Norad

NORAD'S SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY:
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Sustainability
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4. Legitimacy
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PREFACE

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are our shared vision for the future. They emphasise the role of the state in terms of responsibility, national ownership, review and follow-up of the implementation process. The SDGs also call for the "intensive engagement" of civil society. The underlying principles of the SDGs of "leaving no one behind" and "realising human rights for all" are the backbone of Norad's civil society support.

A strong civil society is a key feature of any democratic social order and a goal in its own right. Civil society is key to ensuring public engagement in defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at all levels, for achieving sustainable development targets.

Civil society plays a key role in monitoring and holding authorities accountable, in challenging power structures, setting the agenda and developing policy, and bringing people together around a common agenda to exert influence for a democratic society. Not least, civil society plays an important role in delivering services to marginalised groups and individuals, who are subject to discrimination or live in fragile or humanitarian settings. This work is demanding and takes time.

At the same time, the space for civil society to organise and foster civic engagement is shrinking, with governments, business actors and extremist groups being the main offenders. Across the world, this includes an intensification of attacks against the freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. In their most recent annual reports Civicus and Human Rights Watch point to increasingly divided societies around the world, and restricted space in more than 100 countries – a list that includes a number of new additions.

It is in light of this new normative and political environment that Norad's 2018 guiding principles for support to civil society have been developed. They form a cohesive framework for Norad's partnerships with civil society, by providing guidance and direction for the overall planning of the support to civil society, as well as a backdrop for dialogue. They apply to all of Norad's support to civil society.

Plans and visions have limited value if they do not translate into results. We believe that the current seven principles will provide guidance for Norad and our civil society partners, in our efforts to achieve sustainable results in the implementation of the SDGs.

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THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Each guiding principle is defined and discussed within the context of civil society. However, they also take into account that civil society is only one of many actors that play an important role in the implementation of the SDGs.

Civil society can be defined as an arena where people come together to promote interests and needs on behalf of themselves and others, challenge power-holders, and influence political debates. Civil society includes formally registered organisations, informal grassroots organisations, and social movements. Norad supports civil society actors in a variety of capacities and roles in developing countries, in Norway, and at the international level. The objectives of Norad's support to civil society are democratisation, poverty eradication, human rights and sustainable development. Norad does not support civil society actors that do not further these objectives.

The guiding principles listed below are interlinked, equally important and mutually reinforcing. Their application must take into account the unique circumstances of each individual context. Each section suggests a set of examples of what Norad and civil society partners may do to work in accordance with each principle. The lists of examples are illustrative and not exhaustive. Civil society actors will find that some examples are more relevant than others to their particular area of work. The guiding principles replace Norad's Principles for Support to Civil Society from 2009.

1 SUSTAINABILITY: Norad's civil society support should be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

Sustainable development is the guiding principle for long-term global development, and the SDGs seek to balance the three pillars of environmental, social and economic sustainability. Norad's civil society support aims to contribute to sustainable development through an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable civil society, at local, national, regional and global levels.

Climate and the environment are a cross-cutting issue in Norwegian development cooperation. Civil society initiatives with Norad support must be planned taking into consideration *environmental sustainability,* namely climate and environment-related risks, and implemented without jeopardising environmental sustainability. Civil society actors may also work actively to counteract climate change and protect the environment.

Social sustainability encompasses human rights, labour rights, and good governance and it encourages social integration. Initiatives receiving Norad support must take into consideration possible negative effects on human rights, including women's rights and gender equality. Civil society actors may work to strengthen participation of affected populations, to enhance non-discrimination and ensure accountability.

Economic sustainability means lasting poverty eradication and economic development. Job creation, as well as the improvement and development of skills, infrastructure and institutions – including the methods and financing supporting their continued progress – may all form part of the solution. Civil society actors may contribute directly to poverty eradication by creating or improving livelihood opportunities, or by establishing credit and insurance schemes. Civil society can also play a role in creating fairer framework conditions within the private sector through advocacy, or by entering into partnerships with commercial actors.

For development interventions, sustainability requires that the positive effects continue after their completion. This means that exit strategies – which include planning for a change in the nature of the partnership over time – must be considered from the very start. Premature exit plans will however be counterproductive, it is therefore necessary that exit plans are adapted according to the context of each case.

Examples of what civil society actors can do to strengthen sustainability:

- Enhance sustainability at entry by discussing an exit strategy when entering into a partnership and ensure agreed expectations from all parties;

- Monitor and evaluate systematically how partnerships contribute to environmentally, socially and financially sustainable development results and civil society actors;

- Maintain long-term partnerships that go beyond financial support, and encourage grassroots engagement and volunteerism that will remain even when project funding expires;

- As an employer create decent jobs, gender equality, sustainable value chains, sustainable consumption and production;

- Ensure equal treatment of local and international staff when it comes to e.g. recruitment, promotion and security measures;

- Consider entering into public-private partnerships in order to contribute to more catalytic development and secure long-term financing;

- Diversify financial foundations, including partnerships with governments and corporate actors, to avoid dependency and overreliance on one partner.

In order to strengthen sustainability Norad will:

- Support civil society actors that have a sustainable and knowledge based transition strategy for their partnerships and development initiatives;

- Support civil society actors who contribute to environmental, social and economic sustainability in their interventions;

- Provide multi-annual funding rather than short-term funding to enhance planning, flexibility, predictability and sustainable results;

- Contribute to smooth transitions from humanitarian assistance to long-term development cooperation.

2   INCLUSION: Norad's civil society support should enhance inclusive and participatory decision-making processes and equal access to services for all.

"Leave no one behind" is the overall crosscutting principle of the SDGs, and the world has pledged to "reach those furthest behind first". This requires reaching everyone. Human rights law, and in many cases, national policies and legislation, help to operationalise the "leave no one behind" principle.

Equality and non-discrimination are part of the foundations of the rule of law. The international human rights legal framework contains instruments to combat specific forms of discrimination, including discrimination against indigenous peoples, migrants, minorities, people with disabilities, gender based discrimination, ethnic and religious discrimination, and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

States are the primary duty-bearers in the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights for all. However, civil society and their partners also play an important role in this right, through their long-term development and humanitarian work, as well as by holding governments to account.

Examples of what civil society actors can do to enhance inclusion:
- Plan, implement and document gender-sensitive and inclusive programmes and initiatives, and ensure gender balance and inclusion within their own organisation;

- Hold governments accountable for upholding the human rights conventions they have ratified, as well as the human rights provisions they have enshrined in their respective constitutions and national laws;

- Provide services and livelihood opportunities to groups and individuals who are subject to marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination, or who live in fragile states or conflict situations;

- Engage with parliamentarians regarding their legislative, representative and oversight functions which can bolster or hinder inclusion;

- Open up spaces for voices that are not typically heard; work to bring the voices of people and their movements to the media and public sphere;

- Advocate for free, prior and informed consent for indigenous and other affected populations in large-scale infrastructure projects;
- Work and form alliances with representatives of marginalised and excluded groups on issues and programmes that affect their lives;
- Ensure that the monitoring, evaluation and learning systems can both capture and use relevant information about marginalised groups and individuals.

In order to enhance inclusion Norad will:
- In line with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs guidance, continue to prioritise "countries left behind", with a strong focus on Africa and other countries in fragile situations;
- Continue to support civil society efforts to enhance inclusive social services, particularly as it relates to health and education;
- Support civil society actors, projects and initiatives that have an explicit focus on leaving no one behind, and which work to enhance the inclusion, representation and participation of marginalised groups and individuals;
- Enhance monitoring, evaluation and learning that focuses on marginalised groups and individuals.

3 PARTNERSHIP: Norad's civil society support should enhance different types of partnerships to which every partner adds value.

The SDGs will not be reached without partnerships within civil society, as well as between civil society and governments and the private sector. Equitable, effective and sustainable partnerships therefore constitute a principle that will continue to guide Norad's civil society support.

Norad works with a range of civil society organisations at the global, regional, national and local level. While some funds are allocated to international and local civil society organisations, the majority of Norad's direct civil society partners are Norwegian organisations. Partnership models supported by Norad vary substantially: Some organisations work with local actors through international or national offices in partner countries, while others cooperate directly with local partners. Whatever the partnership model and funding stream that is used, legitimacy and local ownership are critical.

The value added of Norad's civil society partners takes different forms, including technical and administrative capacity to handle donor funding, access to marginalised groups and individuals in both long-term and humanitarian settings, knowledge and

advocacy skills on global development issues, and access to national and international dialogue platforms. Partnership with local actors, whether they are from civil society, the government or private sector, may also bring knowledge and legitimacy to the global advocacy work of Norwegian and international civil society actors.

Civil society actors who represent or have greater access to those left behind, may lack the necessary financial or technical skills to meet Norad's and other donors' demands for direct support. Partnerships with Norwegian or international organisations, South-South partnerships, or trust fund mechanisms are a means to reaching these actors.

Examples of what civil society actors can do to strengthen partnerships:

- Ensure that partners are treated with respect and as equals; based on respect for local culture;

- Provide funding and technical assistance to civil society actors who may not be in a position to receive funds directly from governmental and other donors;

- Shift money and decision-making power in the partnerships towards locally rooted organisations;

- Collaborate with private sector actors in order to diversify financial foundations, expand the scope or reach of their work, and to tap into the added value of other actors;

- Collaborate with the private sector to strengthen responsible business conduct;

- Collaborate with local and national governments to make sure that projects and initiatives are aligned with national plans, and to enhance capacity development of public sectors;

- Monitor and evaluate the organisation's own added value in any partnership, and learn and adapt by changing the partnership approach as required.

In order to strengthen partnerships Norad will:

- Foster enhanced engagement between governmental and non-governmental humanitarian and development actors;

- Support civil society organisations who collaborate with change agents, including informal social movements, and who are able to find strategic partnership models to mitigate financial and results-related risks;

- Seek to harmonise and simplify financial and results reporting requirements with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with other donors;

- Ensure that Norad's application of results based management allows for flexibility and enhances learning and adaptation;

- Explore methods for shifting more of the funding and the decision-making to the local or national level.

4 LEGITIMACY: Norad-supported civil society actors should represent justifiable interest groups and work towards human rights or recognised development goals.

To ensure locally relevant solutions, local needs and priorities must form the basis for decisions on what to support, and how that support should be organised. The legitimacy of a civil society actor is linked to the degree to which other stakeholders perceive their actions as being both justifiable and appropriate. Legitimacy should be distinguished from formal representation, as an organisation can possess the legitimacy to speak on a given issue, without necessarily being a formally elected or appointed representative. For instance, in conflict settings or fragile states, external actors may lack the trust of the local populations required for e.g. providing a needed service or achieving a specific goal.

However, civil society actors who represent minorities or marginalised groups would by definition, not have broad local or national legitimacy. Similarly, human rights defenders may choose or be forced to maintain low public profiles. In many cases, these groups may be subject to suppression from governmental and other actors. However, when viewed from a human rights perspective their claims and actions are legitimate.

Civil society also faces internal challenges that affect legitimacy. There is a need to change the power balance within and between many civil society organisations. Intra- and inter-organisational power imbalances exist regarding resources and influence, size, geographic location (North-South, urban-rural, etc.), as well as between the formal and informal.

Examples of what civil society actors can do to strengthen legitimacy:
- Support partners' own agenda; focus on solving problems and achieving results that are locally relevant, and which have been defined and refined by local communities in an ongoing process;

- Ensure that partners or affected populations, have a place around the table when decisions that concern them are made and resources are distributed;

- Connect traditional civil society organisations with youth, grassroots and social movements; create synergies between informal and spontaneous civil society and the more professionally organised organisations;

- Facilitate platforms for dialogue and exchange that offer opportunities for mutual learning, partnerships and collective action;

- Seek to work in line with national plans and strategies when they are aligned with human rights and recognised development goals;

- Avoid financing projects that rely on excessive sitting allowances or per diems to motivate participation of target groups;

- Strengthen civil society alliances both within and across countries regarding common issues and challenges, whilst recognising that there are power imbalances.

In order to strengthen legitimacy Norad will:

- Take a broad and contextual view on legitimacy as an element of civil society partner identification, in addition to assessing formal representation, local support and membership;

- Support human rights defenders and other civil society actors who work to strengthen the rights of minorities of faith and belief, sexual minorities, indigenous groups, and other minorities who experience suppression but have legitimate human rights claims;

- Support a diverse and resilient civil society globally and within countries, and challenge operating models that result in resources flowing to a small number of powerful actors;

- Challenge organisations' governance structures and favour actors that promote an equal power balance within their own organisation and partnerships.

5 ACCOUNTABILITY: Norad-supported civil society actors should be accountable to the affected populations, and contribute to strengthening the accountability of governments, private actors and other relevant power-holders.

The accountability of civil society actors refers to their willingness and ability to answer to, and take responsibility for, their actions, activities and messages. Openness and transparency are key, and relate to decision-making, the use of funds, and achievement of results. Accountability enhances learning, which in turn facilitates adaptation, change, and better development outcomes.

Civil society plays an important role in holding governments and other actors accountable in their respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights, and in the implementation of the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda states that the follow-up and review of the SDGs at all levels should be "open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for

all people". It also affirms that the review should be "people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthers behind".

Accountable leaders acknowledge, explain, and assume responsibility for decisions, policies, and implementation within the scope of their roles. Formal organisational accountability requires proper accounting practices, as well as sound monitoring and reporting systems and routines. Some civil society actors are more accountable to their donors than to their local partners or affected populations. Organisations may use disproportional resources to meet donor demands, rather than answering to the communities that they are meant to serve. Both formal and informal civil society actors should first and foremost, be accountable to their constituencies or affected populations.

Examples of what civil society actors can do to strengthen their own and other actors' accountability:

- Maintain or establish internal and external accountability mechanisms amongst their own staff, local partners and affected populations, such as publicly available ethical guidelines, transparent public audits, and whistle-blowing channels for financial irregularities, sexual harassment, and other forms of misconduct;

- Publicly disclose – at a level of detail that does not constitute a risk to the safety of staff, partners, or affected populations – the organisation's reports and evaluations, financial accounts (including salary levels and administration costs), achieved results and possible failures, and partnership contracts (including terms and conditions);

- Collect and share relevant information that supports informed decision-making, and enhances an organisation's accountability towards the individuals or communities with whom they are working;

- Promote a culture of openness and honesty, embracing failures as opportunities to support future success;

- Monitor states' human rights implementation, and advocate for transparent tax systems and national resource mobilisation;

- Mobilise and develop the capacity of ordinary citizens to hold their governments to account in the follow-up and review of the SDGs;

- Facilitate local civil society actors' access to regional and global fora;

- Monitor and collaborate with the private sector and enhance critical engagement and accountability;

- Disseminate information and news on the democratic and human rights situation within individual countries; create early warning systems for threats to civic space, and tools for supporting the safety of activists under attack.

In order to strengthen their own and civil society partners' accountability Norad will:

- Publish information regarding decision-making linked to grants and civil society initiatives that Norad supports on its webpage, and increase the availability of information in English;

- Ensure that robust accountability mechanisms and channels are in place in Norad for whistle blowing and other forms of reporting, for Norad staff, as well as for the partners and affected populations involved in Norad-supported initiatives;

- Support civil society organisations who monitor governmental progress towards, and hold governments accountable to, the commitments they have made both nationally and internationally;

- Strengthen Norad's internal collaboration, and collaboration with other stakeholders, in order to enhance the overall coherence of Norad's civil society support and other forms of support (including bilateral and multilateral support);

- Meet directly with selected representatives from the target groups or affected populations when visiting Norad-supported projects;

- Engage in policy dialogues with civil society, academia and government, concerning relevant issues, such as shrinking civic space;

- Support an application of results based management that meaningfully supports monitoring, evaluation and learning both within Norad and amongst civil society partners.

6 COST EFFECTIVENESS: Norad-supported civil society actors should achieve sustainable results in a cost effective manner.

Norad seeks to maximise the results of its civil society support. Norad supports cost-effective partners and partnership models, favouring those where a limited, but reasonable and justifiable portion of the funds are spent in high-income countries, where many organisations are headquartered.

Cost effectiveness, or "value for money", cannot be assessed in isolation from the achievement of results. Achieving sustainable results at outcome and impact levels takes more time than delivering products and services at an output level. Reaching those furthest behind may require more resources than reaching those who are more

easily accessible. Similarly, challenging or innovative projects may also impose greater risks, and require additional resources to support more comprehensive risk assessments and management systems.

Examples of what civil society actors can do to increase cost effectiveness:

- Consider thematic and/or geographic concentration when it strengthens the organisations' achievement of results and added value;

- Build their work on a solid theory of change and a clear plan for achieving results, and explicitly link these to budgets;

- Critically examine their own cost effectiveness and added value to any partnership and initiative; if necessary, rethink organisational structure and partnership approach; consider relocating headquarters or key functions if they are located in high-cost countries or cities;

- Critically examine the percentage of funds reaching partners and target groups, and seek to increase this percentage when it enhances cost effectiveness;

- Increase the use of cash-based programming when appropriate;

- Ensure cost-efficient, local sourcing of products and services.

In order to increase cost effectiveness Norad will:

- Provide clear guidance to partners and applicants regarding cost effectiveness;

- Seek to strengthen civil society through cost-effective partnership models; analyse funding streams; and engage in dialogue with civil society partners on cost effectiveness and money flows;

- Encourage innovative projects aiming to reach marginalised and excluded groups, whilst being aware of the risks imposed on the achievement of results;

- Consider more direct partnerships with civil society in low- and middle income countries; consider strategic partnerships with larger but legitimate civil society organisations;

- Coordinate civil society support with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Climate and Environment, the Embassies and other donors.

7 CONTEXT SENSITIVITY: Norad's support to civil society should be context-specific in its planning and implementation.

The achievement of sustainable and inclusive results requires context sensitivity and contextual knowledge. Drivers of poverty and inequality operate differently in different contexts. Furthermore, all projects have the potential to have a negative impact by e.g. fuelling conflict, increasing tensions, creating opportunities for corruption, contributing to human rights violations, etc., if they are not based on sound analyses of gender, power structures, as well as a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders within a given context.

Examples of what civil society actors can do to strengthen context sensitivity:

- Base all initiatives on solid contextual analyses; focusing on gender and other power structures, as well as any additional causes of poverty, inequality, discrimination and lack of inclusion;

- Prioritise an understanding of local context and culture in recruitment for posts dealing with country-level initiatives, including management positions;

- Develop a clear overview of the other actors working within the same thematic or geographic area, and identify opportunities for cooperation and common action;

- Apply the appropriate and necessary tools in order to ensure conflict sensitivity in planning and programming;

- Carefully consider how an initiative and context will interact with one another, paying particular attention to the potential for negative impacts on local power relations or conflicts, and conversely, on how such factors could impact a given initiative.

In order to strengthen context sensitivity Norad will:

- Support civil society actors that demonstrate relevant contextual competence and experience;

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, view long-term development cooperation and humanitarian assistance through civil society actors together in context;

- Continue to consult with Embassies on country level applications;

- Increase dialogue and coordination with selected embassies regarding context analyses and priorities for civil society support.