



AusAID Management Response

Working Beyond Government: Evaluation of Australia's Engagement of Civil Society in Developing Countries

AusAID welcomes the insights provided by the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) in its evaluation of Australia's engagement with civil society in developing countries. It provides valuable and timely information for the implementation of the Government's policy priorities as outlined in *An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a Real Difference - Delivering Real Results*, which calls for strengthening and working more closely with civil society.

As noted in *An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a Real Difference - Delivering Real Results*, delivering aid through civil society organisations enables us to benefit from these organisations' grass-roots networks, niche areas of specialisation, and presence on the ground. Differences in size and areas of specialisation mean that civil society organisations can be more flexible and dynamic than other partners. Working with civil society organisations is therefore an important component of our overall approach in helping people overcome poverty and is why AusAID already works closely with civil society across the aid program.

Drawing from evidence gathered, the ODE evaluation report *Working Beyond Government* confirms that working with civil society organisations which are embedded in local systems can enhance sustainability, help bring small activities to scale, and reduce transaction costs. The report also observes that civil society can contribute to positive and sustainable development by delivering services and making governments more effective, accountable and transparent. The report provides some good, practical examples of how we might work more strategically with civil society to achieve more effective development outcomes. These include:

- selecting local civil society partners based on sound analysis of the role of, and key actors in, civil society in each country; our engagement with these civil society partners could progressively increase as our understanding deepens;
- reducing transaction costs by choosing strong intermediaries (including Australian NGOs where appropriate) to work with local civil society partners;
- developing longer-term partnerships with civil society organisations.

AusAID is committed to engaging more effectively with civil society in these ways, and agrees with the report's seven recommendations. AusAID is taking forward the findings and recommendations of *Working Beyond Government*. We have developed a policy statement on governance, which includes the critical role of civil society (this document is available on AusAID's website). We are also in the process of developing a new Civil Society Engagement Framework in consultation with the Australian Council for International Development. The Framework is expected to be launched in March 2012

Response to Evaluation Recommendations

<p>Recommendation 1: Develop a civil society engagement framework that recognises civil society in developing countries as integral to the development process.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The Government's aid policy directions, as set out in <i>An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a Real Difference - Delivering Real Results</i>, include the development of a civil society engagement framework. The community partnerships branch of AusAID is taking the lead on developing this, in consultation with Australian NGOs, AusAID's program areas and other relevant stakeholders. This will address findings and recommendations from the ODE evaluation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Integrate country-specific civil society strategies into country aid strategies; include analysis of civil society in country situation analyses.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>AusAID agrees to incorporate strategies on engaging civil society into country strategies where appropriate, especially where the country situation analysis identifies this as an important component of Australia's development response.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Invest in appointing a civil society adviser in Canberra and in major country programs, and in activating networks for sharing lessons related to engaging with civil society.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>AusAID has already agreed to appoint governance advisers in Canberra and in major country programs; their scope of responsibility includes civil society. AusAID notes that there is already a Social Adviser with the Indonesia program, located in Jakarta, and a Social Development Adviser with the Philippines program, located in Manila.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Develop a rationale for choosing intermediaries on the basis of their ability to help develop sustainable local civil society as well as to deliver results.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>The rationale for working with Australian NGOs and others will be further developed and clarified in the civil society engagement framework.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: Include civil society in policy dialogue and implementation when</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>AusAID agrees that when civil society is able to contribute either directly or indirectly to policy dialogue, better policy implementation is generally the</p>



<p>designing sector wide approaches with partner governments.</p>		<p>result. The Government’s aid policy framework <i>An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a Real Difference - Delivering Real Results</i> calls for engaging with and supporting civil society groups in striving for more inclusive and transparent decision-making in developing countries. AusAID agrees to include civil society in dialogue with partner governments where it is practicable to do so.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Support initiatives to strengthen the enabling environment for civil society as part of strengthening civil society, where context is appropriate.</p>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>AusAID agrees to seek opportunities and support initiatives to strengthen the enabling environment for civil society where feasible. AusAID country program areas will be responsible for analysing the enabling context for civil society as part of country situation analyses and developing suitable initiatives as appropriate.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7: Design individual programs with civil society as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move from short-term to longer-term funding where there has been demonstrated capacity and performance and consider providing core funding to trusted and effective civil society organisations. • Develop a clear basis for selecting individual civil society organisations. Choose partners through targeted rather than competitive approaches, where appropriate. • Promote mutual accountabilities through greater transparency of both civil society organisations and the aid program. • Harmonise more efficiently with other 	<p>Agree</p>	<p>AusAID agrees with the overall recommendation, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrees that moving from short-term to longer-term funding models is desirable where there has been demonstrated capacity and performance, and is already doing this in some programs, such as Indonesia and Bangladesh; • Will ensure that the selection of civil society partners, as outlined in the civil society engagement framework, will be on the basis of capacity and performance, and will give consideration to targeted rather than competitive approaches where appropriate. • Agrees that mutual accountability should be promoted; this will be given effect in part through the Transparency Charter being developed as one of the agreed recommendations in <i>An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a Real Difference - Delivering Real Results</i>. • Agrees to continue to harmonise

