

Indicator Two

Civil Society Enabling Environment

Civil society operates within an enabling environment, which maximizes its engagement and contribution to developing.

Draft Assessment and Proposals

1. Introduction

Track Three of the MAG's work plan is to provide advice on the continued relevance and usefulness of the GPEDC monitoring framework to the GPEDC Co-Chairs and Steering Committee. The MAG initiated this review process at its February 2016 meeting.

In doing so, three working groups examined the ten indicators in three clusters – ownership and results, inclusiveness, and transparency and accountability. At its February meeting, MAG members contributed perspectives on the continued relevance of the indicator (in light of the SDGs and Agenda 2030), the effectiveness and efficiency of the methodology at a practical level in gathering data, and the usefulness of the indicator for GPEDC stakeholders. The draft assessment and proposals for each indicator is the result of this work. The MAG is also examining issues affecting the structure of the monitoring framework as a whole.

These documents are posted on the [MAG's Teamworks web site](#) for review and comments. Our advice will be finalized at the MAG's next meeting, June 4-6, in Paris.

Comments and suggestions are very welcome from GPEDC stakeholders. Comments can be provided on the site, or submitted to the MAG Chairperson, Brian Tomlinson (brian.t.tomlinson@gmail.com).

2. Overview

Based on the Busan commitment to enable Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to maximize their contributions to development, Indicator 2 looks at the engagement of CSOs by focussing particularly on the enabling environment for CSOs and CSOs own commitments to development effectiveness. It therefore seeks to examine the sum of conditions that allow or limit the existence and capacity of CSOs to effectively carry out their development work.

3. Key Issues and Challenges

There was broad agreement the relevance of this indicator and on the issues relating to its implementation. The key issues we raised were as follows:

- a) **Relevance** This indicator relates to a very important part of the development process. CSOs are key entities and fulfil valuable and multiple roles alongside development agencies. Furthermore, the MAG agreed that the aim of collecting data over time about the enabling environment for CSOs was important and relevant.

b) Efficiency The first key concern related to the assessment process. It is the MAG’s view that, as currently conceived, the process envisaged by this indicator may be too voluminous. The measurement structure includes four important modules, each with various sub-questions under it. With a focus on multi-stakeholder process in collecting data, the current methodology is likely to prove too much for the national co-ordinator to manage. It is also unclear in the current methodology how data for the module on aid providers’ policies and practices will be gathered, with the current focus on country level engagement of aid providers. Taking account the experience of Round Two for indicator two will be important in understanding the efficiency issues relating to this indicator.

c) Inclusivity Even more importantly, given its complexity, the MAG raised concerns about how inclusive this indicator will be in practice. There are suggestions below on making the methodology for this indicator more fully inclusive in the data gathering process. The MAG pointed to a number of related risks in implementation. Firstly, a government that is antithetic to the CSO sector may be able to coerce or engage with allied CSOs to provide positive responses, thereby presenting a much better picture of the CSO enabling framework than is actually the case. Second, it may be that an over-worked CSO focal point person, with limited resources, may speak only to a small number of larger NGOs, thus ignoring smaller groups, or perhaps those operating in ‘difficult’ areas such as human rights. This risk may be compounded by the fact that smaller CSOs may be unaware of the international development architecture. The result could be that groups who are the real ‘change-makers’ could end up being ignored by this process.

4. Steps Forward

a) Enhance the methodology with a survey The MAG’s main proposal for indicator two seeks to address the issue of ensuring inclusivity. In addition to processes undertaken by the CSO focal point with CSOs constituencies in developing and verifying data, the MAG also suggests a simple and confidential survey for data collection sent out to as diverse a group of CSOs as possible. The MAG’s recommendation is that at least half of the cohort for this survey be smaller, excluded groups. It would also be important that the survey be sent to CSOs operating on a range of different issues.

Issue Area	Small CSOs	Medium CSOs	Large CSOs
Issue 1: Human rights			
Issue 2: Humanitarian relief			
Issue3: Women’s groups			
etc.			

Such a survey would allow data collection to capture the experience of CSOs working on different issues, which may face a different operating environment. The aim should be to populate a table such as the one below to demonstrate that a spread of CSOs of different

sizes and operating in different issue areas had been consulted. Ideally, the national coordinator and the CSO focal point would jointly manage the survey.

A survey does not distract from the importance of the current inclusive process and the contribution of this monitoring process to involve CSOs directly in dialogue with government on enabling environment issues. The monitoring process must create avenues for dialogue as only persistent attention and mobilization to these issues will create change.

b) Reducing the demands of the current module structure A further consideration is to try to reduce the demands of the current structure of the four modules. One approach might be to ask fewer, but key questions in each module that could act as a proxy for progress in each area. Another option might be to ask all the questions currently contained in the three modules on enabling environment, but ask CSOs providing data through the CSO focal point process and/or the questionnaire to respond to the questions/modules that are most relevant to them and their country context. This latter approach might allow greater focus on those issues that really are of concern, rather than collecting reams of data about aspects of the enabling environment that are essentially operating without major problems. While there could be a more selected approach in the three enabling environment modules, this approach would not exclude CSO focal points providing relevant information on CSOs' development effectiveness in module two (accountability and transparency), which should remain a mandatory module.

c) Retain options for contributions on this indicator at various levels The MAG notes that the current methodology allows for the submission of evidence by GPEDC stakeholders at the global, country or regional level where the national coordinator/country has determined that it will not participate in this indicator, or there are different views about the reality for enabling environment on the ground. This option should also be retained, as it will allow for a more comprehensive overview of enabling conditions.

d) Additional guiding questions Having accepted that the data-collection process might be simplified through a more focused approach to the questions most relevant to country circumstances, the MAG feels able to suggest further sub-questions and process. These proposals are as follows:

- In Module One (CSO-government dialogue): An important question is "In which sectors are CSOs consulted by government and who is included in these discussions?" This question may indicate the degree to which there are different operating environments for CSOs working in different sectors.
- In Module Two (CSO development effectiveness): The MAG suggests a generic question to seek the views of CSOs on conditions in their practice where they might become more effective in their contributions to development. We therefore suggesting adding a question along the lines: "Beyond additional financial resource, what changes in the internal and external environment would enable your organisation to be more effective?"

- For Module Three (provider modalities for engaging CSOs): It is essential that this module also be directed to providers' HQ where policies and modalities of support for CSOs are set.

As a final overarching comment, the MAG notes that this indicator is very important in the context of maximum efforts to achieve the SDGs and Agenda 2030. The MAG observes that unlike Busan, there is no recognition in the SDG process that CSOs are development actors in their own right, with various roles in achieving the SDGs, both as individual organizations and as diverse partnerships. Therefore this indicator is an important complement to whatever indicator framework emerges for the measuring the “means of implementation” for the SDGs. This indicator is one of the unique ways through which the GPEDC can add value to the SDG review process.