

Mid-Term Review of the Project “Tracking Trends in Ethiopia’s Civil Society Sector”

Final report - July 2012

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Adaptation Facility
BINGO	British Non-Governmental Organisation
CA	Cotonou Agreement
CANGO	Canadian Non-Governmental Organisation
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
ChSA	Charities and Societies Agency
CCRDA	Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association
CS	Civil Society
CSF	Civil Society Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSSG	Civil Society Support Group
CSSMRP	Civil Society Sector Monitoring and Research Project
CSSP	Civil Society Support Programme
CSSWG	Charities and Societies Sector Working Group
DAG	Donor Assistance Group
DFID	(UK) Department for International Development
ESAP	Ethiopia Social Accountability Programme (II)
EE	Enabling Environment
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FSS	Forum for Social Studies
JFA-PFE	Justice for All-Prison Fellowship
JPM	Joint Programme Memorandum
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
HLF	High-Level Forum
HQ	Headquarters
IGA	Income-Generating Activities
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LFM	Logical Frame Matrix
MA	Management Agent
MBS	Mass-Based Societies
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
Moj	Ministry of Justice
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NCF	National Consultative Forum
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSAs	Non-State Actors
PANE	Poverty Action Network
PBS	Protecting Basic Services (Programme)
PCN	Project Concept Note
PCS	Proclamation on Charities and Societies
POC	Project Oversight Committee
PP	Project Purpose
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SWG	Sector Working Group
TECS	Tracking Trends in Ethiopia's Civil Society
TA	Technical Assistance
TF	Task Force on an Enabling Environment
ToR	Terms of Reference
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
I. INTRODUCTION	8
1.1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON TECS	8
1.2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW.....	9
1.3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	10
2. MAIN FINDINGS	11
2.1 TECS RELEVANCE VIS-À-VIS THE CONTEXT.....	11
2.2. QUALITY OF DESIGN	14
2.3. KEY STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS.....	17
2.4. TECS COHERENCE AND COMPLEMENTARITY WITH EXISTING PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING DFID'S GOVERNANCE PORTFOLIO	18
2.5. EFFICIENCY: PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND M&E SYSTEMS.....	19
2.6. EFFECTIVENESS: EXTENT TO WHICH TECS'S PURPOSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS ARE BEING ACHIEVED AND IMPACT ON PERSPECTIVES	22
3. RECOMMENDATIONS	27
3.1. A THIRD TECS TRANSITIONAL YEAR LEADING TO A NEW DAG-OWNED KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT MECHANISM.....	27
3.2. CONCRETE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE THIRD YEAR.....	28
4. ANNEXES.....	33
4.1. EVALUATION MATRIX.....	33
4.2. MID-TERM REVIEW WORK PLAN.....	38
4.3. TECS DELIVERABLES BY OUTPUT	40
4.4. COMMENTS TO TECS MTR AND REVIEWERS' ANSWERS AND REMARKS	41

Executive Summary

The Tracking Trends in Ethiopia's Civil Society (TECS) Project is an initiative of the Donors Assistance Group (DAG) in Ethiopia, funded by DFID (as the lead donor) and Irish Aid Ethiopia. The project was designed as one of the response strategies to the significant changes introduced by the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) on the regulatory framework for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in 2009. The overall project objective (as outlined in the last version of the Logical Framework) is "increased civil society impact on the achievement of Ethiopia's development goals", which the project plans to achieve through promoting informed and evidence-based dialogue on the way civil society supports national development goals. The TECS project was designed and has been implemented within a complex, challenging and fast-changing policy and institutional context. The project rationale and focus have progressively evolved, shifting from the original sector tracking and monitoring rationale, to a twofold, research and capacity development logic.

Major Findings

Policy issues (relevance)

Overall, TECS is found to be a pertinent and timely project. In particular, the original rationale of sector tracking was valid and remains even more so today, when considered in the light of the recent developments in the sector. However, some serious design limitations have compromised the full relevance of the project. This is particularly evident in its final design, which has not sufficiently incorporated the lessons learnt from the interim project. They concern issues such as the level of TECS's role and ability to promote dialogue, the level of government ownership of and support for the project, the need for flexibility to proactively respond to emerging issues, the paramount role of communication to ensure transparency and build trust among stakeholders, etc. Although there have been some efforts to take into account these issues in the inception phase, they are not adequately reflected in the project design and planning. For instance, most of the assumptions on which the project was premised have proved to be inadequate, irrelevant or unrealistic. In addition, not enough flexibility was built into the design, particularly in the planning and deployment of resources and the choice of methodologies to collect and assess information on the sector, so as to proactively respond to emerging issues and changes in the environment. Moreover, assessment of the project design reveals the existence of severe inconsistencies between the level of project ambitions and planned strategy of intervention, as well as between the level of planned project activities and expected results.

Management (efficiency)

The TECS project has been implemented without a clear and formal governance structure. The tripartite Project Oversight Committee (POC) envisaged in the Joint Project Memorandum (JPM) to serve as the project steering body has never been established. The Civil Society Support Group (CSSG) has recently been acting as the *de facto* steering body of TECS, albeit without clear terms of reference as to its role and responsibilities. The lack of clear and formal governance structure has, to some extent, contributed to a lack of clear transparency mechanisms, as well as key stakeholder confusion on the role, ownership and perceptions of the project. The TECS project has been managed and implemented efficiently in terms of adequate planning, technical management, timely implementation of planned activities, as well as monitoring and evaluation of project implementation. However, the need for the TECS management team to engage more proactively and build strong relationships with key stakeholders, particularly with CSOs, but also with donors and relevant on-going support programmes, has been observed.

Operation (effectiveness)

In general, TECS has made some progress towards achieving its established results or outputs. The

project has started producing the planned research papers, albeit with some delays. The selected research topics are found to be relevant against the overall project objective. However, the existence of other equally and even more pressing topics is noted. The completed research outputs are found to be of high quality in terms of robust methodology, evidence base and presentation. However, the need for a research/knowledge facility that can provide information and research results quickly to development partners and other stakeholders to inform their dialogue initiatives on emerging issues has become more apparent in recent months. In addition, the need to translate research findings and recommendations into advocacy messages and policy actions has become critical.

Despite design problems related to TECS's role and strategies in promoting dialogue, the project has played an instrumental role in facilitating communication between the Charities and Societies Agency (ChSA) and key stakeholders. However, the appropriateness and relevance of TECS's involvement in building the capacity of the ChSA has been questioned by some DPs and CSOs. The absence of regular dialogue forums between government, CSOs and DPs has been one of the major factors that affected the project's ability to support dialogue among these actors. However, the recent inauguration of the Charities and Societies Sector Working Group (CSSWG) is expected to address this issue to some extent.

Among TECS components, the dissemination and communication aspect has faced serious challenges in terms of strategy, focus and sufficiency of communication. Lack of clarity on the role and involvement of CSOs in TECS and insufficient communication with the sector has been observed. Other related major challenges include inadequate targeting and communication with existing CSO support programmes and the absence of a project website.

Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, the need for and importance of the TECS project have been emphasised by most key stakeholders and its timeliness and relevance are not questionable. The complex and challenging policy and project context has impacted on the project design, implementation and achievements. Indeed, this challenging policy environment justifies the need for and existence of the project itself. However, substantial changes are required to allow the project to revert back to its original sector tracking and monitoring rationale.

Based on the above overall assessment and specific findings of this review, it is generally recommended that TECS should continue into a third year as a stand-alone project, owned and strongly supported by DAG/CSSG, and return to the original rationale of sector tracking. Other specific recommendations relate to the clarification of the governance structure, revision of the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM), ensuring project flexibility to respond adequately to emerging issues, translating research outputs into advocacy initiatives, establishing stronger relationships with key stakeholders and stronger links with current international development effectiveness (particularly concerning the notion of an Enabling Environment), etc.

I. Introduction

I.1. Background information on TECS

The profile and engagement of civil society actors in Ethiopia is currently in a state of change due mainly to an overhaul of the regulatory framework. In the last few years, the regulatory framework for much of the civil society sector in Ethiopia has been in a state of transformation. The provisions of the 1960 Civil Code and the 1966 Internal Security Act issued by the then Ministry of Interior were used until recently to govern the establishment and operation of the whole range of civil society organisations designated as ‘non-profit associations’. However, with the increasing size, diversity and importance of the CS sector, the relevance and adequacy of the laws issued in the 1960s to properly govern the sector have become questionable. Among other reasons, this gave rise to the issuance of the Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621/2009 of Ethiopia on January 6, 2009.

Proclamation No. 621/2009 established the Charities and Societies Agency as a government body responsible for the registration and supervision of charities and societies. Accordingly, the Agency has been registering previously operating charities and societies, as well as new ones. Apart from registration and supervision of charities and societies, the Agency has been given the mandate to issue directives and guidelines required to enforce the various provisions of Proclamation No. 621/2009. Accordingly, the Agency issued several guidelines and directives.

Starting with its announcement, the Proclamation **has generated serious concerns among donors and civil society organisations**, most of which have remained unresolved until today. The major concern areas of the Proclamation raised by CSOs and donors relate to the ‘10/90’ rule (which limits the amount of ‘foreign’ funding that Ethiopian charities can receive); the ‘30/70’ rule (which defines the administrative costs of all charities and societies); provisions for the formation of networks and how they are meant to operate; and provisions on income generation.

Given the potential impact of the Proclamation on a wide range of donor assisted programmes, and the spectrum of concern described above, it was agreed at the November 2009 Donor- GoE High Level Forum (HLF), **that discussions on the impact, implementation and enforcement of the Proclamation and development of civil society in Ethiopia would be made a standing item for the HLF, in anticipation of the Charities and Societies Working Group (CSSWG) being set up.** It is important to note that TECS and the birth of CSSWG are related. All stakeholders recognised that support for adaptation and evidence would be critical for effective dialogue. Agreement was reached in 2009 for a jointly governed monitoring project to research and generate the necessary evidence to inform constructive dialogue. In parallel, the Adaptation Facility was established to help CSOs respond to the Proclamation.

An interim project was launched (the Monitoring Facility, managed by IDL), while agreement was sought with the government to move forward with the full monitoring programme. This produced a “Civil Society Organisations Retrospective Baseline Survey” and laid the groundwork for Tracking Trends in Ethiopia’s Civil Society (TECS) with consultations with key stakeholders. Subsequently, TECS’s inception was started in December 2010, and the TECS implementation phase commenced in mid-March 2011.

TECS’s planned impact¹ is increased civil society impact on the achievement of Ethiopia’s development goals. TECS outcome is that informed, evidence based dialogue informs the way civil society supports national development goals. There are three outputs:

¹ Intended impact, outcome and outputs as outlined in the LFM (version 11). As will be further analysed in the report, they differ from the initial project goals.

- Relevant, high quality research produced to inform dialogue and policy on how civil society should support development
- Effective dialogue between government, civil society and development partners on the development of the civil society sector
- Wide range of dissemination and communication activities focused on the development of the civil society sector

Within the second output, TECS has also provided support (principally training) to the Charities and Societies Agency to develop staff core competencies and understanding of the roles and value of CSOs.

TECS is funded by DFID (as the main donor) and Irish Aid Ethiopia. The overall programme funding from 2011 to 2013 is £740,000 (from DFID) and £45,040 from Irish Aid). TECS management is ensured by Atos Consulting (selected through a competitive process), which has a small core team. Research is contracted out to research professionals or to social research CSOs (namely the Forum for Social Studies, FSS).

1.2. Purpose and scope of the mid-term review

The overall objective of the review, as stated in the ToR, is **to assess the performance of TECS against the logical framework** and, with reference to the **dynamic political context, make recommendations including whether TECS should continue to a third year**. Within this overall objective, the ToR further specifies the scope of the assignment as follows:

Table 1: Scope of work as outlined in the ToR and related evaluation dimensions

Scope of work	Evaluation dimension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultants will focus upon reviewing TECS performance against the logical framework: checking the implementation status of the work plan set out in the inception report and progress since inception, including an assessment of the quality of progress, and prepare recommendations as to the future continuation of the project into a third year, factoring in strategic focus, impact and VFM. 	Efficiency: Progress of implementation and quality of management and M&E systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultants will assess progress towards achieving the log-frame Outputs (including last year) and Outcome by the end of the project 	Effectiveness: Extent to which the programme's purpose (outcome) and expected results (outputs) are being achieved taking into account the programme environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultant will consider Assumptions and Risks, and determine whether and what changes are required. 	Relevance of programme vis-à-vis the context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, the consultants will provide inputs on the approaches taken in the programme, make recommendations, where necessary, and identify action points for any major issues and problems affecting progress. The consultants will make recommendations for any changes in focus and approach (assuming continuation to a third year is recommended). 	Relevance of programme vis-à-vis the context Quality of design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultants will also consider changes within the political context, in particular with regard to civil society operations, over the last two years, and assess the relevance and impact of TECS work within that context. 	Relevance of programme vis-à-vis the context Impact perspectives: Extent to which the programme is expected to contribute to the achievement of the overall objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consultants will look at how coordination, synergy and complementarity could be improved; both with other DFID funded activities that encompass work with civil society and parallel projects led by other CSSG members. This will include exploring the possibility of the programme ending at the end of December 2012. 	Programme's coherence and complementarity with DFID's governance portfolio and on-going CS support programmes

I.3. Methodological approach

The analysis has been carried out on **a question-by-question basis, in the framework of an evaluation matrix** drafted during the inception phase of the mid-term review². Each Evaluation question has been approached according to the following protocol: (i) review of relevant documentation; (ii) engagement with informants (via bilateral interviews and/or focus group) and/or participant-observation of ongoing projects and current operations by grantees; (iii) analysis and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data, and, finally (iv) synthesis.

The mission mainly used **two data collection methods: review of documentation (secondary sources) and interviews with key stakeholders combined with focus group** discussions. The collection and review of documentation mainly focused on the following documents: (i) TECS programme/project documents and other outputs such as TECS Project memorandum, Log frame, Inception Phase Report, TECS Quarterly Reports, TECS research outputs, 2012 TECS Annual Review (DFID documentation), TECS Self-assessment against log frame, and other TECS outputs; (ii) Minutes of CSSG meetings in 2011 and 2012; (iii) Minutes of CSSWG (Charities and Societies Sector Working Group) in 2011 and 2012; (iv) Key policy, literature and data on Ethiopia's civil society sector and the current political governance context, e.g. reports by CSO coalition, academic institutions, current statistical data on the profile and engagement of CSOs, relevant government policy documents and legislations for the operation of CSOs, etc., and; (v) DFID Ethiopia Operational Plan and Results Framework.

The consultants used **the set of customised evaluation questions** as a guide in interviews (and also focus groups) with the various stakeholders, but included space for respondents to make their own remarks on the programme. Interviews were sought with six circles of respondents: (i) Atos staff members on TECS team, (ii) CSSG members, (iii) advisors and consultants involved in key 'parallel' projects in civil society, (iv) selected CSOs which have been involved with TECS, (v) officials from the Charities and Societies Agency, Ministry of Federal Affairs and any other relevant GoE representative; (vi) DFID Ethiopia Governance and Security team and; (vii) Irish Aid Ethiopia Governance team³.

The results obtained during the desk phase and their subsequent validation and/or revision through the interviews and focus groups constitute **the basis for the synthesis exercise leading to the set of findings, lessons learnt and recommendations produced by the evaluation team and presented in this report**. It is important to underline that information from various sources has been combined, cross-referenced and crosschecked, and this served as the basis for developing the argument.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that in addition to the time and data constraints, the evaluation presented a number of methodological challenges, some of which are common to any evaluation exercise attempting to capture outcomes and impact prospects (i.e. the so-called attribution and contribution problems), while others are more specific to the review assignment in Ethiopia (i.e. the intricate and changing environment and the issue of confidentiality). These limitations may to some extent have affected the evaluation team's ability to fully assess effectiveness and impact perspectives. When it comes to the issues of relevance, quality of design, complementarity and efficiency, however, the evaluation team is confident they have been able to evaluate these dimensions comprehensively.

² See Annex 4.1. Evaluation matrix

³ See Annex 4.2. MTR workplan (including persons and institutions interviewed)

2. Main findings

2.1 TECS relevance vis-à-vis the context

Overall, TECS is a pertinent and timely project. Both the overall goal and project purpose⁴ (particularly in their original design, as outlined in the draft CSSRMP Joint programme memorandum) were and continue to be highly relevant to the Ethiopian Civil Society context, in the light of the significant changes to the enabling environment brought about by the Proclamation on Charities and Societies (PCS) in 2009.

This judgement is further supported by key stakeholder views within CS and the donor community (DPs). The design of strategies to cope with the intricate and changing landscape is deemed critical and timely, and highly complementary to the Adaptation Facility also supported by CSSG members.

As evidenced in the external review of the two adaptation facilities conducted in November 2011⁵, the adoption of the CSP in February 2009 brought about a strategic shift for both CSOs and donors, from **influencing the environment to that of tracking the changes in the sector and adapting to the new conditions**. Reportedly, CSOs started focusing on their individual survival with little or no attention to common voice and collaboration until the introduction of the Adaptation Facilities.

The **original postulates and rationale that guided the design and initial development of the project** remain even more valid today, in view of the recent developments in the sector. Although there is not yet any comprehensive information on the impact of the PCS and subsequent enacted guidelines, a number of developments can be highlighted as consequences of the law⁶. They include the decrease in the number of registered CSOs (even though the ChSA argues otherwise)⁷, a major decline of rights-based approaches and engagement in democratisation⁸, continued disorientation of the sector, paralysis of networks and coalitions and increasing control and

⁴ Logframe matrix (LFM) Terminology:

TECS LFM terminology	Project Cycle Management LFM terminology
Impact	Overall objective
Outcome	Project purpose, also known as Specific Objective
Outputs	Expected results

⁵ External Review of Civil Society Adaptation Facility Projects prepared by Debebe Hailegebriel and Bethlehem Mengistu. To DAG/CSSG. November 2011. Addis Ababa. Ethiopia.

⁶ Evaluation of Norwegian People's Aid Development Programme in Ethiopia. NUPI Report. Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Drafted by Akalewold Bantirgu, Alemmaya Mulugeta and Axel Borchgrevink. March 2012

⁷ A recent comparative assessment of numbers of registered organisations pre and post the proclamation shows that **there were more federal level registered NGO/CSOs in 2009 (about 2601, excluding faith-groups) than the total number in 2011** (which was 2057). While the number of consortiums grew (from 12 to 34) and the number of INGOs showed little change, the number of local/national NGOs attributed most for the decline in the number observed. Some of the local organisations who decided not to re-register under the CSP could have been weak and non-operational NGOs even before. However, despite the continued registration of the many formerly regional-level registered organisations by the Agency, the fact that the total number of federal level registered NGO/CSOs in 2011 remains below that of the 2009 total numbers provides no grounds to argue that the law has positively contributed to citizen's interests and the right to association. See: Dupuy K. How Legal Restrictions Impact NGOs in Africa: The Charities and Societies Proclamation in Ethiopia, University of Washington Department of Political Science, 2011

⁸ Even before the law, the number of organisations actively engaged in promoting pluralism and promoting watchdog functions were very few. All CSOs with a rights-based approach, and especially those focusing exclusively on issues explicitly listed in the Proclamation as off limits for foreign funding, have been severely impacted by the law. While few have succeeded so far in maintaining such approaches and strategies innovatively, particularly in the regions, others have dropped this line of work, and hence now have less attractive strategies for certain donors, particularly keen rights-based approaches to development. **Reportedly, out of the 127 human rights organisations operating in Ethiopia in 2008, very few exist today** (see the Report by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai. 21 May 2012. A/HRC/20/27.

regulation of interactions between CSOs and their target groups⁹, among others. Besides, as policy-dialogue is an engagement area most discouraged by the law, reportedly the CS community is increasingly becoming inactive and invisible in discussions around core national issues; something that furthers contributes to eroding the relevance and added value of the sector¹⁰.

Nevertheless, despite TECS's relevance in the CS institutional and operational context and against key stakeholder information needs (particularly donors, but also CSOs), a number of considerations need to be made.

First and foremost, the project rationale has progressively evolved, **shifting from the original impact monitoring and sector tracking rationale, to a twofold, research and capacity development, logic**¹¹. This evolution is evident in the table below (table 2), which outlines the project rationale, from the initial documents (namely the draft JPM and ToR of the Management Agent contract) to the last version of the LFM (version 11 of January 2011).

Table 2: Evolution of Project ambitions (at the level of intended impact and outcome)

TECS's goal and Project Purpose (PP) as outlined in the draft JPM	TECS's goal and PP as outlined in the contract ToR	TECS's goal and PP as outlined in the TECS inception report	TECS's goal and PP as defined in the LFM, TECS newsletter, Annual review and subsequent TECS documents
Continuity in the Overall Objective (OO) and PP			Reformulation of OO and PP
<p>The project goal is to support constructive evidence-based dialogue on Ethiopia's civil society sector's contribution to and participation in national development and poverty reduction objectives.</p> <p>The purpose is to monitor and research emerging issues, changes and trends in Ethiopia's civil society sector, including those arising from the implementation, enforcement and impact of the Proclamation on Charities and Societies</p>	<p>The project goal is to support constructive, evidence-based dialogue on Ethiopia's civil society sector's contribution to and participation in national development and poverty reduction objectives.</p> <p>The purpose of TECS is to monitor and research emerging issues, changes and trends in Ethiopia's civil society sector, including those arising from the implementation, enforcement and</p>	<p>The TECS project goal is: constructive, evidence-based dialogue on Ethiopia's CS sector's contribution to and participation in national development and poverty reduction objectives.</p> <p>The purpose of the TECS project is: to create a conducive and enabling environment through supporting dialogue, monitoring and research of emerging issues and trends in the Ethiopian civil society sector</p>	<p>The project impact (goal) is increased civil society impact on the achievement of Ethiopia's development goals</p> <p>The project outcome (project purpose) is that informed evidence-based dialogue informs the way civil society supports national development goals.</p>

⁹ Because of the growing uncertainty after the new CSO law, it has become common practice for NGOs to organise group events for target-groups only with the consent and in the presence of local counterpart officials and authorities, thereby avoiding any suspicion that they are not complying with the law. In some localities, NGOs need to have advance approvals from authorities to host head office staff and other visitors, or only accompanied visits and discussions with communities may be allowed. It can be said that the situation is hindering meaningful interactions between NGOs and their target groups with regard to achieving the shared objective. See: Evaluation of Norwegian People's Aid Development Programme in Ethiopia. NUPI Report. Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Drafted by Akalewold Bantirgu, Alemmaya Mulugeta and Axel Borchgrevink. March 2012

¹⁰ idem

¹¹ Even the name of the project has evolved: from the original "Monitoring Facility" to the "Civil Society Sector Monitoring and Research Project (CSSMRP)" during the interim phase, to the final "Tracking Trends in Ethiopian Civil Society" (TECS), as the Project is known today.

(PCS).	impact of the Proclamation on Charities and Societies (PCS), and to contribute to fora for informed dialogue and constructive engagement at different levels. It will contribute to improved stakeholder understanding of the process of developing the sector.		
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While changes in the inception report were minor rewordings aimed at removing any ambiguity about where the responsibility for monitoring the performance of the ChSA lay, subsequent changes **imply a substantial shift in project focus**, resulting in less project relevance. Certainly, the complexity and unpredictability of the context cannot be overemphasized, and the original project design faced the Government's opposition, particularly concerning the proposed scrutinising role over the Charities and Societies Agency (ChSA)¹². The interim phase also confirmed the need to be particularly careful about the precise wording used in the documents, and, more specifically, the manner in which this wording would be interpreted and understood by key players. However, **the changes introduced shift the focus**, at the level of project goals, **from impact monitoring and sector tracking to research on CS contributions to national development, thereby dropping the original project's initial monitoring and tracking dimension**. However, the latter remains key not only to supporting and informing evidence-based policy dialogue, but also as a corollary to expanding donor support of the sector, as evidenced in the interim final report and handover notes¹³.

Secondly, and despite commendable efforts during the inception phase in early 2011, there was not much **stocktaking of the lessons learnt** (including proposed courses of action) **throughout the interim phase**. They include the already apparent difficulties in engaging in dialogue, several questions on the expected level of GoE involvement and ownership¹⁴, the need to adopt a highly technical focus whilst preserving sufficient flexibility and a brokering role or the paramount role of communication to ensure transparency and contribute to trust-building among key stakeholders, amongst other relevant lessons (see box I).

Box I: Lessons learnt and proposed courses of action, as evidenced at the end of the interim phase of the TECS Project (CSSMPR at the time)¹⁵

¹² Feedback from the November 2009 HLF indicated that the establishment of a permanent, donor-backed, independent monitoring facility or institution whose primary function would be to scrutinise a government agency implementing an Ethiopian sovereign law is unacceptable to Government.

¹³ See the Civil Society Sector Monitoring and Research Project (CSSMRP) Final Report and Handover Notes. April 2010: "The strongly consistent support of the further development of civil society put forward during donor consultations, underpins a robust cross-donor position requesting objective and impartial monitoring of the sector. Supporting enhanced sector-wide monitoring and research is a necessary corollary of expanding resource support of the sector, which is increasingly harmonised behind mutually agreed strategic objectives. The arguments used to justify the development of independent monitoring, tracking, research and analysis should be based on aid effectiveness criteria, given the growing quantum of resources flowing through the sector (i.e. not based mainly on reaction to the PCS)".

¹⁴ As evidenced in the draft JPM, during the course of the consultancy, the issue of 'ownership' of the proposed project came up time and again: is it 'donor-owned', 'jointly owned' by the Government and the Ethiopian Civil Society, or is there 'tripartite ownership' by donors, the Government and the Ethiopian Civil Society? However, the consultancy implementing the interim phase supported the view that trying to pin down 'ownership' at that initial stage was likely to create unrealistic expectations about who had control over what.

¹⁵ Civil Society Sector Monitoring and Research Project (CSSMRP) Final Report and Handover Notes. April 2010

- The **monitoring or tracking project should have a technical focus** on the monitoring and evaluation of emerging issues and trends in civil society, including those arising from the Proclamation. **It is not feasible for this project to take the lead role in convening dialogue between government and civil society** representatives on strategic issues affecting the sector. Ethiopian institutions must take this role. The project can support such dialogue by providing high quality, impartial research evidence.
- There is a need to **expand and enhance capacity in monitoring change**. The project can play a direct role, but can also serve as a focus for capacity building and exchange of experience for various institutions (including the ChSA) which also have a monitoring mandate.
- **Neither the monitoring project nor the donors can take on the representative role for civil society**. There is still a need to resolve the fragmented nature of CS representation in the post Proclamation context. The CS Task Force (supported by AFI), the Cotonou Task Force (previously supported by the CSF and now registered as the Coalition of Non-State Actors), CRDA, PANE and other consortia will need to engage with the ChSA and donors to establish a new structure of CS representation necessary for effective dialogue on sector development.
- **There are opportunities for active collaboration, and the avoidance of duplication, between CSSP and the CSSMRP** successor concerning monitoring and evaluation. This also applies to AFI and other programmes with a monitoring mandate.
- **A technical group could usefully be established that brings together monitoring expertise within the sector** (programmes, networks, ChSA and other capacity) for coordination of work plans, exchange of experience and to act as a focus for capacity building.

Thirdly, and closely linked to the stocktaking mentioned above, **insufficient flexibility is built-into the programme** (particularly in the planning and deployment of resources), **to respond proactively to unforeseen** (in terms of contents) **but expected changes in the environment**. This is particularly relevant for the selection of research topics during the inception phase. Although the selection of the six initial planned research subjects was carefully considered, and they relate closely to the project goal and purpose (as revised in the LFM), they are not considered to be the most relevant and pressing subjects, by either the interviewed CSOs or CSSG members, for informing evidence-based dialogue on sector developments (and not just on sector contributions to the GTP). The 30:70 research, which is considered to be very relevant and timely, was only introduced at the request of the CSSG members at a later stage.

This **limited flexibility is also evident in the choice of methodologies to collect and assess information on the sector**. In principle, and according to draft JPM, TECS was to be dependent on a wide range of information types and sources, including data from the ChSA, as well as secondary data from CSOs and donors. It was also intended to employ a range of activities to achieve the expected outputs, including surveys, base-line studies and research, as well as focus groups, workshops and other qualitative research tools. The project was intended to act as a “broker”, promoting cross-sector communication, networking with related initiatives, documenting findings and lessons learned. In spite of these aspirations, TECS has almost exclusively relied on its own commissioned medium-term research.

2.2. Quality of design

The project’s design as a **stand-alone project** -as opposed to being a component of an existing CS support programme– is a sound decision, considering the **specific independent tracking nature of TECS** (at least in its original design) and **collective DAG ownership**. However, project design is flawed due to a number of reasons.

First and foremost, the project suffers from a **mismatch between its level of ambitions (overall objectives and project purpose) and the planned strategy of intervention** (as defined in the expected results or project outputs). This gap, which **calls into question the envisaged results-chain**, is further widened when project ambitions are assessed against the real strategy of intervention (see table 3, column 4). Inconsistencies can also be observed between the level of deliverables or project activities, and the expected results (the so-called outputs). There are also overlaps between the overall project objective (the intended impact) and expected results. This is particularly evident for output 2, as briefly outlined in the table below (see table 3, column 3). As already confirmed by the interim phase, **it is not feasible or desirable for the project to take the lead role in convening dialogue** between government and CSOs around strategic issues affecting the sector. This role must be taken by Ethiopian institutions and development partners. The project can support such dialogue through providing and disseminating high quality, impartial research evidence.

Table 3: Evolution of project goals (at the level of outputs)

Project outputs (expected results) as originally defined	Project outputs as revisited in the LFM	Comments	Revisited project outputs on the basis of what the project has been doing
Output 1: (i) High quality information and analysis of the development and changes within the Civil society sector	Output 1: Relevant, high quality research produced to inform dialogue and policy on how civil society should support development	Focus on M/T research and CS contributions to development, as opposed to the sector developments/changes. The analysis component of the developments in the sector is left out.	Output 1: Relevant, high quality research produced to inform dialogue and policy on how civil society should support development
Output 2: (ii) Effective dialogue between Government and Civil Society Organisations on the development of the civil society sector, including the implementation, enforcement and impact of the PCS at federal and regional levels;	Output 2: Effective dialogue exists between government, civil society and development partners on the development of the civil society sector	Dialogue cannot be an output as it is the desired impact of the project (OO) and falls outside the scope of project control. Besides the project has been mainly concentrating on providing CD support to the ChSA.	Output 2: ChSA Capacity enhanced
Output 3: (iii) Established dissemination and communication mechanisms on the development of the civil society sector.	Output 3: Wide range of dissemination and communication activities focused on the development of the civil society sector	Dissemination and Communication activities have only concerned TECS research and initially the ChSA This expected result is more an intermediary output or activity under the first two outputs.	Output 3: Established dissemination and communication mechanism on the research accomplished

Assumptions on which the project is premised have also proved inadequate, either because they are not realistic or feasible in the given context (see LFM assumptions highlighted in red in table 4) or not fully relevant to the project (see LFM assumptions highlighted in purple in table 4).

In spite of the interim phase conclusions, warning against overoptimistic assumptions about the willingness and ownership of the Government of Ethiopia, **the design of the implementation phase appears to be premised on the full participation of the Charities and Societies Agency**, considered as a partner in project implementation.

The evaluation team believes that, considering the complexity and unpredictability of the context, **project assumptions (as well as associated risks) should have been re-assessed and revisited on a regular basis**. A number of risk assessment matrices have been produced by the TECS management team, as well as political economy assessment briefs (e.g. of the ChSA). However, the results of these exercises have not been used sufficiently to revise the set of assumptions on which the project is based.

Table 4: TECS assumptions at the LFM level

Assumptions at the outcome level (Project Purpose)	Assumptions at the output level (Expected results)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Project able to influence the Agency to improve the enabling environment for civil society, through more favourable guidelines, effective dialogue and better services. ·DFID willing and able to commission follow-up survey in a timely fashion as a separate contract to TECS. ·Development partners show flexibility in adapting to new language/ways of working of CSOs and develop appropriate programmes and initiatives. ·TECS can navigate an independent line / be regarded as an independent broker (not too close to either the Agency or civil society; lacking credibility among some donors). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Access to key informants who are willing to carry out research. ·Agency, CSSG and DFID remain satisfied with proposed research programme. ·Project able to build trust and gain the Agency's confidence (positive post-election environment, good relationship built up between Agency and DFID). ·Civil society continues to have an open approach towards the Agency, and participates in dialogue. ·Trainers with technical expertise and credibility with the Agency are able to deliver good quality training. ·Agency proposes the most suitable candidates for training. ·Agency is able to devote sufficient time and staff to taking forward dialogue. ·Development Partners demonstrate harmonised approach to civil society support. ·Agency devotes sufficient human resources to implementing the Communication Strategy, especially to analysing and disseminating trends in civil society.

In particular, **the changes that occurred in late 2011** would have required a revision of the project assumptions and eventually of the project strategy of intervention, considering their substantial impact on the institutional environment. They include: the change of leadership in the ChSA, coupled with negative attitudes towards the civil society amongst the new cohort of ChSA staff trained by the Project and, above all, the issuing of a number of guidelines emanating from the PCS, which turned out to be more restrictive and negative than anticipated and which did not take into account TECS's inputs.

Finally, **most of the proposed indicators are neither SMART¹⁶**, nor have they **been designed as progress markers** to assist the project management team to regularly measure progress towards the planned outputs and outcomes.

2.3. Key stakeholder perceptions and expectations

During the interviews and focus groups organised in the course of the mid-term review exercise, it has become evident **that expectations and perceptions of key stakeholders** (namely, donors, the Government through the ChSA, and CSOs) **are not always concordant or aligned with the final log frame**.

There is **no common perception about TECS** (i.e. what TECS is or has been doing, including its research outputs), **whilst the expectations about what TECS should be doing** (particularly those of CSOs and donors) appear to be clear and concur. Out of all the stakeholders contacted, the CSOs and the donor community believe **TECS should be collecting and assessing objective and impartial information about the sector and its developments**, with a view to informing policy dialogue with the Government. Improvements are, nonetheless, noted, particularly by donors, with CSSG increasingly becoming a uniform body, as will be further explored in the efficiency section.

The table below (table 5) summarises some of the most commonly expressed perceptions and expectations in the course of the MTR exercise.

Table 5: Perceptions and expectations of TECS

	TECS and the CSSG	TECS and the ChSA	TECS and local CSOs	TECS and INGOs	TECS and other programmes
Stakeholders' perceptions and /or expectations	<p>Different involvement depending on the relevance of their own CS portfolio and/or aid agenda</p> <p>Increasingly, a common expectation is emerging: "We would expect TECS to be our eyes and ears on the ground"</p> <p>Past diverging views (particularly regarding the Capacity development component for the ChSA) are</p>	<p>Initially, TECS was seen as a capacity development project for the ChSA</p> <p>Some research issues not relevant to them.</p>	<p>The Task Force knows about TECS but the rest of CSOs interviewed have limited knowledge about TECS's purpose and outputs and tend to associate TECS with a capacity development project for the ChSA.</p> <p>TECS is not seen as an independent monitoring and research body.</p>	<p>Diverging views</p> <p>Some CSOs: interest in the 70:30 study and training sessions held by TECS. Yet, limited knowledge on the rest of TECS's activities and outputs.</p> <p>Other INGOs have hardly any knowledge on TECS outputs, including</p>	<p>Different views on the complementarity that could be established.</p> <p>Different levels of knowledge about TECS's role and outputs. In general, not much knowledge of research outputs delivered so far.</p>

¹⁶ S Specific; M Measurable; A Achievable; R Relevant; T Time-bound

	fading.		Some CSOs see TECS as a DFID project.	research outputs delivered so far.	
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Of particular concern is **the lack of knowledge about TECS and its outputs, shown by CSOs** (particularly Ethiopian CSOs, but also International NGOs beyond the information sessions on the 70:30 guidelines). While CS in Ethiopia may pose a challenge in terms of organisation and cohesion, worsened by the PCS, the evaluation team believes that **an adapted communication strategy¹⁷, targeting gatekeepers within or around the CS sector** (platforms, regional membership-based organisations, existing programmes in support of CSOs, loose networks, etc.) and **making use of the right mix of tools** (including the marketing of the research products under the DAG/CSSG label) could have contributed to overcoming these challenges. Besides, these are challenges and constraints that are inherent in the very nature of CS, particularly in developing countries and/or restrictive environments.

Furthermore, this lack of common vision raises questions about the way TECS is conceived and operates (as will be further assessed in the following sections), and its potential to **contribute to building trust and confidence amongst key stakeholders**, in other words **to play the expected brokering role**.

2.4. TECS coherence and complementarity with existing programmes, including DFID’s governance portfolio

TECS does not operate in a vacuum. On-going initiatives, including both donor-funded programmes and Civil Society-led initiatives include the following CSO ones: the Task Force on an Enabling Environment and the current research initiative led by the group of British NGOs (BINGO) to document CS contributions to the Growth and Transformation plan; the two Adaptation facilities funded by some donors of the Donor Assistance Group/Civil Society Sector Group (DAG/CSSG); the Civil Society Fund (CSF) funded by the European Union, the second phase of the Ethiopia Social Accountability Programme (ESAP II) and the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP) in its initial phases.

Cooperation with these programmes and initiatives, **particularly in terms of information sharing and collaboration in areas of common interest** (including the use of existing channels to communicate with CSOs) **has not been as strong as it should have been**, as will be further assessed in the effectiveness section. Apart from DAG/CSSG, there is no permanent forum wherein the different initiatives regularly meet and share information on the sector, particularly concerning the current trends and expected developments.

In spite of their specificities and distinct approaches, **the different initiatives introduced by DAG/CSSG collectively or on an individual basis** (aimed at assisting CS in their adaptation to

¹⁷ As communication is defined as an output (output 3), it is further explored in the section on effectiveness.

the new environment and/or providing general support) **would have required a stronger link and working relationship as they target the same sector and pursue the same overall goal, the promotion of an enabling environment for CS to operate.** As evidenced by the External evaluation of the AF: “These initiatives may have differences in approach and scope of intervention but their end objective is the same; creating an enabling environment for CSOs. There must be a forum facilitated by lead donors from the CSSWG/CSSG where all these actors may come together to share information, experience, as well as roles and responsibilities. All of them should be in a position of knowing the programmes and activities conducted by the other initiatives”.

Finally, in regards to DFID Governance Portfolio, **TECS, despite its small size is a relevant initiative, highly complementary** (at least in its original design) to the objectives of CSSP within the democratic governance area of work. But its relevance goes beyond the democratic governance portfolio, as: (i) the PCS is one of the five selected topics of potential engagement between DFID and the GoE, and last but not least; (ii) the recent developments in the institutional environment pose real challenges to other DFID programmes (as well as to other donors beyond their governance sector), which operate through CS actors for service delivery (e.g. food security, health, climate change, etc.). The PCS and subsequent guidelines have a far-reaching impact on the donors’ ability to channel funds through CSOs in a range of programmes and sectors, even beyond the “controversial” areas.

2.5. Efficiency: Progress of implementation and quality of management and M&E systems

2.5.1 Governance and institutional arrangements

The draft JPM envisaged the establishment of a Project Oversight Committee (POC) consisting of representatives from CSOs, ChSA and DPs, with a responsibility for technical oversight and a National Consultative Forum (NCF) that would enable inclusive dialogue on the information and evidence the project generates.

However, **these two structures have never been established**, due to the lack of agreement amongst key stakeholders. In their absence, TECS proposed and established a **Research Steering Committee (RSC)** in 2011, which consisted of DFID, TECS, FSS and ChSA representatives. However, since the ChSA representatives decided they could not collaborate on any TECS research initiative that went beyond the Agency’s mandate, and reaching agreement on the MoU provided difficult as a result, the RSC ceased to function.

Even though the idea of having a tripartite governance structure as envisaged in the draft JPM is supported by the principles of good developmental practices and would have been important to promote key stakeholder ownership and confidence in the project; **the appropriateness and feasibility of such a governance structure is questionable considering the difficult overall project context**¹⁸.

In practice, the Management Agent has been directly reporting only to DFID or sometimes to both DFID and Irish Aid (the other financing donor). It has been interacting with the CSSG mainly through DFID and Irish Aid, as well as through attending CSSG meetings. The **CSSG has recently started to play a more direct role in providing technical oversight and strategic directions to the project**, in particular in relation to TECS research activities of, and has become the *de facto* steering body of TECS. In fact, the CSSG has sometimes even been involved in approving research designs, which could be considered as purely a managerial rather than strategic issue. Lately, there has also been a practice of a smaller group of more interested and involved CSSG members holding separate ‘business’ meetings with TECS to discuss TECS activities, for example to review emerging

¹⁸ The lesson drawn from the challenges faced in setting up a functioning RSC vividly supports this assertion. The existence of highly divergent views among key stakeholders on the role and enabling environment for the CS sector, limitations and differences in their capacity to interact with and participate in the project, as well as the challenge in determining the appropriate CSO representative, are some of the major factors that would make the appropriateness, feasibility or efficiency of a tripartite governance arrangement for TECS questionable.

findings and ways forward from research outputs.

All in all, TECS has been implemented **without a formal and clear governance structure**. Although the lack of action to establish the envisaged tripartite governance arrangement is understandable based on the above raised points, **the governance issue of the project should not have been left unresolved**, as it has contributed to a lack of clear transparency mechanisms and to confusions on the role, ownership and perceptions of key stakeholders, as already evidenced in the relevance section A formal decision adopting the CSSG as the steering body, **accompanied by clear guidelines as to its role and responsibility, should have been made at the very least**.

2.5.2. Performance of project management

The day-to-day management of TECS has been performed by a Management Agent, Atos Consulting, contracted by DFID. In the implementation of project research components, Atos Consulting has engaged **Forum on Social Studies (FSS), a local knowledge-based CSO, as a partner**.

The regular TECS team includes a part-time Team Leader (310 working days over 2 years), a full time Project Coordinator (440 days), a part-time Research Director (170 days) and a part-time Project Director (30 days). **The evaluation team did not have access to their job descriptions**¹⁹. On the basis of the discussions held with the management team, it appears that outputs and related tasks and responsibilities are shared, without a clear-cut allocation.

This regular team has been supported by short-term experts (40 days of international S/T experts; 388 days of national S/T experts and 176 days of senior national S/T experts) engaged to conduct specific training and research activities.

Overall, the project **has been managed and implemented efficiently** in terms of adequate planning, technical management, timely implementation of planned activities as well as monitoring and evaluation of project implementation.

Before starting the actual project implementation, the TECS team prepared a well-organised inception report, which, despite the design shortcomings already underlined, thoroughly described the project background and the specific activities to be carried out. In the preparation of the inception report, extensive consultations were made with representatives of the three key stakeholder groups (government, CSOs and donors). Moreover, separate validation sessions were held with concerned government representatives and CSSG members, respectively. However, **no validation sessions were held with CSOs**.

One issue that could be raised in relation to planning is that the **timeframes allocated for completion of the various planned research papers did not adequately take into account the potential challenges** in data collection and were over ambitious. In retrospect, they are found to be unrealistic. Another issue related to planning is that although the inception report mentions the need for flexibility to respond to emerging issues or priorities, it **did not set out clear mechanisms or strategies to accommodate such needs for flexibility**. Furthermore, and despite the efforts to conduct a political assessment of the ChSA and the context in general, risks were underestimated.

There has been a **satisfactory level of performance against approved work-plans** (for both year I and II) with some degree of flexibility inserted into the project. Most activities planned have been carried out, although there have been some delays in performing some planned activities, in

¹⁹ If there are any, they were not given to the Evaluation team.

particular those related to research activities²⁰. A small number of planned activities, mainly related to building the Agency's capacity, have been dropped as the required cooperation was not obtained. On the other hand, some unplanned activities have been carried out to respond to urgent requests and suggestions made by CSSG members. Thus, despite the lack of clear flexibility mechanisms built into the design/planning of the project and the lack of proactivism, **TECS has shown flexibility and managed to accommodate emerging demands, put forward by the CSSG.**

Based on information from stakeholders and assessment of the various project deliverables, the services provided **by the TECS team have been professional and of standard quality**, yet delivered on the basis of a strong **technocratic approach**. In this regard, it is worth recalling that the efficient management of a project like TECS, with an expected "brokering" role, involves building trust and confidence among key stakeholders. This is even more crucial in a complex and challenging context, and apart from technical competence, it requires proactive engagement and relationship building with key stakeholders (the "so-called software"), particularly with the CS sector. **However, these aspects have been limited in the management of TECS.** For instance, as already underlined, the focus given by TECS to engaging and communicating with CSOs has not been strong²¹. In addition, the **part-time nature and lack of continuous country presence of most TECS key team members** has had an impact on building a robust relationship with relevant stakeholders²².

Finally, **the partnership between Atos Consulting and FSS has worked well.** A memorandum of understanding that clearly specified the roles and responsibilities of each party was drawn up and has been guiding their partnership. Both parties stated that there has been a very smooth relationship, which has contributed to project efficiency. TECS has reportedly benefited from the extensive experience of FSS in policy research and its well-established research dissemination structures. However, the idea that the involvement of FSS, which is an Ethiopian Resident Charity registered in the ChSA, could, as a partner in the implementation of the project, compromise the perception of the TECS project as an impartial research facility, has been aired by some stakeholders. The project tried to manage this issue by not involving FSS in sensitive research that may potentially involve a conflict of interest, such as the study of the impact of the 70/30 guidelines. Moreover, considering the limited number of research institutions in the country, the other alternative for TECS would be to partner with university-based research institutions, in particular the OSSREA at AAU. However, this option was not found feasible due to administrative bureaucracy at the University.

2.5.3. Value for Money

The TECS project was developed in 2009, without any formal Value for Money measures being formally set. Financially, the overall programme funding from 2011 to 2013 is £740,000. According to the annual review (conducted in April 2012) £304,565 (41% of the total budget) had been spent. This is in line with forecasts.

TECS is a human-resource intensive project. Unfortunately, it is not possible to quantify benefits from a cost/benefit perspective, and effectiveness needs to be assessed on the basis of progress

²⁰ Factors that contributed to the delays include the late start of research due to the resignation of the initially recruited Research Director at the very beginning of the project, delay in completing the IGA research due to illness of the assigned expert, and delays due to difficulties in identifying and arranging meetings with research informants.

²¹ One of the explanations given is that TECS has not been directed by the CSSG to this end. Of course, the CSSG has not fully appreciated the importance of the active engagement of TECS with CSOs, and it has seen the role of CSOs in TECS as mainly sources of information. However, TECS is about promoting evidence-based dialogue between CSOs, the Government and donors, and, therefore, TECS management should have proactively engaged with the CSSG to convince and get direction to actively target CSOs.

²² For instance, contacted representatives of the ChSA stated that their point of contact with TECS has always been the project coordinator. They raised this as one of the issues in their relationship stating that the project coordinator has sometimes lacked authority to respond timely to their requests or concerns.

against the expected results and project purpose, and the use that beneficiaries make of project outputs (see next section on effectiveness).

What can be said, nonetheless, is that TECS is a relatively small project, compared with other CS related projects, such as CSSP, ESAP/PBS II or CSF. However, at least in its original rationale, **it has the potential to add much to the dialogue between DPs, CSOs and Government about the developments in the CS sector and its operational environment; as well as on CS contributions to development goals.**

2.6. Effectiveness: extent to which TECS's purpose and expected results are being achieved and impact on perspectives

TECS has three main outputs or result areas that are inter-related and mutually supportive to achieve the project purpose (outcome)²³. Before exploring each of these outputs and their contribution to the project purpose, it is important to underline that the design problems already discussed in the relevance and quality of design sections, including the questionable appropriateness of the log frame outcome and output indicators, **pose real challenges for the proper assessment of progress towards the achievement of established expected results and project purpose.**

2.6.1. Progress towards the achievement of the expected results (project outputs)

Output 1: Relevant, high quality research produced to inform dialogue and policy on how civil society should support development

Out of the eight planned research papers²⁴, three have been finalised (IGA, MBS, and 30:70 Phase I); three are reaching completion, with early drafts produced (Impact of CSOs on beneficiaries, Federal/Regional interface and Women Economic Empowerment (WEE)), and two are in the early fieldwork phase (30:70 Phase II and CSOs & disadvantaged groups). Apart from these main research areas, TECS has produced short analyses and briefings on gender-based violence & CSOs and on issues of CSO registration and property, as well as field visit reports on CSO operation in emerging regions of Benshangul-Gumeze and Somali²⁵.

Based on discussions with contacted stakeholders and analysis of the context, **the selected research topics are found to be relevant in terms of their thematic focus.** However, most informants (particularly CSOs but also some DPs) noted that there are **other equally and even more relevant and pressing topics that need to be researched.** Most informants rated the study on the 70/30 guidelines as the most relevant and pressing topic. To ensure the relevance and utilization of the research outputs, there have recently been efforts to make the research more policy-oriented including preparation of policy briefs and working closely with development partners to translate the research outputs into relevant advocacy messages. In terms of timing, the delay in completing the research (this is the case of income generation report) has reduced its relevance, as the government issued the guidelines prior to the production of the research.

²³ See Annex 3 for the list of TECS deliverables, clustered by output.

²⁴ At the inception phase, TECS identified and planned to conduct research on six topics. The ones originally planned are: CSOs and income-generating activities (IGA); mass-based societies (MBS); CSOs and the Federal/Regional interface; CSOs and disadvantaged groups; CSOs and women economic empowerment (WEE); and CSO engagement with community-based organisations (CBOs). In 2012, either at the request or suggestion of the CSSG, TECS added two research topics, namely, impact of the 70/30 guidelines (phase I & II, requested by the CSSG), and impact of CSOs on beneficiaries (requested by the Government). Out of the six originally planned topics, CSO engagement with CBOs has been dropped, as its budget has been transferred to conduct the recently requested research on the impact of CSOs on beneficiaries. Thus, TECS has planned to carry out a total of eight of research topics, considering phase I & II of the 70/30 study as separate areas.

²⁵ See Annex 3 for the list of TECS deliverables, clustered by output.

As stated above, only three research papers, i.e. the IGA, MBS, and the impact of 70/30 phase I are fully completed. While the IGA and MBS research outputs have been published and disseminated to a wider group of stakeholders, the impact of 70/30 phase I research has been shared only amongst CSSG members. Feedback obtained from stakeholders, mainly from CSSG members, indicates that all three completed research studies are of high quality in terms of robust methodology, evidence base and presentation. However, **most CSOs contacted for this review have not received or read the research reports** (sometimes only the executive summary) **and could not comment on their quality**. The quality of the remaining research can only properly be assessed after full completion. However, concerns on the quality of the early draft of the research on CSO impact on beneficiaries have been raised by some CSSG members, which should be given serious attention when producing the final research report. Since this is the research the government is most interested in, all efforts should be focused on ensuring its quality.

Finally, and in line with TECS original design, the need for a **research/knowledge facility that can provide information and research results quickly to development partners and other stakeholders to inform their dialogue initiatives on emerging issues in the policy environment has become more apparent** in recent months. This need cannot be addressed through the existing working modality, where all research areas were identified and planned at the inception phase. It requires a more flexible approach for resourcing and conducting research. More importantly, it **requires setting up and implementing a system for continuous and regular collection of information and knowledge management on CSO operations, contributions, challenges and policy environment** (the so-called enabling environment).

The other major emerging issue is **the need to translate research findings and recommendations into advocacy messages and policy actions**. Although there have been efforts in this direction such as producing policy briefs, the need and importance of developing clear strategies and actions to initiate and assist development partners and CSOs to take forward research findings and engage in dialogue and advocacy with the government has become critical.

Output 2: Effective dialogue exists between government, civil society and development partners on the development of the civil society sector

Despite its focus on tripartite dialogue, as stated in the inception report, **most planned activities for this output target the ChSA** and fall under three main headings: building the Agency's capacity to perform functions more efficiently and effectively; building capacity for dialogue within the Agency; and supporting the Agency in developing structures and mechanisms for dialogue²⁶. TECS has also been engaged in providing support to the preparations of the planned Government/CSO joint forum (including the provision of a facilitator and meetings between the facilitator and key stakeholder groups). Unfortunately the forum has not taken place.

In general, TECS has carried out most of the planned activities and some other new ones under this output²⁷. **However, the assessment of the extent to which the project progressed to**

²⁶ See Annex 3 for the list of TECS deliverables, clustered by output.

²⁷ TECS has carried out both planned and new activities under this output. It has provided eight rounds of training to ChSA staff. The training topics include: financial statements and the audit process; Project Cycle Management (PCM); general management and dialogue skills; and communication theory and practice. TECS has played a facilitation role in the provision of equipment, furniture and resource centre to the Agency. It has also provided support to the Agency for the establishment of a database of all registered charities and societies. Although not specifically planned, TECS translated seven of the eight guidelines issued by the ChSA and provided advice and training on the 30:70 guidelines to several informal INGO groups. It also played a facilitation role for consultations between the Agency and CSOs over the guidelines, mainly through preparing the funding proposal on behalf of the Agency. It was also engaged in providing technical support to the organisation of the Go-CSO-Partners Conference on their engagement in the GTP, although it had to withdraw its support due to the indefinite postponement of this Conference.

achieve the stated output, i.e. the existence of effective dialogue between government, CSOs and development partners is problematic.

To start with, most of the planned activities under this output (e.g. providing the Agency with capacity building support so it can perform its core functions properly) are not directly related or expected to bring about dialogue among stakeholders. **Thus, the connection between the planned activities and the established output is remote, and the results chain is, therefore, called into question.** Secondly, as already discussed in the project design section, this output is also the project purpose in the last version of the LFM, but should be seen more as TECS's intended impact, as it is not in direct control of the project. TECS can only support dialogue among the stakeholders through the provision of relevant information, but it cannot ensure there is dialogue.

Yet, despite the above design problems, through its Capacity Building engagement with the Agency, **TECS has acquired a unique position in being able to understand the ChSA institution** itself, its leadership, procedures and guidelines, and to facilitate communication **between the Agency and key stakeholders, CSOs and the CSSG.** In addition, some of the research dissemination/validation forums organised by the project, which were attended mainly by representatives of the Government and DPs and some CSOs, have contributed to the exchange of ideas among stakeholders on the specific issues of the research.

More specific findings and emerging issues related to activities and achievements of output 2 include the following:

- **The absence of regular dialogue forums between government, CSOs and DPs affected the achievement of output two.** For much of the implementation period of TECS, there was not any formal and regular forum where representatives of government, CSOs and DPs can engage in dialogue on civil society matters. The absence of such forums impacted TECS ability to support dialogue through feeding its research outputs to DPs and CSOs. However, the recent inauguration of the Charities and Societies Sector Working Group (CSSWG) is expected to provide a potential channel for TECS to contribute to dialogue among key stakeholders.
- **Diverging views among stakeholders on the inclusion of building the Agency's capacity into the TECS project:** some contacted CSSG members and INGOs question the appropriateness and relevance of TECS involvement in building the Agency's capacity. In particular, **the focus of TECS on this activity at an early stage has contributed to the widespread perception among many CSOs and donors that TECS is about building the Agency's capacity.** Although this perception among DPs is changing with the start of TECS producing research outputs, it is still prevalent among CSOs. Moreover, although the capacity building support has contributed to building trust and confidence with the Agency initially, its direct contribution to dialogue is not logically justified, nor produced dialogue results in practice (particularly following the change in the Agency's leadership). Thus, there is a need to rethink the capacity building support for the Agency.
- **Although the information and training for CSOs on the 70/30 guidelines is very important, its relevance to output 2 or TECS overall objective needs to be clarified.** The information and training given by TECS on the 70/30 guidelines to mainly international NGOs is very much appreciated by the beneficiary CSOs. They stated that the training has helped them to further their understanding of the guidelines and look for ways to adapt to them. Thus, there is no question about the importance and benefits of this support. However, the issue is whether providing adaptation support to CSOs is within the mandate and objectives of TECS, in particular considering that there is another DAG initiative to provide adaptation support to CSOs.

- **Support for the establishment of a database, although very relevant and important, has not been completed and made accessible to external stakeholders.** Among TECS's capacity support activities for the Agency, the support to establish a database of registered charities and societies is the most relevant for the achievement of TECS objectives. In fact, this activity is more aligned with output, as it concerns using relevant information on the trends and development of CSOs. The database is already established and produces much needed information, although the work has not yet been fully completed and owned by the Agency. Agency staff complained that all the requirements they have suggested are not included in the design, and that they are not able to use and update the system. However, the TECS team stated that the main problem lies with the Agency's lack of commitment to and interest in finalising and owning the system. The database is not currently made web-based and accessible to external stakeholders. As the existence and accessibility of the database is very important for designing research and tracking changes in the sector, there is a need to collaborate with and support the Agency for the establishment of a web-based database of registered charities and societies.

Output 3: Wide range of dissemination and communication activities focused on the development of the civil society sector

Although most of the planned activities under this output have been carried out and some progress has been made on the achievement of the intended results²⁸, **this component faces serious challenges in terms of strategy, focus and sufficiency of communication.** As already highlighted in the relevance section, most of the CSOs contacted for this review have little or no information about the objectives and activities of TECS. Those who have some information about the project perceive TECS as a DFID project (as opposed to a DAG initiative) to build the capacity of the ChSA. The evaluation team is surprised to hear that even some CSSG members mention TECS as the Agency's capacity building project. Most of the CSOs contacted have not received the disseminated research outputs of TECS. All these show that the communication and dissemination component of TECS is facing challenges. Some of the major specific issues and challenges with regard to this output include the following.

- **Lack of clarity on the role and involvement of CSOs.** TECS, as a project primarily initiated to support evidence-based dialogue between government, CSOs and DPs, is expected to consider CSOs as its key stakeholders and to have strong and regular communication with the sector. However, there is a tendency among some CSSG members and the TECS team to consider that the role and importance of CSOs in TECS **is mainly as a source of information for the research (passive role), rather than real partners.**
- **Inadequate targeting of CSOs as users of TECS research outputs** with a view to supporting them to dialogue with the government²⁹. The TECS communication strategy clearly

²⁸ According to the inception report and annual plans of TECS, the main activities under this output revolve around three broad categories: disseminating research findings; assisting the Agency to develop a Communications Strategy; liaising with other key stakeholders to exchange views and information about the progress of TECS. Along these lines, TECS disseminated the IGA and MBS research findings to CSSG members initially, and then to a wider group of stakeholders. Short briefing papers in this research were also produced and distributed to stakeholders. Phase I of the 70/30 research was disseminated only to CSSG members. With regard to the second component, TECS assisted the Agency in developing a Communication Strategy. However, further support to assist the Agency in implementing the strategy was put on hold due to a lack of cooperation from the Agency. With regard to liaising with key stakeholders, TECS has developed its Communication Strategy. The strategy identified DAG/CSSG, ChSA, CSOs and other government agencies as its main stakeholder group for communication. Guided by its communication strategy, TECS has been regularly communicating with its funders and CSSG members through email and meetings. It has also been communicating, to some degree, with other development partners, CSOs and CSO support programmes. It has produced and circulated two newsletters for stakeholders.

²⁹ The following information obtained from a discussion with a BINGO representative clearly demonstrates the need and importance for strong communication with CSOs. According to the representative, BINGO has been engaged in dialogue and advocacy around the guidelines with the ChSA and other government agencies. It is currently conducting a study on the contribution of INGOs to the GTP with the objective of using the outputs in its dialogue and advocacy initiatives. Apparently, they were able to collect and obtain ample information for the study. On the other hand, the representative

shows the inadequate importance given to communication with CSOs. In the stakeholder mapping matrix in the strategy, **only a few CSO networks were identified at the federal level**, and, except for the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA), all other identified CSOs were categorised as having middling to low importance as stakeholders in terms of both strategic significance, and frequency and strategic nature of communication. Apart from strategic direction, actual communication with CSOs has not been strong. For instance, the TECS mailing list for policy briefs and newsletters contains a limited number of CSOs, and some of the addresses are not updated or correct.

- **Inadequate targeting and communication with existing CSO support programmes:** as already underlined in the complementarity section, existing CSO support programmes funded by donors, notably the CSSP, CSF and PBS/ESAP are very important targets or stakeholders for a project like TECS. They work with a large number of CSOs and TECS could use them as sources of information and channels of communication (upwards and downwards) with CSOs and their constituencies. Again, the TECS communication strategy has identified only CSSP in its stakeholder mapping matrix. In practice, although there are some levels of communication with these programmes, they are not regular or systematic.
- **The absence of a project website:** TECS does not have a website and this is not included in its communication strategy as a communication channel with stakeholders. The reason is due to the lead donor regulation prohibiting the project to have its own website³⁰. Most contacted stakeholders emphasised that the existence of a website would have ensured the wider dissemination of TECS research outputs and its strong communication with stakeholders. Since TECS is a DAG initiative, CSSG should explore the possibility of ensuring a more systematic dissemination of the TECS research products on the DAG website. This is, in any case, more appropriate than establishing a TECS website for what is after all a short-term project. Such a demonstration of DAG ownership of TECS products is also an important political statement that will deepen ownership across DAG members of the project and its outputs.

2.6.2. Progress towards the achievement of the project purpose (outcome) and impact perspectives

The TECS outcome, as outlined in the last version of the LFM (version 11, January 2011), is that “Informed, evidence-based dialogue informs the way civil society supports national development goals.” Regardless of its relevance (or lack of relevance, as already assessed in the relevance and quality of design sections), **this statement of purpose has two elements**. Firstly, it envisages or assumes that informed and evidence-based dialogue will be held among key stakeholders and, secondly, the outcomes of the dialogues will inform or influence the policy environment or the way CSOs support development goals. Achieving the second project purpose component is contingent upon achieving the first. Therefore, before assessing the achievement of the second leg of the TECS outcome, the progress towards the achievement of the first element needs to be looked at.

As mentioned before, the lack of a formal and regular forum where representatives of the three key stakeholders can engage in dialogue (prior to the establishment of the CSSWG), as well as the tense relationship among the stakeholders on civil society issues, considering the challenging operational environment, are among the major factors affecting TECS's ability to facilitate or even support dialogue. Moreover, it is only recently that part of the commissioned research is available, and its use by key stakeholders is not yet guaranteed (particularly by CSOs). **Furthermore, the different**

stated that BINGO's contact and relationship with TECS has been mainly on the 70/30 issue, and that he has no information on TECS's ongoing impact research or other research outputs. The above case clearly shows that it is important for TECS to closely communicate with CSOs both to collaborate and obtain information for research, as well as support CSOs in their effort to dialogue with the government on the policy environment.

³⁰ Reportedly, project websites are not allowed as they could fragment the information about DFID spending available to the public, which is not in line with the transparency and coherency commitments.

highlighted constraints and shortcomings of the three project outputs hinder achieving the first project purpose element.

Consequently, as there is no notable dialogue among stakeholders as a result of TECS intervention, **it is not possible to consider the second project outcome aspect that dialogue has informed or influenced the policy environment for CSOs.**

On a positive note, the initiative and commitment of some CSSG members to take up some of the specific messages from TECS research findings to engage in dialogue and advocacy with the government, the recent launching of the CSSWG and the integration of topics (i.e. 70:30 guidelines), which are deemed very relevant and urgent (for donors and CSOs), has the potential to improve the prospects of achieving TECS outcomes in the future.

Finally, TECS expected impact or overall objective (as outlined in the last version of the LFM) is that “Civil society has an increased impact on the achievement of Ethiopia’s development goals”. This intended impact is very broad, and relates mainly to policy, practice and behaviour changes, which take time to materialise. Furthermore, achieving it, which is contingent upon achieving the project purpose (not yet materialised), is beyond the project scope and requires action by various actors and sectors (particularly by CSOs themselves and the Government of Ethiopia).

3. Recommendations

3.1. A third TECS transitional year leading to a new DAG-owned knowledge management mechanism

Overall, the need for and importance of the TECS project have been emphasised by most key stakeholders and its timeliness and relevance are not questionable. The complex and challenging policy and project context has impacted on the project design, implementation and achievements. Indeed, this challenging policy environment justifies the need for and existence of the project itself. However, substantial changes are required to allow the project to revert back to its original sector tracking and monitoring rationale.

Based on the above overall assessment and specific findings of this review, and considering the pressing challenges raised by the volatile and rapidly changing environment³¹, the evaluation team believes that **TECS should continue into a third year.** However, substantial changes are required, to allow the project to revert back to its original sector tracking and monitoring rationale. This **rationale remains even more relevant today**, in the light of recent developments (i.e. enactment of guidelines, changes in leadership in the ChSA, etc.) in order to assist key stakeholders (particularly donors and CSOs) to identify and assess key emerging issues and develop effective evidence-based advocacy and policy-dialogue mechanisms.

This view is supported by most of the stakeholders interviewed (by CSOs and the donor community). Furthermore, it builds on the momentum gained by international debates around the notion of an Enabling Environment and its centrality in the development effectiveness agenda (see box 2).

Box 2: The notion of an Enabling Environment in international debates

- Echoing now well-established participatory development approaches, Article 20 of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) and Article 22 of the Busan Declaration explicitly refer to **Civil Society**

³¹ As already assessed in the complementarity and coherence section, recent developments in the institutional environment pose real challenges to donors’ programmes, beyond their governance sector, which operate through CS actors for service delivery (e.g. food security, health, climate change, etc.). The PCS and subsequent guidelines have a far-reaching impact on the donors’ ability to channel funds through CSOs in a range of programmes and sectors, even beyond the “controversial” areas.

organisations (CSOs) as independent development actors in their own right, whose efforts complement those of national authorities and the private sector, on the basis of their manifold potential roles as actors of social change.

- Accra Agenda for Action states that an “enabling environment” for civil society is a key element of aid effectiveness. Busan Partnership confirms the need for an “enabling environment consistent with international rights” to maximize CSO contributions to development.
- CSOs have developed their own development effectiveness mechanisms (Istanbul principles on CS development effectiveness³²; etc.) and are working towards the establishment of an Enabling Environment index, to help different stakeholders, such as policy makers, practitioners, donors and CSOs to have a better understanding of the overall environment for civil society and to offer informed analysis of challenges and opportunities for civil society, and emerging trends.

In recent years, governments in various parts of the world have taken steps to impose increasingly restrictive laws on civil society. Government justifications for legislative constraints may include enhancing accountability and transparency of CSOs, counterterrorism and national security, and state sovereignty. Even the aid effectiveness agenda has been misinterpreted by some governments, e.g. to justify restrictions on independent funding. While commitments to cooperation with CSOs and promoting an enabling environment were recently confirmed in the Busan Partnership Document (Article 22), it is important for international development actors and EU to continue reinforcing and explicitly promoting the role CSOs play in development.

From this perspective, the evaluation team believes this third operational year should be envisioned as a transition phase, leading to a new **DAG-owned knowledge management mechanism**. The concrete implications on funding as well as on institutional accountability and reporting arrangements and management systems nonetheless require further analysis and discussion among DAG/CSSG members. Questions such as “Which donors are willing to fund the mechanism? “What pool funding mechanisms can be envisaged”? Or “How to strike a balance between direct and/or financial accountability requirements to funding donors and other DAG/CSSG member needs and expectations”?” must be considered carefully, should such a knowledge-management mechanism be endorsed.

3.2. Concrete recommendations for the third year

In the meantime, regardless of the endorsement of these longer-term recommendations, the evaluation team proposes the following concrete recommendations:

Firstly, TECS should continue as a **stand-alone project, owned and strongly supported by DAG/CSSG** (see figure 1). Given the sensitivity of the task and the context, the evaluation team believes it is not realistic to pursue and/or expect a joint-tripartite ownership over the project, particularly in what concerns the Government of Ethiopia. In this regard, it is important to recall that the Ethiopian CS context is one of the less conducive environments for civil society in the world³³

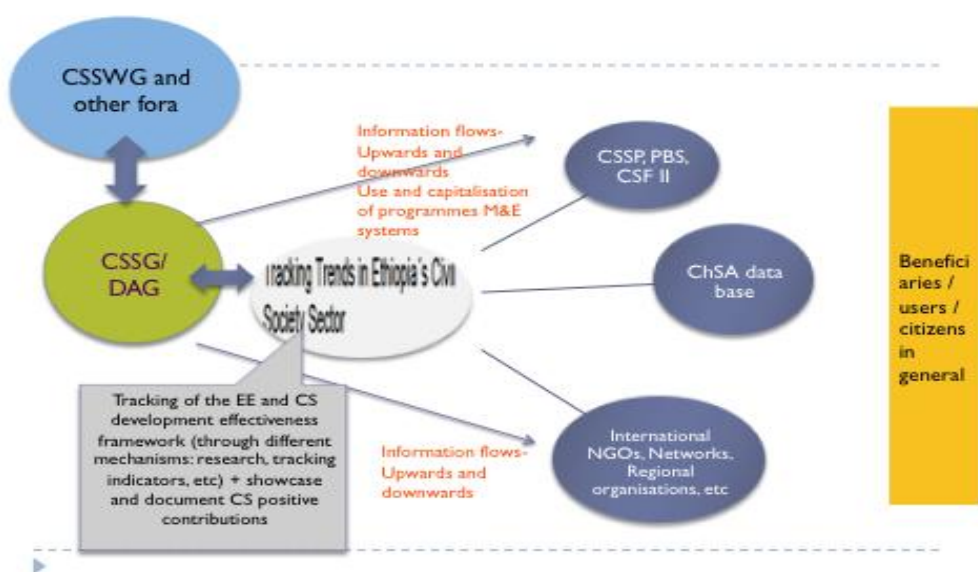
³² In the context of the Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness, civil society organisations developed their own process and principles on development effectiveness: the Istanbul Principles and the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness [<http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-8-istanbul-development,067-.html?lang=en>]. These principles, and the CSO contribution to the Busan process, have been recognised in the Busan partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (Article 22).

³³ Recently, in the conference hosted by CONCORD Denmark in Copenhagen (14 and 15 March 2012), Maina Kiai, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association highlighted the adoption of the 2009 Ethiopian CSO Proclamation as “one of the most restrictive laws in the world.” Maina stated that the international community should no longer equivocate about the impact of the effects of the CSO Proclamation on civil society. He underscored that of the 127 human rights organisations operating in Ethiopia in 2008, very few exist today (see <http://blogs.civicus.org/civicus/2012/03/23/creating-an-enabling-environment-eu-presidency-conference-report/>). Many of the UN human rights Committees, which oversee the implementation of international human rights law at country level, have also expressed serious concern over the Charities and Societies Proclamation. In July 2011 the UN Committee on Human Rights concluded that the law “impedes the realisation of the freedom of association and assembly” as protected in articles 21 and 22 of the ICCPR. It further expressed concern about the provisions that prohibit NGOs from obtaining more than 10 percent of their funding from foreign donors and prohibit NGOs considered by the government to be ‘foreign’ from

and that the prevailing vision on CS (at least on a federal level and formally adopted in the GTP) is that of “an extended arm of the government, which fills the gaps”.

Therefore, the recommendation is to revert back to the original idea (also more apparent in recent months) of a **DAG/CSSG owned project**. This reflects the recognition by DAG members that strengthening state-citizen relationships is an important component for building effective states, attaining broad-based development objectives and promoting democratic ownership and domestic accountability. It also reflects the recognition that to achieve these objectives, support for the government needs to be complemented by support for the civil society. As outlined in the draft JPM, by undertaking monitoring and research work to support constructive, evidence-based dialogue, TECS can represent an important DAG initiative which contributes to strengthened state citizen relations in particular, and promotes inclusive and participatory development processes in general. It will then be DAG’s endeavour to use the evidence and information collected by TECS in the discussions held within the Charities and Societies Working Group (CSSWG), as well as other relevant fora for policy dialogue between the Government of Ethiopia (in its various forms, line ministries, regional bodies, etc.) and donors (see Figure I).³⁴

Figure I: Proposed institutional arrangements



Secondly, and notwithstanding the absence of tripartite ownership over the project, **the evaluation team believes that it is important to agree on a number of guiding principles, which can be shared by all key stakeholders** (the Government, Ethiopian civil society and development partners). They could be drafted on the basis of the principles identified during the identification and interim phase (see Box 3), duly complemented by the outcomes of the international debates on

engaging in human rights and democracy related activities. The Committee concluded that the government of Ethiopia must amend the legislation. “The state party should revise its legislation to ensure that any limitations on the right to freedom of association and assembly are in strict compliance with articles 21 and 22 of the [ICCPR], and in particular it should reconsider the funding restrictions on local NGOs in the light of the [ICCPR] and it should authorize all NGOs to work in the field of human rights. The State party should not discriminate against NGOs that have some members who reside outside its borders.” (Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee: Ethiopia, 25 July 2011, <http://daccessods.un.org/TMP/4400946.7959404.html>)

³⁴ However, considering the recent change in leadership in the ChSA, the nexus between TECS and CSSWG (through the CSSG) requires further analysis.

development effectiveness (e.g. promotion of an enabling environment according to international standards, mutual accountability and learning, CS commitment towards enhanced internal governance principles and systems³⁵; etc.). These guiding principles could provide a common platform to which stakeholders could return when dealing with any contentious issues that may arise.

Box 3: Guiding Principles identified during the interim project phase³⁶

The Guiding Principles agreed by the main stakeholders were to:

- Maximise public benefit/public interest
- Promote an independent, impartial civil society
- Maintain a high level of transparency
- Encourage dialogue and partnership between government and civil society, characterised by mutual trust, and accountability to citizens

Thirdly, the **LFM needs to be revised on the basis of the comments formulated by the MTR** with a view to returning to the original knowledge management (including tracking and information) rationale. An agreement needs to be reached with CSSG on the revisited LFM, which should also include a revised set of assumptions and associated risks, and of indicators.

In connection with the research component (output 1), **flexibility needs to be built-into the project, with a mixture of a rapid response, short ‘ad hoc’ and longer-term research items** (if needed at all), and the possibility of mobilising resources **on the basis of emerging needs**. As the TECS management team reports³⁷, the original research work plan, where all research areas are identified and timetabled at the inception phase, is no longer the most appropriate way forward, although there could still be a need for longer-term, planned research.

This might entail **retaining a ‘pool’ of funding**, not ring-fenced to specific topics, which shall include a maximum number of days for international and national expertise, to be used in a flexible manner to respond to emerging needs. The budget for the longer-term research for this third year (if deemed necessary) can be planned from the outset, once research priorities are agreed amongst CSSG members in close consultation with CSOs.

As regards the choice of research topics, the evaluation team strongly believes that a stronger focus should be placed **on the most relevant and urgent topics**, identified in consultation with CSOs and CSSG members and defined in a “smart” way to ensure GoE buy-in (i.e. using the Enabling Environment concept as well as other relevant development effectiveness notions agreed in the HLF of Busan). In addition, with a view to assisting donors and CSOs in engaging in constructive dialogue with the Government, there is a need **to be proactive and start to identify and address fields in which the impact of the institutional environment puts the Government’s own development objectives at risk** (e.g. including topics such as the elimination of FGM or reduced maternal mortality). More cooperation is also needed with other organisations and institutions conducting research (e.g. research on the 70:30 guidelines conducted by the TS, research on the CS contributions to the GTP done by BINGO; etc.).

In parallel to the research facility, the project should **start working towards the establishment of an Enabling Environment tracking (see box below) and CS evidence documenting system**, in cooperation with existing programmes, and using international standards. Strengthened links with the TF (or future organisations that will take over after the TF) are needed to do this, as are **current relevant international initiatives** (e.g. the new EE index drafted by CIVICUS³⁸

³⁵ See, for instance, The Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness (<http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/-8-istanbul-development,067-.html>)

³⁶ Draft Joint Project Memorandum

³⁷ Tracking Trends in Ethiopia’s Civil Society Sector. Mid Term Review. May/June 2012. Atos Team’s self-assessment

³⁸ <http://blogs.civicus.org/civicus/2012/05/15/enabling-environment-as-a-key-focus-in-the-ec-policy-forum-on-development/>

building on the organisations' track record with the Civil Society Index; the proposals put forward by the CEBUS Consensus³⁹; etc.). Accordingly, a deeper and regularly updated knowledge of both local CS dynamics and current CS development effectiveness debates at international level is required by the TECS project team.

Box 4: The definition and components of an Enabling Environment, on the basis of current international debates

The enabling environment is to be measured in a detailed and multi-dimensional way, in order to capture its complexity and contextual variations, given the current frequent setbacks and the lack of aggregate evidence on successful interventions. Indicators need to cover two different important dimensions: the context but also the actors themselves

A. The conditions of the context, including:

The regulatory and system environment: Adherence to Human Rights conventions (including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, conventions on freedom of assembly, speech, religion, etc.); CS legislation and registration procedures; the variety of primary and secondary policies and systems that ensure the application of these conventions; the system for complaints in case of any abuse and the potential consequences for making complaints; no curtailment/restriction on activity types and sectors, including in the area of HR, gender, and advocacy; number of policies and legislations passed to enhance effective operations of CSOs in the country, etc.

Governance practice: the degree to which government financial and policy information is accessible; the space and existing practice for parliaments, civil servants, local authorities and CSO to contest government data, and to provide evidence; the mechanism for policy debate and for the final decision-making on the constitution and policies; scale and remit of mechanisms for citizens to interact with state institutions and other bodies having a mandate to deliver public services and Parliaments (in the form of institutionalised and ad-hoc meetings, social dialogue mechanisms, regional and local boards, joint programmes and plans, etc.), etc.

The interaction of social, political and economic elements influencing the space and role of CSO: access to decentralized services; the central government's collaboration with local authorities; incidence and potential threat of conflict or disaster (in fragile contexts); freedom of press and space for CS voice in the media including 'official' ones; existence of a favourable fiscal environment (also as regards fundraising opportunities for CSO, income generating activities, fiscal deductions, freedom to receive foreign funding without the government's regulatory measures, transparent distribution of funds for service delivery, etc.), etc.

B. The characteristics of CS actors, including the level to which CSO are playing their roles appropriately and effectively; the number of CSOs registered and operating in the country (and changes in time), particularly the number of CSOs dealing with sensitive issues (governance, human rights, etc.), and the number of CSOs working with groups that are discriminated against or socially excluded; number of performing and structured coalitions, networks and umbrella organisations; the existence of self-governing and governance standards; use of resilience and sustainability proxies (evidence of successful completion of projects in collaboration with local community-based organisations and vulnerable populations, etc.).

Thirdly, more emphasis is needed **on the communication and dissemination dimensions** of the project, including the choice of channels for upward and downward communication to CS and their constituencies; and the marketing of research products (which need to reflect DAG ownership). Systematic and regular communication with the different stakeholders is crucial for effective implementation of any project and **it is even more important in a brokering project like TECS**, designed to contribute to trust building.

Also, within output 3, stronger emphasis is needed on the **translation of research outputs** (and not just TECS-owned research but also existing studies and reports commissioned by other institutions) into workable advocacy messages, in line with the initial work done as regards IGA with

³⁹ <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/global-cso-meeting-post-busan-the,615.html>

DFID. For this close cooperation with CSSG is needed, also in the identification of champions within both the GoE (beyond the ChSA) and Civil Society.

Stronger links are also needed, particularly with CSOs (both Ethiopian and International CSOs, at a federal but also regional level) as well as with **on-going programmes, particularly those supported by CSSG members** (CSSP; ESAP/PBS II; CSF II, etc.). With the latter, cooperation needs to be particularly strengthened in regards to their Monitoring and evaluation systems (as briefly illustrated by the figure below).

Finally, if at all Capacity development work is to continue with the ChSA (output 2), the evaluation team believes that it should only **concern the development of the data base, and provided that a number of sine qua non conditions are fulfilled**. They include: (i) there is a formal commitment on the migration of the data-base to a web-based system, which is accessible to all stakeholders (particularly CSOs without the need of prior ChSA consent); (ii) the decision to continue the support to the development of the data base is strongly backed by all CSSG members; (iii) local and international CSOs are consulted prior to the endorsement of this decision and are regularly informed of the developments and; (iv) mitigation plans are drafted, and duly implemented should the institutional environment change.

Unless all these conditions are met, the evaluation team believes that TECS should not further engage in capacity building activities of the ChSA, as the potential risks of engagement (as evidenced by TECS in its current phase) would outweigh the expected benefits. As the TECS management team acknowledges⁴⁰: “At present, there is little mileage in building capacity of the Agency, although this may change again, especially if Government loses faith that the Agency can put into effect and monitor meaningfully the guidelines or considers a change of leadership. However, as long as the Agency remains quite intransigent on various matters, it is not possible for TECS to be able to engage with both Agency and CSOs and be considered fair, objective and trustworthy by both parties”.

⁴⁰ Tracking Trends in Ethiopia’s Civil Society Sector. Mid Term Review. May/June 2012 . Atos Team's self assessment

4. Annexes

4.1. Evaluation matrix

TECS MTR
Draft of evaluation matrix
 29.05.2012

I. Evaluation matrix

Log frame matrix (LFM) Terminology

TECS LFM terminology	Project Cycle Management LFM terminology
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Figure 2

Impact	Overall objective
Outcome	Project purpose, also known as Specific Objective
Outputs	Expected results

Evaluation questions and sub-questions	Progress markers/Indicators (as defined in the log-frame)	Secondary sources	Primary sources Qualitative information gathered through interviews / and focus groups with relevant stakeholders				
			DFID & Irish Aid	CSSG	TECS team	ChSA	CSOs
Relevance, complementarity and quality of design							
1. TECS relevance vis-à-vis the context	1.1. Relevance of TECS objectives, expected results and selected approach vis-à-vis the institutional, political and economic context of the country at large and that of CSOs in Ethiopia. 1.2. Extent to which the project design has been flexible to adapt/accommodate to the changes in the institutional context. What other adaptations may be necessary?	N/A	PASDEP, GTP, Proclamation, ChSA guidelines, CSSG minutes, Original Project Memorandum, Interim Project documents (most useful is Handover Note of previous Team Leader), TECS inception reports,	1.1. 1.2. 1.3.	1.1. 1.2. 1.3.	1.1. 1.2. 1.3.	1.1. 1.2. 1.3.

Mid Term Review of TECS

	1.3. Major stakeholders' views and perceptions on: (i) the research, dialogue & capacity building and dissemination strategies of TECS and: (ii) appropriateness of the selected approach (targeting both CSOs and the ChSA)		independent INGO, UN and academic institutions reports and position papers, donors reports etc.)					
2. TECS coherence and complementarity with DFID's governance portfolio (when the project was first developed; during inception phase and at present) and on-going CS support programmes	2.1. Extent to which the programme (its objectives, outcomes and outputs, etc.) is complementary to DFID's governance portfolio. 2.2. Extent to which the programme is complementary with CSSG's interventions, namely other CS support programmes in the country and is creating actual synergy (or duplication) with other on-going interventions: (I) Assessment of comparative advantage of the TECS vis-à-vis other donor programmes in support of Civil Society? And (ii) Appropriateness of the measures that have been taken to strengthen the complementarity with other initiatives. What other measures would be necessary?	N/A	DFID Ethiopia operational plan and results framework + information on CSF, CSSP and PBS + minutes from CSSG meetings TECS quarterly reports for 2.2	2.1.		2.2.		
3. Quality of design	3.1 Is there clarity and coherence between the stated objectives (impact), project purpose (outcomes) and results (outputs)? 3.2. Suitability of indicators and feasibility of overall objective (expected impact); project purpose (expected outcome), results (expected outputs) as defined in LFM 3.3. Capacity of major stakeholders to interact with and participate in programme design, implementation and monitoring.	N/A	Analysis of TECS documents by evaluation team (inception report, TECS self-assessment against log frame, LFM, comments by DFID & Irish Aid, quarterly reports, other TECS outputs, etc.). Original Project Memorandum, TECS Inception Report and correspondence between Atos and DFID over development of log frame	3.3.		3.3.		3.3.
Efficiency								
4. Progress of implementation and quality of management and M&E systems	4.1. Level of performance against the approved work-plan 4.2. Quality of planning documents and M&E systems (tools and reports)	Will be measured by comparing accomplished activities vs. planned activities in the work plan Flexibility of project to respond to new	Analysis of TECS documents by evaluation team (inception report, LFM, comments by DFID & Irish Aid,	4.1.				4.1.

Mid Term Review of TECS

	<p>4.3. Degree to which Institutional & governance arrangements have facilitated and provided the desired support for efficient decision-making and implementation of the programme. Are accountability systems of the programme appropriate and effective?</p>	<p>urgent priorities issued from CSSG</p>	<p>TECS quarterly reports, TECS reports, other TECS outputs, etc.) + minutes from CSSG meetings. Suggest you also read some correspondence between TECS and DFID over management and governance arrangements Specially: 'Note for Emma_TECS Governance_12Aug11' and 'TECS Governance Arrangements' (early August '11)</p>	<p>4.3.</p>	<p>4.3.</p>	<p>4.3.</p>			
Effectiveness									
<p>5. Extent to which TECS purpose (outcome) and expected results (outputs) are being achieved taking into account the programme environment.</p>	<p>5.1. Level of achievement of planned outputs (expected results) and outcomes (project purpose). In case of differences across the three result areas, what are the nature and causes of the differences?)</p> <p>5.2. Which of the deliverables & initiatives supported are likely to have produced results contributing most effectively to the programme's outputs (expected results) and outcome (project purpose)?</p> <p>5.3. Degree of key stakeholders' satisfaction with the programme's delivery and quality of service.</p> <p>5.4. Extent to which stakeholders actually benefit from the programme?</p> <p>5.5. Have there been any unanticipated results (unexpected positive/negative outcomes) yielded by the programme and what are the consequences on the achievement of the purpose?</p>	<p>At outcome level (Project Purpose):</p> <p>CSO perceptions of positive GO-CSO partnership and negative views of CSOs by government</p> <p>Guidelines, policies and projects influenced by TECS research</p> <p>Financial sustainability of CSOs</p> <p>At output level:</p> <p>Research is robust and evidence based</p> <p>Research is relevant to development or policy environment</p> <p>Staff competence to carry out core services</p> <p>CSO perception of conducive political and legal environment</p>	<p>Analysis of TECS documents by evaluation team (inception report, LFM, comments by DFID & Irish Aid, TECS quarterly reports, TECS reports, other TECS outputs, etc.) + minutes from CSSG meetings. TECS self-assessment</p>	<p>5.1.</p>	<p>5.1. 5.2.</p>	<p>5.1. 5.2.</p>	<p>5.3. 5.4. 5.5.</p>	<p>5.3. 5.4. 5.5.</p>	

Mid Term Review of TECS

	5.6. What external factors (if any) have influenced the success of the programme? Has the programme responded adequately?	<p>Agency provides sufficient and robust monitoring data</p> <p>Effective federal-regional coordination</p> <p>Agency understanding of civil society sector</p> <p>Guidelines and regulations produced which reflect dialogue</p> <p>Agency has effective communications with stakeholders</p> <p>Research is effectively disseminated</p> <p>Research outputs feed into development partner programmes and is influenced by other civil society projects</p>						
Impact perspectives								
6. Extent to which the programme is expected to contribute to the achievement of the overall objective, taking into account the programme environment:	<p>6.1. Key achievements (or most significant changes) of the project in terms of policy, practice and behaviour change (at the level of CSOs, the ChSA, in general)</p> <p>6.2 What are the main challenges to achieving policy, practice & behaviour change? What counter-measures were taken against the unexpected developments (if any) that affected programme quality?</p> <p>6.3. Considering other related activities undertaken by Government or other donors: (i) likeliness that results and impacts will mutually reinforce one another and; (ii) likeliness that results and impacts will duplicate or conflict with one another</p>	<p>Financial contribution of civil society to national development</p> <p>Civil society views on impact of the CSO sector on national development</p> <p>Charities and Societies Agency views on the motivation and competence of CSOs</p> <p>More effective ways indentified for CSOs to support disadvantaged groups (women's economic empowerment)</p>	<p>Analysis of TECS documents by evaluation team (inception report, LFM, comments by DFID & Irish Aid, TECS quarterly reports, especially the Risk Registers, TECS reports, other TECS outputs, etc., TECS Maturity Matrix) + minutes from CSSG meetings. Recent Progress Reports of the ChSA</p>		6.1.	6.1.	6.1.	6.1.
					6.3.	6.2.		

2. Correspondence between scope of work (as defined in the ToR) and selected evaluation questions

Scope of work	Evaluation questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultants will focus upon reviewing TECS performance against the logical framework: checking the implementation status of the work plan set out in the inception report and progress since inception, including an assessment of the quality of progress, and prepare recommendations as to the future continuation of the project into a 	4	Efficiency: Progress of implementation and quality of management and M&E systems

Mid Term Review of TECS

third year, factoring in strategic focus, impact and VFM.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultants will assess progress towards achieving the log-frame Outputs (including last year) and Outcome by the end of the project 	5	Effectiveness: Extent to which the programme's purpose (outcome) and expected results (outputs) are being achieved taking into account the programme environment (sub-questions)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultant will consider Assumptions and Risks, and determine whether and what changes are required. 	1	Relevance of programme vis-à-vis the context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition the consultants will provide inputs on the approaches taken in the programme, where necessary, make recommendations, and identify action points regarding any major issues and problems affecting progress. The consultants will make recommendations for any changes of focus and approach (assuming continuation to a third year is recommended). 	1 3	Relevance of programme vis-à-vis the context Quality of design
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultants will also consider changes within the political context, in particular with regards to civil society operations, over the last two years, and assess the relevance and impact of TECS work within that context. 	1 6	Relevance of programme vis-à-vis the context Extent to which the programme is expected to contribute to the achievement of the overall objective, taking into account the programme environment:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultants will look at how coordination, synergy and complementarity could be improved; both with other DFID funded activities that encompass work with civil society and parallel projects led by other CSSG members. This will include exploring the possibility of the programme ending at the end of December 2012. 	2	Programme's coherence and complementarity with DFID's governance portfolio and on-going CS support programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultants will look specifically if it fits with the DFID emerging Governance Portfolio and the DFID Operational Plan. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultants will explore the possibility of TECS being delivered by folding it into an existing DFID funded programme. 		

4.2. Mid-term review work plan

Work plan in Addis	
28 th May	International consultant flies to Addis
29 th May	9.00-10.30 Meeting with Rosalind Clark and Emma Grant (DFID) 11.00-12.30 Meeting with Irish Aid Bizuwork ketete Ben Siddle, Deputy Head of Agency Peter Heaney, Governance Intern Bethelihem Kassa, Senior programme Officer
30 th May	9.00-12.00 Work session with TECS team Dr. Claire Howard- ATOS partner Ann Condy – team leader Gemechu Desta – Project Coordinator Yeraswork Admassie. Research Director 13.30-15.00 FSS Dr. Meheret Ayenew , Exec Director and FSS team Dr. Asnake Kefialew – Senior Researcher Dr. Zerihun Mehamod – Senior Researcher
31 st May	10.00-12.00 Charities and Societies Agency Tesfaye Shiferaw Human resource development head To give feedback on the trainings conducted Haileselase G/Micael Registration, monitoring and support process owner 0911354114 To give feedback on the trainings given on the communications strategy and developed communications strategy Kalkidan Mengiste – Planning and Communication Department 14.30 CCRDA/ CS-Taskforce- Amedie Gobena, Programme Officer Task Force on enabling environment taskforcecb@gmail.com taskforce.ethcso@gmail.com
1 st June	Focus Group with CSOs at DFID's premises 11.30 Meeting with Beverly Jones & Getinet Assefa - CSSP
2 nd June	10.30 Akalewold Bantiyergu (ex-Deputy team leader CSF and CS resource person) + internal team work
3 rd June	Internal team work
4 th June	9.00-12.00 Working session with TECS team to discuss preliminary findings and ways forward, should TECS be extended 12.30 meeting with Mario Claasen - PBS – Social Accountability Component





Mid Term Review of TECS

	14.00 Meeting with Meaghan Byers. Analyst. First secretary (development). Canadian Embassy
5 th June	11.00 Trocaire/CAFD/SCIAF Mengistu Gonsamo; Senior Civil Society Capacity Development Programme Officer Joint Ethiopia Programme of CAFOD, SCIAF & Trócaire 12.30 Meeting with EUD; Doerthe Wacker and Juanjo Villa Chacón 13.00 Meeting with Leslie Mitchel. Country representative. PACT
6 th June	9.30 Meeting with CSSG members 11.00 Meeting with HUNDEE (Ato Zegeye Asfaw) 14.00 Telephone meeting with Senait Tibeitu. Senior technical Advisor. Futures (American NGO) 15.00 Meeting with Jeremy Armon, the Governance and Security Team leader. DFID 15.30 Debriefing meeting with DFID; Emma Grant and Rosalind Clarke. International consultant flies back home
12 th June	11:00 Meeting with BINGO representative. Nolawi Melakedingel

4.3. TECS deliverables by output

TECS deliverables by output

TECS deliverables by output			
External deliverables			Internal deliverables
Output 1	Output 2	Output 3	Project Management
1 Proposed research scoping CSO and IGA research (ToR, pre-inception, initial findings, report-draft and final-, presentation and policy brief)	1 Agency Training needs analysis	1 TECS project - presentation to Irish Aid	1 Inception report
2 Mass-based organisations (ToR, research design, report-draft and final-, presentation and policy brief)	2 Agency maturity matrix	2 TECS newsletters (September 2011 and March 2012)	2 Confidential annex to inception report
3 Federal regional Interface (ToR, pre-inception, risk mitigation note, draft report)	3 Financial analysis and audit training (5 days, run 4 times)	3 Proclamation and its impact - DAG presentation - Governance WG	3 Risk register (updated quarterly)
4 Women's Economic Empowerment (ToR, research design, Canvassing Report, draft report underway)	4 Project design, appraisal and monitoring (5 days - run twice)	4 Agency Guidelines and their impact - presentation to DAG	4 Political Economy analysis (updated twice)
5 30:70 (research design phases I and 2; impact report phase I)	5 Management and skills for dialogue training (5 days)	5 30:70 Guidelines translated	5 Revised log frame
6 Impact of CSOs (ToR; emerging findings presentation; final draft)	6 Proformas for audit and financial analysis	6 30:70 workshops and presentations (BINGOs, CANGOs, HINGOs and American INGOs)	6 Work plan 2011
7 PWD and Elderly (ToR)	7 Draft Manual on Audit and Financial analysis Briefing Note to Agency on Audit Guidelines/Procedures	7 Advocacy Notes - IGA for TVET and Health	7 Quarterly reports (April 2011, July 2011, October 2011, April 2012)
8 Gender based violence - CSO issues (short briefing)	8 Inputs to initial draft 30:70 Guidelines		8 Note on TECS Governance
9 CBIDSO - research into issues on registration and property	9 Outlines for 3 manuals (Appraisal/Monitoring/Evaluation)		9 Note on Dissemination of research
10 CSO operations in emerging regions - Benishangul Gumuz	10 Agency equipment and infrastructure procurement list		10 Work plan 2012
11 Issues in emerging regions - Somali region	11 Proposal and procurement plan for Agency Resource centre		11 Annual review submission
	12 CSO database (ONLY ACCESSIBLE TO CHSA)		12 Mid-term review submission
	13 CSO database training		13 TECS communications strategy
	14 Agency Communications Strategy		
	15 Communications training (5 days)		

LEGEND	
	CSOs
	All stakeholders
	ChSA Agency
	Donors (CSSG)

4.4. Comments to TECS MTR and reviewers' answers and remarks.

Atos Team's comments on TECS MTR Report and reviewers' answers

Overall appreciation by ATOS team:

Overall, we are pleased with how the reviewers approached the review itself and the main findings and recommendations contained in the report. The TECS project operates in a complicated environment. The context has changed rapidly from the early design stage, the interim project phase, our inception phase and implementation. We appreciate that some of the new directions taken were not appreciated by all stakeholders, and we are not surprised that there are different views concerning what the project is meant to achieve. We have focused our comments on the main part of the report, without repeating the same points raised in the Executive Summary.

Comment 1: Page 13: the reviewers state that subsequent changes to the project “resulted in less project relevance”. We believe the ‘subsequent change’ refers especially to the decision taken to include a capacity building component for the Charities and Societies Agency in the project. This decision was largely taken by DFID prior to the Atos team commencing the project. We were aware that this new direction did not meet with the approval of all stakeholders. However, during our Inception Phase, we became convinced that most stakeholders (in particular Ethiopian and Ethiopian Resident CSOs) found value in the project attempting to engage with the Agency, to try to influence the development of guidelines and procedures. Thus we question the notion that including this capacity building rendered the project less relevant at that time. We believe it exposed the project to greater risks and in the end, the capacity building was not as effective as we believed it might be, given the context in the first few months of the project in the Agency.

Answer by the evaluation team: The decision to include capacity building is one of the changes introduced to the original project logic (not the only one). Other changes are also mentioned in the report, namely the **shift from the original impact monitoring and sector tracking rationale, to a twofold, research and capacity development, logic.** This shift is precisely what renders the project less relevant vis-à-vis the context and environment

Comment 2: Pages 13-14: the reviewers state that there was not much stocktaking from the Interim Phase. We find this comment a little strange because we felt we were very aware of those lessons and they informed our actions. For instance, taking some of the lessons highlighted in the report and our reactions:

Lessons from Interim Phase	TECS response	Answer by the evaluation team
Apparent difficulties in engaging in dialogue with Government	Atos sought to prioritise urgent training needs for the Agency, by way of starting to build confidence and trust	Dialogue cannot be seen as a project output (expected result) but rather as the intended impact, as it falls outside the scope of control of the project. The interim phase already confirmed that it was not feasible or desirable for the project to take the lead role in convening dialogue between government and CSOs around strategic issues affecting the sector. This role should be taken by Ethiopian institutions and development partners. The project can support such dialogue through providing and disseminating high quality,

		impartial research evidence.
The expected level of Government ownership and involvement was questioned	The capacity building component for the Agency was expected to address this concern – it was believed that if the Agency could see some obvious benefits from the project (the training and equipment), it may be more willing to engage in other aspects (the research, dialogue with civil society)	In spite of the complexities of the context, the project was premised on the full participation of the Government. Yet, as evidenced in the draft JPM, during the course of the consultancy, the issue of ‘ownership’ of the proposed project came up time and again: <i>“is it ‘donor-owned’, ‘jointly owned’ by the Government and the Ethiopian Civil Society, or is there ‘tripartite ownership’ by donors, the Government and the Ethiopian Civil Society? However, the consultancy implementing the interim phase supported the view that trying to pin down ‘ownership’ at that initial stage was likely to create unrealistic expectations about who had control over what”</i>
There was a need for a highly technical focus while preserving sufficient flexibility and a brokering role	We believe we maintained a technical focus (we are said by the reviewers elsewhere to have been too technocratic). As soon as new research needs emerged, we responded to them. We played a brokering role regarding preparations and facilitation of the Government/CSO forum (though unfortunately it did not take place) and consultations over the guidelines	The evaluation team believes that a highly technical focus (different from technocratic) was and continues to be necessary, whereby the project builds on and is duly linked to current debates and initiatives to support and measure an Enabling Environment. Besides, the brokering role should go beyond the preparatory work of the joint Government and CSO forum and entails regular contacts with CSOs.
Role of communication to ensure transparency and contribute to trust-building among key stakeholders	We produced and implemented a communication plan, based on the project’s objectives new strategic direction. We believe that the rather low levels of trust and transparency felt by many key stakeholders currently is closely related to the perceived harsh and intransigent application of the law and guidelines in recent times, and the failure to hold a Government/CSO forum. These matters fall outside the control of the TECS project.	Section 2.6.1. of the MTR report (output 3); on page 25 and 26 elaborates on the communication strategy developed by the project, highlighting its shortcomings-Stakeholders’ perceptions are also comprehensively addressed in the evaluation report in section 2.3. (Pages 17 and 18)

Comment 3: Section 2.2

Page 15: The reviewers question the logic of the results chain in the logframe. They may not recall that we were requested by DFID not to make any significant changes to the higher levels of the logframe - despite the new direction taken – for management reasons. It is true that the logframe is not a very close fit to the project which emerged, but this was considered by DFID Ethiopia and by the DFID Results Adviser in London to be an acceptable compromise, in order to avoid having to re-apply through the DFID channels for approving a new/revised project.

Answer by the evaluation team: The evaluation team is not putting the responsibility on the management team; but rather stating the fact that project design is flawed, due to a number of factors, including the questionable results-chain.

Comment 4. Page 16: The reviewers find the assumptions were not realistic or feasible, or not relevant to the project. We think this goes back to the reviewers' earlier point about the new direction making the project less relevant. However, if we consider the new direction was relevant at that time, then it seems to us that the assumptions were also pertinent and realistic, based on DFID's understanding of the openness of the Agency at the time.

Answer by the evaluation team: Please see our answers above.
The evaluation team strongly believes that assumptions on which the project was and continues to be premised have proved inadequate, either because they were not realistic or feasible in the given context or even not fully relevant to the project. Besides, as underlined in the report, and despite the interim phase conclusions, warning against overoptimistic assumptions about the willingness and ownership of the Government of Ethiopia, the design of the implementation phase seems to be premised on the full participation of the Charities and Societies Agency, considered as a partner in project implementation. Finally, and considering the complexity and unpredictability of the context, project assumptions (as well as associated risks) should have been re-assessed and revisited on a regular basis.

Comment 5. Page 16: The reviewers state that the changes which took place in late 2011 would have required changes to the project assumptions and strategy. We agreed with DFID in late 2011 that any changes to the logframe should await the outcome of the MTR (which was originally envisaged to take place around March 2012).

Answer by the evaluation team: the evaluation team believes that these changes were so substantial that they would have required a revision (at least at an operational level) of project assumptions, associated risks and strategies of intervention

Comment 6. Page 17: "Most indicators are not SMART". We suggest the reviewers read DFID's own guidance note on logframe indicators, which are constructed slightly differently to those of certain other agencies.

Answer by the evaluation team: The definition of what constitutes a SMART indicator should not be conditioned by the practices and procedures of a certain donor agency. In line with the increasing call for enhanced results-based management of development programmes and projects (today widely spread in several multilateral institutions and bilateral cooperation agencies) ; indicators are expected to become more and more "SMART":

- S Specific
- M Measurable
- A Achievable
- R Relevant

- T Time-bound

Comment 7. Section 2.3. Pages 17-18: The reviewers found that stakeholder perceptions and expectations were not always concordant and aligned with the logframe. We are not surprised, we know this and it is largely because of the new direction taken, which did not meet the approval of all stakeholders, and the fact that capacity building for the Agency occurred before results of the research started to emerge.

Answer by the evaluation team: the introduction of the capacity building component is certainly an important factor leading to the existence of diverse expectations and perceptions, not always concordant or aligned to the log-frame. Yet, it is not the only factor as argued in the report (see also our answer to the comment on the communication strategy developed by the project)

Comment 8. Section 2.4. Page 18: The reviewers suggest that there should have been/should be a permanent forum for sharing information between TECS and other CS projects. We largely agree; it was our understanding that our project might share a steering committee with the CSSP, which would have bound us in a more strategic manner. However, this suggestion (made anew once the CSSP began its inception phase) has not been taken up. However, we would suggest that this issue needs to be addressed strategically, especially since a new phase of PBS (ESAP II) has got underway. It is unhelpful to propose too many coordinating/steering fora, in the interests of ensuring that development partner agency and project staff do not spend too much time attending meetings.

No comments

Comment 9. Section 2.5 Page 19: The reviewers state that the Management Agent has communicated mainly through DFID and “sometimes through attending the CSSG meetings”. We met both DFID and Irish Aid regularly, and we frequently met CSSG members who are more active (including the EU, as current Chair of the CSSG, the Canadians, with their interest and insight into the Task Force, the Americans and Swedish Development Cooperation, in their role as previous Chairs of CSSG). We have attended most CSSG meetings and a significant part of CSSG business has been brought by TECS.

Answer by the evaluation team: the statement has been reformulated

Comment 10. Section 2.5.2. Page 21: The reviewers state that there was insufficient engagement and relationship building with stakeholders. We note that the project’s output 3 (communication and dissemination) was always envisaged as carrying a smaller weighting than the other outputs (20% compared with 40% for outputs 2 and 3). We believe this was largely correct at the start of the project when we had as yet little to communicate (no research completed, no results in terms of facilitating dialogue), but we ourselves pointed out in early 2012 that we could see the need to increase the importance of this component. Now that we are well into implementation, the project has more need to communicate both research findings and to engage in advocacy beyond those research findings.

Answer by the evaluation team: see our answer to the comment on the communication strategy developed by the project)

Comment 11. Section 2.6.1 Output 1: The reviewers state that most CSOs have not received or read our research reports. We regret that many CSOs may not have read our reports, although we shared our research dissemination distribution list with a significant number of CSOs and CSO networks, and are happy to provide evidence of our distribution lists.

Answer by the evaluation team:

The evaluation team had access to the distribution lists.

The evaluation team believes that TECS communication strategy clearly shows the inadequate importance was given to communication with CSOs. In the stakeholder mapping matrix in the strategy, only a few CSO networks were identified at the federal level, and, except for the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CCRDA), all other identified CSOs were categorised as having middling to low importance as stakeholders in terms of both strategic significance, and frequency and strategic nature of communication. Apart from strategic direction, actual communication with CSOs has not been strong. For instance, the TECS mailing list for policy briefs and newsletters contains a limited number of CSOs, and some of the addresses are not updated or correct.

Furthermore, and in the course of the MTR exercise, most CSOs contacted confirmed not having received or read the research reports.

Comment 12. Output 2. The reviewers state that all planned activities related to capacity building with the Agency. This is incorrect. We think they have based this finding on our 'list of deliverables', which, for obvious reasons, does not include activities engaged in which did not produce a direct deliverable, as is the case with much facilitation and brokering work. However, if they look again at the Atos Self Assessment report submitted for the MTR (and our project quarterly reports), they will find that many activities under Output 2 related to our support to the preparations for the Government/CSO forum (including the provision of a facilitator and meetings between the facilitator and key stakeholder groups) and our facilitation to the Agency and Task Force in consultations over the guidelines.

Answer by the evaluation team: the statement has been reformulated

Comment 13. Page 25: The reviewers state that the database of CSOs is not web accessible and not accessible to external stakeholders. In fact, the Government as a whole does not permit agencies to make government databases web accessible. On the other hand, we know of several individuals (external stakeholders) who have accessed the database by going to the Agency and requesting reports on the data. However, it is possible that many stakeholders remain unaware that they can access the database by visiting the Agency.

No comments

Comment 14. Output 3 Essentially, the reviewers state that we did not communicate enough with CSO stakeholders and others. We return to some points made above: a) this output carried a relatively low rating, which should now be increased, and b) we also communicated with many CSOs through our other activities in Output 2 (through the facilitation and brokering work we mention above).

Answer by the evaluation team: see our answers below

Comment 15. Recommendations

Taking the main points relating to a third year:

'We should move towards a DAG-owned knowledge managed mechanism'. We are not entirely sure what you mean by this suggestion. Perhaps you are suggesting that the mechanism becomes

institutionalised, for instance, within a university department. But in the current operating environment, we think that an Ethiopian institution might be very nervous about what knowledge it could amass and manage. If you are suggesting instead an independent mechanism, would this not be in effect another TECS-type project?

Answer by the evaluation team: the term “DAG-owned knowledge management” stresses the necessary DAG ownership of the project (beyond DFID and Irish aid, on the one hand; and not joint with the Government, on the other hand). It does not refer to any institutionalisation.

‘TECS should remain a stand-alone project, owned by DAG/CSSG.’ We agree, although we wonder whether you see any need to include either the Government or civil society in a more formal way in the management/steering of TECS.

Answer by the evaluation team: the report provides guidance in this regard (e.g. DAG-owned mechanism; stronger link with CSOs; etc)

‘We should agree on a set of “guiding principles”.’ Whilst we agree that guiding principles can be helpful, in the current Ethiopian context, we feel it is unlikely that these would be a productive starting point for dialogue.

Answer by the evaluation team: as argued throughout the report dialogue is beyond the scope of action and control of the Project; and rather falls in the realm of the intended impact (what the Project should be contributing to) The set of guiding principles is not intended to trigger dialogue (this would be again an overoptimistic assumption) but rather to provide a common platform to which stakeholders could return when dealing with any contentious issues that may arise .

‘Revise the logframe.’ If DFID agrees, we are happy to do so along with updated assumptions relevant to a new direction.

No comments

‘Introduce a flexible research mechanism.’ We fully agree; we proposed this in our self assessment.

No comments. The report provides guidance in this regard

‘Research will be more relevant if based on CSSG and CSO interests.’ How should we include the latter? What happens if CSOs want us to carry out controversial research (for instance, on what CSOs are doing to support human rights) but CSSG believes this is too sensitive a topic? We are already having the brakes put on our research on the 30:70 guideline (regarded by CSSG and CSOs as highly relevant) as a result of the Government members of the CSSWG. It is also quite challenging to achieve CSO cooperation in research and monitoring precisely because of the sensitivities of the situation and the very real threat of action by the Agency.

Answer by the evaluation team: If such situation arises, an open discussion should be engaged between CSSG, CSOs and TECS to: (i) reach a common understanding of the related challenges and risks and; (ii) design a suitable solution. As argued throughout the report a high degree of flexibility is needed and should be built into the programme.

‘Work towards establishing an enabling environment tracking and CS evidence documenting system.’ We believe you may be suggesting that a “parallel” database is set up, to that of the Agency’s database. If this is so, we have the following questions: A) the starting point for an evidence documenting system is surely regular updates from the Agency’s database, but we can only do this with the cooperation of the Government. CSOs would be under no obligation to provide an

independent documenting institution/system with the same amount of detailed and often confidential data as they currently provide to the Agency. B) Is it useful to establish an enabling environment tracking system? The Ethiopian Government could easily claim that it complies with the various principles and protocols it has signed up to – Busan, others, BUT it expects that civil society which is not funded by foreign sources should carry out the rights/democracy etc work. C) The Paris Declaration principles urge donors to work with government systems, not to establish parallel structures. We imagine that many donors, including DFID, would rather remain in dialogue with Government and try as far as possible to work with them.

Answer by the evaluation team:

An enabling environment tracking system IS NOT a data-base and/or does not entail the setting up of a parallel data base.

Commitments to promoting an **enabling environment were recently confirmed in the Busan Partnership Document (Article 22)** and a number of initiatives are currently being underway to implement these commitments.

Ethiopia's challenging policy environment justifies the need for an Enabling Environment tracking mechanisms. As argued in the report, the **original postulates and rationale that guided the design and initial development of the project** remain even more valid today, in view of the recent developments in the sector. Although there is not yet any comprehensive information on the impact of the PCS and subsequent enacted guidelines, a number of developments can be highlighted as consequences of the law⁴¹. They include the decrease in the number of registered CSOs (even though the ChSA argues otherwise)⁴², a major decline of rights-based approaches and engagement in democratisation⁴³, continued disorientation of the sector, paralysis of networks and coalitions and increasing control and regulation of interactions between CSOs and their target groups⁴⁴, among others. Besides, as policy-dialogue is an engagement area most discouraged by the law, reportedly the CS community is increasingly becoming inactive and invisible in discussions around core national issues; something that furthers contributes to eroding the relevance and added value of the sector⁴⁵.

⁴¹ Evaluation of Norwegian People's Aid Development Programme in Ethiopia. NUPI Report. Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Drafted by Akalewold Bantirgu, Alemmaya Mulugeta and Axel Borchgrevink. March 2012

⁴² A recent comparative assessment of numbers of registered organisations pre and post the proclamation shows that **there were more federal level registered NGO/CSOs in 2009 (about 2601, excluding faith-groups) than the total number in 2011** (which was 2057). While the number of consortiums grew (from 12 to 34) and the number of INGOs showed little change, the number of local/national NGOs attributed most for the decline in the number observed. Some of the local organisations who decided not to re-register under the CSP could have been weak and non-operational NGOs even before. However, despite the continued registration of the many formerly regional-level registered organisations by the Agency, the fact that the total number of federal level registered NGO/CSOs in 2011 remains below that of the 2009 total numbers provides no grounds to argue that the law has positively contributed to citizen's interests and the right to association. See: Dupuy K. How Legal Restrictions Impact NGOs in Africa: The Charities and Societies Proclamation in Ethiopia, University of Washington Department of Political Science, 2011

⁴³ Even before the law, the number of organisations actively engaged in promoting pluralism and promoting watchdog functions were very few. All CSOs with a rights-based approach, and especially those focusing exclusively on issues explicitly listed in the Proclamation as off limits for foreign funding, have been severely impacted by the law. While few have succeeded so far in maintaining such approaches and strategies innovatively, particularly in the regions, others have dropped this line of work, and hence now have less attractive strategies for certain donors, particularly keen rights-based approaches to development. **Reportedly, out of the 127 human rights organisations operating in Ethiopia in 2008, very few exist today** (see the Report by the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai. 21 May 2012. A/HRC/20/27).

⁴⁴ Because of the growing uncertainty after the new CSO law, it has become common practice for NGOs to organise group events for target-groups only with the consent and in the presence of local counterpart officials and authorities, thereby avoiding any suspicion that they are not complying with the law. In some localities, NGOs need to have advance approvals from authorities to host head office staff and other visitors, or only accompanied visits and discussions with communities may be allowed. It can be said that the situation is hindering meaningful interactions between NGOs and their target groups with regard to achieving the shared objective. See: Evaluation of Norwegian People's Aid Development Programme in Ethiopia. NUPI Report. Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. Drafted by Akalewold Bantirgu, Alemmaya Mulugeta and Axel Borchgrevink. March 2012

⁴⁵ idem

Finally, also as argued in the report, the **enabling environment is to be measured in a detailed and multi-dimensional way**, in order to capture its complexity and contextual variations, given the current frequent setbacks and the lack of aggregate evidence on successful interventions. Indicators need to cover two different important dimensions: the context but also the actors themselves. The ChSA database is therefore one of the several sources of information that should be consulted.

The evaluation team invites ATOS management team to consult **available literature on the EE and tracking systems** (e.g. the Istanbul principles on development effectiveness; the preparatory work undertaken by CIVICUS to set up an index to measure an EE; current pilot EE monitoring initiatives funded by SIDA; tracking work done by both the European and International Centre for Not- profit Law, guidance and toolkits developed by the World Movement for democracy; etc)

‘Stronger links are needed with CSOs.’ We are not clear if the reviewers think these links should be formal or informal, as mentioned above. What sort of links are you envisaging and with what purpose? Given CSOs tend not to act together (and the networks do not always represent their members’ views), how much time should a small project like TECS invest in creating links with CSOs? Perhaps the CSSG could also reflect on this question.

Answer by the evaluation team: A comprehensive understanding of CS and its dynamics is required to make the best use of existing channels and take advantage of existing windows of opportunity. Several studies are available in this regard and better links can also be established with networks at both federal and regional level as well as relevant membership-based organisations at regional level. Also, as argued in the report, better links should be established with existing CS support programmes, which have access to a wealth of CSOs

‘Only work with the Agency if it is feasible to extend support on the database.’ We agree.

No comments