Open Forum for **CSO**
Development Effectiveness

THE SIEM REAP CSO CONSENSUS
on
THE INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK
FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

AGREED BY THE SECOND GLOBAL ASSEMBLY,
OPEN FORUM FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS,
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About the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness

The Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness is a global process set up by and for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) worldwide. Its goal has been to create a shared framework of principles that defines effective CSO development practice and elaborates the minimum standards for an enabling environment for CSOs, while at the same time promoting civil society's essential role in the international development system.

The Open Forum was formally established in July 2008 in conjunction with the 3rd High level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, Ghana, in response to various calls to civil society organizations to sign up to the Paris Declaration. Instead of signing the Paris Declaration, civil society pushed to define their own effectiveness as distinct but equal development actors. The mandate of the Open Forum runs until the Fourth High Level Forum (HLF4) at the end of 2011 in Busan, South Korea, where the Open Forum conclusions will be presented for acknowledgement by all participants (donors, developing country governments and CSOs). At the same time, the outcomes of the Open Forum process serve as a long-term reference point beyond Busan, for civil society organizations to improve their own effectiveness as independent development actors.

The objectives of the Open Forum form three key pillars:

1. Achieving a consensus on a set of global Principles for Development Effectiveness;
2. Developing guidelines for CSOs to implement the Principles; and
3. Advocating to governments for a more enabling environment for CSOs to operate.

These three components form the *Siem Reap CSO Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness* – the consolidated outcome of a highly inclusive and participatory Open Forum process over the past two years.

The Open Forum consultations were guided by a representative Global Facilitation Group of CSOs worldwide. Between 2009 and 2011, the Open Forum reached out to thousands of CSOs across the globe through national, regional, and thematic consultations. A common aim of the consultations focused on identifying the shared principles that guide the work of civil society in development and the standards for an environment in which they can operate most effectively. In other words, they sought to determine what constitutes development effectiveness for civil society. This worldwide process enabled the greatest possible number of CSOs, with diverse mandates for development, to contribute, which is the foundation and legitimacy of the Open Forum's *International Framework*.

In conjunction with civil society consultations, the Open Forum also held multi-stakeholder meetings with governments and donors at regional, national and international levels. These initiatives were structured to facilitate dialogue and discussion between CSOs, donors and governments on the enabling conditions for CSOs to be effective development actors.

Based on the inputs generated from the thousands of CSOs who participated in the consultation process, the first Global Assembly of the Open Forum (Istanbul, Turkey: September 2010) endorsed the eight *Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness*, which form the basis for effective development work by CSOs around the globe.

More than 200 representatives of CSOs at the second and concluding Global Assembly of the Open Forum (Siem Reap, Cambodia: June 2011) endorsed the *Siem Reap Consensus on the International*

Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness, with guidance to implement the *Istanbul Principles*. The *International Framework* was developed following further inputs from civil society representatives during the first Global Assembly, as well as many more national, regional and thematic consultations that took place between the two Global Assemblies.

The *International Framework* is an inspirational example of global civil society achieving agreement on the standards that guide their development work and as such provides a solid legitimate benchmark for CSOs worldwide.

The *International Framework* is divided into three main sections:

a) Guidance for the implementation of the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness by CSOs;
b) Strengthening Mechanisms for CSO Accountability; and
c) Critical Conditions for Enabling CSO Development Effectiveness: Government Policies and Practices.

The Framework is supplemented by two stand-alone documents - an *Implementation Toolkit* (which provides more detailed guidance on how to put the principles into practice within local realities), and an *Advocacy Toolkit* (with guidance on how CSOs can use the messages in the *International Framework* to promote a more enabling environment for civil society in specific national and regional contexts).

With this landmark global CSO statement, the *International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness*, and building from a thoroughly consultative Open Forum process, civil society has fulfilled its ambitious vision to develop a collective and consolidated reflection and commitment to strengthen their development practices based on effectiveness principles.

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

A commitment to strengthen civil society development effectiveness …

Millions of civil society organizations (CSOs) worldwide contribute in unique and essential ways to development as innovative agents of change and social transformation. These contributions are long-standing: CSOs support grassroots experiences of people engaged in their own development efforts; are both donors and practitioners of development; promote development knowledge and innovation; work to deepen global awareness and solidarity among people across national boundaries; and they advocate and seek out inclusive policy dialogue with governments and donors to work together for development progress.

Acknowledging not only their contributions, but also their weaknesses and challenges as development actors, CSOs have affirmed their commitment to take action to improve and be fully accountable for their development practices. The *Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness,* a CSO-led global and fully participatory process, has determined the vision and essential principles that define and guide change for effective CSO development practice.

In September 2010, more than 170 CSO representatives from 82 countries gathered in Istanbul, Turkey, to consider and unanimously adopt the ***Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness*** (Annex One). The *Istanbul Principles* are the result of thorough consultations with thousands of CSOs in more than 70 countries and sectors.

The eight *Istanbul Principles* take into account the diversity of CSO visions, mandates, approaches, relationships and impacts in their development actions. Given the diversity and geographic spread of CSOs, the *Istanbul Principles* must be applied in meaningful but distinct ways that are appropriate to each CSO local context or sector.

The *Istanbul Principles* are the foundation for the ***International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness***, adopted in June 2011 at the Second Global Assembly in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The *Framework* sets out guidance for interpreting and aligning CSO practices with the *Istanbul Principles* in diverse local and sectoral settings. The "Toolkit for Implementation of the Istanbul Principles", with further elaboration of guidance and indicators, will enable CSO actors to adapt and work with the *Framework* in the context of their organizational mandates and program realities.

CSO development actors are profoundly affected by the context in which they work. The policies and practices of all governments, including when they act as donors, affect and shape the capacities for CSOs to engage in development. Progress in realizing the *Istanbul Principles* in CSO practice, therefore, depends in large measure on enabling government policies, laws and regulations consistent with the *Istanbul Principles*.

At the 2008 Accra High Level Forum-3 governments committed "to work with CSOs to provide an enabling environment that maximizes their contributions to development." Since then, many CSOs, in both donor and developing countries, have experienced deteriorating enabling conditions for their work. The *Open Forum,* therefore, welcomes and encourages further work of the multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment and its *Key*

Findings for the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness as a positive contribution upon which to build and strengthen enabling conditions for CSOs.

This *International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness* is the basis for CSO engagement and collaboration with all development actors, through the *BetterAid Platform*, to achieve the goals of the Busan 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-4).

The *Framework* creates a renewed opportunity for collaboration and synergies between CSOs, developing country governments, donors and other aid actors, in support of peoples' efforts to achieve their own development and claim their rights. CSOs call on all governments involved in HLF-4 to acknowledge the outcomes of *Open Forum* process and endorse the *Istanbul Principles* as an essential basis for their policies of engagement and support of civil society in development.

An understanding of development informs development effectiveness …

CSO development effectiveness speaks to the impact of CSO actions for development. These actions for development will be effective if they bring about sustainable change that addresses the causes, as well as the symptoms, of poverty, inequality and marginalization. For CSOs, development effectiveness is linked to multi-faceted human and social development processes directly involving and empowering people living in poverty and discriminated and marginalized populations.

CSOs assume no single development model, but rather focus on people and their organizations, empowering them to make choices over how they will develop. For CSOs, development effectiveness requires openness to many development alternatives, which are increasingly informed by human rights, environmental sustainability (the Earth's limits) and indigenous peoples' notions of *vivir bien* ("living well").

People living in poverty and marginalized populations have unequal access to development resources. This inequality has persisted not only because of limited capacities and finances for development, but also because of the concentration of socio-economic and political power and barriers to gender equality and rights of minorities. Effective CSO development action must, therefore, involve CSOs making choices and taking sides. It involves direct engagement with populations living in poverty, not as abject victims, but as development actors and political proponents for development in their own right.

> **What are Civil Society Organizations?**
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> "**CSOs can be defined to include all non-market and non-state organisations in which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain.** They cover a wide range of organisations that include membership-based CSOs, cause-based CSOs, and service-oriented CSOs. Examples include community-based organisations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organisations, labour unions, cooperatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes, and the not-for-profit media."
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> *(Advisory Group Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations, August 2008)*

The CSO vision of development is informed by the diversity of their roles as development actors, including many CSOs involved in development who are not aid actors (see Annex Two for a summary of CSO roles in development). Increasingly, CSOs work in support of the human rights of affected populations, rather than agents of charity responding to often externally-determined needs and wants.

SECTION II: THE ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

A preamble ...

Civil society organizations are a vibrant and essential feature in the democratic life of countries across the globe. As self-governing and voluntary organizations, they are striving to be accountable and effective organizations. CSOs have also been widely recognized as distinct and independent development actors, working for development outcomes for poor and marginalized peoples. CSOs are catalysts for social change, collaborating with partners around shared values and interests.

> **What are Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness?**
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> **CSO development effectiveness principles are statements of values and qualities that should inform CSO socio-economic, political, and organizational relationships.** They are universal points of reference for CSO activities in development, emphasizing the impact of these actions on the rights of people living in poverty and marginalized populations. In their diversity, CSO development effectiveness is highly dependent on context: their relevance to unique locales, sector, governance and development relationships.

CSOs are social expressions of diversity and innovation in development practice. They bring a rich array of organizational values, objectives, and means for popular engagement, as well as sector knowledge, structures, interests and resources.

Development is a social and political process that is equally about peoples' participation and engagement to claim their rights, as it is about development outcomes. CSOs are, consequently, political protagonists for development change, advocates for and providers of public goods. CSOs collaborate and partner with communities, with each other and with different development actors, complementing development efforts by developing country governments and donors at many levels.

CSOs have close and often unique connections with local processes, but also seek change at national and global levels. But unlike political parties, peoples' organizations, and social movements, which may aspire to influence development by obtaining formal state political power, CSOs are, for the most part, autonomous non-partisan political actors in the social realm, representing their own point of view. But, in some countries, such as the Philippines, CSOs may also play direct roles within the parliamentary system.

CSOs actions for development are also distinguished by a commitment to non-violent processes. CSOs seek to maximize positive results, while being true to the principle of "do no harm", considering the full range of potential impacts of their development actions. CSOs are channels for social solidarity, for service and mobilization to enable people to better claim their rights and improve conditions of life. CSOs enrich public policy dialogue with knowledge and innovation; they are donors who find and leverage financial and human resources for development.

CSOs collaborate and may coordinate efforts with governments to seek development outcomes consistent with international human rights standards. These standards give priority to addressing conditions of discrimination, dis-empowerment, poverty and inequality. In many countries, CSOs

play important roles engaging citizens, defending the rule of law and guarding against corruption of public funds. As voluntary expressions of citizen action, CSOs are a measure of democratic and inclusive development.

These characteristics of CSOs as distinct, independent and autonomous development actors – voluntary, diverse, non-partisan, non-violent, collaborating for change, linking development process with results and outcomes – have informed all the *Open Forum* consultations. The *Istanbul Principles,* set out in this *Framework,* are not new. They are the consensus expression of decades of experience by thousands of CSOs involved in the *Open Forum* process and its consultations*.* As such, the *Istanbul Principles* reflect CSO work and practices in both peaceful and conflict situations, in different areas of work from grassroots to policy advocacy and in a continuum from humanitarian emergencies to long-term development.

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

The *Istanbul Principles* are, likewise, not intended to duplicate or replace existing CSO country or sector-specific principles or various accountability frameworks. But rather, the adoption of the *Istanbul Principles* is a means to stimulate structured reflection, deeper understanding, and accountability for enhanced CSO development effectiveness. This is the purpose of the guidance suggested for each principle in this *Framework*, which is further elaborated in an accompanying resource, "A Toolkit for Implementation of the Istanbul Principles".

The Istanbul Principles: Guidance for CSO development practice …

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice

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

A rights-based approach to development work has been adopted and implemented by many CSOs. CSOs are empowering people to find their voice and secure their rights using holistic approaches, including holding governments accountable to respect, protect and fulfill rights for all people. These approaches address systemic causes of poverty such as inequality, vulnerability, exclusion and discrimination on any basis. CSOs reference important civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights and international human rights standards derived from the United Nations (UN) human rights system, including the Declaration on the Right to Development, the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, core International Labour Organization Conventions, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and human rights agreements at the regional level.

Guidance

a) **Implement human rights-based approaches to development** in all aspects of advocacy, programmatic analysis, design, implementation and assessment, with mechanisms for participation, training and capacity strengthening, and inclusive policy dialogue for holding governments to account.

b) **Safeguard, support and make operational the rights of affected populations and empower women, who are often excluded, to participate** in the design, implementation and assessment of country-led CSO development activities.

c) **Empower and improve the capacities of affected communities to participate in multi-stakeholder policy dialogue,** seeking and encouraging inclusive policy processes with government, donors and other development actors, based on international human rights law and standards.

d) **Implement genuine approaches that allow free, prior and informed consent** on the part of affected communities and stakeholders. Build the capacity of and educate vulnerable populations about their legal rights and means for recourse.

e) **Establish measurable indicators** for development effectiveness in relation to international human rights standards, including gender equality, children's rights, disability, decent work and sustainable livelihoods.

2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girl's rights

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

> Achieving gender equality, through addressing unequal power relations and fulfilling women and girls' rights - in all their dimensions - is essential for realizing sustainable development outcomes. Vulnerability and marginalization of women and girls is perpetuated through various forms of discrimination including economic discrimination, harmful traditional practices, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. The empowerment of women, through gender equity, promotes equal access for women and girls to opportunities, resources, and decision-making at all levels. Given that women are not a homogeneous category, CSOs stress the need for diversified approaches in order to promote women's empowerment, safety and well-being, especially for marginalized and disadvantaged groups of women. CSOs also acknowledge that men and boys are crucial partners and need to be fully engaged.

> CSOs are not free from gender inequalities and practices. Advancing gender equity goes beyond improving practical conditions for women. It is also essential to redress inequalities in power among men and women, tackling discriminatory laws, policies and practices. Women's participation, per se, is not sufficient to guarantee that their rights and needs will be put forward and defended and that the culture of CSOs will be transformed to

embrace gender equality at the core. Explicitly including the rights and opportunities of girls and young women by CSOs, including for many, women's reproductive rights, is fundamental to realizing gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's organizations and movements are essential actors in development, and have been particularly important as a force for women's empowerment and democratization.

Guidance

a) **Integrate and implement gender equality and women's rights in the constitutive practices of CSOs.** Organizational culture must take account of relevant international treaties and agreements, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**.** This integration of gender equality and women's rights should be reflected in CSOs' mandate, policies, dialogue with counterparts, gender-responsive allocation of human and financial resources and in capacity-strengthening programs aimed at staff and counterparts.

b) **Embed gender indicators and analysis, including disaggregated data, in program plans** by ensuring CSO planning, implementation, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation are based on comprehensive gender analysis as well as gender equality and women and girls' rights indicators.

c) **Invest in partnerships to increase capacities in gender equality and women's rights**, including significant support for women's organizations and movements. The participation and commitment of men and boys in this process should be encouraged.

d) **Seek opportunities for collaboration on multi-stakeholder policy dialogue** to promote context-appropriate changes to guarantee women's sexual and reproductive rights, their economic empowerment, leadership and greater control over productive resources, and improved political participation to further their strategic interests.

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

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

Development will be appropriate and effective if it is grounded in the rights, expressed priorities and local knowledge of affected populations. Affected populations are the primary stakeholders in development. As they work to promote human rights and positive change, CSOs must be respectful of the traditions and culture of local communities. CSO empowerment activities build women and men's collective capacities and their democratic ownership as actors in both their communities and nations and as individuals claiming their rights. Affected populations, therefore, have more influence, decision-making power and resources, giving them more control over factors that shape their lives, free of violence. Democratic ownership over policies and development is of particular importance in conflict and post-conflict situations. When CSOs collaborate in development initiatives with governments, CSOs seek avenues and

outcomes for women and men to claim and exercise their rights, while protecting the autonomy and political space for peoples' movements and organizations.

Guidance

a) **Focus CSO programming on the empowerment of women and men whose lives are directly affected by development initiatives.** Priority must be given to the voice, proposals, development concerns and activities of people living in poverty (with particular attention to the inclusion of women, girls, indigenous peoples, workers, persons with disabilities, migrants and displaced populations) and of social movements representing disadvantaged and marginalized populations.

b) **Promote participative bottom-up approaches to democratic local decision-making and strengthen engagement with a diversity of local CSO stakeholder voices.** Ensure women's voices are heard in setting priorities for national and local CSO programs.

c) **Strengthen the voices of women and men living in poverty and of the politically marginalized in determining, advocating and monitoring public policies on development** through multi-stakeholder dialogue and the strengthening CSOs as non-partisan political actors in development.

d) **Treat all participants in development equally** regardless of legal status, ethnic background, sex or sexual orientation, disabilities, educational and economic background or age.

e) **Build awareness of the complex reality of development among public constituencies in donor countries.** Development is about solidarity and accompaniment of affected populations in developing countries. It is not about directing change on their behalf.

f) **When acting as donors, invest in CSO capacity strengthening and sustainable self-development to enable CSO independence** in areas of governance, finance, leadership in program management and advocacy with other development actors. Women and marginalized communities should have leadership roles.

4. Promote Environmental Sustainability

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

> The human rights of both present and future generations depend on development paths and strategies where sustainability within the Earth's limits is the cornerstone of all development actions. All people have the right to live and work in a healthy and sustainable environment. Complex environmental challenges, including the urgency to mitigate and adapt to climate change, require capacities and skills that advance sustainable ecosystems, human development and are inclusive of all affected populations. Meeting these challenges will demand environmental awareness and innovative solutions. These solutions should be shaped by principles of environmental and climate justice and equity as well as policy

coherence. The millions of women and men, particularly in developing countries, who are deeply impacted by environmental degradation and climate change, bear no responsibility for the conditions that have result in the deepening environmental and climate crises. CSOs must explicitly give priority to local socio-economic conditions and cultural and indigenous approaches in strengthening well-being, biodiversity and sustainability in their development practice.

Guidance

a) **Explicitly incorporate issues of environmental sustainability into CSO policies, practice, program planning, design processes, advocacy and public engagement**. Ensure long-term environmental and ecological integrity, listen to and support local stakeholders and recognize the different gender roles in environmental management.

b) **Build strategic alignments and collaboration** between CSOs involved in environment and development initiatives. Strengthen the ability of both sectors to promote and implement environmental and sustainable development.

c) **Promote and respect the rights for all people to live and work in healthy environments, and support environmentally friendly practices of indigenous communities**. National development strategies and actions and individual environmental responsibilities must be taken into account.

d) **Promote the right to water, land, food, shelter and greater control over the management of natural resources** by people living in poverty and marginalized groups (e.g. indigenous and rural women farmers). Their active participation in environmental governance and decision-making on natural resource management should be fostered. Multi-stakeholder dialogues should be used to hold governments and the private sector accountable.

e) **Influence policies and implement context-appropriate initiatives to reduce the negative impacts of climate change, loss of bio-diversity and all forms of environmental degradation and contamination** (e.g. water resources and land). Socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice, based on the knowledge and experiences of affected populations, should be integrated into policies and initiatives.

5. Practice transparency and accountability

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

Transparency, mutual and multiple accountabilities and internal democratic practices reinforce CSO values of social justice and equality. Transparency and accountability create public trust, while enhancing CSO credibility and legitimacy. Democratizing information, increasing and improving its flow among all stakeholders, including political actors, strengthens both civil society and democratic culture. Transparency is an essential pre-condition for CSO accountability.

Accountability is not limited to financial reporting, but should strengthen both institutional integrity and mutual public reckoning among development actors, particularly focusing on

accountability with affected populations. Community-based CSOs often have particular advantages in implementing local grassroots-accountability processes. Progress in transparency and accountability, however, may sometimes be affected and limited by challenges CSOs face living under highly repressive regimes and laws and in armed conflict situations.

Guidance

a) **Promote public accountability and transparency practices** as tools to increase CSO visibility and credibility.

b) **Create the basis for mutual and multiple CSO accountabilities through easy public access to all constitutive organizational policies and documents,** including criteria against which partners are funded and regular audited financial and programmatic reports. These reports are, of course, appropriate to the nature and locale of the organization and based on minimum common legal and ethical standards. Access to policies and documents must never endanger lives or the existence of a partner organization.

c) **Implement practices that sustain mutual and multiple CSO accountabilities,** by reflecting on power relationships, being open to challenges and criticisms, ensuring necessary resources and establishing an agreed framework for gender-aware, equitable, inclusive and regular dialogue. A fair mechanism should also be established for recourse to deal with arbitrary and disrespectful actions.

d) **When acting as donors, provide accessible information on all partner organizations**, including sources of funding within a framework of mutual accountability and transparency. The privacy and confidentiality of any information that may endanger lives or a partner organization must be respected. Limitations on access to information may also be implemented if requested by affected organizations, on the provision of appropriate justification.

e) **Provide timely, accurate and accessible responses to public information requests**, including gender disaggregated information. Information should, wherever possible, be available in the appropriate languages.

f) **Promote and practice a transparent and democratic culture within the organization with accountable and effective leadership,** clear assigned responsibilities, transparent operational procedures, ethical information practices, anti-corruption policies and a demonstrated respect for gender balance, human rights standards, integrity, honesty and truthfulness.

6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity

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

Effective CSO partnerships, in all their diversity, are expressions of social solidarity. CSO partnerships will be stronger through deliberate efforts to realize equitable and reciprocal

collaboration and coordination, based on mutually-agreed goals and shared values. In the spirit of mutual learning, such partnerships contribute experience, expertise and support to CSOs and local communities assisting their efforts in areas that directly affect the future of their communities. CSOs also promote transnational peoples' solidarity and linkages for public awareness and citizen engagement in all countries. Effective CSO partnerships for development require long-term commitments to negotiate common goals and programmatic objectives, based on trust, respect, solidarity and leadership of developing country partners.

Organizational autonomy is essential for equitable partnerships. Equitable partnerships result from deliberate attitudes and actions, by all partners, to counterbalance inequalities in power. These power inequalities are the consequence of unequal access to resources, structural and historical inequalities, gender inequities and women's exclusion, and sometimes-large disparities in capacity. The role of external CSOs is to enable, rather than dictate, and to amplify, not substitute, the voices of developing country CSO actors.

Sustained and broadly-shared development outcomes will be achieved through respectful collaboration and deliberate coordination with different development actors, particularly with donors and governments. But CSOs are actors in their own right, not instrumental agents for donors or governments. The basis for coordination must be mutual respect, agreement on the distinct areas where goals and development strategies are shared and equality in setting the terms for coordination and coherence.

Guidance

a) **Define, clearly and explicitly, the conditions and terms of partnerships in a "Partnership Agreement"**. Responsibilities, contributions, decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms must be clearly established through respectful dialogue and in a freely-determined agreement. Adequate allocation of resources is needed to ensure the mutual strengthening of organizations. The participation of and respect for women and their strategic gender needs is critical for determining the conditions and terms of partnerships.

b) **Build complementary actions by all partners towards shared analysis, programmatic goals and monitoring, rather than narrow project contracts**. Invest in and institutionalize long-term relationships rooted in partner leadership, appropriate development strategies, and with appropriate consideration of core institutional support, mutual accountability, dialogue to resolve differences, and the participation of all relevant stakeholders in the partnership.

c) **Acting as donors, align with partner organizations' programmatic goals, strategies and administrative systems,** wherever possible, and work to harmonize requirements with other donors based on the partner's systems.

d) **Strengthen collaboration for solidarity and to create synergies for common cause among CSOs, domestically and internationally.** Utilize existing opportunities and structures, such as platforms, coalitions and networks, and encourage new forms of collaboration and inclusion of other development actors such as academics.

e) **Establish mutually-agreed conditions and mechanisms for ongoing risk management, monitoring, evaluation, information sharing, and co-learning processes.**

f) **Invest in public engagement activities that links domestic conditions and issues to the reality and experiences of partners**, promoting direct cross-national engagement, solidarity, and a deeper, subjective understanding and commitment to the relationship.

7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning

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

> Purposeful collaborative processes for learning provide an indispensable foundation for assessing sustainable development results and impact, as well as enabling synergies among different development actors. Development learning requires effective mechanisms for self-reflection and mutual sharing of information and knowledge. Development learning includes exchanges between CSO colleagues, peers, volunteers, partners, affected populations and other counterparts.

> CSOs are learning organizations and should make the creation, sharing and implementation of knowledge a key component of their strategies and ways of working. This learning approach must be self-defined, continuous, collective, iterative and based on participation, openness and trust. Mutual-learning processes can help increase respect and understanding between partners, notably in areas of local knowledge, cultural issues, gender relations, values, spirituality and different ways of working. This learning is only possible if the power imbalances that can hinder true mutual learning are acknowledged and addressed. Tailored and adequately resourced capacity strengthening supports organizational learning and is essential for improving CSO development effectiveness. Regular qualitative evaluation, working closely with development partners and related stakeholders is essential to adapting and refining strategies, priorities and working methodologies in CSO development action. Organizational learning, however, should go beyond the more limited processes of "managing for short-term results".

Guidance

a) **Foster opportunities and a conducive environment for systematic mutual learning and exchange** based on participation, openness and trust in institutional and program activities within and between organizations. Lessons learned should inform organizational decision-making processes, thinking and practices.

b) **Establish professional and ethically responsible methods and tools** to engage critically in gathering and sharing reliable data and information on which to build CSO knowledge.

c) **Encourage collaboration for knowledge-sharing among CSOs through networks, coalitions, and multi-stakeholder dialogue** in order to encourage innovation, capacity strengthening and improve development performance.

d) **Acknowledge and facilitate, in CSO development initiatives and policy dialogue, the sharing and safeguarding of local indigenous knowledge, ancestral wisdom, and**

spirituality underpinning different approaches to development and the management of natural resources.

8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

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

> CSOs achieve sustainable development outcomes by making long-term commitments, working in partnerships, empowering communities and acting in solidarity with affected populations. Positive development change should also be sustained through the complementarity of development actors and a focus on the root causes of inequality, poverty and marginalization. In post-conflict situations, CSOs play an important part in peace and nation-building efforts. In these circumstances, where the role and the reach of the state may be diminished, CSOs make essential contributions and fill important gaps; but should complement, not substitute themselves for the responsibilities of the state. It is the responsibility of the state to deliver public goods, such as education and health, and be held accountable. The state's capacity, however, to deliver public goods, should be strengthened.

> CSOs, whose work is often complex and long-term, acknowledge the importance of assessing, demonstrating with evidence, and communicating the impact and sustainability of their work. Sustainable change in CSO work requires a commitment to gender equality, throughout all aspects of development activity. The assessment of the effectiveness of CSO contributions to positive social change, including achieving gender equality, must be shaped by the views of local counterparts and affected populations. The CSO assessment must also take into account the wider socio-economic and political processes that enable or negatively affect the sustainability of CSO development outcomes for change, particularly in conflict or post-conflict situations.

Guidance

a) **Strengthen CSO collaboration and policy dialogue with other development stakeholders to maximize sustainable impacts of activities and advocacy on shared and mutually-agreed development goals**. CSOs should work with government to strengthen government's role to deliver and be accountable for the provision of public goods.

b) **Engage the private sector in development programs, including initiatives for employment and livelihood-focused economic development**, based on respect for human rights standards, democratic ownership, decent work and sustainable development. These efforts should address the needs for sustainable livelihoods in urban and rural settings, promote social inclusion and create access to resources, especially for the informal sector, for women, and vulnerable segments of society.

c) **Utilize participatory tools for planning, monitoring and evaluating development**

activities, including program implementation and advocacy. Build the analytical capacities of staff, volunteers and partners with an orientation to determining and assessing conditions for long-term sustainable development outcomes affecting lasting change for people living in poverty or marginalized populations.

d) **Improve CSO capacities through comprehensive capacity-strengthening programs** covering areas such as equitable partnerships, advocacy, gender equality, networking and facilitation and impact assessment.

e) **Strengthen the financial sustainability and independence of CSOs** by broadening their funding base, wherever possible, in order to reduce dependence on politically-tied or conditioned assistance.

f) Engage and educate people as global citizens enhancing two-way communication with counterparts and constituencies on equitable and just development and CSO development effectiveness.

SECTION III: STRENGTHENING MECHANISMS FOR CSO ACCOUNTABILITY

CSO mandates are the basis for their responsibility to be fully accountable...

All development actors share a responsibility to demonstrate the results of their interventions and actions, in particular with their primary and most-affected constituencies. CSOs acknowledge and take seriously this obligation, which is set out in the fifth *Istanbul Principle* – to be fully accountable and transparent for their development actions and results. As civil society organizations, accountability is shaped by various distinctive organizational mandates, embedded in their work as agents of change for the public good, with people in their communities, and with the public constituencies that support their work. This responsibility is put into practice through the implementation of various CSO accountability mechanisms, responding to different organizational and country contexts.

As development actors, CSOs enjoy significant trust by the public and local stakeholders. Most CSOs practice high standards of management and probity. CSOs are, also, continuously responding to legitimate calls to improve their accountability and transparency practices. They have done so by strengthening oversight by elected Boards of Directors, ongoing and transparent dialogue with program partners, clear communications with constituencies, accessible program reports and external financial audits, compliance with government regulatory oversight, and through a variety of CSO-managed Codes of Conduct and transparency mechanisms. CSO accountability mechanisms must also address the mutli-directional nature of their accountabilities, often in both donor and developing countries – first to primary stakeholders, but equally to peers, partners, public constituencies, public and private donors.

While CSOs have a primary responsibility for robust accountability and transparency practices, these efforts can be circumscribed by the constraints of working in difficult political environments. Implementing CSO accountability mechanisms can be challenging where governments fail to protect fundamental human right of marginalized and discriminated populations to organize, participate in public policy and follow community-based development paths.

CSOs accountability mechanisms assume many forms. These include less formal, sometimes invisible, accountability practices exist in smaller, community-based CSOs. *One World Trust* has documented dozens of voluntary CSO accountability mechanisms from local to country to global (see the box for examples of some current accountability and transparency initiatives). *Civicus*, the pre-eminent global CSO network, is undertaking a significant multi-year program (Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability) to promote peer learning and knowledge sharing on good practice in CSO transparency and accountability.

Recognizing challenges for accountability mechanisms...

CSOs face many unique practical challenges – internal and external – in demonstrating their accountability. Challenges include the large number and diversity of CSO actors, approaches that must respect equitable partnerships, the voluntary basis of organizations and action, unintended outcomes shaped by a changing political environments and the multi-directional demands (legal, contractual and ethical) for accountability. No single accountability model fits all situations and types of organizations. CSOs, therefore, welcome and encourage the sharing of lessons learned in existing practice in order to improve practical approaches to mechanisms that strengthen individual and collective CSO accountability.

CSO processes and commitment to accountability means much more than having accessible audited financial records. Accountability for CSOs means maximizing efforts to take into account the views of people living in poverty. CSO accountability mechanisms, however, face some practical challenges on how to measure CSO's efforts with grassroots communities, people living in poverty and other affected populations. CSOs often work with varied partnerships and in country contexts with vastly different policies and regulations, set by both donors and developing country governments – disabling environments – that can affect the scope for robust CSO accountability.

The *Istanbul Principles*, as values-based principles guiding CSO accountability to development effectiveness, are subject to interpretation. Appropriate objective standards for accountability to these principles will be context specific and sometimes inherently difficult to determine and monitor. This is particularly true for CSOs working in conflict and post-conflict situations.

CSO accountability mechanisms should focus not only on distinct measurable development outcomes, but also on areas such as advocacy and mobilization for change, for which attribution for outcomes is rarely simple.

CSOs are fully committed to maximum transparency as a necessary criterion for accountability. But CSOs must also address practical challenges in achieving full transparency, including timeliness, cost, workload, privacy and protection of the rights of partners and vulnerable individuals. Implementation of transparency standards must be sensitive to diverse institutional contexts for CSOs – the scale of the organization, the need to improve organizational systems, training and capacity strengthening for staff and volunteers, improved reporting and audit systems, or a need for dedicated resources for monitoring and evaluation. For many medium and smaller CSOs, associational processes (CSO networks, federations, confederations, etc.) may be indispensible tools for responding through collective accountability mechanisms.

Strengthening CSO accountability mechanisms...

CSOs take seriously their obligation to be fully accountable as development actors to all their key stakeholders in many different country contexts. Therefore, CSOs stress the fundamental importance of voluntary accountability mechanisms, not government or CSO-imposed "policing regulations". Given the diversity of CSOs worldwide, it is only practical to have voluntary mechanisms, which provide a framework to improve CSO practice, with a requisite flexibility to safeguard CSO autonomy and independence.

Credible voluntary mechanisms, by their nature, need to evolve and be strengthened over time and in response to changing circumstances. But an essential element is CSOs' commitment to the highest practical standards for mechanisms that demonstrate compliance and innovative ways to assure credible compliance with multiple stakeholders.

Good practice in accountability mechanisms, guidance on improving CSO development practice, and CSO dialogue at the country level through the *Open Forum* suggest some ways forward. The *Open Forum* recommends some basic approaches to advance CSO efforts to strengthen accountability mechanisms:

1. **The *Istanbul Principles* and the guidance in this *Framework* are the foundation** for accountability standards, but accountability mechanisms must also address broader questions of organizational governance.

2. **Voluntary mechanisms must be clear about who is accountable, to whom and for what**.

3. **Voluntary self-regulatory accountability mechanisms and their context-specific requirements are best developed with those whose work will be measured**. Primary stakeholders, where feasible, should be consulted. Accountability mechanisms should promote organizational learning and measures to address challenges.

4. **Codes of conduct and accountability mechanisms should be accessible to, and meaningful for, primary stakeholders.** To be fully accountable to primary stakeholders, communications must be clear, accessible, relevant and respectful of local context.

5. **Flexibility and adaptability** are essential for mechanisms to be realistically applied in diverse and often-unpredictable conditions.

6. **Mechanisms must model good practice and not impose principles and results measurements on others that the CSO does not accept for itself**.

7. **Existing mechanisms and lessons learned should be utilized to strengthen accountability at country levels,** particularly through associations of CSOs. In strengthening accountability mechanisms it is important to demonstrate credible compliance, avoid overlap, duplication, and high transaction costs.

SECTION IV: CRITICAL CONDITIONS FOR ENABLING CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS - GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Preamble

While CSOs are independent and autonomous, they are not development actors working in isolation. Their capacities to live up to principles for development effectiveness are affected by the actions of other development actors.

CSOs, as development actors, are profoundly affected by the context in which they work. The policies and practices of developing country governments and official donors affect and shape the capacities of CSOs to engage in development. Progress in realizing the *Istanbul Principles* in CSO practice, therefore, depends in large measure on enabling government policies, laws and regulations consistent with the *Istanbul Principles*.

An "enabling environment" and "enabling standards"

The "enabling environment" is the political and policy context created by governments, official donors and other development actors that affect the ways CSOs may carry out their work. "Enabling standards" are a set of inter-related good practices by donors and governments – in the legal, regulatory, fiscal, informational, political, and cultural areas – that support the capacity of CSO development actors to engage in development processes in a sustained and effective manner.

At the 2008 Accra High Level Forum, all donors and governments committed "to work with CSOs to provide an enabling environment that maximizes their contributions to development". But since then, many CSOs, North and South, have experienced deteriorating enabling conditions for their work. CSOs call on all governments, including official donors, to review with CSOs at country, regional and global levels, current policies, regulations and practices affecting CSOs as development actors. Respect for CSOs as development actors requires an enabling environment that guarantees the full participation of CSOs in all stages of the development process, including the planning and formulation of development plans and strategies.

Give priority to implementing an enabling environment for CSO development effectiveness...

The enabling environment for development is complex. All development actors are affected by persistent and multiple global and local economic, social and climatic crises as well as conflict situations. Political conditions also matter. Space for CSO-initiated development activities has narrowed, to varying degrees, in both developing and donor countries. For decades, CSOs have been forging partnerships in order to maximize their impact. CSOs require environments in which they are free to choose their partners based on mutually-agreed priorities.

The private sector is also an important actor affecting development. It is essential to strengthen markets and provide decent work for people living in poverty, including informal sector workers. CSOs, as development actors, are affected by the practices of private for-profit actors, particularly where their activities undermine the promotion of sustainable livelihoods. Enabling conditions for CSO effectiveness require an explicit commitment on the part of private sector actors to work alongside other development actors through social dialogue and actions that lead to the realization of internationally-agreed development goals and poverty reduction. Conventions and norms for human rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability and decent work must be respected.

The *International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness* establishes principles and relevant guidance for CSOs to assess and work to improve their practices. CSOs have met with governments and official donors to discuss, based on the *Istanbul Principles*, policies that might enable CSO development activities to reach their full potential. Governments and multilateral organizations committed to do so in the *Accra Agenda for Action* (*AAA*).

The *Open Forum,* therefore, welcomes and encourages further work by the multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment and its *Key Findings for the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness* (April 2011) as a positive contribution on which to build and strengthen enabling conditions for CSOs.

The *Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness* deepen the application of the Paris Principles on aid effectiveness ...

The 2008 *Accra Agenda for Action* invited CSOs "to reflect on how they can apply the Paris principles of aid effectiveness from a CSO perspective" [*AAA*, § 20]. The *Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness* deepens multi-stakeholder understanding and commitment to the *Paris Principles*. The *Istanbul Principles* reflect, for CSOs, the centrality of broad-based, inclusive and democratic ownership of development, which the *AAA* acknowledges as crucial to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the *Paris Declaration* commitments.

The elaboration of the *Istanbul Principles* and the work of the *Open Forum* to seek out multi-stakeholder dialogue signals a CSO resolve to expand and give priority to coordinated efforts on the part of all stakeholders in a "shared commitment to overcome poverty" [*AAA*, § 20, § 32]. But, in the absence of some basic minimum enabling standards on the part of donors and governments, CSOs will be thwarted in their implementation of the *Istanbul Principles*. All governments, as signatories to the *Paris Declaration* and the *AAA,* should work in partnership with all development actors,

including CSOs, to create enabling environments that extend their commitments from aid to development effectiveness.

An enabling environment for CSO development effectiveness

1. All governments must fulfill obligations to fundamental human rights that enable people to organize and participate in development.

In almost all countries, CSOs, their staff and volunteers are experiencing political, financial and institutional vulnerability, arising from the changing policies and restrictive practices of their governments. CSOs are concerned about the impact of these restrictive policies on democratic and legal space for CSOs. This CSO vulnerability is exemplified in the use of pervasive anti-terrorism legislation, more restrictive government financial and regulatory regimes and the exercise of government power to limit "political" activity and sometimes repress CSOs and their leaders, who may be human rights defenders or critical of government policies. Some CSO actors, particularly from Africa, are experiencing difficulties in getting timely access to visas for travel related to inter-country CSO exchanges and regional and global coordination.

CSOs continue to organize and work with government and other stakeholders to strengthen and contribute to democratic governance and inclusive development activities. Democratic government requires laws, regulations and practices that respect several fundamental principles or standards – pre-conditions for a robust and effective civil society.[1] These include:
  - ➢ Freedom of association and assembly;
  - ➢ Legal recognition facilitating the work of CSOs;
  - ➢ The right to freedom of expression;
  - ➢ Freedom of movement, mobility rights and the right to travel;
  - ➢ The right to operate free of unwarranted state interference; and
  - ➢ The legal space to seek and secure necessary resources in support of legitimate roles in development.
Public authorities are required by international law to provide protection when the integrity of a civil society organization or lives of its staff and members are threatened.

CSOs welcome the 2010 resolution by the UN Human Rights Council on the right to peaceful assembly and association. CSOs urge full cooperation by all governments with the UN Rapporteur designated to monitor these rights.

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[1] The organization and presentation of these principles is derived from "International Principles Protecting Civil Society", in *Defending Civil Society*, A Report of the World Movement of Democracy, February 2008, accessed at www.wmd.org/projects/defending-civil-society*.* These rights are guaranteed under the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other multilateral and regional treaties.

2. Areas of focus for Partner Governments and Official Donors

a) Recognizing CSOs as development actors in their own right

The *AAA* recognition of CSOs as development actors in their own right [§ 20] was a significant advancement in situating the distinct contributions of CSOs to development. CSOs' roots in society, and notably with people living in poverty and discriminated populations, make CSOs essential actors for development. The diverse roles of CSOs in complementary provision of services, in social organization and in coalescing civic involvement in all aspects of the development process must be enhanced not curtailed. All governments must affirm and ensure the full participation of CSOs *as* independent development actors in their own right and differentiate them from other actors, such as the private sector.

b) Structuring democratic political and policy dialogue to improve development effectiveness

Governments in both developing and donor countries must provide the conditions for inclusive and meaningful participation of CSOs in political and policy dialogue at all levels of development. CSOs are promoters and generators of development knowledge. In particular, they bring the experiences and voices of men and women, girls and boys living in poverty and the marginalized to policy and priority-setting processes. All actors should work in partnership to strengthen capacities for democratic dialogue to build mutual understanding, trust and common knowledge.

CSOs, in the *Open Forum* processes, have documented significant barriers to inclusive political and policy dialogue – barriers that must be addressed. Building on good practice, CSOs have identified key conditions for reversing these trends:

1. Systematic inclusion of diverse views, particularly those from grassroots-based social organizations, women's organizations and indigenous peoples' representatives;
2. Transparency and clarity of purpose and process;
3. Freedom to access information, including country strategies and program plans;
4. Access to documentation in the languages of those being consulted;
5. Timeliness of consultations in order to impact decisions;
6. Recognition of the responsibilities and contributions of other actors, especially parliamentarians and local government; and
7. Appropriate resources to enable full participation of stakeholders.

Governments and donors should ensure that local CSOs are fully consulted in the planning, design and delivery of country-specific development programs.

c) Being accountable for transparent and consistent policies for development.

Governments must put into practice principles of good governance, which include full transparency and accountability for development priorities, strategies, plans and actions. In their role as "watchdog", CSOs can ensure public resources are used to maximize impact on poverty and equitable growth. Similarly, official donors should put in place transparent and consistent policies

that define the place and role of CSOs in donor strategic frameworks and plans, including country-level program implementation plans.

d) Creating enabling financing for CSO development effectiveness

The donor relationship is, by definition, a relationship rooted in access to development finance for CSOs. The practices of CSOs as donors face many similar issues as official donors in establishing equitable partnerships. But CSOs are also affected, and sometimes limited, by official donor funding modalities and policies. CSO development effectiveness will be enabled through funding modalities undertaken by official donors with 1) a long-term results-oriented perspective, which includes core institutional support, based on the notion that CSOs provide public goods, 2) responsiveness to CSO initiatives, 3) access for a diversity of CSOs, including support for different-sized CSOs, 4) predictable, transparent, easily understandable and harmonized terms, 5) the view to promoting the mobilization of local resources; and 6) support for the full range of CSO programming and innovation, including policy development and advocacy.

A vibrant civil society, which advocates for marginalized populations, is a public good. Governments should acknowledge this important role by providing fiscal support through taxation and other mechanisms in order to ensure the continuing operation and sustainability of civil society actors.

Making progress in standards that shape the CSO enabling environment ...

The inclusive multi-stakeholder character of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness has provided a unique opportunity in which to document evidence and pursue dialogue on CSO enabling conditions. The *Open Forum* welcomes the work of the multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment and its March 2011 agreement on *Key Messages for the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness* as a positive and substantial contribution to strengthening enabling standards for CSOs.

The multi-stakeholder Task Team has advanced important standards in five key areas: 1) recognizing CSOs as independent development actors in their own right, 2) creating enabling environments for CSOs based on human rights standards, 3) deepening donors' CSO support models, 4) strengthening CSO development effectiveness, and 5) assuring accountability and transparency – with shared recommendations, which are consistent with CSOs' commitment to advance the *Istanbul Principles* (see Annex Three for selected key messages from the Task Team).

The full implementation of the five principles of the *Paris Declaration* and the *Accra Agenda for Action* already provide obligations for government signatories to create an effective enabling environment for CSOs. The *CSO Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness* calls on all signatories to the *Paris Declaration* to fully adhere to those obligations. This *Framework* can be the basis for ongoing multi-stakeholder dialogue at the country, regional and global levels, resulting in laws, regulations, policies and practices that fully enable CSOs as development actors.

SECTION V: WAYS FORWARD

The *Open Forum* has undertaken an extra-ordinary global CSO journey of self-reflection about the identity, roles, and principles for CSOs as effective development actors. The result is a global CSO agreement, the **International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness**, adopted fully by 240 CSO representatives from 70 countries in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Along with accompanying "*Implementation Toolkit*", the *Framework* provides the needed tools for CSOs, wherever they work, to be responsive to their constituencies and society at large and to create a more equitable and better world.

All actors for development – CSOs, government and donors – are inter-dependent and must collaborate to effectively realize development outcomes for people living in poverty and marginalized populations. They have a shared interest in a dynamic CSO sector.

For their part, CSOs are coming to the 4th High Level Forum in Busan, Korea, (HLF-4) with a firm commitment to strengthen and improve the sector as an actor in development, guided by the *Istanbul Principles*. CSOs call on all governments involved in HLF-4 to acknowledge the *Open Forum* process and endorse the *Istanbul Principles* as an essential basis for policies of engagement and support of civil society in development.

CSOs pledge to continue discussions in the months after HLF-4 towards implementation and monitoring of the *Istanbul Principles*. These discussions will take place at many levels – in country-level and sectoral meetings, in CSO organizational discussions of their development practice, in self-assessments and peer reviews, and in dialogue with other development stakeholders, including organizations directly representing people living in poverty.

All development actors must make vigorous efforts to strengthen their accountability to internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, in line with international human rights standards. There is no exception for CSOs, who acknowledge their responsibility to improve their development practices. As such, CSOs will measure and improve mechanisms for accountability against experience and best practices, while respecting the country-specific application of the *Istanbul Principles for Development Effectiveness*, as well as CSO independence and autonomy as development actors.

CSOs seek and welcome engagement with developing country governments, official donors and multilateral institutions in advancing CSO development effectiveness principles and meeting the challenges in their implementation. The *Open Forum* welcomes the proposal from the Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness to continue dialogue at the senior level up to and beyond HLF-4, as all stakeholders make collective and individual institutional efforts to address outstanding CSO development effectiveness issues.

 All development actors must continue to work together to advance human rights, gender equality and social justice through reforms in development cooperation. This *International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness*, with its principles, norms and guidance, is a significant CSO contribution to these reforms.

ANNEX ONE: ISTANBUL PRINCIPLES FOR CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS[1]

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
CSOs are effective as development actors when they … commit to transparent relationships with CSOs and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and

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

values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.

7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning

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

8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

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

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

Istanbul, Turkey
September 29, 2010

ANNEX TWO: CSO ROLES IN DEVELOPMENT

People come together to create CSOs as not-for-profit voluntary expressions of peoples' right to development through voluntary association. They are channels for social solidarity, service and mobilization to enable people to better claim all their rights to improve conditions of life and to build a democratic society. Through CSOs, people actively express their 'citizenship' in relation to the accountability of state and government obligations to respect, protect and fulfill human rights.

Alone and in collaboration with CSOs and other actors, CSOs act in development to …

a) **Direct engagement and support for communities, poor and marginalized groups** in self-help and local development innovation.

b) **Delivery of basic services and essential infrastructures** at local level, particularly in social services such as health protection and care, education, water and sanitation, while empowering communities to seek fulfillment of their right to these services from government.

c) **Empower marginalized grassroots communities and people living in poverty, particularly women,** to claim their rights, through inclusive capacity strengthening and promoting social mobilization and peoples' voices in democratizing local and national development and participation in public policy.

d) **Engage communities, civil society, the private sector, local government authorities and other development actors to collaborate** and seek synergies based on mutually agreed development priorities and approaches.

e) **Enrich the public policy agenda** with CSO knowledge, issues, perspectives and proposals which respect and are informed by spiritual virtues embedded in cultural values, including indigenous peoples' rights and their notions of "vivir bien" ("living well").

f) **Monitor government and donor policies and development practices**, through policy research and development, policy dialogue and facilitating democratic accountability for excluded and marginalized populations, based on local knowledge.

g) **Educate and help shape social values of democracy, solidarity and social justice** through production of knowledge, sharing information and encouraging peoples' action for global citizenship.

h) **Encourage domestic and international volunteering engagement**, whether in the creation and support of CSOs and/or contributing in the ongoing organizational life and mission of CSOs.

i) **Find and leverage sources of financing and human resources for development,** including sustaining domestic and local sources of finance in developing countries, directly as CSO recipients or as donor channels at local, national and international level.

j) **Connect and network CSOs within and between civil societies** in ways that encourages accountability to people for positive impacts on the rights and lives of target populations.

ANNEX THREE: SELECTED KEY MESSAGES, TASK TEAM ON CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Among its seventeen messages, the Task Team calls on all development stakeholders to

1) Reaffirm CSOs as independent development actors in their own right and the importance of multi-stakeholder policy dialogue.

2) Commit to and promote an enabling environment for CSOs as independent development actors, both in law and in practice, at minimum in keeping with existing commitments in international and regional instruments that guarantee fundamental rights.

3) Assure that the Paris Declaration principles, including ownership and alignment, are not in any way interpreted or applied to narrow the enabling environment for CSOs.

4) Implement donor models of support that can contribute to CSO effectiveness ... through policies and requirements that are appropriate to promote CSO roles as effective, independent development actors in their own right.

5) Acknowledge existing efforts and progress in demonstrating CSOs' accountability ... [while] CSOs recognize the need for continued progress and commit to actively strengthen the application of self-managed accountability and transparency mechanisms and standards.

6) Encourage context-specific adoption and application of principles of aid and development effectiveness, including the *Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness,* accompanying guidelines and indicators, and CSOs' own ongoing efforts to implement and monitor these self-regulating standards and tools.

7) Recognize that all development actors have a responsibility to be accountable for their aid and development efforts, and share responsibility to promote each others' accountability.

8) Encourage efforts by all stakeholders to increase transparency ... in keeping with their respective access to information regulations, the scale of resources and agreement on modalities that do not jeopardize the continued operations, safety and security of CSOs or individuals associated with them.