

Ensuring Civil Society
Participation in EC Development
Assistance Programmes

This study examines the experiences of drawing up EC Country Strategies in four countries

- Kenya, Senegal
- Bolivia, India

It is clear that there has been a greater effort to consult with civil society groups in ACP countries than in ALA countries

- The experiences of the two countries in the ACP block are very different
- Contextual difference
- Reflect a difference in understanding about and commitment to the nature and purposes of ensuring civil society participation on the part of both Delegations and officials in Brussels

It is apparent, that officials think we are talking about participation at project level, and/or increasing the opportunities for funding of civil society groups., especially NGOs.

- *Recommendation - extensive debate, dialogue and especially training of Commission and Delegation officials about the current thinking on the benefits of and mechanisms for including civil society organisations in policy debate.*

There is also the lack of understanding among some civil society organisations about what is expected of them when invited to contribute to policy debate.

Recommendation - well supported programme of capacity building within CSO/NSA sector and provision of other support for groups wishing to be involved in policy dialogue

It needs to be recognised that the idea for including civil society in policy dialogue is a relatively new idea.

We are still at the stage of learning and collecting examples of good practice.

The distinction needs to be made between 'elite' CSOs/NGOs, often based in cities and which exist largely to lobby on specific issues, and local grass-roots organisations which may not be so experienced in lobbying and engaging in discussions about policy, but which may have real insights into local conditions of the poor.

We suggest that both types of group need to be involved in national debates, but that the processes for involvement of each type of group may be different

The continuing anomaly of development assistance programming being housed within two separate Directorates in Brussels means that it is difficult to ensure consistency of approach across the EC

DG DEV has produced some useful tools to assist in facilitating meaningful dialogue with NSAs, these need to be widely disseminated and discussed. Support should be given to this.

Poverty

Unless Delegations are required to focus on poverty issues, and ensure civil society (NSA) participation, there may be little incentive for them to do so.

Recommendation.

If the EC is serious about its role in providing development assistance focused on poverty reduction, it needs to be more consistent in its instructions to Delegations

Harmonisation with approaches of other major donors.

Develop working relationships with other actors, including other donors, to ensure complementarity in consultation processes with civil society, to prevent setting up of parallel structures and multiple consultation processes.