



CIVIL SOCIETY DAYS

CONCEPT NOTE

Civil Society Days, 4-7 June, 2019

OECD Conference Centre, Paris

BACKGROUND

CSOs are now widely recognized as development actors in their own right, with a crucial role to play in reducing poverty, contributing to democratic governance and fulfilment of human rights. CSOs stand out for their capacity to reach out to, empower, represent, and defend people living in vulnerable situations or belonging to marginalized and underrepresented communities; as well as their capacity to trigger social innovation. For these reasons, civil society is key to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other crucial international commitments. In light of this, governments in many countries have pledged to strengthen their engagement with CSOs.

At the same time, around the world, efforts by various governments to restrict the space in which civil society operates have grown at an alarming rate. Increasingly, governments are enacting laws, policies, and practices that limit the possibilities for people to come together to improve everyday lives. Moreover, evidence shows that, while there is considerable scope to leverage CSO knowledge and capabilities and their influential role as public advocates for sustainable development, donors are still far from offering development effective support and partnerships with CSOs. In fact, donors often indirectly contribute to shrinking space by using CSOs to implement donor programmes instead of supporting them as independent development actors in their own right.

Civil society actors play a role too, with demands for CSO accountability an ongoing challenge for their own effectiveness. Power imbalances within civil society also restrict space for important civil society actors. In many contexts, both at country and global levels, access to information, decision-making and funding is limited to a few selected CSOs. This is particularly evident within development co-operation.

Against this background, civil society space must be addressed now, as a shared responsibility between donors, partner country governments and CSOs. A CSO enabling environment is a prerequisite for CSOs to act as implementers of the 2030 Agenda and other international commitments, as well as watchdogs for accountability.

OBJECTIVE

The Civil Society Days is a forum for civil society and governments to explore how to effectively address the civil society space challenge. On the one hand, the aim is to identify what strategies and practices development actors should consider to protect and expand civil society space, and fulfil their commitments to create an enabling environment where civil society can fully contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international commitments. On the other, the Civil Society Days is an opportunity to build bridges and multi-stakeholder partnerships toward SDG 16 and SDG 17.

SET-UP AND LOCATION

The Civil Society Days mark the occasion of a series of milestones, including the launch of the OECD's Community of Practice on civil society, the 10-year anniversary of the Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment (of which the OECD is an active participant) and the presentation of the OECD study on how DAC members work with civil society.

The Civil Society Days' highlight is an international conference organized jointly by the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) and the multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment. The conference will feature high-level speakers and interactive panels. It is organized alongside a series of safe space discussions in workshops and meetings of different stakeholders.

OVERVIEW OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY DAYS

TUESDAY 4 JUNE

09:00-13:00	Stakeholder meetings (by invitation)
14:00-18:00	Meeting of the multi-Stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment (by invitation)

WEDNESDAY 5 JUNE

09:00-13:00	Meeting of the multi-Stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment (by invitation)
14:00-18:00	Stakeholder meetings (by invitation)

THURSDAY 6 JUNE

09:00-18:00	International Conference on Civil Society Space
18:00-19:00	Cocktail Reception

FRIDAY 7 JUNE

09:00-12:00	Workshop on DAC guidance for working with civil society (by invitation)
12:00-13:00	Brownbag lunch: Outcomes of BAPA+40 & CSO Engagement
13:00-16:00	DAC-CSO Dialogue Meeting (by invitation)