

Bridging the performance assessment gap between civil society organisations and international donors

Rosalind David

Chris Roche

Linda Kelly

Introduction

- AusAID civil society programs
- Typical AusAID monitoring processes
- Particular challenges for assessment of the civil society programs:
 - Conventional M&E inadequate to capture complex results
 - Context is critical to understanding outcomes
 - Changes cannot be aggregated
 - Designs are innovative and 'success' takes a long time.

Wider experience

- Development is non-linear and complex and M&E needs to match this
- Single actors can only have partial knowledge of situations
- Power and gender relations critical to assessment of what has happened
- Circumstances change and therefore assessment strategies need also to change
- Needs leadership and management.

Key messages in the Guidance

1. Need to situate an analysis of civil society within a broader picture of change and power (incl gender) relations.
2. AusAID needs to be clear about why its engaging with Civil Society in the first place, and aware of its own power.
3. Coming to a genuinely shared view about what success will look like – and how it might be achieved - is unlikely before effective relationships and trust are built.

Key messages in the Guidance

4. Some key gender considerations:
 - Is the proposed program based on power analysis that demonstrates the links between poverty and gender?
 - Have past approaches to addressing gender inequality in this context been built upon?
 - Has there been adequate engagement with relevant women's organisations?
 - Are there mechanisms proposed for M&E of progress in both institutional (i.e. organisational policies, staff capacities etc) and programmatic terms (i.e. development outcomes) included in the design of M&E systems?

Key messages in the Guidance

5. M&E of civil society programs needs to support the approach being taken by the program. M&E systems should be : dynamic, participative, gender sensitive, reflective and evolving,
6. Monitoring data can lose meaning if it is aggregated and presented in simplistic or rigid ways. Seeking standardised information based on pre-set indicators, is often unhelpful.
7. Encouraging feedback – particularly from less powerful groups - and 'sense-making' is key. Not all information needs to be in the same format.

Organisational Implications

- Space, time & resources
- Role of Program Managers
- Meeting learning needs
- Contracting

Outcomes of the guidance

- Organisational change in AusAID
- Reference for external stakeholders
- Implication for relationships between AusAID and civil society.
- Implications for new design work

Solomon Islands NGO Partnership Agreement

- Focus on clarifying intent (broadly) and expected outcomes
- Focus on considerable local consultation and participation
- Focus on roles, relationships and processes
- Expectation of change over time in strategies and understanding
- Monitoring based around shared assessment and inquiry