

Effective CSO Engagement at the Country Level A 3-phased Approach

Introduction

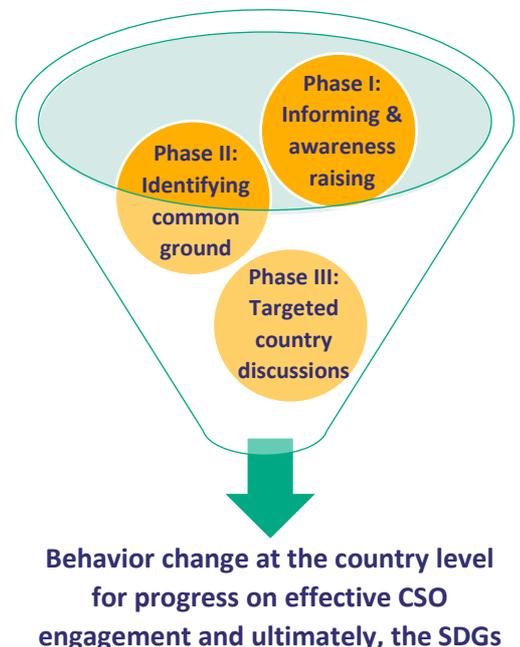
This document briefly sets-out a 3-phased approach developed by the Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment (Task Team), for more effective engagement of civil society at the country level.

The scale and ambition of the Agenda 2030 requires participation of all development actors, including civil society organizations (CSOs), to ensure successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Nevertheless, a recent [study](#) commissioned by the Task Team found that many CSOs are not sufficiently engaged in formal SDG processes or consultations at the country level. This has only been exacerbated by COVID-19 as the enabling environment for CSOs has worsened and opportunities for multi-stakeholder initiatives have been hampered. The ongoing pandemic thus calls for digital forms of communication, tools, and knowledge products. As such, the Task Team proposes to roll-out a three-tiered approach, where each phase will provide for more in-depth engagement at the country level. Phases II and III will be undertaken in collaboration with the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), in an effort to advance shared objectives.

- **Phase I** is an [Online Interactive Guidance](#) on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment. This is available on the open online course provider Coursera and accessible [here](#).
- **Phase II** will focus on organizing virtual multi-stakeholder workshops in pilot countries, building on the knowledge and information in the Online Interactive Guidance. These will be facilitated by the Task Team, with support from the GPEDC Joint Support Team, under the guidance of country focal points.
- **Phase III** will involve in-person workshops in the same pilot countries as the virtual workshops, this time tailored to the GPEDC's country-specific monitoring results of Indicator 2 on the CSO enabling environment and development effectiveness. These workshops will be organized under the leadership of country focal points, with facilitation by the Task Team and the GPEDC.

Each phase will cascade into the next; gradually moving from the global/conceptual level to a more practical/country level focus. This means that individuals participating in Phase III should ideally have completed the two preceding phases in order to have an informed, targeted, and engaging discussion at country level.

The Task Team's [Guidance](#) and the GPEDC's [Indicator 2](#) follow the same [four-part framework](#). In addition, both build on the principle of shared responsibility and aim to stimulate multi-stakeholder collaboration. Nevertheless, [evidence](#) from Indicator 2 monitoring suggests that challenges commonly include; lack of capacity, gaps in awareness, difficulties in stakeholder inclusion, and mistrust across stakeholders. These issues are sensitive in nature and require a gradual approach in order to create progress at the country level. The cascaded approach of informing (Phase I), identifying partners, a common reference point, and emphasizing the shared responsibility approach (Phase II), and organizing targeted multi-stakeholder discussions to address country monitoring results (Phase III), provides an opportunity for country actors to achieve the multi-stakeholder collaboration, increased transparency, trust and mutual understanding that the GPEDC and the Task Team both seek to advance.





Phase I: Online Interactive Guidance

The aim of the [Online Guidance](#) is to inform, sensitize, and raise awareness on the importance, the means, and the possible benefits of effective CSO engagement in development processes.

The Online Guidance is comprised of five modules that each play a part in creating a CSO enabling environment and ensuring CSO development effectiveness, so that all actors can meaningfully and effectively contribute to implementation and monitoring of international development. Each module will start with an animated video introducing the topic and is followed by good practice examples; insights from the field in the form of video interviews; in-depth readings; and an online activity.

The Online Guidance is informed by the written [Guidance and Good Practice](#) developed by the Task Team. It draws amongst others on research commissioned by the Task Team through its Secretariat at the International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam (ISS-EUR). The Online Guidance is offered by the EUR as a free, open resource on Coursera.



Phase II: Virtual Multi-stakeholder Workshops

These virtual workshops will be multi-stakeholder in nature and targeted at country actors from civil society, government, and the donor community. The virtual workshops will be facilitated by the Task Team Secretariat and co-organized with three country level Focal Points, one from each stakeholder group. Participants will ideally have completed the Online Guidance (Phase I) for an informed discussion during the virtual workshops (Phase II).

The workshops will seek to widen and deepen a common understanding of what is meant by a CSO enabling environment and CSO development effectiveness, and what good practices stakeholders can implement to make progress. The intent will be to identify a network of stakeholders that together will form a community of practitioners to eventually champion ongoing dialogue at the country level. Considering the sensitivity of issues and the importance to build trust amongst stakeholders, a gradual approach is needed. These virtual workshops will therefore focus on cementing what was learned in the Online Guidance (Phase I) by actively discussing this in a virtual setting (Phase II) and creating a common reference point between stakeholders for issues that require deeper exploration in a face-to-face setting (Phase III).



Phase III: Face-to-Face Multi-stakeholder Workshops

These face-to-face workshops will build on the virtual multi-stakeholder workshops, in that these will take place with the same participants. This time the focus will be on the country's Indicator 2 monitoring results, whereby the GPEDC is foreseen to provide the relevant data and guidance to facilitate a discussion on what factors are driving the results.

The Task Team can complement these workshops by offering interactive sessions with a view towards facilitating action and behavior change, specifically on issues arising from the monitoring results and/or specific issues raised by the countries. The workshop set-up will consist of different modules that can be used as building blocks. This way the local partners decide which set-up is the best fit for their context and purpose. Possible modules include:

- **Presentations in plenary:** to present the country-level monitoring results of Indicator 2 (CSO enabling environment & development effectiveness) and set the scene for the workshop.
- **Multi-stakeholder role play:** to show that sometimes a different perspective may lead to a better outcome, as well as to foster reflections on the various aspects of what is needed to enable CSO engagement in development.
- **World Café:** multi-stakeholder break-out groups discuss the country-level monitoring results, and together try to generate recommendations for good practice within their country context.

Ultimately, the aim of the workshops will be to create a tailored action plan to address country results, as well as create a basis for ongoing multi-stakeholder dialogue on the civil society-related commitments at country level.