

# THE SWEDISH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

## - overview of Large partnership funding

### INTRODUCTION

#### ForumCiv

Founded in 1995, ForumCiv is a politically and religiously unaffiliated development cooperation organisation that has grown to become the largest civil society platform in Sweden. ForumCiv works to support people to organise and claim their rights and strengthen civil society as actors of change in order to support democratic processes, distribute resources more fairly and reduce poverty.

#### VISION

ForumCiv's vision is a just and sustainable world where all people have the power to effect change.

### The Swedish Partnership Programme

In the Swedish Partnership Programme funding is granted to partnerships between Swedish civil society organisations and civil society actors that operate in countries part of Development Assistance Committee's list of countries that receive official development assistance.

As part of the Swedish Partnership Programme, ForumCiv offers grants and capacity development initiatives that contribute to civil society's ability to support democracy and respect for human rights around the world. ForumCiv underscores the importance of mutual learning with and between its partners by offering opportunities for knowledge exchange.

#### OBJECTIVES

The Swedish Partnership Programme's objective is to support a strong civil society that works with a rights-based approach to improve the living conditions of people living in marginalisation and advocate for change that contributes to a just and sustainable world.

ForumCiv seeks to strengthen a pluralistic, global civil society that empowers people to change their lives and communities at a local, regional, national and global level. It is our belief that a strong, diverse and representative civil society is key to achieving a just society and robust democracy.

### FORUMCIV'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

#### HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH AS THE DEPARTURE POINTS

ForumCiv promotes respect, protection and fulfilment of universal human rights and sees human rights as goals in themselves and as the most effective tools to reach the vision. Human rights seek to ensure a life of dignity and freedom for all and to justify people's claims to be protected from deprivation and abuse.

Based on the human rights framework, poverty is more than a question of lacking economic resources; rather it is the outcome of unjust distribution of power, resources and security. Poverty will never be eradicated unless the world's resources are more fairly distributed between countries, communities and people. Global justice is about the distribution of resources so that the world's most deprived people can improve the conditions of their daily lives. For this to happen, the power structures underlying unjust distribution must be challenged and reformed. Development is a process of removing major sources of unfreedom including economic and social deprivation as well as infringements on political and civil rights.

## THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

ForumCiv views human rights as the most effective tool to achieve a just and sustainable world; this is also known as the rights-based approach (RBA). ForumCiv understands the rights-based approach to challenge unjust power structures and discriminatory norms in order to empower people to have influence over social development and deciding over their own lives.

A rights-based approach shifts development work from viewing individuals as *passive victims* to *active agents* and *rights-holders* who are being denied what are fundamentally and legally their rights. In other words, it recognizes agency, which is the capacity of individuals to act independently, to make their own free choices and to be active actors in creating the changes they want to see. ForumCiv recognizes free and sustainable agency as a major engine of development and is committed to agency-centred development.

As part of the objective of this programme to improve the living conditions of people living in poverty and under oppression, services can be delivered as part of a rights-based approach and to strengthen people's collective capacity. Service provision within the programme needs to be well-integrated and strategically applied the rights-based project. Services can then be part of the activities civil society actors use to enhance organisation among right holders and the implementation of such activities can build on the capacity to address root causes to vulnerability by engaging duty-bearers.

## ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

ForumCiv defines civil society as a collective of people, distinct from the state, political parties, individual households and businesses, acting together to achieve non-profit objectives and advocate for human rights without discrimination. Civil society is a space for rights holders to organize, mobilize and advocate for change. Civil society is organised at a local, regional and global level and includes popular movements, networks, foundations, institutes, loosely organised groups, and registered organisations.

The pluralism of civil society has value in and of itself in that it strengthens the voices and power of a wide range of groups to affect society-wide change. By having a legitimate and representative civil society come together and establish strategic partnerships with formal and informal duty bearers, private sector actors and other strategic actors it can lobby and advocate for society-wide change. Its actors can monitor institutions of power and serve as a channel for popular participation in public debate.

## CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS

ForumCiv is part of the global civil society and is convinced that the growth of new social movements in the broadest sense has an essential part to play in the global change that must take place if development is to progress in the direction of our vision. Development cooperation is *collaborative*. Organisations share values and meet each other as equal partners despite coming from different circumstances. Civil society collaborations are much more than merely sharing development projects; they are about exchanging ideas, knowledge and experiences and possessing a common urge to shape policies and practises in the interest of a more just and sustainable world. We support partnerships between Swedish civil society and local civil society in order to promote an exchange of capacities and knowledge and advocacy work.

Given the above the focus and prioritisation in assessing applications for *Large partnership funding* will not be on specific interventions in the global south -programmes- but to what extent the Swedish organisation can utilise its funding to foster relationships and support networking and mutual learning among civil society actors in different parts of the world, including Sweden, in order to strengthen a global

civil society and bring about changes. This implies ForumCiv in its assessments will be looking at the Swedish organisations' total operations. Poverty and a lack of rights is a global problem and the role of a global civil society is to address this problem wherever it occurs, but when specific lack of rights is a local problem, the solution is often local actions. To support local civil society actors in bringing about changes can and should be an important part of any partnership, but at the same time Swedish organisations receiving *Large partnership funding* should work with a broader perspective where its international and domestic operations reinforces each other. In Sweden organisations should either work to bring about changes from a rights perspective in its field and/or work for an increased rights perspective and actions on international issues and development among its stakeholders, e.g. members and followers. However, please be aware the Swedish partnership programme is not able to fund activities towards target groups in Sweden.

## THE THEORY OF CHANGE

### ORGANISING AND COLLECTIVE POWER

The Theory of Change describes processes of change through organising and collective power on an overall level. This Theory of Change identifies three groups of actors important for creating change; rights-holders, civil society actors (civil society organisations, informal actors and networks etc) and societal actors (religious leaders, transnational corporations, media, formal and informal duty bearers, etc.). A right-based approach requires a thorough contextual analysis to understand the power structures and driving factors against human rights and sustainable development. In order to be just and sustainable interventions, the contextual analysis must consider factors such as gender, conflict, climate change and environmental impact.

### THE PROCESSES OF ORGANISING FOR CHANGE

This is a theory of change about effecting change through organisation and collective power. Collective power is an understanding of power as a relationship in which those in positions of power ultimately depend on the compliance of the people, they hold power over. This understanding of power comes with a wide range of organising methods and tactics to effect desired change.

There are different processes of organising for change that build on and strengthen each other. This theory of change lifts these processes and highlights the nature of organisation in them.

Organising allow people to identify and clarify a problem and generate ideas for solutions. Getting people to identify their vision for the future and then develop a realistic plan to get there through achievable steps can make all the difference.

#### Awareness

A precondition for collective power is awareness. Through awareness, rights holders gain knowledge about their rights and the structural barriers to their enjoyment of those rights. Rightsholders understand their power (i.e. **have awareness of their agency in the situation**) and **identify power relationships and how to change them**. The nature of organising in this process is the **initiation and facilitation of a process of analysis by the rightsholders** themselves and the **interpretation of information so it leads to clear identification of root causes and possible solutions**.

#### Mobilisation

Mobilisation is the process of building collective power to effect change. It means that rightsholders now work together with a clear purpose. The nature of organising in this process is the **unifying and organising of rightsholders** and **planning how to create the desired change**.

#### Advocacy

Advocacy encompasses all the processes where collective power is used to challenge and push for change by engaging relevant duty-bearers. Any process of change in society will run up against structures of power and interest (e.g. state apparatuses, economic patterns, social norms, etc.). By forming

**cooperative relationships** between societal actors through networks, coalitions and alliances social change can be fostered at the individual as well as structural level in society.

*Large partnership funding* should be used to support civil society actors in working for structural change where duty bearers assume their responsibilities; it could be lobbying against governments worldwide to take measures to protect the environment or to lobby against local school authorities to make sure girls have the possibility to get an education. Partnerships should always be grounded in local civil society actors and rights holders' perspective and priorities. Flexible funding, i.e. funding that as much as possible allow local partner organisations to continuously prioritise how money will be used, should always be the preferred financial support. This ensures effectiveness while at the same time mitigating unequal power relations.

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