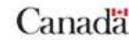




Ethiopian Civil Society Support Programme

Mid-Term Review Executive Summary



Managed by the British Council with consortium partners INTRAC and the IDL group

The Ethiopian Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) is a capacity development programme designed to support Ethiopia's civil society and its contribution to the country's national development, poverty reduction and advancement of good governance, in line with the government's policies and strategies.

Itad's mid-term review (MTR) of the CSSP took place between May and August 2014. The review was designed to provide an independent assessment of the performance and progress of the programme to date. It was commissioned by Irish Aid, on behalf of the development partners who fund the programme.

Key Facts about CSSP

- Five year timespan, September 2011 – September 2016
- €40 million budget: contributors Canada, DANIDA, DFID, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Ethiopia & Embassy of Sweden
- National structure with business units in Addis Ababa, Assosa, Dessie, Harar & Hawassa
- Managed by the British Council, in partnership with INTRAC & the IDL group
- 32 staff

Headline Findings

The CSSP is:

1. Unique in scale and scope in Ethiopia, having disbursed 159 direct grants to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to date, with 81 more in the pipeline;
2. Successful in context, creating space for dialogue between Government and CSOs;
3. Achieving good progress against its own framework for results;
4. Successfully focusing on the "hard to reach" (H2R) civil society & citizens;
5. Focused on a set of 7 guiding principles which provide a values base for decision-making;
6. Improving grant financial management in 2014, which has been limited by CSSP processing capacity and affected by CSO absorption rates;
7. Improving programme governance structures following a 2013 review;
8. Experiencing uncertainty about the future post-2016

Recommendations

The immediate priority is to "right size" CSSP:

- a) Agree an overall budget for the remainder of the programme
- b) Strengthen CSOs uptake capacity and consider streamlining reporting processes

- for more timely disbursement of resources
- c) Work with “strategic partners” as a new grant mechanism, focusing on large grants to mature organisations, but phasing this in as the simultaneous release of a number of big grants is ambitious

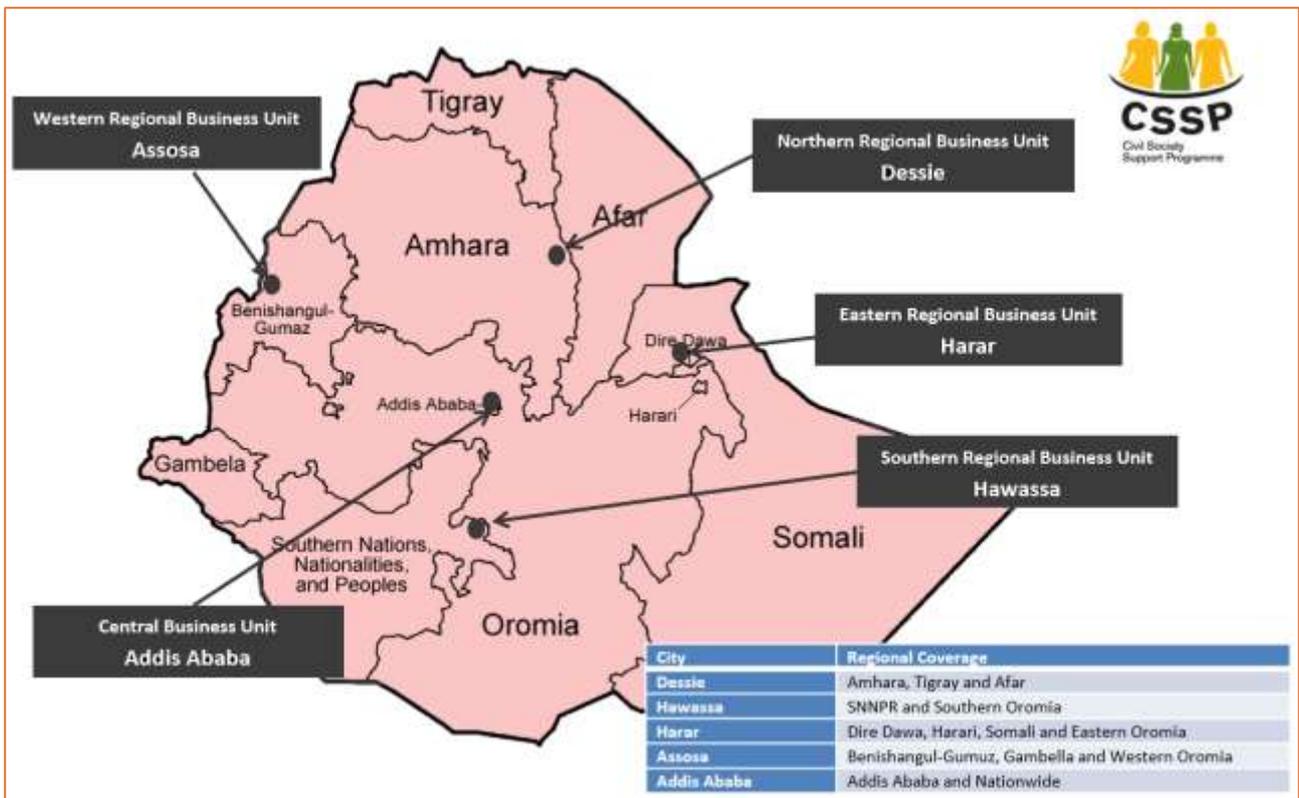
In the second half of the programme, CSSP should:

- d) Focus on learning and dissemination across the portfolio of projects, concentrating on documenting achievements in relation to relationship building and benefits to the “hard to reach”, and examining internal processes to facilitate learning

- e) Provide capacity development support to increase the inclusion of the hard to reach in mini-project evaluations with specific attention to transforming gender relationships and communicating results
- f) Review the programme results framework
- g) Clarify the qualities behind key programme concepts for better understanding among CSSP staff

Post 2016, the review recommends that the CSSP should be sustained as a vehicle of support to civil society in Ethiopia.

Map of the CSSP Organisational Structure: Secretariat and Regional Business Units



Link to CSSP website: www.cssp-et.org

Ethiopian Civil Society Support Programme

Mid-Term Review Summary Document

Acronyms

CSSP	Civil Society Support Programme
MTR	Mid-Term Review
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

The Ethiopian Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) was launched in September 2011.

It is a capacity development and grant making programme, designed to support Ethiopia’s civil society to contribute to the country’s national development, poverty reduction and good governance in line with the Government of Ethiopia’s policies and strategies. The programme emphasises “hard to reach” civil society and citizens.

The overall budget is €40 million for a five year period September 2011 – September 2016. The programme is funded by a set of development partners: Canada, DANIDA, DFID, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid, Royal Norwegian Embassy in Ethiopia and Embassy of Sweden¹.

CSSP is implemented by a consortium, led by the British Council, and including partners INTRAC and the *IDL Group*. The programme has been divided into three periods: inception, learning and full implementation. The latter started in March 2013. The MTR took place at the end of the first year of full delivery with approximately 2.5 years of the programme remaining.

Objectives of the Review

The purpose of the MTR was to provide an independent assessment of the performance and

progress of CSSP in its first two and half years of operation.

The three main objectives of the review were to:

1. Assess CSSP’s achievement against its intended impact, outcomes and outputs to date – including the quality and relevance of its programming at national and regional levels
2. Reflect on the likelihood of CSSP achieving its stated objectives within the life of the programme
3. Provide the CSSP team and the development partners with constructive recommendations for how the programme could be strengthened

An additional key question emerged from CSSP’s preparatory reviews:

4. How should CSSP be “right-sized” for the remainder of the programme?



Image © Sub grantees in Arsi Kersa supported by HARMEE a CSO funded by CSSP

¹ DANIDA completed its support of CSSP in 2013

Methodology of the Review

The MTR was carried out by an Itad team of three consultants. Additionally, an Itad Project Director provided overall technical support and quality assurance throughout the process. The review took place in May and June 2014 in Ethiopia, with report writing in July and finalisation in August.

The process involved:



Findings

Relevance

The review found the relevance of CSSP to be very high, working within the framework of the Government of Ethiopia's 2009 Proclamation to Provide for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies, and its related directives. In particular CSSP assists CSOs to manage their finances within the prescribed proportions of spend (70% programmes, 30% administration). Most of the CSOs interviewed for the MTR confirmed that the CSSP has been a financial lifeline in the context of a changed funding landscape since 2009.

The design of CSSP shaped a non-sectoral, non-thematic approach using the concept of "letting demand emerge". The approach has been contextually appropriate, and has allowed work to be responsive to local needs as expressed by CSOs and their constituencies. Importantly, CSSP's focus on and framing of the "hard to reach"² has helped CSOs to focus and find favour with the Government of Ethiopia.

The review also found that the CSSP's 7 programme principles are actively used within the programme approach, providing a set of values against which decisions can be made. The most visible principle is the first.

The CSSP Principles:

1. Focusing most efforts on hard to reach people & issues
2. Building on people's assets and capacities
3. Building trust between stakeholders
4. Promoting creativity & innovation
5. Promoting social equality
6. Promoting decision-making to the most local levels
7. Delivering value for resources for the poorest people

Furthermore, and of real significance, ***through the effective use of principles, CSSP encourages CSO partners to adopt these principles to guide their work.***

The MTR found that the hard to reach principle has affected all elements of CSSP. This principle is the glue which holds the programme together and is used increasingly as a focus for discussion and collaboration between CSOs and Government. It is a neutral, apolitical term, which is descriptive

² "Hard to reach" is defined by the programme as meeting at least one of the following criteria: i) geographical remoteness or exclusion, ii) social marginalisation on the basis of caste, ethnicity, sex, ability, illness or age; iii) affected by an overlooked development issue such as mental ill health or chat addiction

without being pejorative. It implies a state of being, not a state of deliberate exclusion or marginalisation. Hard to reach organisations receive 35.3% of overall grants.

Principle 3 is also particularly important. The CSSP takes a collaborative approach, bringing CSOs and Government together for shared learning and exposure visits. Principle 6 has been applied to grant giving, and increasingly is being applied internally within the programme structure to increase regional decision-making authority.

Outcome & Output achievement

The CSSP results framework, the Babogaya Framework, includes a set of three outcome statements and seven outputs, below the impact statement:

“Productive engagement of civil society sector with regional governments, in order to improve implementation of pro-poor government policies

and more inclusive public services for poor and marginalised women, men, girls and boys”.

The MTR carried out a detailed analysis of progress against the framework, and took a step back to consider the utility of the framework itself.

The MTR found that there is evidence of good progress against the framework, including at outcome level, and that the outputs are largely on track. However, it is difficult to assess at this point whether CSSP is likely to achieve its outcomes, largely due to the question around whether increased CSO capacity will contribute to sustained change in collaboration with government. Clarity about what is required for sustained relationships would help to focus CSO required action. For example: is it enough for CSOs to develop and maintain a track record for working on shared interests, that is reinforced by regular communication about change, and for which systematic evidence of results could be presented?

Table 1: Outcome Level Progress

Framework Outcomes	Findings
1: Critical mass of diverse CSOs capable of responding effectively and innovatively to priorities determined by poor women, men, girls and boys (especially H2R) through stronger relationships with primary constituencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 77% of 54 CSOs demonstrate improved capacity against at least one of the four key capacity dimensions in the Capacity Change Scales (constituents, finance, people-centred and leadership); • Improving relationships are reported by CSOs with constituencies; • This evidence would be stronger if triangulated with other forms of assessment, including the voices of primary constituencies.
2: More and diverse CSOs have capacity to dialogue and relate to a range of different constituencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For CSOs their main focus is on dialogue with government: and there are modest improvements in the relationships, evidenced by assessments of “relations with the state” in ladders of change exercises; • CSOs interviewed considered that it was easier to forge relationships lower down the government hierarchy (CSSP does not systematically assess relationships with different levels of government); • The MTR did not find a significant amount of data on dialogue with primary constituencies - the H2R.

3: Mutual accountability for efficient and effective delivery of CSSP by the different stakeholders (management, development partners)

- Over time the British Council systems and procedures have improved somewhat in terms of a better fit for CSSP;
- Internal processes have been subject to internal review in recognition of the fact that they are too cumbersome;
 - Implementing governance review recommendations is a work in progress;
 - CSSP is consciously reflective and trying to find ways to improve its own performance;
 - Both CSSP and the DPs are committed to improving mutual accountability and efficiency, as evidenced by review processes and related recommendations.

Table 2: Output level Progress

Framework Outputs	Findings
Output 1: CSOs supported to improve their accountability to poor and marginalised women and men and boys and girls to be more responsive to the priorities determined by those people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On track, with definitions, milestones and target to be refined
Output 2: CSOs, especially those that are hard to reach, supported to improve financial management and to design and deliver projects which are people-centred and emphasise innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress delayed by Capacity Development delivery problems, though the quality of what has been done is reported as high • Indicators and milestones require revision
Output 3: Grants provided to CSOs which focus with depth on hard-to-reach communities, women and men – particularly at regional and sub-regional levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceeded milestones • More sophisticated analyses would add depth to the monitoring and capture geographical difference
Output 4: CSSP captures, analyses, and disseminates examples of effective learning, relationship building, innovation and good practice arising from CSSP-supported CSOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On track • The indicators need to be refined in terms of focusing on the right elements to measure
Output 5: Establishment of a high-quality civil society support facility with strong Ethiopian identity, with potential for a post 2016 existence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed progress due to the context, not the performance of CSSP • Indicators require revision to better capture the ambition of the output
Output 6: CSSP becomes an effective and trusted organisation that is accountable to CSOs it supports and performs its roles and responsibilities with integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On track in terms of existing milestone • Not necessary as a 6th output, could be subsumed into another output
Output 7: CSSP supports the development of a strong leadership culture and governance in Ethiopian civil society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet measured • Not necessary as a 7th output, could be subsumed into another output

Gender and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming

The MTR found that the CSSP promotion of gender and inclusion is evident in various project processes, though gender consideration is less visible in programme documentation. CSSP has opted to mainstream gender rather than develop a separate and specific strategy. However, guidance on how to mainstream gender has not been sufficiently practical. A specific pilot project, Munessa, has addressed violence against young women, and the SASA! Methodology is being adapted and contextualised but was not sufficiently advanced at the time of the review to assess its potential.



Programme management: results, risk, governance structure, relationships, and resources

Results

The Babogaya results framework services all development partners' reporting needs, and this approach has served CSSP well – using one common and agreed framework with one set of reporting.

CSSP has already recognised that there are areas where definitions and concepts within the framework need more clarity to allow for qualitative assessment.

The MTR found that:

- 1) Reporting against milestones does not sufficiently capture the qualities present in the indicators, due to the lack of disaggregated narrative reports
- 2) Self-assessment of CSO capacity changes would be more robust if supported by evidence or verified
- 3) Overall within the monitoring reports, voices and views of constituency groups are less visible to date

The review provided detailed commentary to assist with the reviewing of the Babogaya framework to make it more sophisticated and nuanced as an M&E framework. However, there is a question around whether the outputs and outcomes are ambitious enough to contribute to the achievement of impact, and whether the monitoring tools are appropriate.

A set of key questions in relation to the framework are set out as follows, in order to assist the ongoing process of reflection and M&E development:

- a) Will a % change in capacity of CSOs mean that CSSP has contributed to a critical mass which is able to improve the implementation of pro-poor policies and more inclusive services?
- b) Are self-assessment monitoring tools good enough as stand-alone evidence or should CSSP verify the findings and triangulate them with other sources of data?
- c) Will a set of case studies collected by CSSP staff be enough to provide the main evidence base for final evaluation?
- d) Are the changes assessed by the combination

of case studies, ladders of change and capacity change scales sufficient to build up a picture of a more productive relationship with government?

Risk

CSSP has an established Risk Assessment and Management Matrix, which is rigorous in its design and is regularly updated. However, there are some areas for improvement, specifically in relating the analysis to a strategy for balancing resources and actions in relation to high probability risks with potentially lower loss or damage versus a low probability risk with high loss or damage. Further, some of the identified risks have not been well mitigated in practice.

Governance Structure

The 2013 Governance Review is yielding results, with more work to do on operationalising the recommendations. The review considered the effectiveness and efficiency of the governance set up, including financial arrangements. Recommendations from the review outlined simplifying fund flow from development partners to the British Council, reducing the burden on the Lead Development Partner through better sharing of responsibility between development partners, and formalising an Operations Manual.

The MTR found that the three sub-committees proposed by the Governance Review were functional, but without fully approved mandates, and that Version 2 of the Operations Manual was in final draft. A new governance structure was therefore emerging, with some work still to be done.

Relationships

CSSP was launched in a political context of uncertainty after the 2009 Proclamation. The CSSP aims to achieve productive engagement between civil society and government at various levels. The



MTR found many examples of established CSO relationships with regional level authorities reinforced by CSSP, and that regional forums for CSO/Government meetings have been strengthened by CSSP.

The MTR also found that CSSP has made a significant investment to build an active and productive relationship with the Charities and Societies Agency (ChSA) at a federal level. Relationships between federal CSOs and federal government departments are less well documented.

CSSP has used various mechanisms to encourage CSO joint work, and collaboration. There are individual examples of success in this area, but monitoring of trends in the development of “critical mass” has proved to be difficult.

The MTR found that CSO approaches in terms of targeting and beneficiary selection is mixed and that relationships with primary constituencies need to be tracked carefully.

Resources

CSSP is unique in scale and scope in Ethiopia: it has provided significantly more grants through more

calls than other CSO capacity development programmes (159 direct grants to date), and is more flexible in its range and typology of grants.

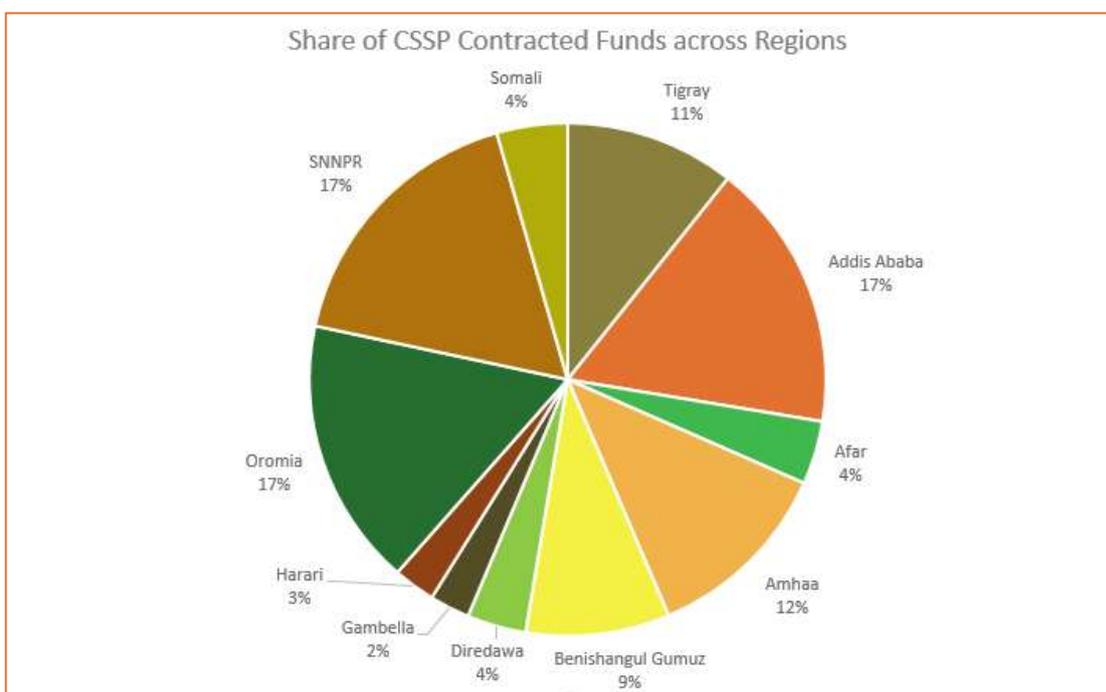
The overall budget envelope of €23 million in 2010 grew to over €40 million in late 2013. The increased envelope has resulted in pressure on CSSP. Less than 50% of the grant envelope had been spent by the time of the MTR.

Absorption capacity amongst CSOs and the CSSP processing systems are key explanatory factors for the pace of disbursement, which has not been predictable, and actual spend. The MTR found that CSSP cannot spend all available funds within the

remaining programmatic timeframe.

The CSSP's Value for Resources strategy is a useful, if complex framework using the four E's of Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity. The framework is the embodiment of the CSSP's seventh guiding principle "to ensure the best value for resources for the poorest people".

The MTR found that the dimensions of Economy and Equity are most used by the programme, the latter being intimately connected to the first guiding principle to focus on the hard to reach. Achieving Efficiency and measuring Effectiveness were weaker in the reporting to date.



Recommendations

The Recommendations of the MTR split into immediate priorities related to right-sizing, and the related key focal areas for the second half of the programme.

Right size CSSP:

1. Draw up a plan and budget for the remainder

of the programme, focusing on realism in terms of disbursement and spend based on the reality of experience to date. This document will give the development partners and the CSSP a joint mechanism for mutual accountability. CSSP should streamline systems for reporting, assuming that this will ease disbursement. Further, phased strategic partnerships with competent partners should be the key

mechanism for grant giving, with no further competitive bidding. Finally, the programme's Theory of Change should be revisited after May 2015;

2. Finalize the implementation of the 2013 Governance Review recommendations, including the formalisation of the sub-committees, agreeing indicators for change for the new way of working, using time limits for comments on key documents and the delivery of the Operations Manual.

In the second half of the programme, CSSP should focus on learning and dissemination:

- a) Looking across the portfolio of projects, concentrate on documenting achievements and gathering robust evidence in relation to relationship building and benefits to the hard to reach. This will necessitate the strengthening of internal processes to facilitate learning, including working with grantees to evaluate their project achievements and challenges, and to communicate their results, and assisting strategic partners to be clear on their objectives;

- Provide capacity development support to increase the inclusion of the hard to reach in mini-project evaluations with specific attention to transforming gender relationships and communicating results
- Consider the roll out of INSPIRE
- Promote regional learn and share workshops with the Ethiopia Social Accountability Project II and Civil Society Fund II

- b) Review the Babogaya results framework; revisiting milestones and targets, clarifying the qualities behind key programme concepts for better understanding among CSSP staff, and investing in the existing database to ensure that it becomes an engine of learning, rather than simply a storage facility.

Longer term

Post 2016, the review recommended that the CSSP should be sustained as a vehicle of support to civil society in Ethiopia.



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