

Foreword

Agenda 2030 is clear on the need to engage civil society organisations (CSOs) in implementing and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals. Given their capacity to bring the voices of those on the frontlines of poverty, inequality and vulnerability into development processes, CSOs have a particular role to play in ensuring no one is left behind. The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation has committed to providing enabling environments for CSOs, both as implementing partners for members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and as independent development actors in their own right. How DAC members work with civil society is part of CSO enabling environments.

Yet evidence from the Global Partnership monitoring, from CSOs' reporting of their day-to-day experience, and from observers and experts worldwide points to the need for much greater individual and collective effort to promote and protect enabling environments for civil society so that this sector's contribution to development can be maximised.

In this context, the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) in 2017 established a work stream on civil society to provide guidance on DAC members' support for and engagement with civil society. This study, *Development Assistance Committee Members and Civil Society*, is a product of the work stream and identifies how DAC members are supporting and engaging with civil society and CSOs in DAC member and partner countries.

This study provides the most comprehensive review of DAC members' work with civil society ever undertaken by the OECD. It builds on the 2012 OECD guidance, *Partnering with Civil Society: 12 Lessons from Peer Reviews*, which has served as a reference point for members and their civil society partners. This study is rich with both qualitative and quantitative data from varied sources. Critical quantitative data were sourced from OECD statistics on official development assistance flows for CSOs. Literature, policies, reports and evaluations regarding DAC members' support for and engagement with CSOs inform the study. A key source of data is the findings of two separate but related surveys designed with input from an informal reference group of DAC members, CSOs and academics. A large-scale survey of DAC members was issued and all DAC members that financially support CSOs responded to it. A selection of CSO networks responded to a smaller-scale survey. Survey findings provided the basis for a working paper presented at the International Conference on Civil Society Space as part of the first OECD Civil Society Days in June 2019, co-organised with the Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment.

The current study builds on that working paper, incorporating insights and feedback received at critical points during the study's development. Consultations with DAC members included meetings in 2018 of a group of DAC member experts (International Donor Group on Civil Society) and workshops in 2019 with the newly launched DAC Community of Practice on Civil Society. In keeping with the Framework for Dialogue between the DAC and Civil Society Organisations, consultations with CSOs from within and outside of the DAC-CSO Reference Group took place in 2019 under the auspices of the OECD Civil Society Days. Both DAC members and CSOs provided further input via online consultations in August and September 2019.

This study finds that DAC members are making efforts towards the type of support and engagement that enable CSOs to maximise their contribution to development, but that gaps remain between the aspiration of enabling civil society through effective development co-operation and members' CSO-related policies and practices. The intent is now to move from evidence gathering to policy action. In this vein, the DCD will continue on this collaborative and consultative path to provide support for DAC members to strengthen the promotion of enabling environments for civil society through DAC members' policies and practices. Chapter 3 of this study thus contains action points for further discussion with DAC members and CSOs and with others such as non-DAC member governments, foundations and academia. These ultimately are to be developed into a guidance document or a recommendation beginning in 2020.

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