DFID Civil Society Challenge Fund, Final Evaluation

Final Report

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANPPCAN	African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect
AMSS	Association Malienne pour la Survie au Sahel
APT	APT Enterprise Development
AR	Annual Report
CSCF	Civil Society Challenge Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CPC	Child Palliative Care
DFID	Department for International Development
FM	Fund Manager
FY	Financial Year
GH	Grantholder
GPAF	Global Poverty Action Fund
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
KTP	Knowledge Transfer Partnership
LEF	Living Earth Foundation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSE	Micro and Small Enterprises
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development /Development Assistance Committee
PCR	Project Completion Report
PLWHIV	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PO	Purchase Order
PPA	Programme Partnership Arrangement
PCR	Project Completion Report
QAV	Quality Assurance Visit
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
TB	Tuberculosis
ToR	Terms of Reference
VfM	Value for Money

Executive Summary

The Civil Society Challenge Fund (CSCF) continues to be relevant to the local context of Southern civil society organisations (CSOs) by supporting civil society to empower poor and marginalised people to increase their voice in decisions that affect their lives. In addition to widespread evidence of civil society engagement in policy dialogue and development, a large number of projects contributed to the adoption of policies likely to bring lasting benefits for poor, vulnerable people by influencing the policy, professional and normative frameworks relevant to their targeted populations. This was often achieved through a wide range of formal and informal capacity development approaches. The evaluation found many positive examples of projects benefiting very diverse groups of poor and marginalised people although it is difficult to provide reliable, disaggregated data on beneficiaries at portfolio level.

Introduction

The Civil Society Challenge Fund has been one of DFID's longest running challenge funds. It was created in 2000 to support UK based CSOs to strengthen the capacity of Southern CSOs to empower poor and marginalised people to influence the policies and practices that affected their lives. A decision was taken in 2010 to close the CSCF for new applications and a final round of projects was agreed in 2011. The last CSCF projects closed in March 2015.

The CSCF was managed by DFID's Civil Society Department (now the Inclusive Societies Department) from 2000 until 2010, with Triple Line Consulting Ltd providing technical assistance from 2003. In April 2010, Triple Line Consulting Ltd, in a joint venture with Crown Agents, was contracted to be the Fund Manager following a competitive tendering process.

DFID commissioned IOD PARC to conduct a final evaluation of CSCF and to assess to what extent the Fund has built the capacity of Southern civil society to engage in local and national decision-making through funding to UK CSOs, and what lessons there are for fund management. The primary audience for the report is the Inclusive Societies Department of DFID and other colleagues.

Background and methodology

The approach the evaluation has adopted focuses more on eliciting learning than assessing the accountability of CSCF performance. The evaluation drafted an intervention logic for the CSCF and sought to identify key learning on its four central 'pillars' i.e. how effective fund management.... supports Northern/Southern CSO Partnerships.... to deliver effective capacity development....that leads to civil society influencing policies, practices and services that impact on the poor and marginalised. An Evaluation Framework was established that identified the key lines of enquiry and data sources to test the intervention logic and answer the evaluation questions in the terms of reference. Special attention was given to ensure that gender and social exclusion were considered at all stages of the evaluation.

It was agreed during inception phase that the population for the evaluation would be the 63 projects which started after the appointment of the Fund Manager in April 2010 and that, in place of country visits, the evaluation would conduct a documentary review of all 63 projects, supplemented by an in-depth analysis of 17 of these.

The evaluation adopted a staged approach to data collection and analysis in order to refine findings based on the evidence presented and to identify patterns and themes. The evaluation drew evidence from the following key sources:

- A documentary review of 63 projects from which project summaries were drafted in line with the evaluation lines of enquiry, and a more in-depth documentary review of 17 projects.

- Semi-structured interviews with 5 DFID Staff, 7 Fund Manager personnel, 16 Grantholders and 17 Implementing Partners.

- An online survey to Implementing Partners to which we received 38 responses from 35 organisations (a response rate of 56%).

- An online discussion platform with three guiding questions in which 11 Implementing Partners participated on-line or by email.

The evaluation developed a preliminary analysis derived from triangulating the material from several different data sources. These preliminary findings were shared with DFID and the Fund Manager in separate meetings prior to the delivery of a draft evaluation report.

The main limitations to the evaluation methodology have been how to identify a set of coherent themes among the diverse, complex approaches to capacity development adopted by CSCF projects; the variability of the quality of project monitoring data; the lack of access to primary data through country visits; the limited number of questions in the Implementing Partner survey (in order to encourage a good response rate); and a low-level response to the on-line discussion forum.

Fund Management

The evaluation found the outsourced fund management arrangements for CSCF to be effective. It was not asked to assess their cost effectiveness. The Fund Manager managed the grant cycle efficiently and provided good quality support to Grantholders to enable them to comply with changing monitoring and reporting guidance. DFID's changing policy priorities have largely driven the evolution of the Fund and has led to a somewhat 'extractive' approach to learning. A more collaborative approach with Grantholders and Partners would have helped to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of CSCF's approach to learning and capacity development.

A number of factors shaped the operating context of the CSCF subsequent to the appointment of the Fund Manager in April 2010 – for example, the introduction of new policy priorities by the new government in 2010; the decision in Autumn 2010 to close the fund in 2015; and the appointment of the CSCF Fund Manager to manage a new Civil Society Challenge Fund, the Global Poverty Action Fund, in December 2010. These factors have perhaps contributed to DFID and the Fund Manager envisaging the CSCF as a 'legacy' fund rather than a focus for innovation, for example, in new ways of working with Grantholders.

After some initial difficulties, the relationship between the Fund Manager and DFID achieved a satisfactory modus operandi. DFID's policy priorities have driven the Fund Manager's interpretation of its role and shaped its relationship with Grantholders. The Fund Manager has been efficient in operationalising DFID policy steers but has not been expected, nor able, to influence the priorities of the Fund itself.

The main focus of the Fund Manager's relationship with Grantholders was to ensure they had the guidance and support necessary to enable them to comply with the changing financial, monitoring and reporting requirements of CSCF, and that project logframes

were realistic in their objectives. At least seven changes to the monitoring and reporting systems of the fund were introduced during the evaluation period. These contributed to improved reporting at portfolio level and produced some 'spin off' benefits for programming. However, the number, nature and timing of these changes were a challenge for Grantholders and Implementing Partners, although they considered the support offered by the Fund Manager to implement the guidance to be very helpful. Gender and social inclusion have been considered at all levels of the fund management process including reporting and monitoring.

A focus on building Grantholder capacities in line with their fiduciary role may have reduced the opportunity to facilitate learning for improvement at project level. Grantholders and Implementing Partners expressed interest on several occasions in learning from each other's experiences. The use of a dedicated CSCF web-site and a thematic approach to learning, both of which would have facilitated peer learning, were suggested by the Fund Manager during the evaluation period but not operationalised.

CSCF has reported on its performance by aggregating project scores of logframe outputs and outcomes. The quality of the sources of evidence in support of these achievements was variable. The Fund Manager provided good support to Grantholders and Partners on logframe design and on the need for stronger evidence and results. Nonetheless, more specific guidance on tools and methodologies to gather evidence on the effectiveness of empowerment, awareness raising and capacity development activities would have contributed to a stronger evidence base for project and portfolio achievements.

The indirect funding of Southern CSOs

Implementing Partners, on the whole, valued their partnerships with UK Grantholders, and their role in channelling CSCF funds, as long as they added value to the project. The value the Grantholder added to the project was not easily discernible in CSCF reporting unless its contribution was included in the logframe e.g. as organisational development support to the partner. Nonetheless, the evaluation identified that CSCF Grantholders played a role in project oversight, project start up and design, accessing funds and in building the capacity of the Implementing Partners. The issue of accessing funding, though obvious, is relevant. Grantholders are the only conduit through which a considerable proportion of CSCF Southern Partners are likely to access DFID funding as 42% of the 63 projects in the evaluation portfolio were implemented in countries which do not have a local DFID office and where local CSOs are not eligible to apply for a UK Aid Direct Impact Grant.

The main role that Grantholders played is one of project oversight. This has two dimensions. First, Grantholders played a compliance role in ensuring that mandatory CSCF processes and standards were adhered to e.g. by quality assuring the financial and narrative reporting of partners. CSCF Grantholders have required considerable capacity development support from the Fund Manager to meet the growing expectations of this role. Second, Grantholders also performed a programmatic oversight role i.e. monitoring the progress the project and the performance of partners. Grantholders, through regular communications with the Implementing Partner, were able to identify and address challenges in the project as they arose – something which would be impossible for a UK-based Fund Manager to do at portfolio level.

Capacity Development

The main role Grantholders played in capacity development was to provide support to Implementing Partners to ensure they had the competencies to meet CSCF monitoring and reporting guidance. Most project capacity development activities, however, were focused at the 'point of delivery' with target groups, involving Collaborative Partners and

community networks. This involved a wide range of formal and informal approaches. The evaluation found evidence of these leading to successful civil society engagement with decision-makers but that more guidance and support should be offered on appropriate methodologies to gather evidence of attitude and behaviour change as a result of capacity development.

CSCF capacity development activities were diverse in their nature; often involved a wide range of actors; took place at different 'levels' of society; and involved a number of different methods to raise awareness, develop capacity, and mobilise citizens. Capacity development often consisted of a variety of approaches including formal training, peer learning, organisational development support, awareness raising, mentoring and 'learning by doing'.

Grantholders also provided training and support in other areas, particularly advocacy. It is difficult to assess the quality of this support unless it is included in the project logframe (which most often it was not).

Most capacity development activities focused on the interface with beneficiary and target groups and local leaders, and awareness raising was the most common approach adopted. Raising the awareness of beneficiary groups was associated with a process of empowerment aimed to harness their motivation for a course of action. Awareness raising activities were frequently the critical point of contact with beneficiary and target groups and local and/or national duty-bearers upon which successful outcomes depended.

Capacity development activities were often successful in achieving civil society engagement with decision-makers. However, the evaluation found that the use of indicators and sources of evidence to monitor the primary impact of capacity development activities on attitude and behaviour change was variable. For example, it was difficult to assess from documentary sources how often pre- and post-assessment methodologies were used.

Three key factors contributed to the success of CSCF project capacity development efforts:

- *Knowledge and familiarity with local networks* was an important foundation in nearly all projects reviewed. Many projects used local staff and/or established community networks early in the project to build relationships with key stakeholders and establish a conducive environment for project activities.

- *A clear focus for capacity building efforts*. The use of different capacity development approaches with diverse stakeholders was mutually reinforcing when the project had realistic goals, specific geographies, and identified target groups.

- *Flexibility to adapt plans* to the context and the needs and learning preferences of different groups. A number of projects needed to adapt their approach to a changing context which could increase support from and credibility with the community.

The three main barriers to successful capacity development were:

- *Political events and insecurity*. A number of projects reported that political events such as contested elections affected their work plans. In some cases e.g. in Mali and the Central African Republic, conflict-related insecurity required the project to close.

- *Government bureaucracy* at local or national level was reported by some projects as leading to delays in outputs.

- *Changes in key personnel* in government or the public sector can set back a project's progress through the loss of key relationships. Staff turnover in the health and education sector also undermined capacity development efforts.

Contribution to sustainability of Southern CSOs

Implementing Partners believed that the expertise and reputation they gained from managing a DFID-funded project increased the likelihood of their attracting further funding. However, the evidence of CSCF funding contributing to longer term financial sustainability is inconclusive. Only 2 of 17 projects subject to in-depth review reported in Project Completion Reports that they had been able to leverage CSCF funding to mobilise additional resources, although this might be under-reported.

Implementing Partners also referred to strengthened project management capacity in financial management, monitoring and reporting as contributing to their organisational sustainability. The majority of respondents to the Implementing Partner survey indicated that the changes they had experienced as a result of the projects were sustainable when these related to changes in organisational practices such as reporting, financial management and project planning. However, a mean average of 33% of budgets subject to in-depth review was allocated to the staffing and administrative costs of partners, including the hire of new staff, leaving some Partner Organisations vulnerable to losing skilled staff on project closure.

Civil Society engagement with decision-makers

The evaluation found considerable evidence of CSCF capacity development leading to civil society engagement at local and national level with decision-makers, and in policy dialogue and development. A large number of projects contributed to successful policy adoption although there were fewer cases of following through on policy implementation (not surprisingly in a three-five year funding period). CSCF projects that demonstrated policy achievements had often been working on the policy issue for several years and/or already had relationships with local partners with good links with the targeted communities. This enabled the projects to 'kick start' their activities on the basis of established expertise and known partnerships.

An important feature of successful policy engagement was the investment by the project in building relationships with decision-makers, including the direct involvement of beneficiary populations, to develop a collaborative approach to achieving project outcomes.

Several projects that achieved policy influence worked within a well-defined 'sphere of influence' and target population e.g. children with life-limiting illness or people affected by leprosy, within which the relevant decision-makers had some level of independence to act. Projects with a clearly defined focus were able to combine technical expertise and advocacy skills with a broader representative platform on a policy issue to access and influence decision-makers within their area of competence and sphere of influence and/or competence.

A number of projects sought to influence the implementation of existing policy or practice commitments - for example, in relation to health or education provision – capable of delivering benefits for target groups if effectively implemented. There is some evidence that practice changes at a sub-national level are likely to have a relatively quick (and sustained) impact on poor and marginalised people at sub-national level e.g. in relation to service delivery, if they conform to existing policy commitments and are embedded in the systems and structures of local public sector organisations.

The evaluation found that CSCF projects that built on a previous track record; adopted a collaborative approach to decision-makers; and focused their efforts within a clearly

defined 'sphere of influence' were able to influence the policy, professional and regulatory frameworks relevant to their policy issue with potentially lasting benefits for their target populations among the poor and marginalised.

It was not possible to analyse with confidence the size and characteristics of the CSCF beneficiary population at portfolio level, given the difficulties encountered in getting reliable, disaggregated data. The evaluation found, however, many positive examples of project impacts benefiting a diverse group of poor and marginalised including women, men, boys, girls, orphans and vulnerable children, Dalit children, people living with HIV and TB and people living with a disability.

Key lessons for Challenge Funds

- *Empowerment and advocacy still relevant.*

  Implementing Partners' affirmation of the relevance and importance of CSCF to their local context suggests that DFID should retain a facility to fund civil society engagement with decision makers. Such a facility would be reinforced by a public theory of change that explains how an independent, vocal civil society contributes to pro-poor outcomes.

- *Lasting impact within a defined 'sphere of influence'.*

  A number of CSCF projects working within a well-defined 'sphere of influence' succeeded in influencing the policy, professional and regulatory frameworks relevant to their targeted beneficiaries. This suggests that DFID should retain a facility to support smaller, more specialised Grantholders to promote policy and practice change within their area of competence.

- *Demonstrating capacity development as a change process.*

  Demonstrating the effectiveness of diverse, often informal capacity development approaches is a challenge. A Challenge Fund for smaller CSOs should provide support and guidance to Grantholders on the use of appropriate indicators and data collection tools to provide a robust evidence base for change through capacity development.

- *Demonstrating the added value of the UK intermediary role.*

  Implementing Partners on balance favoured the indirect nature of CSCF funding as long as Grantholders added value to the project. Challenge Funds supporting Southern civil society through UK CSOs should consider how their added value can be better defined, assessed and reported on so as to provide the rationale for indirect funding.

- *Balancing donor policy priorities with partnership.*

  A Challenge Fund for civil society should acknowledge the role that Grantholders and partners can play in ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of the support it provides. It may be worth considering a Steering or Advisory committee(s) for the Challenge Fund/s to help 'moderate' the different priorities and perspectives of stakeholders.

- *Open Calls favour smaller UK CSOs but need to avoid wasted effort.*

  Open Calls enable smaller CSOs to play to their strengths and avoid the 'mission drift' sometimes associated with thematic calls. This suggests that DFID should

retain an Open Call facility for smaller CSOs, although the grant approval process should be designed to minimise disappointment and wasted effort at proposal stage.

- *Inception phase critical to project design and ownership.*

  The early involvement of partners and target groups (including decision-makers) in project design helps to build ownership and ensure the relevance of the project. A formal inception phase – for example, to consult with partners and target groups on appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes and systems – would help set the foundations of a successful project.

- *A focus on improved reporting and performance*

  The primary focus of the Fund Manager's capacity building efforts with Grantholders was on building the key competencies relevant to CSCF monitoring and reporting guidance. Better reporting does not necessarily correlate to better programmes. A clear learning strategy for a Challenge Fund, developed in consultation with stakeholders, would clarify the target groups for learning processes and outputs and ensure capacity development and learning plans are targeted to improve project performance as well as reporting. The separation of learning processes from accountability reporting may enable projects to learn from the challenges and difficulties they face.

1. Introduction

1.1.   Background

The Civil Society Challenge Fund (CSCF)

The Civil Society Challenge Fund (CSCF) has been one of DFID's longest running challenge funds. It was created in 2000 to support UK based civil society organisations (CSOs) or Grantholders to strengthen and build the capacity of their Implementing Partners in the South to empower poor and marginalised people to affect the decisions that affected their lives.

The Challenge Fund provided grants to projects which were selected competitively on the basis of advertised criteria. Grantholders alongside their Implementing Partners were responsible for the design, implementation and reporting of their Projects.

Projects were supported for a maximum of five years with a DFID contribution of up to £500,000. By the end of the fund 526 projects had been funded: worth an approximate total of £141.5 million[1]. The decision was taken in 2010 to close the CSCF for new applications and a final round of projects was agreed in 2011 with the last of the projects ending in March 2015.

The CSCF was managed in-house by DFID's Civil Society Department (now called the Inclusive Societies Department) from 2000 until 2010 with Triple Line Consulting Ltd providing technical assistance. In 2010, following a competitive tendering process, Triple Line Consulting Ltd, in a joint venture with Crown Agents, was contracted to be the Fund Manager.

As the fund drew to a close, DFID commissioned IOD PARC to conduct a final evaluation to provide learning, with the primary audience being the Civil Society Team within DFID's Inclusive Societies Department. The Evaluation will also be disseminated to the Fund Manager, Grantholders and Partners and more broadly to support wider learning across the civil society sector.

1.2.   Evaluation Methodology

The Evaluation took place from January 2015 to June 2015. This section provides a summary of the Evaluation Team's methodological approach. The full evaluation methodology and framework can be found in Annex 5.

Terms of Reference

The objective of the final CSCF Evaluation was to "*Understand how the Civil Society Challenge Fund has contributed to improved capacity of southern civil society to engage in local and national decision making processes.*" The approach adopted by

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1 Terms of Reference: Independent Evaluation of DFID's Civil Society Challenge Fund 2014

the Evaluation Team was to provide evidence-based learning on the CSCF for the DFID Inclusive Societies Team relevant to future civil society funding mechanisms and, more broadly, to the Civil Society Sector.

The scope of the Evaluation was the period 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2015. It was agreed during the inception phase that the population for the evaluation was to be the 63 projects that started in 2010 after the appointment of the Fund Manager rather than the 142 projects that were managed during the period, some of which had been "inherited" by the Fund Manager. It was also agreed that, in place of country visits[2], the evaluation would conduct a portfolio-wide documentary review of the 63 projects, supplemented by an in-depth analysis of 17 projects.

The evaluation was not required to review the element of "building support for development" which had been part of the original CSCF objectives but latterly de-prioritised. The evaluation was also not asked to include feedback from end beneficiaries but the views of Implementing Partners were considered through the online survey, discussion forum, interviews and documentary review.

The key questions for the evaluation to address were as follow:

Table 1: Evaluation Questions from the Terms of Reference

	Evaluation Questions
Capacity Building	How was capacity built for engagement at local and national level in the areas of accountability, empowerment and advocacy, and what were the barriers and facilitators?
	How are CSCF Grantees engaging in local and national decision making and to what extent?
	What are the perceptions of capacity building among stakeholders?
Sustainability	To what extent have Southern CSOs been sustainable and why?
Indirect Funding	What are the lessons from the CSCF for funding indirectly to Southern CSOs?
	What worked and did not work and why?
	What are the fund management lessons?

The evaluation was also required to contribute to answering question 3 of the DFID Inclusive Society Team's overall evaluation strategy – *"What are the main factors in the development of an enabling environment for civil society?"*.

It was anticipated that the OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria of Relevance, Sustainability and Effectiveness would be incorporated into the evaluation questions above and these were used to frame the analysis in the Conclusion section of this report. The Evaluation Team was not required to look at Efficiency.

Approach

During the Inception Phase, the team of three reviewed key documents (a full bibliography can be found in Annex 3) and met with the Fund Manager and DFID for an initial briefing and to understand the requirements of the evaluation.

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[2] See Annex 5 for further details.

The team adopted a theory based methodology. An Evaluation Framework was drafted that identified the key lines of enquiry and data sources relevant to answering the evaluation questions in the ToR. The team then developed an implicit intervention logic for the CSCF consisting of seven pillars represented in the diagram below. From this the team developed some working hypotheses for each pillar that correlated with the questions in the evaluation framework. The intervention logic acted as a bridge from the CSCF theory of change statement in the ToR to the evaluation framework.

Figure 1: CSCF Evaluation Intervention Logic
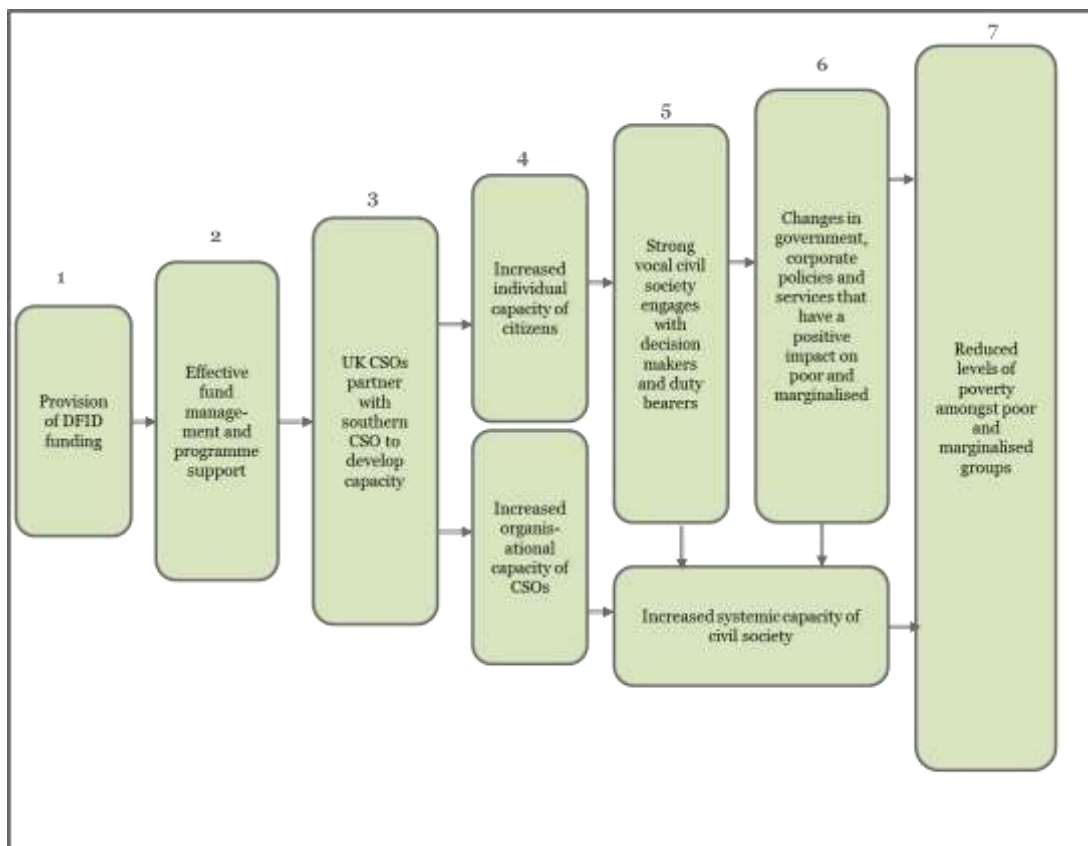
The scope of the evaluation was framed by pillars two to five. The working hypotheses for each of the relevant pillars in the intervention logic were used to guide the enquiry. These were:

Pillar 2: Outsourced fund management provides an effective means – through grant management and programme support systems and processes – of delivering the Fund's objectives;

Pillar 3: UK CSO partnerships with Southern CSOs provide an effective means of channelling funds to strengthen Southern civil society;

Pillar 4: The capacity development provided through these Partnerships will be relevant to and effective in strengthening civil society capacity at individual, organisational and systemic levels;

Pillar 5: The resulting improvements in capacity will result in increased engagement in local and national decision-making and policy and practice changes that impact positively on poor women and men.

These working hypotheses were cross referenced to the Evaluation Framework (see Annex 5) derived from the evaluation questions in the terms of reference.

The team's definition of capacity development encapsulated three levels to capture the complexity of capacity building approaches employed by the funded projects. These were:

- *The individual level* e.g. the development of individual skills and expertise through participation in training courses, workshops, communities of practice, South-South learning initiatives, mentoring, coaching and other methods.

- *The organisational level* e.g. the development of an organisation's capacity in terms of its procedures, systems, policies and culture. This in turn refers to its organisational sustainability.

- *The systemic/societal level* e.g. changes in societal values, customs, laws, policies and system of governance. This level is sometimes equated with the development of an enabling environment for civil society[3].

Data gathering and analysis

The Evaluation Team used a mixed methods approach which was primarily qualitative and structured the enquiry around the working hypotheses which related to pillars in the intervention logic. A staged approach to data collection and analysis was used which enabled the team to refine findings based on the evidence presented and identified patterns and themes. The team considered gender and social inclusion as an analytical lens throughout, where possible considering who was benefiting and what factors aided this.

The team conducted an initial review of 63 projects to identify potential learning relating to the hypotheses. This was followed by a more in-depth review of a purposive sample of 17 projects to draw out further lessons relating to the evaluation questions and hypotheses. See Annex 10 for details of the 17 projects subject to in-depth review and a full list of all 63 projects. The evaluation drew evidence from the following key sources:

- A wide ranging review of CSCF documents including Annual Reports, internal reports, guidance notes, portfolio analyses, Grantholder survey, the previous Evaluation report, and other sources.

- A documentary review of 63 projects from which project summaries were drafted in line with the evaluation lines of enquiry. This included a review of proposals, budgets, Annual and Project Completion Reports, logframes, appraisal and feedback documents, Evaluations and Mid Term Evaluations and supplementary document provided by the project Grantholder or staff.

- A more in-depth documentary review of 17 projects from the portfolio. The team adopted a purposive sampling method to select the 17 projects. On the

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[3] The OECD focuses specifically on an enabling environment as the third level of capacity development. See the OECD Journal on Development, "The challenge of capacity development : Working towards good practice" Volume 8, Issue 3 p14

basis of their project summaries, the team selected 17 projects which offered insight into the evaluation questions and hypotheses, while ensuring that both large and small Grantholders were included and that projects illustrated a range of capacity building approaches and diverse end beneficiaries.

- Semi-structured interviews with 5 DFID Staff, 7 Fund Manager personnel, 16 Grantholders and 17 Implementing Partner Organisations.

- An online Survey to the Implementing Partners to which 38 response were received from 35 organisations (a response rate of 56%). The findings of these can be found in Annex 7.

- An online Discussion Platform with three guiding questions in which 11 Implementing Partners participated on-line or by email. Further details are provided in Annex 8.

Triangulation was an important element of the methodology. This was to ensure that evidence was robust and validated from different sources and was based on several different data sources including interviews, surveys and independent evaluations.

The evaluation developed a preliminary analysis derived from triangulating the material from several different data sources. The preliminary findings were shared with DFID and the Fund Manager in separate meetings prior to delivery of a draft evaluation report.

Methodological Challenges

The Evaluation Team encountered a number of methodological challenges:

- The CSCF is comprised of diverse projects working in different countries, in different sectors and with diverse types of organisations. As noted in the Inception Report, this has made generalisations difficult. The team has sought to identify patterns and themes instead where they could be inferred from the data.

- Context for each project is varied and we have not addressed this given that the specific requirements of the evaluation are concerned with generic learning.

- As the main focus of the evaluation, it has also been difficult to identify capacity development themes as Grantholders have reported and interpreted activities and outcomes differently.

- The quality of evidence, monitoring and data sources and data has varied across the projects.

- Whilst the Survey was well received with 38 responses, there was a lower level of participation with the Online Discussion with 3 Implementing Partners participating online and a further 8 having participating offline (i.e. by email). We have therefore included some of the email exchanges that resulted from the Online Discussion prompt in our analysis.

- In order to ensure a high volume of responses to the survey we kept the questions to a minimum. Whilst this resulted in a higher response rate, it limited the number of questions asked.

Definition of Stakeholders

For the purpose of clarity, the following definitions of terms are:

The Fund Manager	The Triple Line Consulting ltd and Crown Agents Consortium
Grantholder	A UK civil society organisation who has received funds as part of the CSCF
Implementing Partner	A southern civil society organisation that manages project funds and play a prominent role in project management and delivery.
Collaborative Partner	A southern civil society organisation that plays a key role in coordinating and supporting the delivery of the project but do not directly manage project funds.
Target Group	Those groups or individuals that are the primary focus for capacity development activities.
Beneficiaries	Those groups that are expected to benefit most directly from successful project outcomes.

Each project was provided with a reference number by the Fund Manager, and for ease of reading we have used this in the text. Annex 10 provides a full list of the names of each of the projects referenced in this report.

The report is structured following the pillars in the intervention logic with Chapters corresponding to the different pillars, where:

Chapter 2 focuses on lessons about fund management (pillar 2)

Chapter 3 focuses on the UK Grantholder's partnership with Southern Partners to develop capacity (pillar 3)

Chapter 4 focuses on the capacity development as a pathway to change (pillar 4)

Chapter 5 focuses on the extent to which this has contributed to stronger civil society and engagement with decision makers and systemic capacity (pillars 5 and 6)

Chapter 6 provides a conclusion structured by the OECD DAC criteria.

Chapter 7 provides some broader lessons for DFID Inclusive Societies Department that have been developed from the analysis.
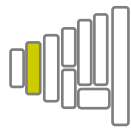
2. CSCF Fund Management[4]

Evaluation Question: What are the fund management lessons?

This chapter corresponds to the second pillar of the intervention logic for the CSCF whose hypothesis is that outsourced fund management provides an effective means – through grant management and programme support systems and processes – of delivering the Fund's objectives.

The evaluation found the outsourced fund management arrangements for CSCF to be effective. It was not required to consider their cost effectiveness. The Fund Manager managed the grant cycle efficiently and provided good quality support to Grantholders to enable them to comply with changing monitoring and reporting guidance. DFID's changing policy priorities largely drove the evolution of the Fund and led to a somewhat 'extractive' approach to learning. A more collaborative approach with Grantholders and partners would have helped to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of CSCF's approach to learning and capacity development.

2.1. Relationship management

This section considers the two key relationships of the Fund Manager - its relationships with DFID and with Grantholders – and how the former has influenced the latter.

Key findings:
- Changing policy priorities in DFID largely drove the priorities in fund management, with implications for Grantholder and Implementing Partner reporting. The Fund Manager was less able to influence DFID in some areas of fund management.
- The DFID/Fund Manager relationship achieved a satisfactory modus operandi with good working systems in place, after some initial difficulties.
- The Fund Manager relationship with Grantholders also improved. Grantholders appreciated the Fund Manager's guidance and support on CSCF financial, monitoring and reporting requirements.

The Relationship with DFID

The relationship between the Fund Manager and DFID faced some initial challenges in 2010/11. Both had been familiar with a different set of working arrangements used since 2003 and each had to adapt to new roles in the management of the CSCF. In addition, the operating context of the Fund had changed[5] significantly since the 2009 Terms of Reference for the fund management. As might be expected, the first year of the new management arrangements also presented some challenges in the handover of projects from DFID to the Fund Manager[6].

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[4] This section loosely follows the core functions of managing a Challenge Fund as identified in a recent Practice Paper published by Triple Line and the University of Bath "Considerations for Challenge Fund Management: Practice Brief" Triple Line, University of Bath, October 2014.
[5] CSCF Annual Report FY 2010-11
[6] CSCF Annual Report FY 2000-11 identifies challenges including transfer of grant files, status of grant payments, summary of grant status, financial reporting requirements and requests etc.

The evidence suggests[7] that 2012 was a watershed year for the Fund Manager when DFID expectations of the management of the fund, particularly in relation to monitoring and reporting, were clarified; a new *modus operandi* with quarterly and Annual Reports and bi-monthly bilateral meetings was established; and new Terms of Reference, as part of a contract extension for the management of the fund were agreed. These more clearly defined DFID's objectives in outsourcing CSCF Fund Management and communicated its changing policy priorities to the Fund Manager. Both sets of stakeholders reported that the relationship strengthened since that time and that roles and responsibilities were more clearly defined.

Although DFID has commented that it could have been more proactive in some instances[8], the Fund Manager was generally responsive to DFID's changing priorities. For example, the Fund Manager adapted the CSCF reporting format to facilitate aggregate reporting; introduced a new approach to Risk Assessment; and incorporated new reporting requirements such as Value for Money and beneficiary numbers.

The Fund Manager has been less successful in influencing DFID in some areas of fund management. For example, the Fund Manager proposed a learning and communications strategy for the fund in 2012 which was not adopted. DFID has retained final decision-making authority over CSCF decisions and maintained an active oversight of the Fund which included quite detailed prescriptions, for example, in relation to the monitoring and reporting of results. Interviews with DFID and Fund Manager staff revealed that differences in expectations with regard to the degree of initiative the Fund Manager was expected to exercise were adequately resolved. This was perhaps reflected in the 2014 Grantholder Survey which registered a good understanding of the Fund Manager's roles but noted a lack of clarity about the role distinction between DFID and Fund Manager[9].

Relationship with Grantholders

The relationship between the Fund Manager and Grantholders was initially seen as rather "top-down"[10] by the latter who found a lack of consistency of contact people in the Fund Manager frustrating[11]. Evidence from interviews and reports suggested that the relationship evolved in a positive direction after 2011. The designation in 2012 of thematic leads for projects contributed to improving the relationship by providing contact people for Grantholders who understood the project context; could offer useful suggestions with regard to CSCG guidance; and provided continuity in correspondence[12].

By 2014, 85% of respondents in the 2014 Grantholder survey noted that they were happy with the way in which the Fund Manager communicated DFID priorities and other information. Nearly two thirds of Grantholders reported that they had received help from the Fund Manager regarding problems or issues. Most Grantholders reported that they were satisfied with the feedback received from the Fund Manager

Key dates

April 2010: Fund Manager appointed.

May 2010: New government takes office. New set of policy priorities introduced.

Autumn 2010: decision to close the CSCF in 2015.

December 2010: new Civil Society Challenge Fund, GPAF created.

December 2010: Fund Manager was appointed to manage GPAF.

An evolving relationship

2010/11 CSCF Annual Report defers to DFID for a number of decisions e.g. "proposed content of the M&E seminar". 2011/12 CSCF Annual Report notes cross-checking with DFID has been reduced and Fund Manager making more day-to-day decisions. 2013/14 Annual Report focuses on the management of the fund, with less explicit reference to decisions required from DFID.

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[7] Interviews, CSCF Annual Reports, Fund Manager ToRs
[8] Interviews with DFID staff involved in the Fund. An example that was provided was that the when a new policy priority such as disability was introduced, the Fund Manager did not automatically incorporate it into their approach.
[9] Grantholder Survey Feb 2014
[10] Grantholder Survey Feb 2014
[11] Interviews with Grantholders
[12] Evidence from interviews and Grantholder survey, although it is noted that the 2015 Bond survey to CSCF, GPAF and CEC Grantholders noted that Triple Line was criticised for not giving Grantholders a single name (this may be related to the GPAF)

in response to the Annual Reports[13]. Reports were reviewed quickly and comments were generally helpful and prompt. Some concerns were expressed about delays regarding decisions, changes and amendments, and not having a way to contact DFID if they were unhappy with decisions made. This generally positive picture was supported by the Evaluation Team's interviews with Grantholders who valued the feedback from the Fund Manager on narrative reporting and noted that one-to-one support was appreciated when it had been given[14].

The Partner Survey conducted by the evaluation indicated that a number of partners would have liked more direct contact with the Fund Manager, for example, by someone from the team visiting each project at least once in a project's life-time.

The Fund Manager has played an important role in relaying DFID's expectations of CSCF monitoring and reporting to Grantholders and Implementing Partners, and following through with support to them. The intensity and timing of these changes were a source of some tension with Grantholders and Implementing Partners who highlighted the strain they placed on their human and financial resources[15]. These changing expectations not only shaped the Fund Manager's capacity development and communications efforts with Grantholders and Implementing Partners but influenced the relationship between them. The evidence from interviews with Grantholders suggests that they would have preferred more a collaborative approach with the Fund Manager in which they were more able to influence the agenda.

Key Lessons
- Donor policy priorities will tend to shape the priorities and approach of fund management (particularly when it is single donor and in the host country). Within those parameters, the professional expertise of the Fund Manager should be enabled to significantly add value to the approach of the fund.

- The role of the Fund Manager as interlocutor between donor and Grantholders requires it to be an 'honest broker' and not just a link in a downward command system. Finding ways for Grantholders to contribute to a shared agenda with the Fund Manager could create opportunities for learning and synergy.

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[13] Grantholder survey 2014. This was also noted in "At project end: what Grantholders say they learned" KTP, April 2015.
[14] At project end: What Grantholders say they learned" KTP, April 2015.
[15] Partner, Grantholder Interviews and "At project end: what Grantholders say they learned" KTP, April 2015 which noted that little advance-warning of template changes made quality and consistency of reporting difficult, setting word limits was limiting, stressful and cumbersome, and PCR required more time than was provided.

2.2. Grant Management

> **Key Findings:**
> - Open Calls were appreciated by UK CSOs as enabling them to play to their strengths, although a low approval rate of developed proposals was a potentially costly process for those involved.
> - Diligent risk management became an increasingly important element of the fund management. It helped to improve the performance of weaker projects but may have indirectly inhibited learning.
> - After some initial tensions, CSCF financial management was efficient and helpful (although demanding of Grantholders and Implementing Partners), and supplemented its risk management approach.
> - Grantholders and Implementing Partners would have appreciated greater flexibility in financial management to reflect the unpredictable contexts that many projects face.

Grant Selection

The Fund Manager managed two application rounds following its appointment. The open nature of the Calls was appreciated by Grantholders and Implementing Partners interviewed since they allowed UK CSOs, a significant proportion of whom are small, comparatively specialised CSOs[16], to play to their strengths without obliging them to adapt their mission to a more thematic focus. The 2010 Evaluation Report had recommended that small organisations should be helped to better access the CSCF funding.

The application and selection process was comprehensive. Grants applications were assessed by a team of pre-trained consultants and selected on the basis of criteria outlined in a guidance note[17]. CSCF applicant guidelines included criteria for how decisions were made on both concept notes and proposals for applicants.

It is noticeable that less than a quarter of proposals submitted from concept note were funded in the 2009 and 2010 Calls. (35% and 36% of concept notes respectively were invited to submit a proposal.) Such a rejection rate at proposal stage was costly for the Fund Manager, in terms of the appraisal process, and for the UK CSO and Southern CSOs in terms of the time involved in proposal development. It may also have been a disincentive for smaller CSOs with fewer resources to dedicate to proposal development.

Grant approval was followed by an introduction to grant management policies and procedures, financial management and reporting and supported with further refinements to the logframe[18]. A Grantholder feedback survey found that the majority of Grantholders had been helped "very well" by the Fund Manager or "quite well" with 62.5% of respondents noting that their logframes were significantly improved as a result of the inception meeting[19]. A recent compilation of insights

Some potential ways to address high rejection rates:

Holding sessions on proposal writing (as was done by Fund Manager)

Including one to one sessions with each project to improve proposal

More stringent requirements at concept note stage.

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[16] 24 of the 63 projects that formed part of the evaluation portfolio had an annual turnover of less than £2million; 22 had a turnover of between £2 and £5 million. The evaluation would categorise nearly half of 46 organisations involved as having a specialised focus.
[17] CN 2009 and 2011 CN Step by Step Guide; Step by Step Guide for Proposal Appraisal 2011 Round, Fund Manager
[18] 2010/11 and 2011/12 CSCF Annual Reports
[19] 68% of the 23 respondents said that the consultant helped them "very well"; 28% quite well (2011-12 CSCF Annual Report)

from Grantholders[20] noted their suggestion to include and provide support at the project initiation phase.

Risk Management

Risk management has been integral to CSCF fund management and reporting since a "proactive management approach"[21] was developed in FY 2012/13 in response to DFID's request for greater scrutiny and oversight of projects which gave cause for concern. Key aspects of risk management included:

- Projects experiencing difficulties were placed on a high risk project register.

- Grantholders on the register were offered support and monitored more closely.

- The progress of at-risk projects was monitored at bi-monthly meetings with DFID.

- At-risk projects were candidates for Quality Assurance Visits (QAV). The Fund Manager aimed to visit 10% of the project portfolio in a financial year.

- A financial audit of 15% of the CSCF portfolio was conducted every quarter and financial capacity building support made available if required.

There is evidence that the CSCF approach to risk management helped to support weaker projects a number of whose performance scores were upgraded over time[22]. DFID, the Fund Manager and Grantholders worked together to resolve problems and find a way to allow the project to continue. A diligent approach to risk management by the CSCF may have had other consequences:

- Highlighting risk management in project monitoring may inhibit learning opportunities. At risk projects, for example, were more likely to receive a Quality Assurance Visit[23] and better performing projects may have had less opportunity to engage with the Fund Manager. Secondly, CSCF reporting allowed for project concerns and challenges to be identified under Risk Management. There is some evidence[24] that this acted as a disincentive to Grantholders to identify difficulties in the project so as not to be automatically put on the 'at risk register'.

- Aversion to risk may over-ride project preferences. A CSCF project in Mali was closed down due to the deteriorating security situation. Although in line with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice, this was contrary to the local advice of the project. Two respondents in the Implementing Partner survey suggested that CSCF should respond and adapt to crises rather than close down projects.

Managing risk in a crisis: the case of Mali.

In January 2013, following the French intervention in Northern Mali, DFID requested that the CSCF project (530) be closed with immediate effect. Partners felt that the decision to close the programme was taken unilaterally after some earlier flexibility. The Grantholder, partners and local mayors made representation to DFID that the situation was stabilising.

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[20] At project end: What Grantholders say they learned" KTP, April 2015.
[21] Agreed with DFID in Sept 2011. Details of the Proactive Management Approach can be found in CSCF Annual Report FY 2011-12 Figure 4.
[22] In the evaluation portfolio of 63 projects, 16 projects that scored B or C in an AR improved to A by the PCR or subsequent ARs and 11 did not improve.
[23] In 2013/14 2 projects had been "randomly selected" for visits. The rest were at risk projects.
[24] Grant Holder interviews.

Financial management

Grantholders and Implementing Partners reported some discomfort over the tone of communications on financial issues in the first year[25]. This reflected the pressure on the part of the Fund Manager to establish a uniform, comprehensive approach to financial reporting that satisfied the new fund requirements.

The level of financial scrutiny of CSCF projects increased during the evaluation period. Each project was provided with a value for money score, finance rating and feedback. Regular, frequent financial audits helped identify which organisations required financial capacity building[26].

Grantholders considered the Fund Manager approach to financial management to have been efficient in disbursing funds and constructive in helping to develop their own capacity in financial management[27] and reporting. Grantholders however identified three issues with regard to flexibility in CSCF financial management which may have been beyond the ability of the Fund Manager to resolve:

- Grantholders valued the ability to carry over funds if there was programmatic rationale to do so[28]. Permission to carry over funds varied during the evaluation period, being allowed in FY 2011/12 but not in FY 2013/14.

- There was some flexibility to move funds between budget lines but greater flexibility would have been appreciated. Grantholders and Implementing Partners commented in interviews that they had not been able to reallocate funds within the budget to meet the increased CSCF monitoring and reporting requirements (although they were encouraged to use the Building Support for Development budget line to support increased reporting costs)[29].

- Grantholders also observed that the lack of contingency funds, given the challenging contexts that many projects faced, limited the ability of CSCF to respond and support projects experiencing unanticipated scenarios.

Key Lessons

- Open Calls may be more favourable to smaller UK CSOs than thematic Calls.
- Grant selection processes should seek to minimise the failure rate at proposal stage to avoid wasted effort e.g. through more stringent short listing of Concept Notes.
- Effective risk management can improve the performance of weaker projects but a formalised approach to putting projects on an 'at risk register' on the basis of their reporting may discourage early warning of challenges. Risk management should not preclude support to stronger as well as "at risk" projects.
- Challenge Funds require some level of discretional financial flexibility, subject to the boundaries established by Treasury guidelines and for accurate forecasting, to respond to the unpredictability of projects working in challenging environments.

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[25] Interviews, 2014 Grantholder survey
[26] CSCF Annual Report FY 2013/14
[27] At project end: What Grantholders say they learned" KTP, April 2015, CSCF Partner Survey 2014 and interviews
[28] Interviews and the Partner Survey
[29] A recommendation from the Kenya Learning Visit was that future DFID civil society challenge funds should allocate budget funds proportionate to its M&E expectations and/or maintain a supplementary fund to invest in project capacity if M&E demands increase.

2.3 Capacity development of the Grantholders

> *Key Findings:*
> - Fund Manager capacity development support to Grantholders focused mainly on the skills required to comply with CSCF monitoring and reporting guidance but brought some programmatic benefits.
> - Developing the capacity of Grantholders to use appropriate tools and methodologies to monitor and report on the effectiveness of empowerment, awareness raising and capacity development activities would have contributed to a stronger evidence base for the Fund's achievements.

The role of the Fund Manager in strengthening the capacity of the Grantholders was poorly defined in the 2009 ToR (which focused on reporting process[30]) and in the 2012 ToR which broadened its role to provide proactive and reactive help, assistance, guidance and advice to Grantholders and their Partners[31]. The Fund Manager's approach to capacity development evolved in response to DFID's increased expectations of project monitoring and reporting in a number of areas. As a result the Fund Manager concentrated most of its efforts in strengthening Grantholder capacity to fulfil their fiduciary role, including support on logframe development, value for money, financial management, M&E, and annual and final reporting.

There is evidence that Fund Manager capacity development efforts, albeit mostly on compliance with CSCF guidance on reporting, delivered other benefits for Grantholders, for example:

- Some Grantholders acknowledged in interviews that grant management competences would be useful in future funding applications. Some - for example, WOMANKIND Worldwide - graduated to become a PPA strategic partner.

- Grantholders found the inclusion of gender mainstreaming as a reporting requirement, and Fund Manager feedback in this area, improved their and their Implementing Partner's programming. To a lesser extent, the inclusion of beneficiary feedback in CSCF reporting also raised Grantholder and partner awareness of the importance of consulting with beneficiaries. The involvement of beneficiaries in project design was identified as an area that requires further guidance.

The evaluation's in-depth project review concluded that Grantholders would have benefited from Fund Manager guidance and capacity development in establishing a robust evidence base for project achievements. In particular, tools for monitoring and reporting on changes in attitude and behaviour in target groups, such as Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Surveys, may have had a wider usefulness. This point was reinforced by participants in the Kenya Learning visit which cited measuring attitude and behaviour change as a challenge requiring technical expertise that could be bought in if supplementary funds were available. More targeted capacity building in this area would have helped to provide a stronger body of evidence on the effectiveness of different development approaches.

Building the capacity of Grantholders and partners

One to one support e.g. logframe;

Roundtable seminars e.g. on M&E, VfM & reporting;

Phone and email helpdesk (mainly on reporting guidance);

Annual feedback on project reporting/performance;

Webinars.

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[30] 2009 ToR for CSCF Fund Management. Fund Manager to provide M&E seminars and answer adhoc requests regarding reporting formats and payment processes
[31] PO 5336 CSCF ToR for extension

> **Key Lessons**
>
> The development of Grantholder capacity should include appropriate methodologies for gathering evidence of the impact of empowerment, capacity development and advocacy.

2.4. Gender and Social Inclusion

> *Key Findings:*
>
> - Gender and social inclusion were increasingly (and appropriately) considered at all levels across the fund management process including reporting and monitoring.
> - Gender and social inclusion were incorporated in project implementation and evident in the selection of target beneficiaries.

How the Fund Manager helped projects consider gender and social exclusion is an important element in understanding the effectiveness of fund management since the CSCF was explicitly targeted at poor and marginalised groups[32].

A review of the CSCF processes from concept note to project completion showed that gender and social inclusion was considered at all of these stages. Examples include asking for sex disaggregated data in reporting; questions about gender and social inclusion at in the Project Completion Report; questions about gender mainstreaming in partner organisations; a requirement for gender analysis and break down of target groups in the Evaluation Guidelines; and feedback on gender and social inclusion in feedback letters. At the proposal appraisal stage projects must also demonstrate how they will address gender equality, and how they have considered the needs of disabled people, people living with HIV and AIDS, children, youth and older people[33]. A Gender and Social Inclusion Practice Brief was produced in 2013; and Social Inclusion is included as a specific thematic area as well as cross-cutting issue for the Fund.

Gender and Social Inclusion

Sex disaggregated data is required, questions about gender and social inclusion and gender mainstreaming in partner organisations are all required in reporting.

The extent to which CSCF projects adopted an inclusive approach varied between projects. Some projects focused on reaching numerical targets for women while others adopted a more analytical approach to gender and social inclusion. This highlights the need for partners to develop a capacity for gender and social inclusion analysis that goes beyond numerical targeting.

> **Key Lesson**
>
> Including gender and social inclusion in the reporting formats encourages Grantholders and partners to consider these important issues, and should be accompanied by training on gender and social inclusion analysis.

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[32] Defined as disabled, street children, women, people living with HIV and AIDS, indigenous people, small producers etc. in the CSCF logframe

[33] CSCF Step by Step guide Proposal Appraisal 2010-2011

2.5. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Key Findings

- Frequent changes to project level monitoring and reporting guidance helped improve CSCF reporting at portfolio level but were less successful in identifying clear project narrative/s that provided insights into what works well where.
- The success of CSCF projects and portfolio was measured by scoring project achievements to logframe outputs and outcomes. The quality of the sources of evidence in support of these achievements was variable and could be improved.
- The CSCF approach to learning, with the exception of country learning visits, tended to be focused at portfolio level, reducing the opportunities to facilitate learning for improvement between projects.

CSCF monitoring, evaluation and learning took place at three interlinked levels: *Fund Management, Portfolio* and *Project Level.*

Fund management level

Monitoring and reporting: DFID monitors the effectiveness of CSCF fund management through quarterly and Annual Reports and key performance indicators, most of which related to grant administration rather than, for example, the Fund Manager's role in improving project quality. DFID feedback to CSCF Annual Reports primarily focused on the reporting rather than the fund management process[34].

Learning: Lesson learning on the fund management process was a feature of the CSCF but became more evident as the fund drew to a close. The end of project meeting notes included a section on lessons for the Fund Manager and this played a prominent part in the 2013/14 AR. Some of this learning was fed into the CSCF processes through recommendations to DFID[35] and through adapting reporting formats. Fund Manager staff also emphasised the degree to which CSCF learning was incorporated into the design of GPAF – for example, the concept of a comprehensive inception phase; and the role of peer learning in a clear learning agenda.

"GPAF was a clean slate and was only possible because of the efforts put into CSCF".

Source: Interviewee

The focus on learning about CSCF fund management reflected the broader interest of the Fund Manager in Challenge Fund management through the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP)[36]. This joint initiative has produced a number of Practice Notes on the issues facing Challenge Funds. Given DFID's role in the CSCF, the role of donors in domestic civil society Challenge Funds could be a topic for a Practice Note[37] in the future.

Portfolio level

Monitoring: A recent KTP Practice Note summarises succinctly the dilemma facing aggregated monitoring and reporting at portfolio level.

"There is a perception that development partners crave both a simple performance narrative (i.e., percentage of projects meeting or failing to meet expectations), and a more in depth account of what is being achieved in a compelling format.

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[34] CSCF Annual Report Feedback 2012-13

[35] For example the 2013/14 Annual Report outlines lessons learned around the CSCF carry over policy and this is followed by a specific recommendation to DFID.

[36] Since 2002, Triple Line and Crown Agents in joint venture have managed 3 Challenge Funds (the CSCF; the Additional Support to Civil Society and the Global Poverty Action Fund; and Triple Line has managed one Fund, the Development Awareness Fund (DAF).

[37] Triple Line is a member of the *Knowledge Transfer Partnership* with University of Bath which has produced a number of Practice Notes on Challenge Funds with lessons for the sector.

Aggregating project performances with grade scores loses the contextual richness of project progress. Trying to report on all the nuances of every project makes for a disorganised narrative that is difficult to comprehend. Where is the middle ground?"[38]

Since 2012, reports on CSCF performance at portfolio level have been in the format of:

- The Portfolio Analysis, developed in 2012 in response to a DFID request for a simpler form of reporting tracking portfolio performance, which provided a predominantly quantitative overview CSCF performance at an aggregate level.

- The CSCF Annual Report which included information on project performance in specific areas such as beneficiary feedback mechanisms; quality of evidence; and included details of the high risk project register.

- The CSCF Logframe which was introduced in 2012.

Overall CSCF performance was monitored using the DFID scoring system introduced in 2010/11. Project performance was graded according to its performance against outputs during the lifetime of the project and performance against outcomes by the end of the project, and grades were aggregated at portfolio level. The reliable aggregation of project performance was dependent on the quality of evidence upon which scoring was based. The Fund Manager reported that the quality of evidence for project achievements across the portfolio was generally good, or at least adequate[39].

However, the practical and methodological difficulties in gathering reliable monitoring data for CSCF projects were considerable. For example:

- CSCF assessors did not review the primary sources of evidence but relied on project reporting. The only means of independent verification of results were the independent final evaluation and quality assurance visits (QAV).

- Project capacity to collect monitoring data varied considerably. For example, it was sometimes collected by volunteers or public sector staff and its reliability was dependent on their motivation, availability and level of skill.

- There is some evidence of inconsistency in project reporting to CSCF formats, For example, when reports offered multiple options e.g. on type of capacity building, some projects selected all options, others only some. As the options were not weighted, it was difficult to infer the primary focus of capacity development.

- The quality and reliability of sources of evidence cited in project logframes - critical in assessing changes in attitude, behaviour, understanding or skill as a result of capacity development - was variable. This is explored further in Section 4.1.

2013/14 Portfolio analysis noted that 19 of the 32 ongoing projects had good quality evidences, 10 adequate, 1 weak and 2 very good[1].

Characteristics of successful projects

Combine advocacy for policy/practice change and innovative service delivery; build the capacity of partner organisations; use rights-based approaches to achieve impact; produce clear evidence of outcomes; represent good value for money.

2012 Annual Report FY 2011/12:

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[38] "Realising the Potential of International Development Challenge Funds: Lessons from Practitioners", Triple Line, University of Bath, February 2015.

[39] 2013/14 Portfolio analysis identified 21 of 32 ongoing projects as having good or very good quality of evidence based on the BOND principles of good quality evidence.

Learning: The importance of learning at portfolio level emphasised the need to strengthen the evidence base for communicating results[40]. As a result, CSCF reporting formats were progressively amended to facilitate aggregate learning and reporting on key performance dimensions. The annual Portfolio Analysis, the most frequently quoted compilation of learning at portfolio level, offered a useful summary of the characteristics and performance of the CSCF project portfolio and is readily accessible in graphic form. It summarised a number of "useful lessons" but the information provided was too cursory to be a prompt to learning or knowledge sharing.

The annual Country Learning Visits - Nepal (2012), India (2012), Kenya (2013), Uganda (2014) and Tanzania (2015) - were key to CSCF learning. The Uganda and Tanzania visits involved both CSCF and GPAF partners. The Country Learning Visits reports, while their primary audience was the project staff in-country, were the main vehicle by which project-based learning directly involving the experiences of partners was made available across the portfolio to other projects. A number of other learning products were developed at country level of wider interest such as a report on the enabling environment for civil society in Uganda.

The Fund Manager recently extracted some useful qualitative learning at a portfolio level from a textual analysis of 44 end of project meetings with Grantholders[41]. This drew out learning related to programme approaches; M&E; partnerships and relationships; gender equality and women's empowerment; project administration; and included suggestions for DFID and the Fund Manager.

Project Level

This report has noted previously how increased monitoring and reporting expectations have shaped the evolution of the Fund. CSCF introduced up to seven new areas of reporting since 2010/11[42] which required the Fund Manager to ensure that Grantholders were familiar with and have the capacity to meet reporting guidance. Managing the balance between DFID reporting requirements and the capacity of smaller CSOs was difficult to maintain.

Monitoring: CSCF had a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process at project level which included annual reporting (financial, logframe, risk matrices and narrative), quality assurance visits, end of project evaluations and project completion reports. The Fund Manager provided feedback on Annual Reports and on the expected improvements in reporting to logframe that needed to be made.

The evidence[43] suggests that Grantholders and partners saw CSCF reporting as serving the accountability needs of the donor but not doing adequate justice to the project narrative and learning. This sense of a disjointed project narrative perhaps reflects reporting formats being progressively amended to facilitate aggregate reporting. The time spent by Grantholders and Implementing Partners in reporting and the Fund Manager in assessing those reports was considerable so the utility of the reports to different stakeholders should be carefully considered.

Seven new areas of CSCF reporting since 2010/11:

Quarterly reporting on compliance with conditions of grant;

International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI);

Value for money;

Evidence to support statements of progress;

Disaggregated beneficiary numbers;

Beneficiary feedback mechanisms;

Environmental impact.

Source: The 2014 Kenya Learning Visit Report.

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[40] "In the remaining years a key focus should be to learn lessons from the fund and strengthen the evidence across the portfolio........" DFID 2012 Annual Review of CSCF p15 The 2014 Appraisal Guidance Note notes that the CSCF (as DFID's longest running challenge fund) makes an "important contribution to DFID's evidence base".

[41] At project end: What Grantholders say they learned" KTP, April 2015.

[42] Kenya Learning Visit.

[43] Interviews, evaluation partner survey, "At project end: What Grantholders say they learned" KTP 2015.

A clear benefit of the emphasis on reporting is that Implementing Partners have improved their reporting skills and capacity. The evaluation Partner Survey indicated that Implementing Partners that improved reporting mechanisms had changed their organisation, increased their capacity to manage projects to donor standards; and that these changes in organisational practice were likely to be sustained over time.

The logframe has strengths and weaknesses as a monitoring tool. On the positive side numerous sources[44] confirmed that nearly all projects found the logframe useful to break down targets into achievable milestones; actively monitor the progress of the project against outcomes and output indicators; and to keep the project focused on its purpose. Grantholders and Implementing Partners also emphasised the importance of having the flexibility to revise outputs, indicators and milestones to accommodate changing circumstances.

There were also less positive reflections on the logframe as a project monitoring tool:

- In the early years, Grantholders[45] expressed frustration at the lack of advance notice of the introduction of the new DFID logframe and the difficulties in adapting to it, even with Fund Manager's support.

- The requirement for disaggregated beneficiary numbers, whilst a positive initiative, also proved to be challenging for many projects. There was an initial lack of clarity around the concept of a beneficiary, and Implementing Partners illustrated[46] the challenges associated with producing information on the numbers and categories of beneficiaries reached e.g. through radio or social rallies.

- Another issue highlighted in the Kenya Learning Visit 2104 was the limitation of the logframe in capturing process results as a key element of project success. Project staff emphasised the process of empowerment as a result in itself and the importance of capturing both process and outcome as a measure of success.

Evaluation: Each CSCF project was required to conduct an independent evaluation at the end of project and expected to manage the process. The evaluation found the quality of the evaluation reports to vary considerably although the Fund Manager assessed the majority of evaluation conducted during the evaluation period as good or average. The Fund Manager has reported[47] that Grantholders welcomed the need for an independent evaluation but sometimes lacked the capacity to identify good quality consultants and manage the process.

The issue of the quality of evaluation reports is important since the Fund Manager acknowledges that they provide the only independent verification of reported project results other than QAVs[48]. Some evaluations do this with methodological rigour, others less so. This raises the issue of the quality assurance of evaluators and their methodologies and the importance of budgeting for a competent evaluation.

Learning: The end of project bilateral discussion was a useful learning opportunity for both parties but too late, for example, to influence the course of the project. While learning was incorporated into CSCF reporting formats, the Fund Manager

Response to the partner survey.

15 of 38 Implementing Partners said the Grantholder had helped them improve their reporting e.g. report writing skills, understanding and using DFID reporting templates; and that they had learnt from Fund Manager feedback on their reports.

In 2011/12 the Fund Manager assessed more than 50% of evaluation reports as good and 28% as average quality. In 2014/15 the Fund Manager assessed 39% as good and 56% as average.

Source: CSCF Annual Reports

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[44] Evaluation on-line discussion, partner survey, Kenya Learning Visit report, evaluation interviews.
[45] CSCF Annual Report FY 2011-12
[46] Kenya Learning Visit Report 2014
[47] Respondents to the perception study included: a weighted sample of ten Grantholders, the Fund Manager's technical team (6 consultants), and DFID / CSD programme manager (CSCF Annual Report FY 2013/14)
[48] Meeting of Evaluation Team with Fund Manager on 29th April 2015.

acknowledges that this did not facilitate learning between projects. A greater emphasis on the inclusion of case studies for learning purposes in the Project Completion Reports may have offered a more in-depth and nuanced narrative of what the project did, how it did it and what it learned in the process[49]. The annual Country Learning Visits and associated publications illustrate how a process of social learning can identify and distil lessons that are directly meaningful to the stakeholders involved.

Grantholders and Partners expressed repeated interest[50] in a more horizontal approach to learning that facilitates knowledge exchange on programmatic issues between project practitioners. There are two ways, both of which have been referred to or suggested in CSCF documents, in which CSCF could have facilitated 'programme learning' among Grantholders and Implementing Partners:

- A thematic focus is well suited for peer learning since practitioners are likely to share similar challenges. The 2011/12 CSCF AR refers to planning three or four thematic roundtables with Grantholders and partner organisations (virtual) which would produce two-page briefing papers, thematic evaluations and reviews. It is not clear why this did not move forward. The 'cluster' evaluations at thematic level recommended by DFID in 2012 were also not taken forward[51]. CSCF projects were organised thematically in 2012. Projects were assigned an assessor with relevant thematic experience who could have been supported to use their overview to facilitate learning across projects.

- Projects also commented[52] on the lack of a dedicated CSCF portal as a barrier to knowledge sharing across the Fund at project level. The Fund Manager drafted a strategy[53] in June 2012 for a CSCF website to become "the principal means of communicating with Grantholders" and that would be "timely, accurate and easy to access" rather than a "passive repository of information". The strategy was not approved as there appears to be constraints on DFID authorising separate websites for the Challenge Funds it supports in the UK.

"It might be good to have a platform where information is stored ...... including some of the questions grantees have asked along with the answers. This could be in form of an online platform where grantees can share information, questions and experiences with the Fund Manager's input."

Source: Grantholder Survey 2014.

Key Lessons

- Challenge Funds should continue to combine quantitative aggregate reporting with more qualitative insight in monitoring portfolio performance.
- Challenge Funds should consider the utility of reporting for all stakeholders and ensure reporting is proportionate to the capacity of Grantholders and partners. It may be important to distinguish between reporting for accountability and learning purposes.
- A reliance on performance to logframe as a measure success in an 'empowerment and advocacy' fund requires ensure partners have the tools to demonstrate plausible sources of evidence.
- A learning strategy, developed in consultation, would clarify the audiences for learning processes and outputs to ensuring that all primary stakeholder needs are met.

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[49] See "At Project End: What Grant Holders say they learned" Slide 2. 2015
[50] Country learning Visits, Grant Holder survey, Interviews. Six respondents in the evaluation partner survey identified learning as an area for improvement.
[51] "Fund manager must ensure ..... a series of cluster evaluations across a range of projects with similar themes is commissioned. This would increase the evidence base for the Fund as a whole. It would also increase learning from the fund" ibid p15
[52] 2014 Grantholder survey, end of project meetings, interviews
[53] CSCF Website strategy, June 2102

3. UK/Southern CSO partnerships for change

Evaluation Questions: What are the lessons from the CSCF for funding indirectly to Southern CSOs? What worked and did not work and why?

The evaluation hypothesis behind the third pillar of the CSCF intervention logic is that UK CSO partnerships with Southern CSOs provide an effective means of channelling funds to strengthen Southern civil society.

The evaluation found[54] that Southern CSO partners, on the whole, valued their partnerships with UK CSOs, and the role they played in channelling CSCF funds, as long as they added value to the project. The evaluation identified a number of 'value-adding' roles that CSCF Grantholders played – for example, in project oversight, project start up and design, in accessing funds and developing the capacity of Implementing Partners. Grantholders played less of a role than anticipated in scaling up the influence of the project. The evaluation noted that, as small to medium sized CSOs, Grantholders required capacity development support from the Fund Manager to meet the growing expectations of their fiduciary role.

The value the Grantholder added to the project was not always immediately apparent. The role of the Grantholder vis-à-vis the Implementing Partner/s was briefly summarised in the initial project proposal. However, the activities of the UK CSO tended to be subsequently 'under-reported' in Annual and Project Completion Reports. There was no specific field in annual and final reports for the Grantholder to report on its work in partnership with the Southern CSO unless this was specifically included as a logframe output such as support to the organisational development of a partner/s. Nonetheless, the evaluation discerned five key roles associated with CSCF Grantholders, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Grantholder Roles with Implementing Partners

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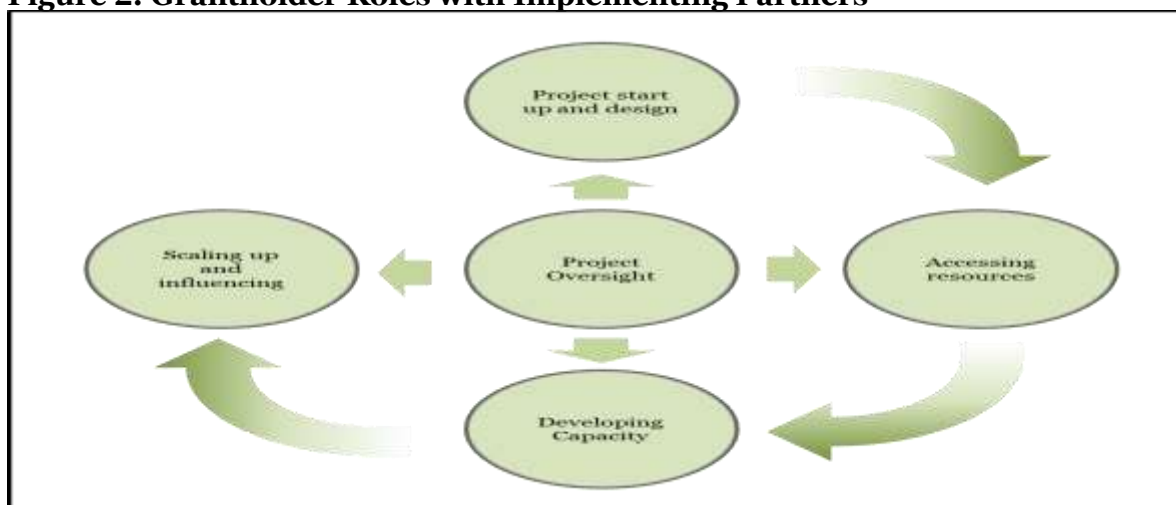
54 From Southern partner interviews, Partner Survey and the discussion forum.

Project oversight.

As the Grantholder, the UK CSO had a fiduciary responsibility, and was accountable to DFID and the Fund Manager for the effective use of the funds granted to it to achieve project objectives. As the key interlocutor between project partners, DFID and the Fund Manager, the Grantholder's role in project oversight had two dimensions though these were not necessarily mutually exclusive:

- *A compliance role* i.e. to ensure that mandatory CSCF processes and standards are adhered to by, for example, quality assuring financial and narrative reporting.

- *A programmatic role* i.e. to monitor the progress the project and the performance of partners in delivering project outputs and outcomes.

Grantholders were expected to provide fiduciary oversight of the project during a period in which DFID expectations of CSCF project and portfolio monitoring and reporting increased substantially. This required the Fund Manager to invest significantly in developing their core competencies, for example, in financial management and reporting, M&E and value for money to enable them to fulfil their fiduciary responsibility. Most Grantholders appreciated this support[55], as might be expected since the majority were small to medium-sized CSOs with less expertise in these areas than larger CSOs.

Furthermore, the Fund Manager continued to actively monitor and quality assure project financial and narrative reporting and to communicate CSCF reporting guidance and expectations e.g. through a letter on receipt of Project Annual Reports. While such guidance was appreciated by partners, it raised the issue of how the Fund Manager could work to transfer to Grantholders the responsibility for the systematic oversight of project monitoring and reporting during the project period as part of their fiduciary responsibilities. The demands of their fiduciary role may have encouraged Grantholders to adopt rather traditional models of partnership, in order to retain a level of control over the quality of reporting and to reduce the risk associated more innovative partnership models. At one end of the spectrum, one respondent in the evaluation Partner Survey commented that they acted merely as a recipient of funds and implementing actor.

The in-depth project review indicated that Grantholders maintained active oversight of the progress of the project from inception through to closure. While the Implementing Partner was responsible for implementing the project, the Grantholder, through regular communication and local knowledge, was able to monitor the progress of the project, and identify and address challenges in the project as they arose. For example, Grantholders played a critical role in managing challenges or crises in the project such as the need to provide additional support to an Implementing Partner at critical moments; changing the Implementing Partner for the benefit of the project; or to consider project closure due to deteriorating circumstances. It would not be possible for a UK-based Fund Manager to exercise such close project monitoring of a portfolio of this size. It should be noted that

The International Children's Trust project on child violence in Ecuador (553) was a rare example of a partnership being formalised by establishing a project management team involving the Implementation Partner.

ChildHope UK in Uganda provided additional support to their partner when its CEOs changed on two occasions. When Trocaire in DRC recognised that, despite their efforts, one of their partners was unable to deliver the results expected of them, it changed partner.

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[55] Evaluation Partner Survey

Grantholder capacity to perform such a programmatic role is subject to budgetary constraints as most projects budgeted for one country visit per year.

Project start up and design.

The in-depth review indicated that CSCF Grantholders frequently played a key role as a 'catalyst' in bringing together suitable partners and coordinating their involvement in project design and proposal development. Grantholders, in most cases, were able to draw upon their prior knowledge of the local context and civic actors to identify and convene a coalition of stakeholders to design and deliver the project. The ability of the Grantholder to involve primary stakeholders at this early stage in the design and development of the project is a major contributory factor to its successful implementation. In some cases they were able to draw upon their experience of similar projects to support the development and implementation of the CSCF project. Two Implementing Partners interviewed confirmed that it would have been unlikely that the project stakeholders would have coordinated their efforts without the initiative of the Grantholder. This role in convening a partnership of diverse actors to design and implement a project would also be difficult for DFID or a Fund Manager to perform.

Accessing funds

Several Implementing Partners interviewed emphasised the role that Grantholders played in enabling them to access DFID funding. For some Implementing and Collaborating Partners, access to DFID funding would have been challenging without the support of a UK CSO. For example, the 63 projects in the evaluation portfolio were implemented in 31 countries. 13 (42%) of these countries did not have a local DFID office and a local CSO would not be eligible to directly apply for a UK Aid Direct Impact Grant. For a considerable proportion of Southern CSO partners, therefore, UK CSOs were the only conduit through which they were likely to access DFID funding.

Developing capacity

Grantholders helped to develop the capacity of the Implementing Partner in one way or another in nearly all projects subject to in-depth review. In most cases this capacity development role was not budgeted for and was comparatively limited in scale. The capacity development role of the Grantholder was less pronounced if, for example, the Implementing Partner was affiliated to the same global con/federation as the UK CSO e.g. ADRA, MSI, and Acord, or was a branch office of the UK CSO e.g. Basic Needs. In these circumstances the relationship was more akin to that of a fundraiser and an implementing partner. Section 4.2 reviews the role of the Grantholder in capacity building in more detail. At this stage it should be noted that the capacity development role of the Grantholder tended to be focused on their relationship with the Implementing Partner rather than at the 'point of delivery' with target groups.

Scaling up influence

Improved civil society capacity to participate more effectively at international level is one of the CSCF objectives. A frequently quoted feature of the added value of international CSOs is their ability to scale up the impact or influence of a project, for example, by building on the project evidence to influence regional or international networks or by exporting the project learning to influence their own international

The Living Earth Foundation drew upon its previous experience in Nigeria of a demand-led approach to governance to develop the CSCF project in Mali (530).

con/federations. Only a small number of CSCF projects[56] aimed to build the capacity of civil society to participate in global advocacy, although examples of Grantholders 'show-casing' their work in international fora are included in Section 5.3. This is perhaps not surprising as most UK Grantholders were not members of international con/federations as are some larger UK-based 'global' CSOs.

Key lessons
- The majority of CSCF southern partners were positive about the indirect nature of CSCF funding.
- UK Grantholders offer a level of project oversight that would be difficult for a UK-based Fund Manager to replicate at portfolio level.
- The Fund Manager had to invest in building key competencies in UK Grantholders so that they can fulfil their changing fiduciary responsibilities.
- Grantholders play a key role in enabling partners to meet CSCF monitoring and reporting expectations through formal training.
- Smaller UK CSOs are less well-placed to scale up influence and impact at an international level than larger CSOs.

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[56] CSCF Portfolio Analysis 2013-14. Five of 32 on-going projects (16%) aimed to build the capacity of civil society to participate in global advocacy.

4. CSCF Capacity Development: pathways to change

Evaluation Questions: How was capacity built for engagement at local and national level in the areas of accountability, empowerment and advocacy and what were the barriers and facilitators? What are the perceptions of capacity building among stakeholders?

The "improved capacity of Southern Civil Society" is the central element of the first three, original objectives of the CSCF and forms the central pillar of the intervention logic for the CSCF. The hypothesis is that capacity development provided through UK NGO/ Southern CSO partnerships will be appropriate to and effective in strengthening civil society capacity at an individual, organisational and systemic level.

The main role of UK CSOs was one of project oversight more than capacity development. Grantholders provided capacity development support to Implementing Partners to ensure they had the competencies to meet CSCF monitoring and reporting guidance. Most project capacity development activities were focused at the 'point of delivery' with target groups, involving Collaborative Partners and community networks. This involved a wide range of formal and informal approaches. The evaluation found evidence of these leading to successful civil society engagement with decision-makers but that more guidance and support should be offered on appropriate methodologies to gather evidence of attitude and behaviour change as a result of capacity development.

4.1. Capacity development as a pathway to change

Key findings:
- CSCF capacity development activities were diverse in their nature; involved a wide range of actors; took place at different 'levels' of society ; and involved a number of different methods to raise awareness, develop capacity, and mobilise citizens.
- The use of output indicators and data collection tools in CSCF logframes did not provide a sufficiently reliable body of evidence at portfolio level for changes in the awareness and capacity of target groups.

CSCF capacity development is the key 'pathway to change' in the CSCF intervention logic linking UK/Southern CSO partnerships with civil society engagement with decision-makers. This pathway to change, however, is by no means straightforward. CSCF capacity development was often a complex, multi-layered process, involving a wide range of civil society actors in very diverse activities in a process of change. It was often a 'messy', interactive process in which the links between improved capacity, engagement with decision-makers and policy and practice change were not linear. Each project had its own implicit theory of change in which different capacity development approaches contributed to civil society engagement with local or national-level decision-makers.

"Capacity development is a locally driven process of learning by leaders, coalitions and other agents of change that brings about changes in socio-political, policy-related, and organizational factors to enhance local ownership for and the effectiveness and efficiency of efforts to achieve a development goal."

Source: The Capacity Development Results Framework. World Bank Institute. June 2009 p3.

Many CSCF projects illustrated a 'cascading' or 'training of trainers' model in which learning and skills are passed on at different 'levels' in the delivery chain[57]. A ChildHope UK project (506) in Uganda illustrated the way in which capacity 'cascades' via different actors, approaches and target groups in this pathway to change.

Figure 3: ChildHope UK: Capacity Development as a Pathway to Change
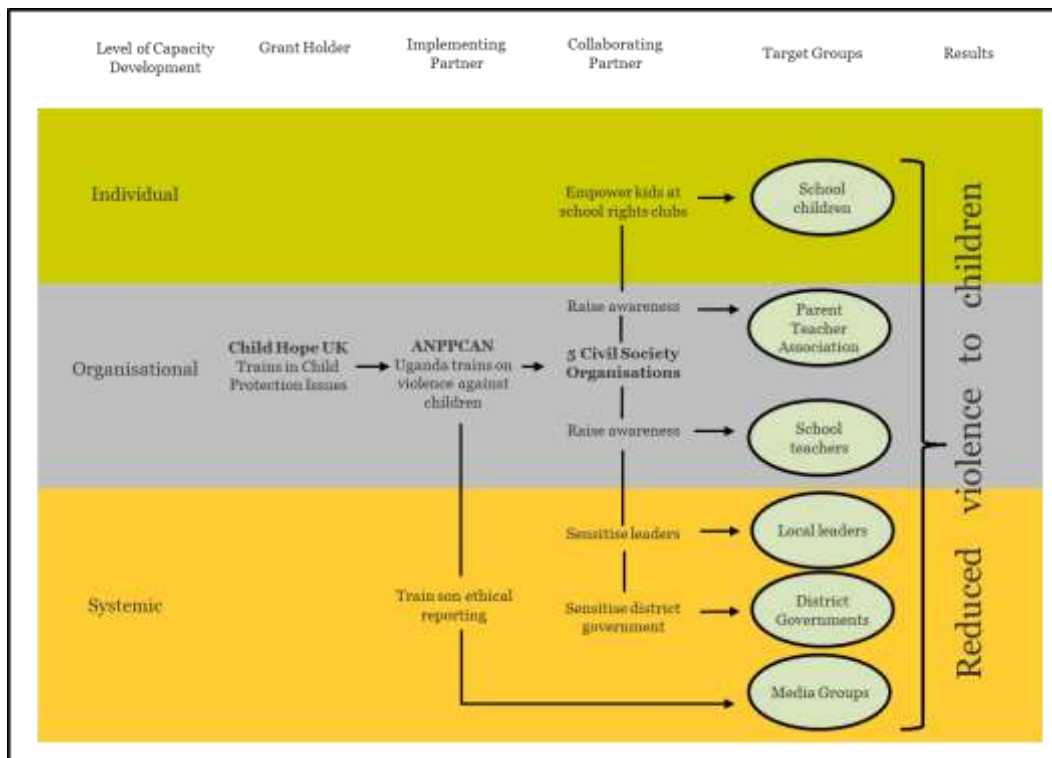
The complexity of such processes involving changes in attitude, behaviour, policy and practice presents certain challenges in terms of reporting on the results chain – not the least what to measure and how to measure it. An in-depth review of 17 final reporting logframes found that the majority of outputs fell into two broad types:

- *Capacity* e.g. the acquisition or refinement of skills and abilities
- *Awareness* e.g. increased understanding of rights.

DFID Guidance specifies that the performance of an output is measured by the indicators linked to it "which tell us what we are going to measure not what is to be achieved"[58] and that output achievements should be substantiated by robust evidence. The indicators for improved capacity and raised awareness in the 17 logframes reviewed were diverse in nature including:

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[57] The Kenya Learning Reports, for example, cites examples of this approach working successfully with street vendors, women soapstone carvers and domestic workers.
[58] Ibid p16

- Activity-based indicators such as the number of health care workers trained in child palliative care (CPC) as an indicator for health care workers with the skills and knowledge to deliver CPC[59].

- Indicators measuring the first-level impact of capacity development on target groups e.g. the percentage increase in the group members' ability to name at least three rights for women's awareness of their sexual and reproductive health rights[60].

- "Proxy" indicators relating to the second-level impact of improved capacity e.g. percentage of prisoners sharing an unsterilised razor blade as an indicator of improved awareness of HIV/AIDS among prisoners[61].

Each of these types of indicators requires different sources of evidence to assess performance. While activity-based indicators are more straightforward, the other two require a pre/post assessment tool to verify achievements. However, the evidence base cited as the basis of reporting to these indicators in CSCF logframes is frequently generic e.g. training reports. Some logframes referred to more specific tools e.g. pre- and post-training surveys that would be able to provide plausible evidence of attitude change or skill acquisition through training. The impact of training activities also needed to be assessed. The evaluation did not encounter examples of longitudinal surveys to assess whether participants used the skills and knowledge acquired and the effect it had on the organisation or project activities. Although constrained by time, such longitudinal surveys could have been included in the final evaluation.

Providing evidence of the impact of capacity development and awareness raising activities is challenging. For example, the limitation of the logframe in capturing the empowerment process (which partners felt should be seen as a result in itself) is reflected in a number of sources - in particular, that output indicators were not well suited to measuring the effectiveness of empowerment of beneficiaries.

Projects deployed a wide range of tools, of varying degrees of methodological rigour, to monitor and measure the effectiveness of their capacity development efforts. Many, if not most, of these tools were developed by Grantholders and Implementing Partners themselves. A more consistent and informed use of data gathering tools would have substantially contributed to the evidence base of the Fund[62].

TB Alert (520 and 550) trained target groups and volunteers in India and Zimbabwe in the use of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) surveys and used these in their mid and final evaluations.

> **Key lessons**
> - CSCF capacity development is a complex, multi-faceted process of learning and change. Measuring changes in attitude and behaviour presents methodological challenges.
> - Grantholders and Partners need support and guidance on the use of appropriate indicators and, in particular, the better use of data collection tools in order to provide a robust evidence base for change.
> - The use of more sophisticated data gathering methods and tools has resource implications and should be adequately budgeted for.

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[59] CSCF project 521
[60] CSCF project 505
[61] CSCF project 519
[62] See BOND Impact Builder – an online hub developed by more than 100 UK NGOs of outcomes, indicators, and data collection tools http://my.bond.org.uk/impact-builder

4.2. Capacity development: a combination of approaches

> *Key findings*
>
> - CSCF projects adopted a wide range of formal and informal approaches to capacity development.
> - Awareness raising of both beneficiary populations and decision makers was a key point of contact in the capacity development process.
> - Technical training and skills acquisition can lead to important secondary benefits and be part of an empowering process.
> - It is difficult to monitor and report on the organisational strengthening of Implementing Partners if this is not included in logframes.

The range of approaches adopted by CSCF projects to support capacity development was extraordinarily diverse. This section will summarise the different approaches adopted by CSCF projects in developing capacity and identify some of the key lessons. A conclusion the evaluation has drawn[63] is that these diverse approaches were complementary and mutually reinforcing in many CSCF projects.

> **ChildHope UK: An example of mutually reinforcing approaches in Uganda**
>
> ChildHope UK (506) trained the staff of local partner ANPPCAN Uganda on child protection issues which enabled those staff to train and sensitise the media on ethical reporting, and the members of four civil society coalitions on violence against children. While ANPPCAN worked through a national coalition to lobby the government to adopt a draft amendment to the Children's Act, local CSOs were empowering children to protect themselves and their peers from violence through the formation of School Child Rights Clubs and to actively lobby for change through District Children's Apex Councils. Local CSOs worked to sensitise local leaders in the communities to monitor cases of corporal punishment; to raise the awareness of teachers, school management committees and Parent/Teacher associations to institute reforms in schools; and to sensitise district governments on issues related to violence against children. A combination of targeted training in child protection issues, awareness raising with target groups including local decision-makers helped build a 'bottom up' pressure in support of national level lobbying.

Awareness raising

The most common approach[64] to capacity development in CSCF projects was awareness raising as it is frequently the first step in an advocacy process aimed to harness the motivation of a group for a course of action. Awareness raising activities were a critical point of contact with beneficiary and target groups and local and/or national duty-bearers upon which successful outcomes depended.

Raising awareness of beneficiary groups was associated with a process of empowerment. Projects sought to empower beneficiary groups as a prompt to action by, for example, increasing their understanding of their rights regarding living with mental illness or epilepsy[65].

CSCF projects frequently sought to 'sensitise' local decision-makers i.e. those able to influence policies, practices or resource allocation, and opinion-makers i.e. those

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[63] From documentary review, interviews and on-line discussion forum.
[64] The Partner Survey identified awareness raising as the most common approach to capacity development with 22 of the 33 projects undertaking awareness raising of some kind.
[65] CSCF project 541

able to influence attitudes and behaviour. The success of these efforts was dependent on a number of factors, which we will explore further in Section 6.1., such as their early involvement in the project or project design; the existence of pre-established relationships; and a collaborative approach on behalf of the beneficiary groups.

It is noticeable that many CSCF projects, particularly those at a local level, focused on both the demand and supply side of service delivery, as illustrated below:

Table 2: Duty bearers and rights in CSCF projects

Rights holders	Duty bearers	Grant Holder
Children. Parents	Local government officials, school committees, local leaders, police	Child Hope (506)
People with Mental Illness or Epilepsy. Primary care-givers.	Rural development and heath institutions such as Community Psychiatric Units and local government.	Basic Needs (541)
Soapstone workers (including women and disabled).	Regulatory bodies and local government community elders and leaders, buyers in international sector	APT Enterprise Development (498)
Forest communities in CAR and Gabon	Local government authorities. Private enterprises.	Rainforest Foundation UK (535)

Training

Training in generic and/or technical skills at all stakeholder levels was a frequent feature of CSCF projects[66]. The evaluation Partner Survey indicated that CSCF grant holders provided training to partners in relevant 'generic' skills, most frequently on monitoring and reporting and advocacy. The former is unsurprising since Grantholders were dependent on Implementing Partners for meeting the CSCF reporting requirements. The latter reflects the advocacy focus of many CSCF projects.

Technical training relevant to the focus of the project included child rights and protection (513), organic farming (552), business skills (542) and climate change adaptation (554)

A number of other training packages were offered to partners including media, gender mainstreaming and participatory planning, and accountability.

The provision of technical training was more frequent in projects with a clearly defined focus and where the acquisition of specific skills was essential to project success. Technical skills training also delivered a number of secondary benefits. Training in income generation and literacy in some projects[67] led to increased beneficiary participation in projects and greater participation in leadership roles - a strategy that encouraged the participation of marginalised groups and women[68]. These secondary benefits were sometimes anticipated as part of the project design[69].

Targeting the most appropriate groups for training is key to its success. This is particularly true with regard to advocacy training. For example, the Food Sovereignty Project in Mozambique (514) originally focused their advocacy training on the most vulnerable groups but found that they also needed to target people better connected in the community to achieve their advocacy objectives.

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[66] 18 of the 33 projects in the Partner Survey reported conducting some form of training as part of the project.
[67] See Kenya Learning Report CSCF projects (498) and (534)
[68] See CSCF project (555) in DRC (555) where strengthening women's literacy increased their confidence to make themselves heard.
[69] See, for example, CSCF project 498 PCR external evaluation

A number of projects reported the challenge of retaining newly trained staff and volunteers and the need for refresher trainings during the project life. A more acute problem was the loss of skilled staff on project closure (see Section 4.4).

Organisational Development

The evidence[70] indicates that a significant number of Grantholders worked systematically to strengthen their Implementing Partners organisationally. Five of the 17 projects subject to in-depth review included an organisational development output in the project logframe, two of which included a gender component. It is interesting to note that the partnership between Grantholder and Implementing Partner was comparatively recent in both cases and that both had an in-country presence.

The in-depth project review revealed that, among those that provided information their relationship with their partner, the majority of Grantholders had five or more years of prior experience of collaborating with the Implementing Partner. Some Grantholders indicated in interview they had previously invested in developing the organisational capacity of their Implementing Partner. There may be an incentive for Grantholders to work with an Implementing Partner with whom they have worked previously to minimise risk in an increasingly results oriented environment[71]. Implementing partners also provide organisational development support to Collaborating Partners in-country[72].

Peer learning

Southern CSOs expressed interest in a number of sources in learning from and exchanging experiences with other projects with similar activities. Peer learning is popular among Southern partners since it often involves face-to-face knowledge-sharing with projects with a similar focus. Peer-based learning does not feature prominently in CSCF learning documents[73] and comparatively few projects[74] included peer group learning as an integral element. When it happened it took three forms:

Peer group networks. These were often an effective means of raising awareness and sharing information. The Empowering Girls in Mtwara project (510) in Tanzania offered peer education sessions for parents and children to develop life skills. Interact (519) used peer education to deliver information on SRH and HIV in prisons. A project in Uttar Pradesh (526) used peer networks to mobilise communities e.g. by community representatives demonstrating the impact the project had on them to a new community.

Grantholder learning networks. ChildHopeUK (506) invited its Implementing Partner to participate in a learning platform with other partners and to participate in its annual partner workshop. Acord (514) developed an e-learning platform to share best practices, plan projects and increase capacity.

Learning visits. Some Grantholders planned for national or international learning or exchange visits. Basic Needs Ghana (541) facilitated exchange visits and learning

Trocaire's (555) included the organisational strengthening of its partners in three core areas - Gender, Community Mobilisation and Influencing Governments - as a project output. Interact/PLAN UK (519) also included the organisational development of its partners in as a logframe output. Both projects conducted a baseline and end of project assessment of capacity using their own capacity assessment tools.

The Tana River Delta project (557) in Kenya operated field schools and demonstration centres on climate smart agriculture; income generating activities e.g. beekeeping, TB Alert (502) offered what was described as 'Hand-holding support' to partners for the implementation of projects.

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[70] 12 of the 38 respondents in the partner survey reported organisational development support being offered at some level in the project.
[71] This was also one of the criteria of the fund
[72] Nine partner survey respondents reported they had supported other organisations in their organisational development.
[73] For example, CSCF Monitoring, Evaluation and Lesson Learning Guidelines, June 2011
[74] Nine of the 38 respondents in the Partner Survey reported peer learning activities taking place in the project.

tours for disability self-help groups in Northern Ghana. ChildHope UK (506) organised an international study visit to Uganda for Kenyan government officials to learn from a successful pilot project. Womankind Worldwide (499/501) facilitated exchange visits between CSCF projects in Ghana and Zimbabwe to promote shared learning and good practice. Target TB (502) organised South-South exchanges between projects in Africa and Asia to facilitate knowledge sharing.

Mentoring. Mentoring, or support of a less experienced actor by a more experienced one, was a feature of some projects[75]. A Grantholder sometimes mentored the Implementing Partner, for example, during a period of difficulty. Mentoring support took place also at community level. TBAlert (530) used community-based field officers to mentor and support community groups. Similarly the Voice of Youth Project (510), mentored young people to support the development of youth friendly services. Measuring the effectiveness of this type of capacity building is difficult.

Learning by doing.

Partners mentioned[76] the importance of 'learning by doing' i.e. developing skills and competencies through new ways of working[77] and that one of the benefits of a collaborative approach to implementing the project can be the heightened self-confidence and improved capacity of partners.

Key lessons
- Successful capacity building may need to adopt diverse approaches with different stakeholders which can be mutually reinforcing.
- The use of local staff and/or volunteers who spoke the relevant language, knew the context, and in some cases the actors involved, was key to building trust, confidence and credibility.
- The targeting of both rights holders and duty bearers for capacity development is a key feature of many successful projects.
- Training needs to be carefully targeted in order to embed skills in the organisation and maximise impact.
- Organisational strengthening of partners needs to be included in logframes in order to be monitored and reported on.
- Peer group learning was prioritised by partners but did not feature prominently in CSCF learning documents and projects.
- Involving beneficiaries in project planning and implementation helps develop capacity through learning by doing.
- There is a need for baseline and end-of project assessment tools to effectively monitor the effectiveness of capacity development activities.

4.3. Capacity development: the roles of different actors

Key findings
- Most capacity development activities focused 'at the point of delivery' involving Collaborative Partners and community networks working directly with i.e. with beneficiary and target groups and local leaders.
- Grantholders' capacity development tended to focus on developing fiduciary competencies of Implementing Partner.
- Implementing Partners played an important role if the project included a national dimension in seeking to sensitise and influence national level decision-makers on relevant policy issues.

CSCF projects typically involve a number of stakeholders fulfilling a role as a capacity 'provider'. The evidence suggests that most capacity development activity was focused 'at the point of delivery' i.e. directly with beneficiaries and local change agents, as illustrated in the following table[78].

Table 3: Focus of capacity development

Focus of capacity development	Number of 32 ongoing projects
End beneficiaries	31
Local leader/change agents	23
Local CBOs	22
Implementing Partners	21
Local governments	16
Local CSOs or networks	12
National Government	6

The following section reviews the distinctive roles CSCF stakeholders played in the capacity development 'chain' and what lessons can be derived from that.

Grantholders.

UK CSOs were rarely directly involved in project activities in-country such as designing and running workshops and the direct capacity building of target groups. In most cases, the focus of Grantholder capacity development efforts was to develop the necessary competencies in the Implementing partner to manage and report on the project in accordance with CSCF guidance, as illustrated below[79]

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[78] From the 2013/14 Portfolio analysis on 32 ongoing projects
[79] In the evaluation Partner Survey 38 Implementing Partners replied to the question "What specific activities the grant manager did which have helped to increase your organisation's capacity?"

Table 4: Grantholder activities

Types of Activity	Changes in organisation
Financial management	
18 respondents (47%) said UK Grantholder had helped improve their capacity in financial management, reporting and monitoring; and in increasing their understanding of value for money.	Increased financial management capacity; better compliance with financial reporting deadlines; and more professional financial management and accountability.
Reporting	
15 respondents (42%) stated that the UK Grantholder had increased their capacity through support on report writing as per DFID guidelines; feedback on reports submitted; and regular updates on new reporting guidance from Fund Manager.	Improved reporting of project activities. Increased understanding on how to use DFID reporting guidelines and manage projects to these standards
Monitoring and evaluation	
16 respondents (42%) reported the UK Grantholder had improved their capacity through support to develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks; developing and refining logical frameworks; training on project monitoring; and evaluation support.	Improved understanding of how to embed monitoring and evaluation frameworks from the outset of a project; improved use of data collection tools.
Project management	
7 respondents (18%) said the UK Grantholder had increased their project management capacity.	Project management improved; roles and responsibilities defined; project planning and management systems developed; more able to meet international quality standards.
Advocacy	
8 respondents (21%) indicated that Grantholders had increased their advocacy capacity.	Improved advocacy, communications and lobbying skills. Ability to train marginalised groups in advocacy.

Other areas of support partners received from Grantholders to increase their organisation's capacity were support with proposal development, technical support, resource mobilisation, and training on gender, HIV, rights-based approaches, and value for money approaches. While there was a good level of partner satisfaction[80] with the capacity development support provided by Grantholders, the areas for improvement suggested include increased support and opportunities for shared learning; training on proposal writing and resource mobilisation; and more face-to-face engagement and feedback.

In Mali AMSS (530) trained CBOs and community health associations in Timbuktu in local governance and resource mobilisation.

Implementing Partners.

The principal responsibility of the Implementing Partner was project management e.g. the coordination and support of project stakeholders to deliver the project activities and objectives. There was likely to be an incentive for Grantholders to

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[80] 11 of 38 respondents to the Partner Survey said there were was nothing the Grantholder could have done to better support their organisation's capacity development.

identify an experienced Implementing Partner given the high monitoring and reporting expectations of the CSCF (although these increased during the evaluation period once the Implementing Partner was chosen).

Most Implementing Partners reviewed already had staff and institutional capacities relevant to the project and previous project management experience. In addition to their project management responsibilities, Implementing Partners played a role in developing the capacity of other partners in the project.

Grantholders acknowledged the importance of choosing an Implementing Partner with sufficient capacity to deliver results. However, the key capacity required of a partner may be the ability to deliver at a grass roots level. One Grantholder pointed out that choosing a local partner with established relationships at community level should be the first criterion, as project management skills can be developed.

The Indian Palliative Care Association (PACAM) worked with the Maharastra State government to raise awareness on the importance of child palliative care. Hospice UK (521).

Implementing partners often played an important role, if the project included a national dimension, in sensitising and influencing national level decision-makers on relevant policy issues, frequently as part of a national forum or alliance.

Collaborative Partners.

While the Implementing Partners sometimes provided capacity development support directly to target groups, more frequently they provided support to Collaborative Partner/s to develop the capacity and raise awareness of target groups. This cascading approach enabled the project to reach a bigger population. Collaborative partners were chosen for their knowledge of and access to the local context. They were most often local CSOs or CBOs though they could also be a local service delivery provider. For example, Hospice UK (521) worked with a hospital partner that is a centre of expertise in child palliative care to train other hospitals, and influence state policy and practice.

Living Earth Foundation (530) in Mali employed specialists to provide training in water pump maintenance and maintenance of medical records. The Rainforest Foundation UK Project (535) hired experts from the academic sector to train and monitor the project Community Legal Field Workers.

The relationship between collaborative partners and target groups was frequently the critical point of contact in the capacity development chain which unlocks the project potential. Collaborative partners 'empowered' local beneficiary groups and potential allies and sensitised local duty bearers to collaborate in achieving project outcomes.

Contracted expertise.

It should be noted that some projects contracted external expertise to provide specialist training that neither the Implementing nor Collaborating Partner felt able to do. This was not always obvious in the project reporting.

Community networks.

The involvement of target populations in project activities lent increased legitimacy[81]. Most awareness raising activities took place at a local level involving local people. Using community-based networks to involve individuals with relevant skills in the project has been described as the 'octopus approach'[82]. Harnessing 'voluntary' participation can be an effective way of engaging with beneficiary populations but a number of projects found that they needed to provide incentives to

[81] "At project end: what Grantholders say they learned. Qualitative Insights" CSCF April 2015
[82] Kenya Learning Report

retain their participation. The independent evaluation for the Soapstone project in Kenya (498), for example, found that combining a livelihoods element with advocacy on health, safety and labour standards helped to ensure the active participation of beneficiaries.

> *Key lessons*
>
> - The role of different actors in capacity development, in particular that of Collaborative Partners, needs to be better described in project proposals and reports in order to understand their contribution to project results.
> - The use of community networks and volunteers to raise awareness and build capacity at local level needs to be adequately budgeted for to incentivise and retain these key actors.
> - Partners require guidance and support on appropriate tools to assess the effectiveness of these 'empowering' efforts at community level.

4.4. Key lessons

This section will identify some of the factors that have contributed to the success of capacity development efforts, some barriers they have encountered, and to what extent they contributed to the organisational sustainability of Southern CSOs.

The in-depth project review suggests three factors that may have contributed to the success of capacity development efforts in CSCF projects:

- *Early investment in building relationships with rights holders and duty bearers.* Local knowledge and familiarity with local networks was an important foundation in nearly all projects reviewed. Many projects used local staff and/or community networks to build relationships with key local stakeholders early in the project. This helped to establish a conducive environment for subsequent engagement and was particularly important in projects that included both demand and supply side of service provision.

- *A clear focus for capacity building efforts.* Many CSCF projects reviewed had comparatively realistic goals, specific geographies, and clearly identified target groups. A clarity of focus helped capacity development activities to be mutually reinforcing with regard to project objectives even when they involve diverse approaches and multiple actors.

- *Flexibility to adapt plans to context and need.* Capacity development approaches should be targeted to the needs and learning preferences of different groups and adjusted, if necessary. (Not all projects conducted capacity assessments or training needs analyses.) Grantholders reported a key learning that finding the right approach involved some experimentation and adjustment[83]. This could have positive benefits. The Living Earth Foundation reported that the ability to revise capacity development priorities following the crisis in Mali in 2012 – for example, to non-violent conflict resolution and cholera control - increased support from and credibility with the community.

The evaluation identified three types of barriers to the success of capacity development efforts, as reported in interviews and project reports.

- *Political events and insecurity.* A number of projects reported that political events, for example, political disturbances in Andrha Pradesh (550) affected

TB Alert (550) noted that where an organisational culture of a service provider is hierarchical it is important to involve the provider early in the project as a joint venture. Hospice UK (521) noted the importance of identifying and developing a constructive relationship with the relevant decision-make.r

The Promoting Livelihoods of Soapstone Workers Project in Kenya (498) initially took a homogeneous approach to training but adapted their approach on realising that different stakeholders had different needs[1]. Likewise the community voices for food sovereignty project (514) Mozambique originally took a blanket approach to training but subsequently segmented their target group and adjusted their approach.

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[83] See "At project end: what Grantholders say they learned. Qualitative Insights" CSCF April 2015

their work plans. In some cases, conflict-related insecurity made the project no longer tenable – for example in Mali (530) and Central African Republic (535).

- *Government bureaucracy* at local or national level can lead to delays in outputs – for example, to delays in legislative process.

- *Changes in key personnel* – for example, in government or the public sector is important, for example, when the quality of relationships is key to project success. Some projects[84] mention changes at Ministerial level setting back advocacy efforts. Staff turnover in the health and education sector also undermined capacity development efforts, requiring refresher trainings[85].

Evaluation question: To what extent have Southern CSOs been sustainable and why?

CSCF PCRs focused on sustainability of project outcomes (which will be addressed in Section 6) rather than the organisational sustainability of Southern partners. Implementing Partners reported[86] that the acquired skills and increased profile associated with managing a DFID-funded project strengthened their credibility and reputation with government and donors and increased the likelihood attracting further funding. The evidence in support of this is inconclusive. Only two of 17 projects subject to in-depth review reported in PCRs that they had been able to leverage CSCF funding to mobilise additional resources. Three respondents to the Partner Survey reported that access to DFID funds had increased their reputation and had allowed them to leverage funds for other projects from local resources.

Implementing Partners also report that the CSCF has contributed to their organisational sustainability through the capacity development support of Grantholders. The majority of Partner survey respondents indicated that the organisational changes they had experienced as a result were sustainable when related to changes in organisational practices such as reporting, financial management and project planning. However, increased capacity in terms of the skills and knowledge of individual staff members was vulnerable to staff leaving, particularly on project closure when they had to let staff go.

The partners of WOMANKIND Worldwide in Ghana (501) and Zimbabwe (499) both reported having accessed further funds due to their status and credibility by having been funded by DFID and of being able to meet the reporting requirements of international agencies.

Expectations with regard to the CSCF contributing to the organisational sustainability of Southern CSOs should be tempered with two features of the fund:

- *The nature of project funding*. It should be borne in mind that CSCF provides programme rather than strategic funding. The opportunity for Southern CSOs to invest in their organisational sustainability is limited. One Implementing Partner suggested that 5-10% of a CSCF grant should be earmarked to invest in organisational sustainability e.g. towards a capital fund to purchase premises. (Although CSCF guidelines precluded capital expenditure as a significant part of the budget.)

- *Dependency on CSCF funding for staffing costs*. The in-depth review of 17 projects indicates that a mean average of 33% of project budgets is allocated to the staffing and administrative costs of Implementing Partners. It was not possible to ascertain what percentage of these budgets covered new and existing staff though some Implementing Partners reported that they had to let staff go on project closure, losing valuable project expertise in the process.

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[84] E.g. CSCF project 506
[85] E.g. CSCF project 550
[86] Implementing Partner and Grantholder interviews, Partner Survey

5. CSCF impact: emerging trends

The final hypothesis in the CSCF intervention logic is that the improved capacities of target groups will result in increased civil society engagement in local and national decision-making leading to pro-poor policy and practice changes.

The evaluation found considerable evidence of CSCF capacity development leading to civil society engagement at local and national level with decision-makers, and in policy dialogue and development. A large number of projects contributed to successful policy adoption although there were fewer cases of following through on policy implementation (not surprisingly in a three-five year funding period). In particular, projects working in a policy 'niche' area with a well-defined operating environment and target population were able to influence the professional and regulatory frameworks to influence policy and practice within their sphere of influence, having a potential lasting impact on poor, marginalised and vulnerable groups.

5.1. Civil Society engagement in decision-making

Evaluation Question: How are CSCF Grantees engaging in local and national decision making and to what extent?

Key findings

- Engagement with decision-makers took place more at a local than national level.
- Several projects sought to empower beneficiary and target groups to directly engage with decision-makers.
- Self-help groups provided an initial forum to raise awareness and mobilise beneficiary groups.
- Projects sought to achieve influence at a national level by working through coalitions or alliances.

Civil society engagement with decision-makers took place at national and sub-national level, with the latter being more frequent.

Many CSCF projects adopted an empowerment[87] approach at local level to enable beneficiary groups to directly engage with decision-makers or decision making processes. The evaluation online discussion platform asked participants '*Why should DFID support empowerment and accountability in the future in your context?*' Two typical responses were the continuing inequality in the access to public services and the benefits of economic growth (Peru) and the need to pro-actively support the inclusion of marginalised and excluded communities (India).

Raising the awareness of target and beneficiary groups of their rights was a preliminary step in CSCF projects to engaging with decision makers. Knowledge of rights and the concept of equality before the law was seen as key to empowerment,

The VODI Project in India (515) supported the Regional Dalit Rights Forum which increased its membership and made 88 representations to government duty bearers and 93 to political representatives during the evaluation period.

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[87]DFID note 'Empowering poor people and strengthening accountability'. Empowerment is defined as "enabling people to exercise more control over their own development and supporting them to have the power to make and act on their own choices" "https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67465/empower-account-summary-note.pdf

enhancing the self-perception and confidence of target groups. This could be an understanding of their rights to basic education or health services or their rights as a poor or marginal group concerned with, for example, mental health, leprosy, HIV/AIDs, or TB. The use of self-help groups to enable beneficiaries to collectively understand and address issues of concern was frequent in projects subject to in-depth review. A preference was expressed for working with existing community groups rather groups established by the project since they were more 'set to go' and more likely to continue working towards project outcomes beyond the life of the project.

Several projects included in the in-depth review supported the direct engagement of target groups and beneficiaries with decision-makers. ChildHope UK's (506) work on reducing violence against children in Uganda involved children directly petitioning local government on corporal punishment in schools, resulting in an education ordinance; engaging with parliamentary committees; meeting key officials; and in 2014 directly petitioning the Minister on the draft Children's Act.

CSCF projects also sought to engage decision-makers at a national level. Working through a coalition, either pre-established or initiated through the project, can increase the likelihood of engagement with decision makers and was a frequent feature of CSCF projects. The combination of the technical expertise and advocacy skills of the CSCF project with a broader, more representative platform was a potentially effective way of constructively accessing decision-makers at a national level.

Trocaire (555) adopted a networking approach to their national advocacy strategy and funded two national level partners who were well connected. This enabled them to lobby national parliamentarians which they would not have been able to do otherwise.

Most of the coalitions reviewed adopted more of a collaborative than confrontational approach with government. In some circumstances this may have reflected an operating environment in which a more confrontational approach may have been neither desirable nor practical. It may also reflect the quasi-professional focus of some projects e.g. in TB control, sexual and reproductive health etc. which encourages a 'professional' style dialogue. The Kenya Learning report includes an example of a more provocative approach being taken by a child palliative care project by allying with Human Rights Watch to expose the lack of government attention to reduce the pain suffered by children with life threatening illnesses to provoke a more rapid implementation of palliative care provision.

Key lessons

- Empowering poor and marginalised groups to access decision-makers remains relevant in contexts where public goods and services are unequally distributed.
- The combination of project's technical expertise and advocacy skills with a broader, more representative platform can facilitate access to and influence with decision-makers.

5.2. Civil society and an enabling environment.

The evaluation was asked to consider what evidence the CSCF provides with regard to the main factors in the development of an enabling environment for civil society.

Key findings

- CSCF projects demonstrate an 'incremental' approach to building a more enabling environment for CSO activity by shaping the policy, professional and regulatory frameworks that affect specific target groups among the poor and marginalised.
- There is less evidence of CSCF projects fostering an enabling environment for civil society by influencing broader political frameworks.

The issue of an enabling environment is particularly relevant for CSCF whose objectives relate to civil society engagement with policy and practice reform. A CSCF report in 2104 on the enabling environment in Uganda noted "*growing government antagonism towards 'rights' and civil society advocacy…. "*[88] but the trend towards the increased limitations on the ability of civil society to operate freely is noticeable in other CSCF project countries[89].

The enabling environment is sometimes narrowly defined as the legislative, socio-political political conditions at national level influencing the opportunities for civic association and action. To understand how the CSCF may have contributed to an enabling environment for civil society, however, it is important to take a broader definition[90], and to recognise that the operating context for civil society exists at different levels in society.

The evaluation, for example, found no evidence of CSCF projects seeking to foster an enabling environment by influencing legislation or the implementation of the law with regard to general operations of CSOs. CSCF projects tended to focus on:

- The policy frameworks that affect a particularly vulnerable section of the population e.g. children at risk of violence of with terminal illness, street vendors, forest dwellers, or people living with HIV or affected by leprosy.

- The availability and quality of services available to poor and marginalised people at a local level, particularly in health and education.

There is evidence that CSCF projects were able to influence the environment i.e. the legislative, professional and operating frameworks, directly relevant to their sphere of influence. This could be described as an 'incremental' approach through which civil society partnerships succeed in creating a more enabling environment for their target populations within their sphere of competence. This can be illustrated by the example below.

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[88] "The enabling environment for civil society in Learning Brief for DFID" Triple Line/Crown Agents July 2014Uganda: A
[89] See Civicus Enabling Environment Index 2013
[90] "….. *a set of interrelated conditions – such as legal, organisational, fiscal, informational, political, and cultural – that impact on the capacity of development actors such as CSOs to engage in development process"* Thindwa, J., "Enabling environment for Civil Society in CDD Projects", Washington, DC: World Bank, Social Development Family, CDD Learning Module, 2001.

Hospice UK: Building an enabling environment for child palliative care in India and Malawi

Hospice UK (521) aimed to improve the quality of life for children living with life-limiting illness and their families and carers in India and Malawi. Key to achieving this was for the project to contribute to changes in the policy environment that restricts children's palliative care (CPC) and the availability of oral morphine for use with children. National partners engaged with decision-makers not only to improve the delivery of palliative care to children but to influence the relevant professional bodies, training institutions and legislation. To do this the project formed a coalition of collaborating partners at different levels including International Children's Palliative Care Network (ICPCN), the national palliative care associations in both countries and a hospital in each country to demonstrate best practice.
As a result, the project has succeeded in creating an enabling environment for CPC in both countries that is likely to have a lasting impact. For example, in India:

- CPC services are integrated into the routine practices of 5 of 6 hospitals involved in the project.

- The Indian Association of Palliative Care (IAPC) has included CPC in all of its strategy documents and established a working group to ensure that it is integrated into its on-going plans and policies.

- CPC is integrated into standard training and education for health care professionals in the state e.g. in the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences.

- The government of Maharashtra has passed a resolution on palliative care which commits to the provision of CPC and included CPC in the policies of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It has also passed an amendment to the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance (NDPS) Act.

By embedding CPC in national legislation; the policies of the relevant Ministries; the strategy of the national professional association; the training of health care professionals; and the routine practices of public health services the project has contributed to creating an enabling legal, policy, and professional environment for the delivery of child palliative care.

The CSCF Uganda report notes that the influence of the political environment on the operating environment for civil society varied by sector and location. CSOs involved in advocacy on politically sensitive issues such as oil and corruption faced more immediate threats than CSOs whose focus was primarily on local service delivery. The latter is typical of CSCF projects that built positive, collaborative relationships with government at national, district and lower levels to improve services for the poor and marginalised. The Kenya Learning Visit identified a number of examples of effective coordination with, and lobbying of, local government by CSCF and GPAF projects. Some CSCF projects tried to take advantage of a potentially enabling environment such as decentralisation to improve service for the poor and marginalised.

The in-depth project review of 17 projects identified two factors that contributed to CSCF projects contributing to an enabling environment. A key contributory factor was the existence of a well-defined operating environment aligned to the focus and expertise of the project. This enabled a coalition of actors to build credibility and influence with relevant decision-makers who had the power to influence policy and practice within their sphere of influence.

Training in negotiation enabled street vendors in Kenya (542) to secure improvements to their working conditions through engagement with local authorities when previous confrontational tactics had failed.

Living Earth Foundation Mali (530) took advantage of a decentralisation policy that gave CSOs the right to run health centres, schools, water points in partnership with local government.

Other important features of successful approaches to the operating environment were the investment in building relationships with decision-makers; a collaborative approach that offers decision-makers mutually beneficial project outcomes; the credibility of the CSOs involved; and the direct engagement of beneficiary populations.

The main barrier to projects contributing to a more enabling environment was that centralised and/or bureaucratic government decision-making processes sometimes impeded the achievement of project objectives within a project lifespan.

> *Key lesson*
>
> The more focused the operating environment, the more likely the project will be able to influence the political, legal, normative frameworks that contribute to the lasting success of the project.

5.3 Civil Society influence on policy and practice

Key findings

- Most CSCF projects adopted a collaborative, enabling approach with duty-bearers to effect policy or practice change.
- The evidence base for CSCF projects influencing a 'change of discourse' and policy development was greater than successful policy adoption and implementation.

CSCF reports required Grantholders to report on whether the project was making a contribution to the different stages in the policy cycle. The CSCF Portfolio Analysis 2103/14 reported that 27 of the 32 ongoing projects were contributing to a change in government policy or practice but the level of achievement was on a diminishing scale through policy cycle i.e. there was a higher rate of reported achievement in contributing to policy debate and development than in policy adoption and implementation[91]. There is a degree of confusion in reports (and in the Portfolio Analysis[92]) as to what constitutes the different phases of the policy cycle. Nonetheless, it was not surprising, given a project timescale of three to five years that most achievements were reported to take place in the earlier phases.

CSCF projects involved in advocacy generally adopted a non-confrontational approach. Such an approach is perhaps better suited to projects focusing on specific populations of poor and marginalised people where popular mobilisation would be unlikely to be influential. CSCF projects involved collaboration with individual politicians and parliamentary groups to influence policies e.g. through private members' bills, or with the media, including social media, to promote key messages and influence policy processes.

At a sub-national level a key element of leveraging change has been to raise the awareness of government officials through dialogue, developing their awareness of the challenges faced by beneficiary groups. This has been described as 'leading from behind[93]' i.e. encouraging and enabling Government to get things done and allowing them to take the credit for some of the project's achievements. This strategy is

WILDAF (501) was invited by the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs to be a member of committee charged with responsibility for drafting an affirmative action bill to promote women's representation in political decision making in Ghana.

TBAlert (520) established a network to advocate for the development of an Isoniazid Preventive Therapy (IPT) policy. IPT for HIV+ people is now incorporated in the government National TB Control Programme Strategic Plan and HIV strategy.

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[91] See CSCF Portfolio Analysis pp 2103/14. pp 25 and 29. This is true with both ongoing and completed projects.
[92]
[93] Kenya Learning Report 2013

pertinent when there is legal or policy framework which the official can be encouraged to implement through partnership with the project.

- *Policy development*

The first stage of policy influence is to engage decision-makers with a view to "changing the discourse". The majority of CSCF projects report significant achievement at this level. However, perhaps the first level of achievement is to succeed in contributing to developing a policy that would benefit the poor and marginalised were it to be adopted and effectively implemented.

As is frequently the case when CSCF partners participated in a policy alliance, network or committee, the development of the relevant policy cannot be attributed to CSCF partner's efforts alone although a substantial proportion of CSCF projects provided evidence of CSCF partners making a significant contribution to policy development[94].

CSCF projects have also been successful at influencing policy development at sub-national level. The CSCF Soapstone Sector Workers project in Kenya, for example, succeeded in getting the County Government to spearhead the development of a strategy to attract investment and stimulate the growth of the Kisii stone sector. Kisii stone sector representatives were also invited to participate in sub-county level meetings to prepare Kisii County's Fiscal Strategy 2014-15, and to develop a joint action plan to improve working conditions in the sector.

In Kenya (498) the sub-county authorities approved policies designed to improve working conditions in the sector and then delegated the Chief of Bomware-Botabari location to enforce new quarrying rules pertaining to health and safety.

- *Policy adoption*

Fewer projects succeeded in contributing to having a policy adopted during the lifetime of the project[95]. The Kenya Street Vender and Marketers Project (542), which contributed to the passing of a Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) Act and the Towns and Cities Act protecting the rights of Street Vendors and Marketers, illustrates the challenge in contributing to policy adoption and implementation in a three-five year funding period. In this case, Grantholders and Partners had worked together in a previous project to contribute to a draft Bill and the CSCF project provided an opportunity for the same partnership to achieve the adoption of the bill. Another good example of the adoption of policy potentially benefitting a marginalised, vulnerable section of the population is provided below.

> **The Leprosy Mission (England &Wales): Policy adoption as a breakthrough in India**
>
> The Challenging Anti-Leprosy Legislation (497) project sought to overturn seven laws in India that discriminate against people affected by leprosy, including leprosy being the grounds for divorce. The CALL project worked to empower people affected by leprosy to come together to claim their rights. This was a challenge as people affected by leprosy lack confidence after a long history of prejudice and discrimination.
>
> As a result in large part due to the project's advocacy activities, the Law Commission of India on 8th April 2015 submitted a draft Bill to the Minister for Law and Justice for the Indian government to repeal all discriminatory legislation against people affected by leprosy, enshrine their human rights and provide additional provisions such as land rights for those living in colonies on government land, training, education and livelihood support.
>
> The Bill has yet to be passed by Parliament (though the project is confident it will be as it has been submitted by the Law Commission) and effectively implemented. Nonetheless, this marks a great step forward for the rights of people affected by leprosy in India that would not have been anticipated prior to the CSCF project.

[94] CSCF Portfolio Analysis 2013/14. 14 of 32 (44%) of ongoing projects reported significant achievement with regard to policy development.
[95] Ibid 10 of 32 (31%) of ongoing projects reported significant achievement with regard to policy adoption.

- *Policy implementation*

  The fewest number of CSCF projects[96] contributed to the last stage of the policy cycle, overseeing the implementation of a policy or practice. The CSCF Portfolio Analysis 2013/14 quotes, for example, the follow up work of TB Alert (550) in Andhra Pradesh in ensuring the effective implementation of the state government orders on nutritional rations to children under 6 and on the inclusion of tuberculosis control strategy DOTS (Directly observed treatment, short-course) in the job descriptions of local health workers. The project had contributed to both of these reforms.

  This is an example of a project with clearly defined 'sphere of influence' or 'domain of change' where policy or practice reform will have demonstrable benefits for specific target groups, and where it is plausible for the implementation of the policy or practice reforms to be actively monitored. It is an example of a CSCF project contributing to a policy being adopted and then following through with monitoring its implementation. Some CSCF projects, (such as 515) sought from the outset to ensure the implementation of an existing policy such as the access of Dalit children to education under an existing Act.

- *Global advocacy*

  Few CSCF projects reported significant achievements in advocacy activities at a global level[97]. The evaluation found no convincing example of a CSCF project seeking to influence transnational policies or practices through a systematic programme of activities. There is a loose interpretation of what constitutes global advocacy in CSCF project reporting. The evidence in support of global advocacy tended to refer to project work being showcased at an international level and/or examples of their work on "building support for development" involving awareness raising events and conferences in the UK.

CSCF project (515) sought to improve the access of Dalit children to primary education by monitoring the provisions of an existing legal framework, the Right to Education Act and associated policies on School Committees, to sensitise local duty bearers on the right of Dalit children to access quality education.

CSCF projects (521, 522, and 540) cite as examples of global advocacy the presentation of their project achievements at international fora - on child palliative care, tuberculosis and lung disease and mental health respectively.

The evaluation found one example of international advocacy activities in support of a national advocacy objective. The CSCF sustainable agriculture project (546) in Paraguay describes its Implementing Partner Sobrevivencia meeting British MPs and members of the Welsh Assembly to sign a declaration of support for the land use plan of La Pastora; giving a Skype presentation at the Seventh "GM Free Europe" Conference in Brussels in September 2012; and launching international campaign, involving a meeting with the British Ambassador, to protect a forest reserve. More generally, some target groups e.g. the Kisii stone sector on Fair Trade (498) were supported to participate in regional and/or international conferences. In other instances it is not clear whether the advocacy activity was supported by the project[98].

> *Key lesson*
>
> It is important for advocacy projects to be realistic in their scale of ambition with regard to what can be achieved within the policy cycle, taking into account the timescale of project funding; the sphere of influence of targeted decision-makers; the stage of the policy cycle; the extent of previous relationships with decision-makers; and the strength of project knowledge and expertise.

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[96] Ibid 28% of completed projects reported significant achievement in policy implementation; 16% of ongoing projects.

[97] Portfolio Analysis 2013/14. 2 of 18 ((11%) of completed projects an 2 of 32 (6%) of ongoing projects report significant achievement in global advocacy.

[98] For example, CSCF project (514) reports[98]"ACORD and African CSO partners put gender equality .... impact of climate change on agricultural production high on the agenda in the post 2015 process and in the Africa working group positions.......".

5.4 Civil Society contribution to end beneficiaries.

A key aim of the CSCF was to strengthen and build the capacity of their Partners in the South to influence policy and practice for the benefit of the poor and marginalised. This section addresses the evaluation question *Who are the end beneficiaries?* and looks at the types of benefits received.

> *Key Finding*
>
> Working with poor and marginalised groups has been a prominent feature of the CSCF projects. These same groups have benefited where there has been a direct intervention. However, quantifying this with a number creates methodological challenges across such diverse contexts.

A review of the 63 projects that formed the evaluation portfolio found that there was considerable variance in the numbers of beneficiaries per project, ranging from 4,000 to 2,250,168 beneficiaries. The sample of 17 projects used for in-depth review, therefore, cannot be used to develop an estimate of the total number of beneficiaries for the CSCF. Another qualification regarding beneficiary numbers is that direct and indirect beneficiaries are not consistently defined and counted. However, it is possible to make a number of observations from the in-depth review:

- There is a significantly higher number of women beneficiaries than there are men, most likely because women were specifically targeted as a marginalised group in some projects;

- The variance of beneficiary numbers between projects indicates the diversity of approaches used across projects with similar budgets;

- While 12 of the 17 projects were able to give an indication of the number of disabled beneficiaries, it is clear that disability was not reported consistently across the projects or in the same level of detail e.g. some projects give a percentage, others a number. The methodology for calculating the numbers of people living with a disability benefiting from the project is not uniform. Some projects estimate the number of disabled beneficiaries from an estimate of the percentage of the population with a disability, whereas others use more specific tools.

- While the majority of data is disaggregated to show disability and children (13 of the 17 projects), disaggregated data on other marginalised or excluded groups e.g. elderly, PLWHIV, is not consistently provided.

From the review of 17 projects, all worked directly with a particular marginalised group and, where there was an opportunity to do so, included other marginalised groups – for example, a project targeted at prisoners (540) worked with people living with HIV in a project targeted at prisoners; a project targeted at soapstone workers(498) worked with women. Annex 11 provides a summary of beneficiaries for each project. The projects' focus on working with largely poor and marginalised groups, on promoting inclusion, gender equality and women's empowerment, demonstrates that social inclusion was at the heart of the CSCF.

Different groups who have benefited from CSCF include women, women leaders, men, girl boys and girl children people living with disability, HIV and AIDs, mental health and epilepsy, youth, widows, Dalit children and indigenous people.

There was evidence of projects employing gender based activity and planning (for example Basic Needs Ghana, 541) and gender analysis (for example WOMANKIND Worldwide, 501) and tackling structural discrimination and inequality through for example encouraging women's political empowerment as a way to ensure gender parity in government decision making structures. Other factors that contributed to

ensuring beneficiary involvements included designing project activities with specific groups in mind enabling, for example, women to attend meetings and providing for literacy classes as a way to prepare women to organise themselves and defend their rights[99]. As noted elsewhere, engaging duty bearers was an important factor in ensuring that marginalised could claim their rights and benefit.

As wide ranging as the types of marginalised beneficiaries, were the types of reported outcomes for those groups. Some specific examples of these have been outlined below:

Examples of benefits to poor and marginalised groups

- *Increased incomes*: CSCF Project (498) reported that incomes for Kisii stone worker, especially women (60% of the workforce), had significantly increased as a result of project inputs on productivity[100].

- *Awareness and uptake of rights*: CSCF Project (515) working with Dalits in India recorded that by the end of the project Dalit men, women and children could apply for social security entitlements and services and as a result 1,481 people received waged work; 114 received old age pensions; 280 households accessed health services; 320 infants accessed child development services and 481 households received housing scheme benefits[101].

- *Reduction in violence against Children*: CSCF Project (506) working with children in Uganda noted a reduction in violence against children[102].

- *Political Participation*: CSCF Project (555) in DRC noted an increase in women's participation and voice in local government with 84 women entering local administration in Ituri[103].

- *Reduction in harassment*: CSCF Project (542) in Kenya working with male female and disabled street venders and marketers reported a reduction in harassment[104].

- *Health service delivery*: CSCF Project (505) through Marie Stopes Bangladesh's voucher scheme enabled 1,754 poor and vulnerable women to access safe delivery services and 5,110 women to receive ante-natal care and post-natal care services at health facilities.[105]

Key Lesson

Targeted approaches can ensure that benefits reach specific marginalised groups particularly where social inclusion or gender analysis has taken place.

5.5 Key lessons : patterns of engagement and influence.

The majority of CSCF projects achieve significant success in the earlier stages of the policy cycle i.e. in developing policy and advocating its adoption. Successful advocacy is a 'long haul' and it is not surprising there are fewer examples of policy adoption and implementation. It may not be possible within three to five years to translate engagement with decision-makers into policy or practice change which has a demonstrable benefit to poor and marginalised. Nonetheless, the in-depth review of

[99] 555 Trocaire DRC
[100] Monthly household income has increased from around KESS3,000 to between KES25,000-40,000100, enabling women to feel empowered to make decisions on the allocation of that extra income within the household (PCR).
[101] 515 PCR
[102] At the baseline 19% (3,090 boys and 3,319 girls) of children had not been beaten at school. By the end of the project, 55% (2,927 boys and 3,144 girls) of children had not been beaten at school CSCF 506 PCR Reporting Logframe
[103] CSCF 555 Final Evaluation Report
[104] At the beginning of the project 66% of members and 55.6% of people living with a disability and 61.7% of women members faced harassment, in year four, 38% of members and 45% of people living with a disability and 38% of women members faced harassment CSCF 542 PCR Reporting logframe
[105] Encouraged by the success of the project, 44 Union Parishads began independently implementing voucher coupons from April 2013 onwards (CSCF 505 PCR)

17 CSCF projects identified four 'patterns' associated with successful CSCF project engagement and influence during a three to five year period:

- *A prior track record.* A large number of successful CSCF partners had a prior track record on working the policy issue and/or of having had worked with local partners who, in turn, had good links with the targeted communities. This enabled the projects to 'kick start' their activities on the basis of established expertise and known partnerships[106].

- *Identifiable 'sphere of influence'.* Several projects that achieved policy influence worked within a well-defined 'sphere of influence' within which the relevant decision-makers had some level of independence to act. CSCF projects such as (521) on child palliative care or (497) on people affected by leprosy demonstrate that the combination of technical expertise, advocacy skills and a broader representative platform can be effective in leveraging both access and influence.

- *Building on established processes and systems.* There are a number of examples of projects at sub-national level seeking to influence the implementation of existing policy or practice commitments /legislation, particularly in relation to service delivery. When practice changes at sub-national level conform to existing policy commitments and embedded in the systems and structures of local public sector organisations, they are perhaps more likely to have immediate (and sustained) impact on poor and marginalised than longer term policy change at national level.

- *Importance of key relationships.* A number of projects commented on the importance of targeting government officials for advocacy or capacity development who are capable of effecting change. The status of the partner and/or personal relationships can be key in this respect. The Kenya Learning Report[107], for example, quotes the high level government contacts of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) being key to identifying the right government official on whom to exercise influence.

When one of more of these conditions were present there is evidence that CSCF projects contribute incrementally or segmentally to shaping the policy, professional and regulatory frameworks relevant to their policy specialisation that are likely to bring lasting benefits for their target populations among the marginal and vulnerable.

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[106] Kenya Learning Report December 2013 noted the same pattern
[107] Kenya Learning Report December 2013, p19

6. Conclusions

6.1 Relevance:

The activities of the Fund Manager and of the project activities supported by the CSCF were generally relevant to the achievement of the CSCF objectives.

The focus of the CSCF on empowerment and advocacy and its invitation for proposals through Open Calls is seen by Grantholders and Implementing Partners as relevant to their own strategic objectives and programme priorities. A lesson with regard to the evaluation question on indirect funding of Implementing Partners is that, on the whole, Implementing Partners value the role Grantholders play as an intermediary in channelling CSCF funds as long as they add value to the project through their project oversight and capacity development support.

The approach of the Fund Manager has been responsive and relevant to the demands made upon the Fund by DFID, particularly in the area of monitoring, reporting and risk management. Donor requirements of the CSCF projects in these areas changed substantively during the evaluation period and the Fund Manager prioritisation of training and support to Grantholders to comply with their fiduciary responsibilities was relevant to the circumstances, and valued by Grantholders and Implementing Partners.

A lesson for fund management is that DFID's directive approach with regard to monitoring and reporting has led to a 'top down' dynamic in which both Fund Manager and Grantholders have focused their programme support on building fiduciary competences to reduce risk and ensure appropriate reporting. As a result, CSCF capacity development and learning activities have tended to reflect the explicit priorities of the donor more than the expressed needs of project partners. Grantholders and partners have indicated a wish for a more partnership-based approach relevant to their own priorities that would enable them to improve performance not just reporting.

There is evidence that many projects target poor and marginal populations with specific needs e.g. TB control, HIV/Aids, children with terminal illness, and people affected by leprosy, and were also inclusive, recognising that within the marginalised groups there may be, for example, gender inequalities.

Working with local staff and/or community activists who are familiar with the local socio-cultural context has ensured that the awareness raising and capacity development approaches adopted by projects are relevant to the target populations. A wide range of capacity development approaches have been adopted to facilitate civil society engagement with decision-makers.

A collaborative approach to working with decision-makers, particularly at local level, often involving them in the project at an early stage to encourage their ownership of and participation in the project has contributed to relevance.

6.2 Effectiveness

The evaluation was asked to address how partners were engaging in local and national decision-making. The evaluation found good evidence of CSCF projects contributing to the improved capacity of Southern civil society to engage with decision makers at a local level. Many project reports can provide evidence of civic actors engaging with local decision-makers and subsequent changes in policies and practices with a potential impact on targeted beneficiaries. However, a lesson for fund management is that to the evidence base for reported achievements has some limitations. First, it is difficult to conclude from the documentary evidence the extent to which projects deployed appropriate tools and methodologies to assess the effectiveness of their approach on changing attitudes and behaviour. Secondly, the evaluation found no examples of projects evaluating the impact of policy or practice changes achieved on the beneficiary population over time. This is not surprising since it is unlikely that a three to five year funding period would allow the opportunity to do a post-hoc evaluation of impact.

The CSCF has been effective at reaching women and girls through specific projects aimed at tackling gender inequality where gender analysis has been integral to the design, implementation and monitoring of the project. Large numbers of women and girls have also benefited from CSCF projects through targeted approaches. At times though this has led to a focus on disaggregated numbers regarding participation and benefit, rather than a nuanced approach to gender analysis which took into account gender, context, need, power and control over resources.

Projects have also been effective at working with and for marginalised groups either through the specific targeting of a marginalised group or through an inclusive approach which enables marginalised groups to participate and benefit from a project.

There is considerable evidence of CSCF projects contributing to the improved civil society capacity to engage in national decision-making processes. National level civil society engagement was reported most frequently at the earlier stages of the project cycle e.g. policy development and, to a lesser extent, policy adoption. Policy development and adoption were sometimes reported as policy implementation. A smaller number of projects reported significant achievement at the level of policy implementation highlighting that three to five years is a comparatively short period in which to move through the whole policy cycle from policy dialogue to implementation.

There was little evidence of CSCF projects participating in international policy fora. Some CSCF project partners participated in international conferences and learning events though this can only loosely be interpreted as 'global advocacy'. In general CSCF Grantholders are less well-placed to scale up influence and impact at an international level than larger CSOs.

The evaluation was asked to identify the barriers and facilitators for capacity development for engagement with decision-makers. Two key factors, within the control of the project contributed to the achievement of project objectives:

- *A well-defined 'sphere of influence'*. A number of CSCF projects that achieved significant success in delivering their project outcomes were focused on a policy 'niche' area with well-defined target groups and beneficiary populations. A key contributory factor to their success was the existence of a well-defined operating environment aligned to the focus and expertise of the project. This

enabled a coalition of actors to build credibility and influence with relevant decision-makers who had the power to influence policy and practice within their sphere of influence.

- *Early investment in building relationships and ownership.* Local knowledge and familiarity with local networks was an important foundation in nearly all projects subject to in-depth review. Many projects used local staff and/or community networks early in the project to build relationships with key stakeholders at local level to establish and implement the project as a joint venture. This helped to facilitate constructive engagement with decision-makers and a collaborative approach to policy and practice change.

The evaluation highlighted three principal barriers, generally outside the control of the project that impeded the progress towards the achievement of the project objectives within the project lifespan:

- *Political events and insecurity.* In some cases political events such as contested elections led to political disturbances that affected project work plans. In more extreme cases - for example, in Mali and the Central African Republic - conflict-related insecurity made the project no longer tenable.

- *Government bureaucracy.* A number of projects reported that the tardiness of government bureaucratic or legislative processes, at both local or national level, led to delays in project outputs.

  Changes in key personnel. Changes in key personnel in government or in the public sector is important when the quality of relationships is key to project success. Changes in government personnel e.g. at Ministerial level, or staff turnover e.g. in the health and education sectors, were reported as impeding project progress.

6.3 Impact

The evaluation Terms of Reference do not cover an assessment of impact but asks the evaluation to consider the extent to which this might be possible and to provide any "perceptions, correlations or descriptive inferences" about how perceived changes might be associated with CSCF funding.

The impact of the CSCF as a fund is currently measured by the aggregated achievement scores to outputs and outcomes of project logframes. The evaluation portfolio analysis suggests a good level of success by this indicator. 49 of the 63 projects (78%) scored) "A" or above[108] i.e. that their outputs/outcomes met expectation.

However, there are a number of challenges associated with assessing the impact of an empowerment and advocacy fund. The first is that CSCF project outcomes and outputs are diverse, ranging from the improved understanding of target groups to engagement with decision-makers and policy influence. It is not possible to infer from aggregated project scores, therefore, the nature and extent of the impact of the Fund on beneficiary populations. The second is that the evidence base for project achievements, particularly in process-related outputs such as empowerment, awareness raising and capacity development, is uneven. Furthermore, the

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[108] From 33 PCRs, the remainder were scores from the latest AR.

independent verification of results is limited to final evaluations whose quality was variable. The evaluation suggests that early investment in developing a more consistent set of indicators and familiarity with relevant data collection tools would contribute to a more robust evidence base to demonstrate impact.

CSCF worked hard to support projects in defining and counting their beneficiaries. The difficulties encountered in getting reliable, disaggregated data on the beneficiary population have been documented in this report and elsewhere. It is not possible to confidently analyse the size and characteristics of Fund beneficiaries at portfolio level. The evaluation has found, however, many positive examples of project impacts benefiting a diverse group of poor and marginalised including women, men, boys, girls, orphans and vulnerable children, Dalit, people living with HIV and TB, prisoners and people living with a disability.

It can be inferred from the evaluation analysis that there are a number of factors that contribute towards projects achieving impact. Key among these are that the project has a clearly defined sphere of influence, has undertaken an analysis of the structural dimensions of marginalisation and exclusion; has implemented a 'multi-faceted approach with multiple actors at different levels; and adopted a collaborative, enabling approach with duty-bearers to effect policy or practice change.

6.4 Sustainability

Organisational sustainability

In response to the evaluation question on Southern CSO sustainability, the evidence is inconclusive. Southern CSOs believe that the expertise and reputation they gain from managing a DFID-funded project increases the likelihood of their attracting further funding. Partners frequently refer to strengthened project management capacity in financial management, monitoring and reporting as contributing to their organisational sustainability. However, partners also reported losing skilled staff on project closure and the evidence of CSCF funding helping to leverage additional project funds and contributing to longer term financial sustainability is inconclusive.

Sustainability of impact

There is stronger evidence to indicate that the achievements of a significant number of CSCF projects may be lasting although it is not possible to quantify this. CSCF projects have achieved varying levels of influence on policy development, adoption and implementation. CSCF itself reports that the level of project achievement on the policy process declines from the initial stages of policy discourse and development through to policy adoption and implementation. To confidently conclude that a policy achievement is sustainable it would be necessary to have evidence of a policy being adopted and effectively implemented. The comparatively short time span of a CSCF project allows little opportunity for post-hoc evaluation of policy implementation.

The evaluation, nonetheless, found evidence in its in-depth review of 11 of the 17 projects influencing policy, professional and normative frameworks within their sphere of influence in ways which are likely to bring lasting benefits for their targeted, vulnerable population. The CSCF project achievements are likely to be most sustainable when they bring about:

- Mutually reinforcing changes in the policy, professional and regulatory frameworks relevant to the needs of their target populations – for example, children at risk, people affected with leprosy, people living with mental health and epilepsy, prisoners affected by HIV.

- Systemic changes in the policies and practices of local public health and education sectors, local authorities, local employer's associations relevant to the target populations – for example, male and female soapstone workers, male and female street vendors and marketers, and people living with TB.

7. Lessons for Challenge Funds

The experience of the CSF provides a rich body of learning for civil society Challenge Funds. This section seeks to derive some lessons for policy makers from the key findings of the evaluation.

7.1 Supporting civil society engagement with decision-makers

Empowerment and advocacy still relevant

Grant Holders and partners affirm the importance and relevance to their context of a Fund that supports the efforts of Southern civil society efforts to engage with decision makers and to achieve policy and practice change in favour of the poor and marginalised. This would suggest that DFID should retain a facility to fund civil society advocacy in future Challenge Fund arrangements. A public, persuasive theory of change that explains why DFID believes an independent, vocal civil society contributes to pro-poor outcomes would reinforce the rationale for such a facility.

A lasting impact within a defined 'sphere of influence'

There is evidence that CSCF has been able to support smaller UK CSOs with a focused mission to have a demonstrable impact on specific policies and practices that will have a lasting impact on the lives of poor and vulnerable sections of the population. Many projects succeeded in influencing the policy, practice and regulatory frameworks relevant to their mission to establish enabling environment for their project objectives. The evidence suggests that DFID should retain a facility to support smaller, more specialised UK CSOs to influence the relevant operating environments and policy and practice frameworks for the benefit of poor and vulnerable populations.

Demonstrating capacity development as change process

The multi-faceted approach to capacity development adopted by many CSCF projects may have contributed to project success but also presents methodological challenges, particularly in terms of how to demonstrate the effectiveness of the capacity development processes than underpin the results. This is a complex area in which smaller CSOs and partners in particular would benefit from support. The learning for a Challenge Fund such as CSCF is to provide Grant Holders and partners support and guidance on use of appropriate indicators and, in particular, the better use of data collection tools to provide a robust evidence base for change through capacity development.

7.2 Supporting Southern CSOs through UK CSOs.

Demonstrating the added value of the UK intermediary role.

CSCF Southern CSO partners value their partnerships with UK CSOs and, on balance, favour the indirect nature of CSCF funding as long as UK CSOs add value to the project in addition to channelling funds. The value-added activities of UK CSOs are not immediately apparent in CSCF reporting unless they are included in a logframe output. Challenge Funds supporting Southern civil society through UK CSOs should consider how the contribution of Grant Holder to the project can be better defined, assessed and reported on so as to provide the rationale for indirect funding.

7.3 Managing a Challenge Fund

Balancing donor policy priorities with partnership.

DFID's changing policy priorities have driven the Fund Manager's interpretation of its role and shaped its relationship with Grantholders. The number, nature and timing of, for example, new monitoring and reporting guidance has been a challenge for Grant Holders and partners, despite the support offered by the Fund Manager. While DFID retains a right to require that the Fund complies with its policy priorities and mandatory procedures, opportunities have been reduced to develop more of a partnership with Grantholders and Southern partners to would help to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the Funds activities.

The roles and responsibilities of donor and Fund Manager should be clear and communicated to stakeholders. This should acknowledge the role that Grantholders and partners can play to contribute to the relevance and effectiveness of fund management. It may be worth considering whether a Steering or Advisory Committee/s for Challenge Fund/s might 'moderate' between the different priorities and perspectives of stakeholders.

Open Calls favour smaller NGOs but need to avoid wasted effort

Grant Holders were positive about Open Calls for Proposals since they enable smaller organisations to play to their strengths and thus avoid the 'mission drift' sometimes associated with thematic calls. Nonetheless, the high rate of rejection of proposals was potentially cost-inefficient for all concerned and demoralising for unsuccessful applicants. This suggests that DFID should retain an Open Call in funding instruments for smaller CSOs, although the grant approval process should be designed to minimise disappointment and wasted effort.

Inception phase critical to project design and ownership.

Early involvement of partners and target groups (including decision-makers) in the project design helps to build ownership and ensure the relevance of the project. A number of Grantholders commented that a more formal inception phase - to consult with partners and target groups on data gathering approaches methods and embedding appropriate M&E processes and systems - would have helped set the foundations of a successful project.

A focus on improved reporting and performance

The primary focus of the Fund Manager's capacity building efforts has been on building the Grantholder competencies in line with their fiduciary responsibilities, and to meet changing expectations with regard to monitoring and reporting. This has some positive spin off effects on programme quality although better reporting does not necessarily correlate to better programmes. Similarly CSCF learning was mostly focused on extracting lessons at portfolio level. Opportunities to facilitate peer learning at project level about methods and approaches which will result in improved project design, implementation and impact have not been adequately followed up - with the exception of Country Learning visits. A clear learning strategy for a fund, developed in consultation with, for example Grantholders, would clarify the audiences for learning processes and outputs and ensure capacity development and learning plans are targeted to improve project performance as well as reporting. Learning processes separate from accountability reporting are more likely, for example, to enable projects to learn from challenges.