

Framework for Dialogue between the DAC and Civil Society Organisations

The DAC discussed and approved the DAC Framework for Dialogue with CSOs [DCD/DAC(2018)28] at its 10 July 2018 meeting.

Expressing no objections to the DCD Director's email proposal of 26 July 2018, the Committee agreed to declassify and issue the document as Final.

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1. Introduction

The overarching objective of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is to promote development policies and development co-operation to assist the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Transparency, accountability and inclusion are vital to ensure DAC's relevance in pursuit of this objective.

In the DAC reform process and the Global Relations Strategy, the DAC has identified civil society organisations (CSOs) as key development stakeholders for collaboration and exchange of information. CSOs receive and channel significant levels of ODA. They are also important development actors in their own right. CSOs help to deliver services to millions of poor people, engage in human-rights-based advocacy work, promote accountability, develop and disseminate policy expertise and practical knowledge and act as watchdogs on the impact of public and private sector activities.

Over the last decade, global commitments have been made to enhance the role of civil society in development and provide an enabling environment for CSOs, including in the 2030 Agenda and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation. One of the key elements of the enabling environment agreed in the Global Partnership is access to multi-stakeholder dialogue fora that address development policies and planning.

This document establishes a structure for the dialogue between the DAC and CSOs. As such, it aims to create a long-term approach to the interactions between the DAC and CSOs, based on joint principles and commitments. Within this overarching framework, the DAC-CSO dialogue will be developed further to provide for an effective, efficient and inclusive partnership between the DAC and civil society.

2. Objectives

The overarching goal of the DAC-CSO dialogue is to offer CSOs a space to engage with and influence the DAC as well as for the DAC to leverage CSO knowledge, capabilities and their role as advocates for fighting poverty and promoting gender equality, inclusion and sustainable development. It fits within the broader DAC reform process, which prioritises increased “outreach to development actors beyond the DAC’s Membership to influence and be influenced” (strategic priority #4) and “increase[d] transparency” (strategic priority #5).

These efforts are also in line with the commitment made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to “hold open, inclusive and transparent discussions on the modernization of the ODA measurement and on the proposed measure of “total official support for sustainable

development” (§55). More specifically, as an integral aspect of the DAC reform process the DAC-CSO dialogue aims to achieve the following objectives:

- a) Facilitate interactions on issues related to the role of CSOs as development actors;
- b) Promote policy debate, consultation and exchange of information and experiences on DAC main reforms, policies and initiatives;
- c) Build relations and trust with a view to facilitate understanding, sharing of experiences and exchange on issues of mutual interest.

3. Scope

This document refers to the dialogue between the DAC and CSOs. The DAC is the OECD’s main decision-making body in matters related to development co-operation, although many other directorates also work with issues related to development co-operation. It consists of delegates from the world’s largest official providers of development assistance. Therefore, a dialogue with the DAC is essential for CSOs aiming to influence development co-operation.

Despite its central position as a mechanism for engagement, the dialogue referred to in this framework does not intend to become the only entry point for CSOs to interact with the OECD on development co-operation. The DAC’s subsidiary bodies as well as the OECD directorates, including the Development Co-operation Directorate, also have dialogues and collaborations with civil society. Few of these exchanges are regulated. The DAC-CSO dialogue referred to in this document may complement and build upon these interactions, but it should not replace existing practices.

4. Representation

The DAC-CSO dialogue gathers DAC delegates and representatives from civil society. CSOs that have expressed interest in the DAC have agreed among themselves to coordinate civil society’s participation in the dialogue and aim for a balanced representation, including participants from CSOs in partner and provider countries and from different sectors, competency areas and interest groups.

The principle of CSO self-organisation is respected in accordance with the DAC tradition and the commitments in the Global Partnership on Effective Development Co-operation, that is, to respect CSOs’ independence and support CSO coordination and self-regulation.

CSOs are responsible for ensuring that there are clear procedures for the engagement of CSOs in the dialogue, including a transparent and representative selection of CSOs attending meetings with the DAC.

The DAC itself represents governments and inter-governmental organisations providing resources for development co-operation.

CSOs and the DAC will work together to make the dialogue inclusive.

5. Dialogue Principles

For the DAC-CSO dialogue to be effective and efficient, the following principles will apply:

- The DAC-CSO dialogue is a shared responsibility, which demands engagement by both DAC- and CSO participants. It will include topics of mutual interest and aim for interactive discussions. Dialogues can be led by the DAC as well as by CSOs.
- The DAC-CSO dialogue will be strategic and forward-looking to allow the DAC to influence and be influenced by CSOs.
- The DAC will provide space for consultation with CSOs before key decisions are made, including before high-level and senior-level meetings.
- To enable CSOs to provide relevant input and engage meaningfully, the DAC will strive to regularly and in a timely way make pertinent information available to CSOs before opportunities where CSOs can influence. The information-sharing is subject to the OECD's requirements on confidentiality.
- The DAC will seek to provide feedback on CSO contributions in a timely and transparent manner, including in relation to decisions at the high-level and senior-level meetings. When possible, the feedback should be presented in a written format.
- CSOs, through the DAC CSO Reference Group, will facilitate and coordinate CSO engagement with the DAC. It will carry CSO positions in these spaces with the ultimate goal of promoting more effective aid and development finance.
- CSOs will as far as possible, share knowledge, experience, perspectives and contacts with the DAC, bring important development aid and cooperation issues to the DAC's attention, and communicate CSOs' analyses, perspectives and priorities.
- CSOs will conduct outreach and establish links with other CSOs and initiatives at the local, national, regional, and global levels to expand membership and increase the diversity of members to include a variety of countries and sectors.
- CSOs will encourage knowledge-sharing and awareness-raising among CSOs on issues relevant to the work of the DAC.
- CSOs and the DAC will work together to strengthen the engagement of CSOs from developing countries in DAC processes.

6. Dialogue Mechanisms

CSO representatives will be invited to the DAC high-level and senior-level meetings. The CSO representatives will have observer status and be invited to speak. Some sessions at the high-level and senior-level meetings may however be reserved for DAC members only.

The DAC will hold consultation meetings with civil society as part of the preparations for the senior level and high level meetings. In addition, the DAC will invite CSOs to substantial dialogue meetings on key issues of mutual concern, with timing agreed by both parties, and as a minimum annually. Dialogue meetings can also be proposed and led by CSOs.

These meetings should be complemented by opportunities to allow the DAC and CSOs to discuss work plans and identify areas of consultation as well as potential areas of collaboration during the year. This can be done on a regular basis through webinars or calls.

Meetings with CSOs where they are based, during country visits by DAC and OECD representatives are encouraged. Furthermore, the DAC may consider the possibility of undertaking joint field visits with CSOs.

The DAC and CSOs will also explore other dialogue mechanisms, including thematic webinars, newsletters and other online channels to promote dialogue and share information.

7. Follow-Up of the DAC-CSO Dialogue

The DAC and CSOs undertake to inform about the DAC-CSO dialogue and ensure compliance and follow-up. The dialogue will be subject to internal assessments by the DAC and CSOs on an annual basis and evaluated by an external party every four years, starting in 2020. Evaluations will be commissioned by the DAC in co-operation with CSOs. The dialogue framework can be revised in follow up of the external evaluations.