

Mid-Term Review of
Strategic Partnership to support Local
CSOs working on
Human Rights, Democracy and Good
Governance

Royal Norwegian Embassy and Norwegian
Church Aid

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June 2008
Addis Ababa

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Chapter One

1. Executive Summary

This mid-term review is designed to assess the “Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance” program jointly run by the Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE) and the Norwegian Church Aid Ethiopia (NCA-E). These organizations made a Strategic Partnership (SP) agreement in 2006 to support local civil society organizations working in the areas of human rights, good governance, democracy and peace building. According to this agreement, seven prominent advocacy organizations have been identified as partners with the possibility of adding other CSOs working in the areas. RNE has transferred the required budget to NCA, which is in charge of administering the fund, oversee the proper implementation of the program by partners and provide technical support to partners.

The civil society organizations we have reviewed under this evaluation accomplished a great deal of ‘their planned activities ‘ provided that the issues they address are very much complicated and are challenging particularly within the weak institutional as well as policy environment of the country. The evaluation team tried to measure the projects’ achievement in light of this context. The team learnt that most of them contributed significantly to increased local participation, awareness on human rights and civic education, access to justice, availing policy alternatives, conducting researches, etc.

However, these achievements were not without any challenges; they suffer both from external and internal challenges. Some projects are very ambitious in setting their plans compared to their human and financial resources and hence plans and actual implementation greatly vary. Participation of stakeholders in planning, implementation and monitoring of program intervention is another area of concern where most partners need to work very hard. The volatile political environment, the perception of the government towards CSOs, high staff turnover from government institutions and foreign donor dependency on financial support remain the major challenges to the partners. One major challenge ahead of the partners is the draft CSO legislation which is believed to be a “death penalty” to most of local advocacy CSOs working on human rights, democratic governance, women empowerment, children and disable persons, conflict resolution and management and law enforcement.

This review is divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals with introductory issues where we discussed approaches, methodologies, purpose of the study and background to the

study. The second chapter focuses on contents and addresses issues which are very crucial in evaluating program relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, partnership, challenges, relation of partners with NC-E, etc. The third chapter is devoted to issues related to NCA. This chapter assesses NCA-E's organizational, governance structure and its professionals and administrative capacity with a view to ascertain relevance, adequacy and effectiveness to manage the program. We also looked into the added values NCA-E has brought in the effective implementation of the program and advancing RNE agenda in human rights, democracy and good governance in Ethiopia.

The fourth chapter scans the external environment under which the partners are working. Two areas have been identified in this regard; the impact of the new donors funding arrangement called "Civil Society Support Program" and the upcoming CSO legislation. The team assessed the perception of the partners towards these issues. Finally, chapter five will take us to the findings of the assessment and suggested recommendations.

2. Introduction

NCA has been working in Ethiopia since 1974 when it began intervening in emergencies and responding to different socio-economic needs. Over the years its involvement has grown to include rehabilitation and development projects being partly implemented by NCA and partly through partners. It has fostered strong professional competence in its selected thematic areas of water, emergency response, peace building and inter religious community dialogue, gender including FGM and HIV issues, partnership, and networking. NCA presently supports 40 projects implemented by its local partners located in Amhara, Tigray, Oromya, Addis Ababa, Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples Regional and Somali Regional States.

To achieve its vision of promoting human dignity for poor and marginalized people, NCA-E has designed its programmatic intervention in Ethiopia in six thematic areas and "Civil Society for Accountable Governance" is one of these areas. This team comprises three sub-themes which are essential to "enable citizens to enjoy equal access and protection of basic human rights through ensuing accountable and good governance". The three sub-themes are;

- Increase capacity and competence of the civil society to constructively engage the government for good governance at local and national levels.

- Increase participation of citizens in civil, political, economic and cultural rights and responsibilities
- Enhance civic education for local communities to play their roles on environmental protection and climatic change.

AS part of its strategy to implement the “Civil Society for Accountable Governance” program, NCA entered into a SP with the Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE) with the objectives of supporting local civic organizations as of October 2006. Under this SP NCA-E assumes the responsibilities of, among others, managing RNE’s fund to seven prominent local CSOs working in the areas of human rights, democracy, good governance and peace building. The CSOs which are referred by RNE as local partners are Action Professionals’ Association for the People (APAP), Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Union (CETU), Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute (EEPRI), Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO), Ethiopian Women Lawyers’ Association (EWLA), Forum for Social Studies (FSS) and Inter Africa Group (IAG). The agreement mandates NCA-E in consultation with RNE to call for more additional partners which can contribute to the achievement of the stated goals in the SP.

Accordingly, NCA has signed formal contract agreements with the stated and some other additional partners according to the SP agreement. Now that it has been three years since the SP agreement is signed and implementation of the program is initiated, it is found to be crucial to review the status of the program; achievement, challenges and prospects. Therefore, the review covers a three years of execution of the program although funds were availed later in the year 2006.

3. Purpose and scope

The purpose of this particular mid term review is to review the performance of NCA’s partners in achieving their stated objectives (in relation to their program on human rights, good governance and democracy) with specific reference to the relevance and effectiveness of the programs, and the extent of the progress they have made towards achieving their objectives. In addition to the partners, the review also covers NCA-E’s role as a Strategic Partner to RNE and its responsibilities towards the implementing partners.

This Mid-Term review made its focus on three general aspects of the program:

- Focus on the practice of partnership and cooperation between NCA and partner civil societies as well as the added value of NCA as strategic partner to RNE
- Focus on program context and design, governance, program objectives and outputs, budget and financing, implementation strategies, sustainability, potential impacts and risks and challenges.
- Outlook on the CSSP and upcoming legislation on regulatory framework on civil societies in Ethiopia in relation to their respective activities and future trends

4. Approaches

The selected civil society organizations we have reviewed under this review accomplished a great deal of ‘their planned activities ‘ provided that the issues they address are very much complicated and challenging particularly within the weak institutional as well as policy environment of the country. Therefore, the evaluation team tried to measure the projects’ achievement in light of this context. The team learnt that most of them contributed significantly to the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and democracy.

Accordingly, the assessment is carried out from three dimensions, namely:

- Prior assumptions (proposals, plans and methodological approaches)
- Implementation process of each partners’ project (short term, long term impacts),
- Future trends (sustainability, CSSP, regulatory framework legislations and the potential replication)

Achievements are assessed against planned objectives stated in their proposal documents. As a general rule, reports and any other relevant documents have provided the basis for assessment. The review is made in a manner to generate lessons learned and recommendations for NCA’s future cooperation with its Partners.

5. Methodology

This review has been undertaken jointly by two consultants under the auspices of the RNE and NCA. The review team employed a qualitative method for collection of the data for the review. To be specific, we made interviews with representatives of the partner organizations, randomly selected beneficiaries such as representative of *Idirs*. We made visits to field offices to meet staff at local level and learn how they translate their objectives to practices. We also observed actual working environments, their human resources and institutional capacity.

Chapter Two; Programs

1. Relevance

The aspect of relevance focuses on the degree to which the objectives of the intervention by each organization are steady with beneficiaries' prerequisites, country requirements, global priorities and NCA's policies. The global strategic program that focused on human rights approach underpins the NCA-E's program on democracy, good governance, peace building and human rights. Indeed even prior to the Partnership agreement NCA had already started implementing this program. Therefore, the program is found to be in line with both the global and national agenda of NCA and as such it assisted the organization to perform its activities at a larger scale and coverage.

When it comes to individual partners, different factors have been taken into account to measure the relevance of their program but from two perspectives; NCA-E and RNE priority as well as beneficiaries.

1.1 Assumptions

Assumption which necessitated the very intervention of the organization is one of the prerequisites to measure the relevance of a certain program. We observed that there are diverse rationales mentioned by the different partners for their intervention. We also noted that all these assumptions are in conformity with the general assumption of both NCA-E and RNE in the SP. The following are the summary of the major assumptions;

- Lack of culture of political debate in the country; discussing politics considered as a taboo
- Absence of democratic governance
- Polarization of the different political actors
- Ethnic and religious Conflicts
- Violation of fundamental human rights
- Existence of war and conflict in the Horn of Africa (IAG)
- The marginalization of women
- Poor access to justice
- Insufficient leadership capacity at different levels of government organs
- Weak capacity of public services delivering organizations

- Unequal access to basic services
- Environmental degradation

1.2 Objectives

Depending on the assumptions, the different partners are working

- Fostering culture of democratic debate on major political, economic and social issues
- Promoting democratic values
- Promoting civil and political rights
- Empowerment of women
- Empowerment of the poor and the marginalized
- Promoting the realization of socio-economic rights such as the right to health, education, food and housing
- Promoting peaceful conflict resolution and management
- Respect for the rights of the workers and ensuring industrial peace (CETU)
- Creating favorable legal, political and economic policy environment
- Ensuring access to justice
- Promoting good governance
- Enhancing the capacity of local government authorities and offices in strategic planning and management

1.3 Integration and coordination with stakeholders

The program's relevance to beneficiaries could be seen from two dimensions: one is from the point of provision of services such as legal aid services in places where judicial institutions are inefficient or inaccessible for the poor and the other is from the point of creating consciousness to their basic rights. As clearly stated in the SP people should be empowered to work for their basic rights as a citizen, and challenge the leaders for the democratic development of the society. On the other hand, active engagement with government to make existing political space more open and transparent, is the other strategy envisaged by the SP.

At the local level, the program has been closely cooperating with local institutions such as *Idirs*, the youth, professionals and government representatives on human right issues and justice concerns. (EWLA, APAP, CETU, EHRCO, MDF). However, we have observed gaps in information exchange and coordination between the head offices staff and the branches in some organizations regarding important matters such as quarterly plans, selection of training themes and administrative matters such as replacements of personnel (EWLA, Bahir Dar and APAP, Hawasa). To ensure the sustainability of its training, MDF is using a TOT (training of trainers) approach and the trainers are selected from the community.

Their integration with the relevant government offices at the level of regions has been in particular very impressive. We have observed that most partners that established branch offices are complementing the work of the state. APAP, EWLA and EHRCO are engaged in addressing access to justice, and contributing to the downsizing of court cases. IAG, FSS and EERI are playing important role, mostly at the macro level, in providing policy alternatives and creating enabling political and economic environments, albeit lack of cooperation from the government side.

The evaluation team made an observation that not many of the experiences of the partners working at the micro level reach legislative bodies and policy makers at least in ceremonial way. Most of the project plans lack clear strategies on how to address policy makers on the importance of their works except in a very sporadic and unplanned ways. Despite these problems there are promising situations, although they are very few, whereby government and partners were collaborating each other particularly in the adoption of laws by the parliament. Partners were invited to forward their comment on certain legislation.

2. Efficiency

An assessment is made how economically resources are converted to results by the different partners. Therefore, the evaluation team made an attempt to measure results with available expertise in the organizations, their governance, institutionalization of program interventions, systems of monitoring and evaluation, capacity to plan and implement projects, etc.

Project management team assigned at head office and branches across all organizations interviewed are well versed with local concerns and could contextualize the program

effectively. However, the working environment at the branch offices and their coordination with the head office is a serious concern. For example, the transport fees for APAP voluntaries is so small (200 birr since 2005), money and material transfer is not efficient. EWLA and EHRICO in Bahir Dar also suffer from human resources. Besides, lack of vehicle facility has been mentioned as the major problem affecting branch offices.

In most cases, the plan and the actual work conducted are not comparable as the plans appear to be ambitious and unrealistic. The volume of planned activities does not match the number of expertise of the organizations. In addition, the desire of the organization to engage across the sectors makes the organizations very ambitious, lacks focus and consistency. These problems are very visible particularly with IAG. The evaluation team noted that IAG never has a strategic plan document which defines its long term objectives and strategic intervention in Ethiopia and thus most of its activities appeared to be event based. However, we learnt that the organization is currently in the process of developing a five year strategic plan document.

When it comes to governance issues except MDF all the partners under the review have made change of their executive directors, which remains one of the chronic problems of the majority of the Ethiopian CSOs. Personality cult, egotism and dominance of executive directors are the main factors affecting the institutionalization and sustainability of program intervention of Ethiopian CSOs. The evaluation team observed that there are commendable efforts by all partners to ensure democratic governance in the administration of their staffs, program planning and implementation, budget and property through a collective decision making process.

All the partners put in place monitoring systems to follow the implementation status of planned activities. This activity is mainly conducted through periodic internal and external reporting and onsite visits as well as small group consultations with staff. However, most of them lack a standard monitoring and evaluation system in the organizations. In addition, most organization failed to carry out periodic and regular evaluation of their program intervention. External evaluation is very crucial to assess achievements and impacts and need to be conducted at least at the end of a given project (program) cycle. Nevertheless, some organizations like IAG never had such exercise since their establishment.

3. Effectiveness

By effectiveness we mean, the extent to which objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved taking into account their relative importance. We classify these achievements as output and midterm outcomes. Indeed measurement of effectiveness also includes the impact of the program intervention on the life of the target group which is really becoming unrealistic for the review at hand as impact is a long time process. Looking into their outputs, most of the partners were able to achieve their objectives: provision of legal services, awareness creation on human rights, and production of research materials, trainings were made in relation to plans.

The following have been observed as major achievements of partners in the last two years.

IAG

- Through the Youth Tour program which is aiming at bringing the youth from different parts of the country to have a tour and discussion on their country, the organization was successful in creating common understanding among the participants about the reality of their country and identity. The youths who took part in the program have already established their own forum.
- The Parliament Internship Program is also mentioned as one of the successes of the organization where by the organization is assigning post graduate students to work and assist the Parliament in the different standing committees. The outcome of this program is still to be seen on the quality of the works of the different standing committees of the parliament.
- The organization has conducted a National Survey focusing on the economic, political and social performance of the government and gauging the perception of the public towards these issues. The survey which is soon to be released has already been submitted to the government.

CETU

- The organization has conducted series of awareness raising activities on the rights and duties of the workers which is very crucial to secure industrial peace
- Trainings focusing on culture of round-table discussion and tolerance between employees and employers were provided

- The organization provided training on “working culture” which is one of the root causes affecting development. In this training the organization has benefited from the expertise of NCA as additional input. The Oromiya Regional State has already made a request for the training to be given also to other parts of the region at their own expense
- Women participation in Trade Union leadership position has reached 20%.
- Assisted workers to establish unions in 46 flower cut industries where there are complaints of violation of basic human rights
- Produced training manual and provided TOT on the labour law

Transparency Ethiopia (TE)

- Launched a radio program focusing on corruption to raise public awareness on the damaging effect of corruption on societal development
- Actively participated in the adoption of the Anti Corruption Convention by the Ethiopian Government

EHRCO

- Made series of reports on human rights violations to international human rights groups and concerned government bodies. These reports include extra judicial killings, forced disappearance, torture, illegal detention and other violations
- Conducted trainings to law enforcing personnel
- Provided legal aid services to the needy

EEPRI

- Provide critical feedback to policies formulated at the national level
- Encouraged dialogue among the public and the government
- provide information for the civil society to enable them use it for advocacy
- produce researches that are strategy oriented
- Organizes workshops, panels, symposiums and conferences
- Provide professional comments on national documents
- Participate as members of steering committee established by the state, thus collaborating with the state.

- Conducts also in house researches and demand driven researches
- Distribution of publication is given focus

APAP

- Created partnership with CSO at the local levels such as Idirs and increasing local participation
- Provide trainings for institutions and encourage them to include trainings as part of their teaching curriculum
- Public-interest litigation where it even put the state responsible in favor of the public
- Encourage capacity building and accountability for duty bearers.
- Focus on advocacy such as through the production of hand book, mute court competition, human right journal and television production
- It shifts its strategies based on evaluation and critical monitoring
- Produced survey before intervention so that concepts are transferred in a better way

Selam (of Harar) and (of Hawasa) Legal Professional Associations established by APAP

- Strong connection with the police and justice
- Provide the support of writing petitions for the needy
- Facilitates the work of the police but does not intervene directly
- Trying to diversify its funding sources by preparing proposals
- Engage in public education on human rights
- Keep reports of each case it deals with (impressive!)

EWLA

- Provide legal aid in nine sub cities within Addis for orphans, women prisoners
- Provide public education specially for governments staff, schools, maids, daily laborer, vendors and brokers
- Trainings for government representatives, judges, police and prosecutors
- Conduct research that strengthen the work
- Produce magazines at regional levels such as Bahr Dar
- Helps improve how the police reports should be organized

FSS

- Outreach radio program
- Publication is the major output and is made by the consortium funding of which NCA is a part
- Distribute publications for as many institutions as possible
- Production of policy brief written in Amharic
- Assessed conflict prone areas and provide trainings for influential personalities such as elders.
- Intervened in conflict resolution such as the one in Kofele

MDF

MDF is one of the selected organizations on pilot basis and this organization has implemented a project on “Wereda Based Development and Women Empowerment in the Less-Served Served Regions of Harari and Somali”. The following were the type of trainings provided by the organization;

- Strategic Planning and Management
- Project Planning and Management
- Good Governance and Administrative Ethics
- Women Empowerment
- Wereda Development and Leadership
- Organization and Management
- Office Management, Report Writing and the Mechanics of Committee Work

EOC

- Made assessments places that are fertile for potential conflicts
- Organized and establish the peace council in conflict prone areas
- Train the council members to intervene in conflict resolution process
- Work with other FBOs affiliated both to Christian and Muslim religious institutions to address religious and ethnic conflicts in the different parts of the country.
- Basis its work on the already existing conflict resolution mechanisms
- Follow up post reconciliation situations

4. Sustainability

Both financial and institutional sustainability of the partner organizations have been examined. Accordingly, we noted that the organizations (excluding EEPRI) lack clear and specific strategies which have been designed how to sustain their program activities in the absence of foreign financial aid. Lack of adequate local resources and too much emphasis on external resources still are prevalent. All the seven previous partners of RNE, unlike most other CSOs in Ethiopia, have changed their executive directors and proved their existence even in the absence of their creators, and this can be taken as one indicator for the institutionalization of the activities of the organizations. Generally, the evaluation team identified the following as major areas of concern in relation to sustainability;

- Lack of (or little) effective strategies to develop communal ownership. In this regard the experience APAP may be taken as the best example where the involvement of the community is very high. Some legal aid centers previously established by APAP reached to the stage where the community or the target groups are taking full responsibilities.
- When it comes to the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and democracy, the government is the primarily responsible organ. Accordingly, working in partnership with the government, albeit it is challenging, is crucial to secure sustainability of program intervention. Although there are some efforts by the partners, we observed that this strategy needs to be further exploited.
- The active participation of the community and other stakeholders in the planning and implementation of projects provides great opportunities for sustainability of projects by boosting sense of ownership. However, the evaluation team observed gaps in information exchange between the head offices staff and field office staff as well as the community regarding important matters such as plans, selection of training topics and other matters that affect the overall activities.
- Most of the project plans lack clear strategies on how to address policy makers on the importance of their works except in a very sporadic and unplanned ways. This becomes a concern as we see later the importance of synergy between the two in formulating policy and sustain impacts of intervention

5. Partnership

The organizations are working with state and non-state actors in advancing their programs. They are actively involved in the different networks established permanently or on ad hoc basis such as Network of Ethiopian Women Association, Union of Ethiopian Civil Society, Human Rights Defenders network, and the ad hoc Taskforce established to work on the draft CSO legislation.

We learnt that NCA has organized an introductory workshop with all concerned new and previous partner of RNE with the objective of discussing the arrangement of the program and sharing experience, future cooperation as well as networking. However, the joint forum which was envisaged by the SP to strengthen joint efforts and capacities as well as sharing of experience is not yet established. Although they are working on similar and interrelated thematic issues, the cooperation among partners has not been very visible to the evaluators.

6. Gender Focus

The evaluation team has observed in the field that the women and men participation in projects has been sound. In some organizations like APAP and EWLA not only at the project level but also at the program level the participation of women is impressive. In APAP the leadership positions are dominated by women as key positions like the positions of the Executive Director and program coordinator are held by women. The assignment of women is mandatory in the Human Rights Resource Centres run by APAP. EWLA by its very nature is a women organization and thus almost all leadership and program positions are held by women. We observed that women are the highest beneficiaries of the legal aid services provided by APAP, EHRCO and EWLA.

7. Relation of partners with NCA

Questions were forwarded to partners concerning their working relation with NCA. It is to be noted that all the seven partners under the review were previously supported by RNE directly and hence the questions were mainly on the comparative advantages the new arrangement has brought as well as problems encountered. The result of this assessment revealed that all the partners have good and smooth working relation with NCA and they really appreciate the commitment of NCA. The partners identified the following added values under the new arrangement and working with NCA;

- Closer working relationship has been established
- On time, honest and constructive comments and feedbacks on plans and reports which have made contribution to the improvement of quality of proposals and reports
- Assisted partners to get the fund in a shorter period than the previous arrangement
- On site visits including attending events of partners
- Assisted the partners to get a better and focused attention
- Created the opportunity of experience sharing among partners
- Accessibility, free participation and common understanding

8. Challenges

Different challenges have been mentioned by the different partners and these include;

- The negative perception of the government towards CSO which affects government cooperation with the partner
- High expectation from the public but limited delivery because of financial scarcity. Dependency on donor funds has always been a challenge for almost all CSOs in Ethiopia. There is very little support from local sources and it poses the risk of program interventions not being embraced by the very section of society they were meant to address.
- In some organizations like EHRCO, staff turnover was very high in the previous years because of various external and internal factors. The director of EHRCO informed the team that because of actual and perceived threat from the government against staff and members, the organization lost some of its members and face challenges to attract and retain qualified staffs.
- High staff turnover from government institutions particularly law enforcing organs. Partners are investing their money, time and energy providing capacity building and awareness raising trainings to government personnel. However, this effort is becoming successful only when the trained personnel serve the institution and the public according to the skill they acquired through the trainings.
- Access to the media particularly electronic media which is very instrumental for advocacy work. Electronic media which have national coverage are still owned and severely controlled by the government.

Chapter Three; Organizational Review of NCA-E

One of the objectives of the Mid-Term-Review is to assess the organizational, governance structure and the professional and administrative capacity of NCA with a view to ascertain relevance, adequacy and effectiveness to manage the program. Accordingly, the consultants made review of relevant documents and interviews with concerned officials at NCA. This assessment also includes the role and added value of NCA-E as strategic partner to the RNE.

1. Governance

NCA is an international development organization which has been working in Ethiopia since 1974 in response to the great famine. In the last 34 years, the involvement of the organization in various development and peace building activities has grown particularly in the areas of water, emergency response, peace building and inter religious community dialogue, gender including FGM and HIV issues. The organization has one country representative and two program managers who oversee program and financial administration. NCA-E has identified six program intervention areas, which includes;

- Civil Society for Accountable Governance
- Peace Building and Conflict Transformation
- HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control
- Fresh Water and Safe Sanitation
- Addressing Gender Based Violence
- Food Security and Emergency, Preparedness and Response and
- Environment and climatic change as a crosscutting issue

Each program has one program coordinator who is accountable to the program manager NCA-E is implementing these programs either directly or through local partners. For the effective implementation the “Civil Society for Accountable Governance” program, NCA-E entered into a Strategic Partnership (SP) agreement with RNE to support local CSOs. Accordingly, NCA-E has currently made partnership agreement with 12 local CSOs which are working mainly on advocacy issues such as human rights, democracy and good governance. One program coordinator has been assigned to administer this support. The program coordinator is responsible to examine quality of proposals and reports as well as conduct monitoring including field visit. The program coordinator is assisted by the program

manager (and the country representative if need be) for any matter beyond her capacity. We have been told the possibility of hiring additional staff should the need arise.

2. Added value

One of the greatest assets of NCA is its capacity to work with various faith based and secular partners, which have strong foothold at the grass root level and widely dispersed in the country. This partnership would assist NCA to reach the marginalized and the poor with sufficient number and quality. Secondly, NCA has been in this partnership arrangement since 1974, which provides it wealth of experience to working with and administering partners with different background; advocacy and service delivery. Specifically, the following can be mentioned as major contribution of NCA-E to the work of the RNE;

- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation of project planning and implementation through a closer working relation with partners
- Assist the embassy to focus on major policy issues than administering grants; the interaction of RNE is only with one organization, NCA-E
- RNE would have been forced to cease completely or at least significantly reduce the number of its CSOs partners at this particular point of time as the size of its staffs have been affected because of the decision of the Ethiopian Government had it not been for the SP with NCA-E
- The SP played significant role in creating an opportunity for partners to be provided with professional support and thereby improve the quality of their reports and plans
- NCA-E has also played decisive facilitation role in the administration of financial transaction. There are instances where NCA-E had released funds from other sources to partners without receiving same from RNE to avoid delay in the implementation of projects (after budget is approved by the RNE).
- NCA-E assisted RNE to receive consolidated information about the activities of its partners, their achievements and challenges.
- The SP created an opportunity to absorb more partners. The number of partners receiving the grant has grown and reached from 7 to 12.

From NCA-E's perspective, the SP has brought the following added values to NCA-E;

- Scaling up its thematic areas (areas of intervention)
- Specialization of personnel and departments

- Linking the faith based organizations with secular civil society organizations on matters of human rights and good governance
- Better implementation of the global agenda of NCA at the national level

3. Acknowledgement and visibility of RNE

As this program is implemented with the generous support of RNE, the consultants also looked into the visibility of RNE in the implementation of the program. We noted that NCA-E is making its level best to acknowledge and maintain the visibility of RNE in all of its dealing with partners and other third parties in relation to the implementation of the program. In all the contract documents with partners, correspondences and meetings NCA-E is mentioning the name of RNE as a back-donor. We have been told that NCA-E is inviting representatives of RNE to attend some of the events in the implementation of the program in recognition of their crucial contribution.

4. NCA-E and RNE Relation

The unreserved cooperation of representatives of RNE particularly during the initial period of the program was very crucial to NCA-E. We learnt from NCA-E that there is a smooth working relationship between the two organizations. RNE is providing with valuable and swift technical support to NCA-E when and as required. There is also a regular meeting between the two organizations focusing on the status of the program and challenges encountered. The NCA agenda both at the national and global level is in full compliance with the strategic intervention of RNE development assistance in Ethiopia. Human rights, good governance and democracy are at the heart of both NCA's and RNE's agendas in Ethiopia. NCA-E has good working relationship not only with local CSOs but also with the government particularly at the lower level. These assisted NCA-E to have a wider and variety of constituents, which are very crucial in the implementation of its program activities.

5. Challenges to the SP

NCA-E has identified the following two major challenges for the effective implementation of the SP agreement.

- The draft CSO legislation mentioned as one of the major challenges. All the partners in the SP are found to be advocacy organizations working on human rights, good

governance and democracy, which are considered by the government as political activities not to be carried out with foreign aid.

- The imbalance between the demand and the supply of fund; the amount of money allocated to each partners as compared to their capacity and demand is very minimal.

Chapter Four; Context

1. The Draft CSO Legislation

The works of the CSOs are highly affected by the volatile political environment particularly after the 2005 national election. The perception of the government towards CSOs as destructive force rather than development partner leads to the draft of a draconian legislation. The draft CSO legislation puts in questions the existence of most CSOs in Ethiopia. If this legislation is going to be adopted, as it stands in the draft there is no chance for advocacy organizations to survive as they are prohibited to access foreign aid greater than 10% of their total asset which is impractical.

2. Civil Society Support Program

The issue is mentioned as ‘taking us out from a comfortable zone’. Many of the organizations are comfortable with the consortium and previous way of dealing with donors. It is based on core programs and is based on trust. The apprehension attached to CSSP is due to the fact that there begins a new introduction, competition and focus on project than programs. Most of the partners stated that they do not feel at ease with the new agency because “we do not know how it works” and might projectize programs. However, they do not see it as monster as any longer, seeing the possibilities of adjusting to it.

The officials in the IAG have some reservation on the arrangement of CSSP on the following grounds. This arrangement may not take into account capacity issues of the different organizations; new and old. Consequently, the equal treatment approach may affect the expansion of CSOs in number as there would be little chance for new comers to win the competition. Secondly because of the multiplicity of CSOs, the fund manager may not have sufficient capacity to effectively carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities on the actual implementation of projects and capacity of partners. These exercises would be confined only to paper work and not on ground works. Organizations with impressive paper works but with no or poor capacity to implement projects may have greater opportunity to become successful in this arrangement. It greatly affects the personal contact partners have with their individual donors. Third, the CSSP arrangement may also affect institutional and program sustainability as the support is restricted only to projects and for shorter period.

Chapter Five; Findings and Recommendations

Findings

1. Collaboration with stakeholders in project planning, implementation and monitoring is very minimal which needs to be strengthened as one means of ensuring sustainability of program intervention. Most of the organizations do not have clear strategy towards strengthening their constituencies (donors and target community) and relation with the government.
2. All the seven partners except the EERI actively involved in CSO forums and networks which is very crucial for experience sharing and achieving common objectives; the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and democracy in Ethiopia. Some of the networks are established to create enabling political and legal environment for the sector.
3. We observed that some projects are very ambitious in setting their objectives compared to their human and financial resources. The issues they deal are multifaceted, in some instances not related to each other, and lack consistency.
4. The evaluation team has observed that women participation in programs has been sound. Not only gender but age has been also considered important in many of the programs.
5. Lack of concrete strategy by partners how to sustain the volatile political environment and scarcity of financial resources. In most program documents, including NCA's, the risk analysis fails to give sufficient attention to the volatile political environment. Almost all the documents are prepared after 2005 but it is surprising to see that these documents did not take into account or give a fair analysis on the perception of the government towards CSO and the policy and legal direction that might follow.
6. The perception of partners towards NCA's effectiveness and efficiency is found to be very positive and encouraging.
7. Although the degree varies among the different organizations, still there are valid concerns on the new funding arrangement commonly known as CSSP. The concern

arises from different perspectives; avoids the consortium arrangement of donors which is believed to be more favorable in utilization and administration of fund, absence of core funding and limitation only to project support, possible impact on donor-partners working relationship, capacity of the grant administrator to establish a close working relation and to assess activities on the ground than mere paper works, etc.

8. The draft CSO legislation, as it stands now, withers away all the partners as all of them are classified as advocacy organization working on human rights, good governance and democracy. These types of interventions cannot be carried out with foreign financial support.

Recommendations

1. Partners should be encouraged to ensure effective and active participation of their stakeholders in project designing, implementation and monitoring. This is one of the factors determining sustainability of their intervention both institutionally and financially.
2. Further clarity to partners about CSSP has to be made so as to avoid the confusion. In this regard, affirming as soon as possible the position of RNE towards this modality, to join or not, is very crucial to avoid uncertainty
3. Partners together with NCA need to design workable strategy how to cope up with the draft CSO legislation before their eventual death
4. Partners need to have continued trainings aiming at project designing so as to improve the quality of their project document and implementation capacity.
5. NCA should work hard towards the establishment of a joint forum consisting all partners as envisaged in the SP. The annual partners meeting is one but should not be the only venue for partners to meet each other, share experience, identify and address common advocacy issues.
6. As part of its role in building the capacity of partners, NCA should encourage those partners which never had an external evaluation exercise on their program intervention, and encourage the rest to make this exercise periodically and regularly.