



ACTION RESEARCH

ON CSOs DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

AND ACCOUNTABILITY

MA. Nguyen Phuong Linh - MSD Director

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PREFACE

Since 2009, through the process of Open Forum for Development Effectiveness, Civil Society Organizations worldwide have been together to develop the International Framework for Development Effectiveness of CSOs (DE Framework) consisting of 8 Istanbul Principles which are applied at national level and by CSOs all over the world. At the fourth High Level Forum (HLF-4) on Aid Effectiveness held in November – December 2011 in Busan, the on-going consultations among related stakeholders gave global consensus to Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. All the partners for development committed to shift the thinking and practice from the focus on aid effectiveness to the focus on development effectiveness. It means to focus on the real sustainable benefits for target groups – the people (“sustainable effectiveness and transparency for every citizen”, §6). Busan partnership document also recognizes the commitments for improving development effectiveness, and that CSOs play a leading role with the declaration of Istanbul Principles on Development Effectiveness and the Siem Reap Consensus on International Framework for Development Effectiveness of CSOs (§22)¹.

Since participation in 2010, Vietnamese CSOs have been closely following the process of Development Effectiveness and making considerable contribution to the development of Istanbul Principles and International Framework for Development Effectiveness. Identifying weaknesses in capacity means to be self-reliance and self-development based on the long-term organization strategy as well as weak cooperation with other development partners, Vietnamese CSOs should consider implementation Istanbul Principles and International Framework for Development Effectiveness a good option/ opportunity for them to follow, implement and develop more effectively and in a sustainable manner. This can be a powerful tool for the development of CSOs.

Research Center for Management and Sustainable Development (MSD) has been a pioneer to coordinate the promotion process of Development Effectiveness for Vietnamese CSOs since 2010, especially after 2011 with the commitment of Siem Reap Consensus, Istanbul Principles on Development Effectiveness and Vietnam partnership document. MSD continued to participate in strategy development, supporting and promoting Vietnamese CSOs with their commitment practice. MSD has been a national coordinator in Vietnam and a regional one in Southeast Asia for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)².

After 5 years of commitment, ordered by CPDE, MSD conducted an action research to evaluate the process in which Vietnamese CSOs have applied Istanbul Principles to Development Effectiveness and Transparency and Accountability. This is also a research report, which contributed to the General report on practice results of Istanbul Principles on Development Effectiveness and transparency and accountability of CSO partnership

¹ For more information about the Open Forum, Development Effectiveness Framework and Istanbul partner, visit: <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/>

² For more details about CPDE, visit: : www.csopartnership.org

forum on Development Effectiveness – CPDE). It was used as a proof for policy advocacy for CSOs and published at the second High Level Forum on Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC).

We hope that this report will provide the readers, especially CSOs, the government and development partners with the whole picture of development and effort of Vietnamese CSOs to follow Busan commitments and promote Vietnamese CSOs with good practice of transparency and accountability.

Because the report was done in a short time with the first analysis and summary, there will be mistakes. We hopefully receive comments and support from all the readers.

Thank you and best regards,

Ms. Nguyen Phuong Linh (MA)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phuong Linh', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Director of MSD (Author)

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ABBREVIATION

BOG	Board of Governance
CBOs	Community based organizations
CPDE	CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness
CSD	CSO – Self Development
CSA Vietnam	Action for CSO Development Alliance - Vietnam
CSOs	Civil society organizations
CSO-TAI	CSO initiative on transparency and accountability
DE	Development Effectiveness
Inspiring CSOs	Inspiring CSO culture on transparency and accountability
MSD	Research center for management and sustainable Development
NGOs	Non-government organization
ODA	Official development aid
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TAPA	Transparency and accountability practice assessment tool

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**ABOUT DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS
AND CSOs IN VIETNAM**

1.1 About CSO Development Effectiveness

1.1.1 CSO Development Effectiveness

CSO development effectiveness speaks to the impact of CSO actions for development. These actions for development will be effective if they bring about sustainable change that addresses the causes, as well as the symptoms, of poverty, inequality and marginalization. For CSOs, development effectiveness is linked to multi-faceted human and social development processes directly involving and empowering people living in poverty and discriminated and marginalized populations.

CSOs assume no single development model, but rather focus on people and their organizations, empowering them to make choices over how they will develop. For CSOs, development effectiveness requires openness to many development alternatives, which are increasingly informed by human rights, environmental sustainability (the Earth's limits) and indigenous peoples' notions of *vivir bien* ("living well").

People living in poverty and marginalized populations have unequal access to development resources. This inequality has persisted not only because of limited capacities and finances for development, but also because of the concentration of socio-economic and political power and barriers to gender equality and rights of minorities. Effective CSO development action must, therefore, involve CSOs making choices and taking sides. It involves direct engagement with populations living in poverty, not as abject victims, but as development actors and political proponents for development in their own right.

The CSO vision of development is informed by the diversity of their roles as development actors, including many CSOs involved in development who are not aid actors. Increasingly, CSOs work in support of the human rights of affected populations, rather than agents of charity responding to often externally-determined needs and wants.

1.1.2 Istanbul Principles on CSO Development Effectiveness

Civil society organizations are a vibrant and essential feature in the democratic life of countries across the globe. As self-governing and voluntary organizations, they are striving to be accountable and effective organizations. CSOs have also been widely recognized as distinct and independent development actors, working for development outcomes for poor and marginalized peoples. CSOs are catalysts for social change, collaborating with partners around shared values and interests.

CSOs are social expressions of diversity and innovation in development practice. They bring a rich array of organizational values, objectives, and means for popular engagement, as well as sector knowledge, structures, interests and resources.

Development is a social and political process that is equally about peoples' participation and engagement to claim their rights, as it is about development outcomes. CSOs are, consequently, political protagonists for development change, advocates

for and providers of public goods. CSOs collaborate and partner with communities, with each other and with different development actors, complementing development efforts by developing country governments and donors at many levels.

CSOs have close and often unique connections with local processes, but also seek change at national and global levels. But unlike political parties, peoples' organizations, and social movements, which may

aspire to influence development by obtaining formal state political power, CSOs are, for the most part, autonomous non-partisan political actors in the social realm, representing their own point of view. But, in some countries, such as the Philippines, CSOs may also play direct roles within the parliamentary system.

CSOs actions for development are also distinguished by a commitment to non-violent processes. CSOs seek to maximize positive results, while being true to the principle of "do no harm", considering the full range of potential impacts of their development actions. CSOs are channels for social solidarity, for service and mobilization to enable people to better claim their rights and improve conditions of life. CSOs enrich public policy dialogue with knowledge and innovation; they are donors who find and leverage financial and human resources for development.

CSOs collaborate and may coordinate efforts with governments to seek development outcomes consistent with international human rights standards. These standards give priority to addressing conditions of discrimination, dis-empowerment, poverty and inequality. In many countries, CSOs play important roles engaging citizens, defending the rule of law and guarding against corruption of public funds. As voluntary expressions of citizen action, CSOs are a measure of democratic and inclusive development.

These characteristics of CSOs as distinct, independent and autonomous development actors – voluntary, diverse, non-partisan, non-violent, collaborating for change, linking development process with results and outcomes – have informed all the Open Forum consultations. The Istanbul Principles, set out in this Framework, are not new. They are the consensus expression of decades of experience by thousands of CSOs involved in the Open Forum process and its consultations. As such, the Istanbul Principles reflect CSO work and practices in both peaceful and conflict situations, in different areas of work from grassroots to policy advocacy and in a continuum from humanitarian emergencies to long-term development.

What are Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness?

CSO development effectiveness principles are statements of values and qualities that should inform CSO socio-economic, political, and organizational relationships. They are universal points of reference for CSO activities in development, emphasizing the impact of these actions on the rights of people living in poverty and marginalized populations. In their diversity, CSO development effectiveness is highly dependent on context: their relevance to unique locales, sector, governance and development relationships.

8 Istanbul principles on CSO Development Effectiveness

1. Respect and promote human rights and social justice
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girl's rights
3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation
4. Promote Environmental Sustainability
5. Practice transparency and accountability
6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

Although the Istanbul Principles are a consensus on essential CSO values that inform their practice, they cannot fully take account the great diversity in numbers, geographic locales, purposes and challenges faced by thousands of CSOs involved in development activities. The Istanbul Principles must be interpreted and applied locally in the CSO's country and organizational context.

The Istanbul Principles are, likewise, not intended to duplicate or replace existing CSO country or sector-specific principles or various accountability frameworks. But rather, the adoption of the Istanbul Principles is a means to stimulate structured reflection, deeper understanding, and accountability for enhanced CSO development effectiveness.

1.2 CSOs in Vietnam

1.2.1 Definition of CSOs in Vietnam

Appeared in early 20th century, civil society organizations in Vietnam primarily worked for the country development; however, there has been a limitation in terms of quantity and quality, only a few organizations were activated, some were budget subsidized by the government and not financially independent, others sponsored with international fund and worked individually. Until the transition economy – the socialist oriented market economy, the civil society organizations started to bloom. Along with the economic development, the state agencies have been modernized according to the international standards with an increasing participation of civil society. The beginning of 20th century witnessed an explosion of CSOs in every genre and scope.

In Vietnam, currently, the term 'civil society' in Vietnamese as 'xa hoi dan su' seems to be a 'sensitive' phrase for VCSOs, especially for those who work on human rights, CSOs' right or civil society in general. The term 'civil society' is understood in different ways by different stakeholders. The government sees 'civil society' as an agent for change including political power or hierarchy of Vietnam, one-party ruled country. While the term is not used in the government's legal/official documents, the phrase

'social organization' ('to chuc xa hoi') or "people organization" (to chuc nhan dan) instead. The term "to chuc nhan dan" was used in Vietnamese in Vietnam Partnership Document in 2012 – the first official document recognizing the role of CSOs as development actor (in English version, the Document still uses "civil society organization". Documents of the Party and the Government mention the phrase "social organization" ("to chuc xa hoi"); especially Article 9 in Constitution amended 2013 states that: "The government supports the Vietnam Fatherland Front, its members and social organizations' activities."

Being used and mentioned in different ways, there is no any official definition of CSOs as well as recognised types on CSOs in the official legal document. In the common understanding and used among CSOs and scholars' presentation, the term "civil society organisation" is understood as organization voluntarily founded by citizens which are not belonging to the State mechanism; be organized and run based on the principle of voluntariness, independent and democracy, self-financing, self-responsibility. A CSO operates under law and working for the development purposes and not for profit.

Due to the inconsistent definition, there has not been any official research about the number and operation quality of VCSOs. However, according to the Ministry of Interior, there are: about 500 at the state level, 4.000 organizations at the provincial level and 10.000 district and commune organizations; 1.800 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including non-state scientific, environmental, healthcare and educational organizations; 150 occupation associations; hundreds funds and over 900 international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) activating in Vietnam. There are over 500, nearly 600 and 445 associations in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang respectively ("Saigon Economics Times", 23/07/2015). Moreover, an international research estimated that over 140.000 community-based organizations (CBOs) are working, which do not have a specific legal framework (Carl Thayer, 2009)

The classification of CSOs has been also controversial with many different ways such as: memberships and non-memberships organizations, associations, non-governmental organizations, social funds, charity funds, community-based organizations, social enterprises, non-profit university, religious organizations, etc.

In this research, about CSOs and follow CSOs definition, research team focus on types of independent organizations, which receive little of no sponsor from the Government.

1.3 Roles of Vietnamese CSOs

With a big number of Vietnamese CSOs as mentioned above which have the organisational system linked to the grassroots, across the country to remote areas and reaching community groups which are vulnerable, marginalised and neglected in the society, Vietnamese CSOs have played a very important role in the development

progress of the country. Some prominent roles can be recognized in reality as following:

First, being as service providers for socio-economic development, CSOs can achieve something noteworthy as following:

- Vietnamese CSOs have developed services, implemented programs and projects to contribute to effective building and development of socio-economy in Vietnam based on the orientation of justice, democracy and civilization.
- Vietnamese CSOs have performed in many different fields, especially service provision for poverty reduction, health, education and environment. This is a strength of CSOs to provide the community with services. That supports the government to cover the defects of the market economy and meets the needs of all classes of people, especially including the groups, which are vulnerable, marginalized and neglected. In addition to these main fields, Genders, Democracy, Human Rights... have been recently paid much attention to. Those are new working areas of CSOs, which represent their development trends changing from service delivery and capacity support to strengthening the development of rights and policy advocacy.
- Location: CSOs are active in all three regions of Vietnam: The North, The Central and The South. In addition to the CSOs which have branches at grassroots level, the Northern ones tend to have wider working areas not only within the North, but also in the Central and the South, and even across the country whereas the ones in the Central and the South just work in the areas where they are located.
- Beneficiaries: Because Vietnamese CSOs work in many different fields, they have a wide range of beneficiaries, which are mainly from the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as women, children, the poor, the disabled, the ethnic minorities... Discriminated groups (HIV/AIDS, prostitution, LGBT, etc.) seem to be new beneficiaries recently supported by CSOs (perhaps, international organisations have had many programs towards these groups). Meanwhile, there have been a few organisations interested in supporting CSOs or enterprises. Each CSO can reach and give direct support to average 178 beneficiaries. It can become an impressive figure if it is multiplied with the number of thousands of CSOs working across the country.
- Vietnamese CSOs have actively participated in poverty reduction through strengthening capacity for the local officials, building the overall scheme for local or regional development, searching for funding abroad, and organizing events. Despite of difficulties, CSOs have implemented many programs, projects, and services in the remote and disadvantaged areas where the for-profit organisations do not want to start their programs and the Government are unable to reach. CSOs have researched, transferred technology for poverty

reduction. There have been many successful models participated and monitored by the people for effective poverty reduction.

- Vietnamese CSOs have been actively participated in the activities related to educational socialization, health, culture, sports, science and charity. They have provided services for the society, members and received public services and public administrative ones delivered by the government for the institution reformation.
- Vietnamese CSOs have joined the labor market solving the unemployment issues in the society: They have created more jobs for a large number of workers. With the average size of 8-10 people in an organization, Vietnamese CSOs have dealt with significant amount of work in the society. Especially having equal working environment where there is no discrimination, they can be able to help the workers such as the disabled, the LGBT ..., who have difficulties in accessing fair employment opportunities. A recent trend also shows that the Youth today seems to be more interested in being workers for contribution and dedication at CSOs. In addition, CSOs also attract volunteers who want to work for the community. This not only helps to solve unemployment problems, but also promote the community culture in the society.
- Environment protection: To launch movements for environment protection, raise the awareness of environment protection for the people and the members in the community. In addition, organisations also learn the latest technology for environment protection and implement them into reality such as sewage treatment, clean water technology, mangroves planting technology; participate in assessment on the environmental impacts on the socio-economic development projects...;
- The organisation's budget is also an expression of impacts by Vietnamese CSOs on the development of the country because it is disbursed for service provision in the community - the development work of CSOs. According to the survey, with the average amount of 1 billion VND annually mobilized and disbursed by CSOs, the organisations providing services for the community have valuable budget. However, there is a need of the overall number telling how much CSOs have contributed to the country's GDP.

Second, in terms of strengthening capacity and incubators

- To research and implement new technology for higher productivity which helps to improve the living standards of the disadvantaged in the society;
- To organize training programs/ activities, knowledge seminars, etc. to improve all the life aspects for organisations and the people;
- To develop incubators providing the initial knowledge, techniques and inputs for the development of Non-Governmental Organisations, small and medium-sized

businesses, social enterprises, innovative young enterprises (e.g: incubators for young entrepreneurs, creative entrepreneurs, social enterprises, CSOs, etc.)

Third, in terms of policy advocacy and representation, Vietnamese CSOs have propagated, advocated and protected the rights for members and community, especially the ones in vulnerable and marginalized groups in the society:

- Mobilise and encourage the people to participate in solving social issues and implementing the policies of the Party and the State;
- To propagate and advocate the members in the community to follow policies, laws and implement the policies of the Party and the State;
- To protect the community and its members, especially the disadvantaged ones; connect them with the Party, the State and reflect the aspiration of the People to the Party and the State;
- To implement initiatives and be able to lead the movements for the development of the country;
- To be active to give ideas, technical consultancy for policy formulation to have appropriate policies for society development promotion.

Forth, in terms of promoting the national unity and international relations, Vietnamese CSOs have played a role as an external force of the People following the trend of international economic integration.

- To promote the national unity;
- CSOs have had extensive relationships with the people in other countries. Thanks to that, they can understand more about Vietnam to enhance understanding and cooperation as well as enlist their support in the process of constructing and developing the country;
- To connect and enlist both domestic and international resources for development: hunger eradication, poverty reduction, health system development, education, charity, humanity, etc.
- To connect the domestic programs/ movements to the regional and international ones.

Fifth, in terms of monitoring and stating standards, Vietnamese CSOs have researched and developed the standards of good practice of transparency and accountability, good governance, the codes of business ethics and conducts, etc. for more effective and transparent activities of economic sectors in the society. Recently, Vietnamese CSOs have been playing a more and more important role in connecting related stakeholders, different components in the society, especially the government, businesses, and international organisations.

For the State, in addition to private and State sector, Vietnamese CSOs have served to ensure the comprehensive and democratic development of the country. The organi-

sations can be able to support the connection between the State and the People and help the government to enhance the credibility by promoting the values of transparency and accountability. In terms of policymaking, CSOs are great partners who add expert opinions, mobilize initiatives and engage the people to contribute more to the laws, then propagate, disseminate and evaluate the progress. In addition, making a great effort to promote the values of transparency and accountability and serve to reflect the people's responses to the State, CSOs help to improve the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the State's activities, and build public confidence. Moreover, as mentioned above, having provided the community, the society with many services, CSOs become the extended arm, which has supported the State with covering the defects of the economic market.

In the private sector, Vietnamese CSOs have provided services for development support, especially small and medium-sized businesses, and social enterprises such as technical solutions and initiatives for business and manufacturing to meet the demand of competency in the market. CSOs not only create platforms for enterprise development but also protect and strengthen the competency capacity for private sectors in Vietnam. Especially, job associations are active to protect the members from business disputes. In addition, CSOs help to promote the social responsibility

For international organizations, Vietnamese CSOs have supported them with strategy development and effective policies, which meet the need, current situation and knowledge in local areas. Being as the organizations in the closest relationship with community, CSOs are important partners to ensure effectiveness and sustainability of the projects owned by international partners in those local areas.

In conclusion, CSOs in Vietnam have been formed and more and more adapted to the market economy. They tend to develop and work with more effectiveness in many sectors, and play more and more important role in the development of the country.



2

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

2.1 Goal and objectives of the research:

- Assessing Vietnamese CSO progress in implementing the Istanbul Principles and Accountability;
- Providing possible recommendations for CSOs in Vietnam and policy recommendations for government and donors to provide capacity development support for CSO development effectiveness

2.2 Research Methodology

To develop the research report, due to the time limitation (one month), the research team applying desk study about the cases, achievements, challenges of CSOs in applying Istanbul Principles and synthesize the data and findings of recent researches relating to the issues such as:

- ✓ *Positioning Vietnamese CSO Effectiveness in good governance, transparency and accountability practice 2014 and 2016 (MSD report 2014 and 2016);*
- ✓ *Survey report on Vietnamese CSO's self development 2015 (MSD report 2014 and 2016);*
- ✓ *Case book of CSOs with best practice on transparency and accountability 2014, 2015, 2016 (MSD, 2014, 2015, 2016);*
- ✓ *Enabling legal environment for CSOs in country development process, MSD, 2016*
- ✓ *Benchmark assessment of civil society space in Vietnam 2015 (Le Quang Binh et al, 2015).*
- ✓ *Annual report of "Inspiring CSOs" program of MSD*

In addition, the drafting report and consultation with Coordination members of Action for CSO Development Alliance – CPDE Vietnam to make the consensus on the finalization of the research.



3

KEY FINDINGS

3.1 Promotion and Implementation of Istanbul Principles in Vietnam

As mentioned, CSOs Vietnam, representing by CSO Development Effectiveness working group³ (DE group) followed Development effectiveness process under the Open Forum from 2010 – 2012 through organizing national consultation on developing the National Principles and National Framework for Development effectiveness. It also contributed to the finalization of Istanbul Principles and International framework for Development Effectiveness in 2011. Committed with the results, after the release of Busan Partnership Document, the working group discussed on how to continue with the efforts of CPDE and localize Istanbul Principles in Vietnam. In 2012, some strategies were discussed are:

- Istanbul principles includes both thematic principles (principles 2, 3, 4) and operation principles (principles 1, 5,6,7,8). As discussed, the principles 2,3,4 has applied popularly and quite effective in Vietnam already and there are some networks (such as Gender and women development network (GENCOMNET – led by Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development - CGFED – www.cgfed.org.vn), Environment and Climate change network (led by Sustainable Rural Development (SRD – www.srd.org), etc.), The People Participation Working Group (PPWG) – led by Institute for Studies of Society, Economy and Environment (iSEE – www.isee.org.vn) are taking efforts to improve the capacity of CSOs in thematic areas already. In this case, the task was assigned as CSOs' thematic networks should be aware of and applied Istanbul principles and guidelines to continue efforts to promote the Istanbul principle 2,3,4 in CSO sector; However, the principles 1, 5,6,7,8 are quite new with CSOs in Vietnam and CSOs have many gaps in CSOs' competency as well as challenges relating to the environment to implement these. Basing on the local context and needs⁴ as well as the Busan declaration's confirmation on the essence of democratic ownership, right-based approaches, enhancing transparency and strengthening mutual accountability as the key principles for achieving sustainable development results, the principle of transparency and mutual accountability (principle number 5) was chosen to pilot implement first and this would be used as cut-crossing principle to promote all other principles steps by steps. In what ways are CSOs working to improve their practices in relation to particular areas of development effectiveness (gender equality and women's rights, environment projection) as well as using human rights based

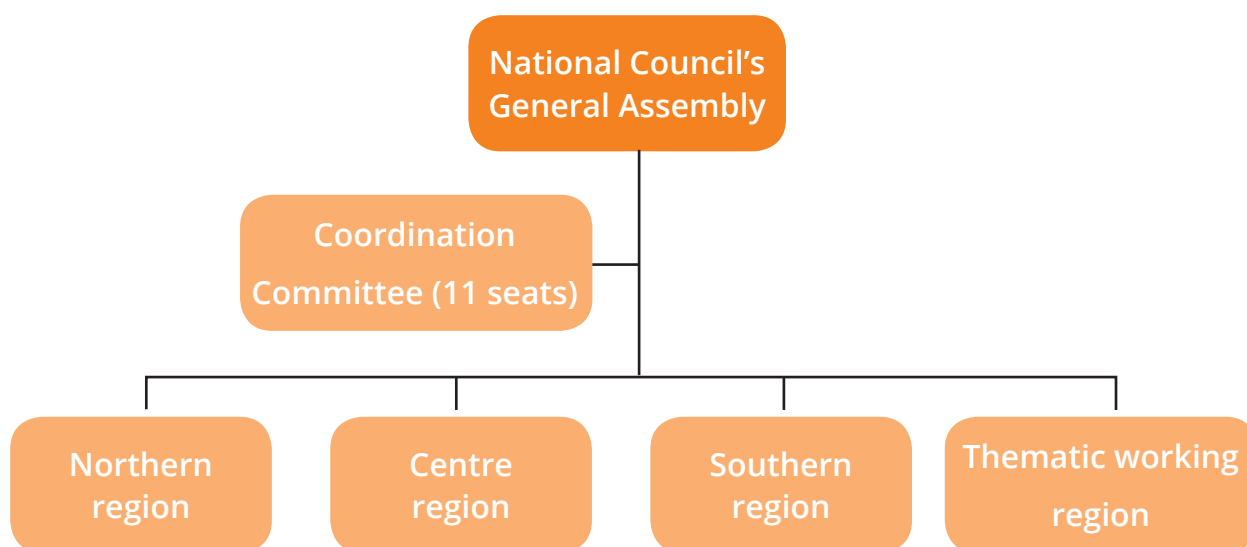
³ *Development Effectiveness working group (DE group) includes 50 CSOs representing Csos from the North, the Centre and the South of Vietnam who participated in the national and international consultation process of Development effectiveness in 2010 – 2011. In 2013, the DE group established Actionf or CSO Development Alliance Vietnam (CSA Vietnam). Up to now, it has more than 100 CSO members throughout the country.*

⁴ *This is based on the anaysis of quick capacity need assessment conducted by MSD with 20 active member of it network on Development Effectiveness on August 2011 about what kinds of principles among 8 Istanbul Principle VCSOs would like to pilot apply into their practice.*

approaches, sustaining equitable partnerships, mutual learning, and for sustainable achievement, etc. The principle number 5 will be focused to implement in the period of 2012 – 2015 and then the other principles and 5, 6, 7, 8 will be in focus at the same time since 2016;

- To improve the effectiveness of the implementation process, DE working group should have a better structure and commitment to the process. In this way, a network was established as Action for CSO Development Alliance (CSA Vietnam – www.vandongchinhsach.org) with the consensus of more than 30 CSOs in Vietnam in 2013 with the mission of empowering local CSOs and advocating for an enabling environment for CSO Development Effectiveness. The network’s responsibilities are:
 - To empower CSOs in practicing Istanbul Principles of Development Effectiveness;
 - To joint advocate in national and international levels for enabling environment for the development of CSOs in Vietnam;
 - To communicate and encourage initiatives to promote transparency and accountability and practice development effectiveness.

Learning from experience of CPDE, CSA Vietnam localize CPDE’s structure, strategy and workplan to improve the process of Development Effectiveness. The structure of CPDE is:



National council includes all members of CPDE. National council have annual General Assembly as the highest governance body of the network to approve the strategy of the network. The Coordination Committee (CC) includes 11 seats includes 6 seats for the focal organizations and the alternatives (2 seats per regions) and 4 focal organizations of 4 strategic thematic working groups of children and youth, gender and women, people with disabilities and immigrants and labor and 1 seat for the National Secretariat who will be responsible for overall coordination of the activities of the network as strategy and workplan. Below the CC, the focal and alternatives of regions and thematic groups will coordinate the activities and supports

members within their regions and thematic working groups. The Research Center for Management and Sustainable Development (MSD – www.msdvietnam.org), was elected as the Secretariat – National coordinator of CSA Vietnam in the period of 2013 – 2018. With CSA Vietnam, MSD⁵ and the CC members have coordinated actively the implementation of Istanbul principles and some achievements has been recorded as below:

3.1.1 General popularization of Istanbul Principles:

- The Istanbul Principles and Development Framework as well as their Toolkits were translated into Vietnamese and popularised to CSOs in Vietnam in various workshops which includes the National training workshop on Development Effectiveness and Accountability in August 2015, supported by CPDE for 40 CSOs throughout Vietnam. Especially, a designed training program was designed and integrated into trainings of Good governance, Transparency and Accountability from 2012 – 2015 for more than 350 CSOs throughout Vietnam;

3.1.2 Efforts to promoting CSO's capacity in Development Effectiveness:

- *Strategy:* Using the Principle number 5 of transparency and accountability as cut-crossing principle to promote Istanbul Principles, the strategy is to enhance CSOs' capability on practicing transparency and accountability (TAP) and using this as evidence to inspire other stakeholders to practice T&A, mutual learning, applying human rights based approach, equitable partnership and for sustainable achievements. The process of gender equality and environmental sustainability are also integrated in the strategy.
- *Methodology:* The organisational development methodology focusing on promoting transparency and accountability was developed by Ms. Linh Phuong Nguyen- MSD's director, CSA Vietnam coordinator and applied widely and effectively throughout capacity building process for Istanbul Principles on Development Effectiveness in Vietnam. The methodology is called ODIC – Organisational Development Methodology of Inspiring Culture. ODIC focuses on two approaches: (i) developing leadership and inspiring to create change, and (ii) building learning organizations. In MSD's view, before creating an inspiring culture of Transparency & Accountability, organizations have to obtain the competency of Transparency & Accountability practice (system, knowledge, skills, belief, attitude, behaviour) as the basis for practicing their capacities,

⁵ CSA Vietnam's Coordination Committee includes 11 members representing the CSOs from the North, the Centre and the South, the national coordinator is the Research Centre for Management and Sustainable Development (MSD – www.msdvietnam.org). MSD is also the focal organisation of CPDE in Vietnam and sub-regional Southeast Asia. The organisation has its strategic working areas of promoting Development Effectiveness for CSOs; promoting enabling environment for CSOs' development and promoting CSO Partnership with different stakeholders.

which should be developed through regular practice and update with a higher level of behaviour. When Transparency & Accountability becomes behaviours and value - a culture of the organization, it will inspire the members, partners and stakeholders of the organization moving towards the development effectiveness of the society. Accordingly, the Transparency Accountability culture will be spread everywhere.



ODIC also builds the organizational capacity based on 5 areas also 5 key components of organizational management and development of (i) Governance and organizational management; (ii) Management of programs/ services; (iii) Human Resource Management; (iv) Financial Management; and (v) Communication and Fundraising. In each key components, there are also parameters to illustrate how CSOs practice and achieve the progress on organisational development. The method was applied in capacity building of CSOs on practicing Development Effectiveness, especially in promoting transparency and accountability.

- *Components and achievements:*
- **CSO Accountability in focus:** CSO-TAI network is the network of organisations who commit to TAP. The network was established in August 2013 and structured to operate from national to regional levels in order to share knowledge and practices on transparency and accountability as well as to inspire stakeholders. The CSO TAI – CSO initiatives on promoting transparency and accountability was established as national platform for CSOs to practice principle 5 and other principle. Up to 2016, there has been more than 350 CSOs outreached in Vietnam with many initiatives to promote development effectiveness and transparency and accountability. Some of the initiatives can be mentioned as:
 - *Self-regulation system – TAP Code:* The first self-regulations were created in Vietnam through the development of Code of practice for CSOs in practicing transparency and accountability. The Code was developed with the participation and consensus of more than 100 CSOs in Vietnam. Up to 2016, there have been more than 50 CSOs publicly announcing their commitment with the Code, hundreds of CSOs using it as principles of the organisation as voluntary;
 - *Inspiring CSOs culture on Transparency and Accountability program:* a program implemented by MSD funded by Irish Aid with the ultimate objective to promote good practices on Transparency and Accountability (TAP) for Vietnamese CSOs, the program is an effective initiative to help developing

organizational capacity through self assessment and obtaining external expertise support in the field of: (i) governance and management; (ii) program/service delivery; (iii) human resource management; (iv) financial management; and (v) communication and fundraising. CSO-TAP consists of following components:

TAPA

Transparency and Accountability Practice Assessment Tool – TAPA has been developed by MSD in order to assess the status / level of TAP of Vietnamese CSOs. The set of tool has been built on the Organizational Development Methodology of Inspiring Culture – ODIC of MSD. Both TAPA and ODIC are copyrights of MSD.

TAPA is used for

- Organizations for self assessment
- Certifying and honoring the organizations with minimum standards (Level 1) on TAP practice (TAP Cert)
- Honoring organization with best practices on TAP (Vietnam NGO Program)

TAPA was tested and edited in 2015 to meet the demands of positioning the Vietnamese CSOs practice in T&A. The toolkit assesses **5 main functional areas** of any organization with **21 capacity criteria** as follows:

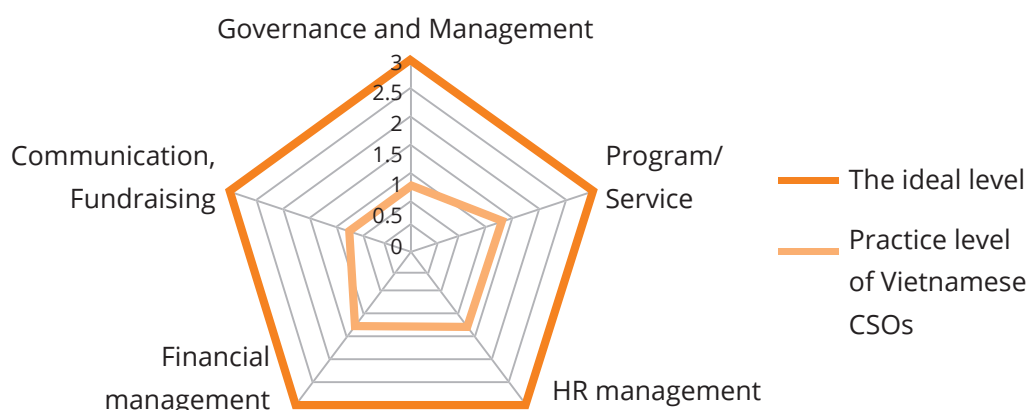
FUNCTIONAL AREA	CRITERIA
GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organization structure and law compliance 2. Vision, Mission and Objective 3. Strategic planning 4. Board of governance 5. Stakeholders 6. Decision-making procedures and reporting system 7. Operation
PROGRAM/ SERVICE DELIVERY	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project management cycle (designing, planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation) 2. Quality control 3. Outcome and impact
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HR policy 2. HRM operation 3. HR development 4. Learning and knowledge management

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial management and control 2. Accounting 3. Budgeting 4. Financial reporting
COMMUNICATION & FUNDRAISING	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Branding and image 2. Communication 3. Fundraising

All the capacity criteria are rated over a number of fact-based indicators reflecting system and practice capacity, and are classified into 1 of 3 levels corresponding to the 3 levels of ODIC as follows:

- **Level 1: Basic practicing** – This is the minimum level to be certified as an organization who meets the requirements of good practice of Transparency & Accountability in their organizations and has structured management systems which are able to provide the related stakeholders when requested with the information for the accountability purpose.
- **Level 2: Developing** – This level includes the organizational pro-activeness in continuous developing good systems which are provide information, explanations as well as the interaction among CSOs and other stakeholders in applying Transparency&Accountability at the organizational level;
- **Level 3: Inspiring** – This is the highest level of Transparency & Accountability – where Transparency & Accountability is the culture of organisations, CSOs and other stakeholders who are responsible to apply it and to require the other parties implement Transparency & mutual Accountability for the best development.

The indicators at the Level 1 are also the minimum standards set by TAPA. This is considered as the first guiding toolkit for assessing and practicing Transparency & Accountability at different development levels of organisational capacity.



In the evaluation conducted in 2015 - 2016, there is parameter to evaluated the practice of CSOs with different stakeholders, in which the level of practice of CSOs is in 1.55/3. The practice shows that CSOs still practice highest transparency and accountability with donors (2 – active action), with constituencies at about 1.5 (quite active) and with the government at 1 (basic – quite passive, only implement when requested).

TAP Coach *Capacity building and coaching for CSOs:* As mentioned, 350 CSOs have been outreached and built capacity through CSO-TAI' s activities, in which 90 selected CSOs have been coached to applied Istanbul principles into practice, in which in the last 3 year, 90% of coached CSOs has increased level of practising transparency and accountability and inspiring other stakeholders to do so⁶;

TAP Cert - *Self and Independent evaluation and certificate system:* The system uses TAPA – Transparency and Accountability Practice Assessment for CSOs using ODIC methods to evaluate CSOs practice. CSOs can use TAPA to assess their practice level of transparency and accountability and CSOs which have independent evaluation of TAPA above level 1 – Basic practicing will receive TAP Certificate. Up to now, TAPA has been used widely and effectively by Vietnamese CSOs, 47 CSOs in 2015 – 2016 were certificated. Many development partners also start use TAPA and TAP Cert as evidence of good practice when assessing CSOs.

Best TAP - “The program to recognize thje organizations with best TAP” is to select the most remarkable representatives among the organizations registered for TAPA and/or participated in TAP-Coach.

Organizations will be evaluated on these criteria also in 3 levels as ODICof (i) Impact of the organization; (ii) Sustainability; (iii) Power and influence competency; (iv) Inspiring organization: Capability to inspire and influence diversified stakeholders on TAP

While successfully promoting transparency and accountability (principle 5) among CSOs and inspiring other stakeholders, since 2015, CSO's capacity building has started moving the focus to widening to other Istanbul principle of 1,5,6,7,8. Some of the new initiatives are:

- *An innovation eco-system developed to provide coaching for CSOs in practicing Istanbul Principles:* The TAP Coach program to provide a comprehensive support for CSOs in practicing Istanbul Principles. The eco-system includes: i) a start-up grant to support CSO incubators and accelerators; ii) Seed fund to support strategy and governance (overhead cost) for selected CSOs; iii) Scholarship for training & mentoring and advisory services tailored to the needs of CSOs; and iv) networking support within the ecosystem. This initiative targets the innovation eco-system developers who expand the support to larger number of CSOs, improving their self-confidence to exercise their roles.
- *Community of Practice for CSOs to promote mutual learning and shared knowledge to promote principle number 7.* The Community of Practice ensure the communication and knowledge management to process effectively. It is the place where CSOs themselves facilitate discussion of common issues and share of lessons learned and best practices. It is also a pool of useful information to promote engagements with other stakeholders. The Action also prepares a comprehensive communication strategy to increase awareness and broaden the base of supports for CSOs in Vietnam among different stakeholders. In order to ensure the broad and inclusive participation of a range of CSOs throughout the country, the Community of practice implements outreach

⁶ As the report of “Positioning CSOs' transparency and accountability practice”, MSD in 2014 and 2016

work and builds platform to encourage groups of CSOs throughout the countries and sectors to participate in. CSOs in the remote areas can overcome the challenge of distance to access to the sector's activities. The initiative employs ICT for capacity building, including: Web-based online learning platform; Learning Management System/e-learning (to enable access to training and education for all); webinars and mobile technology. Collectively ICT support plays an important role in the three core Component proposed by the Action, promote real-time information exchange and break the distance barrier.

- *Promote partnership for effective development cooperation* between CSOs and the state, development partners and business.

3.1.3 Efforts in promoting enabling environment:

- *Strategy:* As the strategy in the period of 2012 – 2016, identifying the main gaps of CSOs was in (i) weak advocacy competency for their own rights; (ii) the lack of understanding of CSOs' definition, role and contributions of the government. Therefore, the focus of advocacy for enabling environment is on (i) capacity building for CSOs on doing advocacy works and promoting their joint advocacy practice; and (ii) developing evidence-base researches on the role and contributions of CSOs, the enabling environment and CSO space for policy dialogues with the government in national and international levels on enabling environment for CSOs.
- *Achievements:*
 - *Capacity building:* The Advocacy toolkit for Enabling environment developed by CPDE was translated into Vietnamese and popularized among CSOs in Vietnam. The capacity building package of CSOs developed with the (i) Capacity building program which provides training and coaching for nearly 500 CSOs' staffs, (ii) handbook for CSOs in advocacy and policy development and advocacy handbook on enabling environment, (iii) training for trainer's book (TOT book); (iv) The Code of practice for CSOs participating in policy development process; and (v) cases book for CSOs. These publications were recognized and highly evaluated by CSOs and multi stakeholders for its application into practice;
 - *Advocacy activities:*
 - The action for CSO Development Alliance – Vietnam (CSA Vietnam) established was recognized as the first alliance advocating for enabling environment for CSOs in Vietnam. It successfully participated in the process of developing and then monitoring Vietnam Partnership Document – a first important document to recognize CSOs as the development actor in the development agenda of Vietnam and reached the agreement to officially represent the voices of CSOs in Vietnam in some national agenda;
 - 15 models of CSOs participating in advocacy developed through 15 small-granted projects successfully implemented throughout the country with different topics. It proves the project models with small budget but great impact and effectiveness and communicated to multi-stakeholders on the competency of CSOs;

- Joint advocacy activities for the enabling environment through: advocacy campaigns on the participation of CSOs in policy development process, advocacy for the Law in Laws 2015, Decrees relating to international aid and ODA, annual dialogues with the government on the role and contributions of CSOs to advocate for enabling environment
- Evidence based research on self-development competency and legal framework of CSOs to advocate for enabling environment
- Joint international advocacy activities of CPDE and other international networks.

In the period of 2016 – 2020, while the context is changing with two main factors (i) the Law on Association is being drafted to create the first legal framework for CSOs; (ii) development partners has new strategy after 2015 with more focus on developing equal partnership with CSOs, the advocacy strategy of CSA Vietnam and MSD has added two other strategies of (a) advocate directly to the development of Law on Associations; (b) continue promoting understanding and relationship with the government and (b) promote accountable aid relationship with development partners.

3.2 Challenges to implementing CSO DE and Accountability

There are many challenges of CSOs to act as development actors on their own rights as mentioned in the context description. The unrecognition of CSOs, their role and contribution. CSOs in Vietnam has not recognized fully by multi-stakeholders. While there is a lack of a legal framework for CSOs, the names and the types of CSOs as mentioned above have not been classified and recognised effectively. Therefore, there has not been any official research report and evidence of CSOs' role and contributions to CSOs in Vietnam. This makes CSOs disadvantage in the power analysis with the government, development actors and private sector. This also leads to the limited space for CSOs participating in development process with limited legal environment relating to the rights to associations, establishment and registration, operation, access to resources and taxation issues. However, there are also many opportunities from external environment which can promote the implementation of DE and Accountability for CSOs in Vietnam. Especially relating to the political and legal environment, while CSOs was recognized in the New Constitution 2013, the legal framework for CSOs – the Law on Associations is in the development process and a lot of legal relating documents is also in the development or revision process to make the commitment of the government to create a better enabling legal environment for CSOs. Though their policy development processes still have many issues with limited participation of CSOs. It may restraints the effectiveness of the legal documents, they are still opportunities for CSOs to advocate for enabling environment and accountable partnership with different stakeholders. In addition, while Vietnam is in integration process with ASEAN, TPP, COD 21, and made commitment with many human rights conventions and covenants, etc. Vietnam is under commitment and pressure of creating better and accountable environment for development.

Basing on the findings of the research, some of recommendations are made to promote the implementation of Istanbul Principles and Development Effectiveness in Vietnam.

4

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Recommendations for CSO:

The strategy of CSA Vietnam and MSD seems very effective in the last period, some of successful lessons can be seen as CSO should make itself be leading force to lead the development effectiveness process and inspire other stakeholders to recognize them, practicing accountability and create enabling environment for CSOs. This should be continued to make CSOs self-develop and inspire other stakeholder. In addition, some of specific additional recommendations for CSOs includes:

- Continue to provide capacity building for more and more CSOs in committing and implementing Istanbul Principles through different initiatives;
- Promote network for mutual learning, knowledge sharing and cooperation to solve the social issues;
- Document effectively the progress of CSOs for inspiring and advocacy process.
- Active advocate for better policies through (i) Strengthen relationship with the government, (ii) Develop effective advocacy strategies, (iii) Diversified channels, roles and contributions.

4.2 Recommendations for Governments:

- Maximize the participation of CSOs in law development process, especially the Law on Associations;
- Study and have the regulation on organizational structure that promote voluntariness, autonomy, self-management and the implementation of transparency and accountability
- Facilitate the contribution of CSOs to policies construction and policies monitoring;
- Study and formulate training programs for the development of CSOs as the development programs of enterprises sector.

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