DAC community of practice to support the implementation of guidance. Issuance of an OECD Recommendation – a legal instrument issued by the OECD Council – based on the guidance, would come with

greater enforcement potential, and provide a stronger leveraging tool within member institutions and their governments to press for adherence.

It is also worth considering a collaborative endeavour between the DAC and other OECD committees focused on public management and regulatory issues to identify good practice in support to and engagement with CSOs. This could produce lessons and guidance on the CSO-state relationship beyond, but still of relevance to, the development co-operation realm. It would be able to draw from the ample experience of DAC member countries in working through what enabling environments for civil society look like domestically, while providing an entry point to reflect on whether and how policy and support frameworks for CSOs involved in development co-operation merit similar, or much different treatment.

Effective support to and engagement with CSOs are part and parcel of enabling environments for civil society. It is not a luxury, an extravagant gesture toward civil society actors that only some members can ascribe to. This working paper has laid out some of the positive trends and outstanding gaps or inconsistencies in how members work with CSOs. It is but one step on a path forward toward strengthening partnerships with civil society to reach development objectives, including that of strengthening civil society in partner countries.

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Annex A. **Methodological note**

The main sources of information accessed for this paper are:

- DAC statistics on ODA
- A survey of DAC members and a survey of CSO networks

All thirty DAC members responded to the survey on How DAC Members work with Civil Society over the period November 2018 through March 2019. As some survey questions were optional, not all of the responses reflect the experience of all DAC members. Many DAC members maintain various funding streams for civil society and channel support both from headquarters and at partner country level. In responding to the questionnaire DAC members had to generalise from these different streams.

A separate but related survey was circulated to fifteen CSO networks, umbrella bodies or platforms from select member countries, partner countries, and thematic or constituency-specific CSOs. Six survey responses were received from CSO networks in 6 member states. A fulsome survey of CSO networks in all member countries was not within the remit of this study. Given the millions of CSOs worldwide receiving direct or indirect support from members, the survey data cannot be assumed to represent the civil society experience globally.

Survey responses included referral to DAC member policy and strategy documents and monitoring reports that also informed this paper, along with select literature by and on CSOs and civil society in development cooperation contexts.

In this paper, where information has been obtained from primary sources such as member policies or evaluation the primary source is referenced using in-text citations. Where an in-text citation is not provided, the information has been extracted from survey responses.

This paper uses DAC member country names except where a specific policy or practice is authored by or specifically applies to a DAC member development co-operation institution or agency, in which case the institution or agency name is used.

This working paper is one step in the study on *How DAC members work with CSOs* and subsequent guidance to be developed based on study findings and consultation with DAC members and other stakeholders. In order to produce a digestible product, this paper does not speak to *all* of the data available from the survey or other sources. It is anticipated that the full data set will be drawn upon in subsequent steps of the study and guidance development.

Annex B.

Table B.1. Official development assistance channelled to and through CSOs, 2010-2017 (USD million, disbursements, constant 2016 prices)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Australia	357	431	452	368	470	407	316	222
Austria	65	55	44	64	54	50	68	90
Belgium	289	297	269	277	266	266	278	261
Canada	645	604	598	662	678	728	780	843
Czech Republic	0	13	13	14	13	15	17	17
Denmark	386	387	423	418	438	424	377	424
EU Institutions	1,469	1,572	1,675	1,765	1,866	1,816	2,045	1,861
Finland	164	161	160	177	184	194	117	117
France	136	109	126	95	227	198	207	258
Germany	868	827	934	977	1,020	1,061	1,313	1,437
Greece	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
Iceland	0	1	2	3	3	4	6	3
Ireland	209	202	192	195	199	183	182	183
Italy	79	95	60	136	157	202	193	214
Japan	373	278	383	298	290	313	267	276
Korea	19	23	26	27	33	38	38	44
Luxembourg	75	70	74	77	74	71	82	83
Netherlands	1,355	1,228	1,100	1,098	1,030	1,055	877	875
New Zealand	44	54	45	48	53	48	50	52
Norway	658	647	638	707	734	772	775	800
Poland	0	0	0	10	13	15	14	23
Portugal	20	17	15	13	13	12	14	12
Slovak Republic	0	0	0	4	2	4	7	7
Slovenia	4	4	4	4	3	2	2	2
Spain	785	575	366	323	242	217	321	485
Sweden	748	814	873	915	957	968	973	1,067
Switzerland	508	527	602	664	750	846	822	795
United Kingdom	1,115	1,529	1,742	1,895	2,176	2,314	2,172	2,377
United States	7,000	7,103	6,507	6,515	6,820	7,276	7,488	7,099
Total	17,375	17,624	17,322	17,749	18,770	19,504	19,801	19,930

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, as seen in OECD (2019a) *Aid for CSOs*.

Table B.2. Official development assistance through CSOs, 2010-2017 (USD million, disbursements, constant 2016 prices)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Australia	242	277	383	263	315	276	208	216
Austria	63	53	44	62	52	49	67	89
Belgium	118	120	106	92	69	92	91	87
Canada	614	556	566	627	630	676	725	820
Czech Republic	0	13	12	13	13	15	17	16
Denmark	251	237	298	208	210	199	181	242
EU Institutions	1,469	1,572	1,672	1,762	1,858	1,808	2,035	1,851
Finland	152	150	147	164	156	162	99	95
France	135	108	126	93	227	185	193	238
Germany	868	827	934	977	1,020	416	553	684
Greece	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
Iceland	0	0	2	3	3	4	5	2
Ireland	86	75	75	76	80	74	72	69
Italy	63	88	57	47	72	75	42	86
Japan	141	101	198	98	94	104	49	97
Korea	18	23	25	27	31	38	34	43
Luxembourg	55	64	67	59	57	59	54	58
Netherlands	1,175	1,189	1,064	1,038	964	956	769	778
New Zealand	25	40	31	36	38	33	35	39
Norway	447	433	433	482	508	534	549	565
Poland	0	0	0	10	12	14	14	23
Portugal	20	17	15	13	13	12	14	12
Slovak Republic	0	0	0	4	2	4	6	6
Slovenia	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	1
Spain	746	564	364	321	239	216	320	485
Sweden	587	693	559	595	579	524	710	838
Switzerland	325	349	420	457	528	607	574	545
United Kingdom	763	1,043	1,251	1,397	1,623	1,770	1,749	1,903
United States	7,000	7,103	6,481	6,515	6,815	7,275	7,487	7,098
Total	15,367	15,697	15,334	15,442	16,214	16,179	16,654	16,986

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, as seen in OECD (2019a) *Aid for CSOs*.

Table B.3. Official development assistance to CSOs, 2010-2017 (USD million, disbursements, constant 2016 prices)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Australia	116	154	69	105	156	132	108	6
Austria	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Belgium	170	177	163	186	197	174	187	174
Canada	30	48	31	35	48	52	56	24
Czech Republic	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Denmark	135	150	125	210	228	225	196	183
EU Institutions	0	0	2	3	7	8	10	11
Finland	12	11	13	14	28	33	18	22
France	2	1	0	2	0	14	13	20
Germany	0	0	0	0	0	645	759	753
Greece	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Iceland	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ireland	124	127	117	119	119	109	110	114
Italy	16	8	3	89	85	127	151	128
Japan	233	178	186	199	196	208	218	179
Korea	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	1
Luxembourg	20	6	7	18	17	12	28	24
Netherlands	180	39	36	59	66	99	108	97
New Zealand	19	14	14	12	16	15	15	13
Norway	211	214	204	225	225	239	226	235
Poland	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Portugal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Slovak Republic	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Slovenia	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Spain	39	11	2	2	3	1	1	1
Sweden	162	121	314	320	378	444	262	229
Switzerland	183	178	182	207	222	239	248	250
United Kingdom	352	486	491	498	553	544	422	474
United States	0	0	27	0	5	1	2	2
Total	2,008	1,926	1,989	2,307	2,556	3,325	3,148	2,944

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, as seen in OECD (2019a) *Aid for CSOs*.

Annex C.

Table C.1. Volume of DAC member ODA channelled through CSOs by sector, 2010-2017 (USD million, disbursements, constant 2016 prices)

DAC Sector	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Social infrastructure and services	8,173	8,328	9,066	8,899	8,919	8,136	8,260	8,004
Education	865	811	887	757	725	790	1,010	975
Health	933	1,126	1,182	1,308	1,482	1,388	1,284	1,077
Population Policies & Reproductive health	2,536	2,668	2,783	2,797	2,588	2,453	2,495	2,295
Water Supply & Sanitation	308	301	336	321	380	409	337	343
Government & Civil Society	2,904	2,869	3,375	3,248	3,266	2,758	2,809	2,968
'- Of Which support to women's equality organisations	167	260	188	137	156	253	193	151
Social Infrastructures & Services	627	553	503	468	477	337	325	346
Economic infrastructure and services	556	514	417	486	436	347	410	394
Transport & Storage	176	106	52	93	35	31	44	27
Communications	25	39	23	20	15	20	26	24
Energy	64	91	86	86	126	76	70	66
Banking Financial Services	87	85	116	93	91	92	116	83
Business & Others Services	205	193	141	194	169	129	153	194
Production	1,012	1,011	971	940	1,016	1,149	1,105	1,160
Agriculture Forestry & Fishing	758	777	759	704	797	896	851	858
Industry Mining & Construction	158	142	108	130	122	156	192	192
Trade Policies & Tourism	97	92	104	106	97	97	61	111
General Environment Protection	290	313	311	352	455	413	393	426
Food Aid	534	712	565	389	471	582	521	599
Humanitarian assistance	3,157	3,140	2,853	3,286	3,898	4,594	4,928	5,177
Emergency Response	2,951	2,907	2,620	3,019	3,595	4,274	4,619	4,700
Reconstruction Relief	85	122	77	71	110	145	105	152
Disaster Prevention	121	112	156	195	193	175	204	325
Refugees in Donor Countries	194	146	162	158	203	195	348	401
Unspecified	1,449	1,534	988	933	816	764	690	762
Total	15,367	15,697	15,332	15,442	16,214	16,179	16,654	16,923

Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System, as seen in OECD (2019s) *Aid for CSOs*.

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