

**Vietnam Civil Society Facility (CSF)
Guidelines for Applicant Organisations
June 2010¹**

1. Irish Aid support for Civil Society

Supporting the emerging civil society sector in Vietnam is particularly strategic in the context of the country's recent and on-going economic growth. As the country is likely attaining Middle Income Country status in 2010-2012, the architecture of development assistance will change. High growth rates frequently lead to increased vulnerability, shocks, inequality and marginalisation of weaker social economic groups. New approaches to poverty reduction and social protection may be required to address pockets of entrenched poverty and support to extremely vulnerable groups. It is important that non-state civil society organisations define and fulfil a strong role in ensuring access to support services needed by these groups.

Under the Vietnam Country Strategy Paper (CSP) 2007-2010, a Civil Society Facility was established at embassy level with an envisaged budget of €1 million per year to support innovative development activities of civil society organisations. The activities supported should contribute towards the achievement of the CSP goal "to promote and support the equitable reduction of poverty and vulnerability in Vietnam".

At the country level, Irish Aid will prioritise support for international and national civil society organisations in the context of national anti-poverty strategies. As civil society capacities develop over time, the focus of Irish Aid's engagement may shift to working with civil society to facilitate greater levels of engagement with Government in the development of and the delivery of its poverty reduction strategy. The engagement with civil society will support the achievement of the objectives in the CSP:

- 1. To support the delivery of basic services and social protection to vulnerable people*
- 2. To promote economic and social transition and growth of the private sector*
- 3. To strengthen systems which enhance state accountability to citizens*

2. Objectives of the Civil Society Facility.

The primary purpose of the facility is to contribute to poverty reduction by targeting appropriate support to some of the most vulnerable groups in Vietnam and seeking to include them in the growth process. Supporting civil society groups offers Irish Aid an opportunity to target extremely vulnerable people and communities that may not yet be in a position to fully benefit from the broader processes of growth and development being effected through the programmes of Government etc.

¹ Please note that these guidelines are relevant to organisations applying to the Civil Society Facility in 2010 only. Organisations which have received funding from the CSF in previous years should continue to refer to the relevant prior version of the CSF guidelines.

An indirect benefit of the fund is the contribution it can make to developing Irish Aid's understanding of, and capacity to engage strategically with, civil society in the longer-term in order to inform their policy engagement and advocacy functions. In this regard, VCSF supports CSOs which (i) promote innovative strategies and approaches for alternative livelihoods and (ii) enhance shared accountability to citizens between the government and the civil society. It also funds activities in research, consultation, policy analysis, advocacy, networking activities, and exchange of experience and lesson-learned between CSOs.

- Priority consideration will be given to interventions which inform poverty reduction and social protection policies for vulnerable groups. The Civil Society Facility focuses on the following areas:
- Support to promote a greater acceptance of vulnerable and excluded groups (including people with disability and people and children living with and affected by HIV and AIDS), interventions which contribute to a comprehensive approach, moving from welfare and charity to right-based and community-based approaches.
- Support for communities to participate in development at local and national levels, to gain access to resources for local development and the improvement of essential services;
- Strengthening of the voice of civil society organisations so they can influence policy, both at local and national levels, for the promotion of sustainable development, social inclusion and the improvement of livelihood security.

3. Eligibility

Mass organizations, national and international NGOs that have registered charitable status in Vietnam are eligible to apply. NGOs which are eligible for and have already received fund from the Irish Aid CSF in Ireland are not eligible to also apply to the VCSF. The criteria for eligibility for civil society organisations to apply for the Civil Society Facility 2010 are set out below. **Applications cannot be considered from organisations which do not meet these eligibility criteria.**

Agencies applying to the VCSF will need to:

- submit a concept note which should include all aspects of intervention(s) and will serve as a basis for discussion with Irish Aid;
- complete a pre-qualification form;

The concept note should clarify:

- that the proposed activity is entirely non-political and non-profit;
- adherence to relevant 'good practice' standards and codes of conduct
- how the intervention will inform policy

The pre-qualification form should establish that the applicant:

- the organisation and governance structures necessary to receive, manage, expend and report funding (from an international donor) in a manner that is representative, transparent and efficient;
- a viable funding base to safeguard against an over-dependence on Irish Aid, an organisation must convincingly demonstrate that its own financial sustainability is sound. Support from the VCSF must not exceed 50% of overall income;
- the capacity to implement the planned actions. This can be by way of previous proven experience or the provision of detailed plans for developing and resourcing the capacities needed to undertake new areas of work;

- can demonstrate a record of financial integrity through audited accounts.
- has the capacity to report on the results (outcomes) of its interventions and the impact on the community, and be willing to report in the format required by Irish Aid.
- will acknowledge Irish Aid funding in its annual report, on its website and on other publications associated with any funded intervention;
- can demonstrate active membership of partnership groups or networks; membership of the VUFO-NGO Resource Centre² would be an advantage for INGOs.

Eligible activities and expenditure

- Activities or programmes can be considered if they clearly contribute to the achievement of the Vietnam CSP goal “*to promote and support the equitable reduction of poverty and vulnerability in Vietnam*”.
- In particular activities that are seen to focus on addressing inclusion of extremely vulnerable groups such as children, women, people with disabilities or PLWHA.
- Activities that are anticipated to contribute towards a reduction in gender inequality, environmental protection, living with disability or mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS will be considered a priority for support.
- Activities that contribute towards the development of an organisations capacity in any of the above areas
- Administration or management overheads up to 6% of the project costs may be claimed. Personnel costs can be considered within a project or programme when they can be clearly shown as related to the overall objective.

Non-eligible activities/expenditure:

The following activities will **not** be eligible for funding support under this scheme

- Evangelisation or proselytisation;
- Interventions that are primarily of a welfare or direct service provision nature
- Major infrastructural schemes
- Emergency response (Irish Aid has a separate procedure for humanitarian funding)
- Individuals or family sponsorship
- Individual activities such as travel, training or other expenses not associated with an agency-led programme.
- Study or research fellowships (excluding short-duration training of staff, partners and beneficiaries within the region within a wider intervention);
- Retrospective Expenditure (i.e. costs incurred prior to the date of submission of the application).

4. Capacity Building

Capacity building is an essential aspect of partnership. Capacity building through partnerships can help to provide local civil society with the following:

- access to knowledge and skills;
- resources for organisational development;
- viable technologies;
- opportunities for networking and exchange for lesson learning, and;
- strategies to advocate and engage with government at local and national level.

² A partnership mechanism between INGOs working in Vietnam and the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations.

Applicants are encouraged to set out in their proposal how the interventions and approaches will build longer term capacity for inclusion and poverty reduction in Vietnam.

5. Participation

Participation refers to the right of women and men to participate in their own development and in the decisions that affect their lives. Applicants should ensure that full consultation has taken place with partner communities on the design, implementation, monitoring and appraisal of the intervention.

There should be structures in place at the local level to facilitate decision making and to ensure that the intervention is shaped in a way that meets the needs of the community. Special consideration and representation should be given to vulnerable groups which might otherwise be marginalised.

6. Mainstreaming/Crosscutting Issues

Irish Aid attaches priority to a number of priority themes. The three issues which have been prioritised by Irish Aid for mainstreaming in all interventions in Vietnam are: gender equality, disability and good governance, and environmental sustainability.

Applicants should demonstrate that these three cross-cutting issues lie at the core of any proposal, influencing

- the objectives and strategies of an intervention;
- the type of structures established to support implementation;
- identification and monitoring of results and
- the way budget resources are allocated.

7. Application and Approval Process

The Appraisal Process will have the following steps:

STAGE ONE

1. A three-page concept note in Irish Aid format should be sent by email to irishembassyhanoi@dfanet.ie. Concept notes must be in English.
(The concept note should include all aspects of the intervention(s) and will serve as a basis for discussion with Irish Aid)
and
Submission of pre-qualification application (Form A)
2. Appraisal of the concept note by Irish Aid and external consultants
and
Scrutiny of pre-qualification application for completeness and administrative compliance

STEP TWO

1. Submission of technical proposal (Form B) by invitation. Irish Aid requires one original hard copy, signed by the legal representative of the organisation and three photocopies to be sent to the address below. In addition, one soft copy should be sent to irishembassyhanoi@dfanet.ie. Applications must be in English.
2. Technical appraisal of application(s) by relevant staff and external consultant(s);
3. Consideration of applications by Civil Society Approvals Committee;

4. Notification of funding decisions to applicants including assessment documentation
5. Contracts prepared and issued to successful applicants.

8. Funding

Size and Duration of Grant

An organisation may submit a maximum of **two concept notes** in any one year to the Civil Society Facility. These applications may be for multi-annual support (one, two or three years). The maximum ceiling for each application is €150,000 per year. A budget for the entire project must be submitted with the technical proposal.

Funding Status

In 2010, **no application will be accepted from an organisation which is currently in receipt of Civil Society Facility grant**, i.e. if the organisation has received a payment in 2010, or if it is due to receive a payment in 2010 or 2011 under an existing contract with the Irish Embassy, it is ineligible for the CSF 2010 funding round.

Funding Base

Income from Irish Aid must not exceed 50% of the overall organisational income of the applicant. This will be verified using the organisation's annual accounts for the two most recent financial years, which should be submitted along with the technical proposal.

If the applicant organisation has an annual income of above €100,000, these accounts should be externally and independently audited, and should be accompanied by a management letter with management response. Irish Aid may require an independent financial review of the organisation before granting public funds and/or before renewals of funding.

9. Appraisal and Approval Criteria

Concept Notes will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Clarity of purpose
- Innovation
- Focus on vulnerable and marginalised groups
- Policy linkages and influencing strategy
- Gap analysis
- Partnerships

Technical proposals will be assessed under the following headings:

- the strength of the context analysis and the extent to which mainstreaming issues have been considered
- the poverty and marginalisation focus and targeting of the project
- organisational capacity of the applicant to carry out the proposed programme and to add significant value
- clearly defined expected results
- the participatory nature of the planning and implementation, and systems in place for downward accountability to intended beneficiaries
- the strength of partnerships, with non-governmental and governmental actors
- the extent to which possible difficulties and risks have been anticipated and systems put in place for mitigation where possible
- the systems in place for sustainability

- the systems in place for reporting, monitoring (including financial monitoring) and evaluation
- the systems in place for financial management and control
- value for money and cost-effectiveness of the intervention
- extent of coherence with and contribution to Irish Aid policy objectives, particularly those specified in the call for proposals
- extent of awareness raising and development education related to project activities

10. Acknowledgement of Irish Aid

Successful applicants are required to acknowledge Irish Aid funding in a clear manner in annual reports, websites and on other relevant publications, and to ensure that their Audited Accounts explicitly include reference to the contribution from 'Irish Aid'.

Any attempt to influence the outcome of the decision-making process in relation to grant applications will result in the relevant application(s) being disqualified.

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