Monitoring the Non-State Actors & Local Authorities in Development Thematic Programme Calls for Proposals 2010

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Executive Summary

This study monitors calls for proposals issued by the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities (NSA/LA) Thematic programmes for 87 priority countries under the Annual Action Plan 2010 as well as 41 local European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) calls issued between January and July 2010, which have a strong focus on work with civil society. It continues the work of two previous reports which covered Annual Action Plans (AAP) for 2007-2009.

The study aims to look both at strategic cooperation between the EC and CSOs, and practical issues regarding the administration of calls. A desk study has looked at issues of timing and predictability of calls, award criteria, evaluation and feedback by the EC, and local consultation processes. In addition, this report has been informed by feedback from members of CONCORD in the process of the overall monitoring of CSO experiences of the decentralised management of EU funding and project management for which a separate report has been prepared.

The study finds that only 44 locally managed calls (out of 84 calls forecasted) had been published until July 2010. By contrast, the NSA/LA calls for proposals issued centrally by AIDCO were published in the first quarter of 2010. Funding allocations for the majority of these calls contain a balance of funds from 2009 which is surprising given fierce competition over EC funding. It strongly regrets the 50% reduction in funds available under the global, multi-country allocation which was a popular mechanism for CSOs and usually elicits high numbers of applications.

Whereas all delegations now organise information sessions on each call, there is almost no prior consultation with CSOs whose local experience and expertise could meaningfully contribute to the setting of priorities for annual action plans. Some delegations are nevertheless working to build relationships with CSOs through guidance and feedback on calls. Despite recommendations from previous reports, a number of “open calls” for proposals are still published (requiring time-consuming preparation of all documentation), particularly for EIDHR calls, which often make very small amounts of funds available.

The evaluation process, using the points system, is questioned by some CSOs who find it lacks consistency. CSOs routinely receive the evaluation grid for unsuccessful projects, but locally issued call guidelines do not make it clear that CSOs have a right to request further clarifications, nor are delegations always cooperative when asked. More timely information on grants given and, in the light of competition for grants, information on the minimum and maximum points scored by successful applicants would enable CSOs to make more informed decisions whether to apply for funds. Finally the report finds that the long list of priority countries (justification for the inclusion of some is not clear) makes for the fragmentation of resources and a lessening of the strategic impact of funds available.

1. CONCORD 4th Monitoring Report on Examples of CSO Experiences with EU Delegations (September 2010)
2. CONCORD advocates for the use of restricted calls, i.e. two steps calls with a concept note at the first stage and a full proposal only at the second stage.
3. CONCORD advocates prioritizing the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
Summary of Recommendations

- CSOs are invited to take part in genuine consultation with delegations on the focus and priorities for the Annual Action Plans for the Non-State Actor Thematic programme and other AAPs for calls which focus on civil society.

- The mid-term review of the Strategy for the NSA/LA Thematic Programme give serious consideration to re-prioritizing the list of countries eligible for support, to enable more strategic and concentrated use of funds.

- The allocation for the global, multi-country call is re-instated to the level of two years ago i.e. €35 million to enable CSOs to submit some programmes which will have greater, regional impact.

- Delegations to continue their efforts for increased communication with CSOs, including respecting the right of all applicants to get expanded feedback on failed proposals; with the provision of up to date statistics on the outcomes of calls for proposals and any other information relevant to calls, so that CSOs can make informed decisions and make quality, targeted proposals.

- AIDCO could look into the possibility of a shorter application format for calls for proposals when the size of grant available is less than €200,000.

- CONCORD is very worried about the timing for the 2011 calls for proposal (as they might not be published before the summer of 2011), and thus requests the European Commission to urgently tackle these delays and speed up the process.

1. Context

Prompted by the ever-evolving situation regarding CSOs and EU funding, CONCORD has decided to carry out a third monitoring exercise of calls for proposals issued under the Non-State Actors and Local Authority thematic programme, which continues to be the major source of EU funding for civil society organisations, both in the EU and in partner countries. It will build on and add to two similar exercises for calls issued under the 2007 and 2008/09 Annual Action Plans. This current study will focus on calls for proposals for funds available under the 2009/2010 NSA/LA Annual Action Plans, the majority of which have been published in 2010. In addition, it has been decided to include calls issued locally under the EIDHR funding instrument, as these tend to have a focus on civil society organisations.

The main purpose of this third study is to continue monitoring both the strategic cooperation between the EC and CSOs, in particular:

- the consultation processes and selection of priorities,
- the practical administration of the call process, including clarity and fairness, timing; appraisal and selection processes, and feedback.

This study will also review recommendations from previous reports in the context of the evolving relationship between the EC and civil society organisations. This is of particular interest regarding the on-going Structured Dialogue - Quadrilogue consultations, taking place from March 2010 until May 2011.
In addition to a desk-based survey of NSA calls for proposals in the first seven months of 2010, this report is informed by feedback from CSO respondents to the CONCORD monitoring of experiences with the decentralisation of EU contract management and calls for proposals (which is also the basis of a second CONCORD report). Thus, these two monitoring exercises can be considered in tandem for an overview of current CSO preoccupations concerning their relationships with EC funding mechanisms. Finally, it must be noted that the study does not monitor calls for proposals specifically for Local Authorities.

**NSA/LA calls for proposals:** The 2010 Annual Action Plan for the NSA/LA thematic programme foresees funding for 87 targeted priority countries, all but three of which will publish individual in-country calls. In all, 88 calls should be made to spend the available funds. Four calls were issued centrally by AIDCO in Brussels in the first quarter of 2010: the global, multi-country call, the call for Public Awareness Raising of Development Issues in Europe, the Networking and Coordination call and one centrally managed in-country call covering three countries, which, for various reasons do not manage their own call. The overall funding allocation for this thematic programme for 2010 is €218,263,951 which is approximately €6 million more than 2009 (allocation: €212,311,086). However, the allocation for Non State Actors within this total envelope has only increased slightly by €1.88 million, whereas the allocation for Local Authorities has increased by €4 million. At the time of writing this report, 44 country calls have been issued, as well as the centralised in-country call for China, North Korea and Iran all of which have been monitored. Another 40 calls are still expected to be published.

**EIDHR local calls:** This report also looks at practical aspects of 41 local EIDHR calls, mostly the Country Based Support Schemes (CBSS) which have been published in the first seven months of 2010. According to the EIDHR Annual Action Plan for 2010, €67,200,000 will be made available for CBSS in 92 countries in Western Balkans and Candidate countries, Latin America, Asia, ACP and ENPI countries. Average country allocations are relatively small compared to NSA/LA calls, ranging between a maximum of €1.2 million to a minimum of €300,000. Some of the calls issued in 2010 make available allocations from the 2009 AAP.

### 2. Timing and predictability of calls

According to the AAP for 2010, all calls are expected to be published in the first semester of the year. As with previous years, this indicative timetable has not been adhered to by almost half of the delegations with a funding allocation under the NSA/LA programme. This is disappointing given that the centrally published calls were issued early in the year (despite scepticism from CSOs) using the facility of the ‘Suspensive Clause’. This had raised hopes that the majority of calls would henceforth be issued in the first half of the year, enabling the NSA/LA programme to ‘catch up’ with itself. CBSS schemes are also expected to be launched in the first half of the year according to the AAP 2010 for EIDHR Fiche 3 of which about 50% have been issued during that time.

### 3. Countries covered by the NSA-LA Thematic Programme

The 2007 AAP for NSA/LA included 96 priority countries. The 2008 AAP narrowed this down to 78, which elicited the criticism that several LDCs had been dropped. The 2009 AAP increased to 82, adding Burundi, Lesotho, Namibia and Jordan. The 2010 AAP (87 countries) drops Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Tunisia. It adds the Dominican Republic, Mauritius, Ghana, Niger, Seychelles, Algeria, Egypt and Moldova. Thus some of the countries originally excluded after 2007 have been re-included, such as Burundi, Ghana, Lesotho, Niger and Moldova. Notable absences continue to be Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Malawi and Tanzania, all Least Developed Countries where many CSOs work. Explanations provided by the EC are that support for civil society actions are provided through other funding instruments.

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4. In duly justified cases, tender procedures may be published with a suspensive clause (i) before a financing decision is adopted or (ii) before a financing agreement between the European Commission and the beneficiary country is signed.
4. Funding allocations

The AAPs allocate funding per priority country. The previous set of NSA/LA calls for proposals combined the funding available under 2008 and 2009 AAP. However, many calls were issued before the AAP 2009 had been published, therefore, the Guidelines to the call had to state that total funds available were subject to the approval of the AAP. It now transpires that for quite a number of countries, the total funding allocation for 2008/09 was not spent and thus some calls for proposals this year combine a balance of 2009 funds with those available for 2010. 32 of the calls published so far this year combine funding allocations. Given the competition in most countries to obtain EC funding, it would be interesting to know the explanations in each case for failure to allocate all the funds for 2009 - for example is it due to lack of demand for funds or the lack of quality proposals? Has the narrowing of focus for many calls for proposals prevented some CSOs from applying?

The funding allocation for the global, multi-country initiative for Non-State Actors was drastically reduced by 50% to €18,450,000 from the 2009 amount of €30,467,000. This was made despite the high number of applications received in 2009 (601 according to AIDCO statistics) and despite requests from CONCORD to maintain the higher level. Despite this 50% reduction in funds available, 446 concept notes were submitted to the 2010 call (full proposals still under consideration at the time of writing). We believe that this allocation should be raised once more as this funding facility enables CSOs to have a stronger, regional impact and would surely represent an efficient way of managing funds for the EC.

With such a high number of priority countries and without any significant increase in overall funding allocations, one could observe that the NSA funding has become over-fragmented. The amounts of funding allocated per individual country can be quite small e.g. 31 countries receive less than €1 million and of these, 19 receive €500,000 or less, thus lessening the overall impact in terms of supporting civil society in a particular country.

5. Focus of individual calls for proposals and consultation processes

Within the overall parameters of the NSA/LA Strategy paper, EU Delegations have considerable leeway to choose local priorities and focus. This is the same for the country based EIDHR calls. However, despite the experience and expertise of many civil society organisations in partner countries (both EU registered and local) there continues to be almost no consultation with CSOs about the orientation of Annual Action Plans and setting of thematic priorities. CONCORD has collected 92 testimonies from 31 CSOs for its monitoring work on experiences with decentralised management of EC funds. Only one mentions that any dialogue with civil society organisations took place prior to setting priorities (Rwanda).

There may be increased informal contacts between delegations and CSOs and a general willingness to work towards dialogue (for example: the EC organised regional seminars in both 2008 and 2009). The Morocco delegation website gives notification of a general consultation meeting with CSOs, not specifically linked to the NSA programme.

Every delegation appears to organise an information session once a call for proposals has been launched and notification of these is readily available on Delegation websites and usually within the call guidelines. The Uganda delegation was complimented by one CSO respondent for providing an informative session with realistic tips about what type of proposal was likely to succeed. But information is not consultation. Recognition that CSOs could make a genuine contribution to the design of NSA calls is a long way off.
6. Equitable access

Open and restricted calls: Out of 44 country managed NSA calls issued so far for the AAP 2010, only 12 (27%) have been open calls (all documentation together). The second NSA Call monitoring report found that about 33% of calls for the 2008/09 round of funding were open so there is some improvement. However, monitoring of local EIDHR calls finds a very high proportion of open calls – namely 22 of the 41 calls covered (54%). The reasons given by the EC in the past to justify an open call are that a small number of applicants are expected or that the call for proposals is of a highly technical nature. Does that mean the evaluator goes straight to the full proposal in case of small numbers of applicants expected? The first reason may justify a small number of open calls in the NSA thematic programme, but the imposition of all documentation seems particularly harsh when only small amounts of funds are available, as is frequently the case with the local EIDHR projects, where the average funding allocation for the 41 calls monitored was €655,000. The amount of work required to put together the documentation for an open proposal, whether it is for €200,000 or €1 million is considerable and many smaller organisations must decide against submitting a proposal. A simplified or shortened application for grants below €200,000 should be considered.

Publication of calls: There appear to be no problems with correct publication of calls both on the central AIDCO website and that of the delegations. Some delegation websites include other useful information on corrigenda, FAQs etc. Only few only provide a link to the main tender website. There is also some evidence that certain delegations are showing a desire to help develop the capacities of CSOs locally: Yemen’s delegation website provided a translation of the guidelines in Arabic and the Belarus delegation one in Russian. Project cycle management training has been provided in Khmer by the delegation in Cambodia. The Nigeria delegation has provided a very comprehensive 21 page guide to writing a funding proposal for the CBSS call; however, its advice on objective setting for the logical framework is contrary to the current EC Project Cycle Management Guidelines! The Namibia call provided additional guidance on HIV/AIDS programmes and a Power Point presentation from their information session on the tender website. Some FAQ such as the one for the Malaysia EIDHR call are very informative.

Time limits for application: Calls for proposals for the most part respect the minimum amount of time for submission of proposals, whether concept notes (45 days) or full documentation (90 days); although there was one exception for the EIDHR calls (Malaysia), where the minimum 90 days for an open call was not given.

Documentation: For the most part, the quality of the call documentation is correct; although we note that there were two calls (Djibouti CBSS and Uganda NSA) that issued Annex A (application format) in the template form with highlights in yellow that should be customized to the call. This was also a problem in a recent IPA call for the Socio-Economic Partnership Programme. This is not a major problem as the CSO applicant can add in the information, but it can cause confusion and stress for applicants who are already only too aware that the slightest administrative error can lead to rejection. Several other EIDHR calls had confusing or poor documentation: the Malaysia and Moldova calls only published the guidelines and one assumes that applicants had to get the other documents direct from the annexes to the Practical Guide. The Cameroon call attached the application format to the end of the guidelines.

Formats: All but one call for proposals uses the proposal formats that ask for information on Relevance, Description of the Action and Sustainability at Concept Note stage. This information must subsequently be repeated at full proposal stage. One EIDHR call for the DRC uses the formats currently being piloted by the Investing in People calls which weights the information in the concept note to more questions on Relevance so that this section does not need to be repeated at second stage. Given that this newer style of application format neatly gets round the real risk that a proposal can be rejected on Relevance at the second stage despite having scored highly at the concept note level, it is curious that this has not been taken up more widely. If one CBSS call can use it, then there appears to be no reason why others could not take it up.

Lack of clarity: There are a number of points that could be made clear in the guidelines for proposals, for example whether scanned signatures are allowed for partners. Now that applications are being made solely by email, further
guidance might be useful on how to deal with signatures. A point that was raised in the second CONCORD monitoring report is also worth mentioning here, regarding additional requirements for reporting and documentation imposed post-contract by Delegations: if increased contractual obligations are required beyond those in Annex II of the Standard Contract we would recommend that call guidelines state these, so that CSOs can budget accordingly for items such as inception reports.

**Eligibility criteria:** These are clearly expressed and all calls are available to CSOs from both EU Member States and the local country (and sometimes others such as from pre-accession countries or the EAA). EIDHR calls may occasionally have some restrictions given the political climate of the country e.g. that trade unions and political parties cannot apply (Kazakhstan). One CSO respondent to the monitoring exercise has raised a problem encountered in Bolivia where CSOs must be registered with the Vice Ministry for Public and External Funding, a process which takes two years and thus can rule out those who have not done this. This registration is not necessary to work in Bolivia.

7. **Award criteria**

As stated in the second Calls Monitoring report, the flexibility on maximum/minimum amounts for grants, duration of actions, percentages allowable is used to the full, and every call for proposals is different. Decisions on the size of grant are usually proportionate to the total funding allocation. Thus, we see local EIDHR calls with no upper limit above €300,000 and lower limits often around €30-50,000. This is not surprising when 9 calls can each only make €300,000 available. This is in reality likely to go to only 2-3 grants at the most. Five out of the 44 country NSA calls make €1 million available (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Lao PDR, Sierra Leone) as well as the Public Awareness Raising and Centralised in-country calls for China and Iran.

Restrictions are frequently placed on the number of proposals by the applicant and involvement of partners. One CSO respondent felt that the rule prohibiting partners from being involved in more than one funding ‘Lot’ for the Lao PDR NSA call discriminated against local CSOs with sufficient capacity.

8. **Evaluation and selection process**

With some exceptions, EU delegations appear to be adhering to the timetables given to respond to applicants on the success or otherwise of their proposals.

The main areas of real concern for CSOs are those concerning the quality, consistency and transparency of the evaluation process. The evaluation grid and points system was introduced to provide some reassurance of equality of criteria for assessment. However, occasionally, it seems that those responsible for appraisal do so without real knowledge of the context of the projects or applicants. Several CSO respondents have reported cases of concept notes that have been resubmitted and received markedly different scoring. Another example was given of a concept note that was re-submitted, taking into account advice received from the delegation. This was then scored lower than before. Several CSOs have expressed their frustration that they work hard to submit the best quality document possible and find that this scores lower than a document of poorer quality. The fact that the points scored by those applications that are funded are not revealed, adds to the feeling of unease about the fairness of the process.

We also note the variations in the numbers of concept notes being taken forward to full proposal. Guidelines suggest that concept notes to twice the amount of funds available (and depending on quality) will be accepted. However, looking at the statistics made available on a number of NSA and EIDHR calls for 2009, we note that for the last Rwanda NSA call 81 out of 100 concept notes were accepted, although ultimately only 12 full applications were funded. A similar situation arose in Peru where almost 60% of concept notes were accepted. This meant that a great many CSOs were asked to write a full document, logframe and budget with very little chance of succeeding.
This is also the case with the Public Awareness Raising call for 2009 where over 50% of Concept Notes were accepted. This has reduced to one third this year, indeed.

For 52 NSA/LA calls issued in 2009 for which we have results, we find that there is an average success rate of 14.1%. This includes both restricted and open calls and includes Guinea Bissau which had a 100% success rate, approving all 6 of the proposals submitted. The tables below provide information on a selection of countries with highest and lowest chances of succeeding with NSA/LA and EIDHR local calls. 4

### NSA/LA calls for proposals in 2009:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Allocation in €</th>
<th># CN received</th>
<th># CN approved</th>
<th># Full proposals submitted</th>
<th># Contracts</th>
<th>% success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guinea Bissau</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>8,000,000</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>3,000,000</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### EIDHR calls for proposals in 2009:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Allocation in €</th>
<th># CN received</th>
<th># CN approved</th>
<th># Full proposals submitted</th>
<th># Contracts</th>
<th>% success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia CBSS</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>590,000</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 34 locally issued EIDHR calls in 2009, the average success rate is 19.4%, which is a little more positive.

Such is the competition for EC funds, particularly on calls such as the global, multi-country and certain in-country calls, that proposals are being rejected with scorings in the high eighties and it may appear to some applicants that it is almost impossible to get a project funded. The second Call Monitoring report requested that information be made available, regarding the lowest and highest scores obtained by those projects that got grants for each call for proposals, for example on the tender website under the call documents. This would give CSOs an idea of the competition and the standards required. However, we received no response to this request, and would like to reiterate it.

We do acknowledge that in the last year more information has been provided to CONCORD and eventually posted on the AIDCO website about numbers of applications to calls for proposals. We would still like to request that the list of grants including the name of the grant beneficiary, name of project and amount of grant be made available more quickly and consistently for each country specific call for proposal. At present, provision of this data is very patchy. Such information would, in certain circumstances, allow CSOs more informed decision-making on whether to try for a grant or not.

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4. Data taken from EC provided document Local Calls for Proposals (NSA/EIDHR) – Application statistics – calls with first submission deadline 2009 Updated 19/04/2010
Feedback: Testimonies from the monitoring exercise indicate that many CSOs are requesting further information from the EC on the reasons for rejection of their proposals, in an attempt to learn from mistakes and submit better projects in the future. We note that there is a difference in the information on the right to ask for this information in call guidelines. All guidelines offer the applicant the information that they will be informed in writing of the decision and in cases of rejection the reasons for the negative decision. This in practice, almost always means a copy of the evaluation grid and nothing else. However, Guidelines issued for centrally managed NSA calls state under Section 2.5: ‘Applicants who were unsuccessful at the technical evaluation stage of the procedure (Step 2 or Step 4) wishing to obtain further information should send their request, indicating the reference of the call and the reference allocated to the proposal to European Commission.....’. A check of a number of delegation issued calls finds that these guidelines say: ‘Applicants believing they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may file a complaint’. Thus not all applicants get the message that they can request further information. The more positive offer to prove more detailed reasons should be made clearly available to everyone. Many of those who do take advantage of this offer find that they get a good response, even if it takes some prompting of the delegation. Peru, Rwanda and Zimbabwe delegations were all mentioned as having provided good written explanations. The Sierra Leone Delegation, having first ignored a request, then held a face to face meeting with the CSO to explain reasons. If limitations of time meant that too many face to face meetings would be a problem we suggest that a delegation could instead hold a meeting for CSOs where they could enlarge on the reasons for rejecting proposals without having to name names. This would have the advantage of informing everyone about the range of problems/reasons for rejection. Making the effort to do this would ultimately be to the delegation’s advantage, and clear reasons would provide CSOs with the tools to make more informed choices about whether to apply in future. Unfortunately some delegations have simply ignored written requests.

9. PADOR

A number of respondents to the monitoring exercise brought up issues regarding PADOR, although we would like to state that the move to make registration on PADOR for partners optional at concept note stage is highly welcome. This change has worked its way into most NSA and EIDHR calls for proposals by the second quarter of the year, but not all by any means and applicants must take care to check the guidelines. Hopefully this will be universal in the near future. The PADOR helpdesk is generally seen as helpful although its advice can seem somewhat ‘standardized’. There is also concern that the User’s Guide is couched in language that is overly legalistic and aimed more at CSOs rather than Local Authorities.

10. Review of recommendations from second NSA/LA Call Monitoring Report

- **Calls for Proposals (CFP) for 2010 to be issued in a timely fashion before the first quarter of 2010**: The centralised calls were indeed issued rapidly, however as pointed out above, end of July 2010 40 calls were still expected.

- **All CFP to use the two stage application procedure**: The percentage of open calls has dropped but 27% of country calls in 2010 have still used the one stage procedure.

- **Increased priority given to the quality of the process of appraisal and approval of CFP including feedback**: We cannot state with any certainty that there has been improvement in the quality of the appraisal process in terms of uniformity in applying the marking system. However, CSOs are for the most part notified of results, according to the timetable given by the delegation and are provided automatically with a copy of the scoring grid in the case of failed projects. Since the guidelines of locally issued calls do not make it clear that CSOs can request further
explanations of reasons for rejection, it is likely that not enough CSOs are being provided with this information. We note that some delegations are helpful in providing feedback, while others do not acknowledge requests.

- **Statistics on the outcomes of local calls are made available by delegations and published on the central tender website:** Monitoring of delegation websites shows that they do not regularly provide this information nor is it available on the central tender website. However, regularly updated information on centrally issued calls is now available on the AIDCO website.

- **The list of priority countries to be re-examined to include a greater proportion of LDCs:** Eight countries have been added to the list of priority countries but only one of these (Niger) is an LDC.

- **CSOs at country level are invited to participate in genuine consultation prior to the setting of priorities for calls for proposal:** This is still not the case, almost without exception.

### 11. Conclusions

Consultation with CSOs in the process of determining both, the list of priority countries and of individual country focus would, we believe, put CSOs knowledge and experience of the sector to good use and increase the strategic impact of funds destined for civil society support.

There is enormous competition for EU funds among CSOs. The high competition between CSOs for EU funds is indicative of considerable needs in developing countries, also to complement efforts in the context of bilateral development assistance. Apart from real consultation, an increase in overall funding for CSOs is required. In addition, the long list of priority countries (not all LDCs) risks fragmenting the funds, decreasing impact on the overall objectives of the NSA/LA programme (addressing poverty reduction and sustainable development) and increasing the administration and management workload.

The practical administration of calls for proposals for the NSA/LA Thematic Programme and for locally issued EIDHR, with some minor problems, is straightforward and CSOs are able to access information on funding opportunities and to develop project proposals. However, CSOs need more up to date and targeted information on outcomes of calls for proposals to be able to make informed decisions about whether to apply and how to use their limited resources to best effect.

CONCORD is very worried about the foreseen timing of the 2011 calls for proposals. Indeed, as we speak, the Strategy Papers 2011-2013 for the NSA/LA Thematic Programme is not yet finalized and the 2011 Annual Action Plan cannot move forward as long as the strategy is not approved. The delay in the strategy suggests that the official approval of the 2011 Annual Action Plan will not come before the summer of 2011, and thus implies that calls for proposal in 2011 will not start before this date. This can also be a sign that the Annual Action Plans of the other thematic Programmes will be delayed as well.
12. Recommendations

CONCORD recommends that:

- CSOs are invited to take part in **genuine consultation with delegations on the focus and priorities** for the Annual Action Plans for the Non-State Actor Thematic programme and other AAPs for calls which focus on civil society.
- The mid-term review of the Strategy for the NSA/LA Thematic Programme give serious consideration to **re-prioritizing the list of countries eligible for support**, to enable more strategic and concentrated use of funds.
- The allocation for the global, multi-country call is **re-instated to the level of two years ago** i.e. €35 million to enable CSOs to submit some programmes which will have greater, regional impact.
- **Delegations to continue their efforts for increased communication with CSOs**, including respecting the right of all applicants to get expanded feedback on failed proposals; with the provision of up to date statistics on the outcomes of calls for proposals and any other information relevant to calls, so that CSOs can make informed decisions and make quality, targeted proposals.
- AIDCO could look into the possibility of a **shorter application** format for calls for proposals when the **size of grant available is less than €200,000**.
- CONCORD is very worried about the timing for the 2011 calls for proposal (as they might not be published before the summer of 2011), and thus requests the European Commission to urgently tackle these delays and speed up the process.

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