

The Commonwealth Foundation

Civil Society Engagement Strategy

Updated March 2015

The Commonwealth Foundation

Mandate, Vision and Mission

The Commonwealth Foundation is a development organisation with an international responsibility and reach and has a mandate to work with civil society organisations to promote a shared Commonwealth identity and principles of governance, democracy and sustainable development. An intergovernmental organisation, the Foundation recognises it is uniquely situated at the interface between government and civil society and intends to optimise this distinction by focusing on participatory governance and developing the capacity of civil society to act together and learn from each other to engage with the institutions that shape people's lives.

Overview of the Commonwealth Foundation Strategic Plan

Through its strategic planning process for the period 2012-2016, the Foundation has identified as its ultimate outcome, a more effective, responsive and accountable governance with civil society participation. In support of this ultimate goal, one intermediate outcome was identified as the main focus of the Foundation, recognising its unique position as well as limited resources, namely; *Enhanced collaboration and learning between CSOs and institutions in governance*. Four short-term intermediate outcomes were then identified to further illustrate the Foundation's theory of change and guide the development of specific activities so that they clearly link to the intermediate outcome. These built on the strengths and competitive advantages articulated during recent regional consultations as well as the renewed focus of the Foundation

- Outcome Area 1: Strengthened ability of CSOs to use creative expression for Participatory Governance
- Outcome Area 2: Enhanced capacity of regional CSOs and networks/alliances to engage in participatory governance
- Outcome Area 3: Enhanced interaction between regional CSOs and networks/alliances and institutions in governance
- Outcome Area 4: Enhanced knowledge management for more effective Participatory Governance

The Foundation's logic model is included in Annex 1 of the Strategy.

The Foundation's work is also guided by four values which recognise core aspects of the Commonwealth: its *diversity* being its centremost strength, the importance of *collaboration*, *integrity* and *ingenuity* to solidify its competitive edge. Three cross-cutting outcome areas are mainstreamed in the design and implementation of the Foundation's programming. The themes are *gender equality*, *environmental sustainability* and *cultural respect and understanding*. A full copy of the Foundation's Strategic Plan (2012-2016) can be downloaded from <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.org>

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Acronyms

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BPoA	Barbados Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CF	Commonwealth Foundation
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOWAS	Economic Council of West African States
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference
OIF	Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organisation
SIDS	Small Island Developing States

Executive Summary

The fundamental purpose of this Civil Society Engagement Strategy is to provide the Foundation with a framework for both empowering and engaging civil society and achieve its ultimate outcome of *more effective, responsive and accountable governance in the Commonwealth with civil society participation*. It aims to focus on the need for strengthening its mechanisms for innovative relationships and coordination with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The strategy articulates how the Commonwealth Foundation engages with civil society as it implements the Strategic Plan of 2012 to 2016 towards innovative relationships with civil society actors. It will guide the Foundation's working relationships upon which are built a shared understanding of expected results and change processes.

The Strategy is primarily meant for the Foundation's use but if appropriate, other intergovernmental agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors and interested stakeholders in the Commonwealth may be able to use the Strategy.

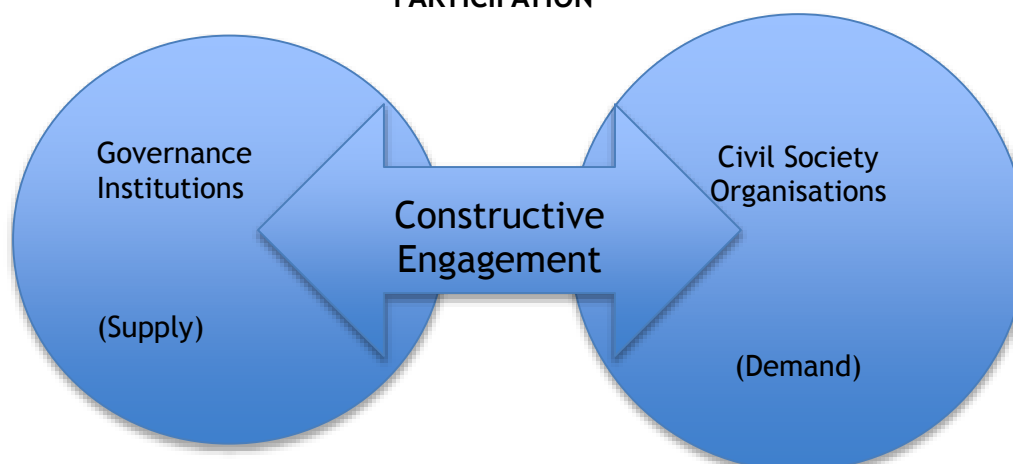
The Strategy is a living document that will continue to evolve, sharpen and adjust as it is applied to the work of the Foundation. It will benefit from the ongoing dialogue with various partners and the wealth of learning coming from the field.

Aligned with global commitments to development effectiveness and guided by its principles of engagement and core values, the Engagement Strategy takes on a longer-term perspective, building capacity, strengthening the enabling environment for participatory governance and policy change and applying an integrated, holistic approach. It underscores a systematic and synergistic approach to monitoring, learning and sharing of best practice. This Strategy is premised on the Foundation's ***theory of change*** that **by having a stronger and more organised voice, increased capacities in policy and advocacy, with clearer messages, and sustained opportunities to work collaboratively with governance institutions, civil society will be able to participate more effectively in governance processes and address the challenges faced in their operating environment.**

The following diagram shows the Foundation's three core action areas of constructive engagement:

CSO-Governance Constructive Engagement Areas and Approaches

MORE EFFECTIVE, RESPONSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION



Strategic Constructive Engagement Areas

1. Capacity Development to strengthen supply and demand (cultural dimension, policy development and advocacy)
2. Enhancement of governance spaces for constructive engagement (regional, pan-Commonwealth and global)
3. Good practices, Sharing, Knowledge Management

Strategic Constructive Engagement Areas	Approaches
1. Capacity Development	Knowledge, attitude and skills building in key areas of need
	Sub-regional and regional network strengthening
	South-South Co-operation
2. Enhancement of Engagement Platforms and Spaces (regional, pan-Commonwealth and global))	Improve the access and utilization of existing strategic sub-regional and regional platforms
	Apply the knowledge, attitudes and new skills learned following a learning-by-doing approach
	Provide technical assistance to select government ministries in constructive CSO engagement
3. Replication of Good Practices and Knowledge Management	Promoting knowledge sharing and learning among CSOs and governance institution
	Documenting and disseminating knowledge resources, lessons learned and success stories
	Replicating good and fit practices in participatory governance
	Maximising communications and technology to enable meaningful learning and performance on participatory governance

1.0 Rationale

1.1 Defining Participatory Governance

Governance encompasses the rules, institutions and processes, through which people, organisations and government work toward common objectives, make decisions, generate legitimate authority and power and promote and protect human rights.¹ *Participatory* governance is about how the state, the market and civil society interact to effect change. These interactions involve the inclusion of civil society in decision-making processes, enabling citizens to exercise voice and engaging in policy formation among others.

An active civil society that is able to question public authorities and suggest different methods of political participation is a cornerstone of participatory governance. Democratic governance is more than simply a matter of “universal suffrage” and while “development and democracy are goals in their own right, they must be mutually reinforcing, with a clear “democratic dividend “in terms of delivering tangible benefits to people.”²

The Commonwealth Foundation’s unique situation at the interface between government and civil society affords it the opportunity to focus on participatory governance and the capacity of civil society to interact with institutions in governance and on the quality of that interaction. The Heads of Government committed themselves to making democracy work better for pro-poor development by implementing sustainable development while building democracy. So, although democracy and development can progress separately, the Commonwealth believes that they are mutually reinforcing. It is impossible to attain either in isolation.

1.2 Background

Emerging Trends in the Development and Political Environment

Over the past two decades, civil society participation has become recognised as critical to ownership of development processes, democratic governance, and the quality and relevance of official development programmes.

Participatory governance or empowered participation of civil society, relies upon the commitment and capacities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberation and are empowered because they attempt to tie action to discussion. It expands the ways in which ordinary people can effectively participate in and influence policies that directly affect their lives and as such, democracy is deepened. Similarly, government officials should also be responsive to this kind of engagement. Participatory governance or democratic governance supplements or enriches the roles of citizens as voters or as watchdogs through more direct forms of involvement.

Civil society, especially when organised, can be a powerful force and is important to the strengthening of responsive governing institutions and practices - in demanding more accountability, transparency, participation and effective governance, democratization of development co-operation, and the quality and relevance of official development programmes.

¹ Governance (Overview), Canadian International Development Agency, December 2010. Online at <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca> > key development challenges>governance>overview

² 2003 Abuja CHOGM Communique Aso Rock Commonwealth Declaration on Development and Democracy : Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, 2003. Online at <http://thecommonwealth.org>

Millions of civil society organisations (CSOs) worldwide, as innovative agents of change and social transformation³, contribute to development in unique and essential ways. The varied roles of CSOs have emerged over the years - they support grassroots experiences of people engaged in their own development efforts; build capacity and advocate for and with the poor; innovate in service delivery; are both donors and practitioners of development; promote development knowledge and innovation; work to deepen global awareness and solidarity among people across national boundaries and push for inclusive policy dialogue with governments and donors to work together for common development goals.

Participatory, democratic governance is a key driver of development. Democracy is directly linked to the concept of governance⁴. There is consensus that barriers to development are linked to failures in governance and that, “poor governance reinforces poverty for the poorest and most marginalised”⁵. If the institutions do not work properly, the vulnerable and poor members of society are the first to suffer. Hence the efficiency and responsiveness of governance and public institutions are increasingly the focus of thought and work in human development. An active and empowered civil society that is able to question public authorities and suggest different methods of political participation is a cornerstone of democratic governance. However, democratic governance also requires⁶:

- The practice of elections and being able to hold the elected official accountable
- A legislature which represents the people,
- An independent judiciary that is able to uphold the rule of law in a non-discriminatory way for all citizens,
- Professional and politically neutral security forces that act in the interest of the common good,
- An accessible media, which are free, independent and unbiased.

While there is no one defined method or rulebook for pursuing inclusive and democratic governance, each country defines its own unique process based on its values, standards, history, local realities and by learning from the experience of other countries.

Civil society in a Global Context

The Commonwealth Foundation understands the concept of “civil society” to be a social domain which is not part of the state or the market, where citizens come together to negotiate their relations with the state, with each other, and with private firms and international institutions in governance. Within this space, “civil society organisations” comprise a wider range of organizational forms and sizes, identities and values - formal and informal voluntary organisations and NGOs, industrial, commercial and professional associations, not-for-profit academic, health and cultural institutions, unions, faith communities, social movements, self-help and community groups and so on.⁷

³ Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, The Siem Reap CSO Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness, Second Global Assembly, Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, Siem Reap, Cambodia, June 28-30, 2011

⁴ Belgian Development Co-operation, Democratic Governance the Key to Development, online at <http://www.btcctb.org/en/thematic-brochures>

⁵ J. Leavy and J. Howard, 2013, What matters most? Evidence from 84 participatory studies with those living with extreme poverty and marginalisation, Participate, Institute of Development Studies, p25

⁶ Belgian Development Cooperation, Democratic Governance the Key to Development, online at http://www.btcctb.org/files/web/publication/Democratic_governance_The_key_to_development.pdf

⁷ CCIC, Civil Society and Development Co-operation: An Issues Paper, Available online at: http://www.ccic.ca/files/en/what_we_do/002_aid_civil_society_and_development.pdf

The distinctive rise of shared governance is a political development of recent decades where the participation of non-state actors (particularly CSOs) in global policy making has increased significantly. Our growing interconnected and interdependent world is characterized by increasing economic globalization, facility of information and communication technology and expanding mobility. Recent moves towards government decentralisation, with greater decision making power and finance provided at local levels, have built upon and often extended the scope for CSOs to influence policy at the local level. Decentralisation and devolution have increased citizen participation and promoted civil society activity as people have responded to opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives.⁸ Meaningful public participation in decision-making, implicit in which are strong civic capacities and a healthy associational life, is a foundation of social stability and peace. As we collectively tackle the challenges of poverty and social inequality, food and energy insecurity, peace and security, economic crises and climate change, new forms of co-operation transcending national and sectoral borders are necessary and the impact of CSOs in the local, regional global governance dialogues cannot be underestimated.

Civil Society in the Commonwealth

Commonwealth leaders recognised the value that the efforts and endeavours of people acting outside the realm of government bring to the Commonwealth. Heads of Government pledged to reform Commonwealth institutions in 2009 at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Port of Spain and in 2011 committed to promote the future of the Commonwealth through the strong and important voice of its people. This resulted in a revised mandate for the Foundation to more effectively deliver the objectives of strengthening and mobilising civil society in support of Commonwealth principles and priorities. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Charter (Clause 16) recognises the important role that civil society plays in our communities and countries as partners in promoting and supporting Commonwealth values and principles, including the freedom of association and peaceful assembly and in achieving development goals⁹.

This Strategy is premised on the Foundation's *theory of change* that by having a stronger and more organised voice, increased capacities in policy and advocacy, with clearer messages, and sustained opportunities to work collaboratively with governance institutions, civil society will be able to participate more effectively in governance processes and address the challenges faced in their operating environment.

1.3 International Principles of Development Co-operation

This Engagement Strategy adheres to several sets of basic principles, already globally affirmed and with a particular focus on aid effectiveness, governance and CSOs. These are the Rome and the Paris Declarations for Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) that together helped transform aid relationships between donors and partners into “true vehicles for development co-operation”¹⁰. The Istanbul Principles and International Framework for Development Effectiveness, also internationally recognized, are the result of civil society analysis on what it believes is necessary to achieve development effectiveness for governments, donors and civil society. The Critical Enabling Conditions by Donors for CSO

⁸ Policy Engagement: How Civil Society Can be More Effective, ODI, RAPID. 2006. Online at <http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID>

⁹ The Commonwealth Charter, March 2013. Online at <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk>

¹⁰ OECD-DAC website at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/fourthhighlevelforumonaideffectiveness>

Development Effectiveness provide valuable insights on the circumstances needed to facilitate an engaged and effective civil society.

1.4 Principles of CSO Development Effectiveness

The Strategy also acknowledges and is further guided by the **Istanbul Principles for CSO Effectiveness** and the International Framework to implement them¹¹ and the decades of ground-level experience by thousands of CSOs around the world it represents. From a civil society standpoint, the Istanbul Principles and International Framework represent the results of a CSO-led analysis and consensus on what civil society believes is necessary to achieve development effectiveness both for governments and donors as well as CSOs themselves. They are statements of values and qualities that should inform CSO socio-economic and political relationships with stakeholders. These principles have given global legitimacy to the notion of CSOs as “development actors in their own right”¹².

Further details on the International Principles of Development Cooperation, CSO Development Effectiveness and learning from the good practices of other donors to engage with civil society, can be found in Annex 3.

1.5 Small States

The Commonwealth Foundation has a special interest in responding to the needs and concerns in development policy and practice for CSOs in Small States, since the majority of Commonwealth member countries are small. Thirty-one of the 53 Commonwealth nations are designated Small States, including both island states as well as several larger countries that share the same characteristics as Small States.

Small States are confronted with many problems and difficulties some intrinsic and timeless while others new, in making progress towards sustainable development and sustainable island living. However, small island societies have a record of thriving in challenging times. Their long histories are rooted in new and innovative approaches, societal mobilization and technological adaptation.¹³

There is a need for international engagement efforts that bring together governments, civil society, regional bodies and international organisations to focus on the effective implementation of the 2014 SAMOA Pathway¹⁴, which supersedes the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Both these documents reaffirmed the continued validity of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) as the “blueprint providing the fundamental framework for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States”.¹⁵ They stress that the acknowledged vulnerability of such states will grow unless urgent steps are taken, and

¹¹ See full copy of the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness and International Framework in Annex 3. The Toolkit for Implementation of the Istanbul Principles is an accompanying resource and can be accessed online at <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org>

¹² Better Aid/Open Forum, “CSOs on the Road from Accra to Busan: CSO Initiatives to Strengthen Development Effectiveness”, Brian Tomlinson (AidWatch), June 2012. Online at <http://www.cso-effectiveness>

¹³ UNESCO website. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/sids/>

¹⁴ UN Conference on Small Island Development States, 2014 website. <http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?menu=1537>

¹⁵ Ibid

reaffirms the international community's commitment to support the efforts of Small States to the full and effective implementation of the BPoA.

It is important for the Commonwealth Foundation to recognise these specific declarations and commitments. Critical from a CSO perspective in Small States, is to ensure that citizens' voices are included in these strategies and ways forward. Of particular importance is the need for ensuring culturally sensitive solutions and taking care that particular island differences are respected. Learning from the work of respected organisations such as the UNESCO in support of these countries and communities, effective action is rooted in the fields of culture, basic and natural sciences, social and human sciences, communication and education.

The underlying challenge is that of building capacities, bridges and networks, in promoting problem-solving actions that mobilise key actors and constituencies that generate effective momentum and impact that are culturally sensitive and scientifically sound. Addressing this challenge calls for meaningful collaboration between societal and organisational sectors (intersectoral co-operation), between regions and between islands of different affiliations (interregional co-operation) and between generations (intergenerational co-operation).¹⁶ Worldwide, there is increasing recognition of the **intrinsic importance of culture to all aspects of the development process**, reflected for example in the debates of the World Commission on Culture and Development and its report *Our Creative Diversity*. With respect to Small States, this widening recognition was reflected in the increasing profile given to culture in both the Mauritius and Samoa UN SIDS Meetings, and to the inclusion of 'Culture' in the updated Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States adopted in Mauritius.

¹⁶ UNESCO website. Online at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/priority-areas/sids/culture-tourism/culture/>

2.0 About the Strategy

2.1 Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy articulates how the Commonwealth Foundation engages with civil society as it implements the Strategic Plan of 2012 to 2017 towards innovative relationships with civil society actors. It guides the Commonwealth Foundation's efforts to more effectively undertake its mandate in a changing global society and pursue its vision of a world where every person is able to fully participate and contribute to the sustainable development of a peaceful and equitable society.

The overarching purpose of the CSO Engagement Strategy is to provide the Foundation with a framework for both empowering and engaging civil society to achieve its ultimate outcome of more effective, responsive and accountable governance in the Commonwealth with civil society participation. Although the Foundation's thrust is on the demand side (CSOs and citizens) of governance, its strategic priorities also address the supply side (state institutions and structures and other institutions in governance), and the interaction between the two. This document offers a frame of assistance to maximise the Foundation's engagement with civil society to achieve its objectives.

Towards this end, the Foundation seeks to focus on the need for strengthening its mechanisms for innovative relationships and coordination with CSOs and governance institutions. Specifically, the strategy aims to:

1. Strengthen the design and implementation of initiatives that will enhance collaboration and learning between CSOs and governance institutions
2. Provide operational guidance to staff as it animates and expands its strategic plan and annual workplans
3. Build cooperative arrangements to promote constructive engagement between CSOs/Networks and governance institutions that will arrive at sustainable results
4. Promote staff interactions with CSOs/Networks, governance institutions and partners in a way that enhances the Foundation's work and contributes to the effectiveness of support to CSOs
5. Assist the Foundation in developing performance measures to facilitate the tracking of progress towards achieving results.

The Strategy is primarily meant for the Foundation's use but if appropriate, other intergovernmental agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors and other interested stakeholders in the Commonwealth may be able to use the Strategy.

2.2 The Strategy's Underlying Principles

This strategy acknowledges the importance of **collaborating through partnerships**. The Foundation's mandate is to enhance the capacities of civil society in support of Commonwealth principles and priorities. To best perform this role, it must seek and nurture relationships that are mutually beneficial and based on trust, shared vision and commitment to common objectives. By working through partnerships, effectiveness and efficiency are enhanced, expertise and relationships are accessed, risks and benefits are shared and new knowledge is produced.

The strategy **highlights the role of the Foundation as an intergovernmental organisation**, development organisation and a convenor of multiple stakeholders, both government and non-government across the Commonwealth. Recognising this strategic value of the Foundation, the interventions and actions that the Foundation undertakes to support civil society will optimise its convening powers and relationship of trust with governments to broker and sustain dialogue and relationships among various stakeholder constituencies. These may include diverse civil society, foundations, faith-based groups, local authorities, governments and the private sector.

The role of CSOs in policy reform and change is critical. The strategy acknowledges the evolving nature and growing influence of civil society on the success and sustainability of development efforts and on how this contributes to changing the lives of citizens, particularly the poor and disadvantaged.

The Strategy builds on these principles and the Foundation's core values while **supporting the various international principles**, commitments and consensus forged by donors, international organisations, governments as well as civil society.

It **applies the lessons learned and recommendations** especially coming from a civil society perspective. Opportunities for South-South cooperation and exchanges between civil society and governments will be supported.

Finally, **the Strategy is a living document** that will continue to evolve, sharpen and adjust as it is applied in the work of the Foundation. It will benefit from the ongoing dialogue with various partners and the wealth of learning coming from the field.

2.3 Process to Develop the Strategy

This CSO Engagement Strategy was developed through an intensive process of review and regional scoping. Seven regional consultation initiatives were organised across the Commonwealth: the Americas, Asia and Europe, Western Africa, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa and the Pacific. The main objectives of this consultation process were to update the Foundation's knowledge of CSOs particularly those in the Global South along with their strengths and areas of weakness particularly in terms of participatory governance, learn about their focus areas of concern in policy and governance and to hear their perceptions of and suggestions for the Foundation.

The CSO Engagement Strategy is based on the input and recommendations from these regional consultations as well as a review of secondary literature and various interviews and meetings with key stakeholders. The experiences, lessons and new development opportunities of other partners have greatly informed this Strategy. Consistent with a belief in not reinventing the wheel and replicating best practices, it builds upon various studies and the good practices and experiences of other donors as explained in the 2012 Aid Watch Canada Briefing Paper #2, the 2012 UNDP Global Strategy to Strengthen Civil Society and Civic Engagement, the AusAid Civil Society Engagement Strategy as well as key documents that provide a civil society perspective of development effectiveness, particularly the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness results. Other reference materials are listed in Section 8.

Findings and Recommendations from the Regional Consultations

The findings and recommendations from the wider range of stakeholders and the regional consultations process sponsored by the Foundation confirmed preliminary assumptions, provided critical updated information on their own respective regional situations and affirmed

the Foundation's efforts to develop this Engagement Strategy. Initial findings and recommendations gathered can be summarized in the following twelve opportunities and challenges.

1. The consultations have affirmed that the Foundation is in a unique position as an IGO and development organisation with a mandate to strengthen and mobilise civil society that can:
 - Open doors to governance institutions and help to bridge divides within civil society
 - Provide access to spaces that can generate various forms of interaction among citizens, and between citizens and government officials
 - Convene stakeholders and bring diverse sectors together
2. The Foundation's concentration on participatory governance has opened up a relevant strategic direction that is at the heart of development effectiveness and resonates with Commonwealth democratic principles and values.
3. Overall, the Commonwealth has a relatively low profile. However there is growing recognition among partners that the Foundation is becoming an influential resource. For example, the Foundation's success with its project on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda has enhanced the profile of the organisation and raised interest in joint sponsorship.
4. There is initial interest among select government institutions to seek capacity development in participatory governance and this is one area to pursue together with civil society counterparts.
5. The Foundation has made a mark and achieved a certain degree of visibility and niche status in its work in culture. Culture is recognised as an enabler of participatory governance and sustainable development.
6. Thirty-one of the 53 Commonwealth member countries are designated as Small States. There is a strong potential for the Foundation to focus some of its work on these states in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, which has also pinpointed this as an area of concern.
7. Regional and sub-regional civil society platforms currently exist in the Commonwealth. Whilst their capacity and readiness is uneven, they are potential entry points on which to anchor the programming efforts of the Foundation. There are also regional civil society - government structures throughout the Commonwealth that similarly offer potential platforms with which to work with CSOs and governments, and collaborate to achieve a common vision.
8. The discussion and reflection within the Foundation regarding participatory governance is a relevant one within the civil society sector - the meaning of genuine consultation and citizen's engagement and voices continues to be debated. There is an articulated need in all regions scoped so far for CSO partners to engage in a process that will further develop a regional development agenda, with an accompanying policy advocacy action plan. This is particularly timely due to the post-2015 development agenda process.
9. CSOs are engaged in governance across the different regions in a variety of methods from mass protest and activism to participation in service delivery, capacity builder, watch-dog monitoring and policy development with differing levels of success. Feedback received

pointed to the need for building CSO capacities particularly in joint agenda setting, policy development and advocacy strategy development and implementation.

10. Furthermore whilst there was recognition of the importance of broad-based collaboration and networks and at a regional, south-south, pan-Commonwealth and global levels, one challenge identified time and again was the ability to sustain momentum and a sense of community of practice, and of continuing to share the currents of mutual inspiration between participatory governance movements in different contexts - developed and developing country, small state, fragile state or at a national, sub-regional, regional, pan-Commonwealth or global level.
11. Civil society is dynamic, vibrant and can be influential but the legal and policy environment for their full operations and engagement is greatly uneven across the Commonwealth and governments in numerous countries are restricting the space for civil society.
12. The Foundation belongs to a Commonwealth family of three intergovernmental organisations -the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning and the Commonwealth Foundation, each with specific but mandates. There is a clear and urgent opportunity for these three sister organisations to more systematically and synergistically collaborate, share results, lessons and strategies to maximise particular areas of expertise and limited resources and improve long-term results and impact.

2.4 Structure of the Document

This Engagement Strategy is divided into four main sections plus references and annexes. The first section presents the rationale for this strategy, provides important contextual information and defines participatory governance. Section two outlines the purpose of the strategy, its underlying principles, the process to develop the strategy and explains who are its intended users. Section three provides a definition for 'constructive engagement' and discusses the role of civil society organisations and government in this engagement relationship while Section four presents the core action areas of the Foundation's programme towards facilitating constructive engagement between civil society and institutions in governance. Sections five and six contain the reference sources and the annexes.

3.0 Constructive Engagement

3.1 Defining Constructive Engagement

A critical aspect of participatory governance is the interaction between the state, the market and civil society that enables citizens to exercise voice and engage in decision-making. The Commonwealth Foundation offers constructive engagement as an approach to this interaction and advocacy for social change and transformation that seeks a reciprocal relationship between civil society and institutions in governance based on mutual respect, trust, legitimacy, transparency and competency for effective, responsive and accountable governance towards social change and transformation.

Constructive engagement would fall within the midpoint range of an advocacy continuum and is about deepening democracy and modernizing governance so that governments and civil society will have changed attitudes and perspectives about each other's roles in strengthening democracy. It is engaging in democratic politics and enabling the citizenry to secure changes in governance that yield gains in development. Constructive engagement is not just about negotiating for issues but helps to build citizenship and good governance for development.

Constructive engagement implies that the State, as the dominant actor, but also other powerful decision-making bodies such as corporations and institutions recognise that CSOs are independent development actors in their own right, and offer a wide range of expertise and experience in development solutions and innovation as articulated in the Istanbul Principles.

It also recognizes that civil society organisations are themselves a reflection and representation of the voice of the citizenry. Government engagement with civil society organisations is therefore, by extension a dialogue with society. CSOs also play a role in facilitating access to society voice in ways that governments cannot, and so constructive engagement with CSOs offers this space to the governing.

Constructive engagement is not an end in itself but a means to an end - a process, a range of strategies where time and timing is crucial; it is about finding the right time, right methods and right language to appeal to the government.

For engagement to be constructive and meaningful, policy dialogue and consultation should be regular or institutionalized, with the necessary information being shared well beforehand and following a process that allows for genuine participation, two-way exchange of perspectives and knowledge as well as a report back on any follow-up action.

Correspondingly, CSOs should always adhere to the principle of accountability to larger society and CSO constituencies, not just to themselves, their own institutions or their networks.

Moreover, constructive engagement should be seen as an essential element of an effective partnership between governance institutions and CSOs.

3.2 CSOs: demand effective, responsive and accountable governance

As internationally affirmed in the Principles of Aid Effectiveness, organised civil society or CSOs are a key partner in development and can greatly contribute to the success, impact and sustainability of the development efforts. As stated in previous sections of this Strategy

document, around the world, civil society has acquired a considerable social and political presence in society at large, and a substantial role in development policy and programming.

In a world that is inter-dependent, events such as the 2008 financial crisis or climate change, have global impacts, the **demand** for good governance is resounding. How can the state better govern and regulate its affairs, including the governance of the private sector that drives jobs and growth? Such questions of transparency and accountability, integrity and effectiveness, competitiveness and equal access to quality basic services are increasingly heard. From revolutionary change in the Arab world, to powerful anti-corruption movements in India and Brazil, to the 'Occupy' movement in some western countries, a groundswell of citizens' movements has signaled frustration with a perceived inability of governments to handle increasingly complex global problems such as poverty, joblessness, fiscal crises, climate change and environmental vulnerability¹⁷. Neither governments nor communities working alone are able to solve these complex problems.

The beginnings of a new social contract are emerging. Citizens are seeking a relationship with their governments based on transparency, accountability, and participation.

3.3 Governments: suppliers of governance

Governments, or the **suppliers** of governance, on the other hand, have gradually been responding to this call. Many have signed on to the International Principles of Development Co-operation. As discussed in the previous section, the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation in 2011, established democratic ownership or inclusive governance as a key tenet of development effectiveness, strengthened commitments of transparency and accountability and acknowledged the Istanbul Principles for CSO Effectiveness and the International Framework to implement them¹⁸ as necessary requisites to achieve development effectiveness. These international declarations recognised the importance of creating an enabling environment to facilitate broader participation in governance and development and in order for collaborative policy development and change to take place. "An enabling environment is a set of interrelated conditions - such as legal, organizational, fiscal, informational, political and cultural - that impact on the capacity of development actors such as CSOs to engage in development processes in a sustained and effective manner."¹⁹ As such, it includes the need for fundamental changes such as legal and policy regulatory contexts to promote and sustain involvement over the longer term and ensure that the civil society organisations can continue to meaningfully participate. (See inset on following page.)

It should be further clarified, that CSO development effectiveness is dependent on mutually reinforcing external as well as internal factors. Internal factors mainly relate to CSOs' capacity, their own fulfillment of principles of CSO development effectiveness, and effective collective structures and mechanisms. External factors relate to the recognition of the role and voice of CSOs and the development of an enabling environment for CSOs to operate²⁰. With the importance of an enabling environment enshrined in the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, civil society and multi-stakeholder actors in the

¹⁷ World Bank Brief, Social Accountability and Demand for Good Governance, August 15, 2013 Online at:

¹⁸ See full copy of the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness and International Framework in Annex 3.

¹⁹ Thindwa, J., "Enabling environment for Civil Society in CDD Projects", Washington, DC: World Bank, Social Development Family, CDD Learning Module, 2001. Available at:
<http://www.worldbank.org/participation/enablingenvironment/EnablingenvironmentCECDD.pdf>

²⁰ Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, Issue Paper 8 Enabling Environment, 2009. Available at
http://www.ccic.ca/files/en/what_we_do/osc_open_forum_wkshop_2009-10_paper_8_e.pdf

Commonwealth have a solid ground for further action on this key area for civil society contribution to development and policy change.

As governments are the primary regulators and leaders in development, they play a principal role in creating these conditions to open up decision-making and enable citizen collaboration around policy and development processes. Currently, conditions vary greatly from country to country ranging from what could be defined as a ‘disabling’ environment, even oppressive environment in some cases, to restrictive or problematic environments, to what may be considered models of good practice and setting an example for others to follow, in other instances. In some countries, the state is responding to, even leading the move to greater openness, transparency, and citizen engagement while others are struggling to catch up with the legitimate aspirations of their citizens.

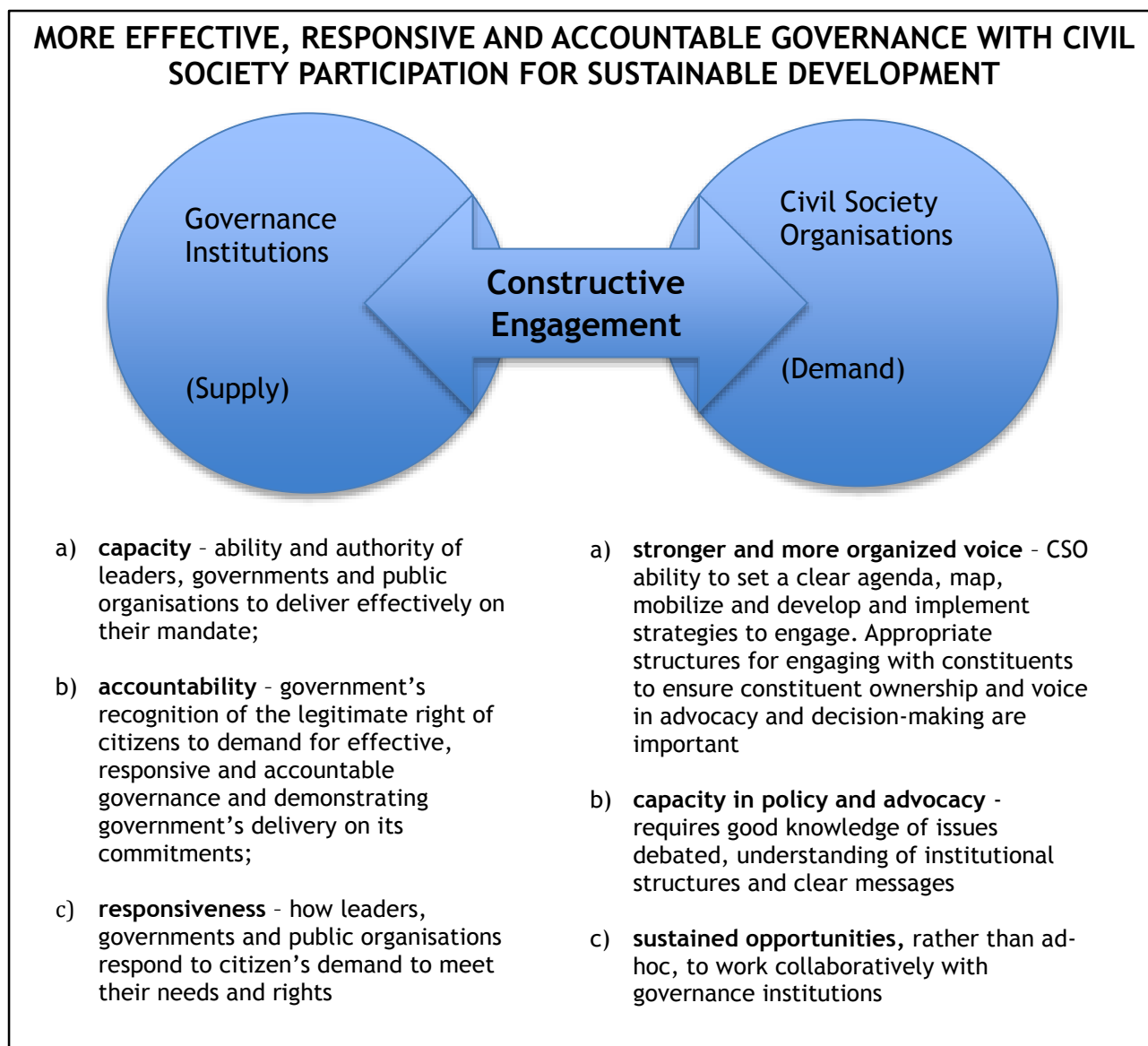
Effective, responsive and accountable or “good” governance is attained through the presence of three elements:

- a) capacity - ability and authority of leaders, governments and public organisations to deliver effectively on their mandate;
- b) accountability - government’s recognition of the legitimate right of citizens to demand for effective, responsive and accountable governance and demonstrating government’s delivery on its commitments;
- c) responsiveness - how leaders, governments and public organisations respond to citizen’s demand to meet their needs and rights.²¹

The diagram below illustrates the model for effective, responsive and accountable governance.

²¹ Centre for Innovation, Transformation and Excellence in Governance, Unit 1110, 11th Floor Prestige Tower, F. Ortigas Jr. Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City, Philippines
Online at: <http://incitegov.org/programs/constructive-engagement/>

Diagram 1: Constructive engagement is a critical element for effective, responsive and accountable governance



3.4 Forms of Engagement and Advocacy

Consequently, it follows that the approaches of civil society in engaging with governments or governance institutions depend on both CSO capacity to engage with governments and on the openness of governments and opportunities for engagement, i.e. an enabling environment for collaboration. Various mechanisms for engagement can be initiated and supported by the state, citizens, or both, but very often they are demand-driven and operate from the bottom-up. This engagement can range from protest and civil disobedience, on one extreme, to collaboration, cross-over, and even co-optation on the other.

While the degree of engagement with government may vary because of different histories and current external and internal country conditions, the need for engagement is deemed crucial for the strengthening of governance. Governance however, is not just about *formulating and administering policy*, which addresses the question ‘who gets what, when and how’, but more

importantly, about ‘*changing the rules of the game*’—that is, defining ‘who makes the rules, when and how’²².

This vision of policy and governance has broad implications for civil society readiness to engage in that it must have the capacity to shift the framing of development, particularly how governance of development is currently viewed and practised. CSOs must begin taking lead and active roles in illustrating models that place equal, if not primary, emphasis on the crucial role of citizens in governance. Such efforts to promote institutional and structural reform could comprehensively and successfully be undertaken through stronger links and collaboration among and between CSOs and social-political movements since the development of such frameworks encompasses the key domains of both their struggles | the civil and political realms. This implies building the capacity of CSOs to strategise, relate, negotiate, forge links and sufficiently coordinate complex citizen coalitions both nationally and internationally.

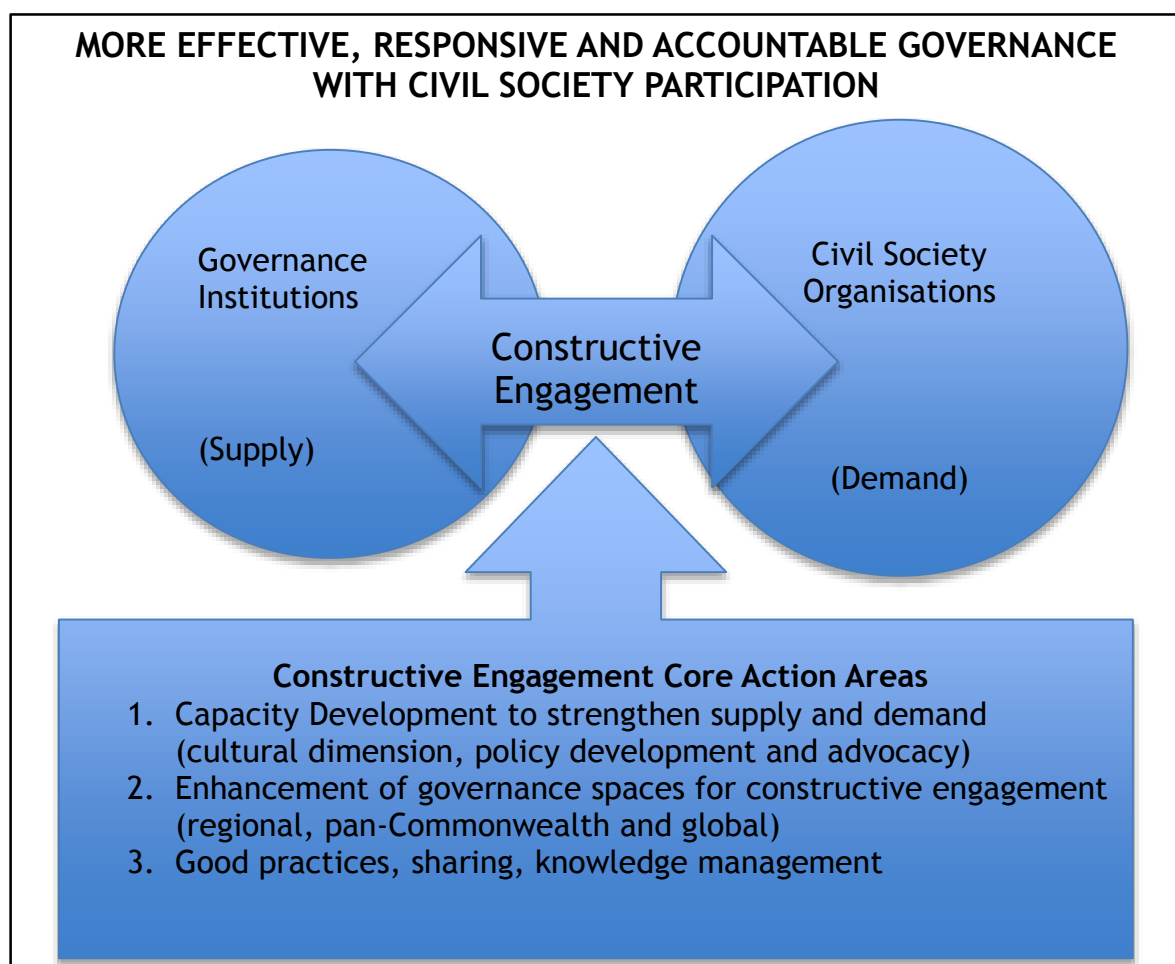
²² UNESCO, 2004 Education for All Collective consultation of NGOs (CCNGO/EFA) ‘Changing the rules of the game’: Building capacity for policy engagement and Asian-South Pacific CSOs in education, A discussion paper. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002331/233177E.pdf>

4.0 Constructive Engagement Core Action Areas

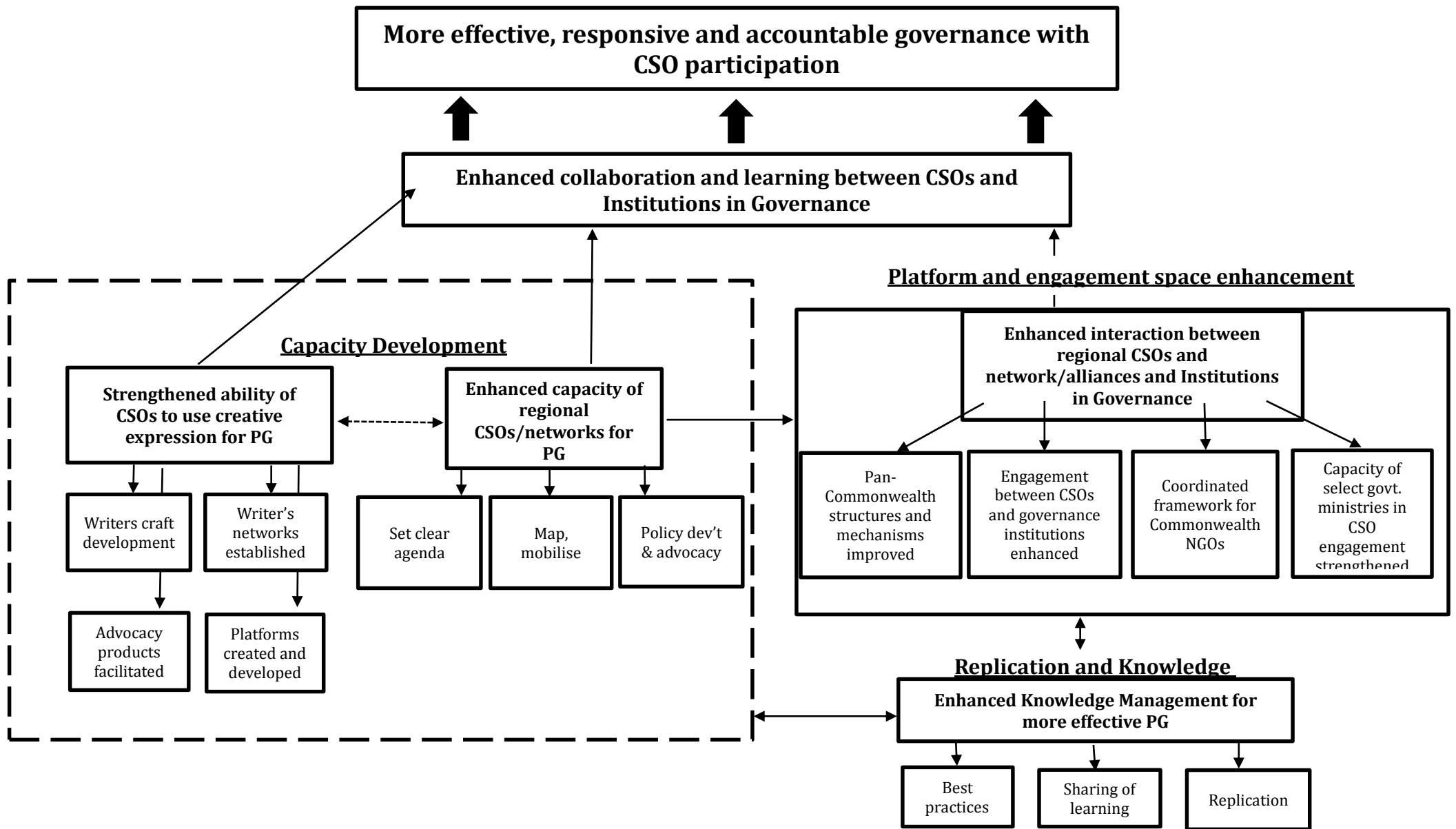
This Civil Society Engagement Strategy takes on a long-term perspective, building capacity, strengthening the enabling environment for participatory governance and policy change and applying an integrated, holistic approach. It underscores a systematic and synergistic approach to monitoring, learning and sharing of best practice. The diagram below illustrates the Foundation's selected three strategic core action areas of constructive engagement:

1. Capacity development to strengthen the supply and demand - in the cultural dimensions, policy development and advocacy,
2. Enhancing platforms and spaces for engagement at the regional and pan-Commonwealth levels networks, and
3. Replication of good practices and knowledge management on participatory governance.

Diagram 2: Core Action Areas of Constructive Engagement



The results of the approach outlined in this strategy will have both 'downstream' local development impact and 'upstream' policy impact. Taking into account the findings and recommendations from the regional scoping and consultation process and in optimizing the unique contribution that the Foundation offers, the Commonwealth Foundation proposes that targeted, strategic interventions focus on three core areas of engagement to achieve this. This is illustrated in the **theory of change** depicted in the following graphic.



CF THEORY OF CHANGE

As such, the three core action areas of constructive engagement are further explained as follows.

4.1 Core Action Area 1: Capacity Development

Capacity development is a key methodology to strengthen and empower civil society and achieve development results; it was identified as lying at the heart of the Accra Agenda for Action.²³ Capacity development is defined as a locally driven process of learning by leaders, coalitions and other agents of change that bring about changes in socio-political, policy-related, and organisational factors. It enhances local ownership for and the effectiveness and efficiency of efforts to achieve a development goal²⁴.

The capacity development model that the Foundation espouses promotes a systematic approach of thinking through and tracing the relationship of a set of variables to a particular goal in a given context and then applying the new capacities in specific instances. It is an open system capacity development model that defines the stakeholder terrain at the individual, organisational and institutional levels. It identifies the various stakeholders that should be included in the capacity development process along with the capacities needed. It also includes effective monitoring of results in order to capture progress made. This model offers a view of capacity as a complex, holistic process that takes place at different levels of the system and in a web of interconnectedness.²⁵

It should be clarified that capacity development is viewed as a comprehensive approach involving a variety of tools and participatory techniques based on exemplary practices and lessons from other practitioners using a learning-by-doing approach, on-site mentoring, locally-based hands-on training and direct application of new skills to local situations.

The findings and recommendations from regional scoping missions and consultations have identified some key capacity development gaps. These have helped to affirm the Foundation's theory of change. Civil society's ability to engage effectively with institutions in governance can be hindered by these main factors: by their awareness of the issues being debated by the governance institutions and their understanding of the processes and structures and their ability to engage - organise, articulate, prioritise, move forward an agenda and interact with governance institutions. All these point to a need for capacity enhancement with an emphasis on addressing these factors. Consistent with the Foundation's theory of change, some of these capacity areas of action include:

a. Knowledge, attitude and skills building in key areas of need

- These include approaches and interventions that integrate culture into the development agenda recognizing the specific contributions that culture as a sector has made towards achieving sustainable development (e.g. craft development, writers networks established)
- Policy development and advocacy as two areas of weakness mentioned by participants in the consultations, in the context of sub-regional and regional positions and including monitoring skills

²³ OECD, Aid Effectiveness, 2012. Online at

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/thehighlevelforaonaideffectivenesshistory.htm>

²⁴ Otoo, Samuel et al. The Capacity Development Results Framework: A Strategic and results oriented approach to learning for capacity development, World Bank Institute, June 2009, p3

²⁵ Commonwealth Foundation Strategic Plan, 2012-16, Commonwealth Foundation. Online at: <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.org>

b. Sub-regional and regional network strengthening

- Collaboration and networking skills enhancement - opportunities for sub-regional or regional networking and collaboration. Some sub-regions/regions have better established or more mature networks whereas others are still beginning to establish themselves. Customised interventions will support the building of strong networks ready and able to engage with regional level governance institutions
- Regional development agenda setting - strengthen capacities to exchange intelligence, articulate positions, negotiate, prioritise and build consensus across a network.

c. South-South co-operation

- Opportunities for South-South exchanges across regions for cross learning and further collaboration. This should not necessarily be limited to CSO leaders but may include the second level leaders who would greatly benefit in exposure to new and different ways of performing similar roles or arriving at similar results

4.2 Core Action Area 2: Enhancement of Governance Spaces for Constructive Engagement

This action area further addresses the hindering factors to achieving a strong and engaged CSO community, namely: a) a lack of CSO capacity to engage and b) the lack of an enabling environment for sustained engagement. As discussed in previous sections, an enabling environment for meaningful CSO engagement includes a complex set of enabling conditions included in this list:²⁶

²⁶ Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, Issue Paper 8 Enabling Environment, 2009. Available at http://www.ccic.ca/_files/en/what_we_do/osc_open_forum_wkshop_2009-10_paper_8_e.pdf

Enabling Environment Conditions* (also see Annex 3 for Critical Enabling Conditions for CSO Effectiveness)

1. CSO recognition

- a. Political factors and other circumstances influencing CSO recognition and operations. These may include mechanisms to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and access to information.
- b. General legal and judicial system and related mechanisms affecting for instance charitable status provisions, CSO legislation and taxation, or whether CSOs, or their constituencies, can seek legal recourse.
- c. Administrative factors affecting the way in which a given government deals with CSOs.

2. Promotion of CSO voice

Processes, structures and mechanisms creating meaningful access, space, and capacity, for CSOs to formulate, articulate and convey opinion in consultations and decision making processes nationally and internationally.

3. Promotion of CSO capacity

- a. Funding mechanisms that ensure that CSO capacity is promoted.
- b. Regulations and norms to promote CSO transparency and accountability to their constituencies.
- c. Government and other support programmes available for developing CSO capacity and effectiveness.
- d. Measures to promote philanthropy and corporate social responsibility.

4. CSO external relationships

Whether CSOs are allowed and enabled to engage in the following relations with other civil society actors:

- a. North/South relations
- b. South-South and other international networking
- c. National CSO networks and platforms

5. Supportive role of external partners and actors in promoting CSO development effectiveness

- a. Northern and International CSOs
- b. Donors
- c. Multilateral Institutions

*Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, Issue Paper 8 Enabling Environment, 2009.

A corresponding key hindering factor includes governance institutions' lack of understanding and recognition of these conditions enshrined in the International Framework to implement the 2011 Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation. The Commonwealth Foundation supports the promotion of these conditions and will undertake efforts to advance their attainment at various levels whether national, regional or global. Specifically, this action area builds on the Foundation's convening capacity to form innovative partnerships with influential organisations in using three main approaches, namely:

- a. **Improving the access to and utilization of existing strategic sub-regional and regional platforms** (e.g. ECOWAS, OIC, OIF, African Union, CARICOM, ASEAN) as well as those at a pan-Commonwealth (e.g. Commonwealth Ministerial Meetings, Commonwealth People's Forum) and at a global level (e.g. UN, OECD, G-20, World Economic Forum). It will do this by:
- Scaled up activities and impact to a higher level of governance
 - Bolstered policy research
 - Sharpened advocacy planning
 - Joint government-CSO agenda planning for key meetings
 - Prepared representation at key meetings and dialogues with government decision-makers
 - Showcasing of civil society expertise and best practices
 - Monitored regional agendas
 - Facilitated co-operation rather than competition among civil society and others

The Foundation has access to important Commonwealth spaces such as ministerial meetings and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and strives to open up these spaces to allow for more meaningful dialogue and negotiation between CSOs from across the Commonwealth and government officials. These spaces have traditionally been limited to agendas and processes planned by government with limited input from CSOs from the Global South, or when planned by CSOs there is minimal representation from or interaction with key governance officials. This falls short from the kind of engagement espoused by the Foundation and supports the traditional format of separate forums or activities with little opportunity or even openness for genuine dialogue, consultation and influencing of policy decisions.

The Foundation conducted recent reflections and an assessment review of previous Commonwealth forums and has concluded that to better achieve its goals, make strategic use of limited resources and maximize its convening capacity to ensure that constructive engagement can effectively take place with concrete results, a more selective approach to working with and accessing with these spaces was necessary.

To support this approach, the Foundation has identified a set of requirements needed to promote genuine dialogue when convening civil society for constructive engagement with institutions in governance. The Foundation is committed to facilitating spaces that work towards these requirements. These will be applied in the selection of spaces and efforts to support them and together with further discussions with civil society partners, will inform how forums are designed and delivered in the future.

Requirements needed to promote genuine dialogue when convening civil society:

To support this approach, the Foundation has identified a set of requirements needed to promote genuine dialogue when convening civil society for constructive engagement with Institutions in Governance. These are:

- Civil society should be in a lead role when developing the agenda and the design of the process and methodology for the dialogue/forum/space
- A participatory process should be followed in the design, implementation and post processes of the dialogue/forum/space
- The dialogue/forum/space should be owned by CSOs in the host country together with broader partner CSO networks across the Commonwealth with support from the Foundation
- Civil society should have access to relevant government ministries and decision-makers in order to have a meaningful dialogue
- A consultation process that is inclusive, allows time for feedback to participants and integrates monitoring and sharing of results should be central to the design, implementation / delivery and assessment of the dialogue/forum/space
- All parties have timely access to relevant information to be able to ably prepare for the dialogue or engagement process
- The host government needs to guarantee a safe and secure space for dialogue and engagement

b. Applying the knowledge, attitudes and new skills learned in the first core engagement focus area - i.e. capacity development - following a learning-by-doing approach, CSO capacities will be strengthened in these important areas of weakness to better utilise the space to pursue clearly articulated CSO agendas. This may be done by:

- Bolstering policy research
- Sharpening advocacy planning
- Accessing required technical assistance
- Monitoring of regional agendas

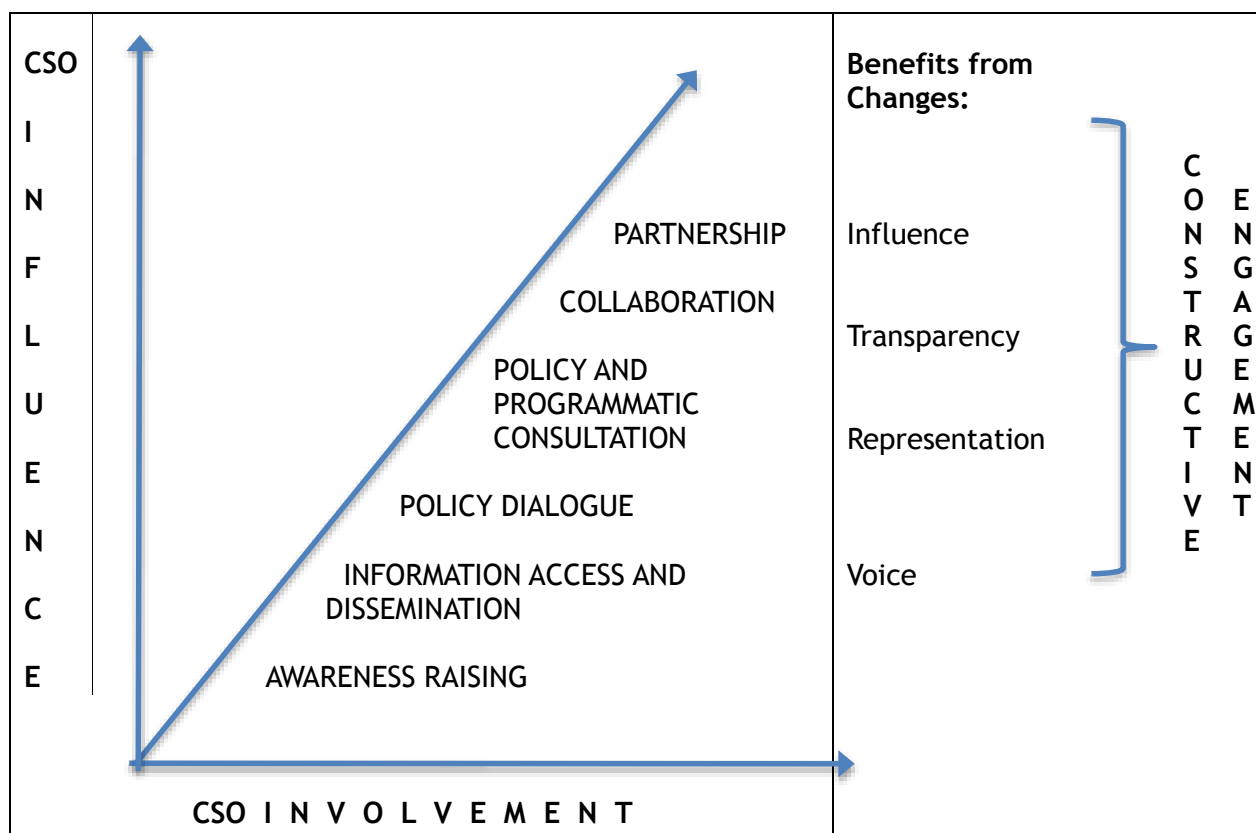
Following the Foundation's theory of change, in order for CSOs to contribute meaningfully in platforms and other engagement spaces whether at a local, national, regional, pan-Commonwealth or global level, CSOs must be prepared and capable to engage. Preparedness and capacity include the internal readiness of the CSO network, which means it has done its own internal consultations to arrive at agreed positions, has the ability to negotiate, build consensus and trust and cultivate relationships. The link between these first two action areas is interwoven such that as capacities are being strengthened in the first core action area, these are tried out and directly applied in the second action area. This implies that the selection of the forum or platform and follow-up supports should consider the areas of interest and preparedness of partners in the first action area.

Consequently, as the Foundation establishes and develops its own relationships with these strategic bodies, it needs to do so at a pace in synch with regional CSO partners. The Foundation does not represent nor speak for Commonwealth CSOs but rather facilitates connections and spaces for dialogue, policy influence and knowledge sharing among CSOs and between CSOs and IIGs. As such, it is important that the Foundation is

in tandem with its partners' issues and advocacies particularly when communicating with governance institutions.

The following diagram will help to illustrate a continuum of CS engagement that the Foundation is guided by as it further animates its programming in this action area.

Diagram 3: Civil Society Engagement Continuum²⁷



Level	Nature of Interaction	Level of CSO involvement in Decision Making	Outcomes
Voice	One way	None	There are limited opportunities for influencing policy processes
Access to Information	One Way	None	The Government makes information available to civil society on policy design and implementation processes
Recognition	Two way	Low	The government, multinational organisations or IGOs recognize the substantive nature of the proposals/ recommendations/ policy options or concerns from civil society, but the action is limited
Influence	Two way	Shared	Formal structures for consultation are established and there is evidence that civil society input is influencing policy (short-term, adhoc)
Active/ Effective Engagement	Two way	Equal	Decision makers engage with civil society in determining the policy agenda (long-term, institutional)

²⁷ Adapted from the World Bank, World Bank-Civil Society Engagement: Review of Fiscal Years 2010-12. World Bank 2013: Washington, DC. Online at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/CSO/Resources/228716-1369241545034/CSReviewFY10-12FINAL.pdf>

c. Providing Technical Assistance to select government ministries in constructive CSO engagement - As part of the Foundation's strategy to promote an enabling environment for sustained civil society engagement, the Foundation will support efforts to ensure Commonwealth governments and IIGs are informed of and better understand the importance of these enabling environment conditions. The Foundation will respond to select national ministries based on a) proven openness from the government, b) willingness to resource the process of engagement with civil society c) technical assistance provided by other donors or multilaterals, d) interest from local civil society participation, e) synergy and link with other core action area efforts and using a learning-by-doing approach.

Given the limited resources of the Foundation, it will prioritize limited support activities and will include preparatory work with local CSOs to confirm their willingness and readiness to participate in a learning and engagement process with their governments. Furthermore, it will be important that continuity and follow-up efforts are built-in to any technical assistance initiatives that will lead to sustainability and eventual institutionalization of engagement processes. The Foundation will also consider synergy with other core action areas and will ensure that these technical assistance efforts are not one-off activities.

One effective strategy to build broad government support for participatory governance and of their opening up meaningful engagement with their local civil society is to harness participatory governance champions among Commonwealth Foundation Board members.

Other methods may include:

- Making available technical assistance and training on CSO engagement
- Knowledge sharing forums and efforts on best practices in participatory governance, constructive engagement and development
- Supporting opportunities for peer-to-peer learning
- Providing customized technical assistance on how to transfer successful interventions from one community to another

4.3 Core Action Area 3: Replication of Good Practices and Knowledge Management

A third core focus area addresses further barriers to realizing effective civil society engagement in governance, particularly: the lack of a knowledge sharing culture in governance, limited funding dedicated to support learning, undocumented good practices and success stories, inability to use or access technology for knowledge sharing, disabling political environments and the media's lack of coverage of participatory governance stories²⁸. The Foundation will optimise its role as a knowledge broker and convenor of partners and stakeholders to share experiences and facilitate learning and capacity building. Knowledge management is a key strategy to enable and enhance collaboration and learning between CSOs and institutions in governance. Increasing the understanding among civil society and other stakeholders is dependent on developing systematic mechanisms for acquiring, sharing and

²⁸ Commonwealth Foundation, 2012, Strategic Plan 2012-16 Online at <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.org>

utilising information and for getting the ‘right information to the right people at the right time’. Interventions and activities will focus on these four groupings:

- a. **Promoting knowledge sharing and learning** among CSOs and governance institutions
- b. **Documenting and disseminating knowledge resources**, lessons learned and success stories
- c. **Replicating good and fit practices** in participatory governance
- d. **Maximising communications and technology** to enable meaningful learning and performance on participatory governance

4.4 Other Strategic Opportunities

An important influence that is increasing its financial support throughout the world, and sometimes directly to CSOs, is private aid. With ambitious global agendas matched by large resources, the private sector and private foundations are transforming the development landscape. “Creative capitalism”, a concept launched by Bill Gates at the recent World Economic Forum by which corporations include considerations of the public good as part of their business model, is gaining interest. So are social enterprises and social entrepreneurship²⁹. Governments have been attracted for two main reasons: 1) to improve the value for money in public service delivery projects and 2) to draw upon expertise within the private sector, while retaining responsibility.

The rise of this new resource offers CSOs throughout the world with new opportunities as well as challenges in engaging with this new partner. However, it will be important to remember that the “contributions and impacts” of the private sector will differ depending on sectors, type of actor and size ranging from large multinational corporations, to small and medium enterprises, and to micro-enterprises”. Therefore, the size, influence and capabilities of the particular private organisation involved will greatly influence the private sectors’ impact in development assistance.³⁰

The private sector is becoming increasingly aware of aid activities as a means of meeting the expectations of a growing, ethically conscious market. The authenticity of development assistance by the private sector has been recently questioned, however, and debates around ‘aidwashing’ have surfaced³¹. With the role of the private sector specially mentioned in the Busan outcome statement, these debates will likely intensify. At one end, it has been argued that the private sector can operate in a regulatory-light environment, ignore cultural competency and because businesses are focused on profit, not aid assistance, the core development philosophy ‘to do no harm’ is compromised. Conversely, other scholars and policy makers suggest involvement of the private sector is central for development practice in such an economically-driven global environment³².

As development CSOs are looking to collaborate with private sector companies for otherwise dwindling resources, it is important to approach such arrangements with care. This is an area that the Foundation with its pan-Commonwealth reach and convening capacity, may pursue

²⁹ UNDP Strategy on Civil Society and Civic Engagement, online at <http://www.undp.org>

³⁰ New Zealand Council for International Development (2012) NGO-Private Sector Development Projects: Lessons Learned, A CID Discussion Paper (2012), p6 Online at <http://www.cid.org.nz/assets/Resources/Other/PPP-Discussion-Paper-2012.pdf>

³¹ ‘Aidwashing’ can be defined as: A form of spin in which a company uses its philanthropic work to deceptively promote the perception that their policies, activities, products or services are ethical” (Jones, 2012: 117 cited in CID Discussion Paper 2012: 6)

³² Ibid

and provide some guidance to partner CSOs in carefully forging the kind of creative but principled alliances needed to fulfill its respective missions.

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6.0 Annexes

- 6.1 Commonwealth Foundation Logic Model (Updated, May 2013)
- 6.2 Commonwealth Foundation Strategic Plan (2012-2016)
- 6.3 Brief on Principles of Aid Effectiveness, CSO Development Effectiveness, OECD-DAC Lessons on CSO Engagement
- 6.4 Critical Enabling Conditions by Donors for CSO Development Effectiveness

Annex 1. Commonwealth Foundation Logic Model (Updated, May 2013)

ULTIMATE OUTCOME	More effective, responsive and accountable governance with civil society participation			
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	Enhanced collaboration and learning between CSOs and institutions in governance			
SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	1 Strengthened ability of CSOs to use creative expression for participatory governance	2 Enhanced capacity of regional CSOs and networks/alliances to engage in participatory governance	3 Enhanced interaction between regional CSOs and networks/alliances and institutions in governance	4 Enhanced knowledge management for more effective participatory governance
FOCUS	Strengthen cultural practitioners and connect them with the wider CSO community	Develop CSO capacity for participatory governance specifically in policy development and advocacy	Increase access to, and improve, existing spaces; and create new spaces	Develop mechanisms, and facilitate their adoption
ENABLING OUTCOME: a more effective Commonwealth Foundation				

Annex 2. [Commonwealth Foundation Strategic Plan \(2012-2016\)](#)

Annex 3: Brief on International Principles of Development Co-operation

A number of globally affirmed principles that have influenced the global development context, specifically aid effectiveness, governance and CSO development effectiveness are outlined below. These principles provide an important backdrop to this engagement strategy.

Principles of Aid Effectiveness

The principles for effective aid have been confirmed by over 100 countries as the blueprint for maximising the impact of aid. They are rooted in continuous efforts to improve the delivery of aid and marked by four important High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness, each one with increasing participation from CSOs.

Rome Declaration for Aid Effectiveness (2003), resulting in three priority actions:

- a) Development assistance be delivered based on priorities and timing of the country receiving it
- b) Donor efforts concentrate on delegating co-operation and increasing staff flexibility
- c) Good practice be encouraged and monitored

Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness (2005), where donors and recipients both agreed to commitments and to hold each other accountable for them. Taking the Rome Declaration further, five fundamental principles were agreed on in the Paris Declaration:

- a) Ownership - developing countries set their own strategies for poverty reduction, improving their institutions and tackling corruption
- b) Alignment - donor countries align behind these country strategies and use local systems
- c) Harmonisation - donor countries coordinate, simplify and share information to avoid duplication
- d) Results - Developing countries and donors shift focus to development results and measuring them
- e) Mutual Accountability - donors and partners are accountable for developing results.

Accra Agenda for Action (2008), where civil society were recognised as development actors in their own right, broadening the stakeholders in the aid effectiveness agenda and the need to deepen and accelerate implementation of the 2005 targets were agreed on:

- a) Improvements in the areas of ownership, partnerships and delivering results
- b) Capacity Development also lies at the heart of the Accra Agenda for Action

Busan Fourth High Level Forum (2011), acknowledged democratic ownership as a key tenet of development effectiveness, strengthened commitments to transparency and accountability, gave significant references to human rights standards for the principles guiding development effectiveness and acknowledged the **Istanbul Principles and the International Framework** to achieve development effectiveness. More than 150 countries and 45 international organisations agreed in Busan, on the need to form a new inclusive forum with a greater variety of stakeholders in order to ensure that development co-operation has the maximum possible impact on development results: The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation³³. Supported by the UNDP and OECD, this new, inclusive forum works to foster

³³ OECD-DAC website at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/fourthhighlevelforumonaideffectiveness>

engagement, communication and knowledge sharing among the many different development actors and to maintain political support for the commitments reached in Busan.

- a) Respect and promote human rights and social justice
- b) Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women's and girls' rights
- c) Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation
- d) Promote environmental sustainability
- e) Promote transparency and accountability
- f) Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
- g) Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
- h) Commit to realising positive sustainable change

Principles of CSO Development Effectiveness

The Istanbul Principles and International Framework represent the results of a CSO-led analysis and consensus on what civil society believes is necessary to achieve development effectiveness and have been officially recognised by governments, international and multi-lateral organisations.

As reflected in the International Framework, the Foundation's CSO Engagement Strategy supports the **critical enabling conditions needed by donors from government for CSO development effectiveness**³⁴:

- a) That all governments fulfill obligations to fundamental human rights that enable people to organise and participate in development
- b) Recognition by governments, donors and other stakeholders of CSOs as development actors in their own right
- c) Structuring democratic political and policy dialogue to improve development effectiveness. Key conditions include:
- d) Systematic inclusion of diverse views, particularly from grassroots based social organisations, women's organisations and indigenous peoples' representatives in governance discussions.
- e) Transparency and clarity of purpose and process
- f) Freedom to access information
- g) Timeliness in order to impact decisions
- h) Being accountable to their constituencies for transparent and consistent policies
- i) Creating enabling, financing for CSO development effectiveness. These funding modalities should focus on:
 - A long term results-oriented perspective
 - Core institutional funding, based on the notion that CSOs provide public goods
 - A responsiveness to CSO initiatives
 - Access for a diversity of CSOs
 - Predictable, transparent, understandable, harmonised terms
 - Promoting mobilization of local resources
 - Supporting the full range of CSO programming and innovations, including policy development and advocacy.

OECD Development Assistance Committee: Lessons on Partnering with Civil Society

³⁴ Excerpt from the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, The Siem Reap Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness, June 2011. Online at <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/InternationalFramework>

The Foundation is also learning from the good practices of bilateral and multilateral donors on their engagement with civil society. The twelve lessons compiled by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) “based on evidence and experience, identifying common ground and action, while respecting the distinctive objectives and roles of official donors and CSOs” are instructive. The lessons are summed up in response to a survey of DAC members on “How members work with CSOs” as well as from relevant commentary in DAC peer reviews and the outcomes of a 2011 workshop involving representatives from northern and southern CSOs and DAC members on “What makes for good co-operation between DAC members and CSOs”³⁵.

The **Twelve Lessons** focus on important conditions for an enabling CSO environment and set the stage for policy dialogues between CSOs and donors at many levels - global, national; in the donor and in the developing countries. These should be understood alongside the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness conditions listed on page 19 of this Strategy paper.

DAC's Twelve Lessons on Partnering with Civil Society³⁶

The Strategic Framework for CSO Partnerships:

Lesson One: Have an evidence-based, overarching civil society policy.

Lesson Two: Strengthen civil society in developing countries.

Lesson Three: Promote and support public awareness raising.

Lesson Four: Choose partners to meet objectives.

Lesson Five: Make policy dialogue meaningful.

Delivering Effective Support for Civil Society:

Lesson Six: Respect independence while giving direction.

Lesson Seven: Match funding mechanism with purpose.

Lesson Eight: Minimise transaction costs.

Lesson Nine: Build strong partnerships with humanitarian NGOs.

Focusing on Learning and Accountability:

Lesson Ten: Focus on results and learning.

Lesson Eleven: Increase transparency and accountability.

Lesson Twelve: Commission evaluations for learning and accountability

However, in the briefing paper “Good Practice in Donor Engagement with Civil Society: Creating and Enabling Environment for CSOs? A Commentary on Partnering with Civil Society: Twelve Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews”, Aid Watch Canada notes that while these lessons will facilitate ongoing CSO dialogue regarding the implementation of Busan commitments to ensure an enabling environment for CSOs, more direct guidance on key directions for donor overarching policies is needed to result in a strategic focus on the policy orientations for good practice. Drawing from the various lessons, they conclude that all donor policies and strategies on civil society partnerships should explicitly address the following principles and approaches, adapted to donor country conditions and contexts³⁷. These reflections and lessons are helpful

³⁵ Brian Atwood. Twelve Lessons, OECD online at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/peerreviewofdacmembers/lessonsonpeerreviews.html>

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Good Practice in Donor Engagement with Civil Society: Creating and Enabling Environment for CSOs? A Commentary on Partnering with Civil Society: Twelve Lessons from DAC Peer Reviews, Aid Watch

for the Foundation as it reviews its strategic context and formulates its framework for working with civil society.

1. Empowering citizens through CSOs - focus on citizens participating and take up democratic ownership as a pillar for effective development (Lesson 2). Encouraging an engaged citizenry in donor countries is also essential (Lesson 3)
2. CSOs as development actors in their own rights, who play a vital role in enabling people to claim their rights, and promote rights-based approaches (Lesson 2, 7)
3. Strategic, informed and inclusive approaches to partnerships - develop a deliberate strategic approach to CS partnerships fully informed about the context and CSOs roles in development in all their dimensions. Strategic objectives should drive the support and choice of partners and not donor funding mechanisms (Lesson 4 and 9)
4. Transparent and regular policy dialogue - helps identify common ground for collaboration and paves way for achieving results (Lesson 5)
5. Balance partner conditions in ways that strengthen CSO independence - CSOs should be independent to pursue priorities which may not align with their respective governments' or donor's preferences (Lesson 7 and 8)
6. Funding modalities with flexibility tailored to the diversity of CSOs and CSO "right of initiative"- strive to increase the share of core funding to strengthen CSO ownership with a mix of funding mechanisms tied to donor strategic directions for CSO partnerships. (Lesson 7 and 8)
7. Reducing transaction costs - develop more strategic, standardized and streamlined approaches (Lesson 8)
8. Address the humanitarian/development continuum in donor CSO policies - mechanisms should not only focus on immediate emergence response but also address a continuum of interventions leading to longer-term development outcomes.
9. Accountability to longer-term development results - ensure that reporting required focuses on development results (rather than inputs) and learning (Lesson 10 and 12)
10. Improve transparency - make transparency the foundation for accountability, including transparency of the donors
11. In addition to these directions set out in the Twelve Lessons, three other areas were identified as missing from the Twelve Lessons and would be valuable for donor policies and strategies to consider:
 - to have greater reflection on donor and CSO partnerships, explicitly addressing the real contributions and current challenges in INGO and regional/ national CSO partnerships in development and in CSO strengthening in developing countries
 - to more explicitly take into account in donor modalities of support and policy dialogue CSO 'watch-dog' roles in both developing and donor countries
 - to address in donor policies and strategies the implications of the recognition in Busan that CSOs "play a vital role in enabling people to claim their rights and in promoting rights-based approaches".

Canada, November 2012. Online at http://cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/briefing_paper_2_dac_twelve_lessons.pdf

Critical Enabling Conditions by Donors for CSO Effectiveness (Derived from The International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness)*

An enabling environment for CSO development effectiveness requires:

1. All governments to fulfill obligations to fundamental human rights that enable people to organise and participate in development.¹⁶
2. Recognition of CSOs as development actors in their own right.
3. Structuring democratic political and policy dialogue to improve development effectiveness. Key conditions for dialogue include:
 - Systematic inclusion of diverse views, particularly from grassroots based social organisations, women's organisations and indigenous peoples representatives.
 - Transparency and clarity of purpose and process.
 - Freedom to access information.
 - Timeliness in order to impact decisions.
 - Resources to enable full participation of stakeholders.
4. Being accountable to constituencies for transparent and consistent policies.
5. Creating enabling financing for CSO development effectiveness. These funding modalities should focus on,
 - Long term results oriented perspective;
 - Core institutional funding, based on the notion that CSOs provide public goods;
 - Responsiveness to CSO initiative;
 - Access for a diversity of CSOs;
 - Predictable, transparent, understandable, harmonised terms;
 - Promoting the mobilization of local resources;
 - Supporting the full range of CSO programming and innovations, including policy development and advocacy.

* From the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, The Siem Reap Consensus on The International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness, pages 22-24, accessible at <http://www.csoeffectiveness.org/InternationalFramework>

¹⁶ The multi-stakeholder Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment agreed in its pre-Busan Key Messages that an enabling environment must “in law and practice at minimum [be] in keeping with existing commitments in international and regional instruments that guarantee fundamental rights. These include: freedom of association, freedom of expression, the right to operate free from unwarranted state interference, the right to communicate and cooperate, the right to seek and secure funding and the state's duty to protect.” *Key Messages, page 10.*