



POLICY BRIEF

SUPPORTING THE RIGHT OF INITIATIVE OF CSOS

Coordination SUD, Bringing Together and Acting for Global Solidarity

Coordination SUD is the national platform of French NGOs working on international solidarity.

Founded in 1994, Coordination SUD currently brings together 184 NGOs, either direct members or via six networks of associations (CLONG-Volontariat, Cnajep, Coordination Humanitaire et Développement, CRID, FORIM, Groupe initiatives). Together with and to the benefit of the most disadvantaged populations, these organisations carry out emergency humanitarian and development aid, environmental protection, defence of human rights, advocacy work, and global citizenship education on international solidarity.

In support to the French associative sector working on international solidarity, Coordination SUD and its member organisations carry out four key activities: promoting and defending an enabling environment for Civil Society Organisations' (CSO) action and expression; supporting and strengthening these CSOs; defining and advocating joint positions on international solidarity policies towards public and private institutions in France, Europe and across the world; and finally, monitoring and analysing the sector of international solidarity, its developments and challenges.

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FORWARD

In this document, we propose a definition of the right of initiative of civil society organizations (CSOs) under French law. Coordination SUD and French CSOs are promoting this right in France, in Europe, and in partner countries. We also draw attention to the crucial nature of the right of initiative and argue in favor of increased financing, in particular by French public authorities (Ministry for European and Foreign Affairs – MEAE, Agence Française de Développement – AFD, and local authorities) and by European and international institutions.

Our definition of the right of initiative seeks to reinforce its acknowledgment in France’s Programming Act on inclusive development and combating global inequalities (hereinafter “Act on Inclusive Development (LOP-DSLIM)”), enacted in August 2021.¹ Our rationale for its financing is based on the recommendation made by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2018 to France to “increase the proportion of bilateral aid it channels to or through local and international NGOs”².

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1. Loi n° 2021-1031 du 4 août 2021 de programmation relative au développement solidaire et à la lutte contre les inégalités mondiales, Journal officiel République française, Paris, August 5, 2021

2. OECD (2018), [The DAC’s main findings and recommendations \(Extract from OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews](#), (see Recommendation 9).

INTRODUCTION

The right of initiative³ is a form of commitment that seeks to recognize the freedom of action of CSOs. It is a lever for promoting alternatives that have not yet been explored or that do not fall within predefined frameworks.

The partnership between civil society and the public authorities goes beyond mere “provision of services.”

CSOs, like all associations, are spaces for innovation, experimentation, and democratic life that need support for their activities, in various forms.

The French Government needs to rely on effective implementation of the right of initiative (which it recognizes in its Act on Inclusive Development (LOP-DSLIM)), in order to stimulate innovation and creativity.

This makes for a “win-win” partnership.⁴

At a time when NGOs are increasingly considered as operators or service providers but are often forced to work under regulatory frameworks that are not adapted to them, Coordination SUD wishes to highlight the crucial role of their right of initiative.

3. Reminder of the overall regulatory framework of the right of initiative:

At the EU level, the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) stemming from the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 gives the right of political initiative to a group of at least 1 million EU citizens from at least seven Member States. If these conditions are met, the European Commission may (but is not obliged to) then draft EU legislative proposals in the areas falling within its remit. *Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union*, article 11, paragraph 4, *Official Journal of the European Union*, Brussels, June 7, 2021. In France, the constitution provides for a so-called Shared Initiative Referendum to be held if called for by one fifth of the members of Parliament and supported by one tenth of voters (i.e., more than 4.5 million people). *Loi organique n° 2013-1114 du 6 décembre 2013 portant application de l’article 11 de la Constitution*, *Journal officiel République française*, Paris, Dec. 7, 2013.

4. “Win-win” in the sense that the Coordination SUD study [Modèles socio-économiques des ASI Françaises](#) (Paris, April 2021), shows that among the top 10 countries where international solidarity CSOs under French law operate, 7 are among the 19 countries defined as “priority countries” by the French Inter-ministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development (CICID) in February 2018 and confirmed by the Act on Inclusive Development (LOP-DSLIM). It should be noted that of the top 19 countries to receive French ODA, only one country is in the list of 19 priority countries: Senegal. Thus, by relying more heavily on CSOs, France would increase the effectiveness of its assistance, as set out in the priorities established in its Act on Inclusive Development (LOP-DSLIM).

DEFINITION

The right of initiative of CSOs has its roots in the principles of freedom of association, as laid down by the French Associations Act of 1901, which gives citizens the possibility to join together to carry out their own actions in the general interest: “An association is an agreement by which two or more people pool, on an ongoing basis, their knowledge or their activities with a goal other than that of sharing profits...”.⁵ French law purposely set a loosely binding framework. It should be recalled that associations can be formed freely, without authorization and without prior declaration. It is important today to recall the historic foundations on which the forms of actions and aspirations of non-profit CSOs are based.

At the international level, the notion of the right of initiative of CSOs emerged in the 1990s. However, a lack of effectiveness and efficiency in the traditional forms of assistance was observed, and the assistance system was recognized to be partially responsible for the failure of development policies. This led to the establishment of new principles of action at international forums (Paris Declaration – 2005, Accra High Level Forum – 2008⁶, Istanbul Principles - 2015⁷), which in turn let CSOs play a part and take on a greater role. Donors and recipient governments then agreed to work with CSOs to promote an enabling environment in the beneficiary countries, including through models of financial support to CSOs that strengthen their contributions to development.⁸

Very recently in France, the August 2021 Act on Inclusive Development (LOP-DSLIM) was inspired by these same principles when, in its content, it acknowledged the right of initiative of CSOs.

Act No.2021-1031 of August 4, 2021, on programming for inclusive development and combating global inequalities, article 2, paragraph VIII

The State recognizes the role, expertise and added value of civil society organizations, in both the Global North and South, and those of all non-State actors involved in the policy of inclusive development and combating global inequalities. For civil society organizations (French or those established in partner countries) falling under categories defined by decree, it shall implement a system dedicated to development projects that they present to the State, within the framework of their right of initiative, with a view to the award of a grant if needed. The funded projects shall contribute to achieving the objectives of the inclusive development policy and the fight against global inequalities.

5. Loi du 1^{er} juillet 1901 relative au contrat d'association, art. 1, Journal officiel de la République française, Paris, July 2, 1901.

6. OECD, (2005), Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and (2008) Accra Agenda for Action, OECD Publishing, Paris.

7. Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness (2010), Istanbul Principles on CSO Development Effectiveness, September.

8. Organisation Development Support (2022), *Droit d'initiative : une étude comparative sur le droit d'initiative des OSC dans 6 pays européens*, Paris, Coordination SUD (2022), forthcoming.

Coordination SUD observes that non-profit international solidarity CSOs fulfill their role in this process of democratic and effective citizen participation in initiative-taking. These CSOs also have the capacity to unite citizens of all nationalities and to communicate the needs of CSOs and of people throughout the world.

The right of initiative, as upheld by Coordination SUD and its NGO members, stems directly from their nature as international solidarity organizations, as opposed to that of State operators or service providers. Thus, the right of initiative of a CSO—within the framework of its statutes, its non-profit project, and/or its analyses—can cover an action, a project, a program, or a strategy emanating from the will of civil society, taking into account various stakeholders, first and foremost of whom the beneficiaries.

The actions concerned can be of any scope (including microprojects, multi-country programs, or even the NGO's global strategy) and of any nature (development, humanitarian action, organization of the non-profit environment, education in citizenship and international solidarity, advocacy, research, and others). They can be carried out in France or in partner countries and can be financed from private and/or public funds.

CSO right of initiative can also sometimes concern actions that are subject to calls for proposals or discussed by mutual agreement between CSOs and public authorities without an overly binding framework. This is especially the case if the identification of needs and the action to be taken has been carried out by the CSO and, if the need arises, its partners. Such cases must be judged on a case-by-case basis.

More generally, and in contrast, the right of initiative does not include actions, projects, or programs carried out by CSOs on the sole initiative of public authorities via calls for tender or services.



Porto Alegre, Brazil,
World Social Forum,
2012.

1

HOW IS RIGHT OF INITIATIVE AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Developing support for CSO initiative provides benefits:

- REINFORCED EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY
- NO ONE LEFT BEHIND
- STRONGER SOCIAL LINK
- CIVIL SOCIETIES ARE STRENGTHENED AND HEARD
- INNOVATION IS ENCOURAGED

REINFORCED EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

Supporting actions designed and desired by the target population and by their CSO partners via a local participatory approach is a guarantee that relevant and good-quality projects have been identified. In this way, people can express their concrete needs and their desire to be involved.

When these CSOs representing citizens are involved in implementing the action, it is a positive driver for effectiveness and therefore for achieving results.

With the right of initiative, actions that are adapted to the needs and interests of their stakeholders can be implemented, thereby ensuring their ownership and promoting their sustainability.

CSO initiatives are implemented according to principles of responsible management (external regulations, internal rules, charters). The resources used are commensurate with the capacities of target areas; a sustainable management approach is applied, thereby furthering their efficiency. Another characteristic of the initiatives is transparent communication to their stakeholders: reporting on actions, evaluation, job and resources account, and audit of financial statements.

The right of initiative helps strengthen the effectiveness of French official development assistance thanks to its methodical and innovative approaches, as highlighted during the peer review conducted by the OECD in 2018.⁹

⁹ OECD (2018), *OECD Development cooperation Peer Reviews: France 2018*, Paris, OECD, Sept. 20.

Change-oriented approach

Since 2014, F3E has been developing what is known as “change-oriented approaches” (COAs). They are based on existing methods, including Theory of Change and Outcome Mapping. They are an innovative way of designing, implementing and evaluating international solidarity actions, by focusing on their qualitative dimensions.

COAs are based on the premise that social, sustainable, and structural changes are made by stakeholders in a given area (individuals or groups of people concerned by a particular issue). Through them, the representations of the stakeholders and the way in which they come to own their tools collectively are at the heart of this approach. COAs thus go beyond the results of the action and facilitate dialogue on the in-depth changes to which collective action contributes in a given context.

These approaches have been gradually tested, enriched, and disseminated by the F3E network as part of several methodological experiments. Today, some 40 organizations have fully integrated these approaches into the management of their actions, sometimes going so far as to draw inspiration from them in the very definition of their purpose. By integrating a strategic dimension into traditional management methods, COAs promote the empowerment of stakeholders over their own management tools and strengthen multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Source: F3E (2022)

The change-oriented approach is co-financed by AFD's CSO Initiatives mechanism.

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

When CSOs develop an initiative, they take the time to carry out, along with the local stakeholders, identification work on needs, so that their action benefits the most vulnerable populations. These latter may be young girls, children, minorities, or victims of discrimination and inequality, who are not beneficiaries of State or international aid. They may also be people who are, or who are at risk of being, left behind with regard to the humanitarian or development action.

Greater support for the right of initiative by French public funds will thus also make it possible to comply more fully with France's international commitments (to the SDGs and aid effectiveness, etc.) by rounding out actions carried out by States and other international development cooperation players.

Mobilization for the survival of indigenous peoples in the Amazon - CCFD-Terre Solidaire

CCFD-Terre Solidaire and its partners are joining forces to avoid a humanitarian and environmental tragedy in the Amazon. In the various countries of Panamazonia, civil society (indigenous and peasant movements, NGOs, the Catholic Church, etc.) is a voice for the calls and outcries of the people, in a context that threatens the very survival of indigenous communities. For example, in Colombia, indigenous peoples and peasants have little or no access to health care or to drinking water. In Peru, several Amazonian peoples, including many native communities, are exposed to hunger and are unprotected as they migrate to cities in search of work. Faced with these multiple threats, CCFD-Terre Solidaire partner organizations have undertaken to support indigenous and local organizations in their project to empower themselves politically and socially and to

protect their rights and the environment. These initiatives take on various forms depending on the context of each country:

- Support for the formalization of indigenous autonomous governments in Peru (CAAAP - Amazonian Centre for Anthropology and Practical Application, Peru Solidarity Forum, etc.) and in Bolivia (CIPCA - Center for Research and Peasant Promotion)
- Speaking out against the impacts of carbon offset mechanisms in Colombia (CENSAT Agua Viva) and in Brazil (CIMI - Indigenous Missionary Council, CPT-Acre - Pastoral Commission of the Earth).

Within a context that remains critical, the action of CCFD-Terre Solidaire and its partners now makes it possible for indigenous peoples to be heard and to acquire new rights.

Source: CCFD-Terre Solidaire (2022)

ECPAT France, member of the international ECPAT network, to end the sexual exploitation of children

ECPAT France is a member the world's leading network of children's rights organizations working to put an end to the sexual exploitation of children in all its forms, whether through trafficking, prostitution, child marriage, travel and tourism or online. Backed by its network of 122 member CSOs in 104 countries, ECPAT advocates for change by placing the crime of sexual exploitation of children on the global, regional, and national agendas. The network contributes to improving legal frameworks and provides recommendations to help inform decisions and guide actions to protect children from sexual exploitation.

In addition to its direct actions with beneficiaries in the field in France, Europe, internationally, as well as online, ECPAT strives to give a voice to child victims and/or survivors and conducts research and analysis to better understand the mechanisms of sexual exploitation of children and its variety of forms. ECPAT France develops training and awareness-raising tools targeting children; citizens; and various professional groups working in child protection, justice, education, and the travel and tourism sector. The aim is to secure an environment that guarantees self-protection and protection of children against sexual exploitation.

Source: ECPAT France (2022)

ECPAT France's activities are co-financed by AFD's CSO Initiatives mechanism.

STRONGER SOCIAL LINK

Strengthening social links with and in local territories.

The right of initiative is participatory in nature and encourages synergies among stakeholders. For each project, CSOs mobilize the authorities and the CSOs of the places involved, professional bodies, and the various composite populations, so that they can reflect and take action together. They also mobilize other sectors: the research world and enterprises (social and solidarity-based as well as commercial) using a participatory and co-constructive approach. Strengthening social links this way helps to build truly inclusive, democratic, and egalitarian societies and to make sure no one is left behind.

Strengthening cooperation between countries and regions, and contributing to peace

Through CSO initiatives, a multitude of stakeholders work together and get to know, understand, and appreciate one another. In doing so, they help strengthen tolerance and mutual respect, and they give impetus to joint and peaceful changes between our societies.

This is because the initiatives proposed by non-profit international solidarity CSOs systematically involve citizens as employees, volunteers, donors, or supporters of those CSOs and/or their initiatives.

For example, according to various sources, the international solidarity sector includes more than 7,000 people employed according to French labor law, 35,000 people employed

in partner countries¹⁰, 2,500 international service volunteers, 260,000 volunteers¹¹, and 800,000 donors in France¹² are involved in these actions. They all join forces and interact with thousands of citizens in the partner countries, whether members of partner organizations or just inhabitants of the target areas of the actions.

Because these initiatives mobilize French citizens and the countries concerned, they promote mutual understanding, cultural exchanges, and cooperation.

These exchanges are powerful levers of innovation both in France and in the target locations. The French citizens working on these initiatives discover practices that are sometimes very different from those that exist in France and that are often a source of inspiration. In this regard as well, reciprocity is often a proven outcome.

Jai Jagat - Ekta Parishad non-violent Indian movement

The Jai Jagat (“Victory for the planet”) march started in India, initiated by the Ekta Parishad peace movement. Its aim is to reduce poverty, reduce social exclusion, respect ecological equilibriums, and prevent wars and violence. Building on the success of its non-violent actions in India, the movement has sought to unite the world’s poorest people and is organizing a gathering of marchers from around the world. Several French NGOs have joined in, including many NGO members of the CRID: CCFD-Terre Solidaire, Secours Catholique - Caritas France, Fédération Artisans du Monde, SOL Alternatives Agroécologiques et Solidaires. This movement’s action has helped create a synergy of small peasant units in India to demand compliance with the SDGs that goes beyond declarations of good intentions.

Source: Crid (2022).

The CRID benefited from co-financing from AFD's CSO Initiatives mechanism to promote this movement.



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Farmers' protest against the government's agricultural reform laws. Beawar, Rajasthan, India, February 6, 2021.

10. Coordination SUD (2022), *Étude sur les modèles socio-économiques*, Paris, Coordination SUD, April 2022.

11. According to data collected by Coordination SUD from its NGO members as of February 24, 2022.

12. *Representing €453 million collected, for an average donation amount of €550*. See: Bazin C., Duros M., Malet J. (2021), *La générosité des Français face au covid*, Paris, Recherches & Solidarités, p. 8, p. 25.

The Concerted Multi-Stakeholder Programs (CMSPs), coordinated by French CSOs in close collaboration with CSOs in the countries concerned, are designed as a process of capacity building and dialogue between the CSOs of the partner countries and France on the one hand and the public authorities of the partner countries and France on the other. These programs bring together local authorities in various ways (e.g., participation in project selection or steering committees), as well as players from the private sector. While CMSPs can be adapted to very different contexts, they have some common characteristics:

- Each program brings together on average 100 to 150 NGO members from the country concerned, plus French organizations.
- Cascade funding helps to create networks throughout the region and to include a large number of stakeholders. By spreading out locally, the program can have more impact.
- Multi-stakeholder consultation is at the heart of the instrument's governance.
- They strengthen CSOs and help give rise to leaders.

Between 2002 and 2019 CMSPs directly reached more than 500,000 beneficiaries and strengthened the constructive role of CSOs in public policies. More than 700 CSOs have been mobilized: thanks to their networking, their legitimacy is growing, and the role of civil society is being strengthened both locally and transnationally. An example of their impact can be seen by the involvement of the Tunisian CMSP "Soyons actifs/actives" as part of advocacy and influence work on public policies in Tunisia, carried out by local and French CSOs. In this way, the CMSP contributed to the promulgation of the new law of June 17, 2020, on social and solidarity-based enterprises in Tunisia.

Source : Charlotte Boisteau, Haingo Randrianarivony, Bamadi Sanokho - RMDA, [Bilan et capitalisation des programmes concertés pluri-acteurs \(PCPA\) 2002-2019](#), Paris, October 2020.

CMSPs are a financing instrument of AFD's CSO Initiatives mechanism.

CIVIL SOCIETIES ARE STRENGTHENED AND HEARD

Helping to make civil society stronger

Supporting the right of initiative means supporting the non-profit projects designed by the CSOs themselves, and therefore strengthening their mission. The right of initiative upholds the independence and autonomy of civil society organizations. Combined with solid and predictable financing, it helps in the structuring of CSOs (for community-based projects and for national and international local networks). Long-term support for the right of initiative helps cushion the effects of disruptions in cooperation strategies that come about from political changes, thereby ensuring the actions' continuity.

Contributing to citizen mobilization

Supporting the right of initiative also means supporting CSOs under French law in their ability to raise awareness and mobilize thousands of citizens to support international solidarity through issues that are both local and global. It involves giving keys to citizens, especially the youngest, to participate in the public debate on societal issues and to work, in an informed and participative way, for a fairer and more inclusive world. Education for Citizenship and International Solidarity (ECIS) plays a key role in this. For example, ECIS organizations organize the *Festival des Solidarités* (Solidarity Festival) each year in France, which reaches more than 300,000 people through 4,400 events involving associations, schools, local communities, businesses, and others.

Together with citizens, CSOs also call on States to improve governance, transparency, and accountability. They play a role as watchdogs and whistleblowers, protecting against abuses and limiting risks (e.g., misappropriations, active and passive corruption, human rights violations, and negative environmental impacts, etc.).

INNOVATION IS ENCOURAGED

Encouraging an undeniable source of innovation and solutions to achieve the SDGs

The right of initiative allows for creation, co-construction, and the search for original solutions by supporting a variety of stakeholders and of actions in many fields: human rights, health, education and vocational training, popular education, social and solidarity economy, humanitarian action, agriculture and sustainable food, water and sanitation, etc. Every day, the right of initiative demonstrates its ability to find alternative and inspiring solutions for the policies and practices of public authorities. This is the case for

EcoDev - Geres program

In 2015, the NGO Geres launched the “EcoDev” multi-country program via four pilot projects that call on local entrepreneurs to disseminate sustainable energy solutions. EcoDev has been working in five countries since 2018, on structuring value chains so that they reach a first stage of replication. Its final phase from 2021 is building on the combined achievements, to start upscaling distribution of electricity to rural VSEs in Mali,

energy-efficient gas ovens for households and professional groups in Morocco, energy-efficient housing in Mongolia and Tajikistan, and sustainable energy solutions for rural households in Myanmar.

In this program, Geres is working both to help people access decent living conditions and to avoid that consumption levels exceed ecological limits and fuel climate change.

Source: AFD, [ECODEV - Accès à l'énergie et développement économique](#), Paris, February 2022.

The EcoDev program was co-financed by the AFD CSO Initiatives mechanism.

activities to support family or peasant agriculture initiated by CSOs, which have subsequently influenced State programs for sustainable agriculture.

Of note is the fact that the French Law No. 2014-856 of July 31, 2014, on the social and solidarity economy,¹³ as well as Circular No. 5811-SG of September 29, 2015, on new relations between public authorities and non-profit organizations,¹⁴ provide that: “Non-profit organizations participate alongside public authorities in the implementation of actions working in the general interest, within a privileged partnership approach that must be encouraged, because it is likely to promote non-profit initiative and innovation.”

2

FINANCING THE RIGHT OF INITIATIVE: AN UNFULFILLED AMBITION

Financing from French public authorities to CSOs has increased in recent years (via humanitarian funds, calls for CSO involvement in French bilateral cooperation in vulnerable contexts, etc.). This is a positive change!

However, even if the 2021 Act on Inclusive Development (LOP-DSLIM) recognizes the right of initiative of CSOs, its application in French ODA is far from fully effective. This is especially true given that only 5% of French ODA was channeled through NGOs according to 2020 figures from the OECD¹⁵ (6.64% according to figures from the MEAE¹⁶, also from 2020¹⁷). Some examples are below.

- In response to the Covid-related health crisis, NGOs proposed initiatives to the French public authorities for 449 projects for a cost of €270 million. However, a budget of €20 million was released, allowing financing for only around 30 of those projects.
- Only €133 million of co-financing was granted by AFD's CSO Initiative Mechanism, out of a total of nearly €200 million requested in 2021.
- Calls for projects with often very precise and restricted frameworks focused on priority countries are now frequently implemented, thereby increasingly limiting the initiatives of CSOs or forcing them to abandon some.
- As Forus International points out, insufficient budgets and unsuitable modes of funding also act as limits to financing local organizations.

13. Law No. 2014-856 of July 31, 2014, on the social and solidarity economy, *Journal officiel République française*, Paris, August 1, 2014.

14. Circular No. 5811-SG of September 29, 2015, on new relations between public authorities and associations, *Légifrance* website, Paris, September 30, 2015.

15. OECD (2022), *Aid for Civil Society Organisations*, OECD Publishing, Paris, June.

16. MEAE (2021), *Evolution de la part de l'APD transitant par les OSC au regard de l'APD bilatérale totale depuis 2015*.

17. MEAE 2021 figures: 7.25% (OECD 2021 figures not available).

“ We see that financing NGOs’ right of initiative is crucial to support civil society projects at their source. It is important to highlight the initiative of local NGOs and small organizations that are key players in the local non-profit sector and that are trying to respond to needs as closely as possible to realities on the ground, but that are often not taken into account or that have only a minor role in the cooperation policies upon which the financing offers of the major donor government agencies are based. ”

Forus International, a global network of national NGO platforms and regional coalitions¹⁸

The figures summed up in the table below clearly show that the trend of financing channeled through CSOs still remains far from the trajectory proposed and promoted by Coordination SUD for the 2017-2022 period: €532 million granted in 2020 out of €669 million requested. These figures also show that the proportion dedicated to the right of initiative remains very insufficient, at less than half of what was requested: €240 million compared to €468 million requested, and this still in 2020, thereby representing 45% of total actual public financing channeled through CSOs (or 55% excluding financing at the initiative of local authorities) compared to Coordination SUD’s target of 70%. Calculation of this share is merely an initial estimate and requires, for some mechanisms, more precise data in order to better distinguish all the financing falling within the right of initiative of CSOs or public initiative.

COORDINATION SUD’S 2017-2022 TARGET TRAJECTORY COMPARED TO ACTUAL FINANCING RECORDED (IN €M)

	2017	2020		2022	
	Actual financing ¹⁹	CSUD trajectory	Actual financing	CSUD trajectory	CSUD trajectory
TOTAL NGO initiatives	151	468	240	700	N/A
TOTAL State initiatives	92	201	198	300	N/A
Total local authority initiative	67		94		N/A
TOTAL NGO financing	310	669	532	1000	620

18. See annex: Forus position paper on the right of initiative, Paris, 2021.

19. MEAE (2022), 2021 ODA/CSO figures. Source MEAE Directorate-General of Globalization (DGM-CIV), Paris, June.

Coordination SUD estimates that by 2027 CSOs will have a capacity of over €2 billion for implementing their own initiatives. Reaching this target, which is very far from current levels, will require significant effort, equivalent to about €1 billion.

Giving greater support to these initiatives would help increase the capacities for action and expression by CSOs targeting the most vulnerable people. Such support from the public authorities is all the more justified in increasingly unfavorable contexts (health crises, environmental crises, armed conflicts, etc.), where CSOs are often on the front line.

This change, which has been considerable in recent years but still insufficient, presents some significant risks:

- Development assistance will not be used optimally, in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.
- CSOs in France and in partner countries will not be strengthened or will even become weaker in the face of powers that are increasingly hostile or even violent against them.
- There will be an increase in inequalities and the number of people left behind.
- The growing humanitarian, environmental, and health crises will lack sufficient responses.

The DAC Recommendation²⁰ is underpinned by a recognition of the diversity within civil society and the varied roles civil society actors play. Its central premise is that development cooperation and humanitarian assistance providers should seek to enable an inclusive and independent civil society, especially in partner countries or territories where official development cooperation is ultimately destined. The DAC Recommendation seeks to enable civil society actors both as independent development and humanitarian actors in their own right—with their own priorities, plans and approaches—and as implementation partners of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance providers.

OECD Development Assistance Committee

20. OECD, *DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance*, Paris, OECD Legal Instruments, July 2021. OECD / LEGAL / 5021.

3

FOR AN EFFECTIVE RIGHT OF INITIATIVE FOR CSOS: SIX DEMANDS FROM COORDINATION SUD

The right of initiative of CSOs is recognized in the Act on Inclusive Development (LOP-DSLIM) and in France's cooperation policy strategy papers²¹. This recognition should now be applied in more suitable and ambitious ways. For this reason, Coordination SUD is requesting the following:

- 1** Full effectiveness of the right of initiative of CSOs, as defined above, in the current and future strategic papers of French official development assistance and external aid.
- 2** Establishment of a precise and transparent budgetary program, by 2027, on all financing mechanisms supporting the right of initiative, by aiming at:
 - a target of €2 billion in ODA channeled through CSOs by 2027,²²
 - a target of €1.4 billion to finance CSO initiatives in 2027, representing 70% of total funds channeled through CSOs.
- 3** A concrete financial commitment, to be made at a future meeting of the CICID (Inter-ministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development) in support of the right of initiative of CSOs and that complies with the above-mentioned trajectory proposed by Coordination SUD.
- 4** Promotion of the right of initiative within the various existing or future financial instruments (e.g., CSO Initiative Mechanism, Crisis and Support Center, volunteer service), including through forms of financing adapted to CSOs or by creating dedicated mechanisms in partner countries.
- 5** Establishment of dialogue with those in charge of these different mechanisms, on the right of initiative of CSOs via implementation of a dedicated framework for exchanges between Coordination SUD and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which the other stakeholders involved (AFD, Expertise France) or concerned (Forus, etc.) are involved.
- 6** Promotion by the French authorities of the right of initiative of CSOs among partner institutions (UN, European Union, OECD/DAC) as well as among partner States, so that these stakeholders themselves promote the right of initiative.

21. MAEDI (2017), *Document d'orientation politique relatif au partenariat entre le ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Développement international et la société civile*, MAEDI, Paris, pages 8 et 9.

AFD (2018), *L'Agence française de développement partenaire des organisations de la société civile (OSC) - cadre d'intervention transversal 2018-2023*, AFD, Paris, pages 8 and 9.

22. See Annex 1: Principles behind defining the objectives of public financing channeled through CSOs in 2027.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Principles behind defining the objectives of public financing channeled through CSOs in 2027

Timetable

The new trajectory, which will be detailed at a later date, year by year and mechanism by mechanism, will last until 2027, which is the end of the current presidential and legislative term. A progress point will be made in 2025, the year when the Act on Inclusive Development (LOP-DSLIM) calls for reaching 0.7% of GNI.

Volumes

Following the 2018-2022 trajectory sought by Coordination SUD, which targets €1 billion in 2022, the objective remains, in accordance with the French Act on Inclusive Development (LOP-DSLIM), to close in on the average share of bilateral ODA channeled through CSOs among DAC countries, which was 15% in 2019 and 14.1% in 2020 (according to OECD figures²³).

Taking into account that the estimated bilateral ODA of France in 2025 is €11.4 billion²⁴, the target of NGO-channeled ODA would need to be €1.8 billion in 2025 to reach this average. However, achieving growth in resources reaching €2 billion in 2027 requires (I) economic growth in France, (II) maintaining the objectives of 0.7% and closing in on the DAC country average, and (III) a acknowledge desire to meet the SDGs.

Proportions

Coordination SUD upholds the right of initiative, both in terms of aid effectiveness and political vision for CSOs. Coordination SUD also recommends that a significant proportion of bilateral ODA channeled through CSOs, under French law or the law of partner countries of this same aid, respect this right of initiative in complementarity with the bilateral ODA channeled through CSOs at government initiative. It is based on this aim that Coordination SUD has set a minimum proportion of 70% dedicated to mechanisms supporting CSO initiatives²⁵.

23. OECD (2022), *Aid for Civil Society Organisations*, OECD Publishing, Paris, June.

24. Based on economic growth estimates from the French Senate Finance Committee, Banque de France, the French Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the IMF.

25. The trajectory of Coordination SUD includes the main mechanisms supporting the right of initiative (MEAE's Crisis and Support Centre, AFD's CSO Initiative Mechanism, and Volontariat) but a more in-depth analysis of all the mechanisms and instruments should make it possible to increase the scope.

Annex 2: Forus position paper on the right of initiative, Paris, 2021



Forus is a network of national NGO platforms and regional coalitions. It seeks to strengthen the structuring of civil society and to support peer learning, capacity building, and common advocacy strategies and actions. In addition,

some projects are supported through small grants, through which the beneficiary platforms have been able to finance programs aimed at strengthening their organization, leadership, advocacy or communication, depending on the very specific and varied needs of each.

A recent evaluation of these projects has indicated that the grants have contributed very positively to improving their flexibility and adaptability in responding to the needs and realities of each platform. This capacity-building support has in fact been crucial for their NGO members and has enabled them to do work that would otherwise have been difficult to obtain financing for.

But large donor organizations place conditions and restrictions on their grants, and it can be particularly difficult for a local NGO to meet their expectations and obtain this financial assistance. These grants must moreover very often fit within a special framework, and they must be used to fulfill the key themes of the donor organizations rather than those of the NGO beneficiaries.

Local stakeholders constantly point out this problem. They explain that it is essential to provide greater opportunities to the stakeholders who work on the ground and to develop projects that are needed locally, and not just try to adapt to the frameworks defined by the donors. Indeed, there can be a gap between the real needs of CSOs and the objectives of donor organizations. In some cases, foreign or international agencies want to remain the main decision-makers for the activities of the organizations they finance, even though on the ground they often cannot access certain areas because of insecurity. In this case, they call on national organizations that have not always been consulted upstream and that lack the means or opportunities to strengthen their capacities and manage the situation.

We can thus see that financing NGOs' right of initiative is crucial for supporting civil society projects at their source. It is important to highlight the initiative of local NGOs and small organizations that are key players in the local non-profit sector and that are trying to respond to needs as closely as possible to the realities on the ground, but that are often not taken into account or that have only a minor role in the cooperation policies on which the financing offers of the major donor government agencies are based.

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