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Guidelines on Principles and Good Practices for the Participation of Non-State Actors in the development dialogues and consultations

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1. POLICY FRAMEWORK AND BACKGROUND

The November 2000 Council/Commission Joint Statement on development policy states that *ownership of their strategies by the partner countries is the key to the success of development policies. With that in mind, the most wide-ranging participation of all segments of society should be encouraged in order to create conditions for greater equity, for the participation of the poorest in the fruits of growth and for the strengthening of the democratic system.* Furthermore, paragraph 38 of the Joint Statement points out that *the contribution made by a broad spectrum of participants from civil society to Community policy is already recognised in the framework of the new partnership with the ACP countries. Implementation of an approach that encourages greater participation by non-governmental organisations, economic operators, social partners and the private sector must be encouraged in the context of the Union's relations with the rest of the world.*

The present paper is announced in the conclusions of the Communication from the Commission on Participation of Non-State Actors (NSA) in EC Development Policy (COM (2002) 598 final of 7 November 2002). These guidelines are intended to cover EU co-operation with all developing countries and regions as referred to in the Joint Statement of the Council and the Commission on Community's Development Policy¹. More specific operational guidelines are being or have been established for the benefit of EC Delegations taking into account the specificities of co-operation between the EU and the different geographical regions (ACP, MEDA etc.)².

The General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) of May 2003 encourages the Commission and the Member States to adopt a framework of principles and practices for civil society consultation and participation in dialogues based on basic criteria proposed in the Communication, which aim at involving civil society in particular in the formulation of development priorities and in the assessment of the development process. The Council also welcomes the intention of the Commission to draft guidelines for its Delegations on civil society involvement in the development process and to discuss these guidelines with Member State experts, in addition to seeking the input of civil society in developing these guidelines.

It encourages the Commission and the Member States to agree on a common practical approach to ensure the effective participation of civil society in development policy dialogues, and to develop appropriate monitoring systems based on indicators to assess the quality of the process of non-state actors participation, taking into account the typology of non-state actors operating in each partner country.

This paper takes into account Member States views and suggestions as expressed in the NGO Co-financing Committee in November 2003. The document was discussed with a

¹ Joint Statement of 10.11.2000; Communication on the European Community's Development Policy (COM(2000)212 final 26.4.2000)

For the ACP: the present paper complete and clarify some aspects of the existing "Programming Guidelines No. 6 - The new actors in the partnership", which had been produced in 2001. See also the Guidelines to EC Delegations of September 2003 on "the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement provisions relating to Non-State Actors", explaining the instruments available and implementation modalities, taking into account 9th EDF rules and regulations.

view to developing common practical approaches to enhance civil society participation in the development process and to monitor the quality of the process.

2. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

NSAs are gradually becoming one of the key partners in EC development policy. The EC objectives in promoting participatory approaches are to contribute to the ownership of the development strategies by all beneficiaries, to progressively consolidate accountable, sound and democratic institutions, to assist in the exercise of citizenship and to facilitate public-private partnerships. This will in turn result in greater visibility of development strategies. These objectives are pursued in co-ordination with Member States.

This paper aims at encouraging and assisting EC Delegations in all developing countries and regions to explore and apply the possibilities offered for the gradual involvement of NSA in the development process, where this is possible with the authorities of the country. Promoting an effective dialogue with NSA should result in strengthening democratisation processes and capacity building in partner countries.

The paper provides to Delegations guidance on good practices in the context of both the programming process (CSP preparation, Mid-Term Reviews) and the regular in country-dialogue with the authorities and with the NSA. This guidance and these guidelines can *mutatis mutandis* be applied at regional level.

It does not focus on project implementation nor include guidance on procedural issues related to project preparation and financial decisions and does not aim at harmonizing the different procedures applicable. Separate documents are being produced on the specific rules that apply to each co-operation instrument³. However, good practices for Delegations to improve NSA access to funding (information, practical guidance and facilitation) are highlighted in this document.

All the practical guidance provided in this document aims basically to promote “confidence building” and trust between Governments and NSA to engage in dialogue related to the development process. A general exemplary framework is proposed. It is to be adapted to each country, in order to take account of the different contexts, particularly in countries showing major reluctance to or with no tradition of participatory approaches.

Maximum flexibility is left to Heads of Delegation (HoD) to decide on the most appropriate ways to involve NSA in dialogue. According to their analysis of the situation in the country and supported by specific research and mapping studies, HoD will take the operational decisions on how NSAs are to be best involved. Headquarters will facilitate the networking and provide policy support and back-up to contribute to policy consistency and coherence in the decisions taken by the HoD, which should aim at enhancing co-ordination and complementarity between the EC and MS at country level on Civil Society Organisations (CSO) involvement in development dialogues.

³ The Commission has produced internal guidelines for EC Delegations in ACP countries on the procedures to implement the 9th EDF funds set aside for NSA in the NIP, and the guidelines for access to thematic budgetlines are available in Europaid website

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOOD PRACTICES

Civil Society participation in the development process facilitates the overarching poverty reduction objective. Partner countries' Governments and international donors have to encourage and enable CSO to play an active role in the design and the implementation of poverty reduction strategies. This participation should be approached taking into account both the specific context in each partner country or region and the complementary, non detrimental role that NSA play in relation to that of state institutions such as Parliaments.

This objective of ensuring involvement of NSAS is a continuous one which requires constant attention by EC and MS Delegations. Nevertheless, in the framework of the development cooperation process, five different stages are particularly relevant to assessing progress done:

- (1) Consultation on National Development Strategies and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers;
- (2) Consultation on EC Country Strategy Paper preparation;
- (3) Consultation on sector strategies once the priority focal sectors have been defined;
- (4) Involvement of NSA in project implementation in all areas of development, including activities specifically oriented towards their needs (capacity building etc.);
- (5) Participation in the Country Strategy Paper review (annual, mid-term and final), as well as in the assessment of progress on implementation and of performance of individual projects and sector policies.

The involvement of NSAS in dialogues and consultations in each of these stages should thus be seen as a continuous process which naturally requires adaptation to specific national circumstances, but nevertheless should always be carried out throughout both the programming process and the regular contacts with the authorities and with the NSAs.

Strengthening the capacity of civil society in partner countries should be given a priority. Capacity building support in critical areas has to be provided to and financial resources should be made available for NSAs when drawing up a programme of financial support.

3.1. Consultations and dialogue: a continuous process

3.1.1. Purpose and content of consultation and dialogue

National Development Strategies and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, where they exist, are the basis for the EC response strategy. NSAs involvement in the process of setting development agendas by the authorities since the beginning is the best entry point and the opportunity to enhance dialogue between the Government and NSAs.

Consultation with NSAs on the Poverty Reduction Strategies should not serve to replace consultations on the CSP process, which are envisaged as a long-term engagement with non-state actors at all stages of the programming cycle. On the other hand, consulting

NSAs is not a substitute for the normal debate in Parliament on national budget and development policies.

If no Strategy exists at national level, NSA involvement can take place at a lower level, meaning in discussions on development strategies or plans at regional, provincial, communal or any other decentralised or sectoral level with the relevant decentralised authorities.

The issue of NSA involvement in the EC programming process should be part of the regular dialogue on co-operation with the national authorities. In countries with lack of tradition of participation the HoD will have to play a more proactive role to facilitate the interaction between the authorities and the NSAs, through bringing issues such as the legislative framework, the funding environment or the registration system to the regular dialogue with the Government. Co-ordination at country level between the EC and Member States, with the involvement of other donors that share the participatory approach as a basic development policy principle can greatly help in this direction. Civil society can provide valuable inputs in the identification of issues to be addressed in the dialogue with the authorities. NSAs association to the dialogue also involves appropriate feedback being provided to NSA.

The consultation process is a two-track approach. First, at the level of National Development Strategies or the CSP process, the aim should be to encourage a wide involvement of NSA in the public debate on setting development objectives and reinforcing good governance and the rule of law. Second at the level of detailed programming discussions, it could be necessary to limit attention to those categories of NSAs which are directly involved in or concerned with the specific sectors/focal areas envisaged for the EC response strategy. This should include NSAs that have assumed a specific advocacy role on cross-cutting themes (i.e. poverty, gender, environment, conflict prevention). This approach will have the advantage of helping to concentrate EC support more clearly on those NSAs likely to be directly involved in EC programmes and of making the process of dialogue more manageable.

- NSA consultations on CSP preparation aim at discussing the analysis, the lines of the response strategy as well as the future involvement of NSAs in the process of implementation and monitoring. The largest possible representation of the different civil society views and opinions should participate in the dialogue.
- NSA involvement in policy debates (definition of national sectoral policies or policy discussions in the CSP context when the focal sectors have been identified) promotes interaction, mutual understanding and confidence building between NSA and national authorities at all levels, including the central government, the Parliament and the decentralised legislatures. NSA participation in policy debates should be part of the information sharing process on contents and effects of such policies. It should contribute to enabling civil society to influence public policies and to work constructively with Governments to design and support policies that benefit the poor and to work to change policies that do not do so.
- NSA involvement in the Review process is directly linked to their participation in the CSP preparation. MTRs should lead to updates and fine-tuning of the strategy, taking into account changes having occurred between the initial programming and the timing of the MTR. It does not necessarily lead to a change in strategy or in the choice of the

focal sectors. NSA should be actively involved in the whole process since the earliest stage.

3.1.2. Identifying NSAs

A “mapping study” on the situation of NSAs in the country or in the region can greatly help the Delegation to launch the participatory process. Once the knowledge of NSAs constraints, potentiality, needs, sectors of involvement, activities, is improved then NSA involvement in the development process as well as the preparation of specific programs in support for NSA, will be facilitated. Such a study can usefully support the fundamental assessment of the issue of NSAs’ voice in the society in a partner country. The purposes of a mapping study are:

- to give an overview of all existing NSA networks and organisations (including national/international NGOs, media, economic and social partners, research organisations, women associations, other organisations with special status such as the Red Cross, etc), but also of the most relevant existing process of dialogue at country/region level in which civil society is involved
- to assess the capacity of these organisations, the role they play and the constraints they face, in terms of advocacy, monitoring, policy dialogue and service delivery, both at district and at central level

The study should be carried out in a realistic way and identify the key NSA networks and organisations and select geographically and thematically representative networks and organisations for analysis, taking into account areas of strategic importance to the EU/EC co-operation.

To produce the expected results, the study should analyse the following aspects of civil society organisations and networks:

- i. their mission and functions and their ability to carry out them;
- ii. their relation *vis-à-vis* each other;
- iii. their level of involvement in policy dialogue, monitoring and implementation both at central and district level, with either the national authorities or the donors community; including the current status of participation in relation to the EC and other donors’ co-operation
- iv. voice of the grassroots;
- v. funding environment and strategies (legislative framework on funding and foreign aid dependency);
- vi. civil society organisations’ views, expectations and strategies on partnership with central and local government;
- vii. flow of information within the civil society and between NSA themselves at central and community levels: nature (“backward”, i.e. from central level to the districts and to the communities, and/or “forward”, i.e. from communities to the districts and to the central level) and contents;

- viii. flow of information between donors, government and civil society: nature (“backward”/“forward”) and contents (strategies, policies, accountability, procedures, access to funding, etc);
- ix. indication (geographical, sectoral, etc) as to where NSAs are not organised and capacity building is needed, taking into consideration possible synergies and linkages with programmes and initiatives already existing within this field.

The expected results of a “mapping study” include

- An analytical overview of the existing NSA networks and organisations, and their mission, the interests they represent or the mandate they may have *vis-à-vis* members. It will provide useful information on the kind of organisations of poor people that participate in and for what purposes, as well as on the balance of power and influence amongst different NSA groups and the extent to which they can be considered representative of the grassroots level interests.
- An appraisal of the capacity of these organisations to contribute to the development process in terms of policy dialogue, monitoring and advocacy, and service delivery, including an analysis of the extent to which civil society organisations are currently partaking in implementation of service delivery for Government.
- An analysis of the extent to which consultation and dialogue mechanisms in place contribute to equal participation of women and men in policy-making processes, including the identification of positive incentives that may be necessary for women organisations to actively engage in dialogues at country level.
- An analytical overview of the institutional mechanisms and the legislative framework under which NSAs operate and that guides the interaction between Government and civil society
- An analysis of Government’s vision and strategies for civil society involvement in the development process.
- An overview of other donor initiatives related to involving civil society in dialogue as well as to capacity building of civil society. The different options for synergies and development of coherence (e.g. basket funding or other co-ordination of support) should also be highlighted and analysed.
- An analysis of mechanisms already in place or to be put in place in order for NSA to be involved in the programming, reviewing and evaluation of EC-financed development co-operation.

The “mapping study” will have to be discussed in stakeholders’ workshops. This would allow to better understand the nature and the expectations of NSAs, as well as to identify the main elements to organise the different consultations and to prepare a Programme in Support for NSAs.

The mapping study may also be relevant in least populous countries where it is easy to identify NSAs, to provide a proper analysis. Some components of the proposed mapping approach will be useful.

In countries where a number of studies have already been conducted by the EC or other donors and the contents of those studies respond largely to the objectives of the "mapping study", they can equally be used in order to avoid duplication. An update of the results of these studies may be appropriate at some future date.

In some cases, mapping studies are not yet in place and it is very difficult to identify non-state actors for participating in dialogues and consultations, due to the large number of existing civil society organisations, or the lack of capacity of the existing NSAs. While waiting for a full mapping of NSAs, all issues concerning NSA participation could start being discussed in multi-stakeholder systems of consultation that are flexible, open, inclusive, pluralist and subject to regular reviews with respect to their composition.

3.1.3. Organising consultations and dialogue

In addition to a good organisation, the key elements for an effective participation in the policy and programming dialogue are to ensure that the appropriate information is sent on time to non-state actors, that a diversity of non-state actors are involved in the process and that adequate feed back is provided on the results of the consultation.

The Delegation can initiate a dialogue, where the authorities have not already done so, with the relevant authorities in order to promote and facilitate contacts at the most appropriate level between the various actors in the development process. In general, the role of the EC is to act as a critical observer and a facilitator having in the driver seat the public authorities and NSA representatives.

It is up to the relevant local authorities and the HoD to decide on the dialogue mechanisms and the means to be used to ensure a proper consultation, according to the local situation, level of NSAs organisation and previous experience in dialoguing. Decisions on this issue will take into account that ensuring a follow-up to the consultation is essential. Efforts have to be made to organise consultations in a way that make it possible to start up and facilitate a continuous process of dialogue in the most adapted way.

Initial consultations and follow-up can take the form of a seminar, a workshop, or a meeting co-chaired by the Government representatives and the HoD, such as those already organised in a number of ACP countries. ICT may be used where appropriate.

If civil society owned fora of dialogue already exist, they should participate and usefully contribute to channel NSAs' inputs in the process of dialogue. The existing processes of dialogue between the authorities or the donors and the CSO, such as those that emerge in the HIPC context, should equally be enhanced. Creating any new *ad hoc civil society* structures for dialogue others than those already existing should in principle be avoided. They would probably neither truly represent the interest of civil society, nor be part of civil society genuine dynamics, they would be dependent for their continuing existence on donor support and would not have a particular *raison d'être* other than to attract donor funding. Similarly, it is important to avoid donor-driven or government-driven structures for dialogue with civil society.

Information sharing and awareness raising are essential for effective and successful NSA involvement in consultations. Clear and comprehensive information is to be provided to NSAs in good time (to be assessed according to the level of capacity of NSAs) so as to allow them to prepare their reactions and proposals. Both partner countries authorities

and the EC Delegations have a role to play in disseminating the information on the different possibilities for NSA involvement as well as on the preparation and the follow-up of consultations. Practical and clear information, adapted to country needs and to participants' capacity and interests, related with the issue to be discussed in the consultation could be timely prepared and disseminated. Established NSA organisations or independent experts in information dissemination and awareness raising can play a useful role in this regard, as well as to strengthen NSAs' advocacy and analysis skills and their capacity to link with groups and give them voice, which contributes to improve the NSA's inputs to the consultations.

Initiatives undertaken by EU institutions such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) regional seminars and general meetings in order to disseminate the information on the Cotonou Agreement and to draw up a scoreboard illustrating the involvement of NSA in implement the Agreement, are contributing to disseminate the information, to awareness raising as well as to the policy debate.

When the consultation focuses on a specific issue, such a sectoral policy, it may be useful to identify specialised networks or actors that focus on a specific theme or section of the community. Economic and social partners, organisations with a specific expertise, such as chambers of commerce, trade unions, research centres and universities or specialised NGOs, networks involved in human rights or community based poverty reduction activities or representing economic actors, including those in the informal sector, should be involved from the outset to assist with the dialogue. These have a valuable role to play in that they represent a wide constituency and enable a Delegation to hear more views than it would otherwise be possible for them to do. However, attention should be paid to ensuring that the networks are representative of an adequate number of people and present a fair picture of their views. Identification of reliable NSA networks is one area that could be usefully covered in the mapping exercise.

NSAs, who should have received the relevant information on time, are invited to explain their views, their needs and how they envisage being active in the development process. During the process, NSAs views should be duly taken into account and discussed. The strategies could be modified accordingly if necessary. Appropriate feedback information should be provided to NSA on the outcome of consultations and dialogue. NSA that have participated in the consultations should in turn share this information with the other segments of the civil society and be able to provide feedback to the grass-roots level.

National authorities, NSA representatives and the EC should jointly decide on the NSAs that will participate in each phase of the consultations and how to structure the discussions. NSAs are expected to operate in a transparent and accountable manner, share the key development objectives and have the capacity to present the views and proposals of their members. NSAs should also have the capacity to report back to their members or constituencies and to other stakeholders not present in the consultations, as well as to disseminate information to a broader range of organisations including the grass roots.

Having all areas of interest represented is crucial. A balance has to be found between economic and social partners, and associations or NGOs representing various groups or areas of concern. The added value being ownership at all levels, all forces of society have and should play an equally important role. Consultation systems that are inclusive and ensure pluralism should be identified in order to involve in the consultation processes the

different types of structures that coexist and represent different viewpoints and different opinions.

Special attention should be given to small and grassroots organisations. Facilitating the dialogue on a decentralised basis between local/decentralised authorities and grassroots organisations could be an appropriate form of involvement. Promoting partnerships between NSAs can also prove to be useful.

Having identified suitable networks, in order to enable them to participate more effectively in policy debates, it is up to the Delegation to analyse whether support for them could be provided either in the context of a development programme or under a specific capacity-building programme. Activities to be supported should be identified through associating the NSA themselves and could include development of skills in lobbying, negotiating techniques, participating in legislative work, analysis and presentation, information technology, establishment of networks or organised activities.

3.1.4. The mid-term review process (MTR)

The general principles linked to consultation and dialogue on the CSP process apply to MTR, which are a key moment in the programming cycle to make further progress in implementing participatory approach in the development process. MTR will provide an opportunity to continue the dialogue with civil society or to begin it in that minority of cases where it has not been established. As part of their involvement in the whole CSP programming process NSAs have a role to play in MTRs as well as in the annual operational reviews, and should be actively involved at the different stages of the review process, as appropriate.

In order to better explain the nature and the objectives of the MTR and to facilitate the involvement of NSAs in MTRs at an early stage, it is suggested that Delegations make available the existing CSP, with its analysis and response strategy, as the starting point, as well as the existing public and relevant evaluation reports.

Delegations could send in addition the layout and/or an outline of the MTR report to NSA indicating a deadline for inputs before the first draft is prepared by the HoD and the relevant authorities. At the same time, a copy of the latest finalised annual report on EC co-operation with the partner country should also be sent to NSAs as an example and a background element. It will be useful and necessary to include a section to assess NSA participation in the dialogue on strategies and in the implementation of co-operation programmes.

It will be finally necessary to provide adequate feedback to NSAs on their input to the report and keep them informed on the next steps of the process, in particular as regards the review meeting in-country when applicable.

In addition to providing an opportunity of improving participatory approaches, the MTR are a key moment for assessing the quality of NSA participation in the development process at country level.

3.2. Provision of capacity building support

3.2.1. The general approach

Capacity building is essential to enable NSAs to play a constructive role in the development process. It should not be seen as a final objective, but as a mean of attaining development goals. Different processes can have an impact on the capacities of an organisation, but only those processes that are truly owned and initiated by the organisation itself will be fruitful in the long term. Building capacities is not a “one-shot” exercise but a long term process that needs commitment and confidence between actors. Mapping exercises can provide the opportunity of discussing with all the stakeholders a comprehensive capacity building strategy, which should be based in the country context rather than in external models, to avoid unsustainable interventions. In general, capacity building should support NSAs:

- (1) To improve internal structure and organisation, constituency building (broadening networks), the development of leadership qualities, the development of analytical and advocacy skills, sustainable fund raising mechanisms, etc
- (2) To perform an advocacy role vis-à-vis Government, both at central and district level, ensuring that the needs of the grassroots are represented at all levels. Related to this is increasing the capacity of civil society actors for policy analysis and dialogue.
- (3) To perform a monitoring role vis-à-vis the State institutions or vis-à-vis a particular issue of general interest.
- (4) To act as service providers. The financial and organisational management capacity of CSOs needs to be strengthened if they are to be involved in public service delivery, and if the quality of such service delivery is to be ensured.
- (5) To improve the research capacities in order to focus interventions on pro-poor development policies, to articulate poor communities’ concerns and governments’ and donors’ agendas and to identify best practices to be replicated or adapted to other contexts facing similar development challenges.

3.2.2. Approaches to ensure capacity building support to NSA

Mainstreaming NSA participation in programmes in focal and non-focal areas: this implies that during the preparation of all development programmes an investigation of the potential or effective role of NSA in the specific development area concerned should be systematically carried-out, with a view to propose specific activities and resources to support NSA in exercising this role. In particular, NSA have a useful and important role to play in decentralisation and good governance activities. This implies researching which organisations need to be involved and to define mechanisms to empower them in the project or programme preparation and implementation. During and at the end of a project, Delegations should involve NSA in project evaluation, in particular for projects where specific population groups are targeted, since NSA are most likely to be able to obtain feedback from target groups. Even in the case of projects where the popular input is less evident, consultation of NSA with some knowledge of the sector can enrich the findings of the evaluation.

Programmes on capacity building of NSA in specific sectors or in general: This type of project would support institutional development, networking and in a broader sense all organisational processes of NSA, advocacy, monitoring, research and provision of services. This could be achieved through adequate communication strategies, training and improved governance structures. The EC dialogue with NSAs, with others donors and with the relevant authorities should provide the opportunity to first discuss the “NSA capacity building agenda”, secondly to decide the areas that the EC could cover and thirdly to identify the resources that can be mobilised.

On the basis of the NSA mapping, a feasibility study can be launched and a Proposal for Programmes of Support for NSA prepared. The feasibility study will explicitly analyse the overall objectives (why is the project important to beneficiaries, the region and the government?), the project purpose (why do the users and beneficiaries need the project?), the project results (what services will the project deliver to the users and beneficiaries? what services external to the project - classified as assumptions - are required to achieve the project purpose?) and the project activities (what has to be done to achieve the project results? what activities external to the project - classified as assumptions - have to be carried out to ensure the project results?). The project purpose and results will be specified by indicators, the project activities will be quantified as closely as possible and any pre-conditions necessary for the start of project activities will have to be identified.

3.2.3. Promoting partnerships between NSAs

There is already a long tradition of partnerships between European and local NSAs. Partnerships have become a basic instrument for NSAs to work together. It goes beyond the purely financial aspects. It is a relationship that develops and grows over time, based on increasing mutual trust that allows for proper dialogue, which in turn provides the basis for true development through which both parties learn, grow and gain capacity.

Working in partnerships is also advantageous for local civil society because bringing different organisations together with their constituencies to form the critical mass needed for advocacy enlarges their base of support. In addition, it broadens the scope of work of the individual member organisations. Advocacy campaigns become more cost effective and its credibility and influence are enhanced. Partnerships offer the opportunity to share information, thus increasing the level of knowledge and understanding about the issues of concern to the network.

However, partnerships also face challenges: conflict of roles between individual CSOs and the coalitions, tendency of the members to see partnerships as an expansion of their own organisation rather than a specific entity, secretariats sometimes feel isolated and disowned by their members, etc.

The mapping study process should analyse the sustainability of and the best way to providing support to such partnerships where appropriate.

3.2.4. Capacitating grass-roots organisations

Promoting partnerships could constitute a way for reaching and capacitating grass roots organisations to get actively involved in the development process. Groups advocating pro-poor issues or claiming to represent the interests of the poor are often elite-based, with weak roots in local and poor communities. Nevertheless, such groups have influence and social connections and can play an important role in bringing about pro-

poor policy changes. Their advocacy work could be considerably strengthened through closer ties with organisations of poor people.

Donors can support such partnerships to emerge by providing spaces and opportunities for these two kinds of groups to meet, by facilitating networking between groups of poor people and influential advocacy groups, and by promoting joint activities, which combine practical and strategic interests. Specific spaces for dialogue and debate between civil society, the economic and social partners and the local authorities can also emerge in decentralised cooperation approach.

Special attention should be paid to operational and analytical capacity building of grassroots organisations. Promoting organisational schemes among the poor represents another difficult challenge. Organising (meetings, discussions, enhancing awareness on issues, finding solutions) takes time, which is a crucial resource for the poor, and sometimes involves financial costs very often beyond the means of the poor people..

These different issues can be dealt with in the mapping study process, in order to develop an analysis and identify a set of possible options and responses.

3.3. Promoting the social dialogue

Social dialogue is a specific area in the promotion of participatory approaches, which often also requires some support in the form of facilitating information and providing capacity building.

Depending on the national context, social dialogue can take the form of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy. The EC Delegation can not initiate social dialogue, as it is not part of it. However, it should, according to the analysis of country/national situations, encourage the dialogue between the participants in the social dialogue (economic and social partners and the government). Moreover, it could also raise the issue of social dialogue in the regular dialogue on co-operation with national authorities.

In addition to the prominent role played by EU institutions such as the EESC in promoting the social dialogue, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) carries on the international commitment for reinforcing the social dialogue by developing mechanisms, instruments and guidelines to bring together the participants in the social dialogue. Information on its role and activities are accessible on the site <http://www.ilo.org>

Social dialogue is an important pillar for the reinforcement of a culture of dialogue and partnership. It may play an important role in strengthening democratisation processes and social governance in partner countries.

3.4. Facilitating access to funding

The Delegation will provide all the relevant information to NSAs on both opportunities and eligibility conditions for funding. A comprehensive set of information with clear, transparent and consistent procedures allowing NSAs information on accessing the different types of funding and increasing the pre-visibility of the Commission's decision-making processes should be made available to NSAs. The Delegation will ensure that the process of preparation of projects to be submitted for EC-financed support is facilitated.

The relevant services in the HQ will update user-guides dealing with the different phases of the decision-making processes as appropriate.

4. ASSESSING THE PROCESS

Appropriate monitoring systems based on realistic and relatively simple criteria to assess the quality of the process of participation and NSAs' added value for policy formulation and implementation are important, in particular to identify the bottle-necks for civil society involvement in the dialogue and to improve the participatory approaches.

An indicative list of criteria can be identified in the questions proposed below. The questionnaire can be further elaborated at country level in close co-operation with both the civil society organisations and the authorities. These questions could form the basis of such an assessment, but may also be useful for the Delegations to prepare a specific consultation or to report on the participation of NSAs in the development process in a given country.

The assessment will focus first of all on authorities' (and donors' where relevant) political will and ability to give voice to NSA in the society, to involve them in all stages of the development process, to facilitate their access to information, to improve the legislative and institutional framework for NSAs, etc.

- Has a proper mapping study on civil society been carried out in the country?
- Are Non-State Actors regularly consulted by the government, by the Delegation or by other donors, on a policy proposal or initiative, such as the national development strategy, the CSP preparation, a sectoral policy discussion, the CSP review?
- Do NSA receive well in advance the information on the venue and content of the consultation? How much time in advance are the relevant documents forwarded to the NSA?
- At what stage have NSA been involved? (at an early stage, when the proposal/initiative was to be designed; or in the course of the process, when the proposal/initiative was drafted; or at a later stage, to endorse a proposal/initiative already finalised and agreed)
- Are there possibilities to modifying the policy proposal/initiative after the consultation with NSAs?
- Are all NSA interests relevant to the policy proposal/initiative under consultation represented? (check the types of NSA invited/represented: local and international NGO, trade unions, consumer organisations, women associations, other organisations with special status such as the Red Cross ...)
- Is there a role foreseen for NSAs in the implementation and the monitoring of policy proposals/initiatives?
- Do consultations foresee a follow up?
- Does the policy proposal/initiative set aside funding for civil society capacity building? (percentage out of the total policy proposal/initiative allocation)

Against this background, which shows the conditions in place for implementing participatory approaches, it is also suggested to assess the trends of NSAs attitude. It is indeed also important to assess the NSAs capacity and added value for policy formulation, their willingness to ensure inclusive and transparent processes involving other organisations, etc.

- Are NSA willing to capitalise on opportunities to get involved in the development process (by increasing their own capacities, by raising awareness)?;
- Are NSA willing to reinforce networks (central level to give voice to the grassroots, to inform constituencies to prepare consultations, to provide feed-back on consultations, etc.)?
- Are inputs provided by NSAs in consultations and dialogues of good quality and relevance?

An overall qualitative assessment aims at providing a clear picture of the quality of participation in consultations and to identify the weaknesses and the aspects to be improved, including the appropriate entry points. It can be based on the check list above, adapted to the country context, as well as by the HoD's overall appreciation on the general characteristics of the country on tradition of participatory approaches. The following issues could be examined in the assessment

- General trends: voice of NSA in the society; NSA involvement in the development process, NSA access to information.
- Participatory approaches in the context of the regular dialogue with the government; progress made and to make in improving the legislative and institutional framework for NSA; government's general attitude towards participatory approaches: ability/willingness to lead the consultation processes.
- Appreciation of the use of the financial support to NSA. If NSA are to succeed in their principal function as participants in development policy debates and as actors in development projects, then appropriate support has to be provided to organise themselves to become credible partners. If this support is to succeed, it must be able to show results. This assessment should focus on
 - the impact of programmes on NSAs capacity building (cfr section 3.2 above)
 - the NSAs added value as implementing partners (by assessing issues such as the added value/relevance of using NSA as service providers to implement specific components of some development programmes, of using NSA for lobbying and advocacy work, of contracting them to monitor the outcomes of some programmes on poverty reduction, of including them in project Steering or Consultative Committees to ensure that their knowledge and experience of the sector is taken into account in the implementation of the programme concerned, of associating them with mid-term reviews, audits and final evaluations, etc)

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Delegation will need to:

- Ensure, under the responsibility of the HoD, that appropriate steps are taken towards the progressive involvement of NSA in the development process in all regions, in particular through promoting an effective dialogue with them and their participation in the whole programming cycle.
- Ensure that there is an official responsible for relations with NSAs to deal with the information and the promotion of EC policy on NSA in a pro-active and systematic manner, or recruit a local agent with a good knowledge of the non-state actors sector and of EC/EU co-operation instruments and policies to assist in this process. Certain types of NSA, particularly from the grass roots, may be “intimidated” by public institutions and international donors, but they can play a crucial role in the development process. The “NSA focal point” in each Delegation should therefore approach them actively in order to bring them to consultation process and dialogues on policies.
- Start promoting the participatory approaches at country level with external technical support through a “mapping study” in a way which is adapted to the country. Once the knowledge of NSAs’ situation is improved, NSAs participation in the development process will be facilitated. Establishing an indicative Plan of Actions with the view of facilitating civil society involvement in all the steps of the development process could be appropriate.
- Explore the possibilities to encourage in practice discussions and exchange of views between NSAs themselves, through workshops or meetings, in order to promote debate on the issue to be discussed with the government or the donors and improve civil society inputs to this dialogue.
- Reflect the main findings of NSA participation assessments in the annual reports as well as in the review process reports. They could focus on NSAs added value for policy formulation and implementation, on the use of resources for capacity building as well as on the level and quality of dialogue and consultation of NSAs. In order to monitor the process across regions and over time, it could be appropriate to consolidate and disseminate the information, which could also be a useful tool for discussion and networking between the different actors.
- Ensure via the HQ units responsible, co-ordination of the different funding sources available for non-state actors (e.g. the large geographical programmes, thematic budget lines including in particular the budget lines for NGO co-financing and decentralised co-operation, European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights or the specific instruments in support of the private sector). In this respect,
 - it is essential to identify the most appropriate instruments and procedures to finance the dialogue and consultation related activities, including the technical assistance that could be necessary to carry out mapping studies, activities of information dissemination and awareness raising,
 - special attention must be paid to avoiding overlap, duplication or inconsistency in the application of funds from different instruments to the same sectors.

6. USEFUL INFORMATION – INTERNET LINKS

6.1. European Commission

6.1.1. Dialogue with civil society

http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/theme/ngo/index_en.htm#

6.1.2. Other issues of interest

Country and Regional Strategy Papers

ACP group

Country Strategy Papers

http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/csp_rsp/csp_en.cfm

Regional Strategy Papers

http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/region/region_fr.htm

Other countries and Regions

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/sp/index.htm

Governance

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0615en01.pdf

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/themes-governance_en.htm

Conflict prevention

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cpcm/cp.htm

Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2001/com2001_0153en01.pdf

Humanitarian Aid

http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/presentation/index_en.htm

Gender

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/theme/human_social/pol_gender2_en.htm

[Practical tool for mainstreaming in MTR](#)

[Guidelines by theme \(or sector\)](#)

[Aidco page on Resources and tools](#)

[Integration of gender in EIDHR](#)

Programmes and Projects

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/index_en.htm

The evaluation website

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/evaluation/index.htm>

Annual reports and other publications

http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/reports/index_en.htm

6.2. ACP Secretariat

<http://www.acpsec.org>

Cotonou Agreement: User's guide for NSA:

http://www.acpsec.org/ExternalSheet.aspx?ArticleFileName=http://www.acp.int/ACPFiles/2004/nsa_users_guide_en_rev1.pdf&sessLang=1

6.3. European Platforms of NGO

6.3.1. *European NGOs Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD)*

<http://www.concordeurope.org/>

6.3.2. *EU member states national platforms*

http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/body/theme/ngo/ngo_organisations_en.htm

6.4. European and International Socio-Professional Organisations

6.4.1. *International Organisation of Employers (IOE)*

Physical address:

26, chemin de Joinville
1216 Cointrin / Geneva
Switzerland

Postal address:

P.O. Box 68
1216 Cointrin / Geneva
Switzerland

Phone : +4122 929 00 00; Fax : +4122 929 00 01

E-mail: ioe@ioe-emp.org

Website: www.ioe-emp.org

Link to national employer organisations:

http://www.ioe-emp.org/ioe_emp/worldwide/worldwide_home.htm

6.4.2. *European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC/CES)*

European Trade Union Confederation
5, Boulevard Roi Albert II
B-1210 BRUSSELS
BELGIUM

Phone: +32-2-2240-411; **Fax:** +32-2-2240-454 or +32-2-2240-455

E-mail: ETUC@ETUC.ORG

Website: www.etuc.org (use function "links" to access to national, European and international members sites)

6.4.3. *International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU/CISL)*

ICFTU

5 Boulevard du Roi Albert II, Bte 1
1210 Brussels
Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 224 0211 ; Fax: +32 (0)2 201 5815

E-mail: internetpo@icftu.org

Link to ICFTU affiliates (national organisations):

<http://www.icftu.org/addressbook.asp?Language=EN>

Link to ICFTU regional offices:

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991209438&Language=EN>

6.4.4. *World Conference of Labour (WCL/CMT)*

World Conference of Labour
33 rue de Trèves,
B-1040 Brussels

Tel. 0032 2 285 4700 ; Fax. 0032 2 230 8722

Email: info@cmt.wcl.org

Link to other international organisations:

<http://www.cmt-wcl.org/1cmt-wcl/Repertoire/Last%20updates/FIPS%2027-01-04.pdf>

Link to regional organisations:

<http://www.cmt-wcl.org/1cmt-wcl/Repertoire/Last%20updates/Organisations%20regionales%2027-01-04.pdf>

Link to member organisations of the WCL:

<http://www.cmt-wcl.org/1cmt-wcl/Repertoire/Last%20updates/Organisations%20membres%2027-01-04.pdf>

6.4.5. *International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP-FIPA)*

International Federation of Agricultural Producers
60 rue Saint-Lazare, 75009 Paris - France
Tel: 33 1 45 26 05 53 - Fax: 33 1 48 74 72 12
e-mail: ifap@ifap.org

Link to member organisations

<http://www.ifap.org/members.html>

Link to IFAP partners and international farmer organisations

<http://www.ifap.org/links.html>

6.5. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is made up of a world wide network of 181 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with a Federation Secretariat in Geneva and a Federation field structure to support the 181 National societies.

The following websites provide the relevant links to the various actors of the IFRC:

- The general website of IFRC secretariat: www.ifrc.org
- Website with directory of all the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies: www.ifrc.org/address/directory.asp
- Website of the International Federation's field representatives: www.ifrc.org/who/delegations.asp